

**Perceptions of principals in promoting professional learning communities: A case study
of three principals**

By

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**Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the Degree of Master of
Education in the School of Education in the discipline, Educational
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ABSTRACT

Principals must play a significant role in transforming schools into professional learning communities (PLCs). They attended the Advanced Certificate in Education-School Leadership (ACE:SL) programme which intended to empower them with the leadership skills to lead and manage their schools effectively. This culture is supported by different researchers, the aim is for teachers to work collaboratively to achieve a common goal. Semi-structured interviews and document analysis were used to generate data. On the other hand, documents were analysed through critical analysis, which was done to ensure reliability and confirmability of interviews. This study is located in the interpretivist paradigm. The participants were purposively selected. A qualitative case study was undertaken to explore perceptions of three secondary principals in promoting professional learning communities.

The study sought to answer the following critical questions: What are the principals' perceptions about promoting professional learning communities in schools at Pinetown District? Why do principals promote professional learning communities the way they do? How do the principals deal with challenges they experience when promoting professional learning communities? The findings show that principals played a key role in promoting PLCs in school. The principal attended ACE:SL programme, which assisted them to apply leadership skills acquired from attending the course. Principals believed in PLCs but they faced many challenges some of which were caused by teachers. The principals decided to formulate strategies. The strategies were to encourage teachers which they did by motivating them and offered them incentives. They also encouraged them to network with other best performing schools. The principals believed that if the principal did not attend the course he/she would not be able to lead and manage the school effectively.

DECLARATION

I, Nontuthuzelo Mhlanga, declare that:

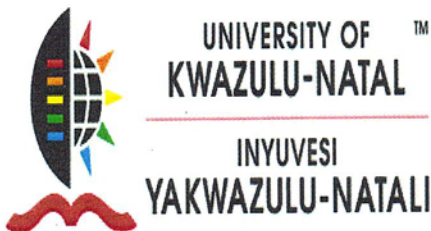
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This dissertation is submitted with/ without my approval.

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03 June 2014

Mrs Nontuthuzelo Mhlanga (213570063)
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Protocol reference number: HSS/0388/014M

Project title: Perceptions of principals about promoting professional learning communities: A case study of three principals

Dear Mrs Mhlanga,

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application dated 03 April 2014, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

To my mother, Beanor Nomathamsanqa Sishi, for her sacrifices and for giving me opportunity to become who I am. Her support and motivation in achieving my goals and in instilling in me the importance of education, has been the foundation for this piece of work.

To my husband Kitt Mhlanga for his understanding, encouragement and support. His love and dedication in spurring me on during trying times is really appreciated. Thank you for assistance in typing and in helping me to bring this piece of work to fruition.

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ABBREVIATIONS	
ACE: SL	Advanced Certificate in Education(School Leadership)
DoE	Department of Education
NSC	National Senior Certificate
PLCs	Professional learning communities
SMT	School management team
USA	United States of America

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This is an introductory chapter of a small scale study that was conducted among three school principals that had completed a professional development programme for school managers known as Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership programme (ACE: SL). This study was carried out between January and September 2014 and it sought to understand the manner in which the principals promoted professional learning communities in their schools. More details regarding the purpose of the study are provided in the sections that follow.

The principal is a leader and a manager in the school. The school principal's main purpose is to have authority and administration in all sections of the school to achieve effective teaching and learning (Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & Van Rooyen, 2010). For the principal to achieve effective teaching and learning, he or she needs to continuously develop himself or herself professionally. As the educational culture changes it is important to develop principals with necessary knowledge, skills, values and attitudes (Mestry & Singh, 2007). Elmuti, Minnis and Abebe (2005) concur that managers and leaders need to be involved in constant learning and education processes due to the continuous changes as well as the speed of change.

Since school principals are leaders of the schools, they need to lead through developing new skills and capabilities. The benefits of possessing such skills help the principal to lead and manage the school effectively and to provide the improvement of education (Department of Education, 2008). The Department of Education (DoE) noted that principals need professional development and introduced an Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership programme (ACE: SL). This is a new qualification for school principals as a strategy to improve educational standards (Department of Education, 2008). This programme sought to empower principals with understanding, ability and values that they should acquire in order to guide and administer schools effectively and also to contribute in the improvement of achieving desired outcome in education (Department of Education, 2008).

One of the principles of this course is to enable principals to administer their schools as organisations for learning by introducing professional learning communities (PLCs). In view of this, the study explored perceptions of principals in promoting professional learning communities. The focus of the study is on exploring the principal's perceptions in promoting professional learning communities which is one of the core principles in ACE: SL programme. Therefore, this study sought to understand the principals' perceptions in promoting PLCs in their respective schools and also to understand challenges that may have faced in the process of promoting the PLC concept. This chapter is an orientation to the study. It provides the background and rationale for undertaking the study. The three research questions that guided the study are also provided as well as an overview of the research design and methodology that was used. This chapter also gives the significance of the study of developing principals in promoting PLCs, it also outlines the literature that was reviewed in the process of conducting the study as well as the theoretical framework. Lastly the layout of the study which spells out what each chapter of the dissertation entails is given.

1.2 Background to the study

In the context of South Africa, Kruger (2003) observes that the principals' performance is crucial for the success of the school. In a new democracy in which South Africans live, the duty of being a principal is now difficult, it requires strength, initiative and many other personal qualities and character (Mestry & Singh, 2007). These scholars continue to state that the selection of school principals who have poor administration skills result in many conflicting issues, criticism and assumptions making a school very difficult to handle. Schools need effective leaders to achieve their objectives. Mncube, Naicker and Nzimakwe (2010) also observe that school principal's job description has changed over the years, changes which include knowledge and skills in areas that they were never trained for.

Similarly, Mncube, Naicker and Nzimakwe (2010), concur with Mathibe (2007) that South African principals are under qualified and inadequately skilled and trained as managers and leaders of the schools. The University of KwaZulu-Natal is one of the institutions which render the ACE: School Leadership programme which was aimed at leadership and management capacities of school principals. Its purpose was to provide constructed opportunities of learning to enhance quality education in South African schools (Department of Education, 2008). One of the principles underpinning this course was teamwork and

collaborative learning. It was believed that if principals obtained networking skills and managed to establish cultures of collaborative learning, they would be able to manage their schools as learning organisations. By so doing they would also be able to introduce the professional learning communities (PLCs) concept and entrench it in their respective schools. Many principals in Pinetown District attended this course and graduated in the year 2007. That was the evidence that they had acquired requisite abilities that would assist them to work collaboratively with their subordinates and other schools, and establish such a culture within their own teaching staff. This study therefore, attempted to find out if these principals have, through knowledge obtained in ACE: SL programme, been able to promote professional learning communities in their schools. The study also tries to understand the nature of challenges that the principals may have experienced as they embarked on promoting professional learning communities in their schools.

1.3 Rationale of the study

In my experience of ten years as a secondary school teacher, I have observed that some principals have played a significance role in transforming their schools into professional learning communities and some have not. I also observed that some principals do not encourage or find new opportunities for development, learning and support for the teachers for the effectiveness of the schools. I noticed some principals shift their responsibilities of supporting teachers to the head of departments while they are supposed to be leaders of the schools and have direct influence on teaching and learning. According to Section 16(3) South African Schools Act, No. 84 of 1996, (Republic of South Africa, 1996), professional leadership and management of the school which involves implementation of all educational programmes and support is the task of principals. This Act further states clearly that it is the principals' responsibility to organise teacher development and support staff not the head of departments.

Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011) state that excellent leaders make a positive impact on schools' improvement and learning. If the principal can apply the fundamental skills there will be successful teaching and education in a school. The principals' strategic and innovative skills are to promote and support professional learning communities (Moloi, 2002). Learning communities encourages teachers to share knowledge and skills which result in teacher

development (Hord, 2009). It is for this reason that I would like to explore the principals' perceptions on promoting professional learning communities.

1.4 Research questions

This study aims to investigate after attending the course what are the principals' perceptions on promoting professional learning communities. This study used the following questions:

- What are the principals' perceptions about promoting professional learning communities in schools at Pinetown District?
- Why do principals promote professional learning communities the way they do?
- How do the principals deal with the challenges they experience when promoting professional learning communities?

1.5 Significance of the study

International scholars (DuFour & Berkey, 1995; DuFour, 1999; Huffman et al, 2001; Printy, 2008) discovered that principal's leadership is an imperative source for supporting and impending professional learning communities. Development of principals can have a positive effect to support professional learning communities. This study can provide insights about the understanding of principals' leadership practices that enhance opportunities for the creation of professional learning communities. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the insight gained through this study may contribute to more understanding of principals' perceptions on promoting professional learning communities.

1.6 Literature review

International and national literature on professional learning communities and the position that school principals perform will be reviewed in the next chapter. The main purpose of that chapter is to elicit some understanding about major developments and important issues associated with principal's role on promoting PLCs. Transformational and instructional leadership are used as theoretical frameworks that underpinned this study.

1.7 Research design and methodology

This research is using qualitative methodology and is located in an interpretive paradigm. This approach was found suitable for this study because it explores the principal's perceptions on promoting professional learning communities. According to Maree (2007), qualitative research concentrates on how similar individuals and groups see the world around them and interpret their own meaning. The interpretivist paradigm, as the theory that underpins the qualitative inquiry was used. A detailed explanation of design and methodology that was used in the study is provided in Chapter Three.

1.8 Demarcation of study

In this study the research focused on principals' perceptions in promoting professional learning communities of three secondary school principals in the Pinetown District. The research was only focusing on principals who have completed ACE: School Leadership programme.

1.9 The structure of the study

This section outlines the structure of the report about the study on how principals promoted the idea of professional learning communities in their schools.

Chapter One

This is the overview of the study. It provides the aim and background of the study. It also provides three research questions, the significance of the study, the literature review, as well as the underpinning theoretical framework. It also provides the research design and methodology that was used and the demarcation of the problem.

Chapter Two

This chapter reviews the literature on perceptions of principals on promoting professional learning communities. A critical review of national and international literature that is relevant to the research topic was done. The chapter also discusses the two theories that framed the study. These theories are transformational leadership and instructional leadership.

Chapter Three

This chapter deals with comprehensive explanation of the research design, methodology, methods of data generation and analysis procedures that were preceded to carry out the study.

Chapter Four

This chapter presents data that was generated through semi-structured interviews with the participants and investigation procedures that were preceded in carrying out the study.

Chapter Five

This chapter unveils the synthesis of the key findings of the research on the basis of which recommendations are made.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter served as an introduction to the research project namely, perceptions of principals in promoting professional learning communities. It presents the background and rationale of the study, research questions and the significance of the study. Definitions, research design and methodology and the demarcation of the problem were presented. In the next chapter the discussion of literature review and the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study is presented.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the orientation of the study where various elements relating the research problem such as the background to the study are presented. Methodological issues are also outlined. This chapter intends to explore the literature on principals' perceptions about promoting professional learning communities in their schools. The aim of this chapter is to acquire an understanding about the perceptions of principals in promoting professional learning communities in their schools. The review of related literature considers both national and international perspectives.

The chapter comprises eight themes, the first looks at the role of the principal in promoting professional learning communities. The second theme looks at challenges faced by principals in promoting professional learning communities. The third deals with issues of promoting professional learning communities. The fourth looks at leadership skills which can be used to promote professional learning communities. The fifth theme looks at principals' leadership in promoting professional learning communities. The sixth presents perspectives of professional learning communities nationally. The seven focuses on international perspectives of professional learning communities. The eighth looks at the theoretical frameworks which are used in this study which are transformational leadership and instructional leadership. The chapter concludes with chapter summary.

2.2 The role of the principal in promoting professional learning communities

Professional learning communities provide an opportunity for professionals to study and think together as professionals and to decide how they can become better in ways that can guide learners to achieve better (Botha, 2012). Hord (2009) state that professional learning communities that where professionals engage in order to enhance their knowledge and skills. Various studies (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Kelly & Saunders, 2010) indicate that principal's leadership has a positive effect on professional relationships, school and professional development. The Department of Basic Education (2011) posits that principals need to play

an important role in teachers' development. Principals' can help or make it difficult for their schools to achieve better and be successful (Tschannen- Moran, 2004).

According to Kouzes and Posner's (2002) principals can use three leader behaviours to model the way of promoting professional learning communities. First, principals who model what the principal expect from others are most likely to guide the school to be a strong learning community. Second, principals who reach the general agreement to a common set of values have a big chance to lead strong learning communities. Thirdly, principals who make co-operative relationship with co-workers are most likely to guide schools that will operate as a strong learning community.

Many researchers have agreed on the view that professional learning of teachers, does not only promote school change, but also student learning and achievement (Murphy & Lick, 2005). According to Marlow and Minehira (2011) school principals must be highly skilled in different competencies so that they can effectively lead schools towards the achievement of educational goals. Researchers suggest that the creation of commitment, promotion of school values, ensuring of systematic collaboration, encouragement of experimentation and promotion of self-efficacy of teachers by principals result in well nurtured and developed teachers.

Williams (2010) and Ertesvag (2011) believe that the principal's responsibility is to construct a teacher collaborative plan that is clearly focused and which is appropriate for the school culture. Schechter (2012) posits that principals can create institutionalised arrangements for collaborative learning by allocating time, space and resources. Principals need to assist teachers in understanding how can collaborative teams should function (Chappuis, Chappuis & Stiggins, 2009). The principals' should demonstrate how people work as a team. Principals should promote a school culture by motivating, encouraging, supporting and building capacity of the staff members that contributes to the way members interact professionally (Katz & Earl, 2010). Principals must encourage participants to share their opinions (Schechter, 2012).

Principals can support professional learning communities by supporting the establishment and sustainability of study groups (Mullen & Huting, 2008). According to Murphy and Lick (2005), principals can create guidelines which encourage members of a group to work

collaboratively. They can also supervise their school's activities and implementation of various policies, they can help analyse learner information, identify areas of teachers' learning and learners' needs, schedule time for uninterrupted meetings and allocate resources to support teachers' opinion (Drago- Severson, 2004; Richardson, 2007). Study groups are a proven way for supporting important elements of the school and they work as the corner stone of the PLCs. These study group can have a positive impact in improving the professional development of teachers, adopting research-based strategies, improving teacher leadership and building community and a vision which align with the school and the district goal (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003; Hirsh, 2005).

Moyer, Dockery, Jamison and Ross (2006) argue that study groups are designed in a unique way, they make change easy in teacher practices and improve student learning. Other authors believe the principal is the most important person in the success of faculty study groups (Sparks, 1997; Drago-Severson, 2004; Schmoker, 2006). Murphy and Lick (2005) argue that it is the principal who should prioritise the professional development of teachers and ensure that they receive opportunities of developing and expanding their knowledge and instructional performance. In terms of this point of view, principals should manage resources, provide support, direction and encouragement to achieve goals and mediate group work (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003; DuFour, 2006). Principals are persuaded to learn beside their teachers (Murphy & Lick, 2005). They continue to say that principals can be supportive by dialoguing with study groups about goals, inspecting teachers' action plans and give report back and specific direction and showcase the school's accomplishments.

According to Mullen and Hutinger (2008), principals must devise strategies to delegate certain instructional and managerial authority for the professional learning community members. They can put first teachers' needs for assistance for learner achievement and strategize on content knowledge and instructional skills of the teachers. (Speck & Knipe, 2005; DuFour, 2006). Principals must plan teachers meetings and provide support in the form of material and human resources as well as afford teachers time to meet in study groups and attend personal development and empowerment seminars (Drago-Severson, 2004). Principals can ensure that teachers have access to current and relevant information on subject matter, instructional methods, effective practice and subject matter expertise (Speck & Knipe, 2005). Teachers' leadership roles such as mentoring, coaching and training can be supported by

using resources. A review of related literature also points to a significant gap in research pertaining to principals' role in the support of PLCs (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Walhstrom, 2004). While the discussion above focuses on the roles that principals can play in supporting professional learning communities, there are challenges that principals face when playing these roles. Some of these challenges are discussed in the following section.

2.3 Challenges on promoting professional learning communities

Principals are overseers of professional learning communities; they may face numerous challenges when they have uncooperative staff members in the form of groups with different opinions (Mullen & Huting, 2008). Underdevelopment of leadership capacity makes it difficult for principals to promote professional learning communities (Botha, 2012). He continues to say that allowing teachers to collaborate without the purpose of working together can result in meetings that are not productive and can be a waste of time. Other leaders are promoted to leadership positions without requisite training in the roles and responsibilities of good leadership, they lack knowledge of how to promote professional learning communities (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Many, 2006).

Some teachers will continue to work in isolation instead of working collaboratively and interdependently with other teachers (DuFour, 2004). Teachers may find the existence of competing tensions as an uncomfortable part of professional learning communities (Westheimer, 1999). Other leaders can become suspicious and intimidated by teachers' leadership qualities (Botha, 2012). Principals may face negative actions and withdrawals or even stand offs by the staff members. Another challenge can be in harmonious, execution of duties, individual commitments and staff needs can interfere with the group tasks and mission, and this poses a challenge for the principal (Mullen & Huting, 2008). These authors attest to the fact that when there is a need principals can quickly help make sure that teachers use their time effectively, and they are responsible for their decisions.

The lack of resources is a major problem that can hinder the establishment and sustenance of a learning community. Another challenge is that of individual initiatives and attitudes of the teachers (Dooner, Mandzuk & Clifton, 2008). Teachers' ability to dedicate extra time to participate in professional learning community activities and family commitments can become a challenge (Sargent & Hannum, 2009). Maloney and Konza (2011) concur with

Sargent and Hannum (2009) that some teachers do not see engaging in professional learning community as an important factor and are not willing to go an extra mile, which include their own time. Some staff members resist full participation. According to Maloney and Konza (2011) if the staff do not have the drive and enthusiasm to express their personal opinions and excited about the changes and new ways of doing things such status can be a challenge.

According to Robert and Pruitt (2003), school principals who do not commit to attend departmental group sessions organised at their schools due to double booking that can become a challenge. Even if they attend the principal may not participate, just sit there and not contribute anything in a group may be seen as a visitor or as an intruder. Attendance at all professional learning sessions, if not done consistently by all, may present a challenge and can divide the group (Maloney & Konza, 2011). Some staff members see the professional learning community as an imposition rather than a development. Given the challenges listed above it is important to note that for principals to deal with the challenges there are certain skills which they need to acquire, and what school principals do to promote the establishment of professional learning communities. The next sections focus on this aspect.

2.4 Promoting professional learning communities

Professional learning communities are promoted in schools for different reasons such as contributing to school effectiveness and school improvement. Seo and Han (2012) claim that professional learning communities create an environment where teachers can participate in continuous professional learning and development. This can be done by promoting collaborative learning in schools. Collaborative learning is an on-site learning which provides effective professional development (Lassonde & Israel, 2010). According to Dillenbourg (1999), state collaborative learning occurs when people learn from one another within the institution.

Collaborative learning has been viewed as a professional development instrument and also as a tool for improving learner performance. Supporting this view, Lassonde and Israel (2010) argues that collaborative learning among teachers can bring about improvement of learners' learning and professional development. A culture of collaborative learning amongst teachers in schools has been implemented through professional learning communities. Thomson, Gregg and Niska (2004) emphasise that principals must have a skill to share authority with

educators, facilitate educators work and the aptitude to participate in learning communities without dictating. Teachers who participate in professional learning communities learn from one another, plan their lesson jointly and solve the problems they face in the profession (Bausmith & Barry, 2011).

Seo and Han (2012) state that in order to ensure that all learners learn, educators are to work with each other in professional learning communities to examine and develop their classroom practices. Rismark and Solyberg (2011) propose the notion of sharing of knowledge as a solution to the initiation of teacher learning communities. Childs-Bowen, Moller and Scrivner (2000) believe that when teachers participate in professional learning communities they will positively influence their learners' learning and eventually makes a contribution towards school developments. Collaboration learning communities is an idea that is promoted by both teacher researchers and scholars of teacher inquiry (Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 2004).

According to Snow-Gerond (2005) professional learning communities encourage an environment of an open discussion where questions are asked and issues of uncertainty are valued and supported. Scholars find that it is the teachers' belief that collaboration yields their growth while it also benefits the future of the education profession. According to Snow-Gerond (2005) the creation of a safe environment through collaboration and professional learning communities can only be achieved when educational practices and policies are reviewed.

According to (Bolam, McMahon, Stoll, Thomas & Wallace, 2005), there are four key professional learning communities for promoting and sustaining an effective professional learning communities which are: optimising resources and structures, promoting individual and collective learning, specifically promoting and sustaining the professional learning communities, leadership and management. These scholars further indicate that the creation and development of professional learning communities dependant on numerous processes originating from internal and external environment.

These are described by Bolam, McMahon, Stoll, Thomas and Wallace (2005) under five headings namely: focusing on learning processes, leading professional learning communities,

making the best of human and social resources, managing structural resources and interacting with and drawing on external agents. The five areas of creating and developing professional learning communities are briefly discussed below.

(a) Focusing on learning processes

A professional learning community cannot be established through one method which is professional development of staff. There are many opportunities of adult learning in a school, it can be formal workshops or courses or can be offered informally through daily work with learners and colleagues e.g. planning together or group work and working as the entire school.

(b) Leading professional learning communities

A professional learning community will never develop in a school without the active support of leadership at all levels. Leading professional learning communities can be facilitated by creating a learning culture, ensuring learning at all levels, showing the human side of leadership, manage and co-ordinate professional learning. The commitment of the principal and shared leadership is important resources for leadership in a professional learning community (Mulford & Silins, 2003).

(c) Developing other social resources

Establishing, coordinating and sustaining professional learning communities is a human enterprise and making use of human and community resources is an important dimension. Trust and good working relationships are important in professional learning communities. Bryk and Schneider (2002) have identified four dimensions of relational trust: respect, competence, personal regard for others and integrity. Group dynamics must be formed where belief, values and norms must be shared to achieve effective teaching and learning.

(d) Managing structural resources

Teacher discussions and sharing of ideas is an important indicator of a professional learning community. It can be managed by allocating time and space for teachers to collaborate. The school need to schedule time for staff members to periodically engage in discussions. If a school creates a space for teachers to collaborate, it is unlikely to inhibit school wide collegiality.

(e) Interacting and drawing on external agents

Inviting external support, forming partnership and networking with other schools is a key factor in developing and promoting professional learning communities. In professional learning communities external support tends to come in the form of district support and other external agents. Schools have built productive partnership with different stakeholders such as parents, governing bodies, local community members, social services and businesses.

Schools have also engaged in many partnerships with tertiary institutions for ongoing teacher development activities. Networking is a way of promoting learning inside and between schools to share and transfer practices through collaborative inquiry on sharing and transfer of practice, developing more understanding, and developing of new knowledge about effective teaching and learning. It is also about teachers changing their practices and how they learn (Toole & Louis, 2002).

2.5 Leadership skills that can be used to promote professional learning communities

Principals need to have good leadership skills to manage their schools effectively. According to Katz (2009) skills are not something that you are born with but you can learn, develop them and it can show in your performance. Katz (2009) further indicates that leadership skills increase effectiveness of the administrative leaders and also tends to promote ethics. Many researchers in this field indicated that for a person to become an effective leader it is because of improved skills and personal qualities (Connaughton, et al., 2003; Rosenbach, 2003).

This relates directly to the study because for principals to be able to promote professional learning communities there are certain skills which they need to acquire. By using leadership skills that would assist the principals in promoting professional learning communities successfully in their schools. Leaders must set good examples for best behaviour which can be followed by the organisation. According to Katz (2009), there are five types of leadership skills that a leader should acquire: Technical skills, conceptual skills, interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence and social intelligence. Each of the five skills is briefly discussed below.

1. Technical skills

Technical skills involve methods, processes, procedures or techniques which can guide a person to clear understanding and being an expert on a particular matter (Katz, 2009). This scholar continues to say that technical skills are gained from formal education, training and job experience. These skills form a foundation for inspiration, innovation and long term planning. These expertises are gained by principals when they attend professional development training and such skills help them to achieve effective teaching and learning.

2. Conceptual skills

According to Yukl (2001) conceptual skills involve better judgement, planning ahead, knowledgeable, innovative and good analytical skills to make decisions in complicated situations. According to Haq (2011) conceptual skills are required for strategic planning, organising and for solving a problem. Haq (2011) continues to state that managers need these skills to predict the effects of the changes in an external environment in the organisation. Principals use these skills to manage their schools and solve problems.

3. Interpersonal skills

Interpersonal skills include knowledge about human behaviour and group processes, ability to understand how people feel, attitudes and other peoples intentions and the ability to formulate accurate opinions (Haq, 2011). These categories of leadership skills also include the skills needed to combine individual performance with others (Gillen & Carroll, 1985; Mumford, Marks et al., 2000). These skills help to influence people which make it easy to share ideas and information (Northouse, 2009). It enables the leader to solve problems in a constructive and effective manner. The principal as a transformational leader in this study uses this skills to influence the teachers to form and participate in professional learning communities.

4. Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence can be defined as an ability to be conscious of one's feelings and those of other people (Yukl, 2001). Emotional intelligence assists leaders on their leadership

role in making good decisions, solving complex problems, managing time and crisis management (Haq, 2011).

