School Leadership Practices in High Performing Rural Primary Schools in Lesotho: A Case Study

By

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Master of Education in Educational Leadership Management and Policy

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DECLARATION

I, **Thabang Daniel Habi** declare that:

i.   This research titled "school leadership practices in high performing rural primary schools in Lesotho: A Case Study", except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.

ii.   This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any degree or examination at this or any other university.

iii.   This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs, or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

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I declare that this dissertation is submitted with/without my approval.

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16 July 2020

Mr Thabang Daniel Habi (211557334)
School Of Education
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Dear Mr Habi,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001517/2020
Project title: School leadership practices of performing rural primary schools in Lesotho: A Case Study
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 16 June 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 16 July 2021.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my father Tumo Paulosi Habi. Father, you really deserve to be honoured as the founder of my formal education from primary school to college level. You played your role as a parent, and I am proud of you. I am a postgraduate today through your financial support.

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To Tsepang Phooko, thank you for always encouraging me to keep on looking at different sources for information in relation to my study.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore leadership practices in high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district. The duty of the principal is to provide every learner in the school with access to education and to develop the learners' leadership potential. It is therefore vital to find out how the principals in high performing, rural primary schools enact leadership, and how they utilise their leadership experiences to create a learning environment that is conducive for teaching and learning. The study was theoretically envisaged in transformational and instructional leadership theories, in order to explore the leadership practices of the principals. The study used a qualitative case study design within the interpretive paradigm. Qualitative research seeks to explain and understand social phenomena in its natural settings. It concentrates on the meaning people have built concerning their world and the researcher is viewed as the primary tool for data generation and analysis. Telephonic semi-structured interviews were employed to generate data. A sample of twelve participants from the four selected high performing rural primary schools was purposefully chosen, which constituted the research participants. These participants consisted of four principals and eight teachers. Ethical considerations, including confidentiality and anonymity, were maintained throughout the research study. The study reviewed related literature from Lesotho and international perspectives on leadership practices, in order to understand how principals, maintain high performance in rural primary schools. The research findings have revealed that principals play an important role in transforming their respective schools into learning environments that are conducive for teaching and learning through their leadership. The rural school principals considered leadership as a collective effort and practised collaborative decision-making. Moreover, the principals' leadership understanding, and experience enabled them to build good interpersonal relationships with members of staff and other stakeholders. Hence, for the school to perform well academically, it is very important to motivate the members of staff and supervise their work frequently. The study has also identified several challenges pertaining to leadership and rurality, which include excessive workload, lack of resources and limited official visits. This study presented the recommendations for practice and for further research.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
DRT	District Resource Teacher
ECOL	Examinations Council of Lesotho
SB	School Board
LCE	Lesotho College Education
COSC	Cambridge Overseas School Certificate
QEO	Qacha's Nek Education Office
PSLE	Primary School Leaving Examination
CAP	Curriculum and Assessment Policy
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centre
LESSP	Lesotho Educational Sector Strategic Plan

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Leadership is a function of context and principals perform instructional leadership and approach school goals, learners, teachers, and community affairs in a different way based upon their specific school and community surroundings (Hallinger, 2016). The study intended to explore the nature of leadership in high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district. This chapter presented the background of the study, the study rationale, the statement of the problem, the purpose statement and the key research questions. It also clarified briefly the concepts used in the study and presented the organisation of the research, as well as the chapter summary.

1.2 Background to the study

The mandate of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in Lesotho is to provide access to quality, inclusive education to all Basotho at all levels. The education system of Lesotho is organised into five levels, namely pre-primary, primary, secondary (Junior and Senior secondary), post-secondary (vocational and technical schools) and higher learning education (Lesotho Educational Sector Strategic Plan (LESSP), 2016). In line with the Lesotho Education Act No.3 of 2010, section 3 (a), one of MOET's objective is to provide free and compulsory quality education in all primary schools in Lesotho (Lesotho Government Gazette, 2010). MOET published the curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP) in 2009. This policy provides principles and general rules for the national curriculum reform and assessment system. It supports for the establishment of the strong link between the curriculum and assessment in order to allow the use of feedback on the learning progress to formulate strategies that will enhance teaching and learning process. The policy further conceives ameliorated pedagogic approaches that will accelerate quality in education delivery (LESSP, 2016).

The curriculum and assessment sector is made up of different units of MOET such as National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) and Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECOL) (LESSP, 2016). NCDC needs to provide a curriculum which can be taught and assessed and stimulates good learning. The principals need to act as the first monitors of their staff members while DRTs and

inspectors need to be able to identify excellent learning and have a good grasp of the proposed standards and help educators in promoting good learning in line with set standards (ECOL, 2012). The role of ECOL is to assist educators in making assessment and to initiate standards and measure the education system against them. In the CAP , summative assessments are described as assessments for selection and certification. They summarise the development of a learner at a specific point in time, usually the end of the course where a learner sat for national examinations in order to get a certificate.

Rural primary schools in Lesotho are mostly found in three districts, namely Thaba-Tseka, Mokhotlong and Qacha's Nek. Although such rural primary schools face a big challenge of underperformance (Lekhetho, 2013), there are rural primary schools which are high performing in the district of Qacha's Nek (ECOL, 2010, 2013, 2016).

In Lesotho rurality is couched in conditions that frequently compromise the quality of education for rural learners and make it hard for them to move from secondary to higher education. Such conditions involve keeping of livestock and crop farming in the mountainous districts of Lesotho, which are inaccessible and sparsely populated (Marrion, 2016). Lack of electricity implies that the schools hardly have science laboratories and computers. Thus, students from rural areas tend to encounter computers for their first time when they move to colleges in urban areas (Mpholo et al., 2018). The principal, as an instructional leader, serves the vital role of ensuring that the educators' instructions are aligned with the students' outcomes (Lefevre & Robason, 2015; McNeill et al., 2018; Taylor Backor & Gordon, 2015). Thus, a high performing primary school in Lesotho is often linked to its learners' achievements in the national examinations (ECOL, 2013).

Moreover, before the implementation of the new integrated primary curriculum, which has now become the standard in Lesotho, there was a Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE), where grade seven learners were awarded a certificate at the completion of primary level. The certificates were offered in three categories, namely first class, second class and third class. The top-primary achievers were identified at the national level by the Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECOL). The analysis in Table 1.1 shows the old curriculum performance of high performing, rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district, whilst Table 1.2 shows the new curriculum pperformance of high performing, rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district.

Table 1.1: The old curriculum performance of high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district

School	Year	Total number of learners	First class	Second class	Third class	% Pass	Fail
Moea	2010	57	3	14	34	**89**	6
	2013	51	29	15	7	**100**	-
	2016	57	26	20	7	**100**	-
Metsi	2010	18	3	9	6	**100**	-
	2013	31	10	12	9	**100**	-
	2016	21	3	7	11	**100**	-
Mobu	2010	53	18	21	14	**100**	-
	2013	30	2	7	19	**93**	2
	2016	34	8	13	11	**94**	2
Lejoe	2010	51	3	15	32	**98**	1
	2013	50	1	13	34	**96**	2
	2016	46	2	13	31	**100**	-

Source: ECOL (2010, 2013, 2016)

Table 1.2: The new curriculum performance of high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district for the year 2018 (with Performance Symbols: A - Advance   P- Proficient)

School	Grade roll	Sesotho	English	Maths	science	Social science	Life skills	Arts	% Pass
Metsi	50	A100% P-	A - P100%	A - P100%	A - P100%	A100% P-	A - P100%	A - P100	**100**
Moea	35	A- P80%	A- P50%	A- P90%	A - P100%	A - P100%	A - P100%	A - P100%	**89**
Mobu	40	A - P66%	A - P50%	A- P100%	A - P100%	A- P100%	A - P100%	A- P100%	**88**
Lejoe	40	A100%	A-	A-	A-	A-	A-	A-	**89**

		P	P80%	P70%	P70%	P100%	P100%	P100%	

Source: ECOL (2018)

According to the new integrated primary curriculum in Lesotho, which was implemented in 2013, a high performing primary school is now measured by the summative assessment prepared for grade 7 learners by ECOL, which replaced the PSLE. High performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district are therefore indicated by learners' achievements on percentages ranging from 70% to 100%, which are described as 'advanced' or 'proficient' (ECOL, 2018).

School principals are the agents of the change process, aligning and displaying change leadership skills that basically contribute to school successfulness and improvement (Ainscow et al., 2012). There is an expanding awareness that productive change cannot happen in educational organisations unless the school principals initiate the change process entirely (Sentocnik et al, 2016). As Tian et al. (2015) state, the principals have the strategic role of determining the schools' plans and day-to-day leadership practices, in order to advance a prevalent teaching and learning culture in a school.

Likewise, in a comprehensive literature review on successful leadership in rural schools, Preston, and Barnes (2017) identify the major roles of leadership in the context of rurality, which encompass encouraging a sound relationship between the members of staff, students, parents, and community members. Hence, principals who succeed in the context of rurality can balance local and district policies and focus more on instructional leadership. As Hitt and Tucke (2016) assert, leadership practices which influences students' performance encompass building trusting relationships, providing individual consideration, providing effective human resource management, and creating communities of practices, as well as acquiring and allocating resources for mission and vision, initiating a supportive learning organisation, and building collaborative processes for decision making. According to Tran et al. (2018), principals' leadership practices that are context-sensitive are required for the educator's professional development, which in turn leads to school enhancement. Moreover, literature suggests that principals are responsible for managing negative conflicts among members of staff effectively by seeking a common idea that everybody can endorse (Tai et al., 2015). The teachers' positive attitudes towards a change are

also likely to be improved if the principal can correctly address genuine concerns, while helping them through their emotional reaction to change.

According to Renihan and Noonam's (2012), study in the Western Canada, leading schools in rurality context is different and difficult compared to urban schools.The study was conducted in small rural schools in villages of Western Canada.The purpose of the study was to find out from rural school principals what it means to be an assessment leader in rural contexts and in what ways rural school context affects their assessment leadership roles.The study adopted qualitative and the data were collected from three focus groups of rural principals. The geographical location of rural schools was the first challenge, which makes it hard for principals to create a relationship with the officials from the Qacha's Nek Education Office (QEO). Rural leadership is challenging because numerous districts have no middle management and depend on their administrators to perform additional responsibilities (Wood et al., 2013). This view is also supported by Beesley and Clark (2015), who assert that rural principals often feel separated in their efforts to establish positive change, because they are assigned with greater levels of responsibility than non-rural principals.

According to Preston and Barnes (2017), rural principals value person-centred leadership, through the development of relationships and cooperation with stakeholders to perform their instructional leadership. Moreover, rural principals struggle a lot to achieve school goals and objectives, while simultaneously balancing various political issues and personal interests of parents, as well as members of the community (Preston et al., 2013). In addition, rural principals do multi-task, of which sometimes they serve as superintendent and classroom teachers (Renihan & Noonan, 2012). As Bush et al. (2011) argue, it is vital to understand that principalship is a specialist position which needs specialised knowledge and understanding how the principals lead in a context which presents the challenges of rurality and those of the 21st century, while they are not instructed in these issues.

Furthermore, leadership at distinct levels of organisations impacts innovation process. As Bush and Glover (2012) observe, all schools had senior leadership teams. Hence, senior leaders outline strategies, structures, systems, knowledge management practices, organisational culture, and climate, and make a pivotal decision about commencing innovations and about resource allocation (Crossan & Apaydin, 2010). According to Denti and Hemlin (2012), senior leaders can build

environments in which people feel persuaded and enabled to develop and can set goals and direct activities. This concurs with Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) view that an effective leader removes obstacles for change and creates chances for educators to implement new initiatives and innovations. Thus, school leaders are under pressure to enhance the teaching and learning performance in their respective schools (Mette & Scribner, 2014; Pont, 2014; Lynch & Doe, 2016).

According to McEwan (2018), an effective leader is a communication expert who acts as a facilator, motivator and change expert, with good qualities of a culture architect. Thus, principals play a vital role in shaping and implementing the school culture (Britton, 2018). As Harvey et al. (2013) state, the principal is the most influential figure in optimising schooling outcomes, and in bringing about the necessary conditions for school enhancement agendas. The school leader is needed to navigate and work in the multifaceted and increasingly complex contexts (Markon et al., 2013). In addition, an effective leader is a person who can pull all pieces together and cannot leave anyone working in separation (Harvey et al., 2013). Education scholars concur that principals are accountable for setting the school tone, by providing successful instructional leadership and ensuring the professional management of the schools (Booth et al., 2010; Chubb, 2014; Tingle et al., 2019). These are, however, fundamentally distinct tasks requiring different leadership practices, competencies, and functions.

Against this background, the thrust of the research is therefore to explore leadership practices in high performing rural primary schools in Lesotho, with Qacha's Nek district as the case study. The study was previously conducted in secondary schools only on the premise that the Lesotho education system is ineffective as indicated by high failure rate in national examinations, specifically the School Leaving Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) (Lekhetho, 2013; ECOL, 2013). The purpose of the previous study was to explore factors influencing the performance of high achieving secondary schools in Lesotho at national examinations (Lekhetho, 2021). Twelve selected schools were in the urban area while one was in the rural area and the study adopted quantitative approach and a group administered survey to find the main factors contributing to good performance of high achieving secondary schools.In addition, questionnaires were used as the instruments to collect data from grade 12 students. The findings revealed that stringent selectivity of learners in grade 8 , effective principal and teacher efficiency were factors influencing high performance of high achieving secondary in Lesotho. Thus, there is a dearth of

literature pertaining to leadership practices in high performing, rural primary schools in Lesotho, and this is the gap that this research intended to fill. This research is critical considering the high performance of the rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district, in a context which presents the challenges of rurality and those of the 21st century. The current study is extending the notion of leadership practices of high performing primary school principals in a rural context sampling principals and teachers while the previous study was focusing on the factors influencing the performance of high achieving secondary schools in Lesotho particularly in urban areas with the sample of learners.

1.3 Rationale for the study

The researcher's curiosity in conducting this study on exploring school leadership practices originated from personal and professional experiences: first, as a student; second, as an assistant teacher; third, as the deputy-principal and then as the District Resource Teacher (DRT). The researcher completed primary education in a rural area and obtained good grade seven results. The researcher then attended post-primary education in town and proceeded to Lesotho College of Education (LCE).

Furthermore, the researcher taught at primary level for four years and was promoted to become the deputy-principal. As a deputy-principal, the researcher observed that all teachers were friendly, but they clashed with the principal in most cases. In addition, teachers who were against the principal never attended the general staff meetings, and if it happened that they were part of the meeting, they would remain silent up to the end of the meeting and eventually reject to sign their names in the staff minutes book. Thus, the researcher realised that this poor interpersonal relationship between the principal and members of staff contributed in large measure to poor learner academic performance and high transfer rate. As Hattie (2015) asserts, schools need to generate a trusting environment, where educators can evaluate the impact and explain the effects of their teaching on learner outcomes. Unfortunately, the principal was an autocratic leader who imposed final decisions in almost every aspect. This contradicts with Leana's (2011) view that working as a team is more successful than as an individual, when initiating reform-based change within the school.

This leadership style led to other burning issues between the principal and teachers, which were solved by the school board (SB). For instance, teachers had a tendency of refusing to attend workshops organised by MOET, when ordered to do so by the principal sometimes. However, such negative conflicts between the principal and teachers are not common to Lesotho teachers only. Research has shown that principals' leadership practices play an important role in school enhancement (Steyn & Mashaba, 2014). Furthermore, as the DRT paying regular school visits, the researcher has observed that rural primary school teachers work hard and some practise multi-grading teaching, in which a teacher is allocated two or three grades. It is hard to believe that a school with four teachers can perform better than schools with seven teachers, where each teacher focuses on a single class or stream. Thus, reflecting on the practices of principals in high performing rural primary schools would assist other principals in solving the challenges at their schools and focus on leadership styles that are future oriented in their search for instructional brilliance and its associated high learner achievement.

1.4 Statement of the problem

Literature suggests that most rural schools struggle with learners' performance and their educational outcomes are below the expected standard (Hlalele, 2012). Numerous rural schools across African Continent have high dropout rates and low learner enrolment (Adedeji & Olaniyan, 2011). In Lesotho, poor quality education in rural primary schools is associated with unqualified teachers, imperfect school management, inadequate resources, severe poverty, lack of teacher commitment and insufficient support from MOET (Lekhetho, 2013). Thus, rural primary schools in Lesotho are generally underperforming academically. This concurs with Halsey's (2011) view that shortage of resources and restricted improved course offerings in rural schools are associated with academic performance deficits.

However, despite these setbacks, rural schools in Qacha's Nek district are performing well due to positive leadership practices (ECOL, 2016). As Makhasane and Chikoko (2016) observe, important and purposeful leadership within the school is influence by the top school leadership. According to Shave (2016), the role of the principal is to empower educators and contribute to the school advancement journey through empowerment and increasing good practice initiatives. Moreover, as Townsend (2011) argues, school leadership is necessary for students' high academic

attainment. Furthermore, research has shown that to stimulate change in rural schools, there is a need to pay attention on strength-based epistemologies (Moletsane, 2012; Makhasane & Khanare, 2018). Thus, there is a paradigm shift in discussion and conversations about rurality and school enhancement. Hence, leadership aspects can greatly influence the academic results of learners. As Maina (2010a) observes, when rural learners are provided with essential tools and equipment it is possible for them to acquire a better understanding of academic concepts and to perform the experiments.

Therefore, it is important to explore leadership practices in high performing rural primary schools in Lesotho, with Qacha's Nek district as the case study. Reflecting on the practices of principals in high performing rural primary schools would assist other principals in solving the challenges at their schools and focus on leadership styles that are future oriented in their search for instructional brilliance and its associated high learner achievement. Although the study was previously conducted in secondary schools, there is a dearth of literature pertaining to leadership practices in high performing rural primary schools in Lesotho. This is the gap that this research intended to fill.

1.5 Purpose statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of leadership in high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district. The study focused on what constitutes leadership in high performing rural primary schools and how leadership is enacted in the context of rurality.

1.6 Research questions

1. How do principals in high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district understand leadership?
2. How do principals in high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district enact leadership?
3. How do principals in high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district manage leadership in the context of rurality?

1.7 Clarification of concepts

This section briefly clarified the key concepts used in this study. Such key concepts are primary school, leadership, school performance, rurality, and rural school.

1.7.1 Primary school

Primary school is the foundation for a child's learning upon which every other level of education depends (Sen, 2010). According to Lesotho Education Act No.3 of 2010, section 7 (3c), a primary school is a school which provides education given to children aged six to twelve years, from the first year up to seven years of primary education (Lesotho Government Gazette, 2010). This is the definition adopted in this study.

1.7.2 Leadership

According to Northouse and Lee (2016), leadership is the process through which an individual influences other to attain a common goal. As Yurl (2010) describes, leadership is the process through which individuals are influenced to know and agree on what to be done and how to do it, as well as the procedure of assisting others and cooperative efforts to achieve shared out objectives. In the school context, leadership is considered as a process of social impact in which principals persuade teachers to use their strengths and necessary resources towards collective goals (Omima, 2013). This is the definition adopted in this study because it makes it clear that principals are responsible for influencing teachers towards goal achievement in the school.

1.7.3 School performance

School performance is defined as the multidimensional productiveness of the leadership, teachers, and learners of a school in achieving their educational goals in relation to quality education (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2010; Scheerens, 2013). This is the definition adopted in this study.

1.7.4 Rurality

Rurality is defined as the state of place-based homelessness shared by people with common heritage and inhabit traditional culturally defined areas statutorily identified to be rural (Chigbu, 2013). Likewise, scholars associate rurality with the discourse of traditionalism, disadvantage and backwards (Roberts & Green, 2013). Education in rural areas is characterised by lack of competent teachers, with learners lacking motivation, parental support, and instruction (Legotto, 2014). In

this study, the definition by Roberts and Green is adopted because rurality is about disadvantage and backwardness.

1.7.5 Rural school

A rural school is considered as a school in the remote area with limited resources, where an educator is teaching numerous learning areas, and which is also hard to attract teachers, since a remote school serves highly poverty-stricken communities with restricted economic opportunities (Nkambule & Mukeredzi, 2017). Scholars state that a rural school is a school which is located outside the urban area where there is no high learner enrolment, electricity, computers, enough teaching staff, and libraries (Moletsane & Ntombela, 2010). This is the definition adopted in this research.

1.8 Organisation of the dissertation

The dissertation encompasses five chapters and a very concise layout of what each chapter entails is presented in subsequent subsections.

Chapter One presented an introduction and the background to the study. It began with a brief introduction in which the purpose of the study is addressed. The background of the study embraced the situation regarding rural education, particularly high performing rural primary schools and the examination results of three identified schools were tabulated, indicating grade seven learners' academic achievements in respective years. The rationale of the study was also presented through the researcher's personal and professional experiences. The chapter also presented the statement of the problem, purpose statement, research questions, and clarification of concepts. A brief description of the chapters was outlined. Lastly, a summary of the chapter was presented.

Chapter Two presented a review of related literature and the theories underpinning the study. This chapter discussed the theoretical framework for the study, providing a literature exploration concerning the information on primary schools, leadership, school performance, rural school, and rurality.

Chapter Three described the research design and methodology followed in the study. The study used different methods to collect data and the methods were explained in detail to account for the

selection of such methods. The chapter also discussed the limitations, sampling, data analysis, and trustworthiness. The details regarding ethical considerations of the study were provided.

Chapter Four focused on the presentation of the generated data. It described specifically what emerged in the field during the interaction between the researcher and the participants. The data was presented in appropriate themes. In addition, the findings from data analysis and interpretation of data generation were also presented in this chapter.

Chapter Five summarised the research findings of the study and presented the conclusions drawn from the study. Recommendations for practice and for further future research were discussed.

1.9 Chapter summary

Rural primary schools are generally under-performing, as is evident from the analysis of national examinations results. However, rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district continuously produce excellent academic results. The leadership is viewed as the driving force that initiates change in these schools, through the establishment of good interpersonal relationships with all the stakeholders, and by providing individual support to teachers. Moreover, lack of resources in schools is linked with academic performance deficits. Thus, the provision of necessary resources in schools can contribute in large measure towards the improvement of learners' academic performance. The next chapter would present a detailed review of related literature, particularly on leadership of in high performing rural primary schools, as well as theoretical framework and the conceptualisation of the key concepts.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

As Mestry (2017) observes, schools need powerful leaders who can care for the members of staff and the learners' development, and consider involvement of parents, as well as the support of the community. Therefore, the focus of this research is to explore leadership practices in high performing rural primary schools in Lesotho, with Qacha's Nek district as the case study. This chapter presented literature review, which was drawn particularly from Lesotho and international studies. The literature review explored such issues as leadership conceptualisation, leadership and management, successful school leadership, and how principals in successful schools lead and why they lead in certain ways. In addition, the researcher reviewed rurality and rural schools, and leadership and rurality, as well as the interaction between rurality and leadership. Subsequently, instructional leadership theory and transformational leadership theory were discussed as the theoretical framework for this study. Lastly, the chapter conclusion was presented.

2.2 Conceptualising leadership

Scholars describe leadership from numerous perspectives, namely social (Northouse, 2012a), cultural (Johnson-Bailey, 2012), organisational (Meyer, 2002), and global perspective (Darling, 2012; Vries, 2012). Hence, successful leadership serves to facilitate social alternation (Northouse, 2012b). Thus, it becomes clear that there are many definitions of leadership and there is no one conceptualisation (Sergiovanni, 2001).

According to Northouse and Lee (2016), leadership is the process through which an individual influences other to attain a common goal. This concurs with Gardner's (2013) view that leadership is not static but is a continuing process in which the leader influences people to pursue the shared aim, as well as the objectives of the organisation. As Yukl (2010) observes, leadership is the process through which individuals are influenced to know and agree on what to be done and how to do it, and the procedure of assisting others and cooperative efforts to achieve shared out objectives. This interpretation indicates that leadership is not a specified trait, but something that is interactive and not fixed (Northouse, 2018). Thus, leadership is an interdependent, dynamic, and

reciprocally interrelation process among leaders and managers, where participants share to the vision and progress regarding change (Werhane & Painter, 2011).

