

School Identity and Learner Performance: A School Leadership Perspective on their Relationships.

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy in Teacher Development Studies

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SUPERVISORS' STATEMENT

This dissertation has been submitted with our approval.

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DECLARATION - PLAGIARISM

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my union, the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) and the African National Congress (ANC) to which I am affiliated and was elected as the Mahhehle ANC Branch secretary in 2014, Johannes Phumani “Pass Four” Phungula Branch chairperson in 2015 and re-elected in 2018. I was elected as Ixopo Cosatu Local 2018. I was elected as Umzumbe Local Task Team.

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Almighty God, for granting me the opportunity to complete this task and for allowing my faith to grow, as did my understanding of human social contact and relationships. Glory is to God, now and forever.

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ABSTRACT

School identity construction and learner performance continue to be of great concern in the South African education system. As the head of school management, the principal's leadership influences the identity of the school and the academic performance of learners. This study explored the relationship between school identity construction and learner performance from a school leadership perspective. Since the advent of democracy, the South African education landscape has been plagued by poor learner performance. While the reasons are as diverse as the nation itself, the adverse effects of poor learner performance on the school system or the quality of education cannot be over emphasised. Some have argued that there are two education systems in South Africa, one being amongst the best in the world (quintile four and five schools) and the others being amongst the worst (quintiles one and two). This study explored the phenomenon of school identity construction from school principals' perspectives from quintiles one schools which are considered to be amongst the poorest of them all. This exploration has been done in eight chapters. It unearthed a dearth of information on the perspectives of the principal on school identity construction and the effect of school categorisation on learner performance. As a result, this study explores school identity construction and learner performance as it relates to the leadership of the secondary school principals.

To achieve this, this study was guided by one critical question and three sub-questions. The critical question was: How does the school principal account for its learner performance within the context of its quintile school categorisation and its school identity? The sub-questions were as follows:

1. How does the principal account for its learner performance since assuming school leadership responsibilities?
2. What engagements did the school principal embark upon to change the school's image and identity?
3. What were the outcomes of school initiatives embarked upon by the school principal to change the identity of the school?

To answer these questions, the researcher employed the qualitative approach to research, which created the platform for details which otherwise would be untapped. To enhance the search for rich and in-depth data, a case study design was used, and it accorded the researcher the opportunity to further probe into the nooks and crannies of how school principals' account for

their learners' performance within the context of its quintile school categorisation and identity. To get the qualitative data required, data were generated using different approaches; narratives interviews (lived stories), observations and artifacts. Four school principals from rural high school participated in the study. Their schools were also observed and the artifacts in the school were also studied. These participants were sampled using purposive sampling.

To make sense of the data, the interpretive paradigm, as well as trait, behavioural and situational leadership theories, were employed as the paradigm and theoretical framework, respectively. While the interpretive paradigm gave a general direction to the study, the leadership theories informed the analyses of the data. To this effect, grounded analysis was used for the actual analysis process. Using grounded analysis, the data generated was broken down into smaller units, and these units were then combined to form sub-themes, and the sub-themes were further merged to form different themes. These themes and sub-themes were then weaved together into the socio-ecological theory of school change.

From the findings, it was clear that the relationship between learner performance and school identity categorisation centred around three key themes; complex nature of learner performance, school identity construction, and pathways to school transformation.

The study recommends, amongst other things, that the rudiments of school categorisation be redefined to ensure that they do not set schools up for failure. It further recommends that the Department of Basic Education create both room and resources to cater for these challenges to ensure that principals can build or maintain the performance of the schools they find themselves in, for, without such resources, leaders would not be able to drive performance in their school the way it should go.

Key words: learner performance, school identity, school leadership,

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the introductory chapter of the study entitled *School Identity and Learner Performance: A School Leadership Perspective on their Relationships*. This study focuses on school identity and learners' performance in relation to the views of secondary school principals. The chapter contextualises the problem under study by outlining the background to the study from an international, national and local perspective.

This chapter presents the problem statement; it explains what motivated the study. It also presents the case, a synopsis of the study and the gap in the literature. The objectives and key research questions are presented, followed by a brief discussion of the research approach, research methodology and design. The last part of this chapter is a concise overview of each chapter for the entire study, which is followed by a summary and conclusion of this chapter.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The period of 1994-2015 constituted a new historical era for secondary school education in South Africa. Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) was introduced and was controversial from the outset; it was criticised by both educators as implementers of the curriculum and policymakers. The reason for the enactment of such a policy was to move away from the apartheid curriculum and to focus on skills, knowledge and values. However, there were various challenges with the implementation process that needed to be redressed. Many educators and school principals perceived the OBE approach to education as problematic and their complaints and challenges forced the then Department of Education to review the curriculum in 2002. The review brought about the introduction of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) as the exit point for school leavers and gateway into tertiary education. Despite the introduction of various changes in the education system, learner performance has remained poor (Dhurumraj, 2013). A new education curriculum was introduced in South Africa to replace National Curriculum Statements (NCS) known as Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). This is the current education curriculum in South Africa. The introduction of CAPS as a new education policy has as its aim to provide clarifications on the practice of assessment with regards to learning. This new South African educational system allows educators and learners to be implementers of the curriculum. CAPS

as the new curriculum statement was preferred because of the standardisation of results. The standardisation process was a tool used to make adjustments to Grade 12 results to correct fluctuations in learners' performance (Spaull, 2013). It was necessitated by the fact that the examination process had a direct impact on the results of the candidates, which was widely criticised.

Furthermore, Annual National Assessment (ANA) was introduced to replace the standardisation process in South Africa as a way of benchmarking the learner in literacy and mathematics. ANA was introduced to standardise the education in Grade 9 class. The learners in Grade 9 had to write common tests in order to determine whether they were fit for Further Education Band (FET).

The ANA did not directly address learners' performance in South African schools; it rather focused on how well educators know their subjects thereby addressing the problem of learners' performance through an understanding of teacher's competencies. This was done by taking educators to a common cluster in order to analyse how difficult the paper was.

The introduction of ANA, which is a nationally-standardised test of achievement for Grades 1 to 6 and 9 was set to be an important policy development in the past 10 years. It was supposed to be a diagnostic tool to the problems that emanated from the international tests. It should have provided some standardised indication of learning at primary grades and allowed the identification and remediation of learning deficits, but it did not. Dhurumraj (2013) asserts that despite the introduction of various changes in the education system, learners' performance has remained poor. The Department of Basic Education decided to do away with the test as a result of several complaints from different teachers' union and education experts. It was set to be replaced by a more effective approach to testing which would be written after every three years beginning from 2018. This was called the Triennial Annual Assessment (TRANA).

The ANA tests were implemented in February 2011 and September 2012. These tests were marked and invigilated by educators in schools. The scripts were externally verified by the Department of Basic Education through Human Science Research Council (HSRC) who re-marked a sample of scripts from Grades 3 and 6. In 2012, ANA was externally verified by Umalusi, but the DBE did not undertake an internal moderation. The outcomes of ANA after verification proved that the majority of learners in South Africa are poor in literacy and mathematics (Spaull, 2013).

Before 1994, schools in South Africa were separated along racial lines. The separation of schools was not only to demarcate learners of different racial groups, but to reflect the quality of education that a racial group would receive. For instance, schools were categorised into three categories, which included 'Model C' schools, township schools and rural schools. This division correlated with the level of learners' performance (although it did not exactly determine the level). Therefore, one could comfortably argue that the category that school learners find themselves in, by and large, determines their academic performance. Although these schools (former Model C schools) enjoyed a certain level of quality leadership just as it is today, the effect of racial considerations which are sociological were more evident than the pedagogical and had greater impact on the school's identity than it is today.

During the democratic dispensation, that is, after 1994, the then Department of Education made several attempts in bridging the identity gap drawn with racially segregated lines in terms of the quality of learners' performance and their leadership through the use of harmonised policies across South Africa. For instance, the department created formulas for categorising schools whose purpose is to redress the gross inequality of learners' performance between the various racial groups as being influenced by their school's identity. Although a significant amount of success has been recorded from a policy perspective, much is yet to be realised as matric results still reflect the trends created in the past. This, therefore, implies that the identity of schools and presumably their categorisation has an impact on learners' performance within South African schools. Arguably, it is believed that the leadership quality of a school principal in contemporary South Africa has an effect on learners' performance (Taole, 2013). He further asserts that the effectiveness of a principal's leadership style and how he or she establishes and manages curriculum changes immensely contribute towards the creation of the school's identity. Nevertheless, there are many reasons that contribute to a school's identity such as historical, geographical, and economic and to a lesser extent, learners' performance. As a result, schools that consistently perform poorly or below the expected benchmark set by the Department of Basic Education (DoBE) in matric results are labelled and categorised under the National Strategy of Learner Attainment (NSLA) program or initiative. Although there are many reasons associated with introducing this contemporary approach to categorisation of schools into the NSLA, this has impacted the schools negatively as most of them tend to perform more poorly reflecting the category to which they belong or have been assigned. Stake holders in the schools (principals, teachers and learners) categorised under the NSLA put all necessary efforts to improve on learners' achievement in

order to get their schools out of this category. The onus is often upon the principal's leadership (although not limited to it) to manage the school to get it out of categorisation or to maintain the school within a satisfactory category. This drive often led by the school principal most often succeeds or fails based on the leadership style of the principal. If the style is great, everyone within the school would be motivated to follow suit. If the leadership is poor, the results would be poor (Taole, 2013). It is from this background that this study seeks to theorise the relationship between school identity and learner performance by exploring views from school principals.

1.3 THE SYNOPSIS OF REVIEWED LITERATURE

This section aims at presenting the synopsis of reviewed literature related to the phenomenon described in the study, while Chapters 2 and 3 present a detailed review of the extent literature. The literature review is divided into different themes. Chapter 2 deals with the following themes: school identity and categorisation; principals as leaders; principals' perspectives; and learners' performance. Chapter 3 presents the leadership strategies of the principals in terms of learner performance and school identity.

1.3.1 School categorisation in South Africa

Schools are generally categorised in different ways, at different times, and in different contexts. The categorisation of schools can be done from a historical point of view, learners' or managerial performance, etc. The review focuses on two aspects of school categorisation. The first aspect categorises schools into quintiles and the other into sections. These categorisations are based on the criteria set out by the DoBE. Durand and Paoletta (2013) define school categorisation as a socio-cultural perspective that explicitly considers the role of the audience and the classification systems within the education sector. A look at school categorisation in other parts of the world such as Nigeria, Kenya and England brings to light alternative approaches to school categorisation like customs, culture, religion, etc. (Sulaiman, 2012). The Nigerian education system classifies schools into missionary schools, Koranic schools, or government schools (Sulaiman, 2012). The missionary schools are compelled to use English as a medium of instruction, whereas the Koranic schools are based on processes where they are required to practice traditions of learning.

Furthermore, the studies conducted in Kenya revealed that the Kenyan government offers free primary education, which significantly makes it impossible for the majority of learners to attend school (Oketch & Ngware, 2010). On the other hand, school categorisation in England

is not so different from categorisation in South Africa. Schools are categorised as academy schools, and they share some characteristics of independent schools in South Africa (Machini & Vernoit, 2011). The American traditional public system (TPS) is usually influenced by the command-control style in which schools follow state, federal or local government guidelines and rules.

One of the criteria used by the DBE in the categorisation of schools is resource targeting (Rammala, 2009). The department funds poor schools or schools in poor areas more than rich schools or schools in rich neighbourhoods. Also, some provinces get more resources than the other depending on how rich or poor the province is considered to be. The quintiles assigned to schools are a direct reflection of the poverty of the community in which schools are located; Quintile 1 schools are located in the poorest communities and Quintile 5 schools are in the least poor communities (Van der Berg, 2008). The quintiles system may seem an appropriate measure to distribute resources to schools, but it has produced an opposite effect from what it was originally intended to achieve in most of the communities where these schools are found. A survey of teachers presented by the School of Education and Development, University of KwaZulu-Natal (2010) revealed clear differences between teachers in Quintiles 1-3 schools and Quintiles 4 and 5 schools. The latter schools are less disrupted they manage to complete the curriculum and have few constraints in relation to resources, discipline and absenteeism. The schools in poor quintiles have a wider range of challenges such as violence, hunger, sickness and absenteeism to deal with daily. These disparities have a huge impact on the performance of learners. In KwaZulu-Natal, for example, approximately 25% of learners in the province studied in schools classified as Quintile 1 while 14% studied in schools classified as Quintile 5 in 2010 (Spaull, 2013).

A report to the provincial treasury of KwaZulu-Natal in 2010 stated that although a major step forward has been taken by the DBE to address the gap between the rich and poor schools (and communities) through differentiated funding, this approach in effect punishes many schools in urban areas dealing with the massive influx of rural and peri-urban poor learners – they have many issues of poverty to deal with and less funds. The South African Schools Act Number 84 of 1996 identifies two kinds of schools: Section 20 and Section 21 schools. The management of Section 21 schools has greater powers and responsibilities than Section 20 schools. Section 21 schools are allocated finances by the department and are responsible for ordering stationery, textbooks, paying water, and light bills and their maintenance. They can also decide on what subjects the school can offer and what sports and other extramural

activities the learners can take. The reports on section 21 as to how schools are managed are mixed, but they are generally ahead in terms of learners' performance than their counterpart Section 20 schools. Section 20 schools receive allocations of textbooks and stationery from the government by a procurement system stipulated by the government through appointed agents to deliver materials to schools. They also have their lights and water accounts paid directly by the government. When something is destroyed in Section 20 schools, the Education Department sends someone from Public Works to do the repairs and inspect all other materials. The recommendation is also done by an appointed agent through Public Works. This situation means a delay in the process of repairing the damaged property in the school. The principals of such schools cannot conduct follow-ups since the agent is appointed by the government. In this case, learners' performance is affected since all powers are within the DoBE.

1.3.2 Development of school identity in rural areas

South Africa's Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (2009) describes rural South African areas as sparsely populated places where agriculture is a prominent activity, and economic activities are focused on the production of food and raw materials. Steyn and van Belle (2015) add that rurality is sometimes used as the basis for allocating development resources. The nature and character of rural places change over time; as such, it is important to investigate the nature of rural places consistently. The schools in rural areas have developed Information and Communications Technology (ICT) programmes that stimulate the development of teaching and learning and improve the connectivity between rural and urban areas. ICT also provides platforms on which services can be provided (Steyn & van Belle, 2015). Although ICT programmes have been initiated in rural schools, limited network infrastructure remains a major barrier to connecting remote places to internet services (Steyn & van Belle, 2016). However, Rammala (2009) argues that rural schools have managed to meet the standards of urban schools by creating learning centres to achieve better learner performance. This has been proven by some rural schools that obtained a 100% pass rate in matric results (Department of Basic Education, 2018).

1.3.3 Principals as leaders

Mncube (2009) states that the role of the principal has changed in contemporary South Africa from being an instructional leader or master to a transitional leader and most recently, to the role of a transformational leader. Presently, the duties of the principal seem to be in a state of

flux and have been extended beyond that of an instructional leader to that of an administrator and manager focused on increasing learner performance (Steyn, 2002). Therefore, the principal's leadership identity plays a critical role in motivating teachers and creating an environment for academic culture and learning in schools today as compared to the past. As a leader of a group of professionals, or coordinator of a cadre of classified personnel, the principal establishes important relationships with the entire staff which is crucial for the creation of a good working environment for the school (Edgerson & Kritsonis, 2006). One of the major reasons for a school's success is the leadership style that the principal adopts for his or her school. Although there are many leadership styles a principal can implement, the success of any leadership style relatively depends on the categorised needs of the school. For instance, in participatory leadership, the principals look at the teachers as equal partners in the decision-making process, but they remain central agents of change. Marks and Printy (2003) argue that such crucial decisions may be beneficial for learner performance to improve. Also, they continue that partnerships should always be considered since the learner's needs must take precedence. This role describes the principal as visionary since he/she leads the school community towards improvement by using more effective teaching strategies and supporting educators' efforts to implement new teaching strategies.

Hanson (1996) believes that a principal's leadership plays a major role in the functioning of the school. It shapes how members of the school go about their tasks. The principal therefore directs school activities and plays a role in setting the tone for the school towards learners' success or failure in public exams. The success of the school depends to a large extent on the principal's effective leadership. Edgerson and Kritsonis (2008) established that principals should take the innovative role as instructional leaders and should possess the requisite skills, capacity and commitment to lead a school effectively. The challenge in attaining such effectiveness varies from one school to the next, even though they may be found within the same quintile or section (20 or 21). These variances, although not well established in literature, could play a huge role in the performance of learners in schools (Gustafson & Patel, 2006).

Most principals and their management staff perceive the present-day complexities in leading a school to improve learners' performance as a daunting task. Although schools are officially categorised by the Department of Education, the sociological and pedagogical implications of such categorisations are evident in the day-to-day decision making by principals, and go beyond the benefits alluded to the division of schools into quintiles and sections. Mestry

(2014) agrees that principals of today face more demanding, complex decisions and more responsibilities than other principals in the past. A principal's day is filled with activities of management such as handling relations with parents and community, dealing with multiple educators and learners' crises that may arise, as well as facilitating best practices to keep the school focused on curriculum, instruction and assessment to meet student's learning needs and improve learners' performance. Edgerson and Kritsonis (2008) concur that for a school to achieve the best possible success with its curriculum, the principal-educator relationship should be strong. The ineffectiveness of such relationships will influence learner's academic performance. The behaviour of the principal and the management style she/he decides to use is considered by Louis, Dretzke and Wahlstrom (2010), as the epicentre of learners' performance. Moreover, Coleman and Earley (2005) believe that for learners' performance to improve, principals need to possess leadership skills that meet the immediate learning needs of the learners.

1.3.4 Principals' leadership and learners' performance

Administratively, leadership responsibility resides in the principal's office, and the principal's leadership is crucial to the academic performance of learners. Printy (2008) agrees that principals have an influence on learners' performance. This influence expresses itself in the academic performance of the school and could be more evident when there is a change in leadership as the performance could likely change. Among other things, the leadership determines the quality of learner performance – this could be common with learning-centred principals (DuFour, 2002). The principal must have a strategic vision about the direction the school should take, and be skilled at drawing learners and educators into actively pursuing the school's goals. Finally, a learning-centred principal is focused and understands that the greatest focus of his or her work is on achieving good learners' performance at school (Johnson, Uline & Perez, 2011). A high standard of learners' performance is necessary because the effectiveness of the principal is measured by the academic performance and success of learners (Mkhize, 2005).

Most of what is known empirically about leadership effects on students' learning does not directly concern school principals, but rather relates to the entire leadership within the district. At the district level, leadership effects on students have, until recently, been considered too indirect and complex to sort out. A review of both past and recent studies of district-level policies and strategies associated with high performing and improving districts in relation to national exams in the United States (Murphy & Hallinger, 1988; LaRocque & Coleman, 1990;

Cawelti & Protheroe, 2001; and Togneri & Anderson, 2003) showed strong similarities among characteristics of effective schools at the district level. However, these studies rarely specify how these characteristics and actions interact, and how they shape, enable and sustain the high performance of teachers and students.

Claims about the effects of school leadership on learners learning are justified by three different kinds of research. One source of evidence is the qualitative case study, which is typically conducted in school settings (Gezi, 1990). These settings are believed to contribute to students' learning significantly above or below expectations. Such research, based on 'outlier' designs, usually produce large leadership effects not only on learners' learning but on an array of school conditions as well (Mortimore, 1993; Scheurich, 1998). The second source of research evidence about leadership effects is large-scale quantitative studies. Evidence of this type of research reported between 1980 and 1998 (from approximately four dozen studies across all types of schools in the US) has been reviewed in several papers by Hallinger and Heck (1996a, 1996b, 1998). These reviews conclude that the combined direct and indirect effects of school leadership on pupil outcomes are small, but educationally significant. While leadership explains only three to five percent of the variation in student learning across schools, this is actually about one-quarter of the total variation (10 to 20 percent) explained by all school-level variables after controlling for student intake factors (Creemers & Reezigt, 1996). To put the magnitude of this leadership effect in perspective, quantitative school effectiveness studies indicate that classroom factors explain only a slightly larger proportion of the variation in student achievement – about a third (Hill, 1998).

The third type of research about leadership's effects is similar to the second type, also large-scale and quantitative in nature, but instead of examining overall leadership effects, these studies inquire about the effects of specific leadership practices. Evidence of this sort can be found sporadically in the research alluded to above. A meta-analysis by Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003) has significantly extended this type of research. Their study identifies 21 leadership responsibilities and calculates an average correlation between each responsibility and whatever measures of learner achievement were used in the original studies. From this data, the researchers calculated a 10 percent increase in learners' test scores of an average principal who improved her/his "demonstrated abilities in all 21 responsibilities by one standard deviation (Waters, Marzano and McNulty, 2003).

While the analysis by Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003) produced interesting data, extrapolations from their estimates to principal effects on student learning in real-world conditions must be made with considerable caution. First, the data are correlational, but cause and effect assumptions are required to understand the effects of leadership improvement on student learning. Secondly, the estimated effects on student achievement described in the study depend on a leader improving their capacities across all 21 practices at the same time – this is an extremely unlikely occurrence. Some of these practices are dispositional (flexible) or rooted in deeply held beliefs unlikely to change within an adult population (ideals). One of the 21 practices, “increasing the extent to which the principal is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction and assessment practices” (Waters, Marzano and McNulty, 2003, p105) is a major professional development challenge by itself. Nonetheless, this line of research is a useful addition to other lines of evidence which justify a strong belief in the contributions of successful leadership to student learning.

The first two sources of evidence of leadership effects, mentioned above suggest effects of different magnitudes: small but significant in the first case and large in the second. How can such differences be explained? Most qualitative case studies, by design, examine the effects of exceptional leadership in schools most in need of it. In contrast, large-scale quantitative studies by design, report average leadership effects across schools which range from being very needy to already highly productive. While large-scale quantitative studies might seem to policymakers as more reliable sources of evidence about leadership effects, such studies systematically underestimate leadership effects in schools where it is likely to be of great value. Research about the forms and effects of leadership is becoming increasingly sensitive to the contexts in which leaders work. To be successful, leaders need to respond flexibly to their contexts. Research is also urgently needed specifically on how successful leaders create conditions in their schools which promote student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1996b). School-level factors, other than leadership, that explain variations in student achievement include school mission and goals, culture, participation in decision making, and relationships with parents and the wider community.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The phenomenon of learner poor performance in South Africa is not new. It has been theorised from different perspectives; lack of resources (Lempota, 2014), discipline and capital (Modisaotsile, 2012), teachers’ experiences, approaches and knowhow (Fomunyam, 2017),

language and basic numeracy (Prinsloo & Rogers, 2013), amongst others. The phenomenon of school identity and learner performance has been explored by a few scholars. However, no researcher has explored it using principals' perspectives. Since school identity as already seen is a development from school categorisation, leadership style and abilities, as well as the location of the school, this study seeks to explore the relationship between school categorisation and learner performance with perspectives from principals.

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVE

The study aims to explore the relationship between school identity and learner performance using perspectives from school principals.

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Understand how school identity has been constructed to influence learner performance in the school categorisation process.
2. Ascertain how learners' performance inform school identity.
3. Examine how principals of different schools respond to school identity construction and learners' performance.

1.6 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study has one main question and three sub-questions that drive it. The main question is: How does the school principal account for their learner performance within the context of quintile school categorisation and school identity?

The sub-questions were:

1. How does the principal account for their learner performance since assuming school leadership responsibilities?
2. What engagements did the school principal embark upon to change the schools' image and identity?
3. What were the outcomes of school initiatives embarked upon by the school principal to change the identity of the school?

1.7 RATIONALE AND MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

The research study is oriented and motivated by the researcher's personal experiences and self-reflections, having worked as a secondary school principal of a school whose learners performed far better than more resourced or equipped schools, despite being in a rural

environment. When the researcher was appointed as the principal, the school had a pass rate of below 50%. Since the researcher's appointment as a principal he never performed below 75% in matric results. The principal is responsible for the monitoring and improvement of learner performance, as well as the development of school identity. The researcher observed schools that were performing better and engaged with the principals of underperforming schools to understand factors contributing to poor learner performance. This background motivated the researcher to conduct research on contributing factors.

Curriculum change, insufficient resources, school categorisation, learner attitudes and leadership styles of the principals were some contributing factors on school identity construction and learner performance. Schleicher (2015) researched on the leadership role of the principal in influencing students' academic achievements, but nothing has been said on how the leadership of the principal contributes on school identity construction through learner performance.

Some scholars like Bhengu and Mthembu (2014) also researched on the effect of leadership on learner achievement. Langa (2013) researched on the effects of school rurality on underperforming school education policy. Hausiku (2015) also researched on inconsistencies between how principals understood their leadership and roles in maintaining learner performance. Prakash (2015) researched on instructional leadership of the principal to enhance the learner performance.

The literature gap in the above research work is that little had been covered in showing how the leadership of the principal relates to learner performance and school identity. The study is located in the rural area of Hlokozi, where the researcher is employed in one of the secondary schools as a principal. There are five secondary schools which sometimes underperformed in matric results. These secondary schools are under Ugu and Harry Districts.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant in that it provides insight into the relationship between school identity and learner performance. This study will provide insight to policymakers on the consequences of school categorisation and how such categorisation make or mar learner performance. It further provides insights on school principals' experiences on school identity and learner performance and how the same mutually enforce each other.

The study is also significant as it contributes to the body of knowledge on school leadership, school identity, learner performance, and government policies and how all of these interact within the educational setting. The study further provides insight on how school principals can lead and inspire change within their institutions. It contributes knowledge about leadership approaches which would work better within the context of the school category and how to lift the school out of such category.

1.10 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section presents a synopsis of the research design and methodology.

1.10.1 The Research Approach

The study is located within a qualitative research approach taking and uses the interpretive epistemology. A qualitative research method focuses on the phenomenon that occurs in natural settings and data are analysed without the use of statistics (Maree, 2017).

1.10.2 Population and Sampling

Purposive sampling was used as a strategy to select participants for this study. The researcher handpicked the participants to be included in the sample based on his judgment of their suitability for the study. Four principals were sampled to act as participants in the study from four high schools in the Hlokozi area.

1.10.3 Data generation

Data were generated in this study using three tools: narratives, observations and document analysis. Narratives were used as the main source of data to explore the perspectives of school principals on school identity and learner performance. Observations were conducted to gather more insights into the relationship between school identity and learner performance and how the two enforce one another. Document analysis was used to triangulate the other sources of data as well as a way of double checking the data generated from the interviews.

1.10.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data were analysed thematically using a grounded approach. The theoretical frameworks used in the study were engaged in making sense of the findings. The data were analysed, presented and supported with direct quotations from the participants.

1.10.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the researcher's university to conduct the study. The researcher also obtained permission from the Department of Basic Education to conduct the study in its schools. The four principals who participated in the study were also made to sign consent forms, indicating their willingness to participate in the study.

1.10.6 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in this study was established through triangulation. The researcher used three different sources of data to check the one against the other to ensure that the findings were trustworthy. The researcher also used tape recorders during the interview session to ensure that everything the participants said was captured accurately. The transcripts of the interview were further presented to the participants to double check for accuracy and to correct where necessary.

1.11 Theoretical Frameworks

The study uses the Social Identity Theory (SIT) and leadership theories. The SIT was developed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979. The theory aimed at understanding the psychological basis of intergroup discrimination. It describes a person as not one, 'personal self', but rather several selves that correspond to widening circles of group membership. (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Leadership has been described in many different ways and forms in the field of teaching, and the views of leadership theories have changed over the years. Schecmerhon et al. (2000) and Hoy and Miskel (2001) categorise leadership theories in two categories: traditional and modern leadership theories.

1.12 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter One:

This chapter provides an outline of the background to the study, a brief description of the theoretical framework, literature reviewed, rationale for the study, problem statement and objectives of the study. It also presents research questions, research aim, research paradigm, significance of the study, and the outline of the entire study.

Chapter Two:

This chapter provides a review of related literature and discusses the main issues related to school identity and learners' performance in relation to school principal's leadership.

Chapter Three:

This chapter provides a review of related literature and discusses the main issues related to leadership styles of the principal in ensuring the attainment of learner performance.

Chapter Four:

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework that underpins the study.

Chapter Five:

The chapter provides a description of the research design and methodology for this study.

Chapter Six:

This chapter presents the findings of the study.

Chapter Seven:

This chapter discusses the analysis of the findings.

Chapter Eight:

This chapter presents recommendations and conclusions of the study.

1.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a brief background to issues of school identity construction and leadership in relation to learners' performance. It has presented the problem statement, detailing concerns of learners' performance, motivation to conduct the study and aims and objectives. Other issues treated in the chapter are research questions, a brief outline of the research methodology, procedures involved in data collection, analysis and interpretation of the study. This chapter has highlighted the measures that were taken to enable trustworthiness in the study, ethical considerations, and research planning.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Different perspectives have been explored to explain the relationship between school identity and learner performance in South Africa, but this chapter focuses on the principal's perspective. The literature review, therefore, focuses on the school identity of South African learners in ordinary (public) schools under the leadership of the principal and shows its relationship with their performance. As stated in section 29(1) of the constitution of the Republic of South Africa, everyone has the right to basic education, and it is the responsibility of the state to make this available and accessible through reasonable measures (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The constitution led to a lot of changes in the educational landscape in South Africa, and after 2009, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) became responsible for primary and secondary schools which comprise about 97 percent of schools in South Africa (Mncube, 2009). This chapter will discuss the quality of education available to learners in these schools, and its effect on their eventual outcomes. The performance of learners within a particular school immensely contributes to the identity of the school. As such, when learners' group performance improves, it contributes positively to the image (identity) of the school, and when learners' performance drops, the image (identity) of the school is affected negatively. For effectiveness and continuity in the argument, this review is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the literature on the development of school identity in South Africa and also explores the broader literature on school organisation, school governance, resourcing and infrastructure and finally the transition of the South African school curriculum over time. The second and last section of the review in this chapter explores the literature on leadership within the school context, the different leadership styles used by principals and the challenges faced, leadership training for effective schooling and finally what an effective school leadership should be.

2.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL IDENTITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The term identity has been used to refer to many different phenomena which include people's goals, values and beliefs, group membership, and roles played in larger society (Vignotes, Schwart & Luyckx, 2011). As such, the meaning of identity has become complex and unclear and thus, some authors like Brubaker and Cooper (2000), and Rattansi and Phoenix (2005)

have advocated for a discontinuity of the use of the term. In this study, it is used as a concept to describe the situational process of creating a distinct profile of a school. According to Kafele (2014), a school's identity defines the school to all stakeholders and the community as a whole as it comprises the school's core beliefs, core values, guiding principles, mission, vision and purpose. Kafele (2014) further states that if a school is known for excellence, excellence will be expected from all stakeholders associated with the school especially its learners, the same applies to a school known for violence. The roles of the principals who are also stakeholders of secondary schools are of particular interest in relation to learners, performance and school identity.

Pavkovic (2006) argues that identity refers to the characteristics of a thing that make it unique or different from others; it is the embeddedness within an entity which helps people to identify it. This means that identity within the school centres on those things that make the school unique. Globally, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is best known as a centre for scientific and technical research. Even though MIT is competitive in other areas such as political science, economics, linguistics and philosophy, it has become popular for its programs in engineering and physical sciences and technology and has produced the best students in these particular fields consistently (Denham, 2013). Since 2014, some schools in South Africa have consistently performed better than others in the National Senior Certificate exams. Matric results during this time show learners from schools in the Gauteng district such as Hoërskool Garsfontein and Hoërskool Waterkloof with the best results. For this study, school identity refers to organisational characteristics which describe the school or make it different from other schools. Lara (2018) posits that schools develop a mission, vision and strategic plans to build and maintain a particular identity; they continuously reflect on this identity because of its established performance on learners' outcomes. Schools are organisations with a mission to cater for the educational and social developmental needs of the learner. School identity in South Africa is greatly influenced by categorisation, the school infrastructure, resources available to them, and the policies around basic education. These mentioned pointers are further discussed in the next section to better articulate the phenomenon of school identity.

2.2.1 School Organisation/Catergorisation

Maphosa and Shumba (2010) state that the democratisation of the South African schooling system in line with the new democratic constitution enacted upon attainment of independence in 1994 brought with it new changes in education and the curriculum that aimed at enhancing

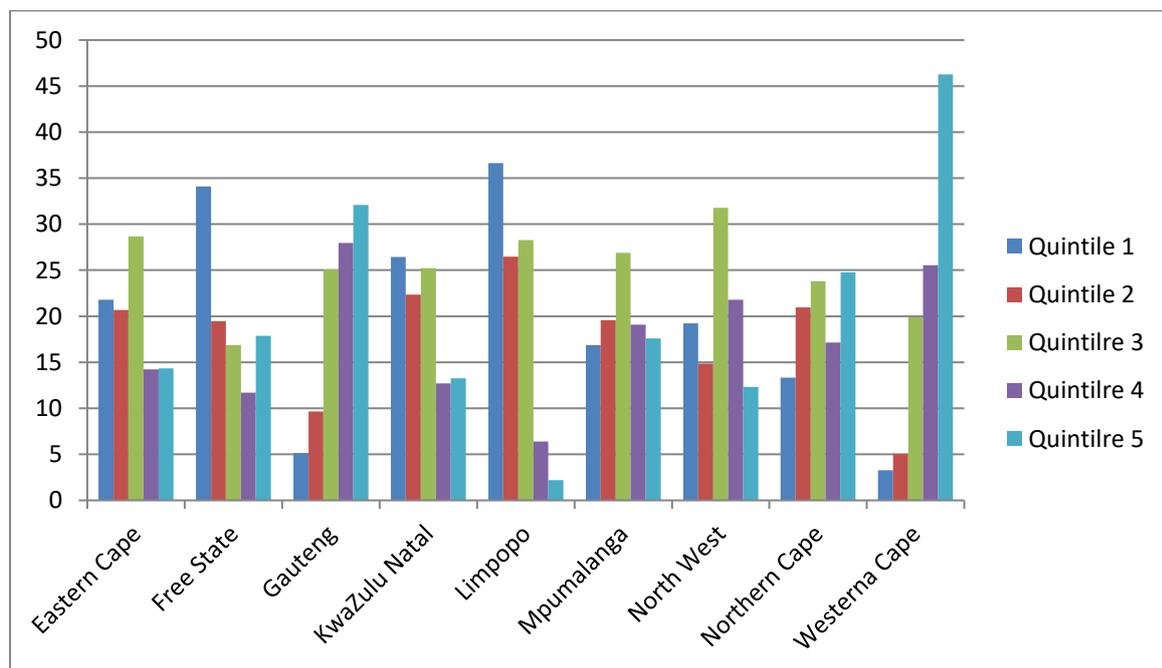
the South African context. The introduction and passing of the National Education Policy Act of 1996 and South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 paved the new dawn on implementation of school categorisation in South African schools, especially in formerly disadvantaged schools. The National Education Policy Act of 1996, the Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) among other issues, clearly defines specific roles of education on South African schools, namely 'community, citizenship and pastoral' in which the educator is required and expected to uphold the constitution and promote democratic values and practices in schools. The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 stipulates that school categorisation should be done in South African schools. Therefore, schools were divided into quintiles. Quintile is a framework used to categorise schools in terms of the level of education and level of unemployment rates of the communities around the schools. The lower quintiles 1-2 represent relative poverty of communities with a low level of education and high unemployment rates (Rammala, 2009, p. 9). The quintile system was regulated by the National Norms Standards School Funding Act of 1998. Moreover, the study of school identity and learner performance is based on the school categorisation. This study envisages how principals of quintile schools especially Quintiles 1-2 construct school identity and achieve learners' performance irrespective of the poor area where the school is situated.

One of the criteria used by the DBE in the categorisation of schools is resource targeting. The department fund poor schools more than rich schools and poor provinces more than rich provinces. The quintiles assigned to schools are a direct reflection of the poverty of the community in which schools are located since Quintile 1 schools are located in the poorest communities and Quintile 5 schools are in the least poor communities (Christie, Butler & Potterton, 2007, p. 33). The sole indicator used is the poverty levels of the community around the school expressed by the division into quintiles with Quintile 1 being poorest and Quintile 5, richest. This quintiles system may seem to be an appropriate measure to distribute resources to schools, but there is evidence that quintile rankings have been used to serve other indicators such as learners' performance in public examinations and national tests.

A report to the provincial treasury of KwaZulu-Natal in 2010 states that although a major step has been taken by the DBE to address the gap between rich and poor schools [communities] through differentiated funding, this approach in effect punishes many schools in urban areas dealing with the massive influx of rural and semi-urban poor learners (Provincial Treasury KwaZulu-Natal, 2010). Hence, funding and poverty linked to quintile ranking have become blurred and unjust. A survey (Hugo, Jack, Wedekind, Wilson, Ngcobo, 2010) of teachers

reveals clear differences between teachers in Quintiles 1-3 schools and Quintiles 4 and 5 schools. The report suggests that Quintiles 4 and 5 schools are less disrupted, complete the annual curriculum and have far fewer constraints in relation to resources, discipline and absenteeism than Quintiles 1-3 schools. The survey further reports that schools in poorer quintiles have a wider range of challenges such as violence, hunger, sickness and absenteeism to deal with daily. These disparities have a huge impact on the performances of learners. There have been great disparities noted on learners' performance across schools of different quintile rankings, for example, as Spaul (2013) notes in his report of literacy and numeracy performance across schools in South Africa. He argues that based on learners' performance across schools of different quintile rankings, there are two world school systems within South Africa – Quintile 5 schools belong to one school world based on their good learners' performance and Quintiles 1 to 4 schools belong to another school world with generally poor learners' performance noted. It seems from these studies that quintile rankings have a relationship with school organisation, learner and teachers' performance and funding.

Figure 1: Distribution of Quintiles by Province: Source: Christie, Butler & Potterton 2007



	E C	F S	G P	K Z N	L P	M P	N W	N C	W S
Quintile 1	21.08	34.09	5 . 1 4	26.44	36.64	16.87	19.23	13.33	3 . 2 6
Quintile 2	20.97	19.48	9 . 6 7	22.36	26.49	19.56	14.87	20.95	5 . 0 4
Quintile 3	28.67	16.88	2 5 . 1	25.23	28.26	26.89	31.79	23.81	19.88
Quintile 4	14.22	11.69	27.98	12.72	6 . 4	19.07	21.79	17.14	25.52
Quintile 5	14.34	17.86	32.01	13.25	2 . 2 1	17.06	12.31	24.76	46.29

Figure 2: Distribution of school according to quintile: Source: Christie, Butler & Potterton, 2007

The tables and figure above indicate the spread of schools across provinces as well as the distribution of poor and poorer schools. The tables show that:

- In the Western Cape, nearly half (46%) of the schools fall in Quintile 5 and with a very small scale falling in Quintiles 1 and 2.
- In Gauteng, the majority of schools (60%) fall in Quintiles 4 and 5.
- Free State, KZN and Limpopo have a relatively large share of schools in Quintiles 1 and 2.

Data presented above shows that schools in KZN have a majority of schools which are in Quintiles 1 and 2. From these figures, it is clear that school categorisation informs school identity as the school is automatically placed within a particular category based on its location and the kind of resources available. This categorisation then influences the organisation of learning within the school as well as the kind of education encounters learners will have within the school.

Figure 3: Mean % pass by quintile Source: Christie, Butler & Potterton, 2007

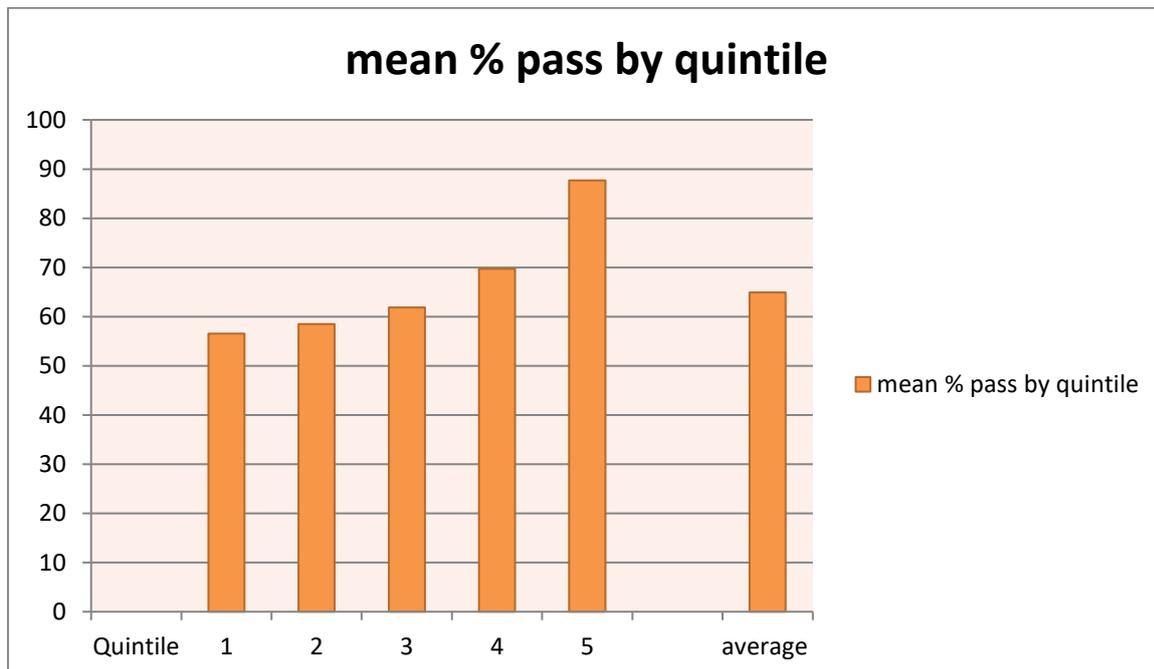


Figure 3 above illustrates the performance of the school as per categorised quintile. The graph shows that schools in Quintiles 1 and 2 are below 60% of pass rate. The schools in Quintiles 4 and 5 excel in their academic performance.

As stated in the SASA, the state provides a quintile ranking mechanism to address equity in schools by disseminating progressive funding and classifying public schools into wealthy quintiles, where schools serving poorer communities should receive more funding than affluent schools (Mestry, 2014). Mestry (2014) further states that this is the purpose of the quintile ranking system; it aims to gradually improve the quality of the school system.

Section 21 and Non-Section 21 Schools

The law relating to school governing bodies (SGBs) is one of the most important aspects of the South African Schools Act (no 84 of 1996). Section 20 of the SASA describes the functions of the SGB while Section 21 contains additional functions which can be allocated to the SGBs of schools that are seen as having the capacity to perform them. This means that the classification of South African schools into Section 20 and Section 21 schools stems from the different functions exercised by the SGB as stipulated in the SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Section 20 of the SASA stipulates the duties of the SGB that do not require the use of any funds, such as adopting a constitution, promoting the best interest of the school,

adopting the school's mission statement and code of conduct, administration and management of school properties, etc. The additional functions in Section 21 are additional financial responsibilities such as buying of equipment for the school including educational materials, and payment for services to the school. If the provincial government decides that a school is functioning well without the government's help, the school's SGB is given Section 21 status and can manage its own funds. If a school is not functioning properly, it is given a Non-section 21 status and the provincial government manages its funds (Roos, 2009; Heystek, 2010).

Mestry (2016) posits that well-resourced schools contribute to excellent learner performance and the achievement of sound educational outcomes. These schools are mostly self-managed and fall in Section 21 category. Section 21 schools perform better financially (Van Wyk, 2007), employ qualified and experienced governors and educators and have strong parent components serving on SGBs, who undertake their responsibilities seriously (Karlsson 2002). This affects learners' performance positively. Mestry and Bischoff (2003) maintain that Section 21 schools have a lot of advantages as they can negotiate the best prices when purchasing support materials from suppliers and better utilise their finances. Even though Section 21 schools are not totally independent, they are more responsible for their affairs and therefore spend more time and funds to achieve excellent educational outcomes. According to Nyambi (2015), who researched on some schools in the Limpopo Province to show if there are considerable changes in their functionality as they were moving from the Section 20 status to the status of Section 21 schools, the Chairperson of the SGB of one of these schools confirmed that the acquisition of Section 21 status changed the attitude and the functioning of the schools and the SGB. He reiterated that the actual functioning of the school improved a lot and work ethic had become positive as all school activities are consciously carried out properly as the school wants to remain a Section 21 school.

2.2.2 School Governance

The Ontario Education Service Corporation (OESC) (2010) defines governance as "the exercise of authority, direction, and accountability to serve the purpose of public education". According to UNESCAP (2012), school governance is the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented. School governance can therefore be referred to as a decision-making process that reflects accountability, responsibility and a commitment to innovative school improvement (Gordon, 2005). It deals with creating, implementing, supervising and evaluating policies and rules, which guide and govern the actions of the

school and its members (Bayat et al., 2014). This implies that a school governing body is established to facilitate the creation of policies for the school and ensure that the school is run according to the set of policies.

Post-apartheid, the democratic government in 1996 passed the South African Schools Act (SASA) with the aim of fostering democracy in schools by encouraging the participation of teachers, students, parents and principals in school governing activities (Duma 2015). Student governing bodies (SGBs) replaced the Parents, Teachers and Students' association (PTSs), which was already in existence. A school is a juristic person with the legal capacity to perform its functions and the school governing body acts on behalf of the school (South Africa, 1996b; Davies, 1998, p.58). Good governance is said to be participatory, transparent, accountable, effective and efficient. Xaba (2011) posits that as stipulated in Section 20(1) of the SASA, school governing bodies were initiated to promote the best interests of South African schools and to ensure its development through the provision of quality education. Other roles were stipulated in this section, which also includes supporting the principal, educators, and other staff of the school in the execution of their professional functions. The involvement of these stakeholders in school governance enhances the success of principals' leadership as it is clear that without effective leadership, learners' performance is adversely impacted. Active involvement of parents in the education of their children ensures higher academic achievement, consistent school attendance, less behavioural problems from learners and general positive school experience for learners (Mohapi et al., 2018). This implies that school governance will have a direct impact on the performance of learners as it is intertwined with all the educating properties that learners have to deal with.

School governance in South Africa is organised at different levels. At the national level, the minister of Basic Education representing the Department of Basic Education (DBE) is responsible for governing schools, while at the provincial level, the heads of the provincial department of basic education in each province handle this responsibility (Nwosu et al., 2017). At the school level, the principals, educators, learners, parents of learners and their host community members make up the school governing bodies (SGBs), which are responsible for handling governance in the schools. SGBs manage the schools, create rules and policies, and perform other functions to ensure that the right to education and planned learners outcomes are achieved. The core function of the SGBs is to promote the educational interests of the schools and the learners also. This means that each SGB is responsible for setting the strategic

framework, achieving the school's vision and mission, setting policies and targets for achieving all set objectives and finally, evaluating progress (Xaba, 2004).

SASA (1996) also outlines the role of the SGB in managing school funds and allocated finances from the government. SGBs have full responsibility of handling school finances including preparing a school budget every year, establishing a school fund, collecting and administering school fees, keeping financial records, and most importantly, supplementing school resources. The Department of Education (1997a, p.380) states that, “Each governing body must make plans to obtain more money and other facilities to improve the quality of education of the school. You have a definite duty and responsibility to see to it that your school can have more money available”. This implies that SGBs can recommend and collect school fees as part of the budgeting and revenue creation process. All members of the SGB must therefore work in synergy as their collective efforts will ensure that learners obtain quality education and positive outcomes which will, in the long run, impact on the identity of the school. If the SGB does not function appropriately, is corrupt or downright inefficient, the performance of learners will be adversely affected. According to Rinquest (2015), SGB members at Glenvista High School in the Gauteng district allegedly embezzled about R8million. The Gauteng Educational Department pursued a criminal case against the corrupt officials at this school that was marred by misuse of school funds and assets, appointment of unqualified teachers due to favouritism, overpayment of teachers and payment for classes that never took place which eventually led to the suspension of the school principal, Yolindi de Jongh (Hadebe, 2015). The maladministration of governing bodies at these schools is the root of many problems in the South African education system including, staff absenteeism, inadequate provision of learning necessities which affects learning performance and, poor implementation and enforcement of rules and regulations (Transparency International, 2011).

2.2.3 School Infrastructure

A key element of providing adequate education is adequate infrastructure; this, therefore, means that there is a direct relationship between adequate school infrastructure and learner performance. According to Budlender (2006), international and local research has revealed overtime that learner outcomes and performance is closely related to the quality of school infrastructure. This link was established by The National Policy for an Equitable Provision in South Africa, which stated that the school environment can influence learners' and teachers' attitude towards school. Further acknowledging this link between poor infrastructural conditions and poor student's performance, the education department in 2008 published its

draft national minimum norms and standards for school infrastructure (LRC, 2013). LRC (2013) further states that learning in poor physical environments is unsafe, results in high absenteeism and impedes the ability of these learners to obtain quality education thereby breaching their constitutional right to basic education. This was demonstrated in their accounts of the deplorable conditions of poor schools like the Mwezeni SPS and Mkanzini JSS as of 2010. These poorly constructed schools were damaged by heavy rains and storms, have exposed electrical wiring, leaking roofs and shortage of furniture. This means that a good school environment should be safe, encourage learners to attend school regularly, improve concentration to studies, and ultimately improve learning outcomes. As stated by Equal Education (2018), education in South Africa during the apartheid era was unequal because policies made had fuelled inequality by ensuring that white schools were properly funded while schools in black, coloured and Indian communities suffered inadequate funding or no funding at all. Kallaway (2002) argues that racial based inequities marred the South African education system during apartheid, and these factors are still profound even after apartheid as South African under-resourced rural and township schools still receive an inferior education. This legacy of the Apartheid education system resulted in massive racial inequality in school resources and infrastructure, and this affected the state of infrastructure in these schools such that even today, many years after Apartheid, most of these schools still suffer. According to reports from the Legal Resource Centre as published in the Legal Resource Library in 2013, most schools were built during this time, and their infrastructure reflects the racial inequality which was then a matter of policy (Equal Education, 2018). Resources were so limited that some schools in rural communities were built by community members themselves.

Affidavits collected by Equal Education (an NGO), and attorneys from Legal Resources Centre in 2011 across South Africa reveals some infrastructural problems faced by schools and the impact of these problems on teaching and learning outcomes. Some of the problems listed are, shortages and overcrowding of classrooms, deteriorating learning structures, absence of clean and functioning toilets, inadequate libraries, science laboratories and computer facilities, lack of electricity, absence of reliable sources of portable water and lack of security. These findings were confirmed by the 2011 report of the DBE's National Education Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS), which indicated that most schools in the rural provinces are in terrible conditions especially in the Eastern Cape and Kwazulu-Natal which have over 400 schools made of mud shacks. This problem of inadequate infrastructure is not only limited to schools in rural provinces. The report also revealed that

out of 11 secondary schools audited in Gauteng, the majority suffers from significant infrastructure inadequacies. This NEIM's report further states that out of 24,793 public schools accessed, "3,544 schools do not have electricity, while a further 804 schools have an unreliable electricity source; 2,402 schools have no water supply, while a further 2611 schools have an unreliable water supply; 913 do not have any ablution facilities while 11,450 schools are still using pit latrine toilets; 22,938 schools do not even have a space for a library; 21,021 schools do not have any laboratory facilities, while 1,231 schools have stocked laboratories; 2,703 schools have no fencing at all; and 19,037 schools do not have a computer centre, whilst a further 3,267 have a room designed as a computer centre but are not stocked with computers" (Equal Education report, 2018, p. 26).

These statistics stated above are , infact, an improvement because, after Apartheid, the South African government inherited a large number of schools with inadequate infrastructure. As of 1999, 59 percent of schools were without a library and 34 percent without water. The National Department of Education (DOE) (2008) developed the National Policy for Equitable Provision of an Enabling School Physical Teaching and Learning Environment, followed by the National Minimum Uniform Standards for School Infrastructure, to guide the provision of adequate school infrastructure. The South African government have taken other steps to solve this infrastructural crisis and its effect on learner performance, such as initiating the priority spending units (PSU) and the Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery (ASIDI). It went ahead to announce a R8.3b allocation for schools' infrastructure in 2011 for Medium Term Expenditure Framework to address this issue and many improvements have been recorded. It became law in November 2013, that every school in South Africa must have water, electricity, internet, working toilets, good laboratories, functional sport facilities, and a safe environment with at most 40 learners in a classroom. This law stipulates that these basic infrastructures must be present in every school and it was published by the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga. This law was further explained in a document titled, "Legally Binding Norms and Standard for School Infrastructure," and it stipulates that, regardless of race and class, all learners and teachers in South Africa will be able to learn in environments with adequate infrastructure. The law was necessitated by the fact that extreme poor infrastructure affects teachers as well as learners. A school which has no toilets for learners will usually have no toilets for teachers and if a learner gets wet when the class roofs leaks, so might teachers. It is therefore theoretically impossible for an excellent teacher to get good results from a learner in a school that suffers from infrastructural inadequacies. This means

that students from well-resourced schools will produce better outcomes than students in the poorest quintiles.

2.2.4 Resourcing

Resourcing in a school setting encompasses different areas, including funding and according to Sedibe (2011), school resources refer to tools used to enhance teaching and understanding of the subject contents of schools. These resources are equipment, facilities and structures that improve the performance of the schools' functions and they include textbooks, laboratories, furniture, libraries, computers and classrooms, among others. In South Africa, the Department of Education is responsible for creating access to adequate resources to schools equally to enhance teaching and learning. South Africa inherited a dual public education system which saw the coexistence between Model C schools and township schools. The Model C schools were advantaged to be well resourced, charge school fees to augment government funds and enjoy better facilities plus qualified teachers, thereby ensuring that learners from these schools produced better outcomes. Township schools who rely completely on the government for funding are plagued with inadequate or absent learning facilities, restrictions in charging school fees, which lead to poor learner performance (Rakabe, 2015).

Ndhlovu (2011) argues that to address this resource disparity and ensure equitable funding of all South African schools, SASA was introduced in 1996, learner-educator ratios were equalised and the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSFF) introduced to ensure equitable redistribution of resources, especially to disadvantaged schools. Gqirana (2016) states that learners will continue to underperform if access to school resources do not improve. Acknowledging the impact of school resources on learner performance, the Department of Education designed a school revenue system that would fund poor provinces than their rich counterparts. According to a report presented in the Education Portfolio Committee briefing held in March 2003 on financial, resourcing and costs of education in public school, the Department of Education in South Africa identified focus areas that would improve education. These focus areas include financial transfers from the national level to the school, translating school allocations to non-personnel resources, school allocations, national norms and standards for school funding, translating school resources to learner performance, among others.

Funding is a vital part of school resources, but apart from funding, resources also include teachers and infrastructure. South Africa does not appear to have a problem of availability of

teachers but more a problem of inequitable distribution of teachers between the poor and rich schools. Teacher allocation to schools is largely dependent on the number of learners in that school and the number of subjects offered. This disparity in itself is a major problem as the studies have shown that learners migrate to schools with better facilities thereby reducing the number of learners in these disadvantaged schools which then affects the funding and teaching allocation to be received due to the small number of learners. The inequality of resources is reinforced not only by this but also by the fact that rich schools use their SGB funds to attract experienced and qualified teachers and further increase the gap between their learners' outcome and the outcomes of learners from poor schools. Rammala (2009) argues that there is a significant relationship between education funding and the provision of adequate resources, and the performance of learners. Despite spending 6% of its GDP on education, improvement in education outcomes have failed, and even though improved government funding has contributed towards reducing inequality in South African schools, equitable distribution of quality education is still a problem. Rammala (2009) argues that the school funding policy does not cater for learners' performance and school identity construction. South African basic education budget allocation and funding are not based on the school, nor do they focus on the restructuring of the curriculum and instruction methods. From the National Treasury to the Provincial Treasury, to the Provincial Education Department and finally to the schools, these funds have a stringent process that must be followed for allocation and use. School funding has a long history of inequality among the different races in South Africa. The schools that were historically white under apartheid were characterised by good infrastructural investment, excellent educational resources and access to well-trained and qualified teachers, while black African education was characterised by high teacher-pupil ratios, unqualified and under-qualified teachers, and a lack of books, libraries and laboratories (Veriava, 2010).

A solution to these vast inequalities required policies that would strongly address these issues, hence, the democratic government's attempt to introduce measures to equalise and redress funding in all schools. This was done through establishing a policy known as the South African Schools Act; Act 84 of 1996. It had a funding instrument known as the National Norms and Standards of School Funding (NNSF- Department of Education, 1998). The NNSF was to be allocated in such a way that schools serving poor communities including rural schools would be allocated more funds than children from other schools (Department of Education, 1998). A crucial aspect of this policy was the issue of school fees. Once funds

were allocated to schools for personnel and non-personnel expenditure, school budget deficits were supplemented by the charging of school fees. To address the issue of disparities in the socio-economic status of families of school going children, the South African Schools Act (SASA) endeavoured to ease the financial responsibility of school fees for poor parents by allowing individual school governing bodies to decide on school fees. SASA also allows poor parents to apply for exemptions from the payment of school fees (Department of Education, 1996). However, this created problems of access for poor learners and also perpetuated the problem of poor schools lacking financial resources to run their schools (Veriava, 2010). After a series of assessment of this policy, it was amended in 2006 to improve, amongst other things, the parts of the policy that deal with school allocation and fee payments in public schools. This was done after the realisation that the monetary value of the school allocation was too low as related to the inequalities across the country (Department of Education, 2006).

The Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding (ANNSSF) policy make provision for improved ways of addressing fee barriers to education for poor communities (Government Gazette, 2018 no. 41420). Firstly, a system of nationally determined quintiles was established, which ensures that state funding for poor learners is distributed in an equitable manner (Veriava, 2010). According to this policy, schools are divided into five categories, or quintiles with the poorest schools in Quintile 1 and the well to do in Quintile 5. This division is based on schools' poverty ranking which is determined nationally on the basis of national data on income levels, dependency ratios and literacy rates in the community in which the school is physically located (Giese, Zide, Koch & Hall, 2009). Evidence suggests that the majority of rural schools fall in Quintile 1 (Veriava, 2010). Secondly, the national funding norms and minimum standards for each learner are established. The national department specified the amount the provinces should allocate to each learner in each quintile for non-personnel spending (Veriava, 2010). Furthermore, the national department also established the 'adequacy benchmark', which is regarded as the minimal sufficient amount of money required for a learner to adequately access his or her right to basic education.

The National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NSSF) as recently amended divided schools in South Africa into five quintiles with Quintile 1 graded as the poor quintile and Quintile 5 graded as the least poor. The policy divides schools into 'fee-paying' and 'no-fee' schools. According to this provision, all schools in the poorest quintiles (i.e., Quintiles 1 to 3) were declared 'no-fee' schools which mean that these schools are, to date, no longer allowed to charge school fees. To make up for the loss of income from school fees, these schools are

allocated a larger amount of funding per learner (Government Gazette, 2018 no. 41420). Quintiles 1 to 3 which are no fees schools receive R1316 per learner, Quintile 4 schools receive R660 per learner while Quintile 5 schools receive R228 per learner. This means that the school governing bodies in Quintiles 4 and 5 schools will determine appropriate school fees to be paid by learners to augment government funding (McCain, 2018). The policy divides schools into 'fee-paying' and 'no-fee' schools. According to this provision, all schools in the poorest quintiles (i.e., Quintiles 1 to 3) were declared 'no-fee' schools which means that these schools are, to date, no longer allowed to charge school fees. To make up for the loss of income from school fees, these schools are allocated a larger amount of funding per learner.

Almost all rural schools which fall under Quintiles 1 and 2 have a 'no fee' school status (Veriava, 2010). In their study, Giese, Zide, Koch and Hall (2009) found that some of the positive impacts of ANSSSF were relieving the burden of school fees for poor parents and increased income for most no-fee schools. However, they assert that, while it is important to acknowledge these positive factors, it is important to note that it was evident from this study that increased funding did not mean sufficient funding. Many poor schools, mostly those in rural areas, are still operating on limited budgets that do not promote the provision of quality education or the provision of school infrastructure that is conducive to learning. Bertram (2009) notes that while poor schools have been granted the 'no-fee status', well-to-do schools are able to charge their own fees additional to state funding. This sees previously white and advantaged schools charging high fees which allow them to employ and pay teachers extra and to sustain their good infrastructure which includes swimming pools, sports fields, laboratories, libraries and computer centres (Bertram, 2009). The above facilities are privileges that schools in rural areas serving black Africans cannot afford. These policies were meant to promote equity; however, they are not successful in doing so as they are skewed against rural schools which mirror the apartheid education as they still face the challenges of unqualified and under-qualified teachers, lack of books, libraries and laboratories.

The ANSSSF does not deal directly with personnel costs in provincial education departments. However, it has implications for post provisioning norms (PPN), which ultimately affect curriculum offerings in schools. This policy affects the decisions that provinces make concerning the number of human resources (personnel) they may appoint and pay as it clearly states:

Unless the relative proportion of personnel costs to total provincial education spending is managed down, provinces will continue to be unable to finance essential non-personnel education services whose distribution at present is both inadequate and highly inequitable (Department of Education, 1998, p. 5).

The direction of the ANNSSF towards a reduction in the amount of the education budget spent on personnel so as to increase costs on key pedagogical non-personnel items such as new school construction, provision of essential services, supply of books and other learning support materials, and educator development (Department of Education, 1998), has resulted in the downsizing of educator posts. Although the issue of distribution and norms for non-personnel, which comes highly recommended in the ANNSSF is important, the decision to reduce the budget for personnel has resulted in indirectly disadvantaging learners in poor schools found mostly in rural communities. The aim to minimise and reduce the cost of personnel has also contributed to a numerical mal-distribution in educators and in exacerbating inequity in educator distribution (Naicker, 2005). Learner-educator ratios are high, and teachers are faced with the challenge of overcrowded classrooms which should not be the case, as the maximum recommended learner-educator ratio is 40:1 and 35:1 for South African primary and secondary schools respectively (Marais, 2016). Schools now appoint educator staff in addition to those employed and paid by the state. The appointment and remuneration of such staff is the exclusive responsibility of the School Governing Body (SGB) and the additional funds to do so are raised by parents (Department of Education, 1996). The employment of SGB-paid educators favours economically advantaged schools. Given their good financial standing through the collection of school fees, they are able to employ a considerable number of SGB-paid educators which results in these schools having far lower learner-educator ratios than schools in disadvantaged areas where most are 'no-fee' schools that cannot afford to employ SGB-paid educators. This has had tremendous impact on the provision of quality education as the gap in output between such economically advantaged and disadvantaged schools most of which are in the rural areas has continued to increase (Naicker, 2005).

Whereas the reduction of educator posts has contributed to economic efficiency and has served the government's purpose of decreasing spending on personnel, it has seriously affected learning in poor rural schools. The cut-back of educator posts in schools has resulted in crucial challenges experienced by principals of poor rural schools in meeting the curriculum

needs of learners (Naicker, 2005). While economically advantaged schools can afford to employ SGB-paid educators to satisfy the curriculum needs of its learners, schools serving poorer communities suffer as they cannot afford SGB-paid educators and they have no option but to offer a limited curriculum. This has serious implications for the policy on educator provisioning, which links curriculum offerings to the number of educator posts. This serves the interests of advantaged schools as they have the financial resources to widen their curriculum choices and thus, qualify for more educators in terms of this policy. A drawback for poor schools is that they have limited curriculum offerings and as a result, a smaller educator entitlement in terms of this policy.

2.3 SCHOOL PRINCIPALS, LEADERSHIP STYLE AND EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

School leadership is the process of enlisting and guiding the talents and energies of teachers, students and parents towards achieving common educational aims (Muthoni, 2017). A school principal is the leader of an entire community within a school, who is responsible for managing administrative task and supervising all students and members of staff. According to Meador (2019), the principal has different roles to ensure the smooth running of the school, and this involves students' discipline, teachers' evaluation, new policy creation and restructuring of old ones, maintaining secure funding for the school, handling the school budget and many others, but the major role of the principal is leadership. A school principal is the primary leader in a school and should perform these roles effectively with the full knowledge that the leadership provided will affect the teachers, the parents of learners, the learners themselves and their eventual performance in their studies. It is worthy to note that the importance of leadership from the school principal in South Africa was acknowledged by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in a document developed in 2015 called the South African Standard for Principalship (SASP). The SASP stated "leading, teaching and learning in school" as the first purpose of any South African Principal in ensuring an improved effective education system (Department of Education, 2015). According to the SASP, there are eight key interdependence areas which constitute the core purpose of the principal in any South African context, and they are,

1. Leading, teaching and learning in school;
2. Shaping the direction and development of the school;
3. Managing quality and securing accountability;

4. Developing and empowering self and others;
5. Managing the school as an organisation;
6. Working with and for the community;
7. Managing human resources (staff) in the school; and
8. Managing and advocating extra-mural activities.

During the Apartheid, South African principals were mere collaborators, but since the shift of South African school management to democracy, the school principal is now the appointed head whose leadership position plays a key role in the performance of learners and the school itself in general. Learners' performance is greatly influenced by the leadership style adopted by the principal and how he/she orients the school towards the delivery of the curriculum as well as expected learning outcomes (Lindberg, 2014; Vilakazi, 2016).

2.3.1 Leadership Styles

The principal's leadership style is considered to be the most important variable in the functioning of the school as it has a great influence on learners' achievements (Tatlah et al., 2014). Williams (2011) argues that prior to 1994, principals were not excluded from fulfilling leadership roles in South Africa, but the educational system was characterised by hierarchical and authoritarian relations to ensure political control. This automatically made the leadership style of appointed school principals rigid and domineering and then resulted in the eventual perpetuation of authoritarian leadership style. According to Clark (2010), authoritarian leadership style emanates from McGregor's philosophical theory X which states that a leader should coerce and control followers because people have an inherent aversion for work and will abstain from it whenever possible. This means that if school principals do not force, intimidate or control learners and staff, the predicted outcomes by the school will not be achieved. There are other basic leadership styles such as the democratic, transitional, *Laissez-faire*, etc., but this study discusses distributed leadership in the form of servant leadership as it has a great positive influence on the school performance and the desired academic performance of learners and improves the identity of the school in general.

A good school is directed by a good leader who brings about an environment that is conducive for all stakeholders to realise their potential and strengths and to lead in new initiatives (Cook, 2014). The idea of political consciousness points towards the servicing of learners irrespective of the socio-economic background of the learner or principal. Principals are leaders, and true leaders are servants of society. Moreover, to be a true African leader, one has to be a true servant of the society they live in. The University of South Africa's principal, Makhanya

(2011) refers to servant leadership as increased service to others, “a holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community and the sharing of power in decision making”. To him, this is an ideal path that the University of South Africa wants to follow. The term servant leadership as coined by Greenleaf (2002) describes it as a management philosophy which sees the leader as a servant first before he or she can contribute to the well-being of the people and community. The important aspect of servant-leadership is that it underscores the importance of one serving first before one can lead. Servant-leadership defeats the notion of individualism. Committed teachers lead with a sense of moral purpose necessary for achieving schools. In schools where there is collaboration, participative, or shared leadership, teachers would be able to work collaboratively with the principal to ensure the smooth functioning of the school as well as the improvement of learner performance.

Masango (2002) writing about the communal nature of leadership in Africa, points out that leadership is a shared responsibility by all villagers or community members, and this should be the same with schools. Although there is always an overall figure, who provides vision and direction, every member of the community takes responsibility for the smooth functioning of the community. Decision making is a communal process, and there is buy-in on every move made in the community. The leader is the voice of the village, and the villagers are represented in him/her. The role of the leader is crucial in sustaining the life of the village. Masango (2002) aptly writes:

The whole aim of an effective or life-giving leader is to uplift the villagers/community in such a way that they progress. This will help people to express their own gifts within the village/community. As leaders share their gift of leadership, in return, the people will honour them. As they continue to share in African religious ceremonies, which are an essential part of the way of each person, the villagers/community will join celebration (Masango, 2002, p. 5)

As servant leaders’ principals need to ask themselves persistent questions with regards to the wellbeing of the school and how to transform the school. Servant leaders are selfless; they focus on others’ needs. This is the basis of *Ubuntu*, a *Nguni* word from South Africa that simply means Humanity and is summarised in the expression “*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*”, which means I am because you are (Ogudu, 2017). It is the African idea that a person is a person through persons, and this addresses the interconnectedness of mankind and the

responsibilities that flow from this connection. Nzimakwe (2014) posits that the spirit of *Ubuntu* leads to cooperative and collaborative work environments because people are encouraged to participate, share, value collective effort and support each other. Adair (2006) argues that effective leadership is the sharing and understanding of a common purpose, this is the philosophy behind the *Ubuntu* leadership as it includes team work, encouragement of team members and personal sacrifice for the goals of the team (Nzimakwe, 2014). This view on leadership is echoed by Meylahn et al. (2017) who states that the *Ubuntu* based philosophy in leadership requires strong community linkages and interdependence, democracy, transparency, responsibility and accountability. These qualities can help South African schools get rid of managerial obstacles and enhance management strategies for the accomplishment of desired results.

This study draws on the philosophy of *Ubuntu* to further articulate the place of servant leadership in school management. From this philosophy, the five Ps can be deduced, (Hallinger, 2018, p. 5):

People-centredness- *Ubuntu* emphasises the role of the people within the village and the organisation. Without an interest in people, *Ubuntu* cannot be realised.

Permeable walls- communication in the village is not restricted, and the walls are not opaque. All the members are able to communicate with one another without fear.

Partisanship – one of the most positive factors of *Ubuntu* philosophy is loyalty. People communicate freely, and they are made to feel closer to the village.

Progeny- *Ubuntu* leadership promotes collective decision making. However, under this, effective leadership is respected, and the leader is respected.

Production – when the above characterise the village, production is guaranteed. The village prospers when its members enjoy respect, loyalty and good leadership.

The core responsibility of the principal as a leader in collaboration with all the stakeholders, goals and expectations, through strategic planning, designing, coordinating, evaluating the curriculum, teaching and economical allocation of resources will enable effective school identity construction and achieve learners' performance (Allie, 2014). The philosophy of *Ubuntu* can therefore orient the principal in this direction. Effective schools and successful principals would ensure that the five Ps

are the underlying principles of their management ideology, and everyone within the school is involved. Success leads to excellence and mastery. Any servant-leader wants to achieve the best primarily for the group, the organisation, and for himself or herself as an individual. Servant leaders model these characteristics for success. They model the innate goodness that is required. This approach to school leadership would offer the school an opportunity to improve the performance of learners regardless of the level of their social and cultural capital. Committed principals will close the achievement gap between indigent and affluent learners. This is even more crucial in the formative years. Msila (2012) concludes that there is a necessity to raise working-class childrens' confidence and close the achievement gap that will widen when compared to middle-class children in later years. Furthermore, inferior schooling, he says, compounds the initial handicaps of learners and leads them directly to the perpetuation of poverty and inequality.

2.3.2 Leadership Challenges for Principals and Schools

According to Botha (2004), the role of the principal in the new educational dispensation involves a balance between leadership (involves working with staff to achieve the vision and mission of the school, supervising the curriculum, building a close relationship with the community and improving the instructional program of the school, among others) and management (involves budget supervision, complying with educational policies and acts, maintaining the school infrastructure among others). Many South African principals lack basic leadership and management training and are made to rely on common sense, experience and character with absolutely no expertise. Apart from the challenges that emanates from inadequate training, other challenges such as the attitudes of the teaching staff to the principal's leadership style, the behaviour of students and the relationship between the principal and the parents of learners also affect learner's performance (Abdulrasheed et al., 2016).

According to Bush and Oduro (2006), a lot of school principals lack basic leadership and management training before and after their appointments as principals. Most principals ignore their responsibilities of instructional leadership because they are not even aware that this is their primary task. They instead focus on administrative duties and maintaining student discipline. If principals are professionally prepared for their roles, they will strike a balance between their leadership and management responsibilities. This means that they will not lack leadership and management skills to cope with the change and to confront the daily challenges faced by their schools. Muhiyane et al. (2014) carried out a small-scale research exploring the causes of school decline in some schools in the Kwazulu-Natal district of South Africa. Part

of the study sought to find out the causes of the decline in learners' performance in those schools after 1994, and their results showed that the lack of leadership and management skills was a major challenge. Although most principals possess the basic requirement of holding a three-year teachers' diploma and have seven years teaching experience before their appointment as principals, they are not empowered with the necessary skills to deal with pertinent issues; consequently, learners' performance is further affected. Staff attitude is also a fragment of the principal leadership challenge. This is so because the low commitment of teaching staff in the implementation of the principal will affect learners' outcomes. If teachers feel marginalised or that their opinions do not have any impact on management decisions that affect the school, they become mere functionaries. In schools where teachers cooperate with the school principal to ensure effective management and leadership, learner's achievement records a boost (Choi & Schnurr, 2014). In situations where teachers do not feel motivated and empowered, it will affect their task and interactions with the learners and learner's outcome. These teachers will then directly or indirectly undermine, disrupt or derail the effort of the principal to improve learner's performance or upgrade the school's identity. Student behaviours such as indiscipline are also a great challenge to the principal. This indiscipline attitude does not only affect the management of the school, but also their performance in general. Some may decide to drop out as they feel that the school authorities can no longer condone their excesses, thereby creating a gap or a trail of inconsistency in the school's progress. Since the inception of Students Government Bodies (SGB's) which involved parents in the decision-making process, the issue of prescribed functions has also become a challenge for South African school principals. Mestry (2004) argues that some principals are unwilling to share responsibility for school governance with other shareholders for the fear of losing power and this affects their relationship with the parents of these learners. Some Parent-Governors are illiterates and do not have the required skill and experience to exercise their powers or contribute to the body. This may often lead to a clash between their interest and that of the school principal. This lack of cooperation cannot promote the best interest of the school, and learner's performance eventually suffers.

2.3.3 Leadership Training for Effective Schooling

The role of the school principal is now similar to that of a chief executive officer (CEO) which involves strategic planning, budgets, managing industrial relations, procuring resources and facilitating marketing, and public relations (Starr, 2009). Most principals are unprepared for their new role as "CEO's" as they are now expected to not only manage and control schools

but are required to be an educational leader who can foster professional development among staff. To execute this new role, principals now have to understand leadership as a process and also develop human relation skill to promote joint action to ensure school improvement and effectiveness (Steyn, 2009). This implies that if principals do not continue to enhance their leadership roles, educational outcomes will be negatively affected. According to Craft (2000), professional development (PD) continuing professional development (CPD) and in-service training (INSET) are used interchangeably to refer to all types of professional learning undertaken by practicing or aspiring principals beyond the point of initial training, with the required training being a three-year teacher's diploma and seven years of teaching experience. On the education agenda of some countries, continuing professional development (CPD) is placed high for school leaders. According to Roe and Drake (1980), the challenge of training school leaders is accorded major importance ahead of any social goal. The Wallace foundation in the United States of America provides free school leadership training for principals, and also trains successful teachers on how to improve their leadership skills and become great principals in the future. Using the Energising Ontario Education model (EOEM) to improve education through more effective school leaders, the Canadian government developed a coherent leadership strategy to provide adequate contextual support for school leaders. Potential vice principals attend a six-month course on leadership in education organised by the government of Singapore. Only a selected few are given executive leadership training for one year before being appointed as principals (Schleilcher, 2012).

The importance of attracting and selecting prospective principals with adequate leadership and management quality for South African schools can therefore not be over emphasised as it has been shown that progressive countries are doing the same. South African principals need development in supporting networks, interpersonal skill and policy issues so that they can improve their focus and strike a balance between their leadership and management roles (Howes et al., 2013). The quality CPD programmes offered to South African principals should be improved, and principals should be encouraged to improve themselves by attending other training sessions designed to provide professional development training. This will further enhance learners' performance as findings have shown that leadership preparation and training are central to school effectiveness (Mestry, 2017).

2.3.4 Effective School Leadership

Taole (2013) explains that effective leadership is the cornerstone of any education system. It can ensure the effective implementation and management of curriculum changes. Jones and

Harris (2014) attest that leadership is essential for accomplishing sustainable change in a school setting. To Taole (2013) therefore, the leadership capabilities of principals play a critical role in motivating educators to create a culture of learning in the school. Once the culture of learning is stable and concrete, the performance of learners' in the school will improve. Bush et al., (2003) write about the importance of culture in schools in determining leadership. While studying the impact of Advanced Certificate in Education - School Management and Leadership (ACE-SML), they found out that culture is among the determinants of effective and ineffective schools. The concept of *culture* is one of the two important words in organisational behaviour, the other being *climate*. In schools, these determine the morale of teachers, the interest of parents and community and most importantly, the impact on learners' achievement. These, however, can be misunderstood terms. Gruenert (2008) points out that those school leaders who want to address morale in their organisations must know the distinction between *culture* and *climate*. Furthermore, he emphasises that teachers need to know the difference between culture and climate if they want to be more precise in their diagnoses and treatment of the two. This implies that it would be difficult to improve schools without understanding the differences and similarities between these terms. Gruenert (2008) posits that climate is the main leverage point for any culture, which means that if school leaders want to shape a new culture; they should start with an assessment of the climate.

Effective innovation in schools is guided by a shared vision which is ensured by an effective school leader who encourages the teachers to improve the shared goals of the school (Reich, 2016). Our schools need teachers who reflect and imbibe this responsibility and equanimity. Few schools will have a strong culture when teachers do not show any responsibility and freedom. Culture influences people's social behaviours and interests and the way they interact with others (Zhu, Devos & Li, 2011). The majority of schools do not perform well because of the absence of effective school culture. Scholars mention a number of aspects such as ineffective school leadership, the type of community in which the school is built and non-involvement of other role-players. Yet, all these can be referred to as sub-sets of culture. Zhu et al. (2011, p. 320) contend that:

School culture is closely related to the healthy and sustainable development of a school, the development and well-being of the school members, and objectives of the school and education. An important dimension of school culture is the multiple interactions among groups and individuals.

To achieve the above, participative decision making is encouraged as this will ensure that teachers air their views in contribution to decisions made. This will create a shared responsibility for innovation as it will empower stakeholders on all levels and support team spirit (Zhu, 2011).

The Greenhouse Schools Project (2012) was another project aimed at enhancing learner performance. It highlights the need to prioritise great teaching above everything. The project pointed out that there are certain parts of school culture that teachers value most and these include common vision, effective instructional practice and clearly defined goals. Also, they found out that effective teachers leave teaching because of weak instructional cultures. Effective schools have teachers who are satisfied with the value of teaching in their schools. South Africa has hundreds of schools where principals are struggling to create and sustain a culture of commitment, but instructional values are weak. The culture of Greenhouse schools involves the following:

- (i) A high bar for hiring – rigorous interview process
- (ii) A focus on student learning – setting measurable student goals
- (iii) Real instructional leadership – leaders conduct more classroom observations and provide more feedback to teachers
- (iv) Better professional development – time set for teachers to observe colleagues
- (v) The right responses to good (and bad) performance – Effective teachers have opportunities to advance.

Without good leadership, many schools will not attain any of these factors. An effective school culture is largely dependent upon the goals set by management. Lack of strong leadership, lack of vision and commitment, absence of clear rules are some of the aspects that lead to weak schools with weak cultures. Msila (2013) illustrates how a principal with strong instructional values can create and sustain commitment in a struggling school that is not effective. In another study, he demonstrates how a principal can be crucial in changing a school by changing the school's culture (Msila, 2008). School culture is more important than resources. Motivated and committed teachers will teach effectively with minimum resources. Culture is attitude and good teacher attitude leads to commitment. Effective school culture destroys toxic cultures based on pessimism.

2.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on school improvements since apartheid and schooling in South Africa from a developmental perspective. Discussions on effective schooling resulting from the principal's leadership styles, leadership challenges faced by the principal, appropriate leadership training and its eventual effects on school identity and learner performance were explored. The next chapter discusses learner performance.

CHAPTER THREE

LEARNER PERFORMANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Within the context of this study, learner performance in the researched schools was viewed as the beacon of its school identity. More broadly speaking, learner performance, especially that which involved system-wide assessments, like Grade 12 assessments, is the indicator of quality education and school efficiency. Hence a review of literature on learner performance in South Africa and contextualised regionally and internationally forms a useful backdrop to understand the role of a school leader in developing its school identity. The school identity, in turn, presents an image of the school as viewed by the community, the state (through its Department of Basic Education), the learners, the teachers and other stakeholders. Hence an engagement of learner performance is warranted in that it shows the extent to which school leaders and its staff and learners are concerned about its image and the attempts it makes to improve its image as depicted through its historic learner performances.

Learner performance refers to learner's ability to demonstrate understanding and show that learning has taken place through an activity or task (Woolfolk, 2007, pp. 562- 563). Until recently, the matriculation examination in South Africa has been the only national measure of school performance where "much behaviour has understandably been orientated towards Grade 12 indicators, in particular 'pass rate', the percentage of students successfully obtaining the certificate or surpassing minimum thresholds in individual subjects (Gustafsson & Taylor, 2013, p. 3). Prior to 2008, students typically wrote a minimum of six subjects as part of the Grade 12 senior certificate. This changed to seven subjects given a fundamental change in the curriculum system between 2007 and 2008 which saw the removal of distinctions between higher grade and standard grade examination papers and introduction of compulsory mathematical literacy for non-mainstream mathematics takers. Using these indicators, several researchers have pointed out that learner performance in South Africa is drastically poor and in need of improvement.

Spaull (2013) believes that South Africa's education system is in a state of crisis. The World Economic Forum claims that the country is at the bottom of the class for the quality of its maths and science education. And there are concerns about high drop-out rates in schools with nearly half of all school pupils dropping out long before they can reach their matric year. Different assessment tests have all pointed to the crisis in the basic education sector in South

Africa. Although some are far less credible than others, they were conducted with the view of comparing South Africa's education system.

The table below illustrates how South Africa performs in different international assessments. The discussion per assessment is done separately.

Table 1: South Africa's performance in different international assessments

Name of study	Purpose	International mean	Overall performance
The southern and eastern Africa consortium for monitoring educational quality(SACMEQ 111)	This study is concerned with the monitoring and evaluating the condition of schooling and quality education in the southern and eastern Africa.(SACMEQ III)	Reading: 500	Gr 6 494,9 (SE = 4.55)
Trends in mathematics and science studies(TIMSS) 2003	The study focuses its attention in the improvement of teaching and learning in mathematics and science and further collects background information about the quantity, quality and content of instructions	Science: 516 Maths: 513	326 354
Progress in international reading literacy study (PIRLS) 2006	This study aims at identifying long term trends and to monitor countries system developments in reading and education over a period of time.	Reading: 500	Gr 4 253 (SE = 4.6) Gr 5 302 (SE = 5.6)

3.2. PERFORMANCE IN COMPETITIVE LOCAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENT

The International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) established the integrated research and training project designed to provide training in technical skills for monitoring and evaluation of the quality of basic education. The project was referred to as the East Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ). SACMEQ is an international non-profit organisation which undertakes educational policy research. It is made up of 15 education ministries from Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zanzibar, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. SACMEQ has conducted three major educational research projects. The most recent data published by SACMEQ comes from a research project which ran from 2006 to 2011 and assessed 61 396 Grade 6 pupils and 8 026 Grade 6 teachers in 2 779 schools across 14 countries.

The study proved that South African Grade 6 learners have a problem in learning areas of reading and mathematics (Fleisch, 2007, p. 15). South Africa scored relatively low for both literacy and mathematics. South Africa came tenth for the reading ability of the pupils tested-behind Tanzania, Seychelles, Mauritius, Swaziland, Kenya, Zanzibar, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia. Five countries – Uganda, Mozambique, Lesotho, Malawi and Zambia fared worse than South Africa. Soudien (2007) affirms that the studies conducted by TIMMS and SACMEQ revealed that South Africa's learner performance was low levels of competence across that nation for both mathematics and reading. The 2001 national Grade 3 systematic assessment reported an average score of 30% for numeracy and 54% for literacy. This suggests that the South African learner performance is low when compared to other countries. Furthermore, TIMMS-R placed Grade 8 South African learners 44% below the mean scores of all participating countries. Moreover, South African pupils came last in the list of 39 countries and attained a mean score of 275 out of a possible total of 800 marks. Taylor et al. (2003) affirm that in Monitoring Learner Assessment (MLA) study for Grade 4 learners, South African learners attained an average numeracy score of 30%, placing it last amongst 12 participating schools. Spaul (2013) confirmed this when he argued that South Africa's educational outcomes have the worst education system of all middle- income countries that participate in cross-national assessments of educational achievements. Furthermore, SACMEQ has revealed the outcomes of the poor performance of the learners in South Africa;

it did not identify any statistical improvement in Grade 6 Mathematics and language performance between 2000 and 2007.

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) is a cross-national assessment of the mathematics and science knowledge of fourth and eighth-grade learners, conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement tests and questionnaires conducted with principals, teachers, and learners to ascertain achievement scores and contextual factors relevant to achievements. TIMSS was designed to align broadly with mathematics and science curricula in participating countries. The results, therefore, can be used to determine the degree to which learners have acquired the mathematics and science concepts and skills likely to have been taught in school. The tests are constructed to measure achievement to help inform governments, policymakers, and educators about the proficiency of their learners at key points in the educational process. TIMSS was first conducted in 1995 in South Africa and subsequently in 1999 to Grade 8 learners. In 2002 it was administered in grade 8 and 9, and in 2011 to grade 9 learners. The TIMSS was administered in South Africa because mathematics and science are seemed to be key areas of knowledge for the development of individuals and society. In 2011, 48 countries participated in TIMSS. South Africa came 47th for mathematics and 48th for science. The Human Research Council noted that ‘most proficient learners in South Africa approached the average performance in Singapore, China, Taipei, Republic of Korea, Japan, Finland, Slovenia and Russian Federation.

Spaull (2013) states that South Africa currently participates in a number of local and international tests of educational achievements. The recently implemented is Annual National Assessment (ANA) which are annual nationally- standardised tests of achievements for Grades 1 to 6 and 9, are one of the most important policy developments in the last 10 years. Spaull (2013) continues that the annually- reported statistics for the National Senior Certificate (NCS) examination in Grade 12 are particularly misleading since they do not take into account those pupils who never make it to Grade 12. Annual matric results often receive most attention, but they provide limited insight into the state of the education system. The matric results do not take into account the large number of school pupils who drop out long before their final year. For every 100 pupils that started school in 2003, only 49 made it to matric in 2014; 37 passed and 14 qualified to go to the university. Between grade 10 and final matric examinations, 50,000 pupils dropped out of the system.

The Global Competitiveness Report for 2014- 2015 placed South Africa's maths and science education last out of the 144 countries assessed. The issues around learner performance have the major concern in the South African education system. Hence schools are accountable for its learner performance and as such are evaluated in terms of its performance. Schools are thus categorised as performing and non-performing schools. In schools that are categorised as non-performing, increased monitoring, support and school accountability are required.

3.3 REASONS FOR POOR LEARNER PERFORMANCE

Click (2004) believes that time-table is an essential tool to teach learners systematically. The principal of the school has a number of resources at his/her disposal – teachers, teaching areas, classrooms, finance, and time. A time-table is the means by which these resources are marshalled to provide the greatest possible educational opportunities and alternatives for learners in the most cost-effective manner. In the secondary school, it is argued that time-table should be pupil-centred so as to maximise learning opportunities. Furthermore, time-table should be arranged with a variety of activities, with subjects spaced to sustain the children's interests and motivations. It should also consider age group, concentration span, ability range and class sizes. Secondary school learners need time –table that allows them to engage with fellow learners. When the time-table is well-structured learner performance is also attained (Mangwaya et al., 2012).

Wiseman and Hunt (2008) define learner discipline as what the teacher engages in; it is an effort to motivate students and manage the classroom when certain mechanisms and reinforcement have not been successful. This means learner discipline is the teachers attempt to ensure that learners are well-behaved and they get the best possible educational experiences. Adams (2004) adds to this by defining learner discipline as the process of running an organised and effective classroom; a classroom in which the abilities of individual children are given the opportunity for development and in which teachers can fulfil their proper functions as facilitators of learning. Moreover, a classroom is the place where children can sensibly and enjoyably acquire the techniques for monitoring and guiding their own behaviour.

Memela (2013) argues that children coming from homes with no tradition of valuing education often develop learning problems. Such children mostly fail to see the value or importance of education, which thus negatively influences the child's interest in education. Therefore, instilling discipline in schools becomes a problematic experience, especially for

principals. The lack of discipline impacts negatively on learner performance. A well-controlled classroom has positive outcomes as it will embark on certain techniques to overcome discipline problems (Memela, 2013). Maphosa and Mammen (2011) state that learners manifest unacceptable behaviours in classrooms, and they are generally noisy and disrespectful to teachers. Every teacher expects learners to be cooperative when teaching and learning have to take place in their classroom. No meaningful learning occurs in a chaotic classroom environment. For this reason, learner discipline problems become an epicentre in the process of teaching and learning. This therefore suggests that learner discipline problems can always be an issue in several schools. Adams (2004) argues that appropriate discipline has long been acknowledged as being one of the most important characteristics of an effective school and a crucial aspect of school and classroom management. However, Maphosa and Mammen (2011) state that ‘disciplining learners these days is more dangerous and risky compared to the days before the democratic dispensation in South Africa.

Masekoameng (2010) states that the disciplinary problems faced by teachers and school principals in South African schools are not unique as they are found in every part of the world with the highest rates of learner indiscipline found in the United States of America. The findings from the National Institute of Education in the United States of America revealed that 64% of junior high school teachers reported that their learners had sworn or made obscene gestures at them, and 12% of the teachers said they had hesitated to control misbehaving learners for fear of their safety. Christie, Butler and Pieterton (2007) reported that the issue of discipline in schools is challenging for many years. They reported a range of discipline problems, but the Department of Education is failing to address those challenging problems. Even the national policies on discipline are not always supported or understood at certain school levels. Moreover, these discipline problems have a negative impact on the side of the principal when he/she tries to construct the school identity and achieve learner performance (Christie et al., 2007, p. 72). Teaching is a profession in which the educator should have confidence in what he/she is doing. An educator of any subject must possess an interest in his/her subject, commitment and dedication. He/she should be able to eradicate the fear that many learners have about the subject and encourage learners to look at the subject with confidence. Holloway (2002) affirms that teacher quality is at the centre of the national agenda for improving students’ achievements and monitoring classroom management. Very few students graduating with mathematics and science choose teaching as a career. As a result of this, there is a shortage of mathematics and science educators and out of desperation,

educators of basic sciences such as natural sciences, life sciences could be forced to teach Physical Sciences. As a result, some schools do not even offer mathematics and Physical Sciences as school subjects (Makgato & Mji 2006, p.254). The National Curriculum Statement for each learning area in the FET phase clearly stipulates the type of teacher and learner that is envisaged. It envisages teachers that are competent, dedicated, caring and qualified. The teacher must be able to fulfil the seven roles of an educator (i.e., educator as a leader and administrator; educator in a pastoral role, educator as a learning program developer, educator as a researcher scholar and life-long learner, educator as assessor, educator as a mediator of learning, and a learning area specialist). The National Curriculum Statement further envisages learners who will be imbued with values and acts in the best interest of society based on respect, democracy, equality, human dignity, and social justice as promoted in the Constitution.

Outcomes-Based education was introduced in 1997 to overcome curricular divisions. However, implementation prompted many reviews, and finally, it was decided from 2012 that the two national Curriculum statements for Grades R-9 and Grades 10-12 respectively, would be combined into a single document, known as the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 (Department of Education 2011, pp. 3-4). The National Curriculum Statement for Grades R-12 builds on the previous curriculum, but also updates it and aims to provide clearer specification of what is to be taught and learnt on a term-by-term basis. This National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 represents a policy statement for learning and teaching in South African schools and is referred to as Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) for all approved subjects (Department of Education 2011, pp. 3-4). CAPS are actually a single policy document that is present for every subject. It replaces Subject Statements, Learning programme Guidelines, and Subject Assessment Guidelines in Grades R-12. This study is based on the performance of Grade 12 learners who were part of the National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12. Msila (2007) stresses that it is important that teachers are able to understand and implement the NCS for the field of specialisation effectively and efficiently. Thus, teachers need development along three dimensions simultaneously: content knowledge, teaching approaches and professional attitudes (Kriek & Grayson, 2009, p.199). When educators possess a negative attitude, it reflects not only in their teaching, but also in the learning environment. A stimulating environment awakens a learner to learn.

According to Baker and Jones (2005), there is an association between low socio-economic status and poor performance in school. However, evidence has suggested that it is not the

socio-economic status *per se*, but factors associated with home resources and background experiences that affect the learners' performance. According to Saiduddin (2003), factors such as unstable homes, drug abuse and teenage pregnancy contribute to poor performance among learners. Teenage pregnancy in South African schools is on the increase; consequently, the learner tends to drop out of school, resulting in an on-going cycle of poverty in the home, community, province and country. Furthermore, parents who are alcoholics, abusive to their children and absent for long periods of time often cause children's poor intellectual, academic and socio-emotional development (Ellof & Ebersohn, 2004).

The educational level of parents also impacts on the social behaviour of the child. Many studies have shown that the socio-economic status, educational qualifications and academic outcomes of parents have a significant predictive impact on children's development and even on their educational attachment as adults (Ellof & Ebersohn, 2004). Berk (1997) states that the harsh life conditions of lower income parents, the powerlessness they feel, the lack of confidence they have in their jobs, the authoritarian model presented by employers, and the lack of higher education that would reform values onto abstract ideas, may result in such parents using authoritarian methods to enforce external characteristics in their children such as obedience, neatness and cleanliness. The children who grow up in such a situation are likely to be troublesome at school and add to learner discipline problems. Christie, Butler and Pieterton (2007) affirm that the socio-economic status of the learner is crucial in obtaining learner performance.

The educational conditions attributed to family need no emphasis, as there is an ever-increasing awareness of the importance of the parents' role in the progress and educational development of their children. The family background is the most important and weightily factor in determining the academic performance of learners and school identity construction (Rammala, 2009, p.12). Rammala (2009) further highlights that countries that are educationally progressive encourage the active interests of parents and local communities in the education of their children. However, this has not been the case in South Africa. The studies that have been conducted on learner performance on South African children, especially, black learners, proved that these learners do not get parental support since their parents are illiterate. They cannot be assisted in doing homework (Rammala, 2009, p. 12).

The learner's background relating to the availability of educational resources at home like books, electronic resources such as televisions, computers, study desks and tables for their

use and general academic support at home, is crucial. Studies (Rammala, 2009, Fomunyam, 2017) have shown that learners who have access to such resources are at an advantage compared to those from poor families because they will be more informed about the latest developments around them thus assisting them in improving their performance at school. While, on the other hand, those from poor families with no resources still have to write the same examination paper. Thus, resources from poor families will affect their performance compared to those who have access to such resources (Rammala, 2009, p.27). With the nature of teaching and learning in South Africa focused intensely on both the resources or capital students come with to school and those available in school as well as the availability of curriculum guidelines, when one is missing, learners are bound to perform poorly. It is a conflux of all these that create the school identity. Mangwaya et al. (2012) believe that one benchmark for measuring the quality of teaching and learning at all levels of education is the existence of a curriculum guideline. A curriculum guideline spells out what content is to be taught and how it should be taught, as well as the teaching and learning resources to be used to facilitate effective learning. Christie et al. (2007) affirms that most of the schools do not have in their possession curriculum guidelines and their performing standards are low. Mangwaya et al. (2012) further emphasise that learners learn best when they are taught using different teaching methods. Learner performance can be improved if various teaching methods are used (Nkanzela, 2015, p.13). Teaching methods play a major role in the performance of the child.

Assessment constitutes another cause of poor learner performance in South African schools. Dhrurumraj (2013) defines assessment according to the National Curriculum Statement for the FET phase, as a process of collecting and interpreting evidence in order to determine the learner's progress in learning and making a judgement about the learner's performance. Assessments underpin all good educational practices. The skills of diagnosing success and challenges are fundamental for educator's work and vital to children's progress (Mangwaya, 2012, p. 56). The school principal should follow the prescripts of the department in administering assessments. When assessment is properly conducted by the school, the learner performance increases.

Schools are judged by their results and the quality of the learners they produce. The quality of learners depends, among other things, on the amount of knowledge and skills he or she acquired at school. Motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) plays a crucial role in learners' performance and acquisition of knowledge. The principal, through the effective exercise of

his leadership role, motivates learners to make concerted efforts to improve their academic performance. Mkhize (2005) believes that the principal's leadership is crucial to academic learner performance and school identity construction. It determines the quality of learner performance. The principal has to ensure that he adopts the style of leadership that can elicit performance of a high standard from learners. A high standard of performance is necessary because the effectiveness of the principal's leadership is measured by the academic success of the learners.

The level of learner performance is not the same in all areas and all subjects, and much research has been carried out in the past to investigate the factors that influence learner performance. According to Van Der Berg (2008), the microsystem is the environment closest to the child, and this includes the family, parents, teachers and peers. These people have a direct influence on the child's development and learning. Findings reveal that out of ten countries studied including, Tunisia, Mauritius, Malawi, Zambia and Senegal, South African learners ranked fourth with an average literacy score of 48.1% and numeracy score of 30.0% (Department of Education, 2001a). Adell (2002) argues that poor learner performance at high schools is an international problem linked to the low socio-economic background of the learners, while Munn (1996) argues that urban students tend to perform better than those in the rural areas. Engelbrecht et al. (1996) posit that the performance of learners in academics reflects social realities such as poverty, political, and socio-economic problems. Physical conditions, available facilities, the degree of overcrowding in classrooms, educators, learner ratios, availability of basic services, the relative poverty of the community around the school, amongst others, have also been adjudged to affect learner performance in South Africa (Kirov, 2002). The following sub-sections will discuss socio-economic factors, learner attitudes to learning, medium of instruction and the school environment, further revealing how they affect learner performance in more detail as this study is located within schools that are in impoverished communities.

Socio-Economic Factors

These factors involve the home environment, self-concept and identity, educational levels, employment status and marital status of parents, family's educational climate and educational resources available at home (Rammala, 2009). According to Morgan et al. (2009), learners from low socio-economic status households develop academic skills slower than learners from the higher socio-economic status group. The school system in low socio-economic status communities is said to be under-resourced and this negatively impacts the outcomes of

learners (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Success in school often correlates with positive self-concept and self-identity. Most low-performing learners have been found to lack self-confidence and have negative views about themselves. This can also be traced to their self-identity and how proud and confident they are about where they are coming from. Learners are encouraged to perform at a high level if they have close family relationships that help build positive self-concept, parents who are involved in their academics and have high expectations for their schooling and also clear rules and standards for their behaviour (Solo, 1997).

The home front is an important factor which determines how a learner will perform in his/her academics; this is because parents play a vital role in the educational development of their children. Parents provide information, learning opportunities, behavioural models, and so many other factors that are relevant to the academic growth of a child. Parents are the first teachers of their children and as such, have a direct influence on their academic performance. Ahmad et al. (2013) suggest that educated parents provide intellectual, psychological, psychological and emotional support to their children and these result in them being more comfortable and adjusted to their learning environment leading to a high academic performance. By virtue of their education, they guide their children academically, put in a lot of time, energy and money and provide academic development related activities to utilise the time available at home (Suresh, 2012). Research has shown that learners from divorced and separated homes are often stigmatised (Adell, 2002). So also, it has been argued that unemployed parents cannot provide their families with a balanced meal thereby affecting the cognition of the learner negatively due to nutritional deficiencies (Munn, 1996). Rammala (2009) states that “The marital status of being either single, married, divorced or widow, the parents’ social class in term of their income categories of lower, middle or upper income-class all impact on self-concept and the learning process of learners”.

School Environment

Research on typical South African schools highlights that the school environment still does not provide a physical environment that enables effective implementation of core sector policies such as progressive curricular, co-curricular activities and the level of quality, equity, efficiency, relevance and values. This is evident in the low academic performance of learners (Motsatsi, 2012). Van der Berg (2008) posits that in South Africa, students in the most affluent quintile of schools outperform schools in the other four quintiles. All learners are educatable, and how the school is managed is the most crucial factor in determining their performance

(Saiduddin, 2003). If the school environment is not conducive and does not motivate the learners, academic performance will be poor. The school environment is an important aspect of educational planning and also influences the learning process. The performance of the learner does not only depend on the ability of the teachers to effectively carry out their duties, but also on the effective coordination of the school environment (Chuma, 2012). Adequate physical activities such as well spaced and organised classrooms, laboratories, fully stocked libraries, excellent school play-grounds, among others, have a great impact on the quality of education that learners acquire. Crowded classrooms affect the learners' concentration and also the amount of time a teacher can spend on innovative teaching methods. Well-equipped laboratories will stimulate learners' interest in scientific activities and experiments while fully stocked libraries will encourage a healthy reading culture. Availability of quality instructional material will pique learners' interest and facilitate child-centred learning through discovery (Mege, 2014)

It is recognised in South African studies that the availability of key school resources influences educational outcomes, with higher levels of resources associated with better educational outcomes (Juan et al., 2017). Mullis et al. (2012) reveal that the results from TIMSS 2011 showed that successful schools were more likely to have better working facilities and more instructional materials. Howie (2003) argues that there is a strong negative association between class size and academic achievement in South Africa and this was confirmed by Visser et al. (2015) after their research showed that for every learner added to a class, the average TIMSS mathematics score decreased by 1 point. A positive school climate promotes not only academic content and implementation of the curriculum but by every activity that involves the learners including extra-curricular activities, which positively affect scholastic performance, psychological state, interpersonal relationship and behaviours (Gae et al., 2016). The learners' relationship with his educators is of great importance also, and Hughes et al. (2011) posit that the reciprocal effects of learners-teacher and learners-peer relatedness have effects on academic self-efficacy.

Learner Attitudes

Attitudes are learned throughout life and are embodied with our socialisation process. Negative attitudes towards learning could result in learners' performing poorly, thus preventing them from obtaining required results for university entrance (Rammala, 2009, p. 19). This suggests that learners' attitudes have an impact on school identity construction and learners' performance. Investigating the attitude of learners towards science was another

factor that TIMSS (1999) explored. TIMSS reported that the generation of a positive attitude towards science is an important and integral goal of science education. Many learners tend to avoid Physical Sciences and Mathematics because of their fear of the subject and a lack of self-confidence. This negative attitude can result in learners' underperformance and as a result, make them unable to get the required results for university entrance (Mullins, 2005). The fear of Physical Sciences and Mathematics has resulted in a decrease in the number of learners taking the subject both at the secondary and tertiary level (Gough, 1954). Dhurumraj (2013) adds that learners who come from a higher socio-economic status family are more motivated to study and show a positive attitude towards their studies. Moreover, learner performance and school identity construction through the leadership style of the principal are guided and supported by learner attitudes.

Medium of Instruction

The medium of instruction is also amongst the factors that influence learner performance. The question of medium of instruction in South Africa goes as far back as 1954 when the African National Congress challenged the Group Areas Act. The use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction was also a serious concern in the past among Black learners. However, the 16th of June 1976 represented the end of the use of Afrikaans and ushered in a new dispensation in which English became the medium of instruction for the education of a Black child. Currently, there are arguments that mother tongue is the basis of all teaching and also that it must be the medium of instruction because bilingualism cannot be set as the aim of teaching. Therefore, most Grade 12 learners are struggling to communicate in English and that could be one of the factors that put them at a disadvantage since that is the language they used to respond to questions in the examination (Rammala, 2009, p. 21).

When learners learn in a language that is not their mother tongue, learning then becomes more difficult. The Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) indicates a correlation between lower achievement levels in science and home language, which is different from school language (Baker & Jones 2005). When learners are required to learn the content of a second language, they are faced with the problem of content literacy (Van der Poll & Van der Poll, 2007). When learners have to use a language that they are not proficient in, then mastering the content (both practical and theoretical) of a subject becomes very difficult (Van der Poll & Vander Poll 2007). This, in turn, affects learners' performance because language

plays an important role in the understanding of technical terms in a subject (Van der Poll & Van der Poll 2007, p.40).

For learners who are not taught in their mother tongue, the practical aspects of other subjects like Physical Sciences and Life Sciences become important. With the availability of the right resources, educators are able to demonstrate experiments which can help learners as well as those who are taught in their mother tongue to gain a visual experience of the events that are taking place, thereby improving their understanding. Thus, school identity construction and learners' performance are affected by the use of the medium of instruction. The schools that have a high failure rate sometimes ignore the use of English as a medium of instruction, and learners find it difficult to answer questions when they are in an examination. Rammala (2009) emphasises the use of English in schools for better learners' performance.

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a synopsis on learner performance within the South African context to show its significance to school education in terms of its relative performance regionally and internationally. The chapter further engages on the issues that have been deemed to influence learner performance generally and more specifically within impoverished communities. These influential issues on learner performance form a backdrop to explore and understand what the researched school leaders (principals of secondary schools in the researched district) have experienced, embarked upon and attempted to change their school image as they aspire for new school identities.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters presented an in-depth analysis of literature on school identity, learner performance and leadership in the South African schools' context. The analysis of literature showed that there is a generally accepted held view amongst researchers that there are numerous problems at various levels associated with learner performance, and a great number of factors influences this. In an attempt to generate further understanding of the subject in line with views of school principals, two theoretical frameworks were chosen in the strive to construct new meaning. These theories were Social Identity Theory (SIT) and leadership theories. These theories are the focus of this chapter.

Theoretical framework, in the context of this chapter, is a description of an explanation of the idiosyncrasies surrounding a particular phenomenon, wherein such explanation is based on evidence gathered and analysed over some time (Fomunyam, 2015). A theoretical framework allows unambiguous hypotheses to be made about interrelatedness in the world (Henning et al., 2004). For this study, where the depth of school identity construction and learner performance is being discussed, theories derived from educational psychology in the social context are significant in forming the framework for the complexity of the contributing factors. This chapter therefore presents the complexities as articulated by the chosen theoretical framework on social identity, in order to streamline the study within the identified research focus and theorising thereof.

4.2 SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

Wenger (1998) argues that identity develops through participation in a community; for example, the principal's engagement within a school organisation or, indeed, broader culturally embedded groupings. Individual identity is fluid, fragmented and ambiguous and is situationally determined by time, place and circumstance, and this creates multiple identities. Individual identity only becomes meaningful as a social identity when the individual associates with a group or team (Heystek & Lumby, 2011). The South African history of enforced separation may have had the consequence that separation is inborn in everybody's consciousness thus, influencing individual identity in South African schools towards forming groups with strong associations caused by and structured in the country's historical context.

Social identity is defined as “the individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups, together with some emotional and value significance to him of group membership” (Tajfel, 1972). The social identity approach posits that the necessary and sufficient condition for the formation of social groups is awareness of common category membership. Turner (1982) describes a social group as two or more individuals perceived as members of the same social category because they share a common social identification of themselves. This is a group of two or more people who interact with one another, share similar characteristics, and collectively have a sense of unity. Tajfel (2010) posits that members of a social group tend to define themselves as a group, interact with each other, and develop a social structure. The presence of these social structures play a divisive or unifying role and, also affects the functions, operations and success of the school.

Social Identity Theory (SIT) evolved from the works of renowned social psychologists Henri Tajfel in 1974. The theory emerged from his work on intergroup processes which focused on the genesis of conflict between social groups, and the factors which influence support for or attempts to change established social hierarchies (Sindic & Condor, 2014). John Turner later adapted this theory as the basis of self-categorisation within social groups. Tajfel and Turner (1979) introduced the notion of social identity to theorise how people conceptualise themselves in intergroup context. Social identity theory states that individuals have their own personal identity as well as a social identity and the two overlap (Onu, nd). This means that the social group influences and may dominate the individual’s identity. The theory holds that membership of social groups be integrated as the social component of self-concepts, implying that the self is partially defined by membership of social groups (Bornman, 2010). According to Onu (nd), who studied the development of social identity and social group affiliations within schools and how it affects educational outcomes, results show that this process can have direct negative or and positive effects on learner outcomes. The Social Identity Theory (SIT) is defined as the individual’s knowledge that he/she belongs to certain social groups together with the emotional and value significance of the group’s memberships. Also, it aims to explain the uniformity and coherence of group and intergroup behaviour as mediated by social identity (Smelser & Baltes, 2001). Tajfel (1978a, p. 63) defines social identity as “that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership”. From this perspective, group membership influences individual identity and perspective. A school, therefore, belonging to a particular category is bound to exhibit the

characteristics of such categorisation because the membership to which it belongs is directly influencing its other identity. Sindic and Condor (2014) confirm this when they argue that group membership provides people with a sense of their unique or appropriate place in the social world and acts as a practical guide to their actions as it provides behavioural guidelines within the group. The processes therefore associated with the social identity as opposed to personal identity inform intergroup rather than interpersonal behaviour. This, thus guarantees that people see and acknowledge themselves with regards to group membership, as well as see other individuals as members of the group rather than individuals in their own right. Tajfel and Turner (1979) further argue that within the group, there is bound to be minimal intergroup bias, because individuals see and relate in line with the group rather than the individual thereby making relationships between these groups a defining characteristic of social identity or their social identity.

The SIT explains the broader understanding of school identity construction and learner performance. The theory articulates a continuum in which identity and relationships can be depicted as purely personal and interpersonal at an extreme end, and purely social, or intergroup at the other end. The relationship between the leadership of abilities and capabilities of the school principal and the performance of the learner performance in the school can therefore be understood within the lens of this theory.

The theory sees the person within the circles of the group and asserts that group membership creates in-group or self-categorisation and enhancement in ways that favour the in-group at the expense of the out-group. Self-categorisation within the framework of school identity in secondary schools is one of the factors that separate or differentiate schools according to quintiles. It has been argued (Smelser & Baltes, 2001) that SIT stresses the fundamental role of social interaction and social identification as a perception of oneness with group of persons. So, the subjecting of schools into quintiles has a direct impact on learner performance. Similarly, principals as leaders of schools perceive the school identity and ethos that influence learner performance. Hogg and Terry (2000) believe that organisations are internally structured groups that are located in complex networks of intergroup relations characterised by power, status, and prestige differentials. This makes social identity an individual's knowledge of belonging to a particular social group and the value such membership offers him or her (Hornsey, 2007). Burke and Stets (1998) adds that SIT begins with social categorisation as the main construct. The use of this theory in the study is vital as the study focuses on school identity and learner performance with reference to the leadership of

secondary school principals. Wilkins et al. (2015) posit that learners with high levels of social identity are more likely to adopt a deep learning approach; this affects their performance positively. This was also echoed by Bliuc et al. (2011) whose findings suggest that , social identity is associated with a deep approach to learning, and this is linked to higher academic performance.

Sindic and Condor (2014, p.45) add that SIT “proposes a motivational element to intergroup behavior by suggesting that people are generally concerned to maintain, or to achieve, a positive sense of self, and that when they identify with social groups, this manifests itself in a need to perceive the groups to which they belong positively”. This means that if the principal of a school adopts leadership mechanisms which gives every stakeholder within the school a say and a sense of belonging, such group dynamics would evolve ensuring that teachers strive to improve the performance of their learners. Sindic and Condor (2014, pp.45-46) add that social categories are often defined and evaluated comparatively. Therefore, “in order to achieve a positive evaluation of their group, group members will be motivated to establish, and to maintain, a positive differentiation (i.e., positive distinctiveness) between in-group and relevant out-groups on valued dimensions of comparison. Membership of groups consensually regarded as superior will confer a positive social identity, and conversely membership of groups consensually regarded as inferior will confer a negative or unsatisfactory social identity, which may, under certain conditions, motivate the members of those groups to take collective action towards challenging the existing social hierarchy and the inferior status conferred to their group”. When schools are categorised as belonging to Quintiles 1 to 5, they see and make themselves superior or inferior in relation to the other as the case might be. This makes learner performance a direct product of school identity, which is itself a product of school categorisation, which is achieved within the parameters of group or social identity.

In this study, therefore, the school is seen as a group with similar culture, value system with respect to teaching and learning as it guides their interactions with one another and with the members out of their group. The figure below illustrates this more clearly.

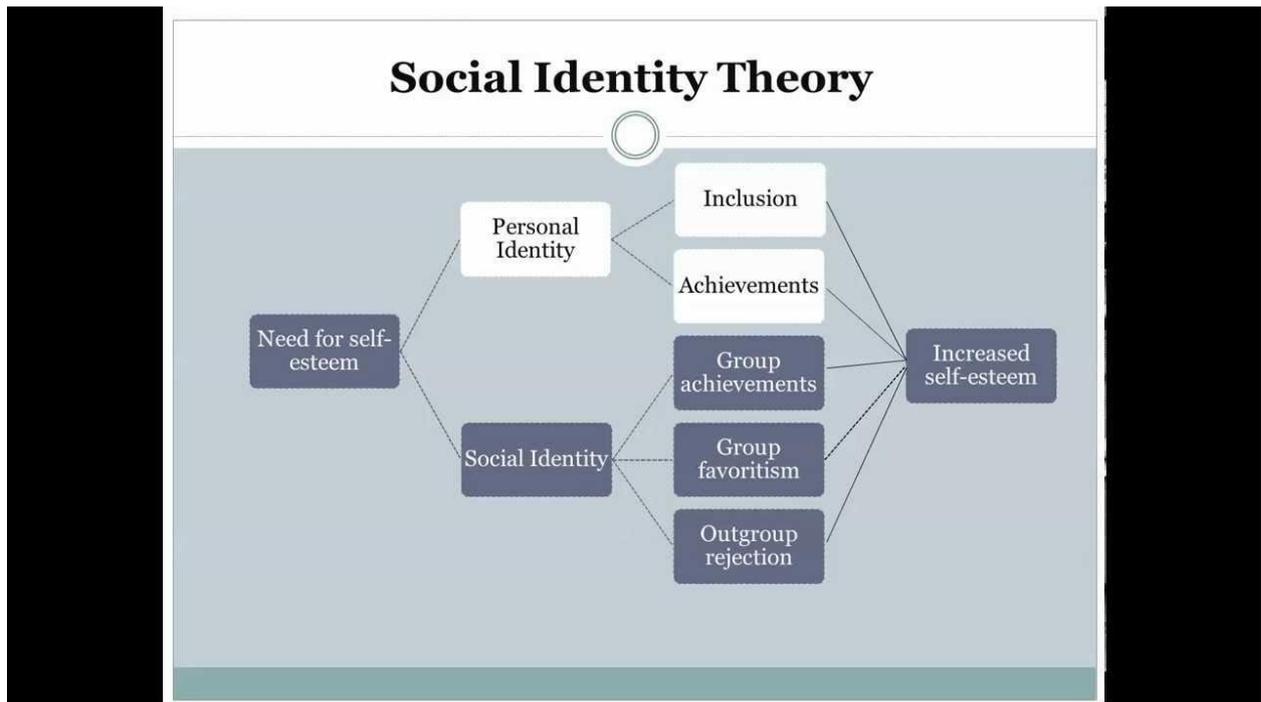


Figure 4.1: Schematic Presentation of Social Identity Theory (Hornsey, 2007)

Figure 4.1 above illustrates the interconnectedness of social identity and the kind of emotions or characteristics it builds in the individual depending on how well or not the individual is engaged in the entity and within the school context how learners, teachers and the principal engage in the construction of school identity and the improvement of learners performance.

Another argument of SIT is that social identification stems from the categorisation of individuals, the distinctiveness as well as the prestige or status of a group. From this perspective, how a school is categorised by the Department of Education reflects the individual's cognitive perception in the way they view the world and the challenges they encounter. This often creates the stereotypical impression that all members of a group have the same qualities. Further, social identification leads to activities that are congruent with the identity, support for institutions that embody the identity. For the principals' perspectives of their learners' performance as influenced by their school's categorisations to be understood, the school needs to be understood as a group with distinct features as the SIT claims. Once the school has been adequately contextualised, it would then be appropriate to begin to understand learner performance.

Trepte (2006) argues that SIT focuses on the group in the individual and assumes that our belonging to social groups defines one part of self-concept. Thus, people categorise

themselves and others as belonging to different social groups and evaluate these categorisations. SIT, therefore, is a social-psychological theory that attempts to explain cognitions and behaviour with the help of group- processes; where SIT considers the part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership. Thus, SIT is based on more or less favorable comparisons between the in-group and a relevant outgroup. This, to Korte (2007), makes SIT a theory of group membership and behaviour which was developed to understand how individuals make sense of themselves and other people in the social environment. It thus seeks to explain the uniformity and coherence of group and intergroup behaviour as mediated by social identity. Therefore, SIT provides a useful theoretical tool for the task of exploring the influence of social group membership on individual experience and behaviour.

Sindic and Condor's (2014) concluding notion of SIT is of particular relevance to this study. They point out that a key construct of SIT is identity management, and this focuses on the strategies that people adapt to deal with unsatisfactory social identity and how this may lead to collective action. This suggests the idea of permeability of group boundaries, that is, the extent to which people think and believe that it is possible for individuals to move between social groups. As a result of "the fact that people in groups considered inferior perceive individual mobility to be possible, they may respond to their inferior status by attempting to "move up" the social hierarchy and by psychologically dis-identifying with the group to which they currently belong. However, when such mobility is perceived to be impossible or undesirable, people may engage in various forms of collective activity aimed at changing the comparative value associated with their group as a whole" (p. 54). By extension, schools in Quintiles 1-4 would therefore desire to move from one category to another in terms of learner performance. If and when this does not yield the desired results, the school is bound to reinvent its status by rebranding or perceiving the status attached to the group which they belong. The success or the failure of the attempt to move from one category to another would be heavily dependent on the managing or leadership abilities of the principal. According to Bush (2008), to secure high-quality education in South Africa, schools need effective leaders. This has put the focus on educational leadership as it is perceived that learner performance and school outputs are directly proportional to the quality of school leadership. Schools have realised that their greatest assets are their human potentials such as competent teachers

managed by effective principals. It is therefore critical to look at the leadership theory informing the study.

4.3 LEADERSHIP THEORIES

Leadership theories provide possible critical explanations of how leadership behaviours and styles develop, which in this case is the school principal. Chen and Lee (2008) state that “leadership is seen as a set of skills or traits that individuals either had or could acquire through training”. But in recent years, leadership is now about groups, surfacing beliefs and values, information and assumptions, making sense of work in the light of new information, generating ideas and acting on them. The principal holds the highest position in the school, and as a leader, his behaviour and personality affect the attitude, climate, progress, cooperation, and direction of efforts in the school. As stated by Ibrahim and Al-Taneiji (2013), after reviewing over 40 empirical studies, Hallinger and Heck (1998) concluded that there is a statistically significant impact of principal leadership on school effectiveness and learner achievement. Waters et al. (2004) reported that effective school leadership substantially increases learner’s achievement and this was echoed by Kruger et al. (2007) who found that school leaders influence learner outcomes and school culture. As the head of the school, the success of the school depends on the principal’s ability to lead properly (Farahbakhsh, 2006). Unlike teachers, principals impact learning indirectly by establishing purposes and goals, through people, and through the school culture (Leithwood et al., 2004; Hallinger & Heck, 1996). In South Africa, education is constantly in a state of flux forcing school management to adjust their management methods periodically (Parag, 2014). This implies that school principals must continuously take innovative actions and strategically structure their leadership practices to enhance the quality of instruction and subsequently, learner performance. Parag (2014) further states that to identify as a successful school, the principal has to share a compelling vision, develop the teachers and learners in alignment with that vision and, diligently ensure compliance, implementation and delivery. This assertion is evident in the research conducted by Moorosi and Bantwini (2016) with an objective to discover how the prevailing leadership style by school principals in Eastern Cape school districts in South Africa support or hinder change and school improvement. Their findings revealed the prevalence of more authoritarian top-down leadership styles, which had a negative impact on school improvement in this district. One can conclude even though it is not proven that this is one of the reasons behind the district’s terrible performance as recorded by the 2017 school monitoring survey (SMS). Research has concluded that school principals

as leaders play a critical role in establishing the conditions necessary to improve school output and learner performance, it is, therefore, pertinent to discuss the leadership theories adopted to achieve these results.

Freire et al. (2019) discuss school identity construction and the effect of reification by school leadership agents on learner performance; some school leaders reify learners as a means of devaluing them in order to motivate them in the long run. This leadership style will see some learners separated or placed in unfavourable positions because they have been perceived to influence the group negatively. Most times, these learners begin to fail, not because they have learning difficulties, but because being reified legitimises the emergence of some ideas about themselves related to school performance and determines forms of interpreting some of their behaviours. To deal with this unfavourable situation and maintain their psychological wellbeing, learners develop two forms of engagement with the school. Some disengage from the school and devalue its identity while others develop creative processes. This illustration by Freire et al. (2009), exposes the understanding of the implication of the leadership model adopted by school leadership agents on learner performance, learner identity construction and school identity.

Leadership has been described in different ways and forms in the field of teaching. Also, the views on leadership theories have changed over the years. Sayed (2013) categorises leadership theories in two categories: traditional and new leadership theories. The traditional theories are characterised by trait, behaviour and situation; while charismatic and transformational leadership are seen as new leadership theories. Sayed (2013) argues that effective leadership depends on the interaction of three factors, namely: the trait and behaviours of the followers, the characteristics of the followers and the nature of the situation in which leadership occurs. Figure 4.2 below exemplifies this.

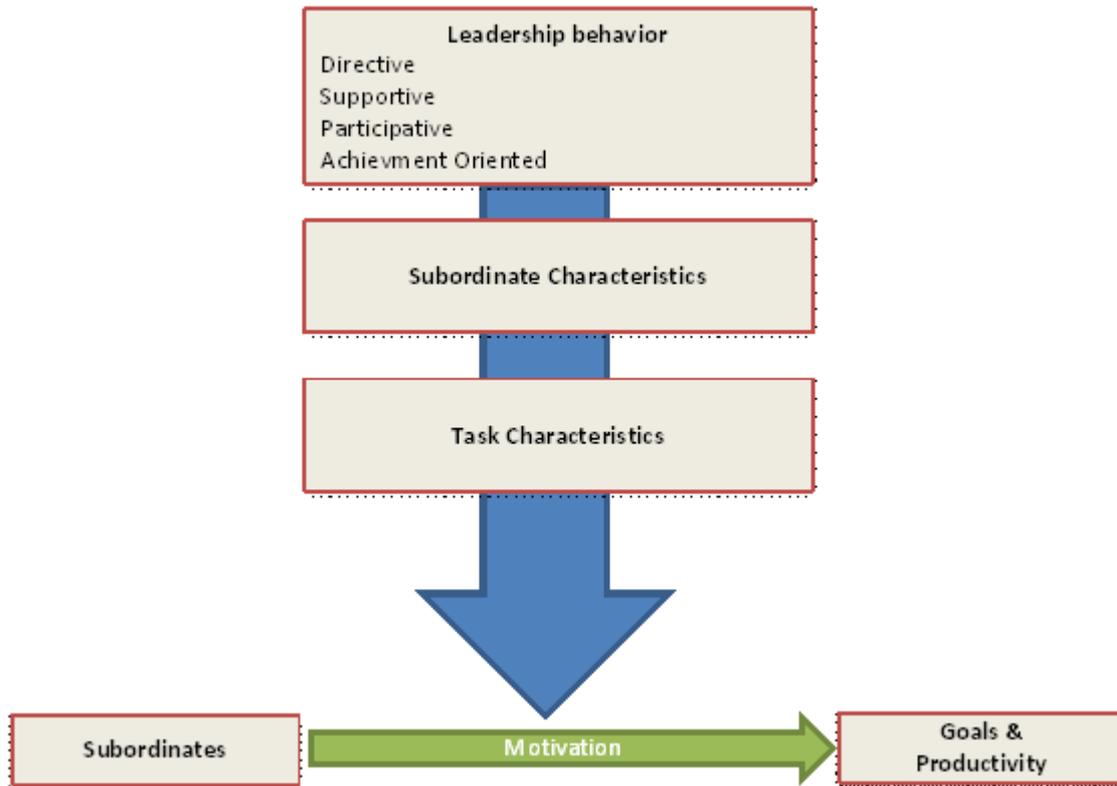


Figure 4.2: Leadership Theory

From the Figure 4.2 above, it is clear that how successful a leader is, is dependent on a variety of characteristics and how such characteristics are enacted within the organisation. If the leader is directive, supportive, participative and goal or achievement oriented, then subordinates would do the same. The theories discussed below illustrate this more clearly.

4.3.1 Trait Theory

The Trait Theory (TT) was formulated between the 1930's and 1940's based on certain qualities such as intelligence. This theory assumes that people inherit certain qualities or traits, and this makes them better suited for leadership. This theory often identifies particular personality or behavioural characteristics that are shared by leaders (Farahbakhsh, 2006). This approach is similar to the Great-Man Theory (GMT) which emphasises that a person is born with or without the necessary traits of leadership, traits like commanding personality, charm, courage, intelligence, persuasiveness and aggressiveness (Khagendra, 2016). As stated by Thomas Carlyle, the GMT claims that leaders are born and only those endowed with heroic potentials could ever become leaders. The capacity for leadership is inherent and people cannot learn to be leaders as it is either something you are born with or born without. The Leadership Theory (LT) then progressed from the claim that leaders are born to a reflection

of certain traits that envisage a potential for leadership (Khan et al., 2016). McCrae and Costa (2003) argue that the TT can be defined as habitual patterns of behaviour, thought, and emotion that often manifest themselves in a wide range of situations. These features being relative stability over time, alternative degrees of expression in different individuals, and influence on behaviour. The TT focuses on personal characteristics of successful leaders. Oyetunyu (2006) believes that trait theories are based on the opinion that leaders are right; and that leadership is rooted in the authority of their righteousness. He adds that leaders are born with certain characteristics that make them great leaders. These characteristics are distinguished from other characteristics that may generally define a leader. This theory focuses on identifying certain characteristics that cause effective leadership. Traits alone are not enough to create a good leader as some effective leaders do not possess these traits and some ineffective leaders do, traits that relate to effective leadership are intelligence, knowledge, expertise, dominance, self-confidence, high energy, tolerance for stress, integrity, honesty and maturity (Consador, