



**THE RELATIONS BETWEEN PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP STYLES AND  
LEARNER PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN CAPE TOWN  
IN THE WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE**

by

**Brandon Arendse**

**A full dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of Master in Education**

**Presented to the Faculty of Education and Social Sciences at the Cape  
Peninsula University of Technology**

July 2022

Supervisors: **Prof Zayd Waghid**  
**Dr Heather Phillips**

## **DECLARATION**

I, **Brandon Arendse**, declare that the contents of this dissertation represent my own unaided work, and that the dissertation has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

B.Arendse

15 July 2022

**Sign**

**Date**

## **ABSTRACT**

Post-apartheid South Africa has seen a significant shift in decision-making at public schools. While education reform by the government was necessary for addressing the imbalances between affluent and historically disadvantaged schools in the country, learners' academic success remains alarmingly low at less affluent schools. This poor academic performance has been linked to the quality of principals' leadership practices. As a leader, the principal performs critical functions in facilitating a school's academic development and output. Yet there is a paucity of empirical research on the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance in South African schools. Notably, literature on the role of the principal in addressing poor learner academic performance remains inadequate. It is for this reason that this study investigates the leadership styles currently employed by principals to address learners' academic performance. This is a qualitative research study with a case study design. The case selected comprised two ( $n=2$ ) public high schools situated in the Western Cape province of South Africa. Principals and members of the school management teams (SMT) were selected through purposive sampling because of their particular knowledge of the phenomenon. Once all the data collected from interviews had been transcribed, inductive analysis was applied using Fullan's (2002) "Leadership in a culture of change" framework to identify emerging patterns. The findings suggested that the principal does indeed play a role in the academic success of learners, by employing a particular repertoire of leadership styles to address the shortcomings of himself, the staff and the learners. Further research with a bigger sample is required, however, to gain more in-depth insights into the relations between a principal's leadership style and academic performance in South African schools.

**Key words:** Leadership, leadership styles, academic performance, CPTD, curriculum delivery.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I give praise to **God** for providing me with the wisdom to conduct this research study.

- **Dr Heather Phillips**, the role you took upon yourself during this journey truly motivated me to complete the study. The compassion you showed towards me and your invaluable insights into the phenomenon investigated are forever embedded in my relationship with you. Dr Phillips, I will never be able to express my gratitude towards you, but know that I deeply appreciate the time you put aside for this study. Thank you that I could call you at any time of the day or night to cry, to laugh or to share exciting news regarding the study. I distinctly remember meeting with you for the first time to discuss the project and you gave me homework. I look back now with amusement, but that homework made such a valuable contribution to our journey. Dr Phillips, thank you for your time, love, endurance and knowledge. I am eternally grateful.
- **Prof Zayd Waghid**, thank you for your valuable contributions to completing this study. I will always remember how you were never satisfied with the state of the proposal, and this I only really understood when coming to write up the thesis. I am eternally grateful for the manner in which you moulded me into a researcher. You always encouraged me to critically discuss and analyse the data we worked with. Thank you for sharing your insights with me, which were all much appreciated.
- **Prof Johannes Cronje**, thank you for your TERPS classes and many insights into the structure of this thesis.
- My mother, **Gelonda Arendse**, thank you for always scheduling your life around my education. Throughout my schooling career, you have been my

biggest supporter. Thank you for always showing an interest in my studies. Thank you for the love and support. Mother, you are valued.

- My aunt, **Priscilla van Aarde**, your continuous financial contributions to my studies alleviated stress, allowing me to focus on what was important. I will never be able to thank you enough.
- My fiancé, **Chadley Davids**, thank you for your patience. You have been my biggest supporter since day one. I love and appreciate you.
- My best friend, **Melitta Adams**, we have journeyed far and long, thank you for the role you played since the inception of our B.Ed. degree through to the completion of the Master's degree. You are valued.
- **Zelda Davids** and **Deidre Layman**, thank you so much for always taking the time to ask me how the study was coming along and for listening to my crazy ideas. I cannot thank you enough for your interest, which truly contributed to the completion of this thesis.
- **Nobandla Malawu**, your friendship and valuable inputs from Honours right through the completion of the Master's degree are valued. Thank you.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my brother, **Nevron Meyer**. Because of you, my initial studies started at The University of the Western Cape. I distinctly remember the day I received an acceptance letter into the B.Ed. programme, unaware that you had applied on my behalf. I am eternally grateful to you. May this thesis present you with motivation to complete your own studies. And may this dedication act as a catalyst for you to achieve all your heart's desires. You deserve all the praise that comes your way. Thank you so very much.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	<b>x</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Background of the study .....	1
1.3 The importance of the study .....	3
1.4 The approach to the study .....	4
1.5 Problem statement .....	6
1.6 The research question and sub-questions .....	6
1.7 The aims and objectives of the study .....	6
1.8 Clarification of key terms .....	6
1.8.1 Leadership .....	6
1.8.2 Leadership styles .....	7
1.8.3 Public high school .....	7
1.8.4 Quintile ranking .....	7
1.9 Limitations to the study .....	7
1.10 Assumptions of the study .....	7
1.11 Organisation of the thesis .....	8
1.11.1 Chapter 1: Orientation of the study .....	8
1.11.2 Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework .....	8
1.11.3 Chapter 3: Methodology of the study .....	8
1.11.4 Chapter 4: Results and discussion .....	8
1.11.5 Chapter 5: Discussion, recommendations and conclusion .....	8
1.12 Chapter Summary .....	8
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework</b> .....	<b>9</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	9
2.2 Current conceptual understandings of leadership .....	10
2.3 The principal as a leader .....	11
2.4 Relations between leadership styles and learner performance .....	14
2.4.1 Bureaucratic leadership style .....	15
2.4.2 Transformational leadership style .....	15

2.4.3 Participative leadership style.....	16
2.4.4 Laissez-Faire leadership style.....	17
2.4.5 Instructional Leadership .....	18
2.4.6 Transactional leadership style.....	18
2.4.7 A combination of instructional and transformational leadership .....	19
2.5 Values-driven strategies that can be used to make leadership more effective in the improvement of learners' academic achievements .....	19
2.6 Leadership and continuing professional teacher development .....	20
2.7 Leadership and curriculum management .....	22
2.8 Leadership and learner assessment.....	23
2.9 Leading the curriculum during Covid-19.....	24
2.10 Theoretical framework .....	27
<b>CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>31</b>
3.1 Introduction and pictorial overview of the research process.....	31
3.2 Research Paradigm .....	33
3.3 Research approach.....	34
3.3.1 Case study.....	34
3.4 Site selection .....	36
3.5 Participant selection .....	37
3.6 Data collection .....	39
3.6.1 Pre-testing of the data collection methods .....	39
3.6.2 Focus-group interviews .....	41
3.6.3 Semi-structured interviews.....	42
3.7 Data Analysis .....	43
3.8 Trustworthiness .....	46
3.8.1 Credibility .....	46
3.8.2 Transferability .....	46
3.8.3 Dependability .....	46
3.8.4 Confirmability .....	47
3.8.5 Triangulation .....	47
3.9 The researcher's position.....	48
3.10 Ethical considerations .....	48
3.10.1 Minimising risks .....	48
3.10.2 Respecting autonomy.....	48
3.10.3 Protecting the privacy of the participants .....	49
3.10.4 Offering reciprocity.....	49



3.10.5 Equal treatment .....	49
3.11 Limitations of the study .....	50
3.12 Chapter summary.....	50
<b>CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>51</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	51
4.2 Research sub-question 1.....	53
4.2.1 Perceptions of a successful school .....	53
4.2.2 Contributing factors that resulted in the academic success of a school .....	56
4.2.3 Leadership styles identified in the selected public high schools.....	61
4.3 Research sub-question 2.....	66
4.3.1 Views of CPTD under the current leadership.....	67
4.3.2 Negative attitudes towards the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS)..	72
4.3.3 Mandatory CPTD during the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak.....	74
4.4 Research sub-question 3.....	76
4.4.1 The hierarchy .....	77
4.4.2 Support provided to novice teachers to deliver the curriculum effectively .....	79
4.5 Chapter summary.....	<b>82</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS.....</b>	<b>83</b>
5.1 Discussion.....	<b>83</b>
5.1.1 Leadership in relation to holistic development.....	84
5.1.2 Relationship building.....	85
5.1.3 Leadership styles perceived .....	86
5.1.4 Knowledge creation .....	88
5.1.5 Vertical structures monitoring and assessing successful curriculum delivery .....	90
5.2 Limitations of the study .....	91
5.2.1 Timeframe .....	91
5.2.2 Gatekeepers' trust.....	91
5.3 Recommendations .....	92
5.3.1 Recommendations for principals at schools with poor learner academic performance .....	92
5.3.2 Recommendations to WCED and DBE.....	92
5.3.3 Recommendations for further research .....	93
5.4 Chapter summary.....	93
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>APPENDIXES .....</b>	<b>113</b>
Appendix A:.....	113

Interview schedule (principal) .....	113
Appendix B: .....	114
Interview schedule (SMT) .....	114
Appendix C: .....	115
Letter requesting permission to conduct research at school .....	115
Appendix D: .....	117
Ethical clearance from WCED .....	117
Appendix E: .....	118
Ethical clearance from CPUT .....	118
Appendix F: .....	119
Sample of transcribed interview .....	119

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**ATP:** Annual Teaching Plan

**CPUT:** Cape Peninsula University of Technology

**CPTD:** Continuing Professional Teacher Development

**DBE:** Department of Basic Education

**DoE:** Department of Education

**4<sup>th</sup>IR:** Fourth Industrial Revolution

**HOD:** Head of Department

**HR:** Human Resources

**ICT:** Information Communication and Technology

**IQMS:** Integrated Quality Management System

**MLQ:** Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

**NSC:** National Senior Certificate

**PD:** Professional Development

**PIRLS:** Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

**QMS:** Quality Management System

**SASP:** South African Standard for Principalship

**SIP:** School Improvement Plan

**SMT:** School Management Team

**SSA:** Sub-Saharan Africa

**TIMSS:** Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies

**WCED:** Western Cape Education Department

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This thesis was inspired by my involvement in the education sector over the past three years. During this time, I have constantly been aware of the need for a paradigm shift on the part of principals at historically disadvantaged schools to enact change in order to promote and maintain good academic performance among their learners. Because of this, I enrolled in a short course that focused primarily on aspiring school leaders. My completion of the course and my experience resulted in my appointment as Grade Head and in this way becoming actively involved in leading and managing a school. As an experienced educator and a catalyst for change, I was able to frame this study by drawing on the work of Fullan (2002) on “Principals as leaders in a culture of change”. The theoretical underpinning of Fullan's framework is the idea that, for principals to have a sustainable approach to leading schools, they should be prepared to enact change. Fullan (2002) introduces five indispensable elements (moral purpose, relationship building, coherence making, understanding change and knowledge creation) that principals should adopt to embrace a culture of change, which in turn should lead to academic success for learners. This theoretical orientation provides the point of departure for the present investigation of the relationship between principals' leadership styles and learner performance in public high schools in the Western Cape.

### **1.2 Background of the study**

Apartheid in South Africa was internationally infamous, as were the social and economic hardships experienced by most people of colour during that era (Johnson, 2004). Post-apartheid South Africa faced the challenge of overcoming the consequences of discriminatory laws and practices inflicted upon the country and its people for decades. According to the Natives Land Act of 1913, the Native Affairs Act of 1920 and the Native Urban Act of 1923, white citizens of the country were able to choose in which communities they preferred to work and live, while the other South African races were given designated areas in which to live and work. These Acts, according to Moloji (2007), had long-lasting effects on education and its social infrastructure in South Africa. Their effects included ineffective leadership at South African public schools, especially at historically disadvantaged schools (Johnson,

2004; Moloji, 2007). In the education systems of sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries more generally, a substantial portion of the academic day – 25 per cent or more – is lost as a result of principals' ineffective leadership practices (Nsubuga, 2008; Kirori & Dickinson, 2020).

Since the demise of apartheid, there has been extensive educational reform to address the imbalances between affluent and historically disadvantaged schools in South Africa. Unfortunately, learners' academic success remains at an alarmingly low level at less affluent schools (Wills & Hofmeyr, 2019). In the international context, the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS, 2015) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2015) rank South Africa second to last in Mathematics and last in Literacy in the world. In South Africa, the 2019 National Senior Certificate (NSC) school report confirms that of the 6 854 schools that participated in the NSC examinations, 58 high schools scored between zero and 29 per cent and eight of those schools achieved a zero per cent pass rate in the 2019 national examinations. These results highlight the poor performance of learners at these schools.

After the release of the Grade 12 examination results in 2006, certain schools were flagged as not meeting the academic standards of the Department of Education (DoE). Although many factors play a role in the academic performance of schools, the exam results were directly linked to principals and their leadership approach (Goddard et al., 2010; Branch et al., 2013). The DoE emphasised that good principalship leads to good academic results (Van der Westhuizen & Van Vuuren, 2007).

Numerous researchers have noted that a principal has both a direct and an indirect influence on the performance and effectiveness of a school (Nir & Hameiri, 2014; Sebastian et al., 2017; Arif et al., 2019; Bafadal et al., 2020). Bellibaş (2015) identifies as a direct influence a principal who sets goals with learners when doing regular classroom visits. An indirect influence is exerted by a principal who creates a disciplined school climate conducive to learning.

Globally, there is an ongoing debate about principals and their leadership in supporting education's primary goal of teaching and learning to improve the academic performance of learners (Naicker & Mestry, 2013). Leadership is a dynamic process characterised by constant change and progress (Nsubuga, 2008; Isundwa, 2015).

Education reform in South Africa has to capture this dynamism in addressing poor academic performance by emphasising improvement in leadership in South African schools (Naicker & Mestry, 2013; Mosoge et al., 2018; Naidoo, 2019; Setlhodi, 2020). According to Nsubuga (2008) and Isundwa (2015), the principal is not only concerned with the school's daily tasks but also actively seeks collaboration between all stakeholders to achieve the school's goals within a particular context. Within this context, leadership pursues effective school performance while reinforcing moral purpose, coherence and relationship building (Fullan, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

It is, however, important to note that the Department of Education (DoE) serves communities in South Africa that are faced with inordinate hardships such as violence, poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. Despite the generally poor results produced by schools serving these communities (Wills & Hofmeyr, 2019), many of them manage to produce excellent results, overcoming the immediate challenges faced by their learners daily (Jacobson et al., 2005; Kamper, 2008).

Although the success of learners stems from multi-dimensional factors, and given that it is difficult to measure the influence of a principal on the academic performance of learners, it is clear in such cases that the principal as leader has contributed to their school's academic achievement by fostering positivity and improvement (Grissom, 2011; Day et al., 2016). Therein lies the importance of this study.

### **1.3 The importance of the study**

Research on leadership in schools in the South African context is very limited. According to Bush et al. (2006) and Grissom (2011), the available literature on leadership is not "conceptually rich", and the art of leadership needs to be explored within a specifically South African context. Hoadley et al. (2009) also note that knowledge regarding the successful management and delivery of the curriculum in South African schools is insubstantial. Although there are policies, guidelines and frameworks for principals outlining their duties, these do not provide concrete information about how they should lead to improve academic results in South African schools and maintain them.

The literature indicates that, in terms of academic performance, leadership is second only to teaching and learning (Ouma et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Tan, 2018). Nevertheless, the characteristics of the principal's leadership role and the nature of the influence he or she has on academic performance remain unclear (Liu & Bellibas, 2018). The purpose of this study is thus to contribute to the body of knowledge about school leadership, particularly about how principals address the academic performance of learners at South African public high schools.

Researchers have made significant contributions to knowledge about educational management and leadership (Leithwood et al., 2006; Hallinger & Heck, 2011; Hallinger & Bryant, 2013; Hallinger, 2018). The available literature arguably highlights "what we know, what we think we know and what we do not know" about educational leadership (Hallinger, 2018). Yet the literature is patchy, especially in terms of geographical reach. The vast majority of the literature has a Western, notably American, background (Mertkan et al., 2016; Khalifa et al., 2019). It is within this context that I decided to investigate the relationship between principals' leadership styles and learner performance at South African schools, specifically in the Western Cape province.

#### **1.4 The approach to the study**

This qualitative research study was informed by an interpretive paradigm, thus allowing the researcher to view the world through the participants' experiences (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). A case study research design was used to provide an in-depth study of the research problem, as opposed to a sweeping statistical survey or comprehensive comparative inquiry. A case study design is often used to narrow down a vast research field to one or more easily researchable examples (Munhall, 2001; Thomas, 2015; Park et al., 2018). It is a sound research design when not much is known about an issue or phenomenon (Polit & Beck, 2004). The case study research design in this study sought to ascertain how principals' current leadership styles are addressing poor learner academic performance.

Qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live (Durrheim, 2006). The approach involves collecting empirical data through interviews in which individuals describe personal experiences and how they make meaning from them (Klenke,

2008). A qualitative case study explores a phenomenon within its context, typically using a variety of data sources: the present study obtained data from principals and members of the school management teams at the schools concerned. This ensured that the issue was explored through a variety of lenses that allowed multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Burns & Grove, 2001). Merriam (2009) believes that case study research can discover new meaning, extend knowledge or confirm what is known. Case study research is more concrete and contextual than comparable forms of research (Merriam, 2009).

All South African public schools are categorised into five groups known as quintiles, mainly for financial and resource purposes. Quintile one (Q1) is the poorest while quintile five (Q5) is classified as affluent. I collected data from two schools serving disadvantaged communities, with exceptional results. Quintile one to three schools were deliberately selected because principals' leadership style in addressing poor learner academic performance should not be influenced by the school's financial status.

I contacted each school telephonically, informing the principal about an email sent requesting permission to use the school as the site and the principal and school management team (SMT) as participants in the study. The letter attached to the email provided a detailed explanation as to why I purposively selected the schools, the importance of the study, as well as the impact the research could have on school leadership and academic performance. I also provided the principals with the ethical clearance obtained from Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) and the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), together with the research proposal.

After I had conducted pre-interviews with the principals, as dated in the data collection discussion in Chapter 3, Table 3.3, the principals introduced me to the SMTs so that I could inform them about their role as participants in the study. The participants were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix D). I emphasised the confidentiality clause, that their identities would be protected, and that they would be allowed to withdraw from the study at any time.



## **1.5 Problem statement**

Despite measures put in place by the South African government to eliminate imbalances in South African public high schools, learner academic progress remains alarmingly low. The study therefore aims to respond to the following central question:

## **1.6 The research question and sub-questions**

- What is the relationship between principals' leadership styles and learners' performance in public high schools in Cape Town?

In pursuit of the main question, the following sub-questions are asked:

- Which leadership styles do the principals in these public high schools employ?
- How do the principals, through their leadership styles, assess and support curriculum delivery by the SMTs?
- How are current leadership styles in these public high schools promoting professional development?

## **1.7 The aims and objectives of the study**

The main aim of the research is to understand the relationship between the leadership styles employed by principals and learners' performance.

Consequently, the objectives of the research include the following:

- To establish the leadership styles employed by principals in selected public high schools to address poor learner performance;
- To establish how the principals, through their leadership styles, assess and support the curriculum delivery through the SMT;
- To establish if and how principals' current leadership styles in these public high schools are promoting professional development.

## **1.8 Clarification of key terms**

### **1.8.1 Leadership**

Leadership in the context of education can be described as principals influencing their staff body to achieve a common goal (Rizi et al., 2013); that is, leadership provides direction and motivates staff members to achieve the school's goals (Rizi et al., 2013).

### 1.8.2 Leadership styles

According to Jamal (2014), a leadership style is what the principal espouses and chooses to employ at a school. It is the framework the leader uses to make decisions, and it is usually sustained until s/he has achieved his or her goals and objectives.

### 1.8.3 Public high school

The South African Schools Act (SASA)(Department of Education, 1996) categorised the schools in the country as either public or independent. According to the SASA (1996), all public schools are controlled by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and are funded according to the quintile ranking.

### 1.8.4 Quintile ranking

The quintile ranking is based on the financial status of the community, where the school is situated as well as the unemployment and literacy rate of the community it serves. Quintile one comprises the poorest schools while quintile five embraces the wealthiest schools in South Africa. Based on the ranking of the school, the government allocates funding to meet the needs of the school and the learners (Van Dyk & White, 2019).

## **1.9 Limitations to the study**

I was aware of certain limitations that I experienced during the completion of the study. Due to the time frame that the WCED stipulated for data collection, I was able to investigate only high schools in the Northern District of the Western Cape Province. This was a limitation in that the site excluded the other seven districts in the Western Cape. One of the schools requested a change in dates and times for the interviews to take place. I had to make adjustments to accommodate the participants, which presented itself as a limitation because I am a full-time educator.

## **1.10 Assumptions of the study**

An assumption was made that the principals are aware of the type or style of leadership they employ at their schools. A further assumption was made that the participants had reasonable knowledge about the phenomenon being investigated and that they would be able to provide rich information about it. It was also assumed that, upon my request, all the principals would grant me permission to collect data at their schools.

## **1.11 Organisation of the thesis**

### **1.11.1 Chapter 1: Orientation of the study**

Chapter 1 introduces the motivation for and background of the study. It discusses the importance, context and approach of the study. Chapter 1 also presents the purpose of the research, research question and sub-questions as well as its aims and objectives. Chapter 1 concludes by providing clarification of key terms utilised, and outlining some of the study's limitations and assumptions.

### **1.11.2 Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework**

Chapter 2 interrogates relevant literature about leadership, leadership styles, the academic performance of learners and professional development. The chapter is synthesised via the theoretical framework of Fullan (2002).

### **1.11.3 Chapter 3: Methodology of the study**

Chapter 3 provides a more detailed account of the research approach, commencing with a pictorial overview of the methodological process. It discusses the research design and research questions, the research approach, methodology and design, the data collection instruments as well as the process of analysing the data. The chapter further examines aspects of trustworthiness and other ethical matters.

### **1.11.4 Chapter 4: Results and discussion**

Chapter 4 presents and discusses the research results. The data collected at the schools was transcribed and coded to create themes for presentation and discussion.

### **1.11.5 Chapter 5: Discussion, recommendations and conclusion**

Chapter 5 provides a critical discussion of the data, presents conclusions and makes recommendations for further research into the phenomenon.

## **1.12 Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided the introduction to the thesis as well as the necessary background, foregrounding the foundation of the study. The chapter further provided the problem statement, the research questions and its aims and concluded with the organisation of the thesis. The next chapter I discuss relevant literature pertinent to the study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter introduced the purpose of this study and provided some necessary background. The objective of the research is to ascertain the relationship between the leadership styles of principals and learner academic performance in selected schools in the Western Cape province of South Africa. To achieve this, it is necessary, first, to establish the leadership styles employed by principals in selected public high schools to address learner academic performance; secondly, to establish how the principals, through their leadership styles, assess and support the delivery of the curriculum; third, to explore how principals' current leadership styles in these schools are promoting professional development; and lastly, to investigate the relationship between the principals' leadership styles and learner academic performance.