According to Christe (2010a), leadership is distinguished by influence and agreement to achieving certain goals. The effective leaders participate in discussions with others to express authentic concerns regarding their welfare (Combs et al., 2015). In addition, successful leaders motivate others, pay attention, provide stimulation, and acknowledge good performance (Hauserman & Stick, 2013; Osman, 2014; Azad, 2017; Gale & Bishop, 2014; Sarros et al., 2014). However, as Hadebe (2013) argues, effective leaders motivate, persuade, and arouse by encouraging and underpinning the capability and imagination of their fellow workers.

Moreover, leadership as a concept is regarded to be multiplex and contested. Leadership definitions identify two synergistic players which are a team of followers and the leader that coincide through mutuality, collaborative, and dependent relationship (Rutkauskas & Stasytyte, 2013). This is in line with Bush's (2008a) view that leadership is likely to fail if influence originate from the top down. According to Unachukwu and Okorji (2014), over the years emphasis regarding leadership has often moved from order and authority to forming teams and getting people to work collaboratively. As Hunya (2012) asserts, leadership is an input within the organisation and encompasses social influence as one introduces structures, as well as acts that result in a reliable pattern of group interaction, focused at successful and individual achievement.

Furthermore, in terms of educational outlook, leadership is considered as a process of social impact in which leaders persuade followers to use their strengths and necessary resources towards collective goals (Omima, 2013). In addition, as Kai-wing (2016) argues, the principal's understanding of leadership is a persuasive cause for visioning, networking, and improving stakeholders' proficiency that results in enhanced academic attainment and general school performance. Literature reveals that the leader is someone who initiates changes (Summerfield, 2014). As Dutta and Sahney (2016) claim, leadership is the key element of the school that directly influence student achievement.

The researcher concurs with Guzman and Hernandez's (2016) view that when a principal works effectively on his leadership, it is obvious that improvements towards student learning become evident. However, as Grant (2010) argues, leadership does not dwell on the principal only but is expected to create learning conditions for everybody within the school premises, in order to allow

them to change into active leaders. Also, Mesty and Naicker (2015) advance the argument that principals are reluctant to work in collaboration with staff but in isolation. However, as Heystek (2015) claims, school leaders cannot surrender to challenges they come across and it is their responsibility to find solutions instead of excuses. The school cannot enhance its performance, as well as learner attainment, without talented leadership (Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010).

In addition to the view of "talented leadership", Carley and Galton (trait theorists in the mid-1800s) argued that there are several familiar personality characteristics that are shared by proficient leaders. Hence, leadership is an inborn thinking quality that a leader possesses, and such leadership qualities as integrity, good decision-making skills, empathy, sympathy, and assertiveness are naturally peculiar to leaders (Cherry, 2016). Traditionally, leadership is regarded as the position of a person whose qualities make him stand out in a certain group (Terhoven & Fataar, 2018). However, as Aleman (2010) observes, an instruction of the leader needs to be familiar with the school objectives to decide on a direction to observe. Therefore, leadership is not associated with the role of the person, but particularly with the strategy that allows the possibility of goal achievement. The strategic role of dealing with vision sharing is all that leadership comprises. Hence, it is entirely focused on influencing and changing the way people think and conduct themselves (Blanchard, 2010; Gorton & Alston, 2012a; Edwards-Groves, 2018; Grootenboer, 2015).

Leadership in schools is regarded more of a distributed activity, with accountability for aspects of school organisation, shared to various leaders together with middle leaders (Dinham, 2016, Harris, 2014). A leader of a school is the one with multitasking and ready for different situations; one must work as a friend, guardian, coach, and counsellor at the same time (Boonla & Treputtharat, 2014). However, many countries in the world have launched large-scale projects to document the most suitable practices and behaviour of school leaders that are useful to school success (Sherman & Clayton, 2011). Hence, leadership must escalate a personal and professional flexibility focused on planning for enhancement, the expansion of the ability of the members of staff, coupled with gaining and managing financial, physical, and sustaining relationships with human resources (Gurr et al., 2014). It is also emphasised that leadership should build the capability of educators, especially in areas like instructional improvement with a focus on responsibility and enhance the climate of the school through the arrangement of priorities addressed towards teaching and

learning and generating the genuine relationships with other stakeholders (Meyers & Hitt, 2017). The researcher's conviction is that the school leadership needs to create a school environment that is conducive for teaching and learning, through good relationships among stakeholders.

Furthermore, documentation is important in organisational leadership. According to Huber and Conway (2015), leadership of schools need to document high quality plans with apparently expressed attainment goals, together with documented planning strategies for accomplishment and observation of learner achievement towards transformation. Leadership studies indicate that principals play a key role towards quality education in schools (Bush et al., 2011; De Velliers & Pretorius, 2011; Drysdale et al., 2009). As Northouse (2013) observes, there are two forms of organisational leadership, which are assigned and emergent leadership. Assigned leadership is a form of leadership in which one is assigned to a formal position in an organisation. In contrast, emergent leadership is a form of leadership, whereby a leader is considered informal because of the perception that members in the organisation have towards him.

According to Bush (2011a), leadership includes blending the motivations and actions of others to attaining certain goals. Hence, leadership entails taking initiative and risks, and its major features include influence, values, and power. Bush (2008b) summarises the components of influences as follows:

- Influence instead of authority. Authority dwells in formal positions while influence is likely to be exerted by anyone in the school.
- Those who seek to exert influence, do so deliberately to attain certain purposes.
- Influence also can be exercised by groups as well as individuals.

Thus, having read definitions of leadership provided by numerous scholars, the researcher regards leadership as a continuing process to influence behaviour of others, establish direction, facilitate performance, and initiate change towards the common goal of the school. As Jarad (2012a) observes, leadership is the subset of management, and both are vital for the facilitation of organisational performance. In the school context, leadership is normally twinned with management. Therefore, it is vital to explain both leadership and management together, and address differences and similarities as they are often used interchangeably.

2.3 Leadership and management

Leadership and management are vital in the organisation for improvement of the system and the accomplishment of intended goals, even though they are distinguishable and do divergent functions (Hallinger et al., 2018; Harris et al., 2015; Harris at al., 2014). As Solomon et al. (2016a) state, it is not easy to understand the difference between management and leadership because they are frequently used interchangeably and sometimes making confusion. Some scholars argue that even though management and leadership coincide, the two activities are not similar (Bass, 2010). The degree of overlap is the point of disagreement (Yukl, 2011). According to Bargau and Marian-Airelian (2015), the desirable effectiveness of organisations depends on powerful leadership and management, therefore consolidating leadership with management constructively is the best way to advance organisations successfully.

In the education system, leadership and management remain at two tips of a spectrum (Tan & Adams, 2018). Roles and responsibilities explain the direction which school leaders and managers follow. In this study, there is needed to consider leadership and management since both complement each other and are essential for a school to success (Grant, 2009). Leading and managing members of staff are the primary features of school leadership in all contexts (Bush & Middlewood, 2013). This is supported by the Lesotho education Act No.3 of 2010 section 21 (a), which states that a principal is responsible for planning and day-to-day running of a school. Leadership had to do with setting the vision and values of an organisation, whereas management concentrates on daily implementation of the vision (Coleman & Glover, 2010). As Bush et al. (2010) stress, as much as the vision within the organisation is needed to initiate essence and direction of alternation, it is therefore crucial to consider that changes are implemented efficiently and that persisting tasks of the school are executed productively, whilst definite sections are sustaining change. According to Solomon et al. (2016b), leadership and management are prominent towards a successful organisation, even though their functions are distinct. As Grant (2012) observes, leadership seeks adaptive and productive change in an organisation, while management improves and maintain order and stability preservation and organisational maintenance.

Furthermore, according to Christe (2010b), leadership is viewed as the ethical relationship of influence over people, directed towards the achievement of the organisational vision. It is an activity directed towards movement, innovation, and transformation of organisations. Management is about structures and processes that maintain an organisation's functioning. This implies that leadership and management are the main pillars of the school development, which principals are bound to rely on for successfulness. Thus, leadership and management are very important to the success of any school (Bush et al., 2011; Ngcobo & Tikly, 2010). It is pertinent that the principals have firm leadership and good management skills, since both are interdependent in ensuring the smooth operation in the school.

According to Cox (2016), management focuses on planning, organising, controlling, and coordinating, whereas leadership attains its function through creating direction, aligning, and motivating people, as well as inspiring. As Rokach (2014) observes, the principal is a gatekeeper accountable for coordinating incidences and interrelationship in the school and outside. However, Heystek (2016) argues that numerous principals in practice have a deficit of fundamental leadership and management training skills before and after their appointment into principalship. Research has shown that the latest educational contingency wishes to strike a balance between leadership and management (Christe, 2010c; Gorton & Alston, 2012b). In the UK educational setting, the managerial role is assigned to school leaders since the 1900s, through organisational structure (Musgrave, 2013). Leaders make changes through influence, motivation, and action, whilst managers maintain prevailing organisational structures and functions (Hopkins et al., 2014).

In the Lesotho educational context, the administrative management of the school is an important element of the principal's daily activities (MOET, 2002a). Likewise, management plays an important role in the administration of policies and procedures. Whilst leadership is understood as a complex notion of influence, school management is more connected with positions and titles specifying the role of the principal (Dimmock, 2013). This is in line with the views of Perera et al., 2015) that improvement without leadership is debatable. Leadership and management differ in terms of functions and activities as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Leadership and management functions and activities

Management produces	Leadership produces
Order and consistency	Change and movement
Planning and budgeting	Establishing direction
• Establishes agendas	• Create a vision
• Set timetables	• Clarify big picture
• Allocate resources	• Set strategies
Organising and staffing	Aligning people
• Provide structure	• Communicate goals
• Make job placements	• Seek commitment
• Establish rules and procedures	• Build team coalitions
Controlling and problem solving	Motivating and inspiring
• Develop incentives	• Inspire and energise
• Generate creative solutions	• Empower subordinates
• Take corrective action	• Satisfy unmet needs

Source: *Jarad (2012b)*

According to Lunenburg et al, (2010), effective implementation is the driving force of organisational achievement. With the expertise of management and leadership procedures, one is likely going to succeed in both fields. As Leff (2014) observes, setting goals and organising are indicators of attainment. In addition, leaders are a key to human resources and institutional improvement and transformation (Okinyi et al., 2015). According to Pasiardis (2014), an effective leader has the capacity to pass on the school vision and mission statement to respective stakeholders, committing them brilliantly. This concurs with Tschohl's (2014) view that managers need to do leading, and leaders as well must do some managing. Thus, a manager must be able to inspire and motivate employees, because he is the leader whom they see and interact with (Bawany, 2014). Thus, leaders inspire and motivate followers given that there is an overlap between leadership features and management features (Northouse, 2016). This concurs with Boonyachai's (2011) view that an organisation absolutely needs strong support of both managers and leaders, in order to successfully attain the organisational goals.

Moreover, both leadership and management entail identifying what ought to be done, for instance making goals, aligning people and resources, playing active role, and striving for success (Young & Dulewicz, 2008). It is, however, vital to know that sound management remains to be an essential aspect of effective leadership. As Bush (2007) observes, evolving models of educational leadership and management stress the role of the school leaders and managers and their influence on stakeholders, as well as the environment. However, as Eacott (2015) argues, this should be viewed in a relational context instead of polarising theories.

Table 2.2: A typology of management and leadership models

Management Model	Leadership Model
Formal	Managerial
Collegial	Participative
	Transformational
	Interpersonal
Political	Transactional
Subjective	Post-modern
Ambiguity	Contingency
Cultural	Moral
	Instructional

Source: Bush (2007)

The arrangement of both management and leadership models in Table 2.2 reveals that a common theme of influence and direction pervades each one of the models detected. There is no best way of guaranteeing perfect leadership. It is important to notice that organisations and people are distinct, and administrators have choice to decide which model of leadership is appropriate in each context (Steyn, 2011). However, in this study the focus is on transformational and instructional leadership, which was discussed in detail in the theoretical framework (Section 2.8).

Leadership and management have global usefulness currently, as governments value the significance of education, in order to compete effectively in the international economy. Thus, governments view effective leadership as the key to development. Understanding leadership attributes and how they are associated with quality management could assist the institute in its policy planning or other initiative strategies. Scholars concur that leadership has a connection and

effect on quality management, particularly when organisations implement high quality management programmes (Chaijukul, 2010; Kemenade, 2014; Boak & Crabbe, 2019). In the school setting, "quality management" is associated with high performing schools, which in turn alludes to successful school leadership.

2.4 Successful school leadership

The International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) had been conducting research on duties of successful principals, since its establishment in 2001 (Day et al., 2000). This research has revealed that successful leadership involves acquiring the knowledge and understanding of successful leadership skills, as well as the personal capability to productively implement those skills, rather than the results of attaining a position. The study was conducted in Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, Norway, Sweden and United states of America. The purpose of the study was to explain why instructional leadership, organisational capacity building, and culturally responsive practices in relation to successful principals. The study adopted qualitative and the primary data were collected from semi-structured interviews with each principal, deputy principal, teachers, support staff, parents and learners. Thus, school leaders need impressive humanistic skills, instead of technical skills, in order to impart effective leadership in different school environments (Sharma, 2010).

In addition, previous research on different leadership styles has indicated that effective school leadership is the degree of influence between teachers and principals around the core activity of schools, instruction (Urick, 2016a).The study was conducted in the United States of America and the purpose of the study was to examine effective school leadership on different leadership styles of which there is an influence between educators and principals around the main business of schools, instruction. The study adopted quantitative and the data were collected from 8524 principals. Thus, scholars concur that successful leadership is a catalyst for ameliorated learner attainment and well-being (Day et al., 2011; Heck & Hallinger, 2011; Wahlstrom, 2010; Robison, 2011; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Therefore, the rise and decline of the school's plans remains with the leadership (Chikoko et al., 2015). In the South African setting, Steyn (2014a) claims that the appropriate qualities of for successful leadership are collaborative and visionary qualities, which can develop schools to greater heights.

In the context of Lesotho, The Ministry of Education and Training (2002b) has outlined the features of successful leadership as follows:

- Build shared school vision, mission statement, core values and objectives.
- Promote the teamwork among all the stakeholders.
- Motivate, monitor, and supervise the staff to work productively.
- Aim for high expectations of academic progress.
- Engage parents in school activities.
- Promote good interpersonal relationships within the school and community.
- Enhance teaching and learning.
- Comply with MOET policies and implement accordingly.
- Maintain school inventory and accurate record- keeping.
- Manage quarrels that emerge between the staff.
- Provide induction to new staff members.
- Develop staff members.
- Initiate new ideas for school development.

In addition to the above-mentioned features, Steyn (2014b) asserts that effective principals possess a vital influence on the culture of their respective schools, which promotes the way in which members of staff cooperate professionally. Hence, that influence can advance successful school development, collaboration, collegiality, support, and trust which are strongly fixed in democratic beliefs and values. Related literature suggests that a comprehensive and successful kind of leadership emanates from the use of multidimensional strategies, such as people-centred leadership, comprehensibly communicated values and visions enclosed with a great emphasis on the advancement of learning, the use of networked leadership, along with innovative management of competing values (Pashardis et al., 2014). This concurs with Fitzgerald and Jaws' (2012) view that to sustain high learner achievement, principals need to be effective leaders and should act as instructional leaders.

According to Leithwood and Sun (2012), the influence of distinct leadership practices moves different routes to enhance learner outcomes. However, as Harris (2013) argues, educational leadership is not the single responsibility of the school principal since any member of staff may

influence others. This concurs with Schmidt-Davis and Bottoms's (2011) view that neither educators nor principals act solely to enhance school development but they both work together. According to Ylimaki and Jacobson (2011), successful leadership entails dimensions which seem to be crucial in sustaining success, for instance instructional influence shared within the school, academic enhancement, satisfying responsibility policies formed socially from interaction of life proficiencies, the knowledge of principals about their duties, and enhancing sustainability of success through the interaction of influence and skills, along with intellectual and emotional qualities of leaders.

In view of these dimensions, scholars concur that the success and effectiveness of the school depends on the relevance of the action or style that the principal embraces in different situations (Gorton & Alston, 2012c). Thus, the success of a leader depends largely on his knowledge and response to the prevailing situation. As Early (2013) argues, high quality leadership is the essential requirement of successful schools since the leader possesses a significant positive influence on learner outcomes. Furthermore, Gurr and Day (2014a) summarise the qualities of successful school leaders. Hence, successful school leaders:

- Have high expectations of all.
- Employ many conceptions of leadership (transformational and instructional).
- Model leadership that entails both heroic and inclusive.
- Promote collaboration and collective endeavour.
- Acknowledge and adapt their symbolic role.
- Show integrity, trust, and transparency.
- Are people-centred.
- Focus their efforts on the development of others.
- Develop personal qualities with suitable core values as well as beliefs articulated and lived.

Having unpacked successful leadership and its features, the focus now shifts on how principals in successful schools' practise leadership. Thus, in this section features of successful leadership are expanded.

2.5 How principals in successful schools practice leadership

Louis et al. (2010) state four broad categories of successful school leadership practices as follows:

- Setting direction
- Developing people
- Redesigning the organisation
- Managing the instructional programme

Innovative leaders are needed to redesign their core practices and develop suitable combinations and accumulations of these practices, in response to the contexts through which they perform (Day et al., 2011). The researcher utilised Louis et al.'s (2010) core leadership practices, in order to explain how successful principals, lead their schools.

2.5.1 Setting direction

This core practice allows the generation of a compelling sense of purpose in organisations, through creating a shared vision for the members of the organisation.

2.5.1.1 Building a shared vision

As Murphy and Torre (2015) outline, vision building is a sense of hope, commitment to ongoing improvement, reflecting and constructing on what is operating well, stimulating collective responsibility of all, and strongly introducing vision in learning and academic results. A shared vision is an apparent picture regarding what the members of the organisation intent to attain in the future (DuFour, 2014). It serves to direct the transformation of an organisation and gives a structure for organisational tasks and interactions (Kopaneva & Sias, 2015). Thus, a shared vision can link to organisational culture. Since a vision is a direction, teachers may commit themselves into actions when they have seen the target, in the school context. As Gurleet al. (2014) assert, a vision is not something that needs to be communicated as a purpose, but futuristic image of effectiveness. Thus, the role of a vision as futuristic image in a school setting mean that everybody has a clear picture on how the school will be developed to become more effective.

However, as Kose (2011) argues, a vision is not only futuristic but should also be particular and manageable. Setting the school vision is one of the greatest contributing factors to success in schools globally (McKinsey & Co, 2010). Therefore, successful leaders can connect the vision to regular activities, including the challenges they face in school leadership. Moreover, Hallinger

(2011a) pinpointed organisational vision being the key to enhancing student learning. Effective school leaders make use of shared vision to direct their staff and line up resources to achieve organisational goals (Kantabutra, 2010a). In addition, shared vision motivates all stakeholders to make informed decisions regarding instructional practices and activates the constituents to review organisational policies and practices (Kouzes & Posner, 2009). As Kantabutra (2010b) claims, organisational vision shows the environment and context in which the organisation is located. A clear vision shared by all stakeholders creates a commitment that connects them together towards a unified goal (Norman, 2016). This concurs with Kurland et al.'s (2010) view that in schools vision is regarded as the essence of leadership, generating a sense of purpose that joins stakeholders together and drives them to fulfil their deepest aspirations and goals. This is also in line with Erdem and Ucar's (2013) stating view that it is necessary for leaders in schools to share the school's vision, to show teamwork, and to increase teachers' commitment in schools regarding learning organisation. Hence, good leaders model the direction, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, allow others to act and encourage the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). The next section discusses performance expectations.

2.5.1.2 High performance expectations

Performance expectations indicate what the organisation expects from its respective members, and how great performance is recognised (Hamilton, 2008). In addition, performance expectations are multiple, since jobs entail various tasks and roles (Spain et al., 2010). Studies on educational leadership has confirmed that leadership is crucial in the effort to make a school successful and attain high performance (Nedeku, 2013). Having high expectations for learners is a necessary element of successful education.

The literature suggests that the communication of high expectations for the learning success of every learner is a required element of high performing schools (Hattie, 2012; Rubie-Davies, 2015). Sun (2010) believes that leaders' expectations of performance in numerous school situations are vital predictors of later achievement among various populations (Mello et al., 2012). As Rubies-Davies (2015) argues, having expectations does not mean having the constant expectations for every learner, while high expectations are relatively linked to each individual learner. Watson and Garrett (2016) state that having high expectations simply means that all learners are likely to challenged and extended.

Moreover, educational expectations have been distinguished as students' greatest approximate of achievement when utilising available information (Jacob & Wilder, 2010). In addition, establishing goals and performance expectations for educators can benefit students' learning (Hallinger, 2011b). As Robert and Leo (2015) claim, schools are more effective when shared expectations are vital to everyone, and when the organisation does not just include the collection of individuals. However, setting expectations is not certainly a unilateral process forced on workers, but a dialogue and negotiation, as well as reward performance management (Aguinis & Pierce, 2008). Effective school leaders set high performance expectations for educators (Kelchtermans & Piot, 2010; Sun & Leithwood, 2015). High expectations comprise an essential compound of a positive school culture that sustain quality teaching and learning (Gupton, 2010). Likewise, as Day et al. (2011) assert, if constructing a shared vision and cultivating goals acceptance and high expectations of performance are brilliantly executed, direction setting motivates and stimulates organisational activity. Also, Barber et al. (2010) claim that high performing principals stress instructional leadership and the development of teachers. Therefore, workers need to be developed to perform better.

2.5.2 Developing people

Education is fundamentally associated with human development, and it is also the key factor in controlling poverty alleviation, health advancement, and suitable livelihood, as well as sustainable environment (Ghorbani et al., 2018). Teacher development is one of the main conditions that should be considered in educational development, in order to contribute to the enhancement of human resource quality (Mulyasa, 2015). When leaders show awareness towards employees' needs and support them, they generate a culture of caring that develops staff (Du Plesis et al., 2015). In addition, educational leadership stresses that leaders reach their highest impact through developing the abilities of teachers. Leaders should not only assist but also participate in the professional learning for their teachers, to become lead learners of their teams and communities (Fullan, 2014). Hence, developing people includes mentoring and coaching.

2.5.2.1 Mentoring

Mentoring is defined as a process through which one person provides individual support and challenge to another professional (Bush, 2009). In other words, mentoring is one on one

relationship between a skilful, knowledgeable teacher (mentor) and less experienced teacher (mentee) (Mukeredzi et al., 2015).

The literature indicates that mentoring furnishes the self-confidence of novice educators, enhances their professional competencies, and keeps them from withdrawing the profession in early years of work (Kidd et al., 2015; Seok & Berliner, 2012; Aspfors & Franson, 2015). Mentors balance teacher and pupil-learning necessities, as well as gathering and analysing evidence of learning for individuals (Bradbury, 2010). Thus, as novice teachers they need guidance to grow and planning competencies to give instruction that advance student learning (Norman, 2011). Scholars concur that teachers require feedback to gain from their experiences and constructive feedback is essential for teachers to attain instructional goals (Anast-may et al., 2011; Taylor & Tyler, 2012; Voerman et al., 2015).

However, as Hudson (2014) observes, poor focus from mentors means that novice teachers would not probably to get reliable feedback. According to Watkins (2016), principals play an important role in mentoring by managing the environment where mentoring is to be undertaken, which comes through understanding and supporting the mentoring programme. As Heystek et al. (2008) state, the success of the reinforcement relies on the relationship of the mentor and the mentee, where the mentor acts as a curriculum interpreter and a guide with methods of teaching. The literature supports the cultivation of coaching and mentoring skills in the setting of educational contexts for principals, middle leaders, and teachers (Fletcher, 2012).

2.5.2.2 Coaching

Coaching is considered as a facilitative intervention planned to assist people to take responsibility for making changes to their behaviour or ways of thinking to attain significant objectives (Van Nieuweburgh & Barr, 2017). According to Lofthouse (2016), coaching is the creation of collaborative professional space. In recent years coaching has appeared to be an important enhancement intervention in schools across Australia, the United Kingdom, and the USA (Lee et al., 2010). Coaching is widely used as a school enhancement initiative to develop principals, other school leaders, classroom educators and their teaching practice, as well as learners regarding study skills and career planning (Van Niewerburgh, 2012).

As Heystek et al. (2008) assert, coaching needs interpersonal skills, openness, and trust among teachers. Coaching skills are an essential capacity for successful leaders since it is crucial for school leaders to develop an understanding of how coaching is principal to their leadership advancement, in order to ensure the most suitable leadership style that is flexible and responsive (Grant & Harttey, 2013; Whiterod, 2014). Related literature has indicated that school leaders who experienced coaching had high level of self-efficacy (Swain, 2016; Netolicky, 2016a). As Netolicky (2016b) observes, Australian school leaders who embraced coaching assisted to change leader-teacher modus from evaluation of self-authored learning experiences.

2.5.3 Redesigning the organisation

According to Anastasiado (2017), leadership is a key component, an important factor that distributes and establishes the actions and practices implemented in an education organisation. The school climate is viewed as an observable form of culture (Balci, 2011). As Mahnegar and Far (2015) affirm, when members of staff are satisfied in their workplace, they become more effective and motivated and can assist the organisation in achieving common goals. This concurs with Hutabarat's (2015) view that teachers who work in a pleasant environment are satisfied with their profession than teachers working in unpleasant conditions that would eventually result in job dissatisfaction.

Therefore, the research endeavours to identify leadership practices that contribute to the establishment of productive organisational structure, to building collaborative school culture, distributing leadership, and to building relationships within and outside the school.

2.5.3.1 Building collaborative school culture

Collaborative school culture includes colleagues operating interdependently and cooperatively to reach goals (Sola et al., 2014). According to Sinek (2017a), principals who generate cultures that are free from fear can focus on and promote student success. Research suggests that engaging in quality collaboration with colleagues can develop the professional capability of individual teachers and generate an environment that enhance student learning across classrooms (McQueen & Grissom, 2015).

As Sanzo et al. (2011) state, principals cannot lead schools without staff cooperation and teachers need to be empowered to make their own decisions. Printy (2010) argues that to maintain quality teaching, solid collaboration based on enhancement is a necessity. Principals serve as leaders, not just through facilitating collaboration in schools, but at the same time enhancing external relationships with the community and families to underpin teachers' efforts (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). Building collaborative school culture is associated with teamwork, communication, and trust.

2.5.3.2 Teamwork

According to Noe (2017), a teamwork is a group of individuals that influence each other, operate cooperatively and interdependently, and has a distributed responsibility to complete duties, attain a common goal or an organisational objective. Also, Thiratanachaiyakul (2015) asserts that an effective team is the one through which members collaborate and take responsibility to conclude work entirely. Hence, a good teamwork is considered as the one which allows members to share ideas and are willing and committed to concluding their tasks to attain the organisation's objectives.

In addition, effective teamwork enables the organisation to improve its effectiveness (Kasetaulm, 2015). This concurs with Szczesiul and Huizenga's (2015) view that principals need to support both individual educators, as well as the cooperative team. As Sparks (2013) claims, schools develop with progress when administrators and educators belong to one or successful teams where shared leadership is practised. As Owings and Kaplan (2012) observe, most time is spent working with learners, so teachers need time to pursue skill improvement and carry out collaborative planning and learning to meet their various classrooms needs. Team building provides people with a collaborative learning climate through structured experimental and authentic learning activities, comprising of complex duties with practical relevance and functionality. Thus, there is no teamwork without communication.

2.5.3.3 Communication

As Nebo et al. (2015) define, communication as a process through which information is transmitted from one person to another. Communication is necessary in creating a caring environment, in

which staff members feel comfortable approaching leaders. Principals can promote communication by notifying staff of how, when and where they communicate concerns (Stickle & Scot, 2016a). Praise and recognition to staff for good work, and indicating an understanding work-life, generate an atmosphere in which employees feel valued, and there is significance of trust (Stickle & Scott, 2016b).

According to Van Deventer and Kruger (2011), greater leaders, as well as school leaders, utilise a strong tool to create a sense of empowerment, which is communication, and when leaders communicate wrongly, their staff will misinterpret, misunderstood, and get mixed messages. Meetings are one of the communication tools, that is commonly used by most leaders to distribute information and make decisions concerning problems that require solutions (Leach et al., 2009). Communication is the key factor in creating relationships. Thus, principals who build a positive environment for teachers through communicating a mission, shared discussions, supportive professional advancement, a sense of teacher community, as well as public relationships with a community encourage a climate wherein teachers feel empowered (Uric & Bowers, 2014).

Furthermore, as Onjoro et al. (2015) state, effective communication with staff and learners goes a long way in increasing their efficiency, as well as effectiveness. Successful learners apparently communicate and establish a supportive relationship between teachers and other school leaders, which is characterised by giving an understandable school vision translating it to the teachers, and framing direction for educators by giving professional development, which shares positively to teachers' commitment to the school (Hulpia et al., 2011a). Thus, people in their communications should consider trust as the key factor.

2.5.3.4 Trust

Trust is simply defined as a willingness of making oneself vulnerable to someone else in the belief that a person's interest of which another person cares about will not be harmed (Tschannen-Moran, 2014a). In educational climate trust supports all productive relationships and interactions among stakeholders (McMurray & Scott, 2013). It is believed that when people put trust and respect into practice, they are found to be a close community with a shared vision to develop higher order alternations. A true reflection of teamwork is observed in a school where principals foster trust.

Research has indicated that teachers make a judgement based on confidence that their colleagues and other clients are honest, reliable, and skilful and open (Handford & Leithwood, 2013). Collective trust between different interdependent stakeholders in a school has been found to be a significant variable that facilitates the attainment of educational results for learners (Tschannen-Moran, 2014b). When there is trust in schools, educators are not reluctant to share views with other educators and their principals (Shih et al., 2012). Similarly, the study conducted by Kars and Inandi (2018) confirm that trust is a central element to maintain the success of the organisation and teacher job satisfaction. The study was conducted in the central districts of Mersin,Turkey and the purpose was to disclose the relationship between principals' leadership and organisational trust , and at what degree leadership behaviours foretell educators' organisational trust. The study adopted qualitative and the questionnaires were used as data collection instruments from 722 principals through principal behaviour scale and Omnibus Trust scale.

However, as Sinek (2017b) argues, trust is the central component for knowledge distribution and that it drives out from safe climate created by leaders. School leaders who generate bonds of trust can assist inspire teachers to reach higher levels in terms of effect and attainment and can also work collaboratively to find solutions towards school challenging issues (Forsyth & Adams, 2014; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Zeinabandi, 2014). Thus, educational success is more likely to happen when distributed leadership is put into practice.

2.5.3.5 Distributed leadership

 Communication and trust in this study present a perfect climate wherein leadership may be distributed successful. The concept "distributed leadership" has been gently developed over the past decade and is nowadays connected with different implications for organisational process, leadership effectiveness and school development (Tlan et al., 2015). Distributed leadership stands as a presentation of a leadership model of which the leader has no primary function, but instead the leadership seems to be responsible for the team to reach the common objectives (Houghton et al., 2015). Thus, distributed leadership may be viewed as comprising five components, in the form of the process of supervision (Hamuton et al., 2014), deputation of authority (Dobrajska et al., 2015), school improvement (Daniels, 2017) and general partnership (Rapp et al., 2016). As Alhouti & Male (2015) assert, distributed leadership becomes effective in climates where individuals work together cooperatively.

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Leadership is no longer based on one person, but duty sharing through collaborative interactions of various leaders (Tlan et al., 2016; Thien, 2019). This suggests that principals need to share their leadership functions to teachers and work hand in hand (Hulpia et al., 2011b). However, as Harris and DeFleminis (2016) argue, leaders do not suggest that everyone is a leader, but it is only for equipped people to lead and to fulfil a certain goal. Moreover, international schools have found success using distributed leadership as a means of resisting high teacher replacement, particularly for teachers who prefer to remain in their school's location, instead of facing new and various challenges (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Research has shown that in schools where distributed leadership is implemented properly, teachers are highly motivated and authorised to make decisions in relation to teaching, learning and assessments, and this increases learners' achievement (Szeto & Cheng, 2017). Therefore, in such a particular school there is a warm working climate, which makes teachers happy and feel encouraged to work hard for the benefit of their students.

However, as cook (2014) observes, it is rare that a good school is administered by a good leader who brings about a climate that is conducive for all stakeholders to recognise their potential and strengths to lead in new initiatives. According to Konsola et al. (2014), distributed leadership hardly determines teachers' motivation. This motivation guides to a powerful bond between colleagues, mutual trust and support which lead to advancement in the school. Distributed leadership promotes a sense of belonging among leaders where they feel valued members of the school (Hughes & Pickeral, 2013). This concurs with Harris' (2013) view that "distributed leadership" is a leadership which is shared within, between and across the organisations. Therefore, it is important for successful leaders to create a good atmosphere in schools.

2.5.3.6 Relationships within the school

As Spillane and Healey (2010) state, leadership is the key to transformation in schools. Studies conducted in recent decades reveal that a positive working climate makes qualitative enhancements and the effective function of the school process (Rigby, 2017). Thus, good interpersonal relationships and friendly collaboration among members of the school community positively influence the operation of the school. Gurr and Day (2014b) stress that successful principals construct good interpersonal relationships among all the stakeholders.

Leaders need to create interconnectedness, encourage positive relationships, and foster an emotional environment that provides the emotional assistance that directs organisational performance and attainment (O'Boyle et al., 2011). It is believed that successful educational leaders have high emotional intelligence capabilities (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Cai, 2011). An effective principal pays much attention on the use of leadership skills to unite teachers to work collectively for the best of the school, and so much importance is situated on the collegial relationships which make teachers fail to operate smoothly without them, and both the atmosphere within teaching community and the role of the principal (Ann, 2014).

However, as Day et al. (2014) argue, interpersonal group communication improves when the principal creates a positive climate at the school. Also, according to Orebiyi (2011), interpersonal communication between teachers and principals are crucial where support for leadership will be required by subordinates. Scholars concur that relationships within the school do not only have an impact on the school, but the entire community around the school as well (Lewallanet al., 2015).

2.5.3.7 Relationships outside the school

Reviewed literature has shown that administrative leadership, the principal, is significant in establishing and sustaining collaborative cultures with families and the community at large (Auerbach, 2010; Sanders, 2014; Tschannen, 2014). In addition, Sanders (2014) asserts that if the principal ignore the concept of collaborative cultures, families and the community would be reluctant to contribute to school leadership. It is essential that principals assist in the development of an authentic partnership, as a respectful alliance valuing connection constructing, dialogue, and power distribution (Auerbach, 2010).

Schools and families are regarded as partners in the education of their children (Epstein, 2011; Lemmer, 2013). Positive parental involvement in the school enhances students' advanced academic attainment and socio-emotional development (Jeyness, 2011; Pedding, Murphy & Sheley, 2011). As Kwatubana and Makhalemele (2015) state, the involvement of parents in the education of their children is a good thing because it enhances academic performance, and learners become more focused in their schoolwork. Garcia and Thornton (2014) claim that engagement of parents in their children's education helps to enhance learners, decrease absenteeism, and reinstate parents' confidence in children's education. Likewise, parents can be involved by means of follow-

ups with their children's subject educator to single out areas where children are facing some challenges (Clinton & Hattie, 2013).

However, as Matefevic and Jovanovich (2014) argue, schools should create partnerships with families through which appropriate information can be offered about the effects of different parenting styles on student achievement. Moreover, trust is the root of school partnerships (Turnbull et al., 2015). Therefore, trust among all stakeholders is necessary to enhancing effective collaboration (Adams & Forsyth, 2013). The next component of instructional leadership style is managing the instructional programme that focuses particularly on the control and instruction (Hallinger, 2013).

2.5.4 Managing the instructional programme

In schools, leaders who practice instructional leadership provide a professional support to teachers in their day-to-day activities and the growth of collaborative groups among members of staff and curriculum development. Policymakers and practioners agree that school leadership is a vital contributor to advanced systems of performance and school function (Harris, 2014). As Zheng et al. (2018) observe, the principal as an instructional leader can practice interactions with the teachers through class observations and provide a support in terms of teaching techniques. Thus, managing of instructional programme involves supervision and evaluation instruction, monitoring of students, and teachers' progress.

2.5.4.1 Supervision and evaluation instruction

Aydin (2014) defines supervision as the process of determining whether the organisational activities are in line with accepted principles and rules. The knowledge and skills gained in schools cannot be stored up date in the face of fast changes and as a matter of fact, these skills become out of date. Thus, this phenomenon requires ongoing self-renewal in teaching as in every profession. Effective supervision plays a key role in enhancing the quality of education and success (Aydin & Toptas, 2017).

Similarly, researchers found that supervision may be given by various people including administrators, peer teachers, instructional coaches, as well as independent consultants (Alila et al., 2015). Various scholars concur that supervision involves the accountability and has broad

meaning on the principal's role as an instructional leader (Tuytens & Davos, 2017; Zepeda, 2016; April & Bouchamma, 2015; Range et al., 2014; DiPaola & Hoy, 2014a; Shatzer et al., 2014). However, as DiPaola and Hoy (2014b) argue, the role of school principals has changed over time and their primary purpose should be explained as instructional leadership and supervision, evaluation of teaching, and the professional development of educators. Thus, evaluation process plays vital role in the professional enhancement of teachers.

Moreover, evaluating teacher performance and their involvement in professional activities ensure student attainment (Bowman, 2013; Sahlberg, 2015). According to Osakwe (2010), principals give guidance to teachers through their supervision, thus school objectives are attained through the effective teaching and well-planned learning. This concurs with Heaton's (2016a) view that principals help teachers in rectifying their skills, which are necessary for teaching students better. Principals who are efficient in supervision help support teachers in preparing lesson plans and summaries before lectures, instructional aids, and other target-oriented tasks.

 In addition, schools may become successful only if teachers are satisfactory (Wildman, 2015). Thus, effective and well-planned teaching demands for excellent supervision practices by the principals. Principals are regarded as school managers, who run them well with collective efforts around them (Heaton, 2016b). Reviewed literature suggests that principals should provide professional and ongoing development, including course work, seminars and learning opportunities for better enhancement of the members of staff. According to Zepeda (2014), staff development is vital for better supervision. It further assists teachers in grooming and making education a learning experience. In addition, better development of staff practices helps in providing needed training to the teachers with respect to curriculum teamwork (Jill & Betty, 2012). Instructional school leaders placed an emphasis on monitoring student progress and enhancing quality teaching, as well as learning (Hallinger & Hosseingholizadeh, 2019).

2.5.4.2 Monitoring of students and teachers' progress

Monitoring teaching and learning in turn offers information regarding strengths and difficulties to be solved through planned professional development activities. Effective school leaders mostly prefer to use class observation to create a meaningful dialogue with teachers, offering helpful feedback to align improvement efforts (Cardenil et al., 2010; Salazar & Marques, 2012).

2.5.4.2.1 Observation

MOET (2002c) in Lesotho regards observation of classes as a technique of evaluating aspects such as lesson planning, the use of learning materials prepared for the lesson, teaching methods, classroom management and learner assessment. This perspective is expanded by Shulhan (2012), who claims that one of the features of powerful teaching leadership is a classroom visit, with the purpose of enhancing learning and evaluating teachers in a caring and constructive manner. Likewise, principals frequently use classroom observation in a developmental manner to support, guide and advise staff about how they can do better.

As Day et al. (2011) observe, teachers welcomed observation as an initiative of distributing practices and rectifying teaching approaches. They further agreed that observation was not considered as surveillance, but instead as a form of professional support and a chance for reflective dialogue. The principals in schools work hard to enforce good learner behaviour in the classroom.

2.5.4.2.2 Classroom management

According to Martin and Sass (2010), classroom management is an umbrella term for educators' actions to control class, learners' behaviour, and their learning. Studies indicate that management of classroom discipline show necessary requirement for cognitive learning and if the educator cannot bring the solution to the problems that emanated from disorderly and conflicting behaviours of learners, the entire teaching and learning process would be compromised (Valente, 2015). In another research, educators' work hand in hand with the parents and counsellor, as a means of stopping discipline problems (Sadik & Arslan, 2015). As Uzzochina (2015) states, principals have crucial responsibility to facilitate an atmosphere for the improvement of favourable student behaviour. The successful instructional leader of a rural school has a clear focal point on technique of instruction that underpins high academic standards for learners (Klar & Brewer, 2014).

Likewise, clear classroom rules can maintain the level order and decrease any interruptions concerning teaching and learning (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012a). Classroom discipline management includes educators encouraging favourable social interactions, as well as energetic management in learning and self-motivation (Jelouder & Yunus, 2011). Educators need to respond successfully and efficiently to undisciplined behaviours and be alert that their own behaviour could

strengthen unsuitable behaviour (Mundschenk et al., 2011). Research suggests that use of favourable reinforcements, giving a place to employ rewards instead of punishments, and creating a healthy interpersonal relationship between educators and learners can stop undesirable behaviours in schools (Senturk, 2010). In the following section the researcher explored why principals in successful schools do lead differently compared to other principals.

2.6 Why do principals in successful schools lead in particular ways?

Quality school leadership is a major element in any reform effort focused on enhancing student attainment. Empirical evidence has shown that principals may create school climates that are conducive to teaching and learning and attract, support, and maintain high-quality educators (Wahlstrom, 2010; Branch et al., 2013). In addition, those successful rural principals endorse the school vision, apparently articulate a plan matching with the school vision and consequently encourage change (Barbour, 2014; Bartting, 2014; Msila, 2012; Tom, 2012).

As Cosne and Jones (2016) observe, leadership areas found to be productive in enhancing low-performing school include setting organisational goals, monitoring achievement utilising school wide-data and cycles of inquiry process for ongoing enhancement, advancing teacher learning by constructing professional development systems that develop educators' effective practice, knowledge and skills, as well as principals serving directly as instructional leaders through the coordination and evaluation of teaching curriculum. Moreover, principals serve as crucial drivers of leadership by planning structures that offer chances for collective decision-making (Goddard et al., 2015). This concurs with DuFour's (2016) view that working alone instead of collaborating in teams has been identified as a major obstacle to ameliorating achievement. As Devine and Alger (2011) claim, a school's success is due to cooperation approach to leadership.

The principals no longer lead an entire school instructional programme without substantial contribution from other educators. Shared leadership is mostly regarded as part of educational reforms, especially in various countries including the UK, the USA, Australia, parts of Europe and New Zealand. Studies have indicated that the educator is the main factor influencing student learning through their influence motivation and operating situations (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Seashore Louis et al., 2010; Heck & Moriyama, 2010). To advance student learning results, principals must reshape the culture to generate professional communities that focus on outcomes

and teacher cooperation (Fullan, 2014). The principal is instrumental in bringing educators together by building trust and shaping new norms which involves and values educator voice, professional learning through a partnership of the principal and the school in which there is a clear vision of distributed success. Since the study is based on high performing rural schools, it is important to discuss rurality and the rural school.

2.7 Rurality and the rural school

As Myende (2015) observes, it is not easy to define the term rurality in South Africa as a notion due to various meanings it has to different people. Perceptions on the definition of rurality are dynamic and wide-ranging, and grounded on a socially constructed understanding which centres on geography, population, land use and culture (Stelmach, 2011a). For instance, some scholars argue that rurality is defined traditionally as the opposite of 'urban region', which results in contradiction and comparison between the two (Stelmach, 2011b). Therefore, for better understanding of rurality both international and local perspectives are utilised.

According to BalFour et al. (2012), rurality studies emanated from the disciplines of Agricultural Science, Agricultural Education, and Human Geography. The USA Census Bureau (2017) defines rurality as any population, housing, and territory which is not within an urban. Similarly, as Redding and Walberg (2012a) state, rurality is characterised with low population density, family and community remoteness and isolation. In addition, rural schools are considered as schools found in remote areas serving a community with low populations, under-resourced and low school enrolment (McLean et al., 2014; Redding & Walberg, 2012b). In addition, Schafft (2016) asserts that the rural school functions as the middle of the community more than in urban areas. As Surface and Theobald (2014) affirm, a strong and positive connection between a school and its rural community may be vital to the existence of both the school and its community. Moreover, rural education relates to six qualitative features approved by rural education organisations namely, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and Rural School Community Trust (RSCT) (Crook & Mc Culloch, 2008). The features are as follows:

- Education happens at a distance from large urban areas.
- Education occurs in an environment with historical roots within rural culture.

- Education with access to little resources like high qualified teachers, high quality education and high-quality professional development and curricula.

- Education takes place in small schools.

- Education collaborates with and tries to meet the needs of the entire community.

- Education is rooted in the lives of community families.

As Lekhetho (2013) observes, poor achievement in rural schools in Lesotho results from lack of infrastructure, use of unqualified teachers, poverty, and the practice of multi-grade teaching. According to Lesotho Census (2006), Lesotho has a population of 1.8 million people. Rurality in Lesotho is considered in areas found in the highlands (Mountainous region) where roads and current electricity are not available. Therefore, there are few numbers of schools and health clinics of which are inaccessible to rural people due long to travelling distances (Bureau of Statistics Lesotho, 2006). Rural schools in Lesotho areas are generally smaller than those in urban areas and most of teachers are unqualified, with multi-grade teaching as a norm.

Rural schools in Lesotho are found in three districts, which are Thaba-Tseka, Mokhotlong and Qacha's Nek. Rurality in Lesotho is also characterised with hardship allowance in terms of salaries of all people working in rural areas (Paramente et al., 2005). Furthermore, scholars concur that rural schools worldwide experience similar barriers to advanced student learning and quality education, for instance poor funding and insufficient resources, insufficient human resources, remoteness, schools serving poverty-stricken localities, inadequate economic chances and paucity of family, social remoteness and separation, rural geographies framing life patterns daily and low educational levels within communities (White & Lock, 2013; Mukeredzi, 2013; Redding & Walberg, 2012c).

2.7.1 Leadership and rurality

Leadership is considered as the process that requires the capacity of one individual to motivate and influence the other to attain shared goals or objectives (Rodrigues & Ferreira, 2015). Thus, the main function of leadership is to initiate change and movement. Rurality simply means the study of how practice, behaviour, decision-making, and operation are contextualised and persuaded by social and cultural meaning partial to rural areas (Coke, 2009). Poor attainment in rural schools may not be associated with lower socio-economic status (Robbert & Green, 2013).

As Urick (2016b) asserts, leadership is regarded as one of the imperative factors affecting the success of the school and excellence. In addition, the principals need to have adequate knowledge regarding the context in which they work, in order to reach the learners' needs and the community's expectations (Riley, 2013). In other words, at any cost of unmanageable factors which negatively persuade student attainment, responsibility for student success as measured by standard tests relies on the school principal.

Moreover, the successful instructional leader of a rural school has an apparent focus on instruction style, which supports high academic standards for students (Klar & Brewer, 2014). The productive rural principal upraises teachers' expectations by supporting on grade reading levels of learners and by encouraging learner enhancement on standardised tests (Tom, 2012; Barbour, 2014). According to Tieken (2014), rurality is normally described as what is left over from urbane. Leadership is an important requirement, especially in the process of change management for running an organisation to initiate new ideas which are creative and innovation to excellence (Hargreaves et al., 2010).

Literature suggests that the school leadership's influence on affective commitment by teachers plays a vital role in organisational productiveness to fulfil educational change initiatives (Tingle et al., 2019). Leadership is the stimulating and paramount discipline in the administration. In addition, leadership is defined by various scholars as a process that influence a group of people to attain a common goal, but it also needs the leader to observe different organisational features such as trust, commitment, justice, culture, climate, and job satisfaction of the employees (Northouse, 2010).

In the educational context, the principal is claimed to be able to determine the school pattern, for instance, the learning environment, the professionalism, and morals of the educator as well as the level of interest for student inequality (Agezo, 2010). Similarly, leadership persuades changes in school academic attainment through its impact on educators and teaching quality, as well as school environment and culture (Sammons et al., 2011). This concurs with Tran et al.'s (2018) view that the school principal's leadership core practices that are reactive are necessary for educators' development, which in succession leads to school enhancement.

According to Sentocnik and Rupar (2009), a school leader needs to organise, supervise, plan, make decision, do managerial and financial duties and particularly be a productive instructional leader.

Studies revealed that due to small staff members and rich social and professional networks, rural principals are in a good position to build trust along with staff and in turn encourage cooperation within staff and support learner achievement goals (Irvine et al., 2010). Johannsen (2014) suggests that it is wise for leaders to always look for the best leadership model for their own organisations.

2.7.2 Confluence between rurality and leadership

Leadership is a function of context and principals perform instructional leadership and approach school goals, leaders, teachers, and community concerns differently based upon their school and community climates (Hallinger, 2016). Being a principal in a small rural school can be professionally and socially separating, with restricted chances to enact with colleagues for support and exchanging of ideas (Earl Rinehart, 2017). Research confirms that experiences of rural principals vary significantly from their suburban and urban counterparts (Hill, 2014a; Johnson et al., 2014; Lynch, 2012a; Preston et al., 2013).

In addition, due to low enrolment, geographic and social separation and few staff, the rural principals face different challenges, as well as dissimilar responsibilities and holding dual roles (Hill, 2014b; Johnson et al., 2014; Lynch, 2012b). The principal does dual roles, for instance as a principal and teacher or a principal and superintendent, and as a result this restrict the rural principal's capability to focus on instructional leadership (Howley et al., 2012). Likewise, literature conceptualises the principal's role just as an instructional leader and not being a teaching principal, which postulates behaviours and functions that are not essentially associated with the real task of teaching principals (Wallin & Newton, 2013). Hence, rural principals often have unlike responsibilities, like paying attention to learner enrolment and substitute teaching, partially because low enrolment induces to a decreased support staff (Duncan & Stock, 2010; Lynch, 2012c; Parson, et al., 2016). As a result of this, rural principals lead and at the same time conduct different and varied responsibilities that are done by specialised staff in a large school (Lynch, 2012d).

In addition, the capacity to delegate and distribute managerial tasks is not frequently an option for the rural principal (Preston et al., 2013). Rural principals face challenges which are beyond different responsibilities and duality of roles. Due to geographic isolation, rural principals face challenges in staffing and pressures to decrease expenditures because of low enrolment (Morton & Harmon, 2011). According to Renihan and Noonan (2012), principals from rural schools in

Canada faced challenges working over local politics, geographic separation, high expectations with a decreased staff, and a requirement for mentorship of novice principals. Numerous rural school principals struggle to attain school goals and educational objectives, whilst concurrently balancing distinctive political, social, and personal interests of parents and community followers (Preston et al., 2013a). Rural principals also encounter socio-cultural problems which are different to their school community.

As Preston et al. (2013b) observe, several challenges of rural school principals include shortage of employment chances for people within the community, geographic separation, and migration of people from their villages and poor terms of education. In addition, rural principals are frequently under-resourced and have additional pressures different to their position, which eventually contribute to stress, heavy workload and burden on family and relationships for principals (McLean et al., 2014; Windsor, 2010). As Pendola and Fuller (2018) assert, challenges connected with rural schools often drive to higher turnover rates and shorter-level leadership stability.

2.8 Theoretical framework

Scholars concur that a productive school is not categorised in accordance with student attainment, but instead how the principal generates chances for productive teaching and learning as the core activities for school excellence (Gorton & Alston, 2012d). The theoretical framework that underpins this study is built in both transformational and instructional leadership styles. Transformational leadership theory is relevant to this study because it affirms the centrality of the principal's reform role, especially in instituting innovation and shaping school culture (Leithwood, 1994). Similarly, instructional leadership theory is appropriate because it concentrates on the principal as the driving force of the school to improve learner achievement.

2.8.1 Transformational leadership theory

Burns (1978) introduces the theory of transformational leadership. Hence, transformational leadership theory is a mutual consensus between leaders and followers to help each other to become inspired to a higher level of ethical standards and motivation by showing respect and reassuring participation. It is not just interchange of one thing for another, but instead it initiates trust, integrity, and true value.

This theory is attractive because it normally results in an understanding of distinct leadership models and is a style to expand leadership. Burns viewed transformational leadership as a process where in leaders and subordinates engage in a reciprocal process of equipping one another through values, self-awareness, charismatic actions as well as motivation. The aim of transformational leadership model is to enact factual and lasting alternations in individuals and organisations particularly in classification such as mind, heart, vision, insights understanding, purpose, beliefs, principles, and values (Covey, 2004). Transformational leadership theory is grounded on the belief that leadership impacts the behaviour of subordinates in accordance with their trust of and respect for the leader.

Burns (1978) draws a difference between transformational and transactional leadership models. He sees these models as being opposite with the leader possessing certain dispositions that control their style. Burns stresses that transactional leader works from powerbase of rewards and penalties and strive to obtain the cooperation of followers on an interchange basis. In other words, transformational leadership can be viewed as an extension of transactional behaviour. Subsequently, Bass (1985) expands on Burns' (1978) indigenous ideas and coins the term transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is about authorising followers to become leaders through the initiation of a reciprocal link of trust and inspiration. Bass (1985) argues that a transformational leader exhibits charisma, regards the interests of individuals and increases their intellectual skills. These scholars concur that fruitful leaders who focus on transformational leadership theories is that they transform their followers through their supportive nature and delightful personalities.

Following the development of leadership theories, the early 1980s have been noticeable by dissatisfactions from the past leadership theories, which were a division of people-oriented against task-oriented views (Gardner & Cleavenger, 1998). Later, a new shift happened in leadership studies with a paradigm found on the theory of transformational leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1994). This is viewed as a leadership form at its highest degree of evolution. Educational administration scholars identified the connection of the theory to the contemporary challenges experienced by principals. The theory was quickly accommodated in the field of education and accepted as an ideal style for school leadership (Hallinger, 1992). Leithwood (1994) narrates and evaluates the effectiveness of transformational leadership in schools. Leithwood distinguished

nine functions of transformational leadership grouping into three areas: (a) Mission centred; developing a shared school vision, building agreement concerning school goals and priorities, (b) performance centred; establishing high performance expectations, giving individualised support, providing intellectual stimulation, and (c) culture centred; modelling school values, strengthening fruitful school culture, building cooperative cultures and initiating structures for cooperation in the school decision making.

This theory describes the distinctive relationship between the leader and his subordinates which accounts for good performance and attainments for the team. The centre of interest in transformational leadership in this study emanate with an understanding that transformational leadership is one of the central and utmost persuasive leadership models in the field of administration (Bush, 2014). In the educational context, it focuses particularly on the principal as the centre of expertise, power, and authority within the school (Morris, 2014a). In addition, the command of authority was not easy for the individual to carry alone, hence the shift towards transformational leadership was highly considered as achievable with a division of power and responsibility, which promotes interest in the empowerment of educators and members of the community including distributed leadership (Morris, 2014b).

According to Northouse (2013), leadership is all about giving directions, carrying out plans and motivating people. Thus, the main aspect of transformational leadership circulates around the followers' special necessitates such as motivation, ethical aspirations, empathy, support, and personal development (Kovjanic et al., 2012; Rusliza & Ebrahim, 2016). Transformational leadership capacitates subordinates to accomplish organisational goals (Luft, 2012). It is believed that if people are committed to the mutual goals of the organisation and are empowered to attain these goals, then there is high possibility of effectiveness in the organisation. The distinctive feature of this leadership model involves a distributed vision among people within the organisation and the power of the leader (Burns, 2010a).

The keystone of transformational leadership theory is the leader's capability to transform beliefs and attitudes of followers to accomplish beyond expectations (de Poel et al., 2014). As Stinglhamber et al. (2015) affirm, transformational leaders motivate their followers to accomplish above the limits by creating high level of necessities among themselves and encouraging an achievement of trust. According to Burns (2010b), primary feature of transformational leadership

is the collaboration between the leaders and subordinates that has the potential of strengthening each other to better levels of motivation and morality. Transformational leaders have ability to orient the values of subordinates with the values of organisation and by so doing improve the efficiency of the organisation (Burns, 2010c). In the context of successful schools, transformational leaders promote creativity and professionalisation by inspiring teachers to question their own beliefs and values and through improving their problem-solving capabilities (Raes et al., 2013; Thoonen et al., 2011). As Trmal et al. (2015) assert, transformational leadership is productive since it drives changes in individual behaviour, which leads to the attainment of organisational goals. In addition, it is viewed that transformational leadership has the capacity to have substantial impact on the general performance of the organisation, generating the support required to make sure that desired outcomes for performance result.

Yukl (2010) argues that transformational leadership implores to the moral values of subordinates to increase their consciousness about ethical issues and to mobilise their energy and resources to change organisations. In the school context, transformational leadership is the leadership style that spotlights the provision of chances and promotes all effective elements at school to work on an exceptional value system, in order to attain goals of the school needs instead of the short-term problems and chances faced by the organisation, in place of viewing intra, as well as extra organisational agents as separate (Saeed et al., 2014). Transformational leadership, as defined by Sheppard et al. (2010), incorporates leaders who have high expectations. Sun and Leithwood (2012) claim that transformational school leadership has an important effect on student attainment. Kurland et al. (2010) recognise that transformational leadership is the mediating effect in the growth of school vision and school success.

Furthermore, according Burns (1978b), transformational approach generates significant change in the life of people and in the organisations. Thus, it rebuilds perceptions and values and changes expectations and aspirations of employees. On the other hand, Burns (1978c) articulates the distinction between transactional and transformational models of leadership by observing that transactional leadership encompasses an exchange of something of value, whilst distributed commitment to a considerable goal among followers. Bass (1985) further expands transformational leadership approach and discovers the dimensions of transformational leadership as follows:

- Idealised influence (charisma): The principal in this dimension leads by example, acts confidently with good cheer, shares risks connected with the application of theories and strengthen values through a high level of ethical behaviour (Alzoraiki et al., 2018).

- Inspirational motivation: In this dimension, transformational leaders encourage staff with new ideas and motivation (Alzoraiki et al., 2018a). They challenge staff by developing a shared vision, setting high standards and encouraging a culture that appeals to the subordinates' self-interest. In the school context, the principal generates a sense of meaning in the work that educators perform. Leadership of principals through idealised influence infuse a sense of faith for a better future among all members within the school, as well as the learners (Berson & Oreg, 2016).

- Intellectual stimulation: Principals in this dimension arouse and encourage educators to cogitate in the matter of innovation and creativity, while giving a culture void with no fear of punishment (Alzoraiki, 2018b).

- Individual consideration: The dimension indicates that in educational context, principals are accountable for giving praise to educators for attainment, initiative and when they achieve their targeted level potential (Alzoraiki et al., 2018c). Through this culture of cooperation, principals and educators focus on the common good of the leaders and the achievement of the school goals (Eliophotou-Menon & Ioannou, 2016).

Transformational leadership practices are important and necessary in advancing high academic performance by fostering the participation of all stakeholders in paying attention to the improvement of student learning through idealised influence (Jebii, 2019). Gatobu (2019) states that for productive learning to happen, prepared school leadership is required. This concurs with Basham's (2012) view that transformational leadership is required in the education sector to meet the ever-changing academic climate. The principal through his power can direct, control, and instruct teachers in the school. It is the researcher's conviction that instructional leadership theory is appropriate for this study.

2.8.2 Instructional leadership theory

The notion of instructional leadership as ideal school management model prevailed since the 1960s and the evolved theory of instructional leadership was initiated just about a decade before transformational leadership in the early 1980s (Bridges, 1967; Hallinger & Murphy, 1983).

Instructional leadership theory has its verifiable studies of schools in poverty-stricken urban communities undertaken in late the 1970s and 1980s, where learners succeeded despite odds. These schools had powerful instructional leadership, including a learning environment without disturbance, a system of apparent teaching objectives and high expectations for learners.

Instructional leadership evolved during successful schools' movement of 1980s, viewed the principal as the key source of educational expertise. The role of the principal was mainly to keep high expectations for educators and learners, supervise the classroom instruction, coordinate curriculum of the school and monitor learners' progress (Barth, 1986). Instructional leadership concentrates on leadership functions linked to teaching and learning (Murphy, 1988a). In wider view, instructional leadership simply refers to all functions which contribute to student learning, incorporating managerial behaviours (Murphy, 1988b). In the context of instructional leadership, principals stressed four sets of activities with implications for teaching. These are evolving mission and goals of the school, coordinating, examining, and evaluating curriculum, teaching and assessment, promoting environment for learning and initiating a supportive work climate (Murphy, 1990). Barber et al. (2010) find that high performing principals concentrate more upon instructional leadership and developing educators. They believe that their capacity to coach teachers and support their development is the most significant skill of a good principal. According to Hoy and Miskel (2008), instructional leaders make developments in schools by employing their personalities, rewards for success and managerial skills.

The instructional leadership theory was selected as one of the theoretical frameworks that underpin this study because it focuses entirely on the significance of the principal in directing school reform and enhancing students' attainment (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012b). In addition, it also targets school core activities such as teaching and learning (Bush, 2011b). Instructional leadership is the act of planning to attain success in the teaching-learning and increasing successful learners for the society, offering the desired situations for learning and teaching, raising the satisfaction of school staff, and converting the school into a successful climate (Steel, 2013). Scholars concur that instructional leadership theory supports productive communication as an essential element of successful leadership (Duncan, Carmody-Bubb & Ree, 2014; Green & Cooper, 2013; McCleskey, 2014; Letizia, 2014). Van Deventer (2016) conceptualises instructional leadership as a broad term used to narrate leadership and management aspects of a school that directly influence student

attainment. It covers managerial and leadership tasks that are all entailed in teaching and learning delivery on daily basis.

Therefore, the quality of teaching and learning can be enhanced by principals when they focus on instructional leadership practices and knowledge of which teaching, and learning is centre to their role. Hallinger and Murphy (1983) (cited Botha, 2016) state three dimensions connected with instructional leadership namely, defining the school mission, managing the instructional programme, and encouraging the school climate. This is supported by Danley & Burn (1978) who classified features of instructional leadership also into three dimensions such as personal, administrative, and professional. The state of being reliable, transparent, and fair are involved in personal attributes of the leader, whilst holding meetings occasionally to maintain teaching-learning process under management is of administrative features, and making the school in peacefulness climate and society, following social events, striving for teachers' enhancement and regular class observation are among professional features.

It is concluded from this point of view that instructional leadership behaviours of the school principals influence the self-efficacy of teachers. Thus, the main duty of the school principals as instructional leaders includes monitoring of learners' attainment, implementation of teaching-related practices of educators in certain standards, supervision of educators and the coordination of the curriculum (Hallinger, 2011; Louis et al., 2010; Wahlstrom et al., 2010). Therefore, the principal as an instructional administrator needs to be familiar with the fundamentals of standard teaching and have adequate knowledge about the curriculum. According to Msila (2013), this statement necessitates that the principal could give information to improve teaching or can construct a climate for educators to offer this support. School principals are expected to stop being followers and interpreters of bureaucratic affairs (Balika, 2018), but to be effective communicators (Le Fevre & Robinson, 2015), and to enhance teaching spaces of the school as instructional leaders (Hallinger, 2011).

As Hoy and Thoonen et al. (2012) assert, good principals are the constructing blocks of good schools and educators as well as students cannot attain success when the principals have no believe in productive leadership. Moreover, Dematthew (2014) claims that the principals become productive instructional leaders when they critically analyse prevailing curriculum and the implications for educators' teaching strategies and student results. This is in line with the option

of Hallinger (2013), who states that effective school principals always make sure that teaching and learning happen irrespective of the situations where in the schools are situated. However, Naidoo and Peterson (2015) argue that principals only become productive instructional leaders when they attract educators with more culturally applicable teaching strategies and practices that result in enhanced student result. He and Guo (2012) affirm that school administration operates to assist in the improvement of the students' learning problems, as well as teachers' management of difficulties in classroom instruction.

2.9 Chapter summary

The intention of this chapter was to present an interpretive description of literature, specifically on what is acknowledged about the leadership core practices of high performing schools. The literature suggests that the principal can develop the school through the implementation of both leadership and management functions, as well as activities. Likewise, it is believed that the aim of leadership in the school is to influence and give direction towards the achievement of common goals. Thus, leadership does not rely on the principal as the keystone, but on the collective efforts among all stakeholders in the school environment. It is confirmed that firm and productive school leadership can help with continuous school development by setting direction, developing teachers, reshaping the school, and managing teaching and learning. The confluence between rurality and leadership was discussed. The last part of this chapter discussed transformational leadership theory and instructional leadership theory as the two frameworks underpinning the study. Added to this, the theoretical triangulation reviewed in this chapter provided leadership benchmarks that informed data generation. The next chapter (Chapter three) discusses the research design and methodology used in the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter (Chapter two) provided in-depth literature review on leadership practices in rural primary schools and discussed transformational leadership model and instructional leadership model as two theoretical frameworks underpinning this study. The current chapter outlined the research design and methodology used in this study. This chapter also reflected on the paradigm that led this study. This was followed by a discussion on the qualitative research approach utilised for a better understanding of how the study was carried out. Moreover, sampling, data generation and data analysis employed in this study were explained and well grounded. This chapter also discussed trustworthiness and ethical considerations that were followed in this research study. Lastly, the chapter presented the limitations of the study.

3.2 Interpretive paradigm

This study utilised the interpretive paradigm. An interpretive paradigm offers the reality that knowledge is advanced because of people's subjective interpretations of their experience concerning their social world (Thomas, 2010). Interpretive researchers assume that there is no single path to knowledge but that knowledge and paths to enhanced knowledge are assorted and relative. In this study, the interpretive paradigm was used because it improves an understanding of social interaction and how people construct meaning in their original settings (Ponelis, 2015). In addition, the interpretive paradigm allows social interactions in groups and between people and their environment are crucial in upgrading existing knowledge on a subject (Creswell, 2014). The interpretive paradigm supports the view that there are numerous truths and multiple realities as experienced by different people in social environments (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

As Schwandt (2011) observes, the interpretive paradigm focuses on the holistic view of an individual and environment, which is more reconcilable with worldview studies. Moreover, this paradigm is good in analysing and interpreting qualitative data utilising two remarkable concepts, namely symbolic interactionism, and hermeneutic phenomenalism (Leitch et al., 2010). The

interpretive paradigm was appropriate for this study involving an inquiry where views and experiences are interpreted from the perspectives of the participants (Cohe, et al., 2011).

3.3 Qualitative approach

As Aspers and Corte (2019) observe, qualitative research is an interpretive process that guides an enhanced understanding of the phenomenon under the study, creating new important distinctions that result from the researcher's investigation. Qualitative research is also regarded as an emergent inductive, interpretive, and naturalistic approach to the study of people, cases, phenomena, social circumstances, and processes in their natural settings to reveal in descriptive terms the interpretations that people attach to their experiences of world (Yilmaz, 2013).

Thus, to understand how principals in high performing rural primary schools enact leadership, the researcher utilised the qualitative research approach because it allows social reality to be interpreted and presented from the opinions of the participants (Basit, 2010). In qualitative research, the goal is to investigate and understand a phenomenon. To understand the experiences of the participants, the research questions are general and broad (Maree, 2011). Qualitative research is concerned with studying people by interacting with them in their natural environment. It focuses on understanding and describing phenomena within their natural setting and is situated on their meaning and interpretation of a situation (Flick, 2014). Maxwell (2013) asserts that qualitative research works with the general meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values, and attitudes that correlate with great relationships, process and phenomena which cannot be decreased to the operationalisation of variables.

Moreover, in researching the leadership practices of high performing rural primary school principals, the researcher acknowledged the characteristics of qualitative research, which entails that it is carried out in natural settings, it uses the researcher as the primary instrument to collect data directly from the source, it stresses detailed narratives that provide a deep understanding behaviour, and concentrates on the process of behaviour (McMillan, 2010). The qualitative approach focuses on small number of participants who provide in-depth data based on their opinions and perceptions (Basit, 2010). In addition, the product of qualitative research is a narrative report with rich descriptions, instead of a statistical report (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). According to Kalpokaite and Radivojevic (2019), qualitative research is best learned by

performing, involving decision making, having patience for understanding the data, and to clarify mistakes with time and practice. Therefore, qualitative approach was suitable for this study because it allowed freedom of expression from the participants, especially regarding their school performance. Qualitative approach was associated with the case study method.

3.4 Case study

This study utilised the case study method. Harling (2012) defines case study as a complete inquiry which explores a concurrent phenomenon within its natural settings. According to Rule and John (2011), case study is regarded a systematic and full investigation of a certain instance in its context to create knowledge. In this study, case study was used because it gives an opportunity to the researcher to attain a logical ending by checking the principals' understanding and experiences of leadership to fully understand it from unlike views. Harrison et al. (2017) explain that case study research seeks to explore and comprehend complex concerns in real world settings.

The case study method is considered as a favoured approach in educational research because it provides plentiful information on events, such as a particular situation, on particular organisations, about what is happening in the classroom and even about people (Rule & John, 2011). In this study, the researcher utilised the case study to acquire greater insight into the dynamics of leadership practices of principals in high performing rural primary schools (Yin, 2014). In addition, case study provides the researcher with the capacity to investigate a phenomenon through a variety of lenses. This multi-perspective approach is vital for an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of real-life situations (Miles, 2015; Pearson et al., 2015). A case study also has the flexibility to investigate and unpack more complicated experiences and situations without singular outcome.

Moreover, a key strength of a case study is that it provides rich detail of the context, thus enabling the readers to draw similarities and differences of their own setting (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). Yin (2013) asserts the capability of a case study as a methodology. Hence, a case study does not only answer the 'what' research questions but also investigate 'why' and 'how'. The case study method permits researchers to recall the holistic and understandable characteristics of real-life events like individual life cycles, small group behaviour, organisational and managerial processes, school performance and interpersonal relations in real contexts (Yin, 2012). Bertram and Christiansen

(2014) affirm the nature of case study as a kind of method that seeks to relate the likeness of phenomena and context. This case study encompasses four school principals of four top-performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district (based on their PSLE academic performance results for 2010, 2013, 2016).

3.5 Sampling

A sample is defined as a group of relatively smaller number of people chosen from the larger population for study purpose (Alvi, 2016). According to Polit and Beck (2017), sampling is the process of selecting relatively a smaller of representative participants from the larger population to provide rich data of the phenomenon of the study. The targeted participants in this study were four principals and eight teachers in high performing rural primary schools in the district of Qacha's Nek.

3.5.1 Purposive sampling

In this study, the researcher used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is the process whereby the researcher uses his own judgement to choose participants, who hold special and expert knowledge about phenomenon to be studied (Rahi, 2017). Kumar (2014) defines purposive sampling as the choice of participants who can provide suitable information to respond to the research questions. In purposive sampling, participants are chosen with a purpose in mind and the criteria of the elements who are included in the study is preset (Polit & Beck, 2017a).

Thus, the selection of four rural primary schools in this study was based on the reputation of good learner academic achievement and instructional excellence. In this case, the participants chosen were four principals and eight teachers who had worked in the school for more than five years and they were all Basotho. In this study, purposive sampling was adopted because the aim of the study was to choose information-rich cases to facilitate in-depth study with the objective of yielding insight and understanding of the phenomenon (Polit & Beck, 2017). This is in line with Creswell (2014) who supports the notion of employing purposive sampling technique for a qualitative study. Qualitative researchers are not interested with generalisation (Harding, 2013), but the researchers select participants who best fit the aim of the study.

3.6 Data generation

Data generation is considered as the use of multiple form of data in a single study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). In qualitative research, researchers refer to the process of engaging with data as data generation instead of data collection (Thorne, 2016). This study relies on primary sources. As Creswell (2013) suggests, a combination of data collection methods better enrich research. The data in qualitative research can be collected using various methods such as observation, telephonic semi-structured individual interview, and document review (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013).

3.6.1 Telephonic semi-structured individual interview

In data collection, the researcher used telephonic semi-structured individual interview instead of face to face interviews because face to face interviews were prohibited due to COVID-19, so UKZN realised that it is unlawful to conduct face to face interviews. Telephonic interview is an interview that happens on a pre-scheduled date over a phone between a recruiter and an applicant, who has applied for a certain position in a company (Abhishek & Arthi, 2016). Telephonic interview permits the researchers who are disabled or not able to reach hard places to undertake a study that may otherwise present challenges (Glogowska et al., 2011)

A semi-structured interview is a verbal exchange where the interviewer attempts to obtain information from the interviewee by asking questions (Longhurst, 2010a). It is a qualitative research method which includes oral communication with individuals in a way which is self-conscious and based on a partially structured methodological course (Longhurst, 2010b). According to William and Finley (2015), semi-structured interview is considered as a common approach in qualitative research, though the main elements of the phenomenon being studied are clearly asked about by the interviewer. Semi-structured interview is characterised by using open-ended questions (Galletta, 2013a). In addition, it provides a repertoire of possibilities and leaves spaces to the participants to give new ideas (Galletta, 2013b). In this study, semi-structured interview was used because it offered the most direct and straightforward approach to collecting detailed and rich data about a certain phenomenon (Chan et al., 2013). In addition, it permitted the researcher to respond to the condition, to emerging issues of the participants, and to new ideas concerning the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Semi-structured interview is regarded as a powerful data collection method due to the interactions between the researcher and data source, and it is possible for the researcher to confirm, explain and elaborate the collected data (Creswell, 2013). This permits the researcher to make sure that collected data is appropriate to the study while maintaining pliability (Stuckey, 2013).

Furthermore, semi-structured interviewing is described as an empowering implement, assisting individuals to share their opinions and experience (Rabienet, 2011). In other words, it helps individuals to give their own experience by providing them an opportunity for their voice to be heard (Adams, 2010). The study is intended to interview principals and teachers in selected schools to gain an understanding on leadership and how it is enacted on daily basis. The interview schedule was prepared and information for each participant was recorded using smart phone. The data was generated for the period of six weeks and the researcher audio-taped the conversations during the interviews process. The researcher was keen in each participant's interpretations and unique context to hear how leadership in respective schools was enacted. However, even though the interview was conducted and completed technology was a challenge in the sense that sometimes mobile network was unavailable, yet the schedule had been made to meet participants on certain dates.What I observed during telephonic interviews is that most of interviwees were not interested to express themselves in English instead they used their mother tongue language (Sesotho) and as an interviewer I admitted that it is their right to use the language that will enable them to express themselves sufficiently regarding the interview questions. Rapport building is the challenge and the absence of visual cues impact on the richness and quality of data because it limits the ability of witnesses to be understood in relation to the research topic. In addition, I noticed that there is high potential loss of contextual data.

3.7 Data analysis

The process of data analysis is considered by Zikmund et al. (2013) as the application of reasoning to understand and elucidate collected data. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) define data analysis as the process that includes data subtraction, determining which data to include, findings of patterns framed and verifying data. In this study, the researcher used thematic analysis and adopted both inductive and deductive approaches. To make meaning of data, the researcher conducted qualitative data analysis using thematic analysis.

The researcher transcribed all audio-recorded interviews verbatim into written transcripts and then coded them. The interviews and probing questions were used to lead the formation of codes and themes. This process enabled the researcher to familiarise with the data by reading, noting points and building themes. To facilitate data analysis of all recorded interviews were listened to frequently. Thematic analysis is a useful method of systematically identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within data set using an in-depth description of themes (Attard & Coulson, 2012). The focus of thematic analysis is not identifying distinctive and specific meanings and experiences found only within the single data item (Braun et al., 2019). It is a qualitative analysis which is used to analyse data classifications and present themes that link to the data.

In addition, as an independent and reliable qualitative analysis method, thematic analysis provides researchers with core skills to perform other forms of qualitative analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). In this study, thematic analysis was used because it produced a depth of understanding of the meaning of a set of texts (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and allowed themes that are connected to the problem to be captured and as they present some levels of pattern responses within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Ashaari and Maideen (2017) assert that identifying themes is a helpful procedure to determine the key factors of an issue. Themes were generated from the literature and theoretical framework guiding this study. Therefore, the analysis adopted both inductive and deductive (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

3.8 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the degree of confidence in data interpretation and methods used to ensure the quality of the study (Polit & Beck, 2014). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness in qualitative research is aimed at supporting an argument of which findings are concentrating on. The present study used four criterions for research trustworthiness, such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to assess research reliability and validity.

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility is defined as the believability of source or message (Metzger & Flanagin, 2015). On the other hand, credibility is unending variable which is subjectively recognised by recipients and is not an objective attribute (Shariff et al., 2017). Credibility emphasises the truthfulness of the

research process, to facilitate study-based credibility the aim of the researcher is to make sure that the investigated phenomenon is identified and described accurately (Schurink & Auriacombe, 2010).

In addition, with the permission of all participants all interviews were audio-recorded and personally transcribed verbatim. The credibility lies in the source of information, the medium of received information (Spillane et al., 2020). Leader credibility is of greatest importance in the leadership and communication process of an organisation because leaders are regarded as one of the vital sources of information for employees (Swanso & Kent, 2014). Erkan and Evans (2016) assert that credibility is the opinion of the people on the reality of the evaluation. Credibility incorporates triangulation, participant checking and peer debriefing, is defined as the truthfulness and faithfulness of the data or findings.

3.8.2 Transferability

Transferability simply means how well the findings fit outside the study situation (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Noble & Smith, 2015). Instead, the concern is further on the richness and depth of the data and ensuring that the findings can be transferable and have relevance when applied to other contexts, situations, or individuals (Houghton et al., 2013). Thus, generalisation can be obtained at different levels with the goal of achieving an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon under investigation. For instance, through analytical generalisation the researcher can test the validity of the results of the research against the theoretical that encircle the phenomenon and the research questions (Yin, 2015).

The literature suggests that information regarding the context, field work, findings and conclusion should be sufficiently detailed so that other researchers may feel confident concerning any transference they may reasonably consider (Creswell, 2012). In this study, to address transferability the researcher provided detailed information concerning the structure of the study for others to have better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and therefore to allow them to make comparisons with their situations. The idea is that another researcher may transfer the outcomes of a study to another environment or determine the level of similarities with his own situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to stability of the research findings and the researcher's attempt to account for any changing situation in the phenomenon of study, design, or methodology as suitable (Houghton et al., 2013). Reviewed literature suggests that dependability is not easy to predict in changing social world (Silverman, 2016). To ensure dependability in my study, the researcher provided sufficient information needed to determine how dependable the study is (Ryan et al., 2007). In addition, the researcher used telephonic semi-structured interview method to generate data.

Dependability includes assessing the findings and the interpretation and recommendations regarding the study to make sure that they are all underpinned by the data collected from the participants of the study (Cohen et al., 2011). Dependability therefore strives not for the goal to produce researcher invariable outcomes (Stutz & Sachs, 2018), but asks researchers to explain the expected difference in results. According to Silverman (2011), if the findings achieved using different methods correspond and result in the same results, then this ensures the validity of such findings and conclusions drawn. A voice recorder was used, and recorded interviews were kept for the sake of consistency of data and safe keeping.

3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is defined as the steps taken by the researcher to illustrate that findings emerge from the data and their own tendencies (Anney, 2014). According to Rangongo (2011), confirmability is the degree in which the researcher findings are the focus of the inquiry and not the researcher's bias. The researcher kept his feelings, experience and understanding to himself to detach himself as far as possible from the participants to avoid the risk of bias affecting the entire study. In this study, telephonic semi-structured interview was used to capture the true findings of the participants' responses (Creswell, 2012). The fundamental criterion to discover confirmability is the extent to which the researcher admits his prejudices and preconceptions (Miles et al., 2014). Moreover, when the study has been conducted, the transcripts were taken back to participants to confirm data to achieve confirmability.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethics is an essential component of research that extends throughout the complete research process, from the selection of a research topic to data generation and analysis, and lastly the dissemination of study outcomes (Shamoo & Resnik, 2015). Ethical issues are paramount matters not only in the primary research specifically, but also even in terms of using secondary data sets because there are ethical issues relating to fair and unbiased selection of sources and analysis (Farrimond, 2013). The ethical considerations when conducting research includes a permission to conduct research, participants informed consent, as well as anonymity and confidentiality.

3.9.1 Permission to conduct research

First, the researcher wrote a letter to Qacha's Nek Education Office (QEO) asking permission to conduct research in four rural primary schools and permission was given. The second letter was directed to the school principals of the selected schools also asking permission to undertake the study and without hesitation all principals approved the letters. In addition, the third letter was written to the participants with a purpose of requesting them to participate in the study and they all consented. Lastly, the researcher applied for ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in the research office to conduct research under the assistance of research study leader (supervisor) and ethical clearance approval was granted. This permitted the researcher to continue with the research process.

3.9.2 Informed consent

The informed consent is considered as the cornerstone of ethical research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The informed consent process respects a person's right to decide whether to take part in the study (Beauchamp, 2013). The purpose of the study was explained to the participants, that is to explore the principals' leadership practices. The participants were informed that they participate voluntarily, thus they have a right to withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, participants were provided with a consent form to sign as evidence to participate in the study and they all signed it.

3.9.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

De vos et al. (2012) state that confidentiality be a continuation of privacy which refers to an agreement between persons that information of a person taking part in the study may not be

revealed. Anonymity is defined as the collection of data without obtaining any personal identifying information (Novak, 2014a). In addition, anonymity and confidentiality are ethical practices designed to protect the privacy of human subjects, while gathering, analysing, and reporting data (Novak, 2014b). The participants took part in the study anonymously. The identity and confidentiality of twelve participants was secured by utilising pseudonyms. Pseudonyms for their names and schools were used. The permission to audio-record the interviews was obtained from all participants in the study and to keep them from harm collected data was kept in a password protected computer of the supervisor. Moreover, participants were made aware that data disposal is the last activity to be done when the study is completed after five years.

3.10 Study limitations

Study limitations are considered as issues of concern with the potential to enfeeble the study which are beyond the control of the researcher (Theofanidis &Fountouki, 2018). The study focused only on twelve participants of high performing rural primary schools in the district of Qacha's Nek. In other words, the study depended in the information provided by twelve participants from four selected schools. This was small-scale research that limits the researcher to make generalisation of the main findings.

3.11 Chapter summary

In this chapter the researcher presented the research design and methodology that was followed during the empirical study. An interpretive paradigm and a qualitative research approach were discussed as the key issues used to obtain new insights about creative leadership practices of the principals of successful schools. The case study is also discussed as the most appropriate method to facilitate the desired in-depth study and unearth rich data that respond to the research questions. Telephonic semi-structured individual interviews and data analysis are highlighted. The researcher also discussed other aspects of research like trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study. The next chapter discusses data presentation and analysis.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of leadership in high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district. In the previous chapter, the research design which was adopted for this study was presented. The primary data was generated using telephonic semi-structured individual interviews with four principals and eight teachers in high performing rural primary schools. In this chapter, the researcher presented and discussed the findings that emerged from the interviews. The researcher presented verbatim quotes from the participants in order to enhance the credibility of the research findings and to secure that the actual participants' voices are maintained. The brief profile of research site, participants and their schools are provided at the beginning of this chapter to contextualise the findings. The researcher then discussed the themes derived from the data, including the confluence between rurality and leadership.

4.2 Profiling Research Site, Schools, and Participants

The researcher provided short demographic information of the research site, including schools and the participants. The information regarding participants was gathered during telephonic semi-structured individual interviews and gives a clear background of each participant. Pseudonyms were used to maintain confidentiality and ensure that the participants' identity was protected in accordance with ethical considerations.

4.2.1 Research Site

The study was conducted in Lesotho in the district of Qacha's Nek. The research site was rural, and the study focused on the principals in high performing rural primary schools. The research was chosen on the basis that these schools were high performing rural primary schools. These schools were situated geographically in rural areas.

4.2.2 Profiling Schools and the Participants

The participants in this study were four principals and eight teachers. Sesotho was their mother tongue. This section indicates the profile of various schools and participants in the sample. Table 4.1 highlights the history and details of the school setting. Table 4.2 displays the profile of the principals from four sampled schools, while the Table 4.3 illustrates the teachers' profile.

Table 4.1: Details of the school setting

SCHOOL	YEAR ESTABLISHED	AGE OF SCHOOL	TYPE	GRADES	DEPUTY	TOTAL NUMBER OF LEARNERS	TOTAL NUMBER OF TEACHERS
Moea	1925	96 years	Rural	1-7	Not available	463	9
Mitsi	1905	116 years	Rural	1-7	Not available	138	5
Mobu	1936	85 years	Rural	1-7	Not available	152	7
Lejoe	2001	20 years	Rural	1-7	Available	280	7

Table 4.2: Principals' profile

Participants	Gender	Age	Qualification	Teaching experience	Experience as a principal	Class taught
Mike	M	42	Bachelor of Education	26 years	6 years	6
Ernestina	F	57	Advanced Diploma in Special Education	30 years	20 years	5

Lerato	F	47	Bachelor of Honours Degree	28 years	6 years	3
'Mathabiso	F	61	Diploma	36 years	22 years	4

Table 4.3: Teachers' Profile

Participants	Gender	Age	Qualification	Teaching experience	Class taught
Talkative	F	39	Higher Diploma	9 years	5
Peter	M	33	Diploma	9 years	7
Comfort	M	42	Diploma	15 years	6
Blom	M	39	Diploma	11 years	6
Thabo	M	42	Diploma	15 years	7
John	M	39	Diploma	14 years	6
'Maente	F	47	Diploma	11 years	3
Lindiwe	F	31	Diploma	8 years	4

4.3 Principals' Meanings of Leadership

First, this study was about understanding the meanings that the principals in high performing rural primary schools attached to school leadership. The researcher interviewed the participants and three themes that exhibit the principals' perception of leadership came out. It emerged that the participants regard leadership as the process of giving direction, guidance, and coaching. Hence, leadership is motivating and influencing. The findings also revealed that school leadership is not the sole responsibility of the principal, but it is a shared responsibility and process. These meanings are discussed at length in subsequent sub-sections.

4.3.1 Leadership is Giving Direction, Guidance, and Coaching

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that leadership is about giving direction, guidance, and coaching. The participants intimated that leadership entails giving direction and

guidance to teachers pertaining to how they were required to carry out plans. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

> *"School leadership is all about ensuring that the work is done harmoniously through the reinforcement of the leaders by giving directions, carrying out plans and motivating teachers to achieve the common goals"* (Principal Mike).

> *"School leadership is the process where a principal has capacity to lead and guide teachers towards attaining set goals"* (Principal Ernestina).

> *"School leadership is the ability to lead and guide teachers in the school to achieve expected outcomes or goals"* (Principal Lerato).

> *"School leadership is all about leading and influencing teachers to do the work properly to achieve common goals"* (Principal 'Mathabiso).

The participants' perception that leadership is giving direction, guidance and coaching concurs with the findings from related literature. According to Kai-Wing (2016), leadership is a persuasive cause for visioning, networking, and improving stakeholders' proficiency that results in enhanced academic attainment and general school performance. This is also in line with Northouse's (2013a) view that leadership as all about giving direction, guidance and carrying out plans. This study has adopted the meaning of school leadership as transformational leadership theory framework drawing from the work of Northouse (2013b). In compliance with Northouse's understanding of school leadership, it was found that leadership is about giving direction. It was further emphasized under instructional leadership that the principal directs school reforms and thus enhancing students' attainment (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012a).

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that leadership is a process through which principals and teachers take part in coaching. The participants have intimated that coaching is very important in teaching and learning. This is supported by the following responses from interview sessions:

> *"School leadership is about coaching and empowering staff in core school activities, such as teaching and learning to achieve goals. The principal is a coach and facilitator of his members of staff"* (principal Lerato).

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"School leadership simply means coaching teachers in their daily work to help them discover their own potential and motivate each individual to improve in the case where there are some weaknesses identified" (Principal 'Mathabiso).

The findings from in-depth interviews have also revealed that teachers concur with the principals' understanding of leadership as giving direction, guidance, and coaching. The participants intimated that leadership entails giving direction, guidance, and coaching. This is supported by the following responses from interview sessions:

"*My principal understands leadership in the sense that she could direct and guide teachers to reach the common goals and develop them to attain their potential. She acts as a coach to ensure that teachers are effective in certain areas where weaknesses are identified on teaching and learning"* (Talkative - teacher).

"Teachers are coached by the principal to improve their ability and other teachers act as mentors to novice teachers" (Peter - teacher).

"The principal in my school guides teachers to do the work effectively to reach the intended goals. She coaches teachers by providing professional support towards teaching and learning. She organises school-based workshops quarterly and coach teachers about teaching methods" (Comfort - teacher).

"*My principal is competent to direct teachers on daily school activities to achieve goals. She provides support to teachers in the form of coaching and mentoring to improve classroom instruction"* (Blom - teacher).

Moreover, some participants have intimated that the principal has the capacity to guide teachers to go an extra mile, particularly on teaching and learning to achieve the common goals. Other participants concurred that the principals understand leadership since they guide, direct and influence teachers towards achieving set goals. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

 "*The principal acts as a coach and mentor to assist teachers to apply their ability consistently and sometimes she delegates other teachers to coach one another"* (Maente - teacher).

"My principal is highly capable of guiding, controlling, and influencing teachers to attain set objectives. The principal keeps on coaching members of staff, particularly on teaching methods and material development to increase learners' achievement" (Thabo - teacher).

"The principal that I work with understands leadership because he can guide and control teachers to get into expected outcomes. The principal as the one having administrative responsibility provides instructional coaching to teachers and sometimes, he delegates experienced teachers to assist the novice teachers" (John - teacher).

"My principal seems to have a clear understanding about school leadership because she can provide guidance to teachers to do the work in accordance MOET standards to attain set goal" (Lindiwe).

The research findings from in-depth interviews are consistent with related literature. It was apparent that the principals trusted their experienced teachers and expect them to assist novice teachers by providing quality instruction which would result in the best learner achievement (Norman, 2011a). This perspective is in line with Lofthouse's (2016) view that coaching is the creation of collaborative professional space. Moreover, Van Nieverburg (2012) refers to coaching as a school enhancement initiative to develop principals, classroom educators and their teaching, as well as learners about study skills and career planning. The next theme discusses leadership as motivating and influencing.

4.3.2 Leadership is Motivating and Influencing

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that leadership is about motivating and influencing. The participants in the four schools considered leadership as motivating and influencing teachers to achieve the common goals or go beyond the expectations. This perspective is in line with the view of Ministry of Education and Training (2002a) in Lesotho that leadership is about motivating and influencing staff to work productively. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

"Leadership may be considered as recognising and rewarding teachers by giving them trophies for an outstanding achievement of learners, particularly in academic results" (Principal Mike).

"Leadership consists of nothing but taking responsibility to motivate teachers with special gifts and certificate of good achievement to have confidence among themselves to be proactive" (Principal Ernestina).

"Leadership is the art of motivating the teachers with special gifts or sometimes organising them food and drinks in recognition of good learner academic performance, so that they may work beyond expectations" (Principal Lerato).

"Leadership is not about a position but is about motivating members of staff by awarding them trophies and certificates of good achievement for acknowledgement of good performance and influencing them in reaching their goals effectively" (Principal 'Mathabiso).

The meaning that leadership is motivating and influencing as shared by principals in this study concurs with the findings from literature review. According to Hopkin (2014), leadership is regarded as motivating and influencing. This is in line with Cox's (2016) view that leadership attains its function through creating direction, aligning people, and motivating, as well as inspiring. It is also the researcher's conviction that leadership is motivating and inspiring teachers to make teaching and learning happen. Likewise, the acts of instructional leadership are illustrated by rural principals who constantly recognise educators' attainment through formal and informal awards (Klar & Brewer, 2014). What emerged from the data is that two participants (Mike, Lerato) considered leadership as motivation, in which the leaders act as role models to ensure that their teachers grow and attain set goals. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

"*Leadership in this case is about motivating by setting good example, whereby the leader is passionate and committed to his work and there is high possibility for teachers to follow suit"* (Principal Mike).

"*Leadership means motivating teachers by preparing daily lesson plans as a leader to attract them to copy from you"* (Principal Lerato).

The above remarks strengthen leadership as motivation and inspiration. Transparency also existed within the school because teachers were able to recognise genuine work from principals. This

concurs with Alzoraiki's (2018a) transformational leadership theory. Hence, in transformational leadership the principals lead by example and act confidently with good cheer.

Furthermore, the findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that the principals understand transformational leadership through their practice. The participants intimated that principal understand leadership as motivating and influencing by rewarding their teachers' performance. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

> "*The principal in my school used to acknowledge teachers' performance through motivation, and motivation gives us strengths to go extra mile in teaching and learning for the benefit of learner achievement*" (Talkative - teacher).

> "*Teachers seem to work hard, and the spirit of competition is high among themselves in target of trophies. Good performance in our school is acknowledged through trophies to best performers*" (Peter - teacher).

Some participants intimated that they were proud to work with principals who understand that teachers need to be empowered in teaching and learning. Hence, the principals are energetic leaders who promote motivation. This encouraged teachers to work hard. The caring and supporting nature of teachers was evident in the way they are motivated and inspired. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

> "*She gives us gifts when the work is done well in classroom situation*" (Comfort - teacher).

> "*You cannot perform well in our school and the principal remains silent. She will do something for you*" (Blom - teacher).

> "*We are committed members of staff, who work together in the best interests of the school. The principal continues to motivate teachers for the good work done in every school activity, either in sports or academic performance*" (Thabo - teacher).

> "*Awards are really significant, since teaching in this school increased the passion and commitment of teachers to their work*" (John - teacher).

> "*The principal whom I work with is a good planner when it comes to ways of improving learner attainment. She prints certificates and give to teachers as an appreciation of good work done*" (Maente - teacher).

"The kind of principal working in our school always surprises teachers with good things, especially when learners' performance is satisfactory. She invites all teachers to the hotel for special lunch and finally awards them certificate of good achievement" (Lindiwe - teacher).

The research findings have revealed that the principals had a common understanding that leadership is motivating and influencing. What emerged from the findings demonstrated that the principals are determined in the way they lead their schools. There is consistence with related literature. According to Bhengu and Gounder (2014), it is important that principals show abilities to collaborate with teachers in ways that result in positive attitudes. This concurs with Alzoraiki's (2018b) transformational leadership theory. Hence, transformational leaders encourage staff with new ideas and motivation. Moreover, as Stinglhamber et al. (2015) observe, in transformational leadership theory leaders motivate their followers to accomplish above the limits by creating high level of necessitates among themselves and encourage an achievement of trust. Having discussed about leadership as motivating and influencing the discourse now shifts on how participants explain leadership as an inclusive responsibility.

4.3.3 Leadership is an Inclusive Responsibility

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that leadership is an inclusive responsibility. Inclusive responsibility as revealed by the participants means that the principals include teachers to carry out other administrative issues. This perspective is in line with Unachukwu and Okrji's (2014) view that, over the years, emphasis regarding leadership has often moved from order and authority to forming teams and getting people to work collectively. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

"Leadership is an inclusive responsibility within the school because tasks are not done by the leader alone but shared among the teachers to work towards a common goal" (Principal Mike).

"Leadership is a collective effort of all teachers being given responsibilities to do other administrative duties. It is about the principal allowing teachers to participate in the decision-making as part of the stakeholders to reach their potential" (Principal Ernestina).

"Leadership can be defined as an event initiated from members of staff's dependence and inspiration to attain team goals and seek out different opinions and perspectives to inform better decision-making" (Principal Lerato).

"Leadership is not an easy responsibility; therefore, it entails cooperation among the members of staff to share tasks and experiences for activities that occur in the school" (Principal 'Mathabiso).

The research findings have revealed that leadership is an inclusive responsibility. Therefore, there is consistence with related literature. Scholars concur that leadership is no longer based on one person, but on duty sharing through collaborative interactions (Tlan et al., 2016; Thian, 2019). It emerged from data that making leadership an inclusive responsibility is important in improving school performance because all stakeholders are part of leadership. This view was also shared by classroom practitioners. Hence, inclusive leadership ensures that stakeholders feel a sense of belonging and they work hand in hand with the principal. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

"Principal in my school leads with all stakeholders because without the concerns of teachers, parents and school board there is no leadership. Our school, due to inclusive leadership, develops rapidly" (Talkative - teacher).

"We never wait for the principal to call the meeting when there is an issue to discuss, but we invite her to join us" (Peter - teacher).

"As teachers in our school we lead different activities because we understand that our support is very important in the school leadership" (Comfort - teacher).

"When the principal is not around at school, we assist visitors with the services they require" (Blom - teacher).

Furthermore, the research findings have revealed that principals did not consider school leadership as their sole responsibility but as an inclusive responsibility. They include all stakeholders in decision-making in order to improve school performance. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

"Leadership in the school does not engage the principal only because it is through the input of members of staff that the school performance can be improved" (Thabo - teacher).

"*In our school leadership is inclusive because the principal needs teachers to gain expertise in developing the school by doing other leadership tasks" (John - teacher)*

"School leadership needs all concerned stakeholders to be involved because the principal cannot master everything. The principal requires teachers' inputs to effectively run the school, but it does not mean that the principal's authority is neglected, because the principal is representing MOET" (Maente - teacher).

"My experience teaches me that leadership remains to the principal as the eye of MOET, even though the principal cannot exclude other stakeholders, because there is a lot to be done in the school" (Lindiwe - teacher).

The research findings from in-depth interviews are consistent with related literature. Scholars concur leadership is no longer based on one person, but duty sharing through collaborative interactions of various leaders (Tlan et al., 2016; Thien, 2019). This suggests that principals need to share their leadership functions to teachers and work hand in hand (Hulpia et al., 2011b). The next theme focuses on principals' enactment of leadership.

4.4 Principals' Enactment of Leadership

The research findings from in-depth interviews have revealed five themes with regards to the principals' enactment of leadership. It emerged from these themes that principals in high performing rural primary schools build a shared vision, foster good interpersonal relationships, improve instruction, engage parents in the school and establish high performance expectations as the way of presenting leadership. These themes are discussed in detail in subsequent sections.

4.4.1 Building a Shared Vision

The research findings from in-depth interviews have revealed the importance of building a shared vision in schools, which is focused on learner achievement. This concurs with Murphy and Torre's (2015) view that a shared vision builds a sense of hope, commitment to ongoing improvement reflecting and constructing on what is operating well, stimulating collective responsibility of all,

and strongly introducing vision in learning and academic results. According to Barbour (2014), successful rural principals support the school vision. Hence, principals as leaders are energetic participants who promote cooperation among all stakeholders in relation to building a shared vision. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

"As *a leader I believe in a shared vision, which is shared among all concerned stakeholders for the benefit of the learner. We meet as a team when compiling our school vision"* (Principal Mike).

"*An effective leader should draw up a vision and stipulate the way in which she wishes to run the school and manage her staff to promote and inspire them to have this vision realised as a collective. It is vital for the leader to keep in mind that the learner is very important"* (Principal Ernestina).

"*I am not working alone in my school concerning vision development; I include teachers, parents, and the school board. We review school vision annually to respond to our daily planned activities"* (Principal Lerato).

"I *work with the committed and passionate staff which never shrink away from duties but work to the extra mile. I meet with my staff and draw up a shared vision that would eventually bring better learner achievement"* (Principal 'Mathabiso).

The research findings have revealed that the principals are aware that the school vision is critical in leadership, as it is shared among all stakeholders in order to develop the school. This concurs with Norman's (2016) view that a clear vision shared by all stakeholders creates a commitment that connects them together towards a unified goal. Also, as Gorton and Alston (2012) assert, the leader should have the organisational vision needed to direct the organisation into its future, and the capacity to communicate this vision. Hence, an understanding of a drawn vision in the school is a strong boost for teaching and learning to occur. This further concurs with Bar's (2013) view that the principals must possess the skills to manage the school and the ability to have apparent vision to persuade change.

Furthermore, MOET (2002b) states that successful leadership builds a shared vision in the school. Thus, communication of a vision is very important as this successfully motivates people into action. Research suggests that engaging in quality collaboration with colleagues can develop the

professional capability of individual teachers and generate an environment that enhance student learning across classrooms (McQueen & Grisson, 2015). The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that staff meetings planned in different quarters of the academic year were used as a vehicle of communicate the school vision. Hence, the vision is not like road sign but needs to be reviewed if it does not serve the purpose. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

"Our *regular staff meetings are very important in the sense that we share ideas about the school vision in relation to our learner achievement"* (Principal Mike).

"*We talk about the vision in the general staff meeting to find out whether there is a need to change our decision and let others then have their input"* (Principal Ernestina).

"*I enjoy collaboration with my staff because we cannot only scan the school vision, but we go into the roots of what we expect our school to be like. Our debate on a shared vision takes a month"* (Principal Lerato).

"*It is so interesting in the staff meeting to hear everybody participating on the school vision and it reveals to you as a leader that your subordinates are supporting your leadership"* (principal 'Mathabiso).

The findings from in-depth interviews are consistent with related literature. According to Wilhelm (2016), a shared vision anticipates all stakeholders to take part in setting the vision by working as a team and share the responsibility of attaining the vision. This further concurs with Rolfe's (2011) view that transformational leaders are visionary figures who function as catalysts besides motivating colleagues to make a better culture. Moreover, principals do not work solo when building a shared vision. Hence, the principal acts as a facilitator and monitor in the formulation of the school vision by concerned stakeholders. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

"*What I like about my principal is that she cannot draft the vision alone but gives an opportunity to all stakeholders to air their views in the formation of the school vision. Teachers are recognised for the skills that they bring in school development."* (Talkative - teacher)

"*Our plans usually start in our staff meetings, where we are tasked by the principal to draft a school vision and then present the draft in the meeting for consideration*" (Peter - teacher).

"*In most schools where plans are done by principals together with teachers and other stakeholders, there is good progress in academic achievement. It is our culture in my school to create the vision together*" (Comfort - teacher).

These findings are consistent with related literature. According to Grand (2010), the distribution of activities is at the core of democratic leadership style. This further concurs with Simola et al. (2012), that transformational leadership is a model in which interactions among interested parties are prepared around collective aim in such a manner that transform, motivate, and strengthen the actions and ethical aspiration of followers. Thus, leadership, vision, and organizational learning are regarded as the key to school improvement (Kurland, et al, 2010). Moreover, a shared vision is adopted and lived by the concerned stakeholders in the school community and is instilled in the daily life of the school (Murphy & Torre, 2015). Hence, building of a shared vision allows principals to be democratic in the school development. This is supported by the following responses from the interview sessions:

"*In our school, vision development is not solely based on the principal as a leader but includes teachers as well, in order to share ideas. It is generated with the purpose of developing a learner and we debate on it to come up with something productive*" (Blom - teacher).

"*Whenever there is an issue that needs to be discussed the principal does not make her own conclusion without the involvement of teachers. We work as a team when formulating the vision of the school*" (Thabo - teacher).

"*The vision of the school is definitely one in which everyone connected with the school can share. At our school we were all involved in crafting the vision, and we worked cooperatively*" (John - teacher).

"*At our school we have a committee that was tasked to look for inputs from the members of staff and the community, and everyone was consulted in crafting in the school vision*" (Maente - teacher).

"We have the system in our school where we choose three teachers to draft the school vision and when they are done, they share with other stakeholders" (Lindiwe - teacher).

These findings are consistent with related literature. According to Kouzes and Posner (2017), it is stated that good leaders model direction, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, allow others to act and encourage the heart. This corresponds with Kurland et al.'s (2010) transformational and instructional leadership theories, which constitute the theoretical framework of the study. Transformational leadership has the mediating effect in the development of the school vision and school effectiveness. It puts much emphasis on creating a vision through collective interests, which help members of the organisation to work as a team (Northouse, 2013). This concurs with Bryk's (2010) view that the instructional leader plays a key role as the driver of change, for school improvement and student learning by involving other stakeholders.

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that these schools perform well because the principals and teachers as the core implementors of the curriculum in schools, who work collectively towards a shared vision. It became evident that principals succeeded in convincing teachers and parents as well to internalise the school vision and own it. Studies have substantiated that encouraging vision-linked activities is the strongest attribute that principals possess (Murphy & Torre, 2015). Effective schools encourage members of staff to work towards, and strongly follow, mission and vision in a collaborative spirit (Jarl et al., 2021). They have a single organising aim that joins and guides all actions. They put learners' learning at the centre of their actions and generate a learning environment that endures it (Jarl et al., 2021). The principals foster good interpersonal relationships in their schools. This theme is explored in the subsequent section.

4.4.2 Fostering Good Interpersonal Relationships

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that the principals' major task was to promote good interpersonal relationships among all the stakeholders, in order to improve the teaching and learning environment within the school. The participants intimated those interpersonal relationships entail working harmoniously at the school towards achieving common goals without negative conflicts. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

"As a principal, if teachers, parents, and the community can have no real trust in you, it will not be easy to run the school properly. Therefore, it is very important to build trust with all stakeholders and respect them" (Principal Mike).

"*I pay respect to all stakeholders in my school, and I always influence them to do the same to everyone within the school. I encourage teachers, parents and community to respect and trust each other to maintain good relationship*s" (Principal Ernestina).

"*I consider the school as a family where love and open communication are needed among stakeholders to promote peace. I ensure that trust and respect exist among all those who are living in the school premises"* (Principal Lerato).

"I try to be a role model of my staff about love, trust, respect and honest because if people at work have some negative conflicts school performance will decline. I am open to my staff in the sense that I listen to their inputs and take care of them in educational or personal affairs" (Principal 'Mathabiso).

These findings are consistent with related literature. According to Stickle and Scot (2016), principals should promote communication by notifying staff of how, when and where they communicate concerns. This concurs with Ordumery and Feany's (2013) view that the principal is necessary to promote a culture of trust and respect, as well as collaboration within the school to achieve good learner academic results. Therefore, this study indicates that by encouraging good interpersonal relationships among all concerned stakeholders, the principals practised transformational leadership, which improves academic performance. Hence, the principals lead by example. This is supported further by the following responses from the interview sessions:

"*I lead by example and my staff follows whatever I am doing concerning school development. I usually report early for work and prepare the lesson plans on daily basis"* (Principal Mike).

"*I am passionate and committed to my work; I have therefore never dodged the class when it is teaching time"* (Principal Lerato).

The data shows that leading by example in the school creates an environment that is conducive for good interpersonal relationships among all. These findings are consistent with related literature.

According to Rigby (2017), good interpersonal relationships and friendly collaboration among the members of the school community positively influence the operation of the school. This concurs with Gurr and Day's (2014) view that successful principals construct good interpersonal relationships among all the stakeholders. The theoretical framework for this study, which is transformational leadership theory, also concurs with these findings. As de Poel et al. (2014) explain, the role of the principal as a leader is to transform beliefs and attitudes of teachers to accomplish beyond expectations.

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that in fostering good interpersonal relationships, the principals are the agents of change in their respective schools. The principals emphasised that it is their duty to deal with negative conflicts and create a school environment that is conducive for teaching and learning. This is supported by the following responses from the interview sessions:

> "*As human beings we find ourselves having some negative conflicts with our colleagues at work, but as a leader, when there are such cases among the members of staff, I intervene to restore peace*" (Principal Mike).

> "*Peace is something important to be maintained in the school, failure of which the school performance might be affected negatively*" (Principal Ernestina).

> "*I simply invite the concerned teachers to my office and settle the disputes together with them*" (Principal 'Mathabiso).

These findings are consistent with related literature. According to Fullan (2014), the principal is instrumental in bringing educators together by building trust and shaping new norms which involve and value educator voice, and professional learning through a partnership of the principal and school. This also concurs with Lokman and Anuar's (2012) view that it is the responsibility of principals to take care of teachers' welfare within the school so that teacher's motivation and commitment are sustainable and avoid dissatisfaction with the duties allocated by the school. This is further supported by the following responses from the interview sessions:

> "*The principal in our school is sensitive towards teachers' welfare. She never ceased to emphasise respect and trust to the staff, thus strengthening that these values are good for*

maintaining relationships within the school. She attends and solve all teachers' negative conflicts professionally without favour" (Talkative - teacher).

"My principal always encourages her staff to pay respect to their colleagues" (Peter - teacher).

"Schools in which stakeholders work harmoniously, learner academic results tend to be of an outstanding" (Comfort - teacher).

"The *principal in our school leads by example when it comes to respect, love and trust. She often encourages her staff to report unhealthy relationships among themselves"* (Blom - teacher).

"*Our school is blessed with a competent principal. She does not like negative conflicts but believes that, through trust and respect, teachers can interact harmoniously"* (Thabo - teacher).

"I work with a patient principal. He often tries to be honest and pay respect to teachers because he wants to set a direction about good relationships among all members of staff" (John - teacher).

"My principal tries to the best of her knowledge to ensure that teachers have good relationships. She believes that through love, respect and trust good interpersonal relationships can be maintained within the school" (Maente - teacher).

"The principal in our school is friendly to everybody and she always preaches about trust, honest and respect to teachers and strongly encourage them to put these values into practice to build good relationships with others" (Lindiwe - teacher).

The participants intimated those relationships in the four schools were based on trust, respect, honest and love through the influence of the principals. Also, through conflict management, the principals-maintained teamwork among members of staff. The teachers also obeyed their principals since they got proper and timely appreciation from them. These findings are consistent with related literature. According to Graf et al. (2011), respect, love, honest and trust are critical in determining quality relationships at the workplace. Moreover, powerful instructional leadership (Pijanowski & Peer, 2016) and positive home-school interpersonal relationship (Casto, 2016) are

vital aspects of a successful school. Thus, for the schools to create good relationships there must be trust and respect between the principals and educators. The next theme then discusses improving instruction.

4.4.3 Improving Instruction

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that the principals in high performing rural primary schools realised that it is their role to improve teaching in schools. They considered monitoring, mentoring and supervision to be prominent in the enhancement of teaching and learning. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

> *"The school needs a competent principal to examine teachers' work frequently to improve performance. I keep on observing teachers while teaching in their respective grades and supervise their professional records such as schemes of work and daily lesson plans"* (Principal Mike).

> *"I never allow any teacher to teach in the classroom without the lesson plan and I supervise how teachers assess learners"* (Principal Ernestina).

> *"In my school I used to pay regular visits to observe how teaching is done and assist teachers where they meet challenges"* (Principal Lerato).

> *""I ensure that every teacher prepares both schemes of work and the lesson plans as a sign of readiness to teach learners. I observe teachers in class with an aim of equipping them with more techniques on effective teaching"* (Principal 'Mathabiso).

These findings are consistent with related literature. According to Salazar and Marques (2012), effective principals prefer most to use class observation to create a meaningful dialogue with teachers, offering helpful feedback to align improvement efforts. Thus, through class observation principals can identify strengths and weaknesses of their teachers and eventually plan on how to provide a professional support. Also, MOET (2002c) in Lesotho reiterates that the notion of class observation is used by principals as a technique of evaluating aspects such as lesson planning, the use of teaching materials prepared for the lesson, teaching methods, classroom management and learner assessment as well.

The findings from in-depth interviews have also revealed that mentoring is very important in teaching and learning. This is supported by the following responses from the interview sessions:

> "*"In the case where a teacher is not competent enough, I attach such teacher to an experienced teacher to assist them. Therefore, an experienced teacher acts as a mentor. I also keep on guiding teachers particularly about teaching methods and classroom management"* (Principal Lerato).

> *"I do guide and equip new teachers with skills on how to prepare schemes of work and lesson plans. I make sure that a new teacher is paired with an experienced teacher to gain more experience, with the experienced teacher as a mentor"* (principal 'Mathabiso).

These findings are consistent with related literature. According to Norman (2011b), it was apparent that the principals trusted their experienced teachers and expected them to assist novice teachers by providing quality instruction, which would result in best learner achievement. The findings from in-depth interviews have also revealed that the principals worked harmoniously with teachers in terms of monitoring their work and conducting class observation. This is supported by the following responses from the interview sessions:

> "*Our principal checks both schemes of work and the lesson plans to ensure that teachers are prepared for the lesson. She observes teachers in classes while teaching and gives the feedback. It is motivating to be told that you did very well"* (Talkative - teacher).

> "*We are regularly observed by the principal when teaching and the feedback is given later about the lesson. It is helpful because we improve on our weaknesses. The principal is much keen in teachers' planning books and examine learners' exercise books whether marking is done formatively"* (Peter - teacher).

> "The *principal in my school is sensitive to ensure that every teacher is ready with the schemes of work and the lesson plans to continue with teaching in the classroom. Sometimes we invite the principal to do class observation, and this is a good exercise. It reflects both strengths and weaknesses of a teacher"* (Comfort - teacher).

> *"We have a good principal who never tortures teachers at work but guides and advises them almost in everything to achieve school goals. The principal examines teachers lesson*

plans together with schemes of work and ensures that teaching is done in accordance with the prepared teaching timetables" (Blom - teacher).

"The principal has the supervision schedule and the dates for submission of schemes of work and lesson plans are stated clearly. The schemes of work are checked once in the beginning of every quarter by the principal, while lesson plans are examined on daily basis. She never embarrasses the teacher when giving the feedback of the lesson observed" (Thabo - teacher).

"I work with the principal who has a passion about teaching, and he is my role model when in work plans. That is why I fear to teach learners without the lesson plan. He cannot demotivate you if you could not teach the concept properly during the lesson; instead, he provides a professional support to understand how better you could have taught the concept" (John - teacher).

Moreover, teacher participants understand that it is important for the principals to monitor teachers' work and assist them where there is a need to improve the school performance. This is further supported by the following responses from the interview sessions:

"We all know that teaching learners without preparation books is an offence. Therefore, we respect our principal by obeying her guidelines and support in teaching and learning. When the principal visits my class, I feel happy because she assists me through her findings" (Maente - teacher).

"According to the school policy every teacher is supposed to submit the lesson plan to the principal before teaching starts. As teachers we never complain when required to submit our schemes of work and lesson plans because as professionals, we understand that teaching starts first with planning. Class visits are conducted by the principal three times in a quarter to observe the lessons in progress and provide a support" (Lindiwe - teacher).

The research findings have revealed the role of the principal within the school. All participants intimated that the principals in their respective schools were not in control of the teachers but monitored teachers strongly to do their work. One of the participants intimated that the principal does not allow any teacher to teach in the classroom without the schemes of work and the lesson plan. Hence, all principals are very important in the improvement of academic performance within

the school because they pay much attention on class observation and supervision of teachers' work frequently. These findings are consistent with related literature. According to Guzman and Hernandez (2016), when a principal work effectively on his leadership it is obvious that improvement towards learning become evident. This is supported by Guo's (2012) instructional leadership theory that emphasizes the role of the school administration in the improvement of the students' learning problems, as well as teachers' management difficulties in classroom instruction. It was further indicated in the work of Msila (2013) that the principal could give input to improve instruction or can construct an environment that is conducive for educators to offer this support. This also concurs with Gatobu's (2019) transformational leadership theory which stresses that for productive learning to occur, prepared school leadership is required. The discourse now shifts to the engagement of parents in the school.

4.4.4 Engagement of Parents in the School

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that engagement of parents in the school is important in learners' education. Parents feel the same way as educators that it is essential for them to begin family school partnership, because they regard it as their responsibility to become fellow workers concerning their children's education (Shepherd & Kervick, 2015). The participants intimated that there is a great improvement academically, through the parents' continuous support in their children's education. This is supported by the following responses from the interview sessions:

> "Parents *help children with homework, and they play a great role to reduce learner irregular attendance" (Principal* Mike).

> "*The parents are helpful towards learners' education, and they are eager to render a support in the sense that when they are asked to check children's exercises at home they do so. We work hand in hand with them to correct children's behaviour"* (Principal Ernestina).

> *"In my school we meet quarterly with parents to share with them about learners' academic performance and reach the conclusion on how to support learners' education. Parent support school educational tours and when their children are sick while at home the report is given to the principal" (Principal Lerato).*

"Working with children alone in the school is not sufficient. Therefore, parents are important to be part of their children's education. The parents share their children's background regarding behaviour and specials needs, and it is an advantage because teachers would be familiar with the kind of learners they work with" (Principal 'Mathabiso).

The research findings have revealed that engagement of parents was highly considered as an important practice in the four schools used for improving learner academic performance. Through parental involvement learners' behaviour and irregular attendance are corrected in order to improve learner achievement. This view is in line with Jeyness's (2011) view that positive parental involvement in the school directs students to advanced academic attainment and socio-emotional development. However, Matefevic and Jovanovih (2014) argue that schools should create partnerships with families through which appropriate information can be offered about effects of different parenting style on student attainment. Effective schools include parents in their decision making and build collective relationships among educators, parents, and communities to improve student learning and academic prosperousness (Mugendawala & Muijs, 2020).

Furthermore, according to Liamas and Tuazon (2016), parents become satisfied when the education system needs their involvement in the school activities. The strong cooperation of parents with school authorities can contribute to enlarged improvement in both physical and academic performance of the school. Hence, school principals must encourage parents to take part and share their views towards assisting the school to attain its missions and goals (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014). What is evident from the in-depth interviews is that parental involvement in the school has a great input from both teachers and parents, for the benefit of learners' achievement. This is supported by the following responses from the interview sessions:

"The *principal in our school used to invite parents quarterly and share with them some challenges concerning their children. Learners' behaviour is improved, and parents have confidence in their children's education when told that children are performing well"* (Talkative - teacher).

"Parents' meetings in my school are held every session to share learners' academic achievements and parents play their role to assist their children in reading while at home" (Peter - teacher).

"It is our culture to invite parents to general staff meetings and exchange ideas on learners' academic performance and find out solutions concerning late coming and high learner dropout rate. Other parents become part of the school as the school board members, and they enhance school performance" (Comfort - teacher).

"Parents inclusion in the learners' education reduces learners' absenteeism. The feedback about learners' progress is shared with parents and they comment on the progress reports of their children about the strengths and weaknesses. There is no way the school can perform well without parental involvement in the school activities" (Blom - teacher).

The research findings have revealed that parents are very important in their children's education. This concurs with Kwatubana and Makhalemele's (2015) view that seeing parents included in the education of their children is a good thing, because it enhances academic performance and learners become more focused in their schoolwork. This is supported by the following responses from the interview sessions:

"The *principal considers parents as part of the school in the decision-making that affects their children. Parents help us a lot concerning learners' behaviour"* (Thabo - teacher).

"It is a must in our school that learners after writing weekly tests they should submit marked scripts to the parents to sign and comment about the performance. It is a good strategy because learners are working hard to avoid being scolded by parents at home when the academic performance is poor" (John - teacher).

"Parents act as resource persons academically because they assist learners on how to prepare Basotho traditional foods and others with skills in traditional games help learners" (Maente-teacher).

"We work with supportive parents in our school. They volunteer to sponsor mathematics and science competitions to motivate learners to work hard. The principal urges parents to monitor their children's exercise books regularly and assist them where they meet challenges in certain subjects. parents never complain, instead they encourage teachers to give learners more homework" (Lindiwe - teacher).

The research findings have revealed that all participants believe that the success of the school emanate from the strong collaboration of parents and teachers. This perspective concurs with Garcia and Thornton's (2014) view that engagement of parents in the children's education helps to enhance learners, decrease absenteeism, and reinstate parents' confidence in their children's education. In addition, parents can be involved by means of follow-ups with their children's subject education to single out areas where children face some challenges (Clinton & Hattie, 2013). Moreover, several studies indicated that successful rural school leadership is all about welcoming, listening, and responding to parental associations affiliated with school improvement efforts and consultative boards (Irvine et al., 2010). The next section discusses how principals establish high performance expectations.

4.4.5 Establishing High Performance Expectations

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that principals in the four schools had the same strategy of producing good learner academic results. The principals considered establishing high performance expectations for both teachers as an important pillar to sustain the level of learner achievement. This is in line with Ndeku's (2013) view that that leadership is crucial in making a school successful and attains high performance. This is supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

> "In *my school we draw the action plan for the year which includes different activities to be done with the purpose of improving learner achievement. Learners are informed that if they can achieve above eight percent, they will be awarded trophies"* (Mike – teacher).

> *"We share with learners what they are expected to know and do at the end of every quarter. We encourage learners to use English as a medium of instruction and the grade that will be found to be the best is awarded trophies, depending on the number of streams and through this system learners' performance is good"* (Principal Ernestina).

> *"I am proud to work in the school considered to be top performing ever since being part of this we had clear plans to sustain learner attainment. Learners are given weekly and monthly tests. The feedback is provided to every learner and those who achieved below the standard will attend one on one session with the principal and the class teacher"* (Principal Lerato).

"We are always encouraging learners to attend morning study and, in the afternoon, when lessons are over, they are given an opportunity to meet in their group discussions to share challenges from different subjects and if those challenges are not solved among themselves, they present them to teachers" (Principal 'Mathabiso).

The research findings have revealed that principals seemed to be using different strategies to enhance learner achievement and they took every opportunity to share new ways with their teachers. Likewise, principals acknowledged that the success achieved in their respective schools was through a spirit of cooperation among staff towards set expectations. These findings are consistent with related literature. According to Robert and Leo (2015), schools are more effective when shared expectations are vital to everyone and the organisation does not just include the collection of individuals. Scholars agree that effective school leaders set high performance expectations for educators (Kelchtermans & Piot, 2010; Leithwood, 2015). As Gupton (2010) states, high expectations comprise an essential compound of a positive school culture that sustain quality teaching and learning. Moreover, effective schools set high standards and expectations for all learners because educators believe that they can acquire knowledge, master challenges, and reach high academic standards (Jarl et al., 2021).

Furthermore, other participants shared similar views regarding high performance expectations. Hence, the school with clear performance expectations is likely to perform well academically. This is further supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

"Our school is among the top achievers due to high performance expectations set by the principal. We are proud to work with learners who meet school expectations and sometimes go beyond them. As teachers we try our level best to assist learners in different ways so that we maintain a good reputation of our school concerning learner attainment" (Talkative - teacher).

"Learners do take responsibility in different ways to improve their work and sometimes they consult teachers frequently where they met challenges in teaching and learning. We used to practice team teaching in our school for the purpose of achieving our expectations" (Peter - teacher).

"The principal in our school keeps on reminding us about performance expectations and this is done with the intention of influencing us to work hard and produce good academic results" (Comfort - teacher).

"We are the famous school regarding good learners' academic performance, and we work hard to maintain that because performance expectations are forcing us. We never use one method of enhancing school performance but instead we consult our neighbouring schools" (Blom - teacher).

The principals were also conscious of the quality of learners' academic results and good instruction in their respective schools and employ high performance expectations as a guiding principle to advance gradually. Hence, high performance expectations create the spirit of competition among the teachers. The participants shared the following:

"Most of the learners from our school surprise teachers when they join high school. Teachers were surprised by their good academic performance, and this confirms that our performance expectations are right" (Thabo - teacher).

"Teachers, through performance expectations, commit themselves into their schoolwork, and learner academic work is improved in such a way that you will not find the same learner achieving better than others" (John - teacher).

"We *are working with creative learners, and they are able to come up with solutions on how to improve their academic performance. As a teacher you just act as a facilitator because learners are already familiar about benchmark"* (Maente - teacher).

"*I am proud to work in the school which set high standards for excellence. Ever since teaching here our school has been among high performing rural primary schools and there was a good communication between teachers and learners"* (Lindiwe - teacher).

These findings are consistent with related literature. According to Jacob and Wilder (2010), educational expectations have been distinguished as students' greatest approximate of achievement utilising available information. This concurs with Day et al.'s (2011) view that setting high expectations of performance, which are brilliantly executed, stimulates organisational activity. This also concurs with Jebii's (2019) transformational leadership theory in which

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transformational leadership practices are important and necessary in advancing high academic performance, by fostering the participation of all stakeholders. Moreover, the findings are in line with Van Deventer's (2016) instructional leadership theory which stresses that the quality of teaching and learning can be enhanced by principals, when they focus on instructional practices and knowledge of which teaching, and learning is centre to their role. An effective instructional leader of a rural school has apparent focus on a style of instruction which substantiates high academic standards for learners (Klar & Brewer, 2014). The discourse now discusses the confluence between rurality and leadership.

4.5 Confluence between Rurality and Leadership

The third part of this study was about the confluence between rurality and leadership in high performing rural primary schools. This part was about checking how leadership was influenced by rurality or how leadership influence rurality. The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed five sub-themes on the confluence between rurality and leadership. These themes are, hardship allowance and leadership, learner discipline and leadership, excessive workload and leadership, lack of resources and leadership, and limited officials' visits and leadership. These themes are discussed at length in the subsequent section.

4.5.1 Hardship Allowance and Leadership

The third research question of this study was to find out from the principals how rurality affects their leadership. The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that education in rural areas takes place in small schools, where learners are few and all these schools have principals. The principals in these schools are paid hardship allowance and it retains them to work under these conditions. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

> *"It is true that we are working under the situation which is not the same as the ones in town, but I am happy in terms of salary because I receive hardship allowance. The projects of MOET for improving schools are mostly allocated to rural schools and we receive incentives as principals"* (Principal Mike).

> *"I understand that in rurality we multitask as principals, and it is a heavy job but MOET cares for us in terms of hardship allowances and in rurality we save our money because we*

are not using many things that cost a lot of money like those principals in town" (Principal Ernestina).

"When there are teaching posts vacancies in my school, I receive more than fifty teachers' applications, which means that hardship allowance is attracting teachers to find themselves working in rurality. We are motivated through hardship allowance as principals in rural schools even though there is a lot to do regarding classroom activities and administration of the school in general" (Principal Lerato).

"In our regular meetings as rural principals sometimes you may hear other principals complaining about performing dual roles and some will tell you that we are comfortable in rural schools because we earn hardship allowance. We understand that working in rurality is an advantage for benefits, which are not provided in urban schools, and that is why new teachers are interested to start teaching in rural schools" (Principal 'Mathabiso).

It was evident from the data that these principals appreciated to work in rural schools even though they are multitasking because The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) is providing hardship allowance to principals and teachers working in rural schools. These views shared by principals in this study correlate with related literature. Reviewed literature concurs that rurality in Lesotho is also linked with hardship allowance, which is included in the basic salaries of people working in rural area (Paramente et al., 2005). Thus, the principals in Lesotho considered hardship allowance as a motivation. This is in line with the view of Sah and Brooks (2016) that work motivation is strongly enough to decrease work stress by reframing emotions as passion. Moreover, according to Surty (2011), the Department of Basic Education in South Africa realises that there is a need to plan a strategy for rural education development, since it established a rural allowance policy to attract and retain teachers to work in public schools in remote areas. The theoretical framework underpinning this study is silent in terms of rural schools' incentives and how these incentives may influence leadership of principals. The next section discusses learner discipline and leadership.

4.5.2 Learner Discipline and Leadership

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that in the context of rurality, principals lead learners of different status in the sense that some are aged, double orphans, and house-headers,

while others are from initiation school (lebollo). These learners, regardless of their status, pay respect to the principals and teachers. Therefore, this influences leadership because principals can manage the school harmoniously without barriers and as a result, they guide learners to earn quality education. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

"Discipline in a small school is easier to maintain especially when the school has clear rules made by all stakeholders including learners. In our school none of the learners can go home without the permission of the principal or class teacher. We keep on reading school rules for learners in their respective grades, even at the general assembly. We are working with well-disciplined learners" (Principal Mike).

"Learners in rural areas respect teachers like their parents because parents are still using the stick at home to discipline children. Learners are given homework and in the morning they will all submit their exercises to be marked. I used to settle minor cases among learners, and you will never hear any teacher reporting to me as the principal about learners who are not well-disciplined. Learners adhere to school rules and prefects are given responsibility to teach their classmates" (Principal Ernestina).

"In schools the learners who are troublesome are boys. I believe that if we had only girls in schools, we were going to have peace of mind. In my school we delegate other responsibilities to big boys, for example others are tasked to take care of garden tools. Likewise, other learners are given the responsibility to ensure that windows and doors are closed when everybody depart home. Learners are familiar about the school rules, and they act in accordance with them" (Principal Lerato).

"Poor learner discipline in the school contributes negatively to teaching and learning. In my school learners are not troublesome in classrooms. They pay respect to teachers and cooks. We do not allow learners to use their different languages, but to communicate in English only within the school campus. I never invite police officers to my school due to undisciplined learners because we always remind them about school rules" (Principal 'Mathabiso).

Therefore, the participants intimated that they used school rules as a policy to maintain learner discipline in their respective schools to improve teaching and learning. These findings are

consistent with related literature. According to Sebastian and Allensworth (2012b), classroom rules can maintain the level of order and decrease any interruptions concerning teaching and learning. This concurs with Klar and Brewer's (2014) view that the successful instructional leader of a rural school has a clear focal point on a technique of instruction that underpins high academic standards for learners.

Moreover, literature reveals that learner indiscipline is a major problem that affects schools globally (Omot et al., 2015). Bullying cases in schools are realities that occur on daily basis internationally and locally (Signh, 2017) and happens in various forms which include physically hurting, stealing, and humiliating. As Gakure et al. (2013) observe, schools had cases of inappropriate behaviour of learners. However, in the context of Lesotho, learners at primary level are well-disciplined compared to high school learners. According to Makafane (2018), learner discipline such as bullying contributes to poor school performance and leads to high learner dropout rate.

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that good learners' discipline reduces heavy stress to the principal. This is further supported by the following responses from in-depth interview sessions:

> *"My school has a policy on how to correct learners' behaviour and all stakeholders as well as learners are familiar with it. The principal at our school spends her time on office work and teaching not attending to learners' cases due to unacceptable behaviour. Learners in rural schools are well-disciplined compared to those in urban schools; that is why performance is satisfactory at our school. The principal used to buy sweets for learners in a quarter when she is satisfactory about their behaviour"* (Talkative - teacher).

> *"We used to organise a special farewell to grade seven learners every year to wish them good lucky to grade eight. I realised that when a leader does good things to learners, they show love and respect to such a leader. In our school, every classroom has rules, and it is a must that before teaching starts learners should read rules and explain them to their classmates"* (Peter - teacher).

Therefore, a leader is on the safe side if s/he shares rules with learners and as a result s/he is admired by learners. Moreover, good learners are natured by instilling in them a sense of discipline,

among other factors. This is further supported by the following responses from in-in-depth interviews:

> *"To change learners' behaviour is not an easy task, but you need to be friendly to them and let them know when they have done something good or bad. Our principal always tells learners at the assembly the good and bad things they did. Where they found that they did wrong, they apologise to the principal"* (Comfort - teacher).

> *"Learners in rural schools fear police officers, so if you tell them that I will invite police officers to arrest those who will be found in possession of knives at school, they will never continue with that habit. At our school, we meet with the learners every quarter to discuss with them good behaviour that befits a learner while at school"* (Blom - teacher).

Echoing similar views, some participants explained further through their experience with large school in urban areas that learner discipline in urban school is not easily maintained, compared to a small school. One participant shared the following:

> *"It is really shocking to meet learners in rural schools who insult you as a teacher or to go to education office complaining about teachers that they are not teaching but playing at school"* (Thabo – teacher).

This view correlates with the views of other participants who took part in this study. The participants concur that learners' discipline in rural schools is much better and this motivates the teacher to enjoy teaching and the principal to enjoy leadership. This is supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

> *"As teachers, every Friday we play friendly games with learners in our school. We never push them to the ground, but they push themselves because it is well known in the school rules that when it is time for sports everyone is expected to attend" (John - teacher).*

> *"Rural learners love their teachers; they can even request to wash your clothes as a teacher. During cleaning time either in the school surroundings or toilets, they just follow the scheduled cleaning timetable without complaining" (Maente - teacher).*

"We work harmoniously with our learners because it is a manageable group, and they respect the principal. Anything discovered to be wrong from other learners, is reported promptly to the principal" (Lindiwe - teacher).

These findings from in-depth interviews are consistent with related literature. According to Paseka (2015), regulations that control educators' and learners' inappropriate behaviour in general are vital in monitoring and controlling learners' behaviour in schools. This concurs with Uzzochina's (2015) view that principals have vital responsibilities to facilitate an atmosphere for the improvement of positive learner behaviour. Thus, it is the responsibility of principals to correct learners' behaviour from negative to positive in their respective schools. Hence, effective principals build learners' attitudes in schools and enhance learner engagement, learning, and results (Mugendawala & Muijs, 2020). The discourse now proceeds to what principals view as excessive workload.

4.5.3 Excessive Workload and Leadership

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that the context of rurality makes principals have excessive workload. The participants intimated that principal in rural schools, particularly where the deputy principal is not available, experience excessive workload. Most of schools in rurality are small in terms of learner enrollment (Hill, 2014). As a result, they are not allocated a grant for the deputy principal, and this means excessive workload for the principal. Hence, rurality excessive workload can sometimes influence principals to resign if they are not flexible enough to adjust things in their leadership. Thus, MOET is neglecting rural schools in terms of deputy principals' grants. The following responses from in-depth interviews help explain this point:

"There is no deputy principal in my school, so you can just imagine how stressful it is to me doing administration and classroom work. I do not have enough time for monitoring teachers' work because I must balance both office and classroom work" (Principal Mike).

"Working in the school without a deputy principal is a highly stressful because every task of administration is done by the principal, since other tasks are just impossible to be delegated to teachers. It is worse during summative assessments, because as a principal you must moderate assessment questions for seven grades and bear in mind that I still have classroom work" (Principal Ernestina).

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"I wonder whether rural schools belong to MOET because few of them have a grant for a deputy principal. We do dual roles and at the same time we are expected to teach learners and provide quality education. You also need to prepare the annual financially report, which is sensitive because it needs a principal as the chief accounting officer" (Principal 'Mathabiso).

It is apparent from participants' responses that these principals even though they are performing well, they experience excessive workload. The notion of excessive workload in rurality as indicated by three principals in this study is consistent with related literature. Scholars concur that the school principal performs dual roles, for instance as a principal and a teacher, or as a principal and superintendent (Howley et al., 2012; Lynch, 2012a). As a result, this limits the rural principal's ability to focus on instructional leadership (Lynch, 2012b). Hence, in rural schools' principals lead and at the same time they conduct different and varied responsibilities that in large schools there are specialised staff that carry out those responsibilities. This also concurs with Lekhetho's (2013) observation that in rural school's multi-grade teaching is an excessive workload. One participant shared the following:

"In my school there are only five teachers, and it is obvious that other teachers have to teach two grades" (Principal Mike's).

Therefore, the research findings have revealed that excessive workload in rural schools affect leadership in the sense that the principals are bound to carry out dual roles. The next section provides a discussion on lack of resources and leadership.

4.5.4 Lack of Resources and Leadership

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that resources are not sufficient in rural schools. The participants intimated that rural schools have limited resources that affect learners' education. The provision of resources sticks to the country's geographic and socioeconomic patterns, as urban schools are better resourced compared to rural schools (Lekhetho, 2018). The principals are therefore required to improvise solutions and continue to lead in positive ways that improve their schools and ensure that the school can provide quality education in the context of limited resources. The following responses from in-depth interviews help explain this point:

"We work in difficult conditions that sometimes requires us as principals to improvise teaching and learning resources, but there are other resources such as computers which we cannot improvise, unless provided by MOET or borrow from our colleagues" (Principal Mike).

"Teachers and learners need to work in comfortable classrooms with enough furniture. As a principal, I work hard to apply for donations from companies to assist our school with furniture as well as computers" (Principal Ernestina).

Therefore, the research findings have revealed that the principals serve their schools by ensuring that under hard situations, there are essential resources to facilitate teaching and learning. The participants intimated that insufficient resources cannot be a barrier for their schools' progress. This is further supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

"It is our expectations to see MOET providing us with computers, but we are still waiting; we borrow from our colleagues to assist teachers" (Principal Lerato).

"We wish to see our learners using computers in classrooms and libraries. Our learners are still behind in terms of modern resources, so as the principal I organise educational tours with teachers and visit the offices in town so that learners can access the use of computers. We have a free classroom which is used as a library even though we have few books collected. In the absence of electricity, we improvise with car batteries when learners need to learn about electricity" (Principal 'Mathabiso).

These findings from in-depth interviews are consistent with related literature. Scholars concur that rural schools are under resourced and that principals have additional pressures that eventually contribute to stress (McLean et al., 2014a). This also concurs with the notion that rural schools are schools found in remote areas serving a community with low populations, under resourced and low school enrollment (McLean et al., 2014b; Redding & Walberg, 2012). The research findings have also revealed that the principals influence their teachers to work hard, instead of putting limited resources as an obstacle. This is further supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

"Leaders being in rural schools are not exposed to the modern things where they have access on the use of computers, current electricity, and library. It depends on person to person

because a flexible leader can improvise resources. No matter we work in hard situation of limited resources we try our level best to provide education by organising educational tours to take our learners to computer centre offices" (Talkative - teacher).

"When resources are not available, I understand that it is impossible to teach effectively, hence resources provide better understanding. My principal is supportive to ensure that we have a computer if needed for a certain lesson. In the case where we need to teach learners about electricity, the principal used to improvise with torch cells" (Comfort - teacher).

Therefore, the research findings have revealed that participants can work under limited resources in rural schools, through continuous support from their principals. This is further supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

"Nowadays the computer is very important that learners should be taught about it in schools. It is not easy in rural schools to have computers because there is no electricity. Our principal sometimes sacrifices with her laptop that we use as a teaching aid for the benefit of learners" (Thabo - teacher).

"As a teacher by profession, you cannot say you will not teach learners about the computer, claiming that it is not available at school. We work hand in hand with the principal to borrow from our friends either two or three laptops" (John - teacher).

Therefore, the participants regarded resources in general as an important issue towards learners' education. The data shows that unavailability of essential resources can impact negatively on learner achievement. The following responses from in-depth interviews help explain this point:

"You cannot expect learners to understand in the classroom if teaching is conducted without teaching materials, which is why we see our principals hiring laptops and requesting the community members to make benches for learners. The principal used to borrow a generator from community members in the case where we need electricity to play videos for learners" (Maente - teacher).

Some participants intimated that when resources are insufficient teachers blame the principal for neglecting her responsibility of ensuring that computers, learners' furniture, and water are available. One participant shared the following:

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"We work with learners whom sometimes you cannot be surprised to find others sitting on the stones in the classroom. However, we are lucky to have a kind of a principal who is working hard to request the community to assist the school with some benches. With the little funds the school has, the principal used to hire a laptop from other schools to help teachers during computer lessons" (Lindiwe - teacher).

Therefore, the principals work in hard conditions due to lack of infrastructure in their respective schools. These findings from in-depth interviews are consistent with related literature. Most of rural schools are characterised by shortage of resources, about facilities and instructional materials (Ncube, 2013). Likewise, poorly resourced rural schools can be attained by the morality of the teachers in stimulating strong relationship with parents and mobilising sufficient resources for teaching and learning (Van de Merwe, 2011). Research indicates that rural principals have overcome challenges by seeking innovative approaches to deliver better results for their learners (Stansfied, 2015).

Furthermore, the study has adopted both transformational leadership theory and instructional leadership theory as theoretical frameworks. Drawing from the work of Luft (2012), which is transformational leadership theory, transformational leaders capacitate subordinates to accomplish organisational goals, while in the work of Hallinger (2013) under instructional leadership theory, effective school principals always make sure that teaching and learning happen irrespective of the situations in which the schools are situated. This meaning relates well with Hallinger concept that regardless of whether the school is in urban or rural environment, teaching and learning should take place. It is also clear from Luft's work that transformational leader are bound to help teachers with resources to achieve school goals. The discourse now shifts to limited official visits, and leadership.

4.5.5 Limited Official Visits and Leadership

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that in rural areas where other schools in Lesotho are located, there is lack of infrastructure such as roads. Therefore, it is not easy for officials to visit these schools using official vehicles, unless MOET hires horses for them. As a result, MOET officials visit these schools after a long time and this affect leadership because

principals are not guided continuously by District Resource Teachers (DRT) and inspectors. The following responses from in-depth interviews help explain this point:

> *"Unavailability of roads in rural areas affects the school leadership because as principals we are not supported by DRTs and inspectors on our daily administration, the reason being that it is not possible for DRTs and inspectors to travel to schools by foot. There is no perfection at work. Therefore, it is our will to see inspectors and DRTs in our schools because there are areas where we need their support. On the logbook in my school, I checked and found that the last visit conducted by a DRT at my school was in 2019"* (Principal Mike).

On the same issue, some participants added that regular supervision in schools motivates principals because they are guided professionally on their daily work. One participant shared the following.

> *"Inspectors and DRTs visit our school after a long time due to availability of roads in remote areas. We are not sure whether we are doing well particularly in the school leadership. We used to attend workshops and come up with new policies to implement in our schools, so if DRTs are not making a follow up on their training, we might implement policies wrongly"* (Principals Ernestina).

Moreover, the other two principals shared their views regarding the importance of external support from inspectors and DRTs. The principals intimated that external support from inspectors and DRTs was essential, as they provide both administrative and classroom guidance. This is supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

> *"Travelling to rural schools by a horse is not reliable because other officials are afraid of riding the horse. I understand that as principals we are working in schools on behalf of MOET to implement its policies. Therefore, it is the responsibility of MOET to make a follow up whether we are doing well or not. We play our role as leaders in schools, but I think if supported we might go beyond where we are now. The unavailability of roads is a barrier for DRTs and inspectors to visit our schools frequently"* (Principal Lerato).

> *"Since we are working in remote areas where it is hard for a vehicle to reach, it is obvious that DRTs and inspectors are reluctant to pay us a visit. When inspectors and DRTs are at our school, I know that at the end of their visit we will meet them and get the feedback on*

their findings for future improvement. As a principal, I also meet the staff in their absence to discuss our weaknesses find out how we should plan to improve them" (Principal 'Mathabiso).

The research findings have revealed that external support from inspectors and DRTs was essential as they provide both administrative and classroom guidance. These findings from in-depth interviews are consistent with related literature. Scholars concur that in rural schools' principals carry out dual roles, for example as a principal and superintendent and as a result this restricts the rural principal's ability to focus on instructional leadership (Lynch, 2012c). Moreover, according to Lesotho Education Act No.3 of 2010 section 18 (4a) one of the functions of an inspector is to inspect daily schoolwork every year and provide a detailed report on attainments and on policies implementation. In the same section in 4(b) the inspector is bound to provide support and advise for schools.

Teachers as part of this study confirmed that external support from MOET officials is important, since it solves the problems that arise among themselves with the principals. This is supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

"The external support from MOET official is not effective in rural areas because roads are not available. As a result, they visit us after a long time when MOET has provided horses to be used as a means of transport. We used to attend workshops where training was based on the curriculum issues since principal's supervision is not enough, because sometimes she might not explain other issues like inspectors and DRTs. When inspectors and DRTs are at our school, they give us an opportunity to ask questions where we meet challenges on our daily work" (Talkative - teacher).

"I still believe that if rural places were reachable like those in town our performance was going to be outstanding because inspectors and DRTs were going to pay regular visits. Our school is too far from the main road, so it is tiresome to arrive at our school as a DRT, especially if you must travel by foot. The principal monitors teachers' work as a leader but I believe that she also needs support from inspectors and DRTs. We always feel happy to meet with DRTs and inspectors at our school during their visits because they provide professional support, which is helpful in teaching and learning" (Peter - teacher).

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The research findings have revealed that inspectors and DRTs' visit is very important in schools because professional support is provided to both principals and teachers. Hence, work-related questions are clarified, including curriculum challenges, even though the issue of roads is a barrier for officials. It is also interesting to note that principals' supervision is not enough and therefore needs back up from inspectors and DRTs. This is further supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

"Being in rurality sometimes we miss important people who can support us, but the question remains on how they arrive in our schools because roads are not constructed. The presence of DRTs and inspectors in our school is crucial because they visit us after a long time, yet we meet challenges in teaching and learning. They assist on how to prepare lesson plans and even about the correct application of teaching methods. Our principal keeps on interacting with us to address challenges, but DRTs clarify more than a principal" (Comfort - teacher).

"Professional support from inspectors and DRTs is vital, especially to a rural principal who little experience than principals in town who can visit the education office to meet inspectors and DRTs and share their problems face to face. DRTs can help you with skills on how to prepare a lesson plan for two grades" (Blom - teacher).

"When you are working alone in the school without any guidance you will think that you are doing well... Therefore, supervision from different people in the school is needed. We have gained a lot from DRTs and inspectors in the previous visits that is why our school is among high performing schools, even though their visits are conducted after two years due to the absence of roads". (Thabo - teacher).

Some participants intimated that principal need refresher training courses particularly on school leadership. One participant shared the following:

"How *can you expect a principal to assist a teacher on the issue that he never attended the workshop about it? It means as a teacher I am confident to help my principal, and this is where conflicts might arise. DRTs and inspectors help a lot on school challenges, and they equip principals and teachers with techniques but the issue of roads in remote areas is an obstacle for inspectors and DRTs to visit rural schools"* (John - teacher).

Therefore, the research findings have revealed that principals and teachers are aware that official visits by inspectors and DRTs are important since they are provided with professional. This is further supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

> *"Our schools are situated in remote areas which are hard to reach unless travelling by horses, of which people living in town are afraid to use horses as a means of transport. The principal is not the master of all in the school, he needs regular support from MOET officials. It is impossible for the school to operate effectively without support of inspectors and DRTs. I was guided by DRTs on the challenge of responding properly to conclusion and evaluation of the lesson plan"* (Maente - teacher).

> *"Our trust in the school is invested in our principal, especially when we meet challenges, and we believe she can assist us. We used to encourage the principal to conduct DRTs and inspectors to solve other challenges that she is unable to help, because their visits are not conducted regularly as the vehicles cannot reach rural places"* (Lindiwe - teacher).

Therefore, the research findings have revealed that if principals can be supported strongly by inspectors and DRTs the competence of their respective schools can be the same as those schools located in urban areas. This study pinpoints regular school visits by inspectors as one of the successful measures to improve teaching and learning, which is currently affected by lack of infrastructure such as roads.

4.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented and analysed the data from the field. The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of leadership in high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's nek district. It emerged that most participants give the meaning of leadership as giving direction, guidance, and coaching. It was also viewed that leadership is about motivating and influencing in primary schools. Subsequently, participants understand leadership as an inclusive responsibility. Likewise, it came out that principals in four schools presented leadership through building a shared vision, fostering good interpersonal relationships, and improving instruction (teaching). The last section of this chapter took the reader to the confluence between rurality and leadership and five sub-themes about confluence were discussed. This chapter has used both literature and theoretical framework to better understand the data that came out from the field. With these findings given,

the next chapter would present the summary of the findings, conclusions and the recommendations guided by the key research questions of the study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study was aimed at exploring the nature of leadership in high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district. The study looked at how principals understand and enact leadership in their respective schools. The study further drew from principals' and teachers' experiences to understand how principals explain the confluence between rurality and leadership. The previous chapter the analysed and discussed the research findings. This chapter presented the summary of the findings, conclusions that emerged from the study in response to three key research questions, and recommendations for practice and for further future research.

5.2 Summary of the study

The intention of this study was to find out how principals in high performing rural primary schools take part in the day- to -day running of their schools. The study was conducted to explore and analyse leadership practices of principals in high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district. In this study, it was argued that even though these schools are in remote areas with poor infrastructure, they have improved academic and curriculum attainments and are therefore considered as high performing schools. The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of leadership in high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district. To attain this purpose the report was demarcated into five chapters and a very concise layout of what each chapter entails is presented below.

Chapter one started with a short introduction and provided the background to the study and discussed the rationale. The problem through which the study was initiated was presented. It argued that even though rural primary schools were academically poor, effective school leadership developed them into high performing schools. Research has indicated that leadership is the driving force towards achieving set goals. The chapter clarified the research topic and research questions that guided the entire research process. In this chapter, high performing rural primary schools were determined by learners' academic results in the previous consecutive years.

Chapter two reviewed literature on school leadership and it was drawn from both Lesotho and international studies. What emerged from the literature was that effective school leadership uses four core leadership practices to lift the school to greater heights. It was further revealed that the rise and decline of schools' plans remains in principals' leadership and the principals at the same time are a catalyst for improved learner attainment and well-being. The chapter also explored the literature on the confluence of leadership and rurality.

Moreover, this chapter discussed transformational leadership theory and instructional leadership theory as theoretical frameworks underpinning the study. The issue of successful leadership in schools is reinforced in the transformational leadership theory, that it is the leader's capability to transform beliefs and attitudes of followers to accomplish beyond expectations. Instructional leadership theory guides the study by showing that it is principal's responsibility to ensure that meaningful teaching and learning takes place in schools.

Chapter three presented the research design and methodology that was executed during empirical study. The study used interpretive paradigm as the nature of ways of knowing. It helped the researcher to acquire new insights about the meaning of leadership as provided by the principals in high performing rural primary schools. A case study was used as the methodology to obtain rich information concerning the enactment of leadership, where principals use four core leadership practices and the confluence of rurality on the enactment of leadership. The purposive sampling was determined, and telephonic semi-structured individual interviews were used as the primary data generation method. The data analysis and the ethical considerations are discussed in chapter four.

Chapter four outlined the process of analysing and interpreting the data generated on the leadership practices of high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district. The data was presented to address the various themes of leadership practices of high performing rural primary schools and confirm the findings.

Chapter five presented the summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for both practice and for further future research, but it reflected on the research purpose and stated how research questions had been tackled. Conclusions were drawn, and findings obtained regarding leadership practices of high performing rural primary schools.

5.3 Summary of the findings

This section summaries the findings of the study under each research question to which this study replied. The summary of the findings is based on the findings presented both from the literature review and data.

5.3.1 How do principals in high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district understand leadership?

The findings revealed that principal have the common understanding about leadership meanings. Firstly, they considered leadership as giving direction, guidance, and coaching, motivating, and influencing teachers to achieve common goal. The notion of transformation leadership has become a priority with the principals in the running of their respective schools as agents of change. The study has shown that leadership begins with the principals who must be the driving force that brings about changes in schools. It was also found that leadership is the art of motivating and influencing, with principals leading by example. This served as a strong source of motivation because teachers were able to recognise the genuineness from their leaders. The findings have also revealed that leadership is an inclusive responsibility in the sense that their attempts at attaining common goals in the school should be a collective effort from all those involved in the running of the school.

In addition, the principals of high performing rural primary schools do not work in isolation but try to encourage teamwork towards achieving common goals which are directed towards instructional excellence and high learner achievement. They did not regard themselves as the master of all but instead they understood that the success of the school includes all stakeholders. Moreover, teachers as part of the participants concurred with their principals' views that leadership involves giving direction, guidance, and coaching. The issues of leadership meanings relate with both transformational leadership theory and instructional leadership theory as the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study. Lastly, the principals arrived at the understanding that as leaders they are bound to enhance learner attainment.

5.3.2 How do principals in high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district enact leadership?

The research findings have revealed that principals in their respective schools build a shared vision, foster good interpersonal relationships among all the stakeholders, improve instruction, engage parents in the school and establish high performance expectations as discussed in chapter four under enactment of leadership. The findings showed that principals have a shared vision with concerned stakeholders, thus demonstrating that they are transformational leaders who aim to bring about change. The findings have revealed that the principals were aware of the vital interpersonal relationships between themselves and educators. Hence successful rural principals support school vision, clearly formulate a plan in line with the vision, and thereafter stimulates change. What emerged from the findings is that principals considered their major task as to promote good interpersonal relationships among all the stakeholders, in order to improve the environment of teaching and learning within the school. They noticed that values such as respect, love, honest and trust are centre in determining quality of relationships.

The research findings also indicated that principals were aware that monitoring, mentoring, and supervision are very important in creating high quality instruction in their schools. It emerged from the findings that MOET outlined one of the successful leadership features as to monitor and supervise the staff to work productively. The notion of instruction improvement was in line with both transformational leadership theory and instructional leadership theory frameworks underpinning this study. In their enactment of leadership principals claimed that parental involvement within the school was a vital practice for improving learner academic performance in the sense that learners' behaviour and irregular attendance were corrected. All participants in the study viewed establishment of high-performance expectations as an important pillar to sustain the level of learner achievement. The findings revealed that high performance expectations comprise an essential compound of a positive school culture that sustain quality teaching and learning.

5.3.3 How do principals in high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district manage leadership in the context of rurality?

The findings revealed that working in rural school has some benefits which the principals enjoy. The principals in these schools were paid hardship allowances and it retained them to work under

these conditions of being away from the town since the hardship allowance served as a motivation. Moreover, it was confirmed from the findings that learner discipline in small school is easier to maintain especially when the school has clear rules which enable them to guide learners to earn quality education. However, the findings also revealed that being a principal in the rural school is the most challenging experience that involves excessive workload whereby principals find themselves working as teachers and at the same time as principals. Shortage of resources affects learners' education although principals are required to improvise solutions and continue to lead in positive ways that enhance their schools. It emerged from the findings that rural schools are not easily reachable due to unavailability of infrastructure such as roads, so this tends to be a barrier to DRTs and inspectors to pay regular visits to schools and provide a professional support to both principals and teachers.

5.4 Conclusions

The study found that the principals seemed to have the common understanding concerning the meaning of leadership and this influenced how they run and administer their schools. The study revealed that the principals considered leadership as giving direction, guidance, and coaching, motivating, and influencing, as well as inclusive responsibility. The findings showed that principals guided and motivated teachers to achieve the common goals. The study indicated that principals' understanding of leadership determined the resolution that leadership begins with themselves and spurred them on to act as the driving force to cause changes in their schools. In addition, for them leadership was not understood as a burden of a principal alone but required a team effort, meaning that principals assigned teachers to carry out other administrative issues.

It is apparent from the study undertaken that four principals were transformational leaders who involved all concerned stakeholders in crafting the school vision. The findings also indicated that the principals were aware that their leadership roles required administering a common vision by encouraging good interpersonal relationships among all stakeholders. What emerged from the findings was that, according to participants' experiences, some of the vital elements of good interpersonal relationships were trust, respect, love, honest and open communication. Moreover, principals employed monitoring, mentoring and supervision techniques in the improvement of teaching and learning. There is evidence from the findings that four principals experienced that

parental involvement in the school and the establishment of high-performance expectations contribute to better school academic performance.

Furthermore, what emerged from the findings is that hardship allowance and good learner discipline demonstrated to be advantageous for the principals, because they were motivated and committed to improve learner achievement. However, leadership is not an easy responsibility because confluence makes leadership being a challenge in rural primary schools. Whilst one can acknowledge the efforts made by principals to lead their schools to be among the best performing schools, there are significant challenges in their leadership which ought to be addressed at national level. The study has revealed such challenges as excessive workload, lack of resources and limited official visits, as discussed in the summary of research findings.

5.5 Recommendations

In view of what had emerged in this research, this section presented the recommendations for both for practice and for further research.

5.5.1 Recommendations for practice

The findings revealed that the principals are responsible for the development of their respective schools in Lesotho regardless of school location. This means that they should work hard ,since all schools are expected to offer quality education. The principals should convince MOET that there is a need to appoint deputy principals in rural schools in order to address the issue of excessive workload, which restrict the principals to do monitoring and supervision of teachers' work regularly. It is also important that the principals should report their leadership challenges to MOET in order to render a necessary support. For instance, principals should be equipped with leadership skills such as effective communication and conflict management, which would enable them to fulfil their leadership roles confidently and be trained on leadership core values as leaders.

Furthermore, principals in their respective schools should introduce professional learning communities as another way of building teamwork among their staff members, to enhance learner attainment. Teaching and learning is effective if accompanied with appropriate resources.The principals should put pressure on the MOET to supply necessary materials equally in both urban and rural schools.

5.5.2 Recommendations for further research

The study induces further research particularly in areas of principal leadership to reduce the poor leaner achievement in rural primary schools. Since this study was conducted in Qacha's Nek education office district as a small-scale study with twelve participants only, the researcher strongly recommends that a similar study about leadership practices be conducted at a large scale to investigate what principals do concerning enactment of leadership in rural primary schools. The study can also incorporate principals in rural secondary schools to share their views about meaning of leadership and how leadership is presented. In addition, further research is important to be conducted on what is link between leadership development and learner achievement.

5.6 Final word

Leadership is described from numerous perspectives by different scholars. This research confirms that effective principals are those who resort to exercising leadership practices that result in their schools obtaining and sustaining success. Literature reveals that the leader is someone who initiates changes. The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of leadership in high performing rural primary schools. The findings emphasise that high performing rural primary school leaders exercise leadership practices that drive the school towards excellence in teaching and learner achievement. In addition, this study apparently indicates that principals of high performing rural primary schools are visionary leaders who cooperate with their staff and other concerned stakeholders. They understand their roles and responsibilities and regard themselves responsible for the performance of learners in their schools. Transformational leadership theory and instructional leadership theory as the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study corresponds well with the leadership practices, particularly on school administration and improvement of teaching and learning as encouraged by MOET. The recommendations prove the necessity for intervention by MOET to train principals on leadership skills and leadership core values. It is anticipated that this study would draw an interest and raise alertness to MOET in Lesotho concerning the importance of leadership practices in high performing rural primary schools.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER TO QACHA'S NEK EDUCATION OFFICE ASKING FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Leropong

P.O. Box 498

Qacha's Nek 600

Lesotho

6th January 2020

The District Education Manager

Ministry of Education and Training

P.O. Box 23

Qacha's Nek 600

Lesotho

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN FOUR RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

I am a registered master's student in the school of education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg Campus, presently engaged in research entitled "Leadership in high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district. A case study". I humbly request your permission to conduct research in the following primary schools: Patlong, White-Hill, Qacha's Nek Government and Rapase. Rural primary schools in Lesotho face a big challenge of underperforming but there are others considered to be high performing.

The principal and two teachers per school will be interviewed. Should you need more clarification, you may contact my supervisor Dr. Phumlani Erasmus Myende on +27839681361 and his email address is myendep@ukzn.ac.za. The research office contact details also are as follows: Hssrec@ukzn.ac.za , Tel: +27312604557.

 I hope the research will benefit the principals in rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district regarding effective leadership to be enacted.

For further communications regarding the study, I may be contacted on +26658914083 or +27718219645.My email address is danielbrave102@gmail.com.

I am looking forward to your reply.

Respectfully yours

Mr Thabang Daniel Habi

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION FROM QACHA'S NEK EDUCATION OFFICE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & TRAINING
P.O. BOX 23
QACHA'S NEK 600

06 April 2020

Office no. 22950407

Cell no. 50058700/63445501

Mr. Thabang Habi
Leropong
P. O. Box 498
Qacha's Nek 600
Lesotho

Dear Sir

RE: APPROVAL FOR THE REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY IN FOUR RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF QACHA'S NEK

The Ministry of Education and Training in Qacha's Nek hereby approves your request to conduct your research in four rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek. The office acknowledges and appreciates your endeavor to conduct this study. It is aware that the findings will also benefit it a lot to improve the system of education, inspections and supervision of schools in times to come. The problem of leadership at schools is a frustrating issue that needs to be handled with care. The office really acknowledges your endeavor to pursue this study. The office is very much thankful for this initiative.

Hoping for fruitful results of this study.

Yours faithfully

Lebonya Mothibeli (Mr.)
District Education Manager, Qacha's Nek

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICE

0 6 APR 2020

TEL: 2295 0407/226
P.O. BOX 23, QACHA'S NEK
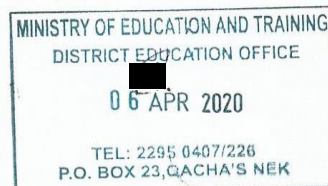
APPENDIX C: LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Leropong

P.O. Box 498

Qacha's Nek 600

Lesotho

6th January 2020

Dear Principal

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am currently a master's student in the school of education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg Campus, presently engaged in research entitled "School leadership practices in high performing rural primary schools in Lesotho: A case study". I humbly request a permission to conduct research in your school.

This study intends to explore the nature of leadership enacted in top-performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district. To complete this study, I need to conduct semi- structured individual interview, therefore the principal and four teachers will be interviewed. In addition, due to **COVID-19** restrictions I will use telephonic interview. The selection of participants especially teachers will be done through purposive sampling based on teaching experience. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants to maintain confidentiality. The interview will be conducted through audio recording, but you are free to accept or reject.

Should you need more clarification, you may contact my supervisor Dr. Phumlani Erasmus Myende on +27839681361 and his email address is myendep@ukzn.ac.za. The research office contact details also are as follows: Hssrec@ukzn.ac.za, Tel: +27312604557.For further communications regarding the study I may be contacted on +26658914083 or +27718219645.My email address is daniebrave102@gmail.com.

I hope the research will benefit the principals in rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district regarding effective leadership to be enacted.

I look forward to meeting and working with you in this study.

Respectfully yours

Thabang Daniel Habi

DECLARATION

I …………………………………... the principal of ……………………………... grant permission to Mr Thabang Daniel Habi to conduct research at my school as he made a request in his letter dated 6th January 2020.I understand that the purpose of this study is to explore the nature of leadership in high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district. It is also a motivation to me as a leader to see my school among high performing rural primary schools in the district of Qacha's Nek.

Signature of principal…………………………………

Date………………………………………………….

Official stamp

APPENDIX D: LETTER TO THE TEACHER

Leropong

P.O. Box 498

Qacha's Nek 600

Lesotho

6th January 2020

Dear Participant

<div align="center">

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

</div>

I am Thabang Daniel Habi, a registered master's student in the school of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg Campus specialising with Education Leadership Management and policy. I am pleased to invite you to participate in the study that I am undertaking. The research topic is "leadership practices in high performing rural primary schools in Lesotho. A case study. In this study the purpose is to explore the nature of leadership enacted in high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district.

Should you need more clarification, you may contact my supervisor Dr. Phumlani Erasmus Myende on +27839681361 and his email address is myendep@ukzn.ac.za.The research office contact details also are as follows: Hssrec@ukzn.ac.za , Tel: +27312604557.

I hope the research will benefit the principals in rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek district regarding effective leadership to be enacted. Additionally, due to **COVID-19** restrictions I will use telephonic semi structured individual interview. You will be requested to participate in audio-recorded interview with the researcher, but it is through your permission that you may be audio-recorded, that means you are free to say **Yes** or **No**. For further communications regarding the

study, I may be contacted on +26658914083 or +27718219645.My email address is danielbrave102@gmail.com.

I look forward to meeting and working with you in this study.

Respectfully yours

Thabang Daniel Habi

DECLARATION

It is with great enthusiasm that I ……………………………………………………… accept to participate in the study having understood the nature of the study as stated in the informed consent letter.

I understand that by taking part in the study I should note the following points:

- Participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time.
- Audio-recording   **Yes / No**.
- Confidentiality is guaranteed using Pseudonyms.
- Collected data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed later after the completion of the study.
- Any information provided by participant cannot be used against him/her but will serve research purpose.
- The results of this study will be given to the participant after the completion.

Signature of participant………………………………

Date……………………………

APPENDIX E: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPAL

1. As a school principal what would you say school leadership is all about?

2. I understand that your school is one of the high performing rural primary schools in Qacha's Nek, would you share with me what do you regard as a leadership for high performance?

3. Do you think leadership in the school is based to the principal only?

4. Tell me about leadership in your school. How do you lead your school?

5. I understand that you have a shared vision in your school. How do you link it with your school activities?

6. How do you manage teaching and learning in your school?

7. How do you acknowledge teachers' achievement in your school?

8. Do you foster teamwork among your staff? If so, how?

9. How do you maintain good interpersonal relationships among your staff?

10. How do you support your staff with teaching resources in the case where there is a need?

11. Do you encourage creativeness among your teachers? If so, how?

12. Would you say the way you lead is the one factor that makes your school successful?

13. What leadership beliefs do you hold and how these beliefs influence your leadership?

 14. How does respect influence your leadership?

15. What is the influence of trust to you as a principal?

16. How does communication impact in your leadership?

17. Leading by example is one of your leadership beliefs. What impact is provided by this belief?

18. What type of leadership do you use in your school and how does this leadership affect different aspects of the school?

19. Do you think the leadership you apply makes your school successful and why?

20. Your school is in a rural context; would you say this context has influence on what is happening in the school?

21. How does the lack of resources affect leadership?

22. How do you solve the problem in the case where there is a lack of modern resource?

23. I understand that during bad weather conditions such as heavy rain and snow fall learners have irregular attendance at school. What action do you take as a principal in this case?

24. In relation to leadership do you think a rural school context requires a special type of leadership, if yes what type of leadership?

25. Why do you think this type of leadership is special for rural context?

APPENDIX F: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHER

1. In your own observation what would you say is your school principal's understanding of leadership?

2. Does your principal have a shared vision? If so, how is it linked to school activities?

3. I understand that your principal has an ability to guide and direct teachers. How does she influence teachers about teamwork?

4. How does your principal monitor teachers' progress?

5. How often does your principal supervise teachers' work? Why?

6. How does your principal acknowledge achievements in your school? Why is important to acknowledge achievements?

7. How does the principal maintain good interpersonal relationships among teachers?

8. Does the principal involve parents in the learning of their children?

9. Which strategy is set by the principal to continuously produce excellent learner academic results?

10. How are you developed professional by the principal to create and sustain high levels of learner achievement?

11. How can you explain the relationship between the school and the community?

12. Your school is regarded as one of successful rural primary schools, in your observation what type of leadership has been applied by your principal?

13. Would you link this leadership with the success of the school and how?

14. To what extend is leadership shared in your school?

15. How is the process of decision making implemented in your school?

16. Your school is in a rural context; would you say this context has influence on what is happening in the school?

17. I understand that lack of resources like computers, current electricity and libraries are challenges in rural schools. How does this affect leadership?

18. How do you overcome the challenge of computers in your school?

19. In relation to leadership do you think a rural school context requires a special type of leadership, if yes what type of leadership?

20. Why do you think this type of leadership is special for rural context?

21. Does your principal apply this leadership and how?

APPENDIX G: TURNITIN CERTIFICATE

Leadership practices in High-Performing Primary Schools

Statement from the Supervisor about the 19% Turnitin

Mr. Habi's first Turnitin report came out with 19% and when he resubmitted, I submitted his work through a new class as the first one had expired. I did this not knowing that Turnitin will regard this as a new submission. From the changes he made in the second submission I am confident that he addressed all the aspects that needed his attention.

Prof Phumlani Myende (Supervisor).