5. Social intelligence

Social intelligence is the ability to decide as a leader what is required in a particular situation and to make the right decision (Haq, 2011). It encompasses perceptual and flexible behaviour (Yukl, 2001). It involves the ability to understand personnel attributes of staff members, social relationship and group dynamics that usually influence the organisation (Northouse, 2009).

The above skills proves that for principals to promote professional learning communities successfully in their schools they certainly need to acquire leadership skills to become better leaders, to understand teachers' behaviour and for school improvement.

2.6 Principal leadership in promoting professional learning communities

Good leadership contributes significantly to school improvement and achievement of targeted learning outcomes (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011). South African literature supports the view that to develop good school effective leadership and management are essential (Department of Education, 1996; Roberts & Roach, 2006; Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & Van Rooyen, 2010; Christie, 2010). Across the board effective schools research shows that good principals have an influence on school outcomes such as learner achievement, motivation of teachers, as well as, emotional behaviour of staff (Davies, Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005; Raihani, 2007; Rice, 2010).

Scholars (DuFour & Berkey, 1995; DuFour, 1999; Printy, 2008) have proven that in a school, principal leadership is an important element that can support or hinder teacher professional learning communities. Other studies (Gurr et al., 2005; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Kelly & Saunders, 2010) also indicate that the principal leadership has a positive effect on professional relationships, professional development and school development. According to Chappuis, Chappuis and Stiggins (2009) a principal should develop change in traditions to emphasise the importance of teachers to be learners. Williams (2010) and Ertesvag (2011)

believe that a principal's responsibility is to create a simple focused collaboration that is suitable for the culture of the school.

Leadership differs from one school to another school that is why the role of the school is complicated (Steyn, 2014). Kelly and Saunders (2010) posit that effective leadership need to succeed in achieving a balance that will not be the same in different schools at different time. Scholars have argued that there is not one but different ways to lead (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Leech & Fulton, 2008; Raihani, 2008). It is the principal's responsibility as a leader of the school to create an environment that teachers can use to learn collectively to develop their learning and the learning of their learners (Blacklock, 2009; Fulton & Britton, 2010; Williams, 2010). Perseverance and willpower are the most important factors to achieve the above goal (Williams, 2010).

According to Williams (2010), schools with strong leadership presence can lead to the success of teacher collaboration. Botha (2012) posits that school leadership with a vision to promote effective teaching practices and learner achievement can create professional learning communities. Various studies (Hurren, 2006; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Kelly & Saunders, 2010) have indicated that leadership quality play a major role in measuring the success or failure of schools.

2.7 Perspectives of professional learning communities national

In South Africa after the democratic government took over, there were many changes that were implemented. However, the education system still has many challenges, one of which is underperforming schools. With all the challenges that affect education in South Africa, the challenges can be solved by creating professional learning communities so that it can build teacher confidence, trust and develop their skills and knowledge for professional growth (Botha, 2012). According to Hirsh (2012) successful professional learning communities encourage the sharing of practices between teachers and are more likely to lead to learner performance.

Similarly, Botha (2012) states that professional learning communities provide one opportunity for adults across the school system to learn and think together about improving their performances which can lead to learner achievement. Botha (2012) found that in South

Africa, clusters were introduced where subject teachers meet to share their subject knowledge but it does not seem that there is any noticeable change in their subjects. Schools in South Africa show no improvement in learner achievement. Unlike in other countries, South African school leaders do not encourage educators to share education practices (Botha, 2012). In some countries, this isolation is overcome by the creation of professional learning communities which challenge the teachers to work together with others to improve their own practice and the learner achievement (DuFour, 2004).

The problem with South African schools is that many of its leaders are appointed into leadership positions based mainly, on their good behaviour and commitment or their teaching experience without being trained or developed in the roles and responsibilities of good leadership (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Many, 2006). Such a practice tends to result in leaders that lack knowledge of how to create supportive professional structures for the improved teaching and learning. Implementing professional learning communities requires an understanding of its purpose and how it is going to benefit school effectiveness (Botha, 2012). In the recent policy statement of the Department of Education, there was a call to create professional learning communities (PLC's) (Basic Education and Higher Education and Training: Teacher development, 2011-2025). So far, no empirical evidence exists about the impact professional learning communities on teaching and learning. This may be expected because of the fact that many teachers are still experiencing challenges in providing effective teaching and learning (Botha, 2012). That is the motivation for the current study which is researching the experiences of principals about promoting professional learning communities.

2.8 Perspectives of professional learning communities international

In a professional learning community there is transparency about what learners must know and be able to do. This implies that teachers should share mission, vision, values and goals (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Many, 2006). A professional learning community is seen as an influence of staff development approach, and an important strategy for school change and improvement (Hord, 1997). Spillane and Louis (2002) define professional learning community as a shorthand term for different relationships that can support change of the individual in the classroom and for the whole school. In the United States of America,

teachers who participate in professional learning communities show changes in their teaching practices (Strahan, 2003; Hollins, McIntyre, Debose, Hollins & Towner, 2004).

Empirical evidence suggests that teacher professional learning communities have an effect in improving learner achievement (Berry et al., 2005, Bolam et al., 2005, Hollins et al., 2004). Scholars around the globe who are studying teacher practices noted the different form which educational system use to support collaboration of teachers and the development of professional learning communities (Paine & Ma, 1993; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Wang & Paine, 2003). In the context of Japan “lesson study” is an established practice that began in the early 1900s (Fernandez, 2002). This scholar further explains that lesson study consist of teacher collaboration and systematic inquiry into teaching and learning in the context of peer observation, critique and discussion around specific learner learning objectives.

Several studies have inspected the structure and role of teacher collaboration and professional learning communities in Chinese schools (Wang & Paine, 2003; Paine & Fang, 2006 & 2007). In the context of China the policy environment for teacher collaboration is experiencing changes (Sargent & Hannum, 2009). A new policy known as the New Curriculum Policy has sought to bring transformation in a number of teaching practices. The policy has aimed to examine the structure and content of basic education and transformation in curriculum, pedagogy and beliefs about teaching and learning (Shi & Liu, 2004; Sargent, 2007). The research conducted by Sargent and Hannum (2009) in rural areas of China prove that allocation of time, physical space, and school incentives exist to make teacher professional communities possible and worth teachers effort. The American literature shows that intervention in some schools who participate in a learning community has led to a positive teaching practice and improvement of learner achievement. To create professional learning communities culture, teachers have to understand how to share ideas about their teaching strategies. Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace and Thomas (2006) identify five characteristics that are needed to create a culture of professional learning communities.

First, teachers and school leadership need to collectively hold a common goal for learner achievement and work together on strategies and intervention to reach academic goals. Second, school leadership and teachers must share the responsibility for the improved learner achievement by being accountable and encourage staff members to work collaboratively.

Third, teachers and school leadership must work together to look at strategies that promote effective teaching and learning. Fourth, they must exchange ideas, teaching practices and analysing assessment data. Fifth, data must be shared among team members for analysis and interpretation to plan intervention strategies. Jalongo (1991) adds a sixth characteristic that there must be mutual respect and trust between all members. In a professional learning community there is transparency about what learners must know and be able to do which implies that teachers share mission, vision, values and goals (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Many, 2006). There are five research dimensions of professional learning communities (Hord, 1997), and these are briefly outlined below:

(a) Shared values and vision

Shared mission and goals are the basic components of the professional learning communities that staff members must see as their own common purpose.

(b) Shared and supportive leadership

This means sharing power, authority and decision-making where teachers become actively involved in the organisation.

(c) Supportive conditions both structural and relational

The structural or physical conditions are those such as time to meet, a place to meet, as well as the policies and resources that support the staff when they come together to study and learn.

(d) Collective learning and its application

The staff must decide what to learn and that is based on examining the learner information and learner needs.

(e) Shared personal practice

The delivery of new learning to the classroom is encouraged by the practice of peers assisting each other. These dimensions can help the principal to promote a professional learning community.

In conclusion the literature review explains all the literature relevant to the study and what researchers' international and national says about the topic.

2.9 Theoretical Frameworks

This study is underpinned by two theoretical frameworks and these are transformational leadership and instructional leadership theories.

2.9.1 Transformational leadership

Bass (1996) and Dvir, Eden, Avolio and Shamir (2002) seem to agree that transformational leadership is an extension of transactional leadership. According to Bass (1996), transactional leadership highlights the transition that takes place among leaders, colleagues and followers. Dvir, Eden, Avolio and Shamir (2002) indicate that transactional leaders apply pressure by setting goals, providing feedback, clarifying required result and offer rewards when tasks are accomplished. However, Transformational leadership theory moves beyond the notion of transactional leadership.

The distinction between transformational leadership and transactional leadership goes back to Burns (1978) book in which he notes that leaders who shows transformational behaviour attract followers sense of values and are able to convince them to see a higher vision and encourage them to influence themselves in performing consistently to achieve that vision. According to (Sashkin, 2004) the most common aspects of leader behaviour is creating development opportunities which are shared by different treatment of transformational leadership. The main focus of the study is the perceptions of principals about promoting professional learning communities in their schools. Transformational leadership looks at the leader's effect on the followers and the behaviour used to achieve this effect (Yukl, 1999).

Some key elements of transformational leadership can have a direct relations to the manner in which teachers are influenced by the leader. Transformational leaders act as change agents who arouse and transform followers' attitudes and belief through motivation (Bass, 1998). According to Bass and Avolio (1994) transformational leadership comprises four dimensions or four 'Is'. The first dimension is known as Idealised influence which is a behaviour that results in follower admiration, respect and trust. Second dimension is known as Inspirational motivation which includes behaviours that articulate clear expectations and demonstrate commitment to overall organisational goals. The third dimension is known as Intellectual

stimulation. This element of transformational leadership focuses on soliciting new ideas and creative solutions for their followers and also encourages new ways for performing work.

The fourth dimension is called Individualised consideration which is reflected by leaders who listen closely and pay special attention to the followers' achievement and growth need. From other perspective, Bass (1996) outlines his set of four transformational leadership components. Firstly, Charismatic leadership or Idealised influence that is where transformational leaders become examples to their followers through the manner in which they behave. Therefore, transformational leaders are well liked, valued and trustworthy. Secondly, Inspirational motivation is where transformational leaders conduct themselves in ways that stimulate those around them by providing their followers with knowledge and challenges. Team strength is stimulated passion and confidences are displayed.

Thirdly, Intellectual stimulation refers to transformational leaders encouraging creativity and encouraging members to try new approaches and avoiding criticism of individuals' mistake in public. They do that through questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and using new ways to approach an old situation in order to stimulate the followers' efforts to be creative and innovative. Fourthly, Individualised consideration entails leadership focuses their attention to an individual's needs for achievement and growth. School principals who promote professional learning communities in their schools are expected to display some of the transformational leadership qualities whereby they inspire and motivate teachers.

2.9.2 Instructional leadership

Principals' instructional leadership shifted its attention on the principal as a supervisor of teachers to see if they are able to perform their job well and to the principal as a facilitator of teacher development (Marks & Printy, 2003). Developing professional learning communities is part of this change (Kruse, Louis & Bryk, 1995; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003). Instructional leadership are goal-oriented, they play a lead role in directing schools and the principals doing it themselves co-ordinate an attempt towards increasing learner achievement (Hallinger, 2009).

Instructional leadership is seen as having a concern in involvement with different teaching and learning ways and acting as a leader in terms of pedagogy and instruction (Muijs, 2010). According to Bush (2007) instructional leadership concentrates on teachers' behaviours in working with learners and also on teaching and learning. According to Southworth (2002) instructional leadership is concerned with modelling good teaching, monitoring learner progress and professional dialogue and discussion. The most effective means towards achieving the learning targets is for principals to be instructional leaders (DoBE, 2011).

When researching the study of instructional leadership in South Africa Hoadley and Ward (2008) comment that South African leadership research base is very restricted. These scholars further indicate that most studies are on development and training for managers of the school and there is a small number of research projects that focus on what the principals actually do. There are other qualities that instructional leaders display. For instance, instructional leaders lead from a combination expertise and being influential (Hallinger, 2009). Instructional leaders are principals who do things themselves, involve in curriculum and are not afraid of working together with teachers to improve teaching and learning (Cuban, 1984; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986).

Horng and Loeb (2010) concur with the above view by emphasising that strong instructional leaders are "hands on" leaders, they engage with curriculum and instruction issues, they are not afraid to work directly with teachers and often present in classrooms. Pansiri (2008) indicates that the role of instructional leader is to make certain that teachers are involved in continuous cycle of discussing, planning, implementing and review curricular and teaching and learning in order to improve learner performance.

Several conceptualisations of instructional leadership have emerged. For instance the Weber (1996) model of instructional leadership extends the Hallinger and Murphy (1985) model by identifying five essential domains of instructional leadership. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) model corresponds with the first three dimensions of the Weber (1996) model. The first dimension of their model is defining the school's mission. The expectation here is that the principal is responsible to make sure that together with the stakeholders they develop a clear academic mission of the school. The second dimension emphasises managing the curriculum and instruction and that it must be arranged in the school instructional development where he

offers instructional resources and support. The third dimension promoting a positive learning climate instructional leaders communicate goals, prepares instructional time, and supply incentives for the teachers and learners.

The fourth dimension emphasises observing and improving instruction. An instructional leader improves instruction by using observation in classrooms and professional development opportunities. The fifth dimension is about assessing the instructional programme the instructional leader becomes part of the group to the planning and designing, administering and analysis of assessments that assess the effectiveness of the curriculum (Weber, 1996). Horng and Loeb (2010) state that school principals can have a huge effect on learner achievement by hiring good teachers and create opportunities for teachers to develop. Organisational management for instructional improvement means hiring the best teachers and give them appropriate supports and resources to perform well in the classroom.

The most frequently used conceptualisation of instructional leadership was developed by Hallinger (2000). Hallinger's (2000) model proposes three dimensions of the instructional leadership construct and these are defining the school's mission, managing the instructional programme and promoting a positive school-learning climate. Framing the schools goals and communicating the school goals comprise the dimension of defining the school's mission. These functions deal with the role of the principal in collaborating with staff to make sure that the school has clear achievable goals that focus on the learner achievement. The responsibility of the principal is to ensure that these goals are supported and known by every stakeholder in a school.

The principal must ensure the mission of the school is clear and to communicate it to all staff. The second dimension managing instructional programme focuses on the coordination and control of instruction and curriculum. This dimension incorporates three leadership functions namely: inspect and assess instruction, coordinating the curriculum, monitoring learner progress. These functions need the leader to be involved in the instructional development of the school. In schools with a large capacity principal should not be the only one engaging in the school instructional programme. This framework assumes that the important leadership responsibility of the principal is the development of the academic core of the school (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

The third dimension promoting a positive school learning climate includes several functions and these are protecting the instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for learning. This dimension asserts that effective schools create an academic achievement by improving high standards and expectations and a culture of continuous improvement. The responsibility of the instructional leadership is to join the schools standards and practices with its mission and to create a climate that support teaching and learning.

A six year study of school leadership which was recently released by the Wallace Foundation (2010) which concludes that school leaders primarily affect learners' learning by influencing the motivation of teachers and working conditions. These recent study has proven that schools that shows growth in learner achievement are more likely to have principals who are strong organisational managers. Strong organisational managers take part in employing and supporting staff, allocating budgets and resources and maintaining positive working environments (Horng & Loeb, 2010). They spend more time developing organisational structures to improve teaching rather than spending time in the classrooms. Principals who are poor organisational leaders are having a big chance to have teachers who ask for assistance outside the school (Horng & Loeb, 2010; Mindch, 2010). Strong organisational leaders are able to support teaching by developing a working environment where teachers can have access to the support they need without directly providing support to the individual teacher (Horng & Loeb, 2010).

This study intended to understand the experiences of school principals about promoting professional learning communities in their schools. Therefore, the study considers principals as instructional leaders. This study used Hallinger's (2000) model because the three dimensions proposed by this model are related directly to the study they are used by principals' to promote professional learning communities in their schools. Hallinger (2009) confirms that instructional leaders lead from a combination of expertise and being influential. Bass (1998) concur that transformational leaders act as change agents who arouse and transform followers' attitudes and belief through motivation. These two leadership theories complement each other that is why I used both of them in this study. They relates directly to the study because the intention of promoting professional learning communities in schools is

to promote collaboration among teachers. It is believed that instructional leaders can play an important role in promoting professional learning communities.

2.10 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the literature that has been reviewed on the topic. The intention of reviewing literature was to gain an understanding of how principals can promote professional learning in their schools. The chapter has referred to both national and international literature on the study focus. This chapter has towards the end discussed the theoretical framework that underpinned the study. The next chapter provides design and methodology that was used in the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has reviewed literature on perceptions of principals in promoting professional learning communities, it has also discussed the theoretical framework of the study. This chapter presents a discussion of the research design and methodology informing the study. Henning, van Rensburg and Smith (2004) describe methodology as a clear and reasonable group of procedures that complement one another. This chapter addresses items such as the research paradigm, methodology, research design, selection methods, techniques or methods of data generation, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical issues.

3.2 Research paradigm

In social science there are four dominant paradigms namely: positivists, interpretivists, constructivist and critical theory. This study is located in the interpretive paradigm. Maree (2007) states that interpretive paradigm describes how people make sense of their worlds and how they make meaning of their particular action. Burton, Brundrett and Jones (2008) characterise interpretive paradigm as involving insight, deeper knowledge and the understanding of human behaviour and relationship. The above authors share the similar sentiments in defining the interpretive paradigm. Interpretive paradigm was deemed relevant for the study as it sought to understand the principals' perceptions in promoting professional learning communities in their schools.

Drawing from the above scholars' views about research paradigm, interpretive paradigm is a vital attempt to comprehend the biased world of a human being. This study focused on understanding the perceptions of principals on how do they promote professional learning communities in their schools. Interpretivists believe that there is not one reality or truth but a set of realities (Maree, 2007). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) interpretivists make effort to get into a person and to understand from within in order to appreciate a person's world view.

3.3 Methodology

In social science there are three types of research approaches and these are qualitative approach, quantitative and mixed-method approaches. This study adopted a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is a type of educational research in which the researcher depends on the view of the participants (Creswell, 2008). This study relied on principals' views as it intended to explore their experiences in promoting professional learning communities in their schools. Cohen, Morrison and Manion (2011) state that qualitative research gives a detailed perplexing power to understand meanings, actions that are observable and those that are non-observable. This approach was deemed suitable for this study because the aim was to gain a clear understanding of how principals promote professional learning communities in their schools and why. Maree (2007) asserts that qualitative research concentrates on individuals and groups and how they view the world and build meaning on their own experience. Different scholars emphasise different aspects of qualitative research. Creswell (2008) posits that qualitative research poses open and general questions, generates text data from the participants, describes and analyses the generated data for themes and carry out the study in a manner that is subjective and biased. This study used qualitative research to explore principals' experiences in promoting professional learning communities and to gain a clear understanding of how principals promoted professional learning communities and why.

3.4 Research design

There are six dominant types of research methodology and these are surveys, an experimental research, a detailed ethnography, action research, case study research and testing and assessment (Maree, 2007). This study adopted a case study research. Case study tries to understand how participants make a meaning of a phenomena and how they describe and act in a specific situation (Maree, 2007). Rule and John (2011) concur with Maree (2007) when they state that a case study is an organised detailed investigation of a particular situation in its circumstance in order to gain knowledge. This study adopted a case study for its relevance to the study since the researcher intends to obtain an understanding of school principals' perceptions in promoting professional learning communities. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) state that a case study is a study for an example study of a particular system such as a school or a community.

MacMillan and Schumacher (2006) state that a case study looks closely in details applying many sources of data found in a location. These scholars further indicate that the case maybe an event, an activity or a set of individuals grouped together in time and place. In this study the case is that of principals promoting professional learning communities who have completed the Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership (ACE: SL). This study focused on three secondary school principals in a district in order to get a detailed understanding of their perceptions in their contexts.

3.5 Selection

This study used secondary school principals as participants. The sample of the study is composed of school principals who have attended ACE: SL and who have promoted professional learning communities in their schools. There are two main methods of selection and these are probability sample and non-probability sample. Due to the nature of this study qualitative research, purposive selection was used. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) describe non-probability sample as where the researcher targets a specific group and it does not represent wider population. This study used purposive sampling because a researcher handpicked the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their possessions of the particular characteristics (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). These scholars state that the goal of purposive sampling is to select persons or things that can provide rich and in-depth information to assist in answering research questions. The researcher decided to choose these principals who have completed the course and who has promoted professional learning communities in order to gather information.

3.6 Data generation methods

This study has relied on two methods of generating data namely: semi-structured interviews and documents review. The participants were interviewed separately in order to gather an understanding of their perceptions in their contexts. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) look at interviews as enabling interviewers and interviewees to converse their understanding of the world around them and to articulate how they view the situation from their own perspectives. Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to probe for expanding and clarifying participants responses (Scott & Morrison, 2005). This method suited interpretivist theoretical framework which guided this study. Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle (2010) claim

that semi-structured interviews means that the researcher can modify, exclude or may use different wording of the questions depending on how the interview unfolds. Disadvantages of individual interviews are that they can be intimidating for some people and linguistic factor can be a problem.

The researcher also utilised documents review. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) report consists of public and private records that a qualitative researcher obtains about the site or the participants in a study. Documents report the formal matters about the site or the participant in a study. Documents can include newspapers, minutes of meetings, personal journals and letters. In this study documents were reviewed which are: minutes of meetings, year plan, and school management team effectiveness plan, circular, reports of departmental meetings and analysis of results. Disadvantage of document review is that they can be misplaced.

3.7 Data analysis

Before analysing interview data the interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder. The audio-recorded information was transferred from the audio-voice recorder to the computer system for manual transcription. The data was analysed using content analysis which is an orderly way to analyse data that classify and outline the message content (Marie, 2011). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) content analysis involves coding, categorising, comparing, concluding and drawing abstract conclusion from the text. It clearly defines the process of summarising and gives report on written data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

The transcription of data was categorised using a coding system, the interview questions and responses were grouped according to the interview questions. Coding is the assigning of category label to a piece of data responses that have been collected (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Coding enables the researcher to identify similar information. In analysing data the researcher grouped the responses to each question together and analysed them separately. After that the researcher coded the related responses using key terms that were common in the responses.

Themes were developed after coding data. Themes are “a big idea that combines several codes in a way that allows the researcher to examine the sub-questions guiding the research” (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010, p.185). The themes were developed in relation with the interview questions. The study also used documents review in generating data documents were analysed separately. The documents reviewed were selected because they report the formal matters in the school. MacMillan and Schumacher (2006) concur that documents are records they comprise both written and printed materials, maybe official or unofficial, public or private, published or unpublished, prepared intentionally to serve an immediate practical purpose.

All documents collected from participants were critically examined. The aim of documents review was to confirm or refute the emerging issues during the interviews. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) indicate that there are preliminary issues around ascertaining the authenticity of the document. That is verifying the author, place and date of its production. These authors argue that in some cases the documents may have been forged or the authorship in doubt. The documents used were: strategic planning, SMT minutes, SMT effectiveness plan, school development plan, year plan, service commitment charter and school code of conduct produced within the school. The dates in the documents were checked and the authors and letterhead of the school.

3.8 Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of qualitative research is questioned by positivists (Shenton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose naturalistic enquiry which develop credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability which should be considered by qualitative researchers to ensure trustworthiness.

3.8.1 Credibility

This study adopted qualitative research design. To ensure that the generated data was credible, I used a number of strategies to enhance credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that one of the most important factors to create trustworthiness is ensuring credibility. One way of ensuring credibility was to ensure that participation was voluntary. The participants

signed the declaration form which is a proof that they accepted participating in the study. In other words the findings can be trusted because there was no coercion involved as each participant gave his views voluntarily. The second way the researcher made use of a manageable sample of participants. These participants were visited and interviewed in their contexts and the interview was recorded in order to keep first hand data.

3.8.2 Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) view transferability as the amount where the result of the research can be applied in similar situations. According to Shenton (2004) in positivist work the concern is about presenting that the results of the work at hand can be applied to a broader population. However, given that this is a qualitative research and generalisation was never intended there are other means of enhancing transferability. I ensured that I provided a detailed description of every step that I took. This is done in order to ensure that any researcher who wants to replicate the study can be able to do so.

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability is to assess the quality of combined processes of generating data like analysing of data and theory generation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to address the dependability within the study the processes should be reported in detail (Shenton, 2004). In addition I had to use multi-methods as a way of enhancing dependability of the findings. In that way findings from semi-structured interviews could be checked against those elicited from the documents reviewed.

3.8.4 Confirmability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) states that the concept confirmability is the qualitative investigators equivalent concern to neutrality. Shenton (2004) defines confirmability as the qualitative investigators which are equivalent concern to objectivity. In ensuring confirmability the researchers' interpretations were confirmed by the participants. To ensure that my interpretation of what was emerging from the interviews was accurate, I had to do member-

checking to confirm my interpretation. In addition after the transcriptions had been completed I gave the participants transcripts of the interviews to confirm authenticity.

3.8.5 Ethical issues

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) indicate that in conducting research, it is important to observe ethical principles to minimise problems that may arise during fieldwork and also to secure the rights of the participants. To make sure that I comply with ethical requirements, I first applied for ethical clearance to the Ethics Committee of the University. The University has an ethics policy which is applicable to both staff and students who plan to conduct research. Besides ethical clearance application, I also sought approval from school principals to conduct the study. The principals acted as gatekeepers and also as research participants.

All participants were informed about the nature of the study. Their autonomy was explained to them. They were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage of the research process should they wish to do so. They were also informed that the content of our conversation would be treated in strictest confidence and that their identities and that of their schools would be protected. That is why in the next section, the names of the schools and that of the participants have been hidden and *pseudonyms* have been used instead of their real names. It was also explained that the interviews would be audio-recorded in order to ensure that the true record of the interview was kept and they all agreed to have the interviews recorded. After each participant had agreed to participate, each had to sign a declaration of informed consent.

3.9.1 Coding of the schools

Pseudonyms were used to hide the identity of the three schools that participated in the study and also the three participating school principals. The codes used are explained below.

Mehlemamba Secondary School refers to the first school selected.

Bhubesini Secondary School refers to the second school selected.

Mgijimi Secondary School refers to the third school selected.

3.9.2 Coding of the participants

Mr Ndlovu refers to the principal of Mehlemamba Secondary School.

Mr Mpiyakhe refers to the principal of Bhubesini Secondary School.

Mr Ntshangase refers to the principal of Mgijimi Secondary School.

3.10 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the research design and methodology that was employed in the study. This chapter has given detailed explanation of the procedures that were followed in conducting the study. The next chapter provides a detailed discussion of the data and discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a discussion on the research design and methodology that was utilised in generating data that was used to answer the research questions. This chapter thematically presents and discusses the data that emerged. The study made use of two data generation methods namely, semi-structured interviews and documents review. Therefore, this chapter presents and discusses the data generated through the use of these two methods. In addition, the discussion infuses the literature that was reviewed, as well as the theoretical framework that informed the study and was discussed in Chapter Two. *Verbatim* quotations are used in the data presentation.

4.2 Discussion of themes emerging from the data

When analysing data a group of themes emerged. A list of themes that emerged from the data are as follows: (a) principals understanding of professional learning communities (b) the roles played by principals to promote professional learning communities (c) reasons for promoting professional learning communities (d) challenges experienced by principals when promoting professional learning communities (e) strategies applied by school principals to address the challenges (f) assistance of ACE Leadership Course in enabling principals to promote professional learning communities (g) leadership skills used by principals to promote professional learning communities (h) principals' opinions about not attending the ACE School Leadership Course.

4.3 Principals' understanding of professional learning communities

School principals' understanding of professional learning communities differed from one another. One of the three principals viewed professional learning communities as important and that teachers needed to engage in it because that is where they get new information and

knowledge. Another principal viewed professional learning communities as a way of talking and sharing ideas for the sake of the school and also as a way of advancing learning.

This is what the first participant said:

I think this one is the most important thing in our education that our teachers need to engage themselves on professional learning communities because it is where they are getting new things, they get new information from these professional learning communities **(Mr Ndlovu, the principal of Mehlemamba Secondary).**

The other participant raised a slightly different opinion about professional learning communities. He emphasised collaborative learning, his perception was that it was a good thing and the best way of advancing learning. This is what he said:

My perception is that it is a good thing to have people talking, sharing ideas for the sake of our school, for a purpose that contributes to our learners but I will say it is the best way for us advancing teaching **(Mr Ntshangase, the principal of Mgijimi Secondary).**

The principals' understandings were different as they understood professional learning communities in different ways. Principals' understanding of professional learning communities concurred with what various scholars said about professional learning communities. For instance, Mr Ntshangase claimed that it is a good thing to have people sharing ideas for the sake of the school and purposes that contribute to the learners' improved situations. This is in line with the views of various scholars (Katz & Earl, 2010; DoE, 2011; Greer, 2012) when they state that professional learning communities include all the orderly intensive interactions that team members are engaged in. It is important for such activities to promote teacher learning and these can entail providing opportunities to perceive, contend and share teaching practices to benefit both teacher and learner.

Hord (1997) states that the concept of professional learning communities includes people working as a team for a specific objective. It is implied in this statement that teachers meet and work together for a common objective which invariably is to improve student learning. Professional learning communities promote change in teachers' methods which can influence to better learner performance (Seo & Han, 2012). The school as an organisation depends on

individuals working together to achieve its goals and to be successful. Therefore, the purpose of the professional learning communities is to collaborate in order to achieve a common goal. This view is also supported by Hord (1997) when highlighting the features of professional learning communities. Hord (1997) argues that it is about supportive and shared leadership, shared values, shared vision, collective learning and supportive conditions as well as shared practices.

The study is underpinned by instructional leadership. Pansiri (2008) states that the task of the instructional leader is to ensure that teachers are involved in continuous cycle of discussing, implementing, planning and reviewing curricular and instruction which lead to improved learner achievement. This style of leadership promotes the sharing of information among the teachers and it focuses on learner achievement. The sampled principals believed that it is important for the teachers to meet and share ideas and information for the benefit of the school and the learners.

This is supported by the documents of one school where the principal in his year planner has subject phase meetings where subject teachers meet and share ideas and information once every week.

*04/02- 08/ 02/2014 subject phase/ learning area meeting take place once every week.
11/02/- 22/ 08/ 2014 four times in a month which means they meet all the time
(Mgijimi Secondary year planner).*

The document shows that principals' understanding is that it's important to support professional learning communities and therefore they allocate time for it in the school year plan. This theme shows that the sampled principals seemed to understand what professional learning communities is all about. The way they explain it shows that they believe in professional learning communities and its importance. They see professional learning communities as a way that will assist teachers to share ideas and information. They also think that when teachers are involved in professional learning communities, it will assist them to get new information which will contribute to the school and the learners achieving their individual and collective goals.

The year plans support the view that the sampled principals understand the importance of professional learning communities in their school, and that is why one of the principals even

allocate time for subject teachers to meet and share ideas and information once a week. Bolam, McMahon, Stoll, Thomas and Wallace (2005) assert that managing structural resources can be managed by allocating time and space for the teachers to collaborate. This proves that principals understand professional learning communities and that is why they promote it in their schools.

4.4 The roles played by principal to promote professional learning communities

The data that was generated through semi-structured interviews suggests that all principals were involved in promoting professional learning communities concept in their schools. The same sentiments were played. Some principal played their roles by encouraging and supporting teachers and make sure that all the teaching materials were available. Some principal played the roles of encouraging and organising promoting effective communication of committees. This is what one participant said:

The role that I play as a principal is to encourage them, support them and to be an example to them. I do it myself so they can see the need for professional learning communities (Mr Ndlovu, the principal of Mehlemamba Secondary).

Same sentiments were shared by another principal who also encouraged and supported his staff in similar ways. This is what he said:

The role that I played is that of encouraging and supporting the staff so that they perform to the best of their ability. I encourage team teaching within the staff and I also have a supporting role making sure that all the materials for teaching and learning are available for educators to perform their duties (Mr Mpiyakhe, the principal of Bhubesini Secondary).

Another principal shared similar sentiments. He also claimed that he encouraged and facilitated effective operations of various committees in the school. This is what he said:

My role is to organise these committees the second role will be to encourage and facilitate the working mechanisms of these committees (Mr Ntshangase, the principal of Mgijimi Secondary).

The principals seemed to have been playing similar roles in promoting professional learning communities. For instance, Mr Mpiyakhe the principal of Mgijimi Secondary said that the

role that he played was to encourage, support and ensure that all the materials for teaching and learning were available for the educators to perform their duties. This view is supported by Schechter (2012) who states that principals can establish institutionalised allocation for teachers to meet by assigning appropriate time, space they will use and resources. Mr Ntshangase, the principal of Bhubesini Secondary School, said that his role was to organise, encourage and facilitate effective operations of various committees. This statement is supported by scholars such as Roberts and Pruitt (2003) and DuFour (2006) when they state that principals should provide support and direction and encourage the achievement of organisational goals and mediate group dynamics.

Mr Ndlovu, the principal of Mehlemamba, said that his role was to encourage and support teachers and serve as model to them. This statement is supported by Katz and Earl (2010) when they state that, by inspiring and stimulation, support and the size of the space allocated, the principals can encourage a school culture that contributes positively in many ways which staff members can use to interact professionally. It appears from the discussion that the sampled participants perceived their roles as important. This is in line with the three specific leaders' behaviour espoused in the model of Kouzes and Posner (2002). This model emphasises practices of modelling the way in which principals can promote professional learning communities in their schools. This was highlighted by Mr Ndlovu, the principal of Mehlemamba, when he said that he encouraged and supported the teachers and served as a model to them.

Mr Mpiyakhe claimed that his role was to encourage team teaching and have a supporting role of making sure that all the teaching material were made available. This is in line with the views expressed by Kouzes and Posner (2002). These scholars emphasise the notion of building a general agreement on common set of values which are most likely to guide strong professional learning communities. The ideas drawn from literature and the data suggest that if principals play their roles that can be useful in teaching and learning in their schools. As part of documents review the data generated from school management team minutes of their meeting were used to triangulate information elicited from the participants. The analysis of the minutes of meetings revealed that in one school, the principal issued the school management team with the school allocation of funds so that they can order books for their

various departments. Such funds would be used to buy learner teacher support material (LTSM), and it constituted 30% of the total school budget for 2015 academic year.

29/ 02/ 2014 the principal issued school allocation to the school management team (SMT) and request for school books for all grades was drawn in the meeting by the SMT (SMT minutes at Mgiijimi Secondary).

In another school, their strategic plan reveals that team teaching was encouraged among educators and was viewed as the best way to improve school performance.

01/ 07/ 2014 Team teaching encouraged among educators within the school and also networking with best performing schools by allocating time for learning areas teachers to meet once a week (Strategic planning 2014, Bhubesini Secondary).

The evidence emerging from the documents review indicates that some principals do play their role to promote professional learning communities. The sampled principals understand the usefulness of their roles in promoting professional learning communities. All the principals in this study played their roles of supporting, encouraging providing teachers with resources to support them. Schechter (2012) posits that principals can create institutionalised arrangement for team to meet by setting aside time, venue and resources. In our discussion with the sampled participants they revealed that they also encouraged teachers to network with other best performing schools and they ordered learner teacher support material in advance to support teachers and learners.

This is in line with Bass and Avolio (1994) transformational leadership third dimension which is known as Intellectual stimulation that transformational leadership focuses on soliciting new ideas and creative solutions for their followers and also encourages new ways for performing work. According to Bolam, McMahon, Stoll, Thomas and Wallace (2005), networking is a strategy that can be used to recommend professional learning in schools and between schools through working together, sharing of information, skills and knowledge. This also shows that principals understand their roles and how important it is to play them effectively in order to achieve effective teaching and learning in their schools.

4.5 Reasons for promoting professional learning communities

This theme describes the manner in which school principals that participated in this study promoted professional learning communities while acknowledging the different reasons for possible different strategies that they used. One of the participants thought that as the education system was changing rapidly, teachers needed to equip themselves and capacitate themselves with learning and skills that will allow them to teach the learners of today. Another participant expressed a strong desire to have vision and mission of the school to be shared among the educators. In addition, the principal expressed a strong desire to have responsibilities shared according to expertise in his school so that good results can be produced. Similarly, the third participant Mr Ntshangase, the principal of Mgijimi Secondary School saw professional learning communities as a way of imparting and sharing information to the learners. On this matter, this is what the first principal had to say:

Our education system is changing rapidly, so for the learners to get the education they need the teachers need to equip themselves with requisite skills, they need to capacitate themselves to be able to teach learners of today (Mr Ndlovu, the principal of Mehlemamba Secondary).

The second principal emphasised a different aspect. He wanted to make sure that the vision and mission of the school was distributed among all key stakeholders in the school. This principal believed that good results can be produced and that teachers will be in a position to assist one another. This is what he had to say:

I want to make sure that the vision and the mission of the school is shared among the educators. I want to make sure that responsibilities are shared according to expertise so that individual educators can excel in what they are expected to, and so that good results can be produced. I want to make sure that educators are able to assist each other towards a common goal (Mr Mpiyakhe, the principal of Bhubesini Secondary).

The third principal had a slightly different reason for promoting professional learning community. He seemed to see professional learning communities as a way of sharing information. This is what he had to say:

Professional learning communities have been shown to be the most productive way of sharing information, skills and knowledge to the learners (Mr Ntshangase, the principal of Mgijimi Secondary).

The above extracts show that principals in the study support the view that professional learning communities were promoted in their schools for different reasons. One of the reasons was that it contributed to school effectiveness and school improvement. Mr Ndlovu, the principal of Mehlemamba Secondary believed that teachers needed to equip themselves and capacitate themselves with requisite skills and learning that will enable them to teach the learners. This is in line with the views of Seo and Han (2012) when they state that professional learning communities create an environment where teachers can be part of continuous professional learning and development. This can be done by promoting collaborative learning. Lassonde and Israel (2010) concur that collaborative learning is an on-site learning which provides effective professional development. Mr Ntshangase saw professional learning communities as the way of imparting and sharing information, knowledge and skills. This is supported by Rismark and Solyberg (2011) when they propose sharing of knowledge as a solution to the initiation of teacher learning communities.

Mr Mpiyakhe wanted to make sure that the vision and mission of the schools was shared among educators. This view is supported by Hord (1997) when he affirm that the key component of the professional learning communities is shared vision, mission and goals that the staff members see as their own and it reflects common purpose. One of the theories framing this study is transformational leadership. The discussion with the participants suggested that they promoted professional learning communities for different reasons. It has appeared from the discussions that sampled principals perceived that, professional learning communities was promoted in schools because it helped the teachers to equip and capacitate themselves. It also helped the teachers to impart and share information and to make sure that the vision and mission was shared.

This is in line with Burns (1978) when he notes that leaders who demonstrate transformational behaviour attract followers' sense of values and are able to convince them to see a higher vision and encourage them to influence themselves in performing consistently to achieve that vision. Sashkin (2004) posits that the most common aspects of leader behaviour are creating development opportunities which are shared by different treatment of

transformational leadership. Promoting professional learning communities is indeed important to ensure that there is effective teaching and learning in a school.

When reviewing documents kept in the school, I noted that perhaps some participants did promote professional learning communities as they had claimed, at least some documents did not suggest that they did. The extract below was drawn from the school development plan that was adopted in March 2013.

This entry highlights some key items relating to development meetings:

10/ 03/ 2013 formation of subject committees, regular meeting of educators teaching same subjects, team teaching (School development plan Mgijimi Secondary).

The extract above shows that in some schools, provision was made for collaborative work in the form of subject committees and team teaching. This theme has also revealed that principals had different motivations for promoting professional learning communities in their schools. The reasons were based mainly on their understanding of professional learning communities and what they want to achieve by promoting it in their schools. One participant thought that professional learning community was going to help the school produce good results in terms of the learner academic achievement.

The other participant thought that promoting professional learning communities was going to assist teachers to capacitate themselves so that they can be able to teach effectively. Seo and Han (2012) claim that professional learning communities create an environment in which teachers can be involved in continuous professional learning and development.

4.6 Challenges experienced by principals when promoting professional learning communities

The data generated suggest that principals are faced by many challenges in schools which inhibited them in promoting professional learning communities. These challenges were mainly inside the school. It transpired from our discussion with the participants that participation in professional learning communities cannot be forced on the teachers. Some principals claimed that some teachers resisted they did not see the need for professional

learning communities. Another challenge was that of passive resistance, fear of the unknown, lack of self-esteem, peer pressure and negative utterances. Another challenge was that some individuals in the school claimed to know everything but did not seem to want to share their knowledge with the others in the school. This is what the first participant, Mr Ndlovu said:

Some of the teachers are very resistant to what we are doing in the school, they don't see the need for them to participate in professional learning communities because they are going to retire soon (Mr Ndlovu, the principal of Mehlemamba Secondary).

The views expressed in the above extract were also shared by the principal of Bhubesini Secondary. This participant faced challenges such as passive resistance, the fear of the unknown and lack of self-esteem among some of the teachers. To highlight this point, this is what he had to say:

The first challenge is passive resistance this is experienced when educators feel they are not part of the goal or vision of the school. Another common barrier is the fear of the unknown the educators tend to lack self-esteem when they have to take responsibilities. The last one is peer pressure whereby others tend to discourage other educators and make negative utterances when someone is doing something good for the school (Mr Mpiyakhe, the principal of Bhubesini Secondary).

The participant challenges were individual's background and teachers claiming to know everything. This is what he said:

Some of the teachers claim to know everything, that is problematic and some of them have a background problem where a person grows up in an environment where there is no sharing of anything (Mr Ntshangase, the principal of Mgijimi Secondary).

The discussions reflected in the above extract suggest that the challenges faced by principals were caused by a number of factors including teachers' behaviours within the schools. For instance, Mr Ndlovu said that other teachers did not see the need to participate in professional learning communities. This view is consistent with those of Maloney and Konza (2011) when they state that teachers do not see engaging in professional learning communities as an important factor and are not willing to go an extra mile which includes their own time. Mr Mpiyakhe, the principal of Mgijimi Secondary, said that other educators had the fear of the unknown and also lacked self-esteem which prohibited them from taking initiatives and

responsibilities. This is supported by Maloney and Konza (2011) if the staff member does not have the drive and enthusiasm to express their personal opinions and excited about the changes and new ways of doing things such status can be a challenge.

Robert (2004) indicates that collaborative learning involves building confidence, reducing distress, encourage understanding of diversification, encourage relationship and arouse critical thinking. Mr Ntshangase said that some teachers had a problem of sharing ideas with others and he attributed such behaviours to their upbringing among other factors. That view is supported by DuFour (2014) when he affirm that some teachers continue to work in isolation instead of working collaboratively and interdependently with other teachers. These challenges raised by principals confirm the argument made by Seo and Han (2012) when they state that establishing professional learning communities in secondary school is more complex.

Seo and Han (2012) further state that secondary school teachers require more time and application to build professional learning communities because they need to make real alterations away from the departments towards broader school and wide communities. This study is framed within transformational leadership as one of the two theoretical frameworks. Conger (1999) argues that a transformational leader may increase the psychological empowerment of the followers by enhancing their followers' self-confidence, and also by heightening their personal and professional development. This in turn will lead to the empowerment of followers. Transformational leaders raise the morale, ambition and morale of their admirers. In concluding this theme I must state that the principals faced different challenges which emanated from various quarters including teachers' behaviour. These challenges were mainly located in the internal environment within the schools.

Each school has teachers with different characters, and that is why the challenges were not the same. The challenges included passive resistance, fear of the unknown, lack of self-esteem, peer pressure, as well as background problem of not being able to share anything. This challenges results from the lack of leadership skills from the principals. According to Robert (2004) principals who are developing professional learning communities have to display certain leadership skills such as develop confidence, fostering relationship, reducing distress, encouraging understanding of diversification and arouse critical thinking. It has

transpired from the discussion that some teachers did not embrace participation in professional learning communities in all sampled schools. Drawing from the two situations in this study it is evident that teachers' behaviours and the lack of leadership skills on the part of the principals on the other hand were two main sources of the challenges to promoting professional learning communities.

4.7 Strategies applied by school principals to address the challenges

It has been discussed in the previous theme that principals in this study faced a number of challenges which made it difficult for them to promote professional learning communities. The challenges cited included teachers who were resisting, they did not want to participate in professional learning communities, some lacked self-esteem, others succumbed to peer-group pressure, while others claimed to know everything and they did not want to share ideas with others. The discussions with the principals revealed that these challenges hindered the success of professional learning communities in their schools.

As a result of these challenges two of the three principals that participated in this study developed strategies to address these challenges. These strategies included schools deliberately involving the teachers in decision-making processes and also praising them for any achievement made. That was used as a way to encourage them. In some schools the principal made sure that teachers were sharing the subject with others in one phase and they also sent them to attend courses together. This is what one participant said:

I involve teachers as much as I can in decision-making, I praise them and I encourage them to understand their effort of being part of the organisation (Mr Mpiyakhe, the principal of Bhubesini Secondary).

This view was shared by the other principal who also made sure that teachers sharing the same subject were sent to attend courses together. This is what the principal of Mgijimi had to say in this regard:

When a person does not share information with others, I make sure that at least they are sharing the subject in one phase and I also send them to attend courses together and they must come and give feedback to the others in that particular phase (Mr Ntshangase, the principal of Mgijimi Secondary).

It is evident that principals used different strategies to address their problems. For instance, Mr Mpiyakhe claimed that he involved the teachers in decision-making and also encouraged them to understand implications of their effort of being part of the organisation. This view is supported by Hord (1997) when he states that shared supportive leadership means sharing power, control and determination where teachers become part of the organisation. DuFour and Eaker (1998) state that shared mission, vision and goals are recommended to address the roadblock of isolation among the teachers. Sharing similar views Lujan and Bay (2010) states that, collaborative cultures can improve with time disconnection of nature of the profession and if the different points of views were addressed.

The data generated suggest that participants used different strategies to deal with their challenges. One of the theoretical frameworks used in this study is transformational leadership theory. When Mr Mpiyakhe claim that he praised and encourage educators, they seemed to change their attitudes and they were inspired to do more for the school. This agrees with the tenets of transformational leadership theory as advocated by Bass (1998). This scholar further states that transformational leaders act as agents of change by stimulating and convert their admirers perspective and confidence through motivation. The data produced is also in line with Hallinger's views (2000) when he states that the principal should make sure that the school has a clear academic mission and to communicate it with the staff. Besides transformational leadership theory, instructional leadership theory was also utilised as the focus of the study was about professional learning communities and their usefulness for teaching and learning.

According to Hallinger (2009) instructional leaders are goal-setters they give guidance in describing clear direction for their school. Instructional leaders use approaches for combining and control to arrange in line the school academic mission with the procedure and action. Mr Ntshangase said that he took the initiative of sending the teachers to attend courses together. This is in line with Horng and Loeb (2010) when they state that school leaders can have huge effect on learners through the teachers and how they create opportunities for them to improve.

The sampled principals used strategies to deal with their challenges in order to promote professional learning communities in their schools. This data generated suggest that

principals' did not use the same strategies because their challenges were different. When reviewing the documents some schools did seem to take action in order to address the challenges they faced. This is what I find in their school management effectiveness plan.

01/07/2013 conducting workshop on staff recognition procedure as a tool to motivate staff members to perform better (SMT Effectiveness Plan Bhubesini Secondary school).

The above extract was taken from an entry made in the school management team's meeting minutes of Bhubesini Secondary School. In concluding this theme principals faced different challenges and they apply strategies to deal with the challenges. The details about how they addressed the challenges they faced has been presented in the previous sections above. Mr Mpiyakhe in our discussion also revealed that he organised service excellence awards for the best performing teachers as a way of encouraging his teachers to perform well in their respective subjects. This is in line with Bass's (1998) views when he states that transformational leaders acts as agents of change by arousing and stimulating followers perspectives and beliefs through motivation activities. This is indicative of the fact that principals did not leave their challenges unresolved but they took action as ways of resolving them. By implementing these strategies they were applying their leadership tasks. Principal's leadership has a positive effect on professional relationships, professional development and school development (Gurr et al., 2005; Hallinger, 2010; Kelly & Saunders, 2010).

4.8 Assistance of Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership programme in enabling principals to promote professional learning communities

The participants in the study all attended and completed the ACE School Leadership Course. The data generated suggested that the course assisted the principals in their leadership and management practices. Some principals claimed that they had gained better leadership and management abilities which enabled them to lead all the stakeholders involved in a school. Other principals claimed to have gained knowledge of management and giving direction to his staff. The third principal claimed to have gained knowledge of promoting professional learning communities and to share information. They attributed all these achievements to the ACE School Leadership programme they had attended. With regard to the discussion above, this is what the first participant had to say:

It has assisted me a lot. I now know better issues of leadership and management in a school, I know how to lead the governing body, how to lead the educators, to lead the

community, to lead the learners and to manage the school (Mr Ndlovu, the principal of Mehlemamba Secondary).

On the same vein, the second participants also stated how the course had assisted him. He too had gained knowledge on management issues and this is what he said in this regard:

The leadership course has helped me to gain knowledge about the following aspect of management I am able to give direction and I know how to manage people (Mr Mpiyakhe, the principal of Bhubesini Secondary).

While broadly agreeing with the other two principals, the third participant emphasised the ability of promoting professional learning communities in his school. He claimed to have gained knowledge of promoting professional learning communities. This is what he had to say:

I would say that it the best programme for school managers, it has assisted me in promoting professional learning communities because it emphasises that you can't run the school alone you have to share with other people and it emphasises cluster formation (Mr Ntshangase, the principal of Mgijimi Secondary).

All participants had attended and completed the ACE: SL programme. One of its goals was to develop a culture of collaboration among teachers in schools. The principals gave positive comments about the contribution of the course in their leadership and management practices. The principals' claimed that the ACE: SL programme had assisted them to gain knowledge to lead and manage people. For instance, Mr Ndlovu claimed that he had gained knowledge and skills to lead and manage better. He further claimed that he could lead teachers to better lead the school governing body and the learners better. This view is supported by Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011) when they claim in their study that most candidates claimed to have improved their leadership and management practices.

The discussion with the participants revealed that the ACE: SL programme enabled them to achieve the objectives of the ACE: SL programme. For instance, the Programme Handbook indicates that the first module start with investigating the school as an educational institution it also look how an idea of teaching and learning can be promoted (Department of Education, 2008). As part of building leadership capacity the ACE: SL programme or qualification sought to empower school principals to grow on their knowledge, expertise and principles

needed to guide and administer school impressively and to be responsible to make better the delivery of education across the school method (Department of Education, 2003). The qualification aimed to supply professional leadership and management of all the studies, thereby ensuring schools provide standard teaching and learning for better level of achievements for all learners (Department of Education, 2008).

The data generated suggested that the participating principals improved their leadership practices after attending the course. The study is underpinned by instructional leadership theory. Since the role of principals have changed to those of instructional leaders they need to participate in programmes that will prepare them for meeting the challenges of the 21st century (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Hale & Moorman, 2003; Lin, 2005). Instructional leaders guide using special skills and influence join together (Hallinger, 2009). This programme assisted the principals to promote collaboration among the teachers in their schools. The data generated shows that principals gained more knowledge in this course and it assisted them to promote professional learning communities.

The data generated from the documents claims that some principals did improve in their management and leadership after attending the ACE: SL programme because they had documents which support them. For example, I found that the schools kept a number of documents and various plans that they had developed. The extract below shows some of the activities that the schools were engaged in:

School development plan, strategic planning, year planner, SMT effectiveness plan, service commitment charter and school code of conduct (Bhubesini Secondary School).

These documents reveal that some principals did improve in their management and leadership practices by having documents which show their plans for the year. One of the modules of the ACE: SL is managing policy, planning, school development and governance. The module assisted principals to draw up school development plans, school year plans, strategic planning, school management team (SMT) effectiveness plan and service commitment charter.

In concluding the discussion of this theme, I can say that ACE: SL appears to have made a reasonable contribution on principals' ability to improve their managerial and leadership

practices. The ACE programme intends to enable school leaders to guide and administer schools impressively in time of important changes, demanding situations and favourable time (Department of Education, 2008). This improvement on management practices assisted the principals to promote professional learning communities in their schools. This programme did not only assist principals in their management practices but it also inspired them with regards to collaboration. It transpired from the discussion that they believed in teamwork, collective decision-making and teacher collaboration.

4.9 Leadership skills employed by principals to promote professional learning communities

Principals need to have good leadership skills to manage their schools effectively. In this theme the principals explained how their leadership skills assisted them in promoting professional learning communities concept. In some schools, learner achievement had improved, the behaviour of the learners has changed and the attitudes of the educators had improved. Some school principals claimed that they were able to plan better after exposure to the leadership programme. They highlighted a number of areas where they had improved and these include ability to draw the school and management plan for the year, the principal were able to promote the practice of information sharing among the teachers and it was believed that such practices could lead to the effectiveness of teaching learners. This is what one participant said:

I have seen that for an example the results for the school has improved the behaviour of the learners has also changed and the attitude of the teachers (Mr Ndlovu, the principal of Mehlemamba Secondary).

The other participant expressed similar views stating for example his planning had improved. This is what he had to say:

I can plan better now and I can be able to draw the school and management plan for the year (Mr Mpiyakhe, the principal of Bhubesini Secondary).

While agreeing with the other participants the third participant emphasised the sharing of information and the promotion of collaboration among the teachers as one of his achievements. This is what he had to say in this regard:

I promote that teachers must share, share ideas so that eventually lead to the effectiveness of teaching learners (Mr Ntshangase, the principal of Mgijimi Secondary).

The principals' leadership skills assisted them in different ways in their schools. For instance, Mr Ndlovu claimed that the results had improved and that the attitude of the learners and the educators had changed. This statement is in line with the views of Katz (2009) who states that expertise are not something you are born with, but they can be intellectual and grow and can be noticeable in practice. Examples of skills being learned can be witnessed in Mr Mpiyakhe's testimony when he claimed that after exposure to training he could plan better and was able to draw the school management plan for the year. This is in line with Haq's (2011) views when he states that conceptual skills are needed for planning effectively, organising and solving a problem. Similarly, Mr Ntshangase claimed that he was able to promote sharing of ideas among the teachers and that such practices eventually led to effectiveness of learners' learning. This is supported by Northouse (2009) who states that interpersonal skills assist in influencing people and it make spreading of beliefs and information a lot easier.

Principals need to have good leadership skills to manage their schools effectively (Katz, 2009). The data generated reveal that principals used different leadership skills in their schools for effective teaching and learning. This study is underpinned by transformational leadership theory. Transformational leaders are acting on behalf of change by encouraging and changing admirer's attitude, belief by inspiration (Bass, 1998). Idealised influence it a manner that results in followers' approval, honour and trust (Bass & Avolio, 1994). The statement supports what the sampled participants said about improved behaviours of the teachers and the learners. When reviewing the schedule of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) for the past two years this showed steady improvement which seemed to support the principals' claims. What follows below are extracts from the NSC schedule and year plans that have been drawn from Mehlemamba and Bhubesini Secondary schools respectively.

1. *pass rate 2012 30% , 2013 47.44% (Mehlemamba Secondary school)*

2. *14/01/2014 first departmental meeting*

Staff meeting

Finance committee meeting

05/12/2014 planning for 2015

Staff meeting

Finance committee (**Bhubesini Secondary school part of the year plan**)

The data generated suggest that principals used different leadership skills and they helped them in different ways. Some principals have used their leadership skills successfully and the results of the school have improved. Furthermore, they have learned how to draw up a management plan and school plan for the year. Technical skills are skills that place the basis for creativity and tactical plan (Katz, 2009).

The data has shown that by attending the ACE: school leadership principals that participated in this study felt empowered to perform a number of tasks. These areas have been discussed in the previous sections and in many instances the principals' views were supported by various scholars with the exception of few aspects where there were disagreements.

4.10 Principals opinions about not attending ACE Leadership Course

All the participants agreed that if a principal did not attend the ACE Leadership Course he or she will not be able to promote professional learning communities. The views of these participants were mainly based on the perception that for those principals' who did not attend the ACE: SL will be not successful at school due to the perceived adherence to the old leadership approaches. Their views were that it will be difficult for them to obtain clear understanding of new concepts, approaches and strategies that they as participants in the ACE: SL was exposed to. This is what one participant said:

It is not easy for the principal who did not attend this course to successfully promote the idea of professional learning communities at the school. This is because the principal might be using the old leadership styles that might have been changed by this course (Mr Ndlovu, the principal of Mehlemamba Secondary).

Similar views were shared by the other participants in the study that for principals who did not attend the school leadership course it is going to be difficult to promote the concept professional learning communities and there will be no direction in that school. This is what one of them said:

Not at all professional learning communities will not be successful as I eluded to the things that I studied from the ACE Leadership Course for instance there could be no

direction in learning in that particular school (Mr Mpiyakhe, the principal of Bhubesini Secondary).

The third participant agreed with the above two participants and felt that the school leadership course assisted with different strategies of management. This is what he said:

It is very difficult if you don't have exposure to this leadership course. This course helps with different strategies of management including the notion of professional learning communities (Mr Ntshangase, the principal of Mgijimi Secondary).

The data generated showed that all the participants' opinions were that if you did not attend the course as a principal you will have difficulties in managing your school. For instance, Mr Ndlovu claimed that it not easy if you did not attend the course because you may be using the old leadership style. This is supported by the views of Department of Education (2007) that claims content of the ACE: SL curriculum is set to empower school principals with understanding of how to lead and manage people is one of the modules in this programme.

Mr Mpiyakhe the principal of Bhubesini Secondary claimed that there could be no direction in that school. This is in line with managing teaching and learning which is another module that was taught as part of the curriculum of ACE: SL programme. Similarly, Mr Ntshangase the principal of Mgijimi Secondary claimed that the principal will not know different strategies of management. The views expressed by all three participating principals were that ACE: SL is an important programme which must be attended by all principals in order to be able to promote professional learning communities in their schools. However, Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011) in their evaluation of the ACE: SL seem to disagree with the participants' views they observe that the majority of the schools whose principals had completed the ACE: SL there had not been any school improvement.

Rather, in some schools there had been a decline in their output. As has been seen in the discussion in the above paragraph this study is underpinned by one of the theories instructional leadership theory. In view of that Mr Mpiyakhe the principal of Bhubesini Secondary claimed there would be no direction in that school if the principal did not attend the course. His views are based on the belief that principals that attended this leadership course were taught how to lead instruction in the school. This is in line with Hallinger (2009)

when he states that instructional leader's lead the way of how to achieve objectives of the school.

Similarly Mr Ntshangase the principal of Mgijimi Secondary claimed that the principal will not know different strategies of managing the school. This is supported by Hallinger (2009) when he states that instructional leaders use procedures to bring together and control school academic mission with strategy and action. Instructional leaders concentrate not only on leading but also being in charge of the institution. They understand their positions as managers which comprises monitoring subjects offered in a school, teaching, coordinating and controlling (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Heck, 1992; Leitner, 1994; Goldring & Pasternak, 1994; Hallinger et al., 1996). The participating principals claimed that the principal who did not attend the ACE: SL programme will lack understanding of information and proficiency that was acquired by attending the programme.

In conclusion, the sampled principals believed that if a principal did not attend ACE: SL course he or she will not be able to promote professional learning communities. The reasons were that the principal may be using the old leadership styles. Attending the course could have helped them obtain updated approaches and philosophies about leading institutions. By attending the course the principal may not have learnt different strategies of management.

The sampled principals revealed that the ACE School leadership programme assisted them in their leadership and management practices. They revealed that after attending the ACE School Leadership programme they gained new knowledge and skills which enabled them to deal with for instance misconduct among the educators as well as the learners, they now had deeper insights about issues of school governance and they could compile buildings and grounds maintenance plans as well as office management plans. Such views were consistent with the content of one of the module of the ACE School Leadership programme which is known as manage organisational system, physical resources and financial resources (Department of Education, 2008).

The views expressed by the sampled participants disagree with those of Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011) who state in their evaluation of ACE School Leadership course that there are no improvements in schools whose principals attended this leadership course. It has

transpired from the discussion with the participants, Mr Mpiyakhe claimed that after attending the course he was able to do service commitment charter, school development plan, school safety plan, and on the aspects of management, that he could do the curriculum management plan, compile governing body operational plan and many other important activities. The above statement proves that some schools had improvement after their principal attended the ACE School Leadership course.

4.11 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, a presentation of data generated through semi-structured interviews and document analysis was made. Data was presented in eight themes and these were mentioned and discussed. The next chapter brings the study to an end. Among other things that chapter provides a summary of the whole study that presents key findings and makes recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a detailed discussion of the data that was generated through the use of semi-structured interviews with three school principals and the review of some documents kept in the schools. In this chapter I am presenting the findings and recommendations. In presenting the findings, research questions are used and this strategy ensures that the findings drawn from the data presented answer the main questions driving the study. Before the findings are presented and discussed, a summary of the study is presented first.

5.2 Summary of the study

The study explored the perceptions of three secondary school principals about how they promoted professional learning communities in their schools. This was a case study of three secondary school principals who had attended and completed the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE: SL) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The first chapter outlined the background of the study, including the discussion of the rationale, research questions and a short discussion of the methodology.

The second chapter focused on the review of the related literature including the discussion of the theoretical frameworks. The third chapter provided a comprehensive discussion of the design and methodology that was used to produce data that would assist in answering research questions. The fourth chapter presented the data which was organised into eight themes and these were discussed in full. The last chapter summarises the study, presents the findings as well as recommendations.

5.3 Presentation of findings

In this presentation of findings I am using the research questions that were posed in the first chapter to organise the presentation. I am going to bring together evidence from various

themes discussed in Chapter Four. As part of presenting the findings the extent to which each research question has been addressed is also discussed. Research questions that guided the study are re-stated below:

- (a) What are the principals' perceptions about promoting professional learning communities in schools at Pinetown District?
- (b) Why do the principals' promote professional learning communities the way they do?
- (c) How do the principals' deal with challenges they experience when promoting professional learning communities?

5.3.1 What are the principals' perceptions about promoting professional learning communities?

The discussion below details the findings regarding the principals' perceptions about promoting professional learning communities in their schools. After holding discussions with the three principals, the data emerged revealed that, they perceived the notion of promoting professional learning communities in their school as important. The principals in this study attended ACE: SL programme and they all believed that attending that ACE programme has assisted them in many ways. One of the cornerstones of that training programme was that of collaborative learning where a community of professional teachers learn together as a community. It was therefore, an expectation that principals that had been trained in this programme should establish professional learning communities in their respective schools.

After discussing the eight themes that emerged from the data the findings revealed that principals had a clear understanding about what constitutes professional learning communities. However, when they were asked about their understanding it became evident that they emphasised different things which made professional learning communities what they are. It was also very clear that all three principals viewed professional learning communities as important for their schools. They further thought that teachers needed to engage in them in order to get new information, share ideas as the best way for advancing learning. More details about their perceptions of professional learning communities can be found in Section 4.3 of Chapter Four.

The ACE: SL programme that they attended assisted them to promote professional learning communities in their schools. They highlighted a number of specific modules that they thought gave them specific skills which enriched their leadership and management lives in the schools. One of the modules they mentioned is ‘Managing Teaching and Learning’ which they claimed assisted them in promoting professional learning communities in their schools. They believed that if a principal did not attend the ACE: SL programme that principal will have difficulties to manage his school and promote professional learning communities. They reveal that ACE: SL have made a reasonable contribution on their abilities to improve their leadership skills and management practices. This demonstrates the participants’ perceptions about the professional learning communities and the role that ACE: SL can play in ensuring that these communities are established in the schools.

The discussion has also revealed that principals, as part of their commitment to the concept of professional learning communities encouraged the teachers to network with other schools particularly those that were regarded as best performing schools. The discussion with the principals showed that they were playing their roles to promote professional learning communities in their school. The principals showed that they understood what their roles were from our conversation. More details on this aspect can be found in Section 4.4 of Chapter Four.

5.3.2 Why do the principals promote professional learning communities the way they do?

The question to be addressed in this section is about why the principals in this study promoted professional learning communities the way they did. Promoting professional learning communities appeared to be important in this study. It transpired that teacher meeting and sharing information was regarded as beneficial to the teachers and the learners. Principals promoted professional learning communities for different reasons. This is what they indicated: Mr Mpiyakhe indicated that *“I want to make sure that the vision and mission of the school is shared....”* Mr Ntshangase indicated that *“professional learning communities have been shown to me as the most productive way of imparting and sharing information.....”* Mr Ndlovu indicated that *“Teachers need to capacitate themselves....”* More details about why these principals promoted the notion of professional learning communities the way they did can be found in Section 4.5 of Chapter Four. It was revealed in our discussion that they

thought promoting professional learning communities was going to improve their school results. One participant even allocated time in his school development plan. He seemed to view professional learning communities as one of the plans of the school development. The principals made what I can call sincere attempts to promote professional learning communities in their schools. In our conversations they seemed to be serious about promoting professional learning communities.

The records also showed that subject meetings were promoted which were meant for the teachers to share information, skills and knowledge. Their reasons for promoting professional learning communities showed that they believed in professional learning communities. However, the manner in which they attempted to promote professional learning communities did not in all instances indicate that they fully committed themselves to do it. The data shows that principals in the study were not as active as they should in promoting professional learning communities. The data does not show that they were interested in learning with teachers as it is the practice of promoting professional learning communities. Therefore the findings are that principals did not participate in subject committee or teacher collaboration activities. They only played a passive role in this process they did not play any direct role in promoting professional learning communities as they were not monitoring and involved in these committees.

5.3.3 How do the principals deal with challenges they experience on promoting professional learning communities?

The data generated has revealed that the three principals experienced different challenges which they thought were caused by the teachers' behaviours and attitudes. In order to deal with these challenges the principals used different strategies. Some of the challenges were that some teachers are resisting attempts by the principals to make them to work collaboratively with the other teachers in the various departments and phases in the schools. A detailed discussion on these issues is presented in Section 4.6 of Chapter Four. This section deals directly with the manner in which the principals in the study addressed the challenges they faced when trying to promote professional learning communities concept in their respective schools. Before discussing this issue, I should highlight that there were two main issues in the study to be the challenge. The first one was that some of the principals lacked skills of handling their staff members so the issue of leadership was prominent. The second

challenge was with the teachers who happened to display negative attitudes towards the principals' attempts to create a professional learning community in each school. To address these challenges some principals such as Mr Mpiyakhe and Mr Ntshangase tried some strategies to overcome them. Their strategies entailed involving the teachers in decision-making, sending teachers sharing the same subjects to attend courses, encourage teachers and to give positive appraisal for the good work they have done.

The findings also show that Mr Ndlovu did not have any strategies to deal with the challenges. That may be due to a number of factors that he did not share. Perhaps he was frustrated and overwhelmed by the challenges. His lack of action raised a number of questions such as the following: Did he really understand what professional learning communities is all about? Has he forgotten that challenges need to be dealt with? Did he experience any challenge or did he not? Could it be that this principal lacked bold leadership despite his claims that he had benefitted from ACE School leadership programme? Unfortunately, these questions were never addressed during the course of the study. What is evident is that collectively principals in the study made attempts to address the challenges they faced with the apparent exception of this principal.

There is evidence that by implementing these strategies, it showed that the principals wanted to eliminate any obstacles which appeared to hinder them from promoting professional learning communities. More details about what the principals did and perceived effects thereof can be found in Section 4.8 and Section 4.9 of Chapter Four.

5.4 Recommendations

This study has made two sets of recommendations: recommendations directed to the Secondary school principals and recommendations directed to the researchers.

5.4.1 Recommendations directed at the Secondary school principals

The findings of the study revealed that the principals while all three participants were not fully involved in promoting professional learning communities, when they were faced with challenges not all three showed eagerness to address them. The study has also found that

principals faced a number of challenges which were caused by the teachers' behaviour. It is therefore recommended that firstly, principals need to continuously engage with the debates and discussions regarding the concept of professional learning communities. They need to be more involved in these professional learning communities for instance, attending some of the professional development sessions that take place in their various departments or phases and by also making sure that teachers meet to talk about their professional issues. They need to try and convince teachers about the importance of professional learning communities. They need to promote that teachers need to network with other schools because only one participant who was promoting networking in his school the other two did not. I promote that further research on how can principals improve their ways of promoting professional learning communities can be achieved.

5.4.2 Recommendations directed at the researchers

The findings show that some principals are not fully involved in promoting professional learning communities in their schools. It is recommended that a research should be conducted that focuses on perceptions of teachers about promoting professional learning communities in schools. The researcher also needs to do a research on results or improvements after promoting professional learning communities.

5.5 Chapter summary

The chapter begins by providing a summary of the entire study and the findings which are organised under the research questions. It has presented findings and made recommendations that are directed to the school principals and the research community.

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APPENDIX: A

REQUEST PERMISSION LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

445 Effingham Road

Effingham Heights

4051

15 April 2014

The Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I, Mrs N. Mhlanga presently studying towards a Master's of Education degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal kindly request permission to conduct a research at your school. I am in the process of conducting a research for my dissertation titled: **Perceptions of principals on promoting professional learning communities: A case study of three principals**. I therefore humbly request you to grant me permission to conduct research at your school. Since the study focus on understanding principals' perceptions, it will be highly appreciated if you would agree to participate in this study. The identity of a participant will be protected. We will hold interviews at the time and date that is convenience to you, approximately 30- 45 minutes. Participation is voluntary and the participant will be free to withdraw at any point without any negative consequences. I undertake to uphold the autonomy of participants. Participants will be asked to complete a consent form. In the interest of the participants feedback will be given to them during and at the end of the study. The interview will be voice recorded. Data and all documents will be incinerated once the study has been completed and submitted.

The information will be treated with the strictest of confidentiality and will be used for the purpose of the study.

For more information and any questions about this study, you may contact me as follows:

Cell: 0722594865

Email: nontuthuzelomhlanga@gmail.com

My supervisor's details:

Dr T. T. Bhengu

College of Humanities

School of Education

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Tel no: (031) 260 3534, Fax: (031) 260 1598

Email: bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za

Officials in our research office:

Ms P. Ximba

HSSREC UKZN Research Office

Tel no: (031) 260 3587

Email: ximba@ukzn.ac.za

Thanking you

Yours in Education

.....^{AP} 16.05.2014

Mrs N. Mhlanga

APPENDIX: B

Mrs N. Mhlanga

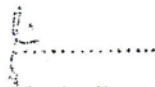
RE- PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Your letter seeking permission to conduct research in our school has a reference. Permission is hereby granted on the condition that it will not disturb our teaching and learning programme. I fully understand the contents of your letter, I agree to my school's participation in the study. Your assurance of confidentiality and anonymity is acknowledged and appreciated.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you well and success in your studies.

Thank you

Yours Faithfully


Principal)

Mrs N. Mhlanga

RE- PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Your letter seeking permission to conduct research in our school has a reference. Permission is hereby granted on the condition that it will not disturb our teaching and learning programme. I fully understand the contents of your letter, I agree to my school's participation in the study. Your assurance of confidentiality and anonymity is acknowledged and appreciated.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you well and success in your studies.

Thank you

Yours Faithfully

Mrs N. Mhlanga

RE- PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Your letter seeking permission to conduct research in our school has a reference. Permission is hereby granted on the condition that it will not disturb our teaching and learning programme. I fully understand the contents of your letter, I agree to my school's participation in the study. Your assurance of confidentiality and anonymity is acknowledged and appreciated.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you well and success in your studies.

Thank you

Yours Faithfully

(Principal)

APPENDIX: C

LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

445 Effingham Road
Effingham Heights
4051
15 April 2014

The Principal

Dear Participant

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Nontuthuzelo Mhlanga, I am a Master student studying at the University of KwaZulu- Natal, Edgewood campus. As part of my degree requirement, I am conducting a research. The title of the research project is: **Perceptions of principals' about promoting professional learning communities: A case study of three principals.** To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interview may last for about 1 hour and may be split depending on your preference.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for the purposes of the research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalised for taking such an action.
- The research aims at knowing the perceptions of principals about promoting professional learning communities.

- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- The interview will be recorded using audio equipment.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment: Audio equipment or visual equipment.

For more information and any questions about this study, you may contact me at:

Cell: 0722594865 or Email: nontuthuzelomhlanga@gmail.com

My supervisor: Dr T. T. Bhengu. Tel no: (031) 260 3534 or Fax: (031) 260 1598, or Email: bhenguti@ukzn.ac.za or

Officials in our research office: Ms P. Ximba, (HSSREC UKZN Research Office) Tel: (031) 260 3587, Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

I hope this letter will find your favourable consideration.

DECLARATION

I (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. In addition, I hereby consent to have this interview recorded and also for you to use any photographic equipment as your study requires.

Signature

16.05.2014

Date

- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- The interview will be recorded using audio equipment.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment: Audio equipment or visual equipment.

For more information and any questions about this study, you may contact me at:

Cell: 0722594865 or Email: nontuthuzelomhlanga@gmail.com

My supervisor: Dr T. T. Bhengu. Tel no: (031) 260 3534 or Fax: (031) 260 1598, or Email: bhenguti@ukzn.ac.za or

Officials in our research office: Ms P. Ximba, (HSSREC UKZN Research Office) Tel: (031) 260 3587, Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

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.....
Signature

16.05.2014
.....
Date

- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- The interview will be recorded using audio equipment.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment: Audio equipment or visual equipment.

For more information and any questions about this study, you may contact me at:

Cell: 0722594865 or Email: nontuthuzelomhlanga@gmail.com

My supervisor: Dr T. T. Bhengu. Tel no: (031) 260 3534 or Fax: (031) 260 1598, or Email: bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za or

Officials in our research office: Ms P. Ximba, (HSSREC UKZN Research Office) Tel: (031) 260 3587, Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

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I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. In addition, I hereby consent to have this interview recorded and also for you to use any photographic equipment as your study requires.

.....
Signature

16.05.2014
.....
Date

APPENDIX: D

Interview guide for Principals

Topic Perceptions of principals on promoting professional learning communities.
Professional learning communities (PLCs) that when educators work together towards a shared purpose to improve professional learning communities.

1. What are your perceptions on promoting professional learning communities?

Probes:

- . Role played by the principal
- . Encouraging forming of PLCs
- . Supporting

2. Why do you promote PLCs the way that you do?
3. What challenges do you experience and how do you deal with them when promoting professional learning communities?
4. Does attending ACE Leadership Course assist on promoting PLCs in your school?
Please elaborate.
5. In what way has the ACE Leadership Course assist you on promoting PLCs in your school?
6. If a principal did not attend the ACE Leadership Course do you think promoting professional learning communities could be successful? Please explain.

Second draft clean dissertation

Originality

Question

10%

Match Overview

- 1 Carol Mullen. "The Prin...
Publication

- 2 www.aibusiness.com
Internet source

- 3 www.educationcollab.org
Internet source

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- pharmatrust.com
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- 6 Steyn, G. M., "Creating...."
Publication

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