This chapter is thus thematically mapped out to satisfy the objectives of the study. According to Parris and Peachey (2013), mapping out literature thematically is an effective way to explore the legacy of research. The chapter will critically discuss aspects of leadership and define leadership within the context of the thesis. In addition, the chapter will discuss leadership in relation to the delivery of the curriculum and professional development, drawing on the repertoire of current leadership styles that a principal can employ to address the academic performance of learners. Drawing these topics together is a framework derived from Fullan (2002), "Principals as leaders in a culture of change". Because the literature review is mapped out thematically, the chapter is arranged under the following sub-headings:

- 2.2 Current conceptual understandings of leadership
- 2.3 The principal as a leader
- 2.4 Relationship between leadership styles and learner performance
- 2.5 Factors contributing to the effectiveness of a school
- 2.6 Leadership and professional development
- 2.7 Leadership and curriculum delivery
- 2.8 Leading curriculum delivery and professional development during Covid-19
- 2.9 Theoretical framework

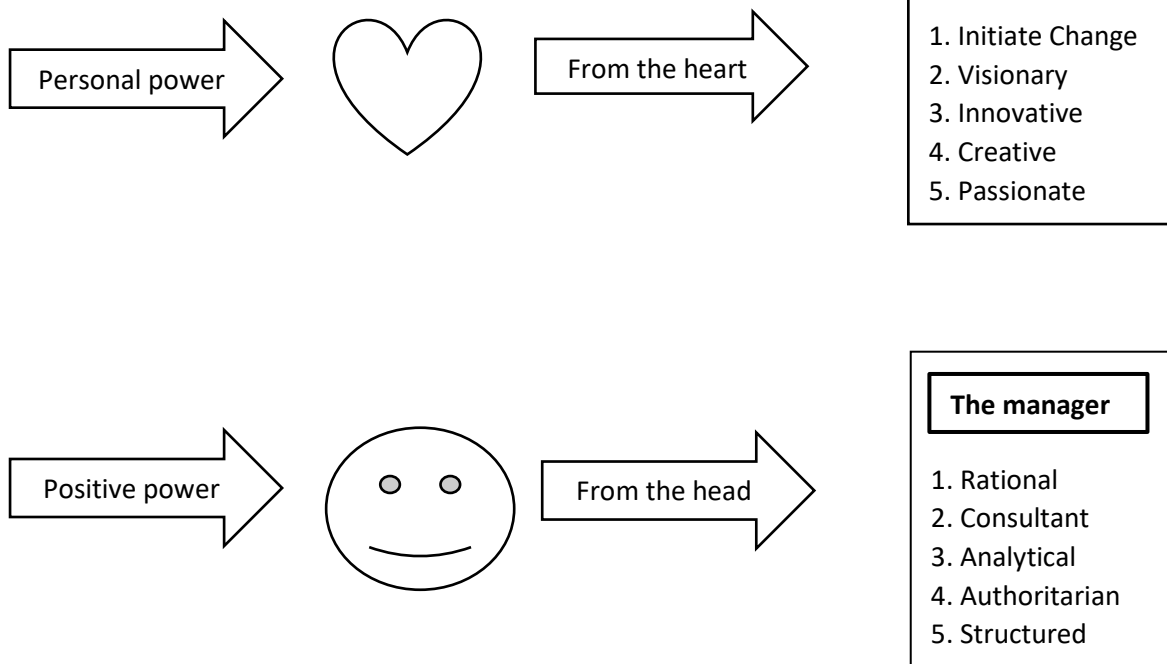
- 2.10 Summary

## **2.2 Current conceptual understandings of leadership**

In the past decade, leadership has gained much attention in both national and international educational contexts (Amanchukwa, 2015). There are many reasons for this, but the chief seems to be a dominant focus on deepening and strengthening the performative cultures of schools as well as meeting the developmental needs of both the teachers and learners (Korumaz, 2016; Miller, 2018).

There are many conceptualisations of the term leadership. Adams et al. (2017) argue that definitions of leadership are subjective: there is no one correct definition, and the concept should rather be defined relative to a specific context. Connolly et al. (2016) define leadership as a practice of having the authority to influence others, predominantly derived from hierarchical relationships. In an educational context, Costello (2017) observes that although successful leadership is a complex process, it can straightforwardly be defined as anything a leader does to improve teaching and learning. Leithwood et al. (2020) emphasise the importance of leadership by noting that it is regarded as second only to teaching and learning in terms of its contribution to academic success. They draw on evidence from a range of empirical sources, such as qualitative case studies of successful leaders, large-scale quantitative research on the effects of leadership on learners' achievements, as well as both negative and positive factors contributing to leadership's effect on learner success. Leithwood et al. (2020) claimed that leadership has a significant effect on teaching and learning practices, defining it as assisting teacher performance in terms of beliefs, values, motivation, skills and knowledge. Although there are differences in emphasis, scholars agree that successful leadership revolves around the primary goal of education, which is teaching and learning (Connolly et al., 2016; Costello, 2017; Leithwood et al., 2020). The definitions they have formulated provide insight into the relationship between principals' leadership styles and learner academic performance by unpacking leadership in relation to professional development and curriculum delivery. Before scrutinising the role of the principal as a leader rather than a manager, the essential differences between the two roles are usefully summarised in the Figure below.

**Figure 2.1: Qualities of the leader versus a manager**



Source: Naylor (1999), cited by Amanchukwa et al. (2015)

### **2.3 The principal as a leader**

Although all public schools are controlled by the government in South Africa, the role of the principal has evolved and grown over time (Zuze & Juan, 2020). According to Zuze and Juan (2020), each school is faced with different challenges and operates under different socio-economic conditions. It is thus within a particular context that principals and their school management teams (SMTs) evolve leadership approaches to ensure the success of the school. The literature nevertheless insists that the principal's role as a leader is that of creating an efficient and effective school (Kowalski, 2010; Zepeda, 2013; Naidoo, 2019). To fulfil the role, a principal traditionally performs three integrated functions in a school. First, principals focus on the management of resources such as human and financial resources. Second, as administrators, they are responsible for the day-to-day functionality of the school. Third, as leaders, they pilot the school's vision by continuously striving to improve its performance (Naidoo, 2019). The literature also notes the role of the principal in directly influencing the work ethic of teachers (Nir & Hameiri, 2014; Talebloo, 2015; Andriani et al., 2018) and the academic progress of students (Garza et al., 2014; Bastian & Henry, 2015).

Zepeda (2013) insists that a principal has a clear and specific role as the head of an institution. The South African Department of Basic Education (DBE) has developed a South African Standard for Principals (SASP) (Department of Basic Education, 2015) that thoroughly defines the role of a school principal in addition to listing particular aspects of professionalism required of a principal. The policy aims to provide guidelines for addressing professional leadership and developmental needs. To ensure the quality of education, as well as the overall performance of a school in South Africa, a principal must fulfil the following functions:

**Table 2.1: The SASP comprises 8 key interdependent areas that constitute the core purpose of the principal in any South African context, and which are:**

1. Leading teaching and learning in the schools;
2. Shaping the direction and development of the school;
3. Managing quality and securing accountability;
4. Developing and empowering self and others;
5. Managing the school as an organisation;
6. Working with and for the community;
7. Managing human resources (staff) in the school; and
8. Managing and advocating extra-mural activities.

The SASP (2015) highlights that a principal is responsible not only for leading and managing the school but also for evaluating the curriculum. The policy standard maintains that if its several components are embraced by principals, quality teaching and learning will take place within South African schools.

A principal must have the ability to lead in the here-and-now; this is because the entire schooling system will wait on command and direction from the principal to ensure that teaching and learning remain the primary focus of the school (Zepeda, 2013). Cherkowsk (2016) agrees that a principal is the primary agent in determining a favourable outcome for the institution as well as the implementation of an environment conducive to learning.

Bhatti et al. (2012) claim that to be an effective leader, the principal must regularly pave the path to the desired destination. In other words, the principal as a leader should direct his or her followers to a common goal agreed upon by all the

stakeholders involved. Nir and Hameiri (2014) employed the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) as a research instrument en route to claiming that teachers and their work ethic are influenced by the leadership behaviour of the principal. Nir and Hameiri (2014) argue that an active leadership approach such as the democratic leadership style has a positive effect on school performance, concluding that a school where the principal employs an active leadership style is an effective school. Conversely, the opposite – a *laissez-faire* or passive leadership approach on the part of the principal – resulted in an ineffective and underperforming school.

Garza et al. (2014) conducted a comparable study of educational leadership. They collected data using documented analyses that illustrated school performance. They also employed semi-structured interviews with principals, deputy principals, teachers, parents and learners. The focus of the interviews was perceptions of school success and the contribution of the principal to that success. The data was analysed using a cross-case inductive approach. They found that the principal as a leader indubitably contributed to the success of the school. According to Garza et al. (2014), “parents felt invited, students felt good about themselves, and the teachers felt supported and appreciated”. Moreover, with the leadership of a good principal, the academic achievement of learners was exceptional.

It has been increasingly accepted that good leadership is developed through education, professional development and relevant experience (Amanchukwa et al., 2015; Sudja & Yuesti, 2017). According to Kiori and Dickinson (2020), leadership thus developed is characterised by the influence and direction it provides for the achievement of academic excellence. Yet the discourse on educational leadership has been critiqued by researchers over the years (Leithwood et al., 2004; Christie, 2010; Eacott, 2013; Gunter, 2010; 2015). The objection is that the prevailing concept of school leadership stems largely from a managerial approach with very little concern about the discourse of teaching and learning. This in turn affects the academic performance of learners (Gunter, 2015). Principals are mistakenly seen as managers rather than educational leaders (Lingard et al., 2003).

Leadership development should provide an opportunity for capacity building amongst the principals as leaders, which by definition ought to serve to strengthen a performative culture within schools. However, according to Fullan (2006), Harris



(2010) and Bush (2012), the majority of the reform endeavours of leaders fail because their theories of change lack capacity building.

Although the WCED and the DBE have constructed frameworks and policies like the SASP (2015) to highlight what is expected of a principal as a leader, this is not to say that these expectations are being met. In a study conducted by Mestry (2017) on how principals should lead effectively in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is assumed that principals should know how to enhance their leadership roles. Mestry (2017) purposively sampled 15 principals in three districts in the Gauteng province, and his findings indicate that in South Africa many principals are unaware of the leadership style they should employ to lead a school. According to Bush et al. (2011) and Townsend and MacBeath (2011), South Africa is one of a few countries in the world that does not require principals to have a formal leadership qualification to take on the role of institutional head. This is supported by recent studies conducted by the Department of Basic Education (2014), Bush (2018), and Sepuru and Mohlakwana (2020), which have all decried the fact that no formal training for principalship is needed in South African public schools. But how does a principal's leadership style affect learner performance?

#### **2.4 Relations between leadership styles and learner performance**

While the importance of effective school leadership has been highlighted (Naicker & Mestry, 2013; Day et al., 2016, Leithwood et al., 2020), there is ongoing debate about the leadership style that might be most conducive to addressing learner academic performance (Blom, 2016; Naidoo, 2019; Leithwood et al., 2020). In the South African context, Makgato and Mudzanani (2019) conducted a study exploring the principals' leadership styles and learner educational performance from both high- and low-performing schools in the Limpopo Province. The study employed a qualitative approach in terms of which participants were purposively selected from ten schools based on their performance. Data was collected through focus group interviews with five teachers from each school. The study revealed that to some extent, a principal's leadership style affects educational performance, as the teachers and learners cannot but be indirectly influenced by the approach that the principal chooses to adopt. Below I describe the range of leadership styles a principal can adopt in respect of the academic performance of learners.

#### 2.4.1 Bureaucratic leadership style

Bureaucratic leadership follows the rules attentively, ensuring that the staff always follow procedures accurately (Kalkan, 2016; Fleming, 2020). This leadership style is effective, especially where the safety of both the teachers and learners are concerned, and is beneficial for the routine tasks of a school. However, principals who employ this leadership style restrict themselves from being creative and innovative. This means that the principal will find it difficult to embrace a culture of change to address a school's poor learner academic performance (Kalkan, 2016).

#### 2.4.2 Transformational leadership style

Transformational leadership is built on a system of values and beliefs, in terms of which the leader and the staff empower each other (Smith et al., 2017). The main goal of this approach is to bring about change within largely unquantifiable categories such as heart, vision, insights, understanding, beliefs and values. According to Smith et al. (2017) and Anderson (2017), the result of the approach is that the leader and the staff are valued for their contribution to making a success of the institution.

Allen et al. (2015) conducted a correlational study to determine the relationship between transformational leadership and student achievement. The study employed Multifactor Leadership Questionnaires (MLQ-5x) to determine the degree to which a principal drew on transformational leadership precepts in leading a school, based on the perceptions of the teachers. According to Allen et al. (2015), transformational leadership has an indirect influence on student achievement. The study noted that if the leader instils a system of beliefs, including trust, with and within the staff, teachers as givers of knowledge will go beyond the call of duty and use every opportunity to provide learners with the best teaching and learning experiences.

Conversely, a study conducted by Silva et al. (2011) investigated the direct influence that transformational leaders have on the academic performance of learners. Silva et al. (2011) postulated that if a principal engages in discussion with learners about their potential goals, the learners were more likely to achieve their goals in their assessment tasks. The data suggested that if a principal sets an example by modelling the skills needed to be a successful learner, this will filter down to the learners and improve their academic performance. Parallel to the findings of analyses of specific subjects like Mathematics and English (Robinson et al., 2008; Finnigan & Stewart, 2009), it was

concluded that if a transformational leader instils values such as trust in the skills and instructional methodologies of the teachers, learners will attain or improve their academic performance, albeit indirectly (Silvia et al., 2011).

#### 2.4.3 Participative leadership style

Although democratic leaders allow staff to participate in the decision-making process, they still make the final decision (Adeyemi, 2010; Rossberger & Krause, 2015). The participative leadership style encourages staff to be creative and innovative and be involved in the final decision. According to Rossberger and Krause (2015) and Sagnak (2016), the staff becomes very productive by dint of their involvement. A principal who adopts this style also encourages professional development – ensuring that the staff improve their practice. One of the dangers of participative leadership is that staff members may lack the experience and expertise to make quality inputs (Sagnak, 2016).

Obama et al. (2015) sought to examine principals' leadership styles and learner academic performance in public secondary schools in Kenya. They note that although performance can be measured by a range of factors, the leadership style a principal chooses to adopt plays a vital role in the quality of learners' academic performance. Examining the relationship between participative leadership and the academic performance of learners, Obama et al. (2015) found that because the principals created a platform for teamwork and valued the input of the staff body, the goals of the school were achieved. The study reiterated that participatory leadership provided a sense of unity within the school, which in turn improved the academic results of learners. The results of this study were consistent with the results obtained by other researchers (Okoth, 2000; Kimacia, 2007; Orodho, 2014; Ibrahim & Orodho, 2014) regarding participative leadership and learner academic performance. Obama et al. (2015) concluded their study by noting that schools headed by principals who adopted a more democratic, participatory leadership approach and encouraged teamwork performed remarkably better than schools where principals employed a more autocratic and dictatorial approach.

According to a study by Makgato and Mudzanani (2019) conducted in South African schools, participative leadership was the dominant style among the principals surveyed. Since this pertained to both low- and high-performing schools, the

researchers questioned how learner academic performance could be so different at schools operating under the same leadership approach. The study concluded that although the principal might display a participative style at a low-performing school, s/he was lenient with behavioural issues and the overall conduct of learners and in this way indirectly affected the academic performance of learners (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019).

#### 2.4.4 Laissez-Faire leadership style

Robbins (2007), cited by Chaudhry and Javed (2012), characterises the laissez-faire leadership style as essentially “abdicating responsibility” by avoiding decision-making. This leadership style entails a non-proactive approach to assigned duties. Chaudhry and Javed (2012) note that the style encourages subordinates to make their own decisions, sometimes granting them complete freedom in this regard. A longitudinal study conducted by Wong and Giessner (2012) highlighted that laissez-faire leadership is a passive approach, involving “intervening only when problems become serious” (Bono & Judge, 2004). Another study utilised descriptive correlation as a research design and concluded that the laissez-faire approach offers little to no direction to subordinates (Sedeghi & Pihie, 2012).

According to Dahar et al. (2010), hardworking and dedicated teachers can maintain a good work ethic under a laissez-faire leadership approach, but lazy teachers will not be able to function optimally due to the lack of direction they receive from the principal. Dahar et al. (2010) note that the principal acts according to a “non-interference policy”, which resulted in a positive relationship with certain teachers. One of the respondents in the study noted that under the laissez-faire leadership approach, teachers can leave the school without prior permission, which no doubt suited them, but not necessarily the school. The results showed that even though there was some sort of academic achievement amongst learners, the quality and level of this achievement were inconsistent and generally low. The study concluded by accentuating that there is a significant correlation between the low quality of learner performance and the laissez-faire leadership approach (Dahar et al., 2010).

Similarly, Duze (2012) sampled 120 senior secondary schools in the Delta state of Nigeria to explore the leadership styles of their principals. The study interrogated three basic leadership styles used in the schools and found that the transactional

(autocratic) leadership approach was the most commonly used approach among the principals surveyed (70.03%). The study highlighted that participative (democratic) leadership was the least commonly used approach (8.25%) with the remainder of principals employing a laissez-faire approach (20.25%). The results of the study indicated that the laissez-faire or free-rein approach correlated with the poorest academic results among learners in the schools canvassed.

#### 2.4.5 Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership is one of the recommended leadership approaches listed in the SASP (2015) for the effective management of teaching and learning in South African schools. According to Boyce and Bowers (2018) and Hou et al. (2019), instructional leadership is concerned with providing professional development and managing the curriculum. This style pays particular attention to the school's teachers, its vision and mission, and how learners learn. If a principal adopts instructional leadership as an approach, s/he will have a positive influence on the school climate and teacher satisfaction and commitment (Boyce & Bowers, 2018).

Researchers across the globe have attempted to understand the relationship between instructional leadership and the academic performance of learners (Witziers et al., 2003; Robinson et al., 2008; Scheerens, 2012). According to a study conducted by Heaven and Bourne (2016), there is a statistical correlation between instructional leadership and learner academic performance. The extent of the correlation depends upon the degree to which the principal employs such a leadership style. There might of course be other contributing factors working to improve or impair the academic success of learners, such as parental involvement and background, family income, language barriers, and teaching and learning resources (Farooq et al., 2011; Mphale & Mhlauli, 2014; Waheed et al., 2020).

#### 2.4.6 Transactional leadership style

The transactional leadership style is extensively used in schools across the world (Khan, 2017). Under this leadership style, principals expect teachers to simply obey their instructions (Mahmoud, 2008; Khan, 2017). According to Avci (2015), this approach is based on the staff member's recognition that academic performance is reward in itself. A principal who chooses to employ such a leadership style encourages

staff to execute their role to the best of their ability to ensure that learning is achieved (Mahmoud, 2008; Avci, 2015; Khan, 2017).

#### 2.4.7 A combination of instructional and transformational leadership

Although this survey has presented literature on a range of leadership styles in relation to learner academic success, research increasingly suggests that a combination of instructional leadership and transformational leadership best promotes academic improvement among learners (Valentine & Prater, 2011; Day et al., 2016). This approach involves a principal's embedding strategies to establish and maintain a high standard of academic achievement within the school. Investigating the impact of leadership on student outcomes, Day et al. (2016) provide compelling empirical evidence of how principals directly and indirectly promote learner improvement. Principals were asked which leadership strategies contributed most to the academic success of learners. The findings of the study were that 34.0% of principals encouraged the use of data and research, 27.7% emphasised teaching policies and programmes, 21.1% referred to the importance of school culture, 19.5% pointed to providing and allocating resources, while 18.6% of principals nominated the improvement of assessment procedures. These findings indicate that it is necessary to move beyond the use of one single leadership style. To understand how to make a positive difference in schools and how leadership practices can eliminate alarmingly low academic results, it is necessary to combine instructional and transformational leadership styles (Day et al., 2016; Boberg et al., 2016; Kwan, 2020; Bellibaş et al., 2021).

### **2.5 Values-driven strategies that can be used to make leadership more effective in the improvement of learners' academic achievements**

Worldwide, scholars and policy makers have provided insights into how principal leadership can have both a negative and positive effect on a school, its culture, and, most importantly, the quality of teaching and learning that takes place (Bruggencate et al., 2012; Gu & Johansson, 2013; Day et al., 2016). Although it is difficult to measure the impact of a principal's leadership on the academic performance of learners, it is clear that the academic success of learners is a benchmark for a school being effective or not (Ishimaru, 2013; Day et al., 2016). It is not the only benchmark, however: a school is not successful if it does not promote and instil values to create a holistic

learning environment. The international literature on school leadership concurs that schools succeed both by improving and maintaining academic standards among learners and by promoting positive and pragmatic values such as integrity, moral purpose, relationship building (communities of practice), kindness and trust, to name a few (Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2011; Moos et al., 2012; Day et al., 2016).

According to a study conducted by the International Successful Schools Principals Project (ISSPP), as cited by Ylimaki & Jacobson (2011) and Moos et al. (2012), values are collectively an indispensable factor in explaining why there is such a big gap in the academic performance of certain schools – in the South African case – irrespective of its quintile. According to Louis et al. (2010:9):

Most school variables, considered separately, have only small effects on student learning. To obtain large effects, educators need to create synergy across the relevant variables. Among all the parents, teachers and policy makers who work hard to improve education, educators in leadership positions are uniquely well positioned to ensure the necessary synergy....

Value-driven leadership is uniquely placed to create this synergy of variables to achieve and maintain academic success. One of the variables cited is the importance of continuing professional teacher development. How this fits in with the relationship between a principal's leadership style and learner academic success will be addressed next.

## **2.6 Leadership and continuing professional teacher development**

In South Africa, the educational system is made up of education ministers, heads of department, directors, circuit managers, principals, teachers, learners and various other stakeholders (e.g., teacher unions, parents, community members). While each component plays a vital role in the overall performance of a school, teachers remain pre-eminently responsible for learner achievement (Bayar, 2014) and the most important resource that a principal has at his/her disposal (Calik et al., 2012). To ensure the academic success of learners, sound teaching practices are required, which means that a principal must promote as well as take part in professional development (PD) (Hoppey & Mcleskey, 2013).

Olivier and Wittmann (2019) notes that continuing professional teacher development has a core focus on teacher learning and translating the knowledge of teachers into excellent classroom practices to develop learners. Hammond et al. (2017) endorse Olivier and Wittmann (2019) definition of continuing professional teacher development as structured professional learning with the central purpose of improving learner outcomes.

Within schools, principals are in a unique position to influence the quality of teaching and learning by promoting CPTD (Bredeson, 2006). Since learning is what schools are all about, it is necessary for a principal as a leader to understand how his/her teachers learn and assist them to combat their weaknesses and develop their strengths (Brown & Militello, 2016).

The following aspects are usually addressed in both formal and less formal CPTD programmes (Engelbrecht & Ankiewicz, 2016):

- Equalisation of teachers through the upgrading of academic and professional qualifications, as well as classroom skills and teaching strategies
- Efficiency of classrooms and schools as microcosms through proper management training
- Classroom competence through effective input and subject knowledge, theory, subject methodology and educational philosophy
- Change brought on through curriculum development and CPTD
- Empowerment through action research and teacher initiatives.

Brown and Militello (2016) characterise CPTD as a comprehensive, sustained and intensive set of methods for improving the effectiveness of teachers and principals to enhance school performance. They argue that the principal should take the lead in promoting CPTD amongst teachers to ensure that effective teaching and learning take place. Steyn (2011) and Ovesni et al. (2019) maintain that effective CPTD is rooted in the ability of schools' daily activities to meet both the learners' and the teachers' needs. A principal's leadership approach in respect of CPTD therefore plays a significant role in the quality and performance of the school. Principals should evaluate teachers, identify their needs and create or recruit CPTD programmes to meet these needs and ensure their development.



Steyn (2011) conducted qualitative research to obtain an in-depth understanding of teachers' views on CPTD and the principal's role in enhancing the academic performance of learners. One of the respondents emphasised that teachers need to develop professionally by "engaging in life-long learning", for instance by attending workshops to improve their pedagogical knowledge and classroom practices. The study also found that teachers recommended that principals isolate critical areas for development and address these areas most effectively to improve learner academic performance. Steyn's (2011) study emphasised that the principal, as the leader of the school, is also expected to develop professionally.

In South Africa, it appears that the DBE is well aware of the impact CPTD has on teachers, principals and effective teaching and learning (Okeke & Mpahla, 2016). According to Nozidumo and Mtapuri (2014), the DBE employs a range of CPTD programmes to help teachers and principals improve their content and methodological skills to enhance performance. One of the mandatory processes that the principal oversees is the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), a policy designed by the DBE to help teachers identify their limitations and develop their skills to improve teaching and learning in schools. Nozidumo and Mtapuri (2014) explain that the principal plays a vital role in implementing CPTD through the IQMS process, which highlights the importance of both the development of the teacher and the needs of the school. Through IQMS, teachers can identify their shortcomings and develop their teaching skills (Nozidumo & Mtapuri, 2014).

Although new research is emerging all the time, the literature cited above suggests that for teachers to remain skilled in teaching and learning, leaders need consistently to support teachers by initiating CPTD sessions (Hilliard, 2015). The limited extent of current leadership and professional development programmes in schools suggests that teachers' developmental needs are not being identified (Zepeda et al., 2014; Karacabey, 2021).

## **2.7 Leadership and curriculum management**

According to Barnes et al. (2010), planning is an important activity for a leader. Planning is articulating shared direction and coherent policies, practices, and procedures for realising high standards of learner performance. It helps school leaders

focus on resources, tasks and teachers. Barnes et al. (2010) utilised self-administered questionnaires to ask participant principals to report on their leadership activities for a single day. The study found that principals were able to connect to the “routine activities and decisions made within the school”, in other words, that principals were consciously aware of the day-to-day functionality of the school. The study concluded that set goals for student learning were consistently associated with admirable academic outcomes.

According to the DoE, a strategy to improve school leadership and governance in schools’ policies highlights that planning is an essential aspect of being an effective leader at a South African school. Section 16a of the Education Laws Amendment Act calls for the principal to compose a School Improvement Plan (SIP), responding to reports submitted to the Head of Department on the academic performance of the school. The SIP should be based on data collected for decision-making purposes.

Fullan (2002) and Kurland et al. (2010) maintain that a school’s success depends on its leaders. Principals are responsible for the quality of teaching and the academic success of learners (Kurland et al., 2010). Principals affect academic achievement by creating a school culture conducive to learning through monitoring the content and degree of instruction and learner assessment. This includes manipulating certain school variables, such as class size, learner-to-teacher ratio and learner ability groupings (Dhuey & Smith, 2014).

In a related study, Mestry (2013) investigated principals’ perceptions of their role as leaders in facilitating teaching and learning. Mestry (2013) concludes that if a principal plays an active, ongoing role as an effective leader, learner success will be maintained through curriculum delivery. Mestry (2013) highlights that, for a principal to promote curriculum delivery successfully, he/she must be familiar with effective teaching practices and encourage teachers to model these practices in the classroom.

## **2.8 Leadership and learner assessment**

According to the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU, 2018), assessments are activities undertaken by the teacher to modify teaching and learning activities and adapt their teaching methodologies to meet the learners’ needs. As a leader, a principal must ensure that the assessments used to gauge learners’

learning processes are aligned with the curriculum set out by the DBE and implemented by the teacher (Lunenburg, 2010). Robinson (2010) believes that principals should concern themselves with the quality of the assessments used to measure learners' academic performance. When assessments are well designed and effectively implemented, they can foster positive change in teaching and learning and contribute to learners' academic success (Robinson, 2010).

At the present time, it is necessary to recognise the devastating impact of Covid-19 on schools and the successful delivery of the curriculum.

## **2.9 Leading the curriculum during Covid-19**

When schools are faced with a crisis, the role of the principal is magnified (Direen, 2017; Varela & Fedynich, 2020). This is because the leader needs to make calculated and strategic decisions to preserve, protect and benefit the school and the community that it serves (Valera & Fedynich, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way principals lead throughout the world. Although there is as yet scant literature on the topic, the simple fact is that the pandemic forced schools and their delivery of the curriculum to change rapidly in a short period. The school's community of parents, teachers and learners looked for guidance and support from principals on how to maintain the academic performance of learners in these unprecedented circumstances (Varela & Fedynich, 2020).

Several possible scenarios were explored by educators to maintain academic instruction. These included strict health protocols with reduced class sizes, an adapted teaching and learning model with a routine timetable, and at-home learning incorporating Information Communication and Technology (ICT) (Pollock, 2020; Pollock & Wang, 2020). Each of these possible scenarios presented a novel yet viable approach to the successful delivery of the curriculum (Pollock & Wang, 2020).

Principals were expected not only to draw on their existing skills and expertise to address the task of ensuring that learners completed the curriculum during the crisis, but also to acquire new skills and knowledge to mitigate the challenges that schools faced (Pollock, 2020). The need for new skills and knowledge stemmed from a variety of factors, the most prominent of which was the unknown nature of Covid-19 and the need to consider alternative ways to successfully educate learners amid the outbreak

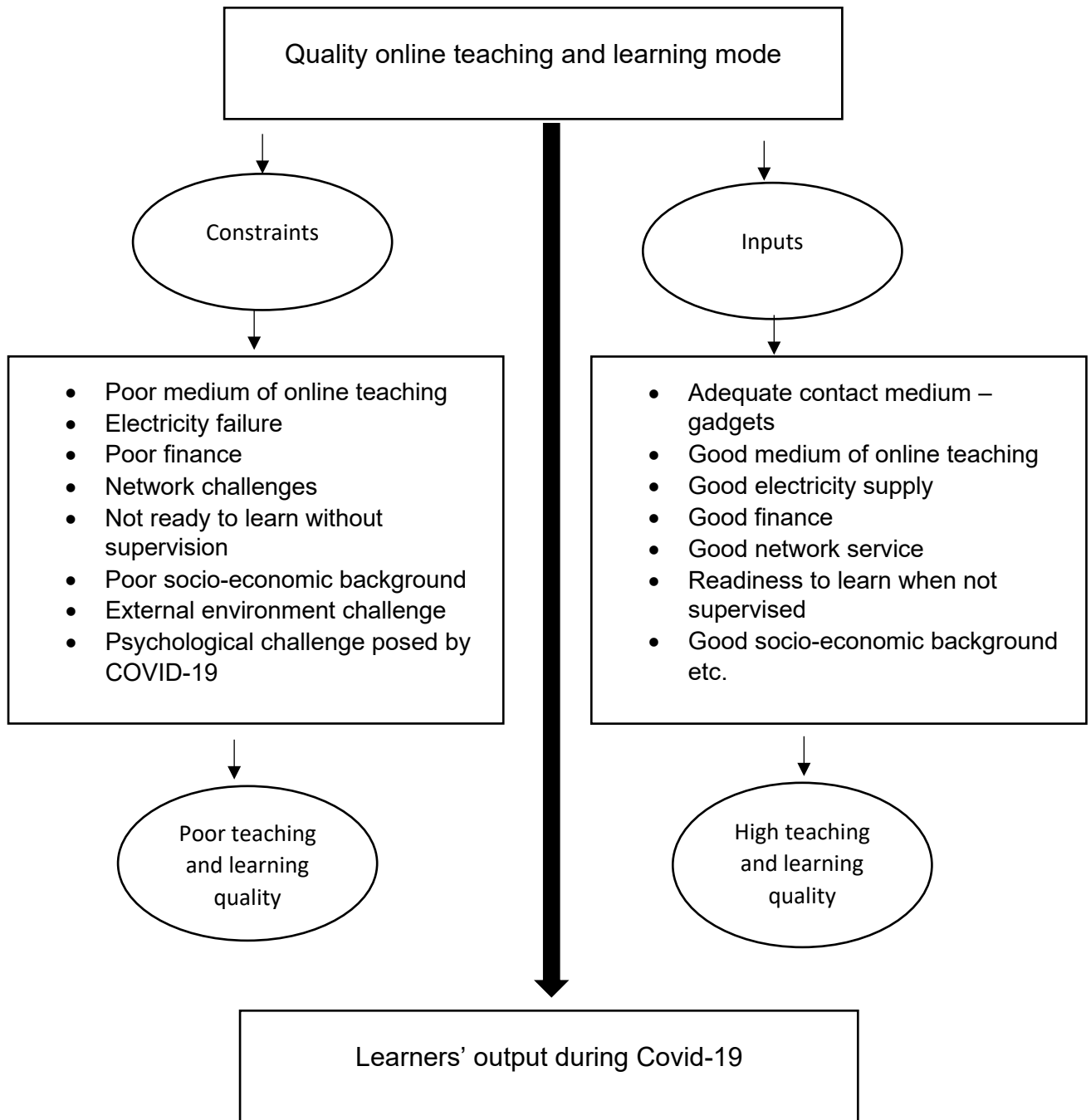
– both of which required principals to carry out their duties in a changed, unique way. The bare fact is that change was necessary to maintain the academic progress of learners (Pollock, 2020).

In an intercontinental study of how schools responded to the global crisis and planned for the 2020-2021 academic calendar, the majority of the participants (60-90%) responded by saying that it was difficult to maintain, let alone improve, the academic performance of learners by providing support remotely (cited in Varela & Fedynich, 2020).

In the study by Valera and Fedynich (2020) set in southern Texas, USA, 25 of the 30 respondents (88%) were school principals while the rest were district officials. The data indicated that 62% of the schools served rural communities. According to the study, 53% of the principals felt they were fully equipped to support their teachers in delivering the curriculum, while 80% of the respondents felt confident about leading the school community in the shift to online instruction whilst maintaining academic standards.

Conversely, in Nigeria, the country confirmed its first Covid-19 case in the early stages of the academic calendar, forcing teaching and learning to move online (Iyiomu, 2020). However, the education system was not equipped to accommodate the change in such a way as to ensure the academic success of secondary-school learners, (Iyiomu, 2020). The lockdown imposed starkly exposed imbalances between the resources of wealthy and less affluent schools to enable learners to continue with teaching and learning. The study noted that schools made use of audio recordings, videos, various online platforms and the internet in an attempt to deliver the curriculum to learners (Iyiomu 2020). This proved to be a major challenge, especially as many teachers lacked the skills to teach online. Iyiomu (2020) constructed a model contrasting the quality of teaching and learning at wealthy or well-resourced schools and poor or under-resourced schools, which is reproduced below:

**Figure 3: The model of online teaching during Covid-19**



The model depicts how the quality of teaching and learning online affected the performance of learners during the Covid-19 pandemic. If teachers are not skilled to perform the tasks required, academic success cannot be achieved. Against this background, I explore leadership and professional development.

## **2.10 Theoretical framework**

For this study, Michael Fullan's (2002) paper, "Leadership in a culture of change", will provide a theoretical framework. Although Fullan (2002) argues that instructional leadership is an indispensable approach, he concedes that it cannot be a panacea capable of ameliorating the significant shortcomings of certain schools. Rather, the instructional focus should be rooted in a comprehensive set of characteristics.

According to Fullan (2002), principals must condition themselves to a picture of "betterness" and work to transform schools through communities of practice. For principals to shift towards a sustainable approach to leading schools they should be prepared to enact change. The "Leadership in a culture of change" framework (Fullan, 2002) advocates five core components to improve the quality of education in schools: moral purpose, understanding change, relationship building, knowledge creation and coherence making (Fullan, 2002). These components are discussed in detail below.

### **2.10.1 Moral Purpose**

Moral purpose plays an integral part in improving and sustaining systemic change within the context of education (Fullan, 2002:4). For a leader supporting teaching and learning, moral purpose means acting with the intention of making a positive change at schools by closing the academic gap between high- and low-performing learners. According to Fullan (2002:4), moral purpose is informed by the value of constantly improving the academic success of learners. Moral purpose is therefore embedded in a culture of change insofar as the culture is characterised by the search for ways to make a positive difference in the lives of learners.

### **2.10.2 Understanding the process of change**

Fullan (2002:5) introduces this characteristic by saying that it is "essential for leaders to understand the process of change". Should a leader not embrace the process of change, moral purpose as we know it becomes moral martyrdom (Fullan, 2002:5) and is emptied of its rationale.

A leader's possessing innovative ideas and his or her being good at implementing these ideas do not amount to the same thing. It is within the context of this discrepancy

that Fullan (2002) suggests a series of guidelines for understanding the process of change. First, the principal should focus on selective shortcomings: as an instructional leader, s/he should primarily be concerned with teachers' teaching and learners' learning. Second, to have good ideas is not enough. The leader should consult stakeholders with innovative ideas and find ways for staff members to commit to change. Third, a principal should anticipate early difficulties in trying something new – Fullan (2002) refers to this as the “implementation dip”, which can last for as long as six months. Fourth, “reculturing” is the name of the game. In order to reculture, the principal should support the teaching and learning domain by promoting and taking part in professional development as well as evaluating teachers' teaching and the curriculum. Last, never a checklist, always complexity. Fullan (2002) highlights that there is no step-by-step shortcut to transformation: instead, the principal as leader in understanding the process of change has to work hard day by day for reculturing to take place.

### **2.10.3 Relationship building**

For a principal to be a leader in a culture of change, successful relationship building has to occur. Fullan (2002:7) submits that if relationships amongst staff improve, things will get better. One way that a principal can improve relationships is by promoting CPTD. If teachers remain the same, there will be no foundation for improving the quality of teaching and learning and closing the gap between high- and low-performing learners.

Fullan (2002:7) argues that in relationship building, emotional intelligence is just as important as good ideas. To foster relationships among stakeholders and encourage team building is a very difficult skill for educational leaders and requires sensitivity and emotional intelligence. Building relationships will lay a firm foundation for improving academic performance by motivating teachers through professional development, connecting the disconnected, and establishing a positive climate at the school.

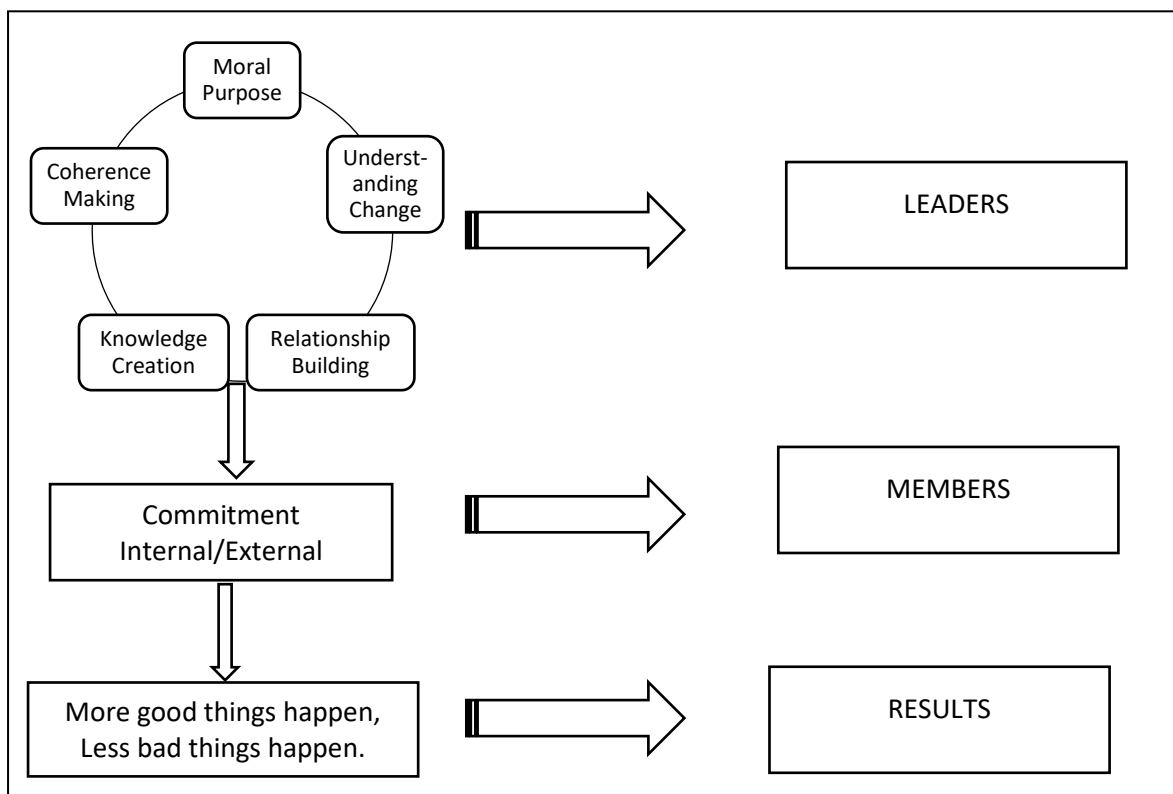
### **2.10.4 Knowledge creation**

Fullan (2002) shares particular insights concerning knowledge creation. He argues that information can only become knowledge through interaction between individuals

and groups. This is why professional development is of vital importance in leaders' support for teaching and learning. Fullan maintains that leaders must encourage knowledge seeking as well as knowledge giving (2002:7).

### 2.10.5 Coherence making

The final characteristic identified by Fullan (2002) is coherence making. He argues that principals who do not embrace the culture of change concept make the mistake of wanting to address too many problems simultaneously. Principals committed to the culture of change are primarily concerned with how learners learn and consult stakeholders who can assist in realising bettering the vision of the school. Figure 1, below, offers a visual representation of Fullan's (2002) theory.



**Figure 1: Framework for leadership**

(Source: Fullan, 2002)



## **2.11 Chapter summary**

The literature review has presented the global significance of the relationship between a principal's leadership and learners' academic performance in several dimensions. These include most notably the successful delivery of the curriculum to learners and the importance of continuing professional teacher development, which shapes both the principal in his role as leader and teachers in their role in the classroom.

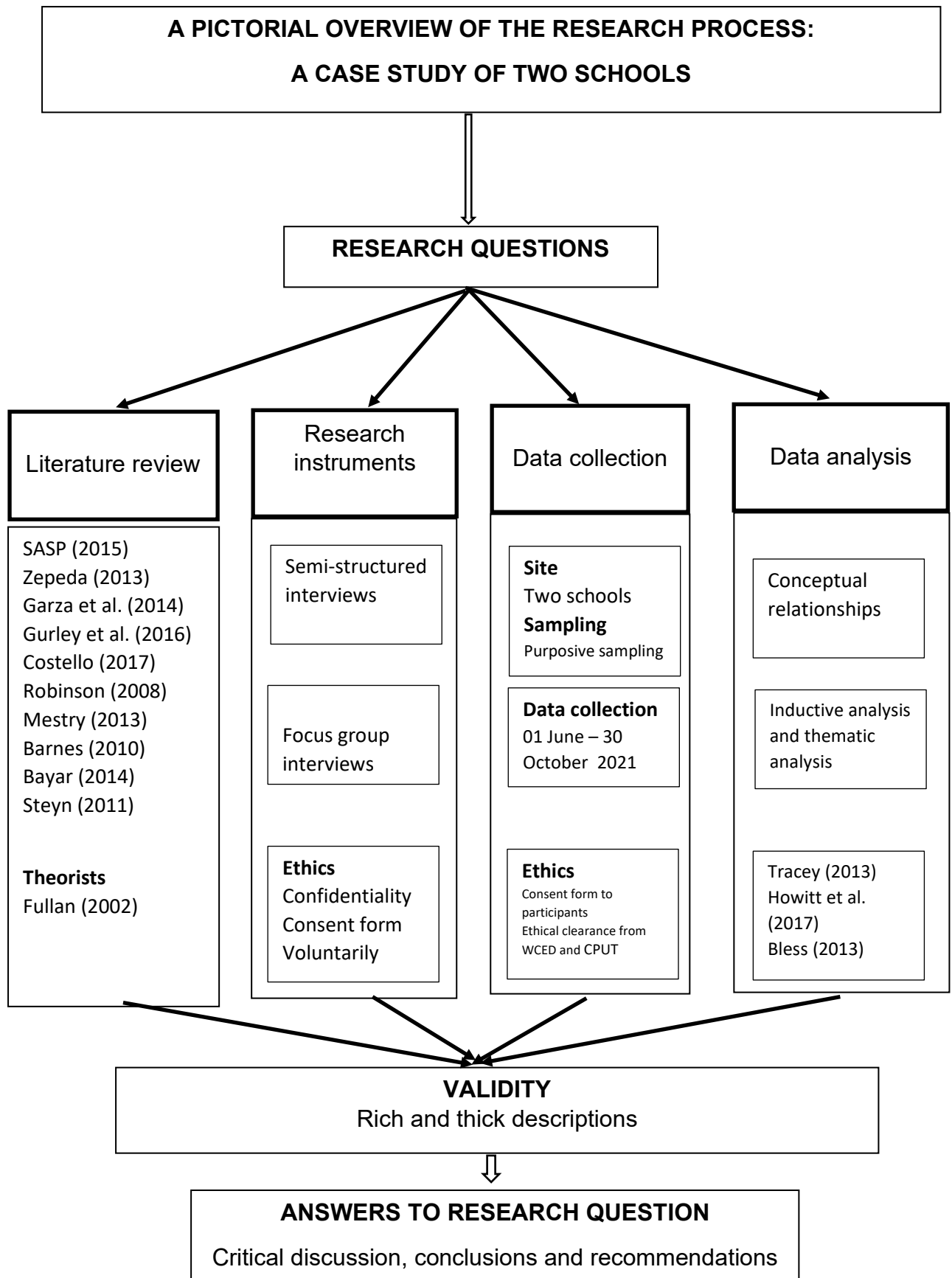
Chapter 3 of the study discusses the research approach, data collection methods and methodology employed in executing the research. The ethical aspects of research are also discussed.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction and pictorial overview of the research process**

This chapter will offer a description and discussion of the research approach, methodology and design, the data collection instruments and techniques, as well as the process of data analysis. Some attention will be given to trustworthiness and other ethical considerations. The chapter is organised under the following headings and sub-headings:

- 3.1 Introduction and pictorial overview of the research process
- 3.2 Research paradigm
- 3.3 Case study (advantages and challenges experienced)
- 3.4 Site selection
- 3.5 Participant selection
- 3.6 Data collection process (pre-testing/ focus groups/ semi-structured interviews)
- 3.7 Data analysis
- 3.8 Trustworthiness (credibility/transferability/reliability/conformability/triangulation)
- 3.9 The researcher's position
- 3.10 Ethical considerations
- 3.11 Limitations to the study
- 3.12 Chapter summary



**Figure 3.1: A pictorial overview of the research process**

The research project was designed to fulfil the purpose of the research and enable the researcher to answer the research questions by following sound principles of scientific inquiry (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016). A qualitative research approach was selected because it focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live (Durrheim, 2006). The approach involves collecting data from interviews and empirical observation that captures the personal experience of participants and the meaning they ascribe to that experience (Klenke, 2008). A comprehensive overview of the research design is provided in sections 3.2 and 3.3, below.

### **3.2 Research Paradigm**

A research paradigm is a philosophical way of thinking that shapes the research process. Kivunja & Kuyini (2017) note such a paradigm is nothing less than the principles and beliefs that configure how a researcher sees the world.

This study was informed by the interpretive paradigm so as to explore the world as reflected in the participants' experiences (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Research conducted under this paradigm typically displays the following characteristics (Morgan, 2007; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017):

- The admission that the social world cannot be understood from the standpoint of an individual.
- The belief that realities are multiple and socially constructed.
- The acceptance that there is inevitable interaction between the researcher and his or her research participants
- The acceptance that context is vital for knowledge and knowing
- The belief that knowledge is created by the findings, can be value-laden, and the values need to be made explicit
- The need to understand the individual rather than universal laws
- The belief that causes and effects are mutually interdependent
- The belief that contextual factors need to be taken into consideration in any systematic pursuit of understanding.

The ontological position espoused by the interpretive research orientation is therefore that “realities are multiple and socially constructed”, that is, that reality is at least to some extent a matter of human interpretation (Ansari et al., 2016). The epistemological implication of this is that we acquire knowledge about the world through interpretation, which is always contingent (Creswell, 2003). It is therefore acknowledged that any knowledge gained in this study about the relationship between principals’ leadership styles and learner academic performance is the product of the perceptions of an interpretive community. It is the result of an attempt to understand the experience of specific principals, teachers, learners, and the culture of the school in the community it serves (Taylor & Medina, 2011; Kozleski, 2017).

### **3.3 Research approach**

Qualitative research is characterised by its aims, which are associated with aspects of social life, and its methodology, which analyses data using words instead of numbers (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Kozleski (2017) argues that qualitative research is important because it recognises interactions between individuals, the relationships that humans have with themselves (their psychological understanding), relationship building (anthropological and sociological perspectives), as well as systems in which we live (the built environment). According to Thanh and Thanh (2015), an interpretative paradigm favours a qualitative research approach like a case study. Qualitative methods seek to explore, decode and understand the meaning of what occurs in the social world (Patton & Cochran, 2002). Qualitative research was best suited to this study because it aimed to investigate human perceptions resulting from real-world experience. This experience pertained to the leadership styles of principals in addressing academic performance at the two schools selected for study. According to Mertens (2004), the qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for gathering and analysing data and, as such, can respond to the situation by maximising the opportunities for collecting and producing meaningful information. In sum, this study can be described as qualitative research framed as an interpretive case study.

#### **3.3.1 Case study**

A case study research design was used to provide in-depth knowledge of the particular research problem rather than a sweeping statistical survey or

comprehensive comparative inquiry. A case study design is often used to narrow down a vast research field into one or more easily researchable examples (Munhall, 2001; Thomas & Myers, 2015; Park et al., 2018). It is a sound research design when not much is known about an issue or phenomenon (Polit & Beck, 2004). The case study research design in this study seeks to ascertain how principals' current leadership styles are addressing learners' academic performance.

A qualitative case study is an approach that explores a phenomenon within its context, using different data sources. Investigating the issue using a variety of lenses allows multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Burns & Grove, 2001). Merriam (2009) observes that case study research can discover new meaning, extend knowledge or confirm what is known. Case study research is notably concrete, contextual, and developed by reader interpretation (Merriam, 2009).

The case study design complements the needs and purposes of the study. Yet its implementation had certain challenges as well as advantages, as predicted by Cohen et al. (2018) and Myburgh (2019).

#### 3.3.1.1 Advantages accruing from utilising a case study design

This case study research design helped me to interpret, understand and contextualise the available literature. Through the use of a case study, I was able to recognise and understand the complexity of the investigation and offer enriched insights into the leadership styles used by principals to address or mitigate poor academic results at historically disadvantaged schools in Cape Town. The case study should be of interest to a range of audiences, including principals, circuit managers, district directors and the like (Cohen et al., 2018.).

#### 3.3.1.2 Challenges experienced in utilising a case study design

Although I was able thoroughly to contextualise the issues through the case study, the data collected and analysed cannot be widely generalised because the study only focused on a few historically disadvantaged schools in one district in the Western Cape. It is quite possible for different results to be obtained in other provinces in South Africa. I was faced with the difficulty of remaining unbiased and objective because I

am myself a full-time educator serving a historically disadvantaged community similar to the case study participants. These challenges were mitigated through the use of the most appropriate data collection methods discussed in sections 3.6.2 and 3.6.3, below.

### 3.4 Site selection

The site selected comprised two public high schools in the Western Cape. Principals and members of the School Management Team (SMT) were chosen through purposive sampling. The schools selected for the study were high schools in the northern district that were performing well despite the inordinate hardships associated with their quintile ranking. All South African public schools are divided into five groups, called quintiles, mainly for financial and resource purposes. Quintile one (Q1) is the poorest while quintile five (Q5) is classified as affluent. I collected data from two schools in quintiles 1 and 2 that serve disadvantaged communities. A principal's leadership style in respect of addressing poor learner academic performance should not be influenced by a school's financial status. These schools were producing good academic results despite serving learners from poor socio-economic backgrounds.

**Table 3.1:** Overview of schools involved in the research

Site		
School	School A	School B
Quintile	Quintile 2	Quintile 1
Location of school	Urban	Urban
Method	Semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews	
Pass rate of school (NSC results)	81%	92%

School A is approximately 26 kilometres from Cape Town and is situated in an urban area. The school employs 33 teachers, four departmental heads, one deputy principal and one principal. The school is classified as a commuter school and serves

communities faced with numerous hardships, as highlighted in Chapter 1. School A has 1188 learners with a teacher-learner ratio of 1:36. The school was flagged for continuous low academic results between 2015-2017 and the school did not have a permanent principal. However, in 2018, the WCED appointed a permanent principal and the results of the school improved to an 80% pass rate, a standard the school has maintained amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

School B is approximately 21 kilometres from Cape Town and is located in an urban area. The school is classified as a quintile 1 school and caters to learners from communities with a range of socio-economic backgrounds. School B has a total of 1250 learners and 39 teachers, four departmental heads, two deputies and one principal. The teacher-learner ratio is thus 1:32. The school has shown continuous academic success for the last three years, with more than 90% of the grade 12 class passing with admissions to colleges and universities.

### **3.5 Participant selection**

Sampling is a process of choosing a portion of a research population that conforms to a designated set of specifications. A sample is thus a subset of a population (Polit & Beck, 2004). The participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, a form of non-probability sampling, because they were identified as those likely to yield the most information about the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 2002). Creswell and Poth (2016) describe purposive sampling as selecting sites or participants willing to reflect on and share their knowledge to help the researcher to understand the problem and answer the research question.

The participants were thus selected according to their particular knowledge and experience of the phenomenon under study and their willingness to share their knowledge with the researcher. The sample included the principals of the schools and three members of their respective school management teams. Tables 3.2 and 3.3, below, provide an overview of the research participants from the two schools studied.



**Table 3.2: Overview of research participants (SMT members)**

Sample	School A		
SMT members	SMT1	SMT2	SMT3
Gender	Female	Female	Female
Years of teaching	21 years	15 years	9 years
Years under current leadership	3 years	3 years	3 years

Sample	School B		
SMT members	SMT1	SMT2	SMT3
Gender	Male	Male	Female
Years of teaching	16 years	7 years	40 years
Years under current leadership	3 years	3 years	3 years

**Table 3.3: Overview of research participants (principals)**

Sample	School A	School B
Years of teaching	37 years	33 years
Years in a leadership position	10 years	15 years
Years as principal	3 years	9 years

The schools and samples were grouped together to identify trends and outliers within the sample. According to Myburgh (2019), grouping within a table allows researchers to see possible patterns and relationships within the sample. Table 3.2 provides biographical and professional information about the participants. The years of teaching and years under current leadership indicate that the sample is appropriate for the study as the individuals can be assumed to be knowledgeable about the phenomenon being investigated. The participants' years of teaching indicate the extent of their experience within the profession. The gender of the participants is included to indicate that both male and female participants were selected for the study. All in all, the information

presented in the tables validates the inclusion of the research participants in the study (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014; Myburgh, 2019).

### 3.6 Data collection

Because the study is informed by the interpretive paradigm, a range of cognate data collection instruments suggest themselves, such as one-on-one interviews, observations, focus-group interviews and document analysis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). McMillan & Schumacher (2015) and Myburgh (2019) encourage researchers to make use of more than one type of data collection instrument. I therefore employed both semi-structured interviews and focus-group interviews to collect data from my participants. These two instruments are further discussed in sections 3.6.2 and 3.6.3, below. Table 3.4 displays the time and data collection instrument used to collect data from participants.

**Table 3.4: Data collection schedule**

Data collection	Site	Pre-interview	Interview with principal	Focus groups with SMT	Length of focus group	Length of semi-structured interview
	School A	12 August 2021	13 August 2021	13 August 2021	29 minutes	28 minutes
	School B	26 August 2021	27 August 2021	27 August 2021	31 minutes	59 minutes

#### 3.6.1 Pre-testing of the data collection methods

A pilot study is a trial version of the main study to determine if the elements of the main study can all work together (Arain et al., 2010). Before I embarked on the interviews with the participants, I conducted a pilot study with my co-supervisor, who had experience and knowledge about the topic of principals and the academic performance of learners. The pilot study was conducted on Microsoft Teams because of Covid-19. The study helped me to determine if the questions would yield rich and appropriate information from the participants. According to Majid et al. (2017), a pilot study assists researchers to adjust and confirm the interview schedule to ensure that

the necessary data is collected within the main study. The table below presents the adjustments made on the basis of the data obtained from the pilot study.

**Table 3.5: Adjustments made due to pilot study (pre-testing)**

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Initial question</b>	<b>Final adjusted question</b>
<b>7</b> <b>Semi-structured interview</b>	Motivate your answer by giving an example where you used [a leadership style] in a situation.	Why have you chosen to adopt [leadership style] as an approach to leading this school? Give an example where you used [leadership style] in a situation.
<b>12</b> <b>Semi-structured interview</b>	How do you feel about Continuing Professional Development?	What role do you play in ensuring that teachers remain skilled with their specialisation?
<b>18</b> <b>Semi-structured interview</b>	Would you say that you play a vital role in the academic success of the learners? Why would you say so?	Do you believe that the role of the principal plays a role in improving or maintaining the academic success of learners? Why would you say so?
<b>8</b> <b>Focus group interview</b>	Does the principal as the leader ensure that all assessments are well aligned with the standards set forth by the DBE and WCED?	Is there a system put in place by the principal that ensures that all the assessments are well aligned with the standards set forth by the DBE and WCED? Please elaborate on how he/she ensures that assessments are aligned.

Based on the data collected, I was able to see if the questions as formulated would provide sufficient suitable data. My co-supervisor and I changed the sentence construction of questions 7, 12 and 18 in the semi-structured interview instrument to sound more concise and easy to understand when posed to the interviewee. Question

8 in the focus group interviews seemed to invite a “yes or no” answer, so we decided to reformulate it in order to probe for more nuanced answers (DeMarrais, 2004).

### 3.6.2 Focus-group interviews

In recent years, focus-group interviews have gained considerable attention amongst researchers as a way of collecting data for qualitative research in the social sciences (Rabiee, 2004; Dilshad & Latif, 2013). Focus groups emerged as a qualitative data collection method for conducting scientific research by harvesting local knowledge (Nyumba et al., 2018). Focus-group interviews, according to Rabiee (2004), can be defined as “a technique involving the use of in-depth group interviews in which participants are selected because they are a purposive, although not necessarily representative, sampling of a specific population, this group being ‘focused’ on a given topic”. Participants in this type of qualitative study are thus selected according to the criterion that they be knowledgeable, as outlined in section 3.5 of Chapter 3. Put slightly differently, a focus-group interview is a discussion with a homogeneous group of targeted persons whose experience and point of view are needed to address a specific research topic (Vaughn et al., 1996; Darlow et al., 2016). Focus groups are particularly useful when one is conducting exploratory research and there is a shortage of reliable sources from which to obtain valid data (Vaughn et al., 1996).

The focus-group interview has other advantages. It is a structured and well-articulated data collection method that nevertheless encourages interaction between participants (Vaughn et al., 1996; Darlow et al., 2016). Focus-group interviews provide answers to the research question[s] by explaining how and why people behave as they do (Gulliksen & Hjordemaal, 2016).

Denscombe (2007) identified three distinctive properties of focus-group interviews:

- I. Prompt/stimulus: in this part of the interview process, the participants’ responses are usually triggered by a question or statement made by the interviewer to the discussion in a particular direction.
- II. Interviewer: the interviewer does not have to be as neutral in the proceedings as with other interview techniques because of the ongoing discussion taking place amongst the participants.

- III. Interaction within the group: interaction between participants within the group is valued, as opposed to gaining the opinion of just one person.

According to Casey and Krueger (2000) and Dilshad and Latif (2013), focus-group interviews yield a more natural discursive environment among participants than one-on-one interviews do, because participants engage with one another. Focus groups thus allow for comprehensive information to emerge from the discussion, providing insight into life as it is lived by the participants. Focus groups are appropriate for gaining insight into the current leadership styles employed by principals towards addressing poor learner academic performance as they are not concerned with consensus-building but serve to garner a range of opinions from participants (Vaughn et al., 1996; Darlow et al., 2016; Gulliksen & Hjordemaal, 2016).

Although focus groups are popular among researchers, I experienced several challenges and limitations. It was difficult to get all the participants together at the same time because of the nature of their responsibilities at the respective schools. Depending on the particular dynamic of the focus group, some participants appeared to conform to the responses given by others, even though their views might have been different (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). The focus-group interview schedule, consisting of twelve research questions, is included in Appendix 2.

### 3.6.3 Semi-structured interviews

Irrefutably, qualitative interviewing is a powerful instrument for enabling researchers to understand the participants through their experience of the phenomenon investigated (Rabionet, 2011). Rabionet (2011) observes that, through the use of semi-structured interviews, researchers are able to capture the views of the participants and bring them to life, giving meaning to the participants' experiences. Semi-structured interviews are designed to obtain personal opinions, views, experiences and feelings (Hammett et al., 2015; McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Semi-structured interviews create a platform for a conversation to take place between a researcher and a respondent capable of providing in-depth data about the why and how of the phenomenon being investigated. (Newcomer et al., 2015).

I conducted semi-structured interviews with the principals of the schools as they were able to provide insight into their leadership practices and how they sought to address

the academic performance of learners. The semi-structured interview tool allowed me to create an all-inclusive interview schedule and gain insight into the subjective knowledge of the participants (Richards & Morse, 2007; Hammett et al., 2015; McIntosh & Morse, 2015). While there was an interview schedule, the data collection method allowed for some open-ended questioning in response to the participant's contributions (Bartholomew et al., 2000; McIntosh & Morse, 2015). The semi-structured interview allows the researcher to discover new aspects of the problem by investigating the explanations given by the participants in detail (Bless et al., 2013).

I held interviews with two ( $n=2$ ) principals. According to Newcomer et al. (2015), semi-structured interviews should be conducted within approximately one hour to avoid interview fatigue. For this reason, I allocated 45 minutes per interview with the school principals. The semi-structured interview schedule, comprising 12 research questions, is included in Appendix 3.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Inductive analysis was used to interpret the data. This consisted of six main steps, (1) getting familiarised with the data, such as through actively listening to the recorded data; (2) creating primary codes; (3) identifying and then examining themes discovered; (4) describing the identified themes; (5) categorising them; and (6) constructing the research report based on the findings (Tracy, 2013; Terry et al., 2017). Thematic analysis was used to identify and describe the main themes emerging from the research data.

The findings of a qualitative research study typically stem from patterns and relationships identified in the data collected (Tracy, 2013). These are used to support, modify, or create a novel theory. Once all the necessary data had been collected and transcribed, I analysed it using Fullan's (2002) "Leadership in a culture of change" framework, identifying various emerging patterns.

I employed a three-phase approach to analysing the data, adapted from McMillan and Schumacher (2015) and Myburgh (2019). Table 3.5 presents this approach.

**Table 3.6:** Three phases of inductive analysis as outlined by McMillan and Schumacher (2015)

Phase 1	<p>I readied the data obtained from both the focus-group and semi-structured interviews by transcribing the recordings. The transcriptions were given back to the respondents so that they could confirm that what was on paper was what they had said during the interview.</p> <p>Before organising the data, I familiarised myself with the information by reading and re-reading the transcribed data. This enabled me to compartmentalise the data into smaller, more manageable segments (Myburgh, 2019). The analysis of the data consisted of six main steps, as discussed in section 3.5 of Chapter 3, steps taken without a preconceived framework (Bless et al., 2013) for subsequent inductive analysis.</p> <p>During this phase, the emerging categories were identified and coded for analysis (see Chapter 4).</p> <p>Phase 1 comprised the first two steps of inductive analysis: familiarising myself with the data by listening to the recordings and transcribing them, as well as identifying the primary codes.</p>
Phase 2	<p>By scrutinising the codes identified in phase one, I was able to recognise patterns and relationships, as well as outliers within the collected data. I was thus presented with the opportunity to categorise the data into meaningful groupings, and by doing so I was able to develop themes and sub-themes for each research question (Castleberry &amp; Nolen, 2018).</p> <p><b>Central research question</b></p> <p>How are current leadership styles in selected public high schools addressing the poor academic performance of learners?</p> <p>The following themes emerged based on the categories identified:</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leadership styles employed by principals</li> <li>2. Leadership styles promoting professional development</li> <li>3. Principals, through their leadership styles, assess and support the curriculum delivery through the SMT.</li> </ol> <p><b>Sub-questions</b></p> <p>Which leadership styles are currently implemented in these public high schools to address poor learner performance?</p> <p>How are principals, through their leadership styles, evaluating and managing curriculum delivery?</p> <p>How are current leadership styles in these public high schools promoting professional development?</p> <p>The categories foregrounded in this phase showed the relatedness between the literature review and the framework of Fullan (2002), “Principals as leaders in a culture of change”, as discussed in Chapter 2.</p> <p>Phase 2 embedded steps 3, 4 and 5 of inductive analysis: identifying and then examining themes discovered; describing the identified themes and categorising them.</p>
Phase 3	<p>Phase 3 presents the findings of the study. The results and findings from the focus-group interviews conducted with the SMT and semi-structured interviews conducted with the principals are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. I make use of tables and figures to communicate the results and findings presented. I constantly link the results and findings with the literature review and Fullan’s (2002) theory.</p> <p>Phase 3 embraced the last of the six steps to inductive analysis, which was constructing the research report based on the findings.</p>



### **3.8 Trustworthiness**

In the context of this research, the concept of trustworthiness embraces credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, validity and triangulation, and the general objectivity of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). Before I conducted the interviews with the participants, I first spoke to them to put them at ease and assured them that the outcomes of the research would be reported to them. The findings' validity ultimately rests on whether these participants will see a recognisable reality in the reported outcomes. A detailed discussion of the various aspects of trustworthiness follows.

#### **3.8.1 Credibility**

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), in qualitative research, credibility is closely aligned with internal validity and is concerned with the truth of the research conducted. There are various strategies to obtain credibility in a qualitative study, such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation and member checking. The nature of the study suggested that the best strategy for achieving credibility was triangulation, discussed below in section 3.8.5.

#### **3.8.2 Transferability**

Transferability refers to the applicability of the findings to other contexts, with different participants, groups and situations. It can be achieved by full descriptions of the data (Shenton, 2004). Because this study only investigated schools near Cape Town in the Western Cape province of South Africa, the results are not widely transferable. Nevertheless, the research could be duplicated in a different context or province to ascertain the relations between the principals, their leadership styles and learner success.

#### **3.8.3 Dependability**

Dependability refers to the stability of the study's conditions and the data over time (Connelly, 2016). Dependability is needed to strengthen the findings of the study. The procedures utilised in this study to secure dependability will be fully described, thus aiding a future researcher to replicate the study (Rolfe, 2006).

### 3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree to which other researchers can confirm the findings of the study. Confirmability underlines the fact that the findings of the study are not preconceived but rather accurately derived from the data collected (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The tools for collecting the raw data from the participants were tested through a pilot study. According to Myburgh (2019), conformability can be increased further by using triangulation.

### 3.8.5 Triangulation

According to Wilson (2014), triangulation occurs when a researcher uses more than one approach or data source to strengthen or validate the findings of the study. Wilson (2014) cites the work of Flick (2002) in listing four ways in which a researcher can triangulate the data of the study.

- I. Data triangulation: this method makes use of a range of sources of data. It includes different times for collecting data as well as different participants involved in the study.
- II. Methodological triangulation: using more than one method to collect the data from the participants.
- III. Investigator triangulation: making use of more than one person in gathering and analysing the data.
- IV. Theory triangulation: draws on a theory or theories to confirm or create new knowledge.

This was a qualitative study, informed by the interpretive paradigm. I was therefore able to employ methodological and theory triangulation. The theory triangulation was secured through the use made of the theoretical framework of Fullan (2002), "Principals as leaders in a culture of change". Since I made use of both focus-group and semi-structured interviews to collect the data, methodological triangulation was also achieved. The validity and credibility of the study were improved by this triangulation.

### **3.9 The researcher's position**

I was the interviewer collecting the data from principals utilising semi-structured interviews. In addition to this, I conducted the focus-group interviews with the SMT to gain insight into the principals' leadership styles. In both cases, my role as facilitator was to collect sufficient data by asking questions during the interviews. An independent researcher assisted in facilitating the interviews to ensure that there was no bias throughout the data collection process.

### **3.10 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations attending the research process are mainly concerned with not creating conditions that might be harmful to the subjects of the inquiry (Schurink, 2010). I sought to be sensitive and respectful towards the research participants, observing their human rights and fully following the ethical code of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. I ensured that, throughout the study, the participants were aware that the study was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any time if they wished to.

According to Hammersley & Traianou (2012), cited by Myburgh (2019), there are five main ethical considerations in the social science research field. These issues are minimising risks, respecting autonomy, protecting the privacy of the participants, and offering reciprocity and equal treatment.

#### **3.10.1 Minimising risks**

During the data collection process, I tried not to inflict any harm on my research participants in any way. For instance, I accommodated and adhered to the participants' times of availability, respecting their responsibilities at their schools as well as their privacy.

#### **3.10.2 Respecting autonomy**

All the participants in the study were made aware of the nature and purpose of the study and what it entailed. I scheduled pre-interview sessions with the participants so that I could personally inform them about their role as a participant and the contribution they would be making to the field of educational research. Throughout the study, I respected every response from the participants and answered all their questions about the research truthfully, also reminding them that they could retract their consent to participate in the study at any given time.

### 3.10.3 Protecting the privacy of the participants

I assured all the participants that their identities would remain anonymous. This was achieved by providing each participant with a pseudonym to protect their privacy when presenting the results in Chapter 4.

### 3.10.4 Offering reciprocity

All the research participants were treated with respect. I provided feedback to the participants to avoid being biased during the write-up of the results.

### 3.10.5 Equal treatment

I did not discriminate against any of the research participants during the data collection process, nor did I discriminate against them during the write-up of the results.

The study's aims and objectives were explained, and participants in the study completed an informed consent form assuring them that their privacy would always be respected and that everything that they shared was confidential. Informed consent was obtained and documented in terms of a formal letter (see Appendix A). I informed the participants about the study's research process and what I intend to do with the information gathered from their interviews. It was also explained that the participants had the right to leave at any point during the study, ask questions throughout the study and receive a copy of the informed consent form. I applied for and received an ethical clearance number from the CPUT ethics committee. Subsequently, I applied for ethical clearance from WCED and obtained a clearance letter from the department.

### **3.11 Limitations of the study**

I was aware of certain limitations experienced during the completion of the study. Due to the time frame that the WCED provided for the collection of data, I could only collect raw data within a specified period. The study only investigated high schools in the Northern district of the Western Cape province, which is only one of eight such districts. One of the schools requested numerous changes in dates and times for the interviews to take place and I had to make the adjustments to accommodate the participants. This was seen as a limiting constraint as I am myself a full-time educator.

### **3.12 Chapter summary**

Chapter 3 commenced with a pictorial overview of the methodological process. This was followed by detailed discussion of the research approach, methodology and design, the data collection instruments as well as the process of analysing the data. The chapter further examined aspects of trustworthiness and considered salient ethical issues. The next chapter, Chapter 4, presents and discusses the data collected.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

This study aims to understand the relations between principals' leadership styles and learners' academic performance. As discussed in detail in the previous chapter, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from principals and focus-group interviews were used to collect data from school management teams. The results emanating from this data are presented in this chapter as a response to the main research question:

- What is the relation between principals' leadership styles and learners' performance in public high schools in Cape Town?

The chapter also provides cognate responses to the following sub-questions:

- Which leadership styles do the principals in these public high schools employ?
- How do the principals, through their leadership styles, assess and support the curriculum delivery through the SMTs?
- How are current leadership styles in these public high schools promoting professional development?

The findings were analysed within a framework derived from Fullan's (2002) theory, which introduces five indispensable components (moral purpose, relationship building, coherence making, understanding change and knowledge creation) that principals should adopt to embrace a culture of change – which, in turn, will lead to the academic success of learners.

**Table 4.1:** Overview of themes and sub-themes

Subsidiary question	Themes	Subsidiary themes
Which leadership styles do the principals in these public high schools employ?	Leadership styles employed by principals	Perceptions of a successful school
		Contributing factors that resulted in the academic success of the school
		Leadership styles identified
How are current leadership styles in these public high schools promoting professional development?	leadership styles promoting professional development	Views of CPTD under the current leadership styles employed
		Negative attitudes towards IQMS
		Mandatory CPTD during the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak
How do the principals, through their leadership styles, assess and support the curriculum delivery through the SMTs?	Principals, through their leadership styles, assess and support the curriculum delivery through the SMT	The hierarchy
		Support provided to novice teachers to effectively deliver the curriculum

## 4.2 Research sub-question 1

### **Which leadership styles do the principals in these public high schools employ?**

The aim of the first research question was to understand leadership and leadership styles in selected public high schools in the Western Cape. By definition, according to Boyce and Bowers (2018), instructional leadership is concerned with providing professional development and managing the curriculum. This style also pays particular attention to the school's teachers, vision and mission, and how learners learn. If a principal adopts instructional leadership as an approach, s/he will have a positive influence on the school climate and teacher satisfaction and commitment. However, it is important to note that, according to Fullan (2006), while instructional leadership is an indispensable approach, it cannot alone ameliorate the situation and make good the significant shortcomings facing certain schools. *Leadership styles employed by principals* was consequently the first theme to emerge.

#### **4.2.1 Perceptions of a successful school**

The principals interviewed through the semi-structured interviews and the SMT members interviewed through the focus-group interviews were of the opinion that values as well as discipline play an important role in the success of the school. They thus attributed their success to a solid discipline structure and instilling a set of values within the learners. Apart from the values of integrity and kindness, the principals from both school A and school B were concerned with responsibility, highlighting that learners have to come to school to keep learning and improving their academic performance. In response to the following interview question and probing questions: *What is your view of a successful school, in terms of learner performance?*, at School A the principal and two SMT members emphasised how they were measured by the WCED in terms of learner performance. One SMT member from school A and one SMT member from school B agreed that schools also measured their success from an internal point of view by judging how many learners the school was able to retain throughout their high school career



### **School A Principal**

“...a successful school is a school that is well managed in terms of discipline ... I would say learners must be well disciplined... coming to school to improve their academics.”

“Success in the Western Cape is determined by the matric results, so my focus was on the matric results and to make the change there.”

The principal of school A regarded the notion of a successful school as revolving around well-disciplined learners: learners had to attend school consistently to improve their academic performance. Moreover, they had to take ownership of their own learning. Lumadi (2019) shares these views on discipline and academics, arguing that there is a relationship between discipline structures at a school and the values the school aims to instil in learners. At the same time, the expectations of society must be met by ensuring teaching and learning are of a sufficiently high standard to maintain or improve the academic success of learners. The SMTs agreed that the results of the Grade 12 learners are used to measure the school as successful or not by the bodies governing and managing the school such as WCED, DBE and the community. The SMT of school A perceived and understood their success as in part the result of establishing a stable academic background, keeping learners in the education system and not losing them to the socio-economic hardships in their immediate environments at home. In that regard, they perceived the school to be successful.

#### **SMT1**

“Everything revolves around the results of the Grade 12s. That’s the measure people use today whether a school is successful or not... I agree yes, your results must be good, but we must send happy adults into the world that are developed holistically... a good academic background ... well-disciplined.”

#### **SMT2**

“... although we get judged by our Grade 12 external results, we judge ourselves by every learner we are able to keep in the system without dropping out, despite the many hardships they face at home... we always tell them to define the year in the context of success for themselves.”

The principal at school B was very concerned about her human capital, emphasising that the teachers at her school were required to have adequate knowledge of the subject matter to be taught. Her perception was that teachers and their knowledge are what makes a school successful in terms of learner performance. In the focus-group interview with the SMT of school B, the participants emphasised that the leadership of the school was particularly concerned with closing the gap between high- and low-performing students and ensuring that there was a place for every learner at the school. This bears directly on Fullan's (2002) first criterion of moral purpose: supporting teaching and learning to make a positive change at schools by closing the academic gap between high- and low-performing learners:

### **Principal**

"... the teachers must have enough knowledge of whatever they are teaching and they also have to follow the curriculum, but then there must be more than just the curriculum. I ensure that my teachers are well trained so that the learners can get the best education and perform well."

"...the main thing is responsibility... you have to take ownership and the only way you can do that is to take up responsibility and say okay...I want to be successful."

### **SMT2**

...about improvement... top learners and bottom learners improving... but also closing the gap between high- and low-performing students... I think discipline is important in that regard... in the school and in the classroom because it allows of a more learning culture if children get on with the work and there is not a whole lot of disruptions.

The findings for both school A and school B are consistent with the findings of Garza et al. (2014), as reported in Chapter 2, section 2.8. They also employed semi-structured interviews with principals, deputy principals, teachers, parents and learners, focusing on *perceptions of school success*, but particularly the contribution of the principal to the success of a school. The data was analysed using a cross-case inductive approach. Their findings were that the principal as a leader contributed to the success of the school. According to Garza et al. (2014), "...parents felt invited, students felt good about themselves, and the teachers felt supported and

appreciated". The academic achievement of learners was exceptional, indicating that the principal and his/her leadership approach had a comprehensive effect on good teaching and learning practices, which in turn led to outstanding learner academic performance.

#### **4.2.2 Contributing factors that resulted in the academic success of a school**

The participants interviewed in both the semi-structured interviews and focus-group interviews believed that both values and discipline played an important role in the success of the school, attributing their success to a solid discipline structure and instilling a set of values within the learners. The following question and probing questions were posed: *What is your view of a successful school? In terms of learner performance? What are the contributing factors to learners' performance? As a school, serving communities facing inordinate hardships in the Western Cape, you obtained an 80% pass rate in the NSC examination. Would you say your school is successful? Or not? Why? To what would you ascribe its success?* In response, the principals and SMTs explained that if the culture of the school is positive, learners embrace it and want to be successful at school:

##### **School A – principal**

"I would say learners must be well disciplined... coming to school to improve their academics."

"Success in the Western Cape is determined by the matric results, so my focus was on the matric results and to make the change there."

"One of the biggest things was parents did not pitch for meetings, learners did not stay for the 9<sup>th</sup> period.... I made a point of asking teachers to inform me if learners did not perform well in class and I would respond to it immediately.... With the grade 12s, I would take their grade 11 results, and based on that interact with them on a termly basis.... I would monitor them and their performance."

"What is their goal? I let them sign a consent form saying what they want to achieve... that is their commitment to maintaining"

### **School A – SMT 1**

“Everything revolves around the results of the grade 12s. That’s the measure people use today whether a school is successful or not... I agree, yes, your results must be good, but we must send happy adults into the world that are developed holistically... a good academic background ... well-disciplined.”

### **School A – SMT 2**

“The one thing I absolutely admire about our kids are their resilience... Although we get judged by our Grade 12 external results, we judge ourselves by every learner we are able to keep in the system without dropping out, despite the many hardships they face at home... we always tell them to define the year in the context of success for themselves.”

“Principal X always asks, what do we as teachers model for our kids in terms of values? Do we model forgiveness, relationship building, teamwork... because we cannot expect these kids to model these values if the leader doesn’t instil or model these values at school.”

### **School A – SMT 3**

“We also have the 9<sup>th</sup> period at the end of the day for revision and consolidation of lessons.... I will never forget when the principal X had to do a presentation to the district based on the school results, he ended off by mentioning that even though we are faced with severe socio-economic circumstances, we obtained 80%, learners being expelled at other schools come to our school and we accept them... leadership at school is definitely doing something right. We are instilling values in learners... irrespective of their results, the school and its culture positively contributed to the success of the learner.”

### **School A – SMT 2**

“We look at the subjects and analyse each learner based on their results obtained... we advise learners on the best options for them, changing from maths to maths lit... so now they have choices again and their academic

success looks better in terms of results... the leadership style of the principal was concerned with the academic success of the learner. Principal X involved the parents in these decisions too.”

“If we couldn’t get hold of the parents, the principal would become very bureaucratic and write letter upon letter, being very persistent until the parent played a role in helping the school assist the learner.”

### **School A – SMT 1**

“...because of principal’s X leadership, the learners were closely knitted to each other...the relationships between the learners were amazing.... If someone was absent, someone would offer to take the notes home to that learner, so they really shared with each other what was needed to make them a success”

“Another thing that contributed was the matric camp... immediately there was relationship building... we also started a mentoring programme where each teacher was assigned a number of learners... again relationship building between teachers and learners.”

SMT 2 reiterated what the rest of the focus group said, explaining that the camps prepared learners for what lay ahead, but also helped foster a positive and healthy relationship among learners so that they could help each other. The camp focused on values like trust, relationship building and finding yourself. Although the camp prepared learners for academics, they did not do any academics there. SMT 2 ended the discussion of successful schools by stating that everything starts with the leader – the principal is the one setting things in motion, and the values concerned filter down to the teachers to manifest within the classroom on a daily basis. These findings are in line with those of Zepeda (2013) and Cherkowsk (2016), as reported in Chapter two, section 2.8. They found that a principal must have the ability to lead in the here-and-now, because the entire schooling system waits upon command and direction from the principal to ensure that teaching and learning remain the primary focus of the school. The principal is regarded as the primary agent in determining a favourable outcome for the institution through implementing an environment conducive to learning.

The principal at school B shared similar sentiments when asked about the factors contributing to the academic success of the learners, stating that her school was successful because it had sound disciplinary structures in place, and discipline was necessary for the inculcation of desirable values.

### **School B – Principal**

“Discipline and values come together... the main thing is responsibility... you have to take ownership and the only way you can do that is to take up responsibility and say okay... I am willing to do this.”

“... firstly, I must give them a reason to come to school, secondly if I am not enthusiastic about school, how can I expect the learners to be, so whatever I project will be the deciding factor if the learner will learn... I have to put measures in place to ensure the academic success of the learners... so even if I have to make a big deal out of something small, I will do it. The fact that the learner wrote a 1 and didn't do the rest of the question... he started, he made an effort, and from that effort I tell teachers to make a helluva thing.”

The school B focus-group participants emphasised that the leadership of the school prioritised closing the gap between high- and low-performing students and ensuring that there was a place for every learner at the school. This relates directly to Fullan's (2002) first criterion of moral purpose supporting teaching and learning; here, acting to bring about positive change by closing the academic gap between high- and low-performing learners:

### **School B – SMT 1**

“it's not only about high marks...it is also about learners at the bottom that improves their marks as well... there needs to be a place for everyone at the school... not only the top 10, but also those who were failing that are now passing.”

### **School B – SMT 2**

“...but also, about improvement... top learners and bottom learners improving... but also closing the gap between high and low performing students... I think discipline is important in that regard... in the school and in

the classroom because it allows of a more learning culture if children get on with the work and there is not a whole lot of disruptions.”

### **School B – SMT 3**

“learners have the support from the staff, not just looking at our top students, but how many learners we were able to get through the grade successfully... and the matric results are a good measure”

### **School B – SMT 2**

“... there is a lot of extra lessons going on. The English teachers are here over weekends for the learners and I think one of the things that helps in my personal experience... we have a culture of caring about the learners.”

“We also have a study buddy system where the seniors tutor the juniors... again, it is about stability, the school, under the leadership of principal X, is stable and functional.... we get our grade 8s from over 1000 schools every year... different cultures... different levels of discipline... so we do invest a lot in trying to mould them into the expectation of the school, which is of course the continuous academic success.”

The findings in this section suggest that relationship building is needed for the academic success of learners. Fullan’s theorisation (2002) insists that for a principal to be a leader in a culture of change, successful relationship building has to occur (see Chapter 2, section 2.11.3, above). Relationship building was confirmed throughout the discussion of “contributing factors to learner performance”: for example, school A engages with learners by taking them on a camp to help them find themselves and build relationships with one another. Under the leadership of the principal at school A, the relationship building had a positive effect on the learners. As SMT 1 observed in the focus-group interview, learners were consequently concerned about their peers: if they were absent they offered to take notes home to them to ensure that they did not fall behind with their academics.

Fullan (2002) also highlights *coherence making* as another criterion (Chapter 2, section 2.11.5), arguing that principals who do not embrace the culture of change concept make the mistake of wanting to address too many problems simultaneously. CCPs are focused on how learners learn and consult stakeholders who can assist in

enhancing the vision of the school. Coherence making is evident in the results from school B, where the participants noted that learners learned from their peers through the tutor buddy system at school, and teachers made themselves available over weekends to assist learners and ensure their academic success. School B also focused on structures of discipline to ensure minimal disruptions during lessons.

These findings are in line with those of Ylimaki and Jacobson (2011), Moos et al. (2012), Ishimaru (2013) and Day et al. (2016) (see Chapter 2, section 2.3). These authors observe that although it is difficult to measure the impact of principal leadership on the academic performance of learners, it is clear that the academic success of learners is a benchmark for a school being effective or not. At the same time, the academic success of learners does not render the school successful if the school, under the leadership of the principal, does not promote and instil desirable values in the learner. Truly successful schools, besides improving and maintaining the academic performance of learners, promote positive and pragmatic values such as integrity, moral purpose, relationship building (communities of practice), kindness, and trust, to name but a few. In this regard, it is clear that values-driven leadership plays a vital role in the academic success of learners.

#### **4.2.3 Leadership styles identified in the selected public high schools**

In the interviews, the participants made it clear that, while the government controls all public schools in South Africa, the role of the principal has evolved in importance over time. Questions eight and nine in the interview schedule for the semi-structured interviews aimed at establishing whether principals understood leadership in the context of South African schools, as well as what leadership style(s) these principals employed at their schools to maintain and improve the academic performance of learners. Although the principal from school A was not able to categorise the different types of leadership style (as discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.10), he was able to relate his approach to the leadership styles presented to him in the interview (see Annexure A).

“...I believe in transformational leadership where you interact with your staff. You make a decision based on your interaction with your staff... any decision I make, I consult the staff about it first.”



“...I always try to bring about change, good change.”

“Like I said, the transformational and participative. So, the first thing we have in the morning is a SMT meeting, so we discuss the day ahead and the decisions that need to be made. The decision of the SMT we take to the staff, it is not a final decision. Whatever comes out by the staff, we will adjust the decision taken in the morning. If the staff disagrees and it makes sense, I would rather go with the collective decision. So, there is a lot of participation and consultation before the day even starts.”

The views of the principal of school A were further echoed in the focus group interviews with the SMTs responding to the question: *How would you describe the principal's leadership style – providing an example of how your principal employed this leadership style, or how he uses this leadership style for the day-to-day running of the school?*”

#### **SMT2**

“Principal X likes to use a combination, I would say 80% transformational and 20% participative where he makes it known that he will consult you with decisions, which I think is a good thing because no leader can just use one leadership style for every situation....”

“Principal X introduced changes to how things are done at school, it might not have been popular amongst the staff, but it is what was needed to take the success of the school forward.”

#### **SMT1**

“Principal X is involved, he always looks at everyone's strong and weak points... his leadership approach was seen as transformational... he is open to change, if it is for the better he really listens to the ideas of the staff... or he would say Mrs Y you are right, doesn't matter your rank at the school.”

The perceptions of the principal of school A in terms of leadership and his leadership style were consistent with the literature discussed in Chapter 2, sections 2.10.2 and 2.10.3. The findings are in line with those of Adeyemi (2010) and Rossberger and Krause (2015), who comment that the participative leadership style encourages staff to be creative and innovative, and insist that the leader engage with them before making a final decision.

From the interview with the principal of school B, it could be inferred that she had a clear understanding of the various types of leadership style (see Chapter 2, section 2.10). The principal was able to identify her leadership style and illustrate it by referring to her day-to-day running of the school. Although the principal mentioned that she was more transformational and participative in her approach to leading the school to continuously improve and maintain the academic success of learners, the findings also suggested that, in times of crisis, she had to change her leadership style to deal with the situation. For example;

“...there is a need for me to say that look no discussions allowed, this is what it is and it needs to be done. But normally, I would go for the transformational and participative leadership... I really like to empower my people... I am transformational because I want you to give your input ... I have to allow the person to use their own initiative but also trust them in their decision making.”

“... I am not going to ask you to do something and I don't want to do it self, therefore I say I am participative because I allow you to work with me. But I do think I am more transformational that anything else.”

According to Naidoo (2019) (see Chapter 2, section 2.8), a principal performs three interconnected functions in a school. First, as managers, principals focus on resources such as human and financial resources. Secondly, as administrators, they are responsible for the day-to-day functionality of the school. Thirdly, as leaders, they pilot the school's vision by continuously striving to improve its performance. It is clear that the leadership style of the principal at school B was driven by the characteristics of transformational and participative leadership. The literature notes the role of the principal in directly influencing the work ethic of teachers (Nir & Hameiri, 2014; Talebloo, 2015; Andriani et al., 2018) and the academic progress of students (Garza, et al., 2014; Bastian & Henry, 2015). The inferences can also be made that the leadership styles of both principals have moral purpose (Fullan, 2002). The “Principal as a leader in a culture of change” framework highlights that leaders cannot succeed without moral purpose, which plays an integral part in improving and sustaining systemic change within the context of education. Moral purpose informs the intention of constantly improving the academic success of learners. Moral purpose is also embedded in the role of a “culture of change” principal to the extent that s/he seeks to

make a difference in the lives of the learners, positioning their learning as indispensable to the framework of leadership. The first criterion of Fullan (moral purpose), as well as the findings of the participants regarding the notion of leadership and their perception of leadership style, are consistent with the results of Allen et al. (2015) and Obama et al. (2015) (see Chapter 2, sections 2.10.2 and 2.10.3, regarding transformational and participative leadership, respectively).

The participants in the focus-group interview with school B strongly agreed with what the principal had to say about her leadership style. Although the SMT cited different examples to describe the leadership approach of the principal, the descriptions were in line with the findings and recommendations of Robinson et al. (2008), Finnigan & Stewart (2009), Silva et al. (2011), and Allen et al. (2015).

#### **SMT1**

“Principal X is participative because she allows staff to participate in a lot of things at school.... the SMT was only 3 people, now it consists of 13 people, so there is someone from every facet of the school... she wants to see people develop.”

#### **SMT2**

“She definitely empowers, and she allows people who are in positions of decision making to use their creativity to make decisions and work out solutions to the problems, whether it be an exam, a subject matter or discipline.”

The views of SMT1 and SMT2 of school B were in line with a study conducted by Makgato and Mudzanani in South African schools (2019), where it was revealed that participative leadership was the most dominant style among school principals. The study surveyed both low- and high-performing schools and questioned how it was possible for learner academic performance to be so vastly different between such schools, given that they were subject to the same leadership approach. It was concluded that although the principal at a low-performing school was participative, s/he was also lenient with behavioural issues and the overall conduct of learners. In this way, s/he had an unfortunate indirect effect on the academic performance of learners (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019).

### **SMT3**

“She is definitely transformational because she has a clear vision for the school with a beautiful set of values like kindness and trust and responsibility that carries the school.”

### **SMT2**

“... that is where the WCED has moved to and our principal... slotted perfectly into this because she wanted to transform the school and she was given the mechanisms to use her personality and leadership styles to do it.”

SMT2 and SMT3 felt that the principal’s approach to leadership was more transformational than anything else. SMT3 highlighted that the principal was values-driven and that these values were aligned with the vision of the school. SMT2 added that the WCED theme for 2021 was values-driven leadership, which coincided with the leadership style of the principal at school B.

To return to the data on the first theme, the principal of school A perceived a successful school as one that had a good discipline structure in place to alleviate disruptions in class that might detract from the teaching and learning time. The SMT members of school A agreed that the results of a school determined if the school was successful or not because the National Senior Certificate (NSC) results served as the main measure of success. They also noted that a school should be perceived as successful if it retained its learners in the education system and ensured that they completed their high school careers. School B, on the other hand, perceived success somewhat differently. The principal of school B claimed that a school was successful if the teaching staff had enough content knowledge, while also highlighting the importance of learners’ adhering to the school’s value system and taking responsibility for their own learning. The SMT of school B expressed a similar sentiment to the SMT of school A, asserting that the success of a school revolves around closing the academic gap between high- and low-performing students.

The principals of both schools attributed the academic success of the school to the intervention programmes they had initiated. The principal of school A also brought up the question of relationship building, noting that he met with learners at the school on a termly basis to check on their progress and identify possible underlying issues

should they not be performing. The SMTs of both schools answered similarly when they were asked about factors contributing to the academic success of the school, observing that the principal instilled values not only in the learners but also in the teaching staff. The SMT of school A mentioned that each learner's results are analysed and they are offered career guidance and advice on the most suitable subject choices based on the results obtained at the end of an academic year. The SMT of school B added that the learners are moulded to the expectations of the school based on previous years' academic achievements.

At both schools, the principals were aware that there was a repertoire of leadership styles available. Although they were not able to name these styles, they comfortably explained what their leadership style entailed. At both schools, the most prominent leadership style that emerged, according to both the principals and SMTs, was a combination of transformational leadership and participative leadership. This will be discussed in relation to the data analysis in Chapter 5.

### **4.3 Research sub-question 2**

#### **How are current leadership styles in these public high schools promoting professional development?**

The aim of the second research question was to establish how much attention principals paid to developing themselves and their staff to ensure the continuing academic success of the learners at their respective schools – for instance, by staying abreast of current developments in pedagogy. The sub-question as well as the questions in the semi-structured and focus-group interviews were guided by two of Fullan's criteria: *understanding the process of change* and *knowledge creation* (see Chapter 4, section 4.4, below). It is important to note that despite their scepticism about the IQMS tool used by the DoE to measure the shortcomings of teachers does not reflect their true developmental needs, they understood that the principle behind IQMS had merit.

### **4.3.1 Views of CPTD under the current leadership**

The data collected from both schools reflected similar views regarding CPTD. The SMTs and the principals perceived CPTD as an important contributing factor to the academic success of learners. The participants from school A were committed to the notion that teachers should be lifelong learners and that they should always develop themselves in relation to the classes that they teach, while aligning their ongoing teacher professional needs with the vision of the school so that they could assist the principal in achieving the school's goals.

#### **School A – Principal**

“I believe the teachers must continuously develop, you can never say you are done learning, I may be teaching for 38 years, but there are still things I do not know... each year the department send stuff for developmental purposes and I really encourage my staff to attend these sessions... and especially if you are teaching a matric class. I will not give a matric class to an educator that does not continuously develop.”

#### **SMT1**

“CPTD is very important because if you are not going to develop, you are going to be stuck in the past, stuck in your old ways. Remember there are new ways of teaching all the time... and if I am not going to upskill myself, I will never be able to stay with the new learners coming in year after year. Simple example, if I do not know how to use technology, like a PowerPoint presentation, I am going to lose today's child in the lesson because these kids are technology driven.

...what is important to me is if the principal gives our allocation at the beginning of the year, what we need to teach and who needs to teach what... and then you develop continuously, develop yourself for those learners... even though sometimes we say we do not want to go or we don't have time, in the end, we go because we know how important CPTD is.”

#### **SMT2**

“...we always lack something and we can always learn from each other... we want to give the child better... so with CPTD, the staff are trained to see beyond

the classroom because without CPTD we will forever be stuck in our ways.... The child already knows a lot when he comes to class. He takes out his phone, presses a button and get the information he needs. So CPTD is important because we must be able to offer the learner something more... something new... we must actually make space on our yearly calendar for it, that's how important it is.

SMT2 of School A highlighted that learners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century come to class with a wealth of knowledge because of their consistent use of technology, and emphasised that teachers had to upskill themselves to be able to offer the learners something new in the classroom. SMT3 commented: "...not at any level in your teaching career can you say you do not need to develop... CPTD is not just about your subject discipline, it is about you are a person... are you a well-rounded person, because how are you going to teach a child to be a well-rounded individual if you as the teacher are not". This sentiment is in line with Bayar's (2014) opinion that teachers have a unique responsibility for the holistic education of the learner, and are by far the most important resource that a principal has at his/her disposal (Calik et al., 2012). According to Hoppey and Mcleskey (2010), a principal must promote as well as take part in continuing teacher professional development. SMT2 at school A also felt that CPTD enables teachers to enrich their knowledge beyond the minimum required for the classroom, so that they are in a position to relay the knowledge with confidence and in a manner that is easily understood by the learners. This data resonates with the information presented in Chapter 2, section 2, that CPTD has a core focus on teacher learning, that professional development is the foundation of learning to learn, but even more, a means of translating the knowledge of teachers into excellent classroom practices (Olivier and Wittmann 2019).

The principal of school A went so far as to say that he would not allow a teacher who did not attend professional development activities to teach a grade 12 class, because the school's grade 12 results were used as a measure of academic performance by the DoE and the WCED. Scholars have recognised that although it is difficult to measure the impact of a principal's leadership on the academic performance of learners, that performance remains the benchmark of a school's effectiveness (Ishimaru, 2013; Day et al., 2016, see Chapter 2, section 2.3).

The overall perception of the SMT of school B was marked by their awareness of constant change, highlighting that teachers must be ready to embrace a culture of change. They noted that teachers could only do this by developing themselves professionally. School B thus collectively views CPTD as very important for the success of the learners. The findings from school B echoed the study cited in Chapter 2, section 2.7, in which Steyn (2011) adopted a qualitative research design for an in-depth understanding of teachers' views on Continuing Professional Teacher Development and the role of the principal in enhancing the academic performance of learners. SMT2 of school B emphasised that teachers need to develop professionally by "engaging in life-long learning", such as attending workshops to improve their pedagogical knowledge and classroom practices.

This raises the question of how much CPTD is necessary, how often teachers professionally develop under the leadership of their respective principals, and also how often the principals develop themselves to lead in these selected public high schools in Cape Town.

The SMT of School A stated that the principal offered a lot of support for CPTD. Under the leadership of the principal, the SMT addressed the needs of their own departments to improve or maintain the academic success of learners. SMT1, who leads the technical department, insisted that teachers left immediately after school to attend the workshops that she had recommended they attend.

#### **SMT1**

"We do workshops and have training bi-weekly or on a monthly basis. For the last couple of months, we always had workshops that we had to attend to upskill ourselves."

SMT2, who leads the languages department, sends daily messages to her department to ask if they have any problems, which she then addresses in subject meetings with her team, sometimes by finding development sessions in line with what her team needs.

#### **SMT2**

"These workshops are there to improve the results of our learners so we do it very often. So if I look at our results at this moment, it is not bad because our teachers are continuously upskilling themselves with new methodologies ... we



also do little things like looking at a question paper, giving it back with feedback, that is also developing the staff, it does not always have to be formal setting... in the last year, the principal organised a lot of sessions with google classroom to help get the teachers familiar with technology and teaching online.”

SMT3 felt that she had to develop herself more so that she could provide her team with best practices for teaching and learning. Moreover, all the respondents in the school A focus group interview said that they had to report back to the principal on what their subject or department teams were busy with in terms of developmental sessions as he kept a register of every teacher and their progress in CPTD. The principal also had a one-on-one meeting with every teacher and discussed their strengths and shortcomings, seeking out CPTD sessions that might result in improvement. He also deploys teachers with particular strengths to train other teachers in that area or discipline. The principal himself accepts guidance from an experienced ex-principal to ensure that the academic success of the learners remains the priority of the school. The leadership style of the principal thus enables CPTD to take place at the school, using both internal and external resources.

### **School A – Principal**

“... I keep a register of the professional development we do... and myself, I attend this principal’s academy where we have mentors to help us lead our schools better, I also have an experienced principal come to school to guide me through the process of principalship.”

### **SMT3**

“We do a lot of workshops...these workshops prepare me as the HoD to better develop my own team... Mr X (name of principal) had something where he called in every single teacher and he wanted to know how are we going to develop ourselves to ensure our learners’ results improve as the year progresses. He would sit with you and say, what are you going to do to get this learner to a 50%, but also provided training opportunities to better ourselves as teachers... and it was nice because we could openly speak to the principal about the challenges we are facing and he could also find ways to help us address these issues that might hinder academic performance of learners.”

The principal of school B believes that she has to develop herself to gain enough insight into best practices regarding leadership and how to lead both staff and learners. In addition to her duties as principal, she teaches two lessons a day. Although the school continues to exhibit excellent academic performance with a pass rate of above ninety per cent under the leadership of this principal, the school's grade 12 average increased by more than two per cent in her first year of leading the school.

### **School B – Principal**

“...there is a lot of development opportunities for myself and for the staff...it is necessary that I develop myself enough to gain better insight into good leadership and teaching practices...there is a lot of short courses and I do a lot of them, for example, how do I cope with HR, because at this moment I am a teacher and I have to lead people... so we do a lot of training here at school... both from the school's side and from the department's side... and I take every opportunity for myself and the staff because it can only improve our schools and then help us improve the academics of our learners. Our results improved by just a bit more than 2% in my first full year of leading this school.”

The SMT concurred with the responses of the principal, with SMT1 explaining that CPTD occurred regularly, with the staff having training sessions at least once a term. SMT1 mentioned that because the WCED required documentation proving that CPTD had taken place within a specific time frame, the principal had to behave bureaucratically to ensure that the school was compliant. However, the school went above and beyond what the WCED expects of them in terms of CPTD.

### **SMT1**

“... we do CPTD at least once a term, but you need to get something that you want to improve on... I don't even count the amount of times we develop ourselves anymore, we get external people in as well... but we have to submit documents to WCED proving that we have done CPTD with staff every six months. So, the principal always promotes CPTD through her SMT by highlighting the plans and the goals of the school for the year and how we plan to reach it, so she makes sure the staff is developed and aligned with the goals of the school.”

SMT2 and SMT3 highlighted the importance of change and the growing gap in experience between the teacher and today's learners, a gap that CPTD helped to bridge.

### **SMT2**

"...I think with the speed of change in the modern era, there is no longer the time for teachers to reach their 50s and say I am not going to learn new stuff...there is a 30-year gap between you as the teacher and the learner...so in order to improve results, we have to improve ourselves as teachers too...."

In both the focus group interview and semi-structured interview, the references to CPTD sessions were consistent, with all the participants mentioning that the WCED provided an eight-hour workshop called *Changed Mindset* where the teachers and leadership of the school were trained on how to deal with learners of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. All the participants felt that this workshop was worthwhile, though SMT2 claimed that the WCED provided the same workshop every year with nothing new, despite the fact that each year the type of learner entering the school was a little different with a different set of needs.

### **SMT2**

"... but I don't like the repetitive training. Just last week we had progressions and promotions training and it was the same training like 10 years ago... nothing changed, there's nothing new."

## **4.3.2 Negative attitudes towards the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS)**

At school A the principal and SMT felt that IQMS had merit but was not administered so that teachers could develop themselves properly. The IQMS process was mostly seen as extra administrative work.

### **Principal**

"...to tell you the truth, I don't think it is working. It's just a lot of paperwork that needs to be filled in but nothing comes of it, your peers just come sit in your class once a year and score you from 1 to 4...my personal opinion? It is just extra administration work."

SMT2 agreed that IQMS was nothing more than filling in paperwork and served no purpose in identifying one's strengths and weaknesses. It was suggested that teachers simply did it for the extra 1.5% remuneration the DoE provides as an incentive for completing the process. SMT1 ended the discussion by noting that pressures placed on the principal from district and head office inevitably rendered his leadership style more bureaucratic, but only to ensure the school's compliance in terms of administrative work. It seems that even though the principal, according to the data reported in section 4.2.1, above, is mostly transformational and participative, the government does not allow him to employ his own leadership style because of administrative pressures placed on him from above.

### **SMT2**

"I can lie about it, but IQMS is not very reliable at our school because it is an exercise of paperwork and much less professional development for teachers. Its more about compensation. IQMS is about filling in papers and transferring scores from one sheet to the next. We can say that leadership could make it count for more... We just sign each other's papers. The principle behind IQMS is great because educators must be assessed to identify their weakness."

### **SMT1**

"Mr X (the principal) is a bureaucratic leader during this process because it has to be done."

School B had more or less the same opinion as school A. The principal of school B felt that the principle behind IQMS was a good one, but that schools had to be given more time to administer the process. She emphasised that IQMS should be seen as a working document: teachers should identify their shortcomings on the IQMS document and periodically return to it to see whether they had developed in the areas identified. SMT3 echoed how the participants felt from both schools by suggesting that the IQMS process was not a true reflection of the capabilities of the teacher. Novice teachers could come into the teaching profession and teach something to a teacher who had been in the profession for more than 25 years, so the marking guideline used to measure teachers, according to the participants from both school A and school B, did not allow teachers to be realistic about their strengths and shortcomings.

### **School B – Principal**

“I don’t know if IQMS is the correct way of doing it, assessing yourself once a year is just not enough. IQMS is supposed to be like a working document, so you going to say right, this is what I project, and then in 3 months’ time, let’s check what happened or why did it not happen. So IQMS is just something where we filled in papers and is a tedious process... I cannot say that IQMS has been successful over the year, so I have my doubts.”

### **SMT3**

“I think it is a lot of paperwork. I also do not think that it is a true reflection and his or her capabilities or growth. And the point system used to measure yourself, I don’t think it is a realistic way of looking where a teacher is at. When do you deserve a 4? When you have been teaching for 25 years? A new teacher can be brilliant at something and I can actually learn something from that teacher who has been teaching only for one year.”

The analysis of the data both supports and contradicts the literature available on the IQMS process. The participants acknowledged the worth of the principle behind the IQMS process but did not deem it as effective in practice as projected by the available literature. As discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.7, one of the mandatory processes that the principal should oversee is the IQMS, a policy designed by the DoE to help teachers identify their limitations and develop their skills to improve teaching and learning. Nozidumo and Mtapuri (2014) explain that the principal plays a vital role in implementing CPTD through the IQMS process, which highlights the importance of both the development of the teacher and establishing the school’s needs. Through IQMS, teachers can identify their shortcomings and develop their teaching skills.

### **4.3.3 Mandatory CPTD during the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak**

During the focus group interview at school A, the SMT mentioned that they had not had a lot of CPTD sessions of late because of the worldwide pandemic. SMT2 however highlighted that the principal had chosen to focus on CPTD sessions that would enable the staff and the learners to continue with the academic programme online. The group noted that the principal was thinking ahead in terms of academic success, but also conceded that the initiative was not very successful because most learners could not

afford the equipment to continue with online instruction from home. At School A, CPTD was therefore successful in that the developmental sessions allowed teachers to upskill themselves to be available to learners should another lockdown period be instated by the government. At the same time, it was not very helpful for the learners.

### **SMT2**

“...unfortunately we didn’t have as much interactive CPTD sessions because of COVID... in the last year, the principal focused on CPTD sessions with Google classroom to help the teachers get familiar with technology in case the schools had to close again, so he was thinking ahead. Although it wasn’t very successful because our kids don’t have the means to sit at home and continue with learning.”

SMT1 pointed out that their WhatsApp groups allowed them to assist the learners at home to an extent. They were able to remind learners about work and clear up any uncertainties the learners might have had. SMT1 also mentioned that the school prepared notes for each subject that were printed in booklet form for each learner to continue learning at home.

### **SMT1**

“...we copied booklets of notes for learners and had a WhatsApp group with our learners. This helped us to make sure the learners are learning.”

By way of interpretation, it is evident that both schools attempted to move to online instruction to continue with teaching and learning so that they could maintain their academic success. Although the schools used different models, school A attempting to use Google Classroom and school B using Microsoft Teams, both applications enabled the schools to teach online. Although the process at school A was not very successful, the staff, under the leadership of the principal, was able to find alternative ways to continue with teaching and learning. School B, on the other hand, was very successful in that it was able to function as an online school. The results therefore reveal that while the schools were not able to continue with their set CPTD sessions, they underwent mandatory CPTD in an attempt to continue the teaching and learning process by acquiring the skills to teach online.

### **School B – SMT2**

“You know every school had to comply with protocol and be creative when it

came to their teaching during the pandemic. We were never an online school... but we taught for three months from home and her leadership style allowed this to happen. Because being transformative and participative... she's not scared to take risks. The one thing that Ms X (the principal) was hard on, was the fact that we must start teaching as soon as possible and a week into Covid training started for the teachers and a week later we taught like a fully functional online school.”

### **SMT1**

“If it wasn't for the change in leadership, I doubt we would have taught online... only the teachers had email addresses... within a week we went from nothing to having 1000 learners with profiles on teams and very active in the teaching and learning. I mean it was a battle but under her leadership we got it.”

Theme 2 has highlighted the importance of the life-long learning that teachers and principals should undergo to ensure the academic success of learners. The participants from school A emphasised that learners come to school with 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution (4<sup>th</sup>IR) knowledge and easy online access to content related to the subject taught in class. The SMT of school A also felt that a teacher has constantly to develop to produce well-rounded learners. Both principals indicated in their semi-structured interviews that they had recourse to external developmental sessions for themselves for insight into best practices regarding leadership. Both schools had a negative attitude towards the process of IQMS although they acknowledged that the principle behind the idea of assessing oneself had merit. The schools were unable to continue with their intended CPTD programmes as scheduled on their yearly calendar due to the Covid-19 outbreak, but focused instead on training teachers to deliver lessons on online platforms. In this regard, school B was the more successful in that they were teaching online by week 3 of the national lockdown, losing minimal teaching and learning time with the learners.

#### **4.4 Research sub-question 3**

**How do the principals, through their leadership styles, assess and support curriculum delivery through the SMTs?**

The final research question of this study sought to ascertain to what extent the principals, through their leadership styles, played a role in the successful delivery of the curriculum at these schools. Despite facing considerable hardships and the additional blow of the Covid-19 pandemic, both schools were able effectively to complete the curriculum, maintaining or improving their academic results over the last three years.

#### **4.4.1 The hierarchy**

During the semi-structured interviews, both principals highlighted the importance of a hierarchy when it comes to ensuring that the curriculum is successfully delivered. Although the SMT oversees an entire faculty such as languages, each language has a subject head who is a specialist in that discipline. It seemed that the principals depended a great deal on the subject heads to ensure that the curriculum was delivered effectively. The principal at school A noted that it was the responsibility of the subject head to conduct regular classroom visits for their specific subject to ensure that teachers were sufficiently skilled and well prepared for teaching the learners. The observations of the subject heads are passed on to their HoDs; if the HoD is the subject head as well, their observations are discussed on a quarterly basis with the principal in an SMT meeting.

##### **Principal – school A**

“...we have a subject head for each subject. They have been tasked to see that the curriculum has been taught. They need to go sit in in the class of the teachers for example to monitor how the teachers teach... we have a quarterly meeting... and we discuss how far we came with the curriculum... if there is a shortage, the teachers come in over weekends or in holidays to finish the curriculum. So, the SMT meets with the subject heads and they report back to me during our SMT meetings.”

##### **Principal – school B**

“Okay... let’s start with the hierarchy, so if I go to my subject heads, the subject head will be the first level... I have a meeting with them every Wednesday and I keep a register with dates where they do classroom visits and where they can



provide me with feedback on what is happening in these teachers' classes. The subject head also monitors the results and maybe see if there is something you can do to help the person improve the results.... We have a team's folder and every teacher drops content in there so we have a whole library of resources. So, if I see learners struggle with cash flow statements for example, I will go to the team's library and make use of the resources... we also cross teach certain topics, where we can benefit from each other."

To pursue the emerging theme – principals, through their leadership styles, assessing and supporting curriculum delivery through the SMT – the study engaged with the question of planning. In this regard, the principals and SMT members were asked about the procedures involved in macro- and micro-planning at the school to maximise teaching and learning in each classroom.

The principal of school A stated that the school compiled the academic calendar for the school and the various departments used this as the basis for their own term planners. The principal also mentioned that because the deputy principal, who is the head of academics, assumes the responsibility of curriculum coordinator, he arranges meetings with the various subject departments to ensure that the planning of the departments does not contradict that of the school's year planner. The departmental plans are presented to the SMT by the curriculum coordinator and discussed. It emerged that only when the SMT, chaired by the principal, was happy with the planning of the subject head, would the subject heads present their planning for the term to the rest of the teachers in the team.

#### **Principal – school A**

"We have a year plan that we do the previous year, then we have term planners. The subject heads have meetings with their team of teachers and they bring their planning to the SMT. The deputy principal, who is the curriculum coordinator also sits with the subject heads where they outline and the subject heads takes it to their team."

During the focus group interview, the SMT of school A highlighted that the timetable for the following academic year was compiled and given to the subject heads at the SMT level, indicating that the teaching staff does not participate in this process. The subject heads distribute the timetables to their departments, when the staff see for the

first time the classes and grades that they will be teaching in the following academic year. A similar situation was described by the principal of school B, where the timetable is set up the year before, allowing for thorough planning to take place within the subject departments. An aspect of the leadership style of the principal was revealed when she noted that she allowed the deputy principal, the head of academics, to execute the planning around the academic portfolio. This clearly showed that the principal encouraged the staff to lead within their assigned portfolios (cf. Chapter 2, sections 2.10.2 and 2.10.3). The SMT of school B referred to the School Improvement Plan (SIP) that they use as a basis for their macro planning and that has to be submitted to the district office for its implementation to be monitored by the circuit manager

### **Principal – school B**

“One of the deputy principals is the head of academics, so she has her own way of doing things, so again I have trust that my subject head is up and running... the timetable is done the previous year and the HoDs together with the subject heads will start planning in their own subject teams.”

### **SMT1**

“...we also have to submit a school improvement plan to the district.”

## **4.4.2 Support provided to novice teachers to deliver the curriculum effectively**

When the question of novice teachers arose, and how the schools supported new teachers to deliver the curriculum effectively, the participants made an array of comments but the data reveals a kind of synergy at work. Both school A and school B provide support to these teachers so that the academic success of the school can be maintained.

The principal of school A noted that each novice teacher is assigned a mentor, and this mentorship role is taken on by either a member of the SMT or an experienced teacher in the subject team or department. The principal again emphasised the importance of the line function, explaining the process that the SMT member or the novice teacher should follow if issues arise during the mentorship period. This indicates that he respected his staff and trusted them to execute their duties to the best of their ability. The principal of school B evinced similar sentiments but stressed

that the subject head plays a pivotal role in mentoring the novice teacher. Within the subject team, the pacesetter of a specific grade ensures that the novice teacher receives all the necessary resources to be able to deliver the curriculum successfully in class. SMT2 at school B echoed the remarks on mentorship made by both principals. It can therefore be inferred that newly-qualified teachers are provided with the necessary guidance to function optimally in contributing to the academic success of the learners.

### **Principal – school A**

“...we give them a mentor, it is either an SMT member or an experienced teacher and it becomes their task to guide that person. If there are any issues the mentor or SMT member will report it to me and I will step in and assist in terms of support to deliver the curriculum by sending senior staff with good subject knowledge to sit in a lesson and provide feedback.”

### **Principal – school B**

The subject head becomes the mentor; the subject head uses the pacesetter to provide notes and plan of action for the grade.

### **SMT2 – school B**

Although she [the principal] doesn't do it herself, she has systems of mentorship and a culture of welcome is at school.

SMT1 at school A observed that, even though the novice teacher was allocated a mentor, it remained the responsibility of the HoD, an SMT member, to provide him or her with all the necessary resources. The first resource the newly qualified teacher received was the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP). How the ATP works is explained step-by-step by the HoD. All other requisite resources, such as chalk, whiteboard markers, textbooks, etc., are also provided to the novice teacher by the HoD. The novice teachers receive training on how to set up quality assessments, how to mark accurately as well as how to moderate examination question papers and marked scripts. SMT1 at school A also highlighted that because their learners came from a community with a poor socio-economic background, they could become very difficult in terms of discipline. SMT1 declared their practice was to remind the novice teacher that doing something wrong was not necessarily bad, and encouraged them to ask questions and raise any concerns they had with the principal.

## **School A – SMT1**

“So we as the HoDs make sure that they have their ATPS and that they have all the resources we use to ensure that the curriculum is delivered successfully. We sit with them and explain how the ATPS work but also make sure that they are happy. Because you know we have difficult learners. I remind the novice teachers that teaching is a master of time, there is no right way, but we learn as time passes, don't think there is something wrong with you because you could not finish, let's discuss the matter. We sit with them to show them how to set up a question paper, the requirements, mark allocations, etc.”

SMT2 provided a different perspective on how the novice teacher is supported, noting that the principal put structures in place, such as the mentorship programme and line function leadership. However, SMT2 differentiated between delivering the curriculum and discipline, maintaining that the two had to be separated in order to determine where the novice teacher needs guidance. In this regard, SMT2 stated that the subject head assisted the novice teacher with the content of the subject, while the head of discipline at the school assisted with any disciplinary issues.

## **SMT2**

“What helps a lot is the structures that is already in place. The subject head assist with the content, the head of discipline will help with discipline issues. There is a difference between curriculum delivery and discipline issues. You know I sat in one of my novice teachers' lessons and she started with an ice-breaker and I thought wow when last did I do that and I could feel I am in a new teacher's class.”

The findings indicate that the school principals understand their role as leaders in South African schools. They also understand the value of teaching staff, and seek to ensure that the teaching staff, including the principals themselves, are continuously developing to stay abreast of the current pedagogies. With various structures in place at both schools, the principals can monitor curriculum delivery and address any issues arising, while supporting novice teachers by providing mentorship through the SMT or veteran teachers.

#### **4.5 Chapter summary**

Themes one and three – the leadership styles employed by principals, and principals, through their leadership styles, assessing and supporting curriculum delivery through the SMT – resonated with moral purpose, coherence making and relationship building (Fullan, 2002). The principals of both school A and school B sought to make positive and meaningful changes at their schools to maintain and improve the academic results of learners. Theme two – leadership styles promoting professional development – satisfied Fullan’s (2002) criteria of knowledge creation and understanding the process of change. Both principals enthusiastically supported and encouraged CPTD among staff.

Chapter 5 presents a detailed discussion of the leadership styles identified in each of the three themes emerging from the data. The chapter provides recommendations for further research while acknowledging the limitations that I encountered during the write-up of the thesis.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS**

### **5.1 Discussion**

As discussed in Chapter 1, section 1.7, the aim of this research was to understand the role played by the leadership style[s] of principals at selected public high schools in addressing the academic performance of learners. In response to the main question – What is the relationship between principals’ leadership styles and learners’ academic performance in public high schools in Cape Town? – the study found that the leadership style of the principal informs the day-to-day functionality of the school, creates the culture of the school and, above all, plays an integral part in the academic success of learners by influencing existing structures or implementing new structures to improve or maintain academic performance. The findings of the study were framed by the theoretical contribution of Fullan (2002), which postulated five significant characteristics for principals to display to improve or maintain success at their schools. The following characteristics were evident in the interpretation of the findings and will be revisited in this chapter:

- Moral purpose: acting to make a positive change at schools by closing the academic gap between high- and low-performing learners;
- Understanding that the process of change occurs through the process of reculturation;
- Building relationships with staff and motivating them to lay a firm foundation for improving academic performance;
- Knowledge creation: the process of knowledge-seeking and knowledge giving;
- Coherence making: being concerned with how learners learn and consulting with stakeholders to achieve the vision of the school.

For easy reading, the chapter is organised under the following sub-headings:

- 5.1 Discussion
- 5.2 Recommendations
- 5.3 Limitations
- 5.4 Conclusion

The preceding chapter analysed and interpreted the findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the principals and the focus-group interviews conducted with the members of the SMTs at two public high schools in Cape Town. These schools were selected because they achieved continuous improvement in academic results despite being faced with many socio-economic hardships. In this chapter, the implications of the findings are discussed. Each theme will be discussed in relation to how, under the leadership of the principal, the schools improved or maintained the academic success of their learners.

#### 5.1.1 Leadership in relation to holistic development

The data that was gathered to answer the first research question – *Which leadership styles do the principals in these public high schools employ?* – is presented in Chapter 4, section 4.2.1. This data suggests that school A and school B have the same end goal, which is not just the success of the school, but also the well-being and continuous academic improvement of the learners. Moreover, the leadership styles of the principals were very similar, although the avenues used to attain the desired results were different.

The principal of school A recognised that structures of discipline are needed for academic success, but also insisted that learners should come to school for the purpose of learning. The results in respect of school A (Chapter 4, section 4.2.1) indicate that the onus of achieving academic success cannot fall on the school alone; it is essential also for learners play an ongoing part in their own success by understanding the purpose of school, entering the school building to learn and continuously working to improve their results. Respondent SMT1 from school A acknowledged the importance of academics, but mainly for the confidence and satisfaction that doing well at school afforded the learners. The findings therefore suggest that the results that the school achieves at the end of the grade 12 year, are a true reflection of both the school and the learners. This is evident in how the school accepts learners that have been expelled from other schools and is able to keep these learners in the education system to complete their schooling despite the many socio-economic hardships they face at home.

The principal of school B felt strongly that teachers should have enough content knowledge to ensure that their teaching is successful; but she too stressed that learners had to play a part in ensuring their academic success by taking responsibility for their own learning. It is therefore evident that the principals shared a perception of how learners contributed to the success of the school by taking responsibility for their learning and having a clear understanding of their purpose at the school. The SMT of School A had strong opinions on looking not only at the top achieving learners at the school but also at learners who struggled with academic work but were improving and were now passing rather than failing. The data suggested that their perception of a successful school in terms of learner performance was focused on closing the gap between high- and low-performing learners, and ensuring that the culture of the school was inclusionary and afforded a place for each and every learner. One of the SMT members commented that discipline also makes a school successful. This idea overlaps with the belief of the principal of school A, that if discipline structures were in place at school, the culture of the school would conduce to maximum effective teaching and learning taking place.

In unpacking his first criterion, *moral purpose*, Fullan (2002) insists that principals should be concerned about closing the gap between high- and low-performing learners. He suggests that learners should come to school for a purpose and teachers should help learners to realise that purpose. I therefore conclude from the findings that both schools, under the leadership of their current principals, are acting with the intention of introducing positive change at their schools and ensuring good structures are in place to foster learning. But according to my analysis of the results in Chapter 4, section 4.2.2, the participants' perceptions of a successful school did not only stem directly from academic performance, but derived from several factors contributing to the academic success of learners. These will be discussed below.

### 5.1.2 Relationship building

Members of the SMTs as well as the principals of both schools stressed the importance of relationship building to the ongoing academic success of the learners at the respective schools. I inferred from the findings that, for learners to receive quality education at school, relationship building has to be fostered among learners, parents,



staff and the leader of the school (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.2). In Chapter 2, section 2.3, there was discussion of a range of research on leadership conducted in international and national contexts. It was evident from this that successful schools, together with improving and maintaining the academic performance of learners, also promoted positive and pragmatic values such as integrity, moral purpose, *relationship building* (communities of practice), kindness, trust, to name a few (Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2011; Moos et al., 2012; Day et al., 2016). My argument is that because excellence is the result of a group effort, leadership simply cannot succeed without relationship building.

In the case of school A, the leadership style of the principal secured relationship building by taking the learners on leadership camps to help them find their identity and form bonds with their peers (Chapter 4, section 4.3.2). These camps enabled learners to get to know each other outside of the classroom, which resulted in a closely knitted community. The findings further suggested that because these learners had experienced relationship building, they had each other's best interests at heart, taking notes for their peers should they be absent or explaining a concept if another learner has not grasped it in class. It is therefore reasonable to argue from the findings that the principal of school A contributed indirectly to the academic success of the learners by using the leadership camps to instil a sense of relationship among the learners and staff.

The principal of school B was also concerned with relationship building, but went about it in a different way. Her concern with values confirmed the transformational leadership style of this principal. She built relationships with learners through regular meetings at which she commended them for showing progress, irrespective of how small it was (Chapter 4, section 4.3.2). Because of this positive reinforcement, learners were motivated to improve their results. The stance of the principal was echoed by SMT 2 and SMT 3 at school B. Fullan (2002) regards relationship building as indispensable to leading a school in a culture of change.

### 5.1.3 Leadership styles perceived

A range of leadership styles was presented in chapter 4. Both principals had to be bureaucratic leaders, not necessarily by choice, but because of demands set by the

district or head office that required paperwork for compliance. A bureaucratic leader is one who follows rules and procedures attentively (Kalkan, 2016). There is a danger, however, that excessive bureaucracy can stifle a culture of change, innovation and creation, negatively affecting the academic performance of learners (Kalkan, 2016).

Although neither of the principals was able to identify their leadership style in response to the question, *What leadership styles do you employ at your school?*, they were certainly able to relate to the definitions of leadership styles provided to them (see Appendix G).

The principal of school A was seemingly under the impression that leadership styles did not evolve over time, yet he himself was a catalyst for change. This can be seen in the way he distinguished three basic leadership styles according to an old-fashioned model at odds with the framework of leadership styles discussed in Chapter 2 and highlighted in the SASP (2015). Below is an example of such a response:

Principal – school A

“... autocratic principal who just informs the staff this and that must be done, there is no real communication.”

It became clear that although the principal of school A lacked the conceptual vocabulary to identify it, he was employing transformational leadership by instilling a sense of values in both the learners and the staff. This was underlined by SMT2 of school A, who quoted the question constantly posed by the principal: “What do we as teachers model for our kids in terms of values? Do we model forgiveness, relationship building, teamwork, because we cannot expect these kids to absorb these values if the leader doesn’t instil or model these values at school”? As a transformational leader, the principal sought to inculcate a sense of values within the staff, which filtered down to the learners. These values instilled a sense of pride and responsibility among the learners and this in turn improved or maintained their academic success.

It also emerged, through the focus group interviews with the SMT of school A, that SMT2 perceived the principal of school A to be participative. This was evident in how he prepared for the day-to-day functioning of the school by starting the school day with a discussion with the SMT of plans for the day ahead (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.3). The principal’s leadership style undoubtedly encouraged positive change to occur at

the school. I can therefore argue that the leadership of the principal improved the academic results of the learners, to the extent that the school achieved an 81 per cent pass rate under his leadership (see Chapter 3, table 3.1). This data mirrors the findings of Okoth (2000), Kimacia (2007), Orodho (2014) and Ibrahim & Orodho (2014), who argued that participatory leadership conducted to a sense of unity within the school, which in turn improved the academic results of learners.

The response of the principal at school B was similar to that of the principal at school A when she was asked which leadership style she employed at her school. However, she was more informed about current notions of leadership and had a better understanding of them.

#### Principal – school B

“Look there is a lot, it can be one where I am sitting on my chair and you are doing everything.... or it can be where we say, right we are a team we are going to do this together and I allow you to give your input and we discuss it.... or it can be where I tell people this is the story; no discussions and I expect you to do that or it can be a combination of the lot.”

Looking at the analysis of the data, the principal of school B was able to identify, through the use of examples, a repertoire of leadership styles such as laissez-faire, transactional, participative, and transformational. Although the principal was of the opinion that she was more transformational, SMT1 felt that she was more participative, while SMT2 and SMT3 agreed that she was transformational. The data therefore suggested that the principal of school B used a combination of these two leadership styles to lead the staff and learners and ensure the academic success of the learners (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.3).

#### 5.1.4 Knowledge creation

My analysis of the data relating to the second research question – *How are current leadership styles in these public high schools promoting professional development?* – suggest that the principals of both school A and school B understood the importance of CPTD (see Chapter 4, section 4.3.1). Both principals encouraged CPTD amongst their staff. It is reasonable to argue from the results that the CPTD programmes

encouraged by these principals can be seen to be a contributing factor to the academic success of the learners. The principals developed themselves to become better leaders, while the teachers attended CPTD programmes that focused on their needs, thereby ensuring that learners were provided with quality teaching and learning time which in turn improved or maintained their academic success.

This finding can be construed in relation to Fullan's (2002) criterion of knowledge creation. He argues that information can only become knowledge once it is shared. While emphasising the importance of professional development, he notes that leaders should not only promote CPTD but participate in it too. (cf. Steyn, 2011; Ovesni et al., 2019; see Chapter 2, section 2.7). This development must always seek to meet the needs of both the learners and the teachers.

Interestingly, all the participants shared the same negative sentiments regarding the IQMS process administered at the public high schools in South Africa (see Chapter 4, section 4.3.2). Although the principals of both schools agreed that CPTD was vital for the academic success of learners, the IQMS process did not receive a favourable response. The data suggests that the IQMS should rather be seen as an ongoing process, in terms of which teachers and principals use the document to develop themselves, and record that development, throughout the year. As things stand, IQMS is administered in these schools not for the purpose of developing teachers as educators or the principal as a leader, but to comply with government requirements and receive the paltry additional remuneration offered for completing the IQMS forms. It was concluded that at both schools, because of official pressure, the principals have no choice but to employ a bureaucratic leadership style to complete the IQMS process.

During the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak, the principals were faced with the academic calendar being disrupted. According to the results, both the teachers and the learners at schools A and B were not ready to shift to online learning. There was a lack of skills on the part of the teachers and problems with access to the internet and devices for learners that together made it difficult to continue with the teaching and learning programme online. I therefore argue that the WCED should shift its focus to a more 4IR approach in developing teachers through CPTD to teach online. School A attempted to move to online platforms but failed because of factors such as the time frame, teachers being inexperienced in online teaching and learners not having the

necessary tools to join the online classes. However, the data indicates that, through the leadership of the principal, the school made use of other avenues to ensure that learning continued. Packs of printed notes were distributed to learners and WhatsApp groups were created to check in on the learner's progress at home.

On the other hand, School B was able to move to online instruction within a week and the success of this initiative was evident in their 2020 results, when the school achieved a pass rate of above 90% in the NSC examination. Although this school serves learners that come from communities enduring great hardship, the principal encouraged and herself took part in extensive online learning training. This allowed for teaching and learning to continue during the lockdown periods. The efforts of both the principals aligned with Fullan's (2002) understanding of 'leadership in a culture of change', in that they committed to CPTD to reculture notions of teaching and learning so that learners were still able to cover the prescribed curriculum and have a successful academic year.

#### 5.1.5 Vertical structures monitoring and assessing successful curriculum delivery

My analysis of the data relating to the last research question – *How do the principals, through their leadership styles, assess and support the curriculum delivery through the SMTs?* – suggested that the leadership style of the principals at both school A and school B allowed for participation from staff within subject disciplines. Both principals are instructional leaders, ensuring that vertical structures allow the subject heads and members of the SMT to continuously monitor the delivery of the curriculum and report back should there be any areas of concern.

The vertical structures in place at both schools ensured that planning for the academic year is meticulous and well structured, which ensured that the schools functioned optimally to maximise the teaching and learning time and thus promote the academic success of the learners.

The last area of concern was how novice teachers are supported to deliver the curriculum. Again, the stable vertical structures in place at both schools allowed for ample support to be provided to newly-qualified teachers to teach effectively. The mentors assigned to novice teachers at both schools, under the leadership of the

principal, were veteran teachers familiar with the curriculum. Novice teachers were therefore guided by subject specialists in their discipline and the academic performance of the learners was undiminished.

It is clear that the findings reported above are in line with the theoretical recommendations of Fullan (2002), who argues that the leadership style of the principal should lean toward transforming the school through a community of practice committed to a sustainable approach to addressing whatever challenges the school faces. In the case of the two schools investigated, these challenges boil down to sustaining the successful academic performance of learners from severely deprived and under-resourced backgrounds.

The findings have implications for both policy and practice. First, the findings provide governing authorities such as DBE, WCED and other stakeholders with a model of leadership for schools whose learners come from socio-economically depressed communities. The leadership of these principals enables the schools to maintain and improve the academic results of their learners. This suggests that the authorities may need to revisit their training programmes for principals leading schools in South Africa, showing them how to transform underperforming schools to improve the academic results of their learners.

## **5. 2 Limitations of the study**

Two limitations were identified that occurred mainly during the data collection process.

### **5.2.1 Timeframe**

During the focus-group interviews, some participants spoke at greater length than others. The result was that there was insufficient time for all the participants to discuss their lived experiences in detail. Should focus group interviews be used in future research, participants should be reminded that the aim is a group discussion around the question posed, rather than one participant articulating all the details and the others in the group agreeing with these.

### **5.2.2 Gatekeepers' trust**

The gatekeepers' trust and support were seen as another limitation in this study. During the first contact phase via email, none of the schools responded. Only after a follow-up email did one school respond positively with a proposed date and time for me to visit the school and conduct the interviews with the participants. I had to go directly to the other schools to make an appointment to meet with the principal. During the data collection process, I had to return twice to one school because the participants of the focus group interviews were not available together to do the interview. The principal at school B, who acted as the gatekeeper, created a WhatsApp group with the participants and I was able to contact all of them simultaneously, which prevented a similar no-show situation.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

#### **5.3.1 Recommendations for principals at schools with poor learner academic performance**

First, it is recommended that principals adopt a culture of change at their schools by identifying the shortcomings of the school and addressing these serially. According to Fullan (2002), such shortcomings cannot be addressed simultaneously by insisting on a shortcut to transformation; instead, the principal as leader needs to understand the process of change and work hard day after day for reculturing to take place.

Secondly, principals should foster positive relations with the staff, especially the teaching staff, as they are the most important resource the leader of a school has at his or her disposal to enact change. These positive relations will become a contributing factor to the academic success of the school.

Thirdly, it is recommended that the principals continuously develop the staff to embrace the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution and stay abreast of technological developments so as to maximise the teaching and learning time.

#### **5.3.2 Recommendations to WCED and DBE**

First, it is recommended that the governing authorities such as WCED and DBE allow principals to explore and employ their own leadership style by reducing administrative tasks that force principals to become bureaucratic leaders.

Secondly, it is recommended that WCED and DBE revise their CPTD programmes so as not to present the same programmes year on year. Teachers are willing to participate only if they can truly benefit.

### 5.3.3 Recommendations for further research

First, in this research the sample consisted of only two principals and six SMT members, which was deemed enough to satisfy the aims and objectives of the study. However, a more in-depth study with a much bigger sample has to be conducted in South African schools to gain more extensive insight into the leadership styles of principals and how they address the academic performance of learners.

Secondly, it is recommended that a wide range of schools participate in the study rather than only schools from the lowest quintiles.

Thirdly, based on my observations during the interview process, it is recommended that the participants have access to the research instruments before the interview[s] to eliminate the possibility of the misinterpretation of questions asked by the researcher during the data collection process.

Fourthly, it is recommended that responses to the new Quality Management Systems (QMS) process which is being implemented in 2022 in South African schools be investigated. It could not form part of this study because the last mandatory CPTD completed by teachers was the IQMS questionnaire, which sought to obtain teachers' attitudes towards the revised CPTD implemented by the DBE.

## 5.4 Chapter summary

This chapter presented a discussion of the findings as outlined and analysed in Chapter 4, which responded to three research questions. Chapter 5 also offered a holistic overview of the findings that revealed a clear relationship between the leadership style of the principal and the learners' academic performance at these two public high schools near Cape Town in the Western Cape province of South Africa. The two principals employed transformational leadership or participative leadership, or in some instances, a combination of both, to achieve and maintain high academic standards among the learners at their schools. The chapter concluded by describing



a couple of limitations encountered by the study and offering several recommendations.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, D., Kutty, G.R. & Zabidi, Z.M. 2017. Educational leadership for the 21st century. *International Online Journal of Educational Leadership*, 1(1):1-4.
- Adeyemi, T.O. 2010. Principals leadership styles and teachers job performance in senior secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies*, 2(6):83-91.
- Allen, N., Grigsby, B. & Peters, M.L. 2015. Does leadership matter? Examining the relationship among transformational leadership, school climate, and student achievement. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 10(2):1-22.
- Amanchukwu, R.N., Stanley, G.J. & Ololube, N.P. 2015. A review of leadership theories, principles and styles and their relevance to educational management. *Management*, 5(1):6-14.
- Anderson, M. 2017. Transformational leadership in education: A review of existing literature. *International Social Science Review*, 93(1): 1-13.
- Andriani, S., Kesumawati, N. & Kristiawan, M. 2018. The influence of the transformational leadership and work motivation on teachers' performance. *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, 7(7):19-29.
- Ansari, S., Panhwar, A.H. & Mahesar, G.A. 2016. Mixed methods research: ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings. *ARIEL- An International Research Journal of English Language and Literature*, 27.
- Arain, M., Campbell, M.J., Cooper, C.L. & Lancaster, G.A. 2010. What is a pilot or feasibility study? A review of current practice and editorial policy. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 10(1):1-7.
- Arif, S., Zainudin, H.K. & Hamid, A. 2019. Influence of leadership, organizational culture, work motivation, and job satisfaction of performance principles of senior high school in Medan City. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute – Journal*, 2(4): 239-254.

- Avci, A. 2015. Investigation of transformational and transactional leadership styles of school principals, and evaluation of them in terms of educational administration. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 10(20):2758-2767.
- Bafadal, I., Nurabadi, A., Soepriyanto, Y. & Gunawan, I. 2020. Primary school principal performance measurement. *Proceedings of the 2nd Early Childhood and Primary Childhood Education Conference (ECPE 2020)*. Amsterdam: Atlantis Press: 19-23, <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201112.004>
- Barnes, C.A., Camburn, E., Sanders, B.R. & Sebastian, J. 2010. Developing instructional leaders: Using mixed methods to explore the black box of planned change in principals' professional practice. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 46(2): 241-279.
- Bartholomew, K., Henderson, A.J.Z. & Marcia, J.E. 2000. Coding semi-structured interviews in social psychological research. In H. Reis & C.M. Judd (eds.). *Handbook of research methods in social and personality psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 286-312.
- Bastian, K.C. & Henry, G.T. 2015. The apprentice: pathways to the principalship and student achievement. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 51(4):600-639.
- Bayar, A. 2014. The Components of Effective Professional Development Activities in Terms of Teachers' Perspective. *Online Submission*, 6(2): 319-327.
- Bellibaş, M.Ş. 2015. Principals' and teachers' perceptions of efforts by principals to improve teaching and learning in Turkish middle schools. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 15(6):472-1785.
- Bellibaş, M.Ş., Kılınç, A.Ç. & Polatcan, M. 2021. The moderation role of transformational leadership in the effect of instructional leadership on teacher professional learning and instructional practice: an integrated leadership perspective. *Educational Administration Quarterly*:161-179.
- Bhatti, N., Maitlo, G.M., Shaikh, N., Hashmi, M.A. & Shaikh, F.M. 2012. The impact of autocratic and democratic leadership style on job satisfaction. *International Business Research*, 5(2):192-201.

- Bless, C., Higson-Smith, C. & Sithole, S.L. 2013. *Fundamentals of social research methods: an African perspective*. Cape Town: Juta.
- Blom, M. 2016. Leadership studies: a Scandinavian inspired way forward? *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 32(2):106-111.
- Bono, J.E. & Judge, T.A. 2004. Personality and transformational and transactional leadership: a meta-analysis. *Journal of applied psychology*, 89(5): 901.
- Boyce, J. & Bowers, A.J. 2018. Toward an evolving conceptualization of instructional leadership as leadership for learning: meta-narrative review of 109 quantitative studies across 25 years. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 56(2):161-182.
- Branch, G.F., Hanushek, E.A. & Rivkin, S.G. 2013. School leaders' matter. *Education Next*, 13(1):62-69.
- Bredeson, P.V. 2006. The school principals' role in teacher professional development. *Journal of In-Service Education*, 26(2): 385-401.
- Brown, C. and Militello, M. 2016. Principal's perceptions of effective professional development in schools. *Journal of educational administration*.
- Bruggencate, G., Luyten, H., Scheerens, J. & Slegers, P. 2012. Modeling the influence of school leaders on student achievement: how can school leaders make a difference? *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48(4):699-732.
- Burns, N. & Grove, S.K. 2001. *The practice of nursing research: conduct, critique & utilisation*. 4th ed. Philadelphia, PA: WB Saunders.
- Bush, T. 2012. International perspectives on leadership development: making a difference. *Professional Development in Education*, 38(4):663-678.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2012.660701>
- Bush T., Glover, D., Bischoff, T., Moloj, K. & Heystek, J. 2006. *School leadership, management and governance in South Africa: a systematic literature review*. Johannesburg: Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance.
- Bush, T. 2018. Preparation and induction for school principals: global perspectives. *Management in Education*, 32(2):66-71.

- Bush, T., Kiggundu, E. & Moorosi, P. 2011. Preparing new principals in South Africa: the ACE school leadership programme. *South African Journal of Education*, 31(1):31–43. Available at <http://www.sajournalofeducation.co.za/index.php/saje/article/view/356/236>. Accessed 30 August 2021.
- Calik, T., Sezgin, F., Kavgaci, H. & Cagatay Kilinc, A. 2012. Examination of Relationships between Instructional Leadership of School Principals and Self-Efficacy of Teachers and Collective Teacher Efficacy. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 12(4):2498-2504.
- Castleberry, A. & Nolen, A. 2018. Thematic analysis of qualitative research data: is it as easy as it sounds? *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, 10(6):807-815.
- Chaudhry, A.Q. & Javed, H. 2012. Impact of transactional and laissez-faire leadership style on motivation. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 3(7):258-264.
- Cherkowski, S. 2016. Exploring the role of the school principal in cultivating a professional learning climate. *Journal of School Leadership*, 26(3), 523-543.
- Christie, P. 2010. Landscapes of leadership in South African schools: mapping the changes. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 38(6):694-711.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. 2018. *Research methods in education*. 8th ed. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Connelly, L.M. 2016. Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Medsurg Nursing*, 25(6): 435446.
- Costello, D. 2015. Challenges and supports of instructional leadership in schools. *Antistasis*, 5(1). Retrieved from <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/antistasis/article/view/22852>
- Creswell, J.W. 2003. A framework for design. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*: 9-11.
- Creswell, J.W. & Poth, C.N. 2016. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Dahar, M.A., Faize, F.A., Niwaz, A., Hussain, M.A. & Zaman, A. 2010. Relationship between leadership styles and academic achievement at the secondary stage in Punjab (PAKISTAN). *International Journal of Academic Research*, 2(6).
- Darlow, B., Donovan, S., Coleman, K., McKinlay, E., Beckingsale, L., Gallagher, P., Gray, B., Naser, H., Perry, M. & Pullon, S. 2016. What makes an interprofessional education programme meaningful to students? Findings from focus group interviews with students based in New Zealand. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 30(3):355-361.
- Day, C., Gu, Q. & Sammons, P. 2016. The impact of leadership on student outcomes: how successful school leaders use transformational and instructional strategies to make a difference. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 52(2):221-258.
- DeMarrais, K. 2004. Qualitative interview studies: learning through experience. *Foundations for Research: Methods of Inquiry in Education and the Social Sciences*, 1(1):51-68.
- Denscombe, M. 2007. *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects*. 3rd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Department of Basic Education. 2014. Call for comments on the South African standard for principalship. *Government Gazette*, 590(37897):1-32, August 7.
- Dhuey, E. & Smith, J. 2014. How important are school principals in the production of student achievement? *Canadian Journal of Economics/Revue Canadienne d'Economique*, 47(2):634-663.
- Dilshad, R.M. & Latif, M.I. 2013. Focus group interview as a tool for qualitative research: an analysis. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS)*, 33(1).
- Direen, G. 2017. School leadership in a post-disaster setting. *Teaching and Learning*, 2(1): 9-15.
- Du Plooy-Cilliers, F., Davids, C. & Bezuidenhout, R. 2014. *Research matters*. Cape Town: Juta & Company Ltd.
- Durrheim, K. 2006. Research design. In M. Terre Blanche, K. Durrheim & D. Painter (eds.). *Research in practice: applied methods for the social sciences*. 2nd ed. Cape Town, South Africa: University of Cape Town Press.

- Duze, C.O. 2012. Leadership styles of principals and job performance of staff in secondary schools in Delta state of Nigeria. *International Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 1(2): 224-245.
- Eacott, S. 2013. Rethinking 'leadership' in education: a research agenda. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 45(2):113-125.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220620.2013.768971>
- Edmonds, W.A. & Kennedy, T.D. 2016. *An applied guide to research designs: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. London: Sage Publications.
- Engelbrecht, W. & Ankiewicz, P. 2016. Criteria for continuing professional development of technology teachers' professional knowledge: A theoretical perspective. *International Journal of Technology and Design Education*, 26(2): 259-284.
- Farooq, M.S., Chaudhry, A.H., Shafiq, M. & Berhanu, G. 2011. Factors affecting students' quality of academic performance: a case of secondary school level. *Journal of Quality and Technology Management*, 7(2):1-14.
- Finnigan, K. & Stewart, T. 2009. Leading change under pressure: an examination of principal leadership in low-performing schools. *Journal of School Leadership*, 19(5): 586-618.
- Fleming, C.J. 2020. Prosocial rule breaking at the street level: the roles of leaders, peers, and bureaucracy. *Public Management Review*, 22(8):1191-1216.
- Flick, U. 2002. *An introduction to qualitative research*. 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications.
- Fullan, M. 2002. Principals as leaders in a culture of change. *Educational Leadership, Special Issue, May*:1-15. Ontario: University of Toronto.
- Fullan, M. 2006. *Change theory: a force for school improvement*. (Seminar Series Paper No. 157). Jolimont, Australia: Centre for Strategic Education. Available at <http://michaelfullan.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2016/06/13396072630.pdf>. Accessed 16 May 2021.
- Garza, E. Jr, Drysdale, L., Gurr, D., Jacobson, S. & Merchant, B. 2014. Leadership for school success: lessons from effective principals. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 28(7):798-811.

- Goddard, Y.L., Miller, R., Larsen, R., Goddard, R., Madsen, J. & Schroeder, P. 2010. Connecting principal leadership, teacher collaboration, and student achievement. *Online Submission*.
- Grissom, J. 2011. Can good principals keep teachers in disadvantaged schools? Linking principal effectiveness to teacher satisfaction and turnover in hard-to-staff environments. *Teachers College Record*, 113(11):2552-2585.
- Gu, Q. & Johansson, O. 2013. Sustaining school performance: school contexts matter. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 16(3):301-326.
- Gulliksen, M.S. & Hjordemaal, F.R. 2016. Choosing content and methods: focus group interviews with faculty teachers in Norwegian pre-service subject teacher education in design, art, and crafts. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 60(1):1-19.
- Gunter, H. 2010. A sociological approach to educational leadership. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 31(4):519-527.
- Gunter, H.M. 2015. Perché la leadership? Perché ora? [Why leadership? Why now?] *Journal of Educational, Cultural and Psychological Studies*, 11:29-43.
- Hallinger, P. & Heck, R.H. 2011. Collaborative leadership and school improvement: understanding the impact on school capacity and student learning. In *International handbook of leadership for learning*. Dordrecht: Springer: 469-485.
- Hallinger, P. 2018. Surfacing a hidden literature: a systematic review of research on educational leadership and management in Africa. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 46(3):362-384.
- Hallinger, P. & Bryant, D. 2013. Mapping the terrain of educational leadership and management in East Asia. *Journal of educational administration*, 51(5), 618-637.
- Hammersley, M. & Traianou, A. 2012. *Ethics in qualitative research: controversies and contexts*. London: Sage.
- Hammett, D., Twyman, C. & Graham, M. 2015. *Research and fieldwork in development*. London: Routledge.
- Harris, A. 2010. Leading system transformation. *School Leadership & Management*, 30(3):197-207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2010.494080>.



- Heaven, G. & Bourne, P.A. 2016. Instructional leadership and its effect on students' academic performance. *Review Pub Administration and Management*, 4(3), 1-20.
- Hilliard, A.T. 2015. Global blended learning practices for teaching and learning, leadership and professional development. *Journal of International Education Research*, 11(3): 79-188.
- Hoadley, U., Christie, P. & Ward, C.L. 2009. Managing to learn: instructional leadership in South African secondary schools. *School Leadership and Management*, 29(4):373-389.
- Hoppey, D. & McLeskey, J. 2013. A case study of principal leadership in an effective inclusive school. *The Journal of Special Education*, 46(4): 245-256.
- Hou, Y., Cui, Y. & Zhang, D. 2019. Impact of instructional leadership on high school student academic achievement in China. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 20(4):543558.
- Ibrahim, A.H& Orodho, A.J. 2014. Strategies applied by the board of management to enhance students' academic performance in national examinations in secondary schools in Mandera County, Kenya. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(20):1-20.
- Ishimaru, A. 2013. From heroes to organizers: principals and education organizing in urban school reform. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 49(1):3-51.
- Isundwa, S.J. 2015. The Influence of leadership styles on students' academic achievement in secondary schools: a case of selected secondary Schools in Morogoro Municipality. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Open University of Tanzania, Dar es Salaam.
- Iyiomo, O.A. 2020. Managing the costs of online teaching in a free secondary education programme during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 48(3): 66-72.
- Jacobson, S.L., Johnson, L., Ylimaki, R. & Giles, C. 2005. Successful leadership in US schools: enabling principles, enabling schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 43:607-618.
- Jamal, A.H. 2014. Leadership styles and value systems of school principals. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 2(12):1267-1276.

- Johnson, R.W. 2004. *South Africa: the first man, the last man*. Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers.
- Kalkan, F. 2016. Relationship between professional learning community, bureaucratic structure and organisational trust in primary education schools. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 16(5):1620-1637.
- Kamper, G. 2008. A profile of effective leadership in some South African high-poverty schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 28(1):1-18.
- Karacabey, M.F. 2021. School principal support in teacher professional development. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*, 9(1):54-75.
- Khalifa, M.A., Khalil, D., Marsh, T.E. & Halloran, C. 2019. Toward an indigenous, decolonizing school leadership: a literature review. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 55(4):571-614.
- Khan, N. 2017. Adaptive or transactional leadership in current higher education: a brief comparison. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 18(3):178-183.
- Klenke, K. 2008. *Qualitative research in the study of leadership*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Pub.
- Kimacia, P. 2007. The relationship between headteachers' leadership styles and girl students' performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Narok district, Kenya. Unpublished master's project, University of Nairobi.
- Kirori, M. & Dickinson, D. 2020. Not a panacea, but vital for improvement? Leadership development programmes in South African schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 40(1):1-11.
- Kivunja, C. & Kuyini, A.B. 2017. Understanding and applying research paradigms in educational contexts. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 6(5):26-41.
- Korstjens, I. & Moser, A. 2018. Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, 24(1):120-124.

- Korumaz, M. 2016. Invisible barriers: The loneliness of school principals at Turkish elementary schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 36(4), 1-12.
- Kowalski, T.J. 2010. *The school principal: visionary leadership and competent management*. London: Routledge.
- Kozleski, E.B. 2017. The uses of qualitative research: Powerful methods to inform evidence-based practice in education. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 42(1): 19-32.
- Krueger, Richard A. & Mary Anne Casey. 2000. *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research* (3rd edition), Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.
- Kurland, H., Peretz, H. & Hertz-Lazarowitz, R. 2010. Leadership style and organisational learning: the mediate effect of school vision. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 48(1):7-30.
- Kwan, P. 2020. Is transformational leadership theory passé? Revisiting the integrative effect of instructional leadership and transformational leadership on student outcomes. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 56(2):321-349.
- Leedy, P.D. & Ormrod, J.E. 2010. *Practical research: planning and design*. 9th ed. Boston: Pearson Educational Limited.
- Leithwood, K., Day, C., Sammons, P., Harris A. & Hopkins, D. 2006. *Seven strong claims about successful school leadership*. Commissioned paper. National College of School Leadership, Nottingham, England.
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A. & Hopkins, D. 2020. Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School leadership & management*, 40(1): 5-22.
- Leithwood, K., Louis, K.S., Anderson, S. & Wahlstrom, K. 2004. *Review of research: how leadership influences student learning*. New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation. Available at <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledgecenter/Documents/How-Leadership-InfluencesStudent-Learning.pdf>. Accessed 15 May 2021.
- Lingard, B., Hayes, D. & Mills, M. 2003. Teachers and productive pedagogies: Contextualising, conceptualising, utilising. *Pedagogy, culture and society*, 11(3): 399-424

- Liu, Y. & Bellibas, M.S. 2018. School factors that are related to school principals' job satisfaction and organisational commitment. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 90:1-19.
- Louis, K.S., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K.L. & Anderson, S.E. 2010. *Investigating the links to improved student learning*. Final report of research findings to the Wallace Foundation. University of Minnesota.
- Lumadi, R.I. 2019. Taming the tide of achievement gap by managing parental role in learner discipline. *South African Journal of Education*, 39.
- Lunenburg, F.C. 2010. The principal as instructional leader. *National Forum of Educational and Supervision Journal*, 27(4):1-7.
- Mahmoud, A.H. 2008. A study of nurses' job satisfaction: the relationship to organisational commitment, perceived organisational support, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and level of education. *European Journal of Scientific Research*, 22(2):286-295.
- Majid, M.A.A., Othman, M., Mohamad, S.F., Lim, S.H.A. & Yusof, A. 2017. Piloting for interviews in qualitative research: operationalization and lessons learnt. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 7(4):1073-1080.
- Makgato, M. & Mudzanani, N.N. 2019. Exploring school principals' leadership styles and learners' educational performance: a perspective from high-and low-performing schools. *Africa Education Review*, 16(2):90-108.
- McCusker, K. & Gunaydin, S. 2015. Research using qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods and choice based on the research. *Perfusion*, 30(7): 537-542.
- McIntosh, M.J. & Morse, J.M. 2015. Situating and constructing diversity in semi-structured interviews. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*, 2:1-12.
- McMillan, J. & Schumacher, S. 2015. *Research in education: evidence-based enquiry*. 7th ed. New Jersey: Pearson.
- Merriam, S.B. 2009. *Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Mertkan, S., Arsan, N., Inal Cavlan, G. & Onurkan Aliusta, G. 2016. Diversity and equality in academic publishing: the case of educational leadership. *Compare*, 1:1-16.
- Mestry, R. 2013. The innovative role of the principal as instructional leader: a prerequisite for high student achievement? *International Proceedings of Economics Development and Research*, 60(1):119-131.
- Mestry, R. 2017. Empowering principals to lead and manage public schools effectively in the 21st century. *South African Journal of Education*, 37(1): 1-11.
- Moloi, K, 2007. An overview of education management in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 27(3):463-476.
- Moos, L., Johannson, O. & Day, C. (eds.). 2012. *How school principals sustain success over time: international perspectives*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Morgan, D.L. 2007. Paradigms lost and pragmatism regained: methodological implications of combining qualitative and quantitative methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1):48-76.
- Mosoge, M.J., Challens, B.H. & Xaba, M.I. 2018. Perceived collective teacher efficacy in low performing schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 38(2):1-9.
- Mphale, L.M. & Mhlauli, M.B. 2014. An investigation on students academic performance for junior secondary schools in Botswana. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 3(3):111-127.
- Munhall, P.L. 2001. *Nursing research: a qualitative perspective*. Sudbury, MA: Jones & Barlett.
- Naicker, S.R. & Mestry, R. 2013. Teachers' reflections on distributive leadership in public primary schools in Soweto. *South African Journal of Education*, 33(2):1-15.
- Naidoo, P. 2019. Perceptions of teachers and school management teams of the leadership roles of public school principals. *South African Journal of Education*, 39(2):1-14.
- Newcomer, K.E., Hatry, H.P. & Wholey, J.S. 2015. Conducting semi-structured interviews. *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*. New Jersey: Jossey Bass: 492.

- Nir, A.E. & Hameiri, L. 2014. School principals' leadership style and school outcomes. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 52(2):201-227.
- Nozidumo, T.Q. & Mtapuri, O. 2014. Teachers' perceptions of the integrated quality management system: lessons from Mpumalanga. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(1):1-14.
- Nsubuga, Y.K.K. 2008. Analysis of leadership styles and school performance of secondary schools in Uganda. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth.
- Nyumba, T., Wilson, K., Derrick, C.J. & Mukherjee, N. 2018. The use of focus group discussion methodology: insights from two decades of application in conservation. *Methods in Ecology and Evolution*, 9(1):20-32.
- Obama, O., Eunice, A. and John, A.O., 2015. Effect of principals' leadership styles on student' academic performance in public secondary schools in Homa-Bay County, Kenya. *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*. 20(3) :51-60
- Okoth, U.A. 2000. A study of the effects of leadership styles on performance in KCSE examination in Nairobi Province. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Nairobi.
- Olivier, J. & Wittmann, G.E. 2019. Professional development in fostering self-directed learning in German Second Additional Language teachers. *Per Linguam: a Journal of Language Learning= Per Linguam: Tydskrif vir Taalaanleer*, 35(3): 125-142.
- Okeke, C.I.O. & Mphahla, N.E.2016. Continuing Professional Teacher Development: The Case of Junior Teachers in one Rural Education District in South Africa. *Studies of Tribes and Tribals*, 14(1): 1-10.
- Orodho, A.J. 2014. Attainment of education for all (EFA) by 2015: from rhetoric chimera to practice in Kenya. *International Journal of Current Research*, 6(1):46-74. January. [www.journalcra.com](http://www.journalcra.com)
- Ouma, M., Lucy, A.E. & John, A.O. 2015. Effect of principals' leadership styles on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Homa-Bay County, Kenya. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 20(3):51-60.

- Ovesni, K., Hebib, E. & Radović, V. 2019. Continuing professional development of teachers: interplay of the school management, school climate, motivation and incentives. *Teaching and Education*, 68(2):31-34.
- Park, D.Y., Park, M.H. & Bates, A.B. 2018. Exploring young children's understanding about the concept of volume through engineering design in a STEM activity: a case study. *International Journal of Science and Mathematics Education*, 16(2):275-294.
- Parris, D.L. & Peachey, J.W., 2013. A systematic literature review of servant leadership theory in organizational contexts. *Journal of business ethics*, 113(3): 377-393.
- Patton, M.Q. & Cochran, M. 2002. A guide to using qualitative research methodology: *Medicins sans Frontieres*.
- Pollock, K. 2020. School leaders' work during the COVID-19 pandemic: a two-pronged approach. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 48(3):38-39.
- Pollock, K. & Wang, F. 2020. *School principals' work and well-being in Ontario: what they say and why it matters*. Retrieved from [https://www.edu.uwo.ca/faculty\\_profiles/docs/other/pollock/Understanding-School-Principals-Work-and-Well-Being-ON-Final-Report.pdf](https://www.edu.uwo.ca/faculty_profiles/docs/other/pollock/Understanding-School-Principals-Work-and-Well-Being-ON-Final-Report.pdf)
- Polit, D.F. & Beck, C.T. 2004. *Nursing research: principles and methods*. 7th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Rabiee, F. 2004. Focus-group interview and data analysis. *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*, 63(4):655-660.
- Rabionet, S.E. 2011. How I learned to design and conduct semi-structured interviews: an ongoing and continuous journey. *Qualitative Report*, 16(2):563-566.
- Rizi, R.M., Azadi, A., Farsani, M.E., Aroufzad, S. & Mirsafaei, R. 2013. Relationship between leadership styles and job satisfaction among physical education organizations employees. *European Journal of Sports and Exercise Science*, 2(1):7-11.

- Robinson, V.M. 2010. From instructional leadership to leadership capabilities: empirical findings and methodological challenges. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 9(1):1-26.
- Robinson, V., Lloyd, C. & Rowe, K. 2008. The impact of leadership on student outcomes: an analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(5):635-674.
- Rolfe, G. 2006. Validity, trustworthiness and rigour: quality and the idea of qualitative research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 53(3):304-310.
- Rossberger, R.J. & Krause, D.E. 2015. Participative and team-oriented leadership styles, countries' education level, and national innovation: the mediating role of economic factors and national cultural practices. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 49(1):20-56.
- Sadeghi, A. & Pihie, Z.A.L. 2012. Transformational leadership and its predictive effects on leadership effectiveness. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*: 3(7).
- Sagnak, M. 2016. Participative leadership and change-oriented organisational citizenship: the mediating effect of intrinsic motivation. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 16(62):181-194.
- Scheerens, J. 2012. *School leadership effects revisited: Review and meta-analysis of empirical studies*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Schurink, W. 2010. The importance of theorising in proposal writing. *Journal of Public Administration*, 45(3):420-434.
- Sebastian, J., Huang, H. & Allensworth, E. 2017. Examining integrated leadership systems in high schools: connecting principal and teacher leadership to organisational processes and student outcomes. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 28(3):463-488.
- Sepuru, M.G. & Mohlakwana, M.A. 2020. The perspectives of beginner principals on their new roles in school leadership and management: a South African case study. *South African Journal of Education*, 40(2):1-11.
- Setlhodi, I.I. 2020. Collaboration practices between the two tiers of school leadership in eradicating underperformance. *South African Journal of Education*, 40(3):1-10.



- Shenton, A.K. 2004. Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2):63-75.
- Silva, J., White, G. & Yoshida, R. 2011. The direct effects of principal-student discussions on eighth grade students' gains in reading achievement: an experimental study. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 47(5):772-793.
- Smith, G., Minor, M., Brashen, H. & Remaly, K. 2017. Successful instructional leadership styles in education. *Journal of Instructional Research*, 6(1):46-52.
- Sudja, I.N. & Yuesti, A. 2017. The influences of education and training, leadership, work environment, teacher certification on discipline and teacher's professionalism in high school at Bali Province. *Scientific Research Journal (SCIRJ)*, 5(9): 102-108.
- Steyn, G.M. 2011. Continuing professional development in South African schools: staff perceptions and the role of principals. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 28(1):43-53.
- Talebloo, B. 2015. Transformational leadership, organisational citizenship behaviour and school effectiveness in primary schools, Selangor, Malaysia. Unpublished doctoral thesis, School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia. Retrieved from: <http://psasir.upm.edu.my/id/eprint/59488/7/FPP%202015%2018IR.pdf>
- Tan, C.Y. 2018. Examining school leadership effects on student achievement: the role of contextual challenges and constraints. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 48(1):21-45.
- Taylor, P.C. & Medina, M. 2011. Educational research paradigms: from positivism to pluralism. *College Research Journal*, 1(1):1-16.
- Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V. & Braun, V. 2017. Thematic analysis. In C. Willig & W. Stainton Rogers (eds.). *Sage handbook of qualitative research in psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: 17-37.
- Thanh, N.C. & Thanh, T.T. 2015. The interconnection between interpretivist paradigm and qualitative methods in education. *American Journal of Educational Science*, 1(2):24-27.
- Thomas, G. & Myers, K. 2015. *The anatomy of the case study*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Townsend, T. & MacBeath, J. (eds.) 2011. *International handbook of leadership for learning* (Part 1). New York, NY: Springer.

- Tracy, S. J. 2013. *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Tschannen-Moran, M. 2014. *Trust matters: leadership for successful schools*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Valentine, J.W. & Prater, M. 2011. Instructional, transformational, and managerial leadership and student achievement: high school principals make a difference. *NASSP Bulletin*, 95(1):5-30.
- Van der Westhuizen, P. & Van Vuuren, H. 2007. Professionalising principalship in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 27(3):431-446.
- Varela, D.G. & Fedynich, L. 2020. Leading schools from a social distance: surveying south Texas school district leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. *National Forum of Educational Administration and Supervision Journal*, 38(4).
- Vaughn, S., Schumm, J.S. & Sinagub, J.M. 1996. *Focus group interviews in education and psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Waheed, H., Hassan, S.U., Aljohani, N.R., Hardman, J., Alelyani, S. & Nawaz, R. 2020. Predicting academic performance of students from VLE big data using deep learning models. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 104:106-189.
- White, C.J. & Van Dyk, H. 2019. Theory and practice of the quintile ranking of schools in South Africa: A financial management perspective. *South African Journal of Education*, 39(1), 1-19.
- Wills, G. & Hofmeyr, H. 2019. Academic resilience in challenging contexts: evidence from township and rural primary schools in South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 98(1):1-27.
- Wilson, V. 2014. Research methods: triangulation. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 9(1):74-75.

- Witziers, B., Bosker, R. & Kruger, M. 2003. Educational leadership and student achievement: the elusive search for an association. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 34(3):398-425.
- Wong, S.I. & Giessner, S.R. 2018. The thin line between empowering and laissez-faire leadership: An expectancy-match perspective. *Journal of Management*, 44(2), 757-783.
- Ylimaki, R.M. & Jacobson, S.L. (eds.). 2011. *US and cross-national policies, practices, and preparation*. New York: Springer.
- Zepeda, S.J. 2013. *Instructional leadership for school improvement*. London: Routledge.
- Zepeda, S.J., Parylo, O. & Bengtson, E. 2014. Analyzing principal professional development practices through the lens of adult learning theory. *Professional Development in Education*, 40(2):295-315.
- Zuze, T.L. & Juan, A. 2020. School leadership and local learning contexts in South Africa. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 48(3):459-477.

## APPENDIXES

### Appendix A:

#### Interview schedule (principal)

1.	How long have you been in the teaching profession?
2.	How long have you been serving as a principal, in total, at this school or all the schools where you may have been principal? What is your idea of a successful school?
3.	Would you say <b>your</b> school is successful? Or not? Why? To what would you ascribe it? (whether successful or not)
4.	
5.	What kinds of leadership styles are there, in your opinion? What leadership style(s) would you say do <b>you</b> employ as the principal? Give an example?
6.	
7.	How do you monitor curriculum delivery by the teachers in the classrooms, in terms of the content and the teaching thereof? That is, with the experienced teachers?
8.	And with the novice teachers, how do you monitor it? And how do you support them with delivering the content effectively and teaching it effectively?
9.	Would you say that a principal plays a vital role in the academic success of the learners? Why would you say so?
10.	How would you describe <b>your</b> relationship with the learners in your school?
11.	Do you think that you create a positive learning atmosphere among the learners? How do you achieve that?
12.	Is there perhaps a different approach you would employ to improve the academic success of the learners at your school? Why? And what, or how, would you do it differently?

## Appendix B:

### Interview schedule (SMT)

1.	Please introduce yourself and mention your role in the School Management Team?
2.	How long have you been serving on the SMT under the current principal? (NOT accumulative years if there was a change in leadership).
3.	What is your idea of a successful school?
4.	Would you say your school is successful? Or not? Why? To what would you ascribe it/ (whether successful or not)
5.	What kinds of leadership styles are there, in your opinion?
6.	How would you describe the leadership style(s) of your principal? Give an example?
7.	How does the principal monitor you as the SMT, about what you do with the teachers, or with you as the teachers, regarding the curriculum delivery in the classrooms? That is, in terms of the content that is taught, and <b>how</b> it is taught? How often does he visit the classrooms during teaching?
8.	With regard to the novice teachers, how does the principal ensure that they are managing in class in terms of content and teaching, and how does he support them with that?
9.	Would you say that a principal plays a vital role in the academic success of the learners? Why would you say so?
10.	How would you describe your principal's relationship with the learners in your school? Do you think that he creates a positive learning atmosphere among the learners?
11.	Or not? Why do you say so? Give an example? How does he achieve that? Is there perhaps a different approach you think he should employ to improve the
12.	academic success of the learners at your school? Why do you say so? And what, or how, should he do it differently, in your opinion?

## Appendix C:

Letter requesting permission to conduct research at school



Fountain Views  
Riana Street  
Brackenfell  
7560  
28 January 2021

Dear Principal / Member of SMT

### **Request for your permission to conduct an interview with you as part of the research for Master's Degree**

I am registered at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology as a Master's Degree candidate.

My research topic is:

**"Leadership styles in public schools in the Western Cape."**

I would hereby like to request your permission to conduct an interview with you, about your views of leadership styles in your school. Kindly be ensured that the interview will not interrupt or affect the teaching, learning and core business of the school, in any way. The time for the interview will be arranged with you as convenient to you.

The identity of the participants will be kept strictly confidential, and no content will be used in defamatory nature for any parties involved. Your participation and this agreement may also be terminated at any time. Upon completion, my thesis will be available for you to view.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in this research project. Please feel free to contact me should you require any additional information regarding this research.

Should you be willing to participate in my research by means of the interview, I kindly require you please sign the attached consent form, granting me permission to conduct the research.

Respectfully,

.....

**Permission to be a participant in the research**

I, Mr / Mrs / Miss .....

Hereby grant permission to be interviewed for the research project entitled **“Leadership styles in public schools in the Western Cape”**. My rights and the research process have been explained to me, and I am fully aware that neither my nor the school’s identity will be revealed. I also understand that I may at any time withdraw from this agreement if I wish, without any consequence to me or the school.

Signed on this ..... Day of..... (Month)..... (Year)  
at..... (Place).

Signature.....

## Appendix D:

Ethical clearance from WCED



**Directorate: Research**

[meshack.kanzi@westerncape.gov.za](mailto:meshack.kanzi@westerncape.gov.za)  
Tel: +27 021 467 2350  
Fax: 086 390 2282  
Private Bag X9114, Cape Town, 8000  
wced.wcape.gov.za

**REFERENCE:** 20210719-4427

**ENQUIRIES:** Mr M Kanzi

Mr Brandon Arendse  
U44 Fountain Views, Riana Street  
Protea Heights  
Brackenfell  
7560

**Dear Mr Brandon Arendse,**

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL: THE RELATION BETWEEN PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP STYLES AND LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN CAPE TOWN IN THE WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE.**

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **12 August 2021 till 30 September 2021**.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Mr M Kanzi at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. The approval of your research request does not imply a promise of any data from the WCED. Should you require data, you will have to request it from the participating schools where it will be possible to secure parental consent.
11. Please note that POPIA prohibits the sharing of personal information without parental consent.
12. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
13. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services  
Western Cape Education Department  
Private Bag X9114  
CAPE TOWN  
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Meshack Kanzi'.

**Meshack Kanzi  
Directorate: Research  
DATE: 11 August 2021**

---

1 North Wharf Square, 2 Lower Loop Street,  
Fonshome, Cape Town 8001  
tel: +27 21 467 2531

Private Bag X 9114, Cape Town, 8000  
Safe Schools: 0800 45 46 47  
wcedonline.westerncape.gov.za



## Appendix E:

Ethical clearance from CPUT



---

Private Bag X8, Wellington, 7654  
Jan van Riebeeck Street, Wellington, 7654  
Tel: +27 21 864 5200

P.O. Box 652, Cape Town, 8000  
Highbury Road, Mowbray  
Tel: +27 21 680 1500

<b>FACULTY OF EDUCATION</b>
-----------------------------

To: Mr Arendse

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 2021 the Chairperson of the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology granted ethics approval (EFEC 5-6/2021) to J Arendse for a M. Ed degree.

<b>Title</b>	The relationship between principals' leadership styles and learner academic performance in public high schools in Cape Town in the Western Cape Province.
--------------	---

Comments:

The EFEC unconditionally grants ethical clearance for this study. This clearance is valid until 31st December 2024. Permission is granted to conduct research within the Faculty of Education only. Research activities are restricted to those details in the research project as outlined by the Ethics application. Any changes wrought to the described study must be reported to the Ethics committee immediately.



Date: 10<sup>th</sup> of June 2021

---

Dr Candice Livingston

Research coordinator (Wellington) and Chair of the Education Faculty Ethics committee

Faculty of Education

## **Appendix F:**

Sample of transcribed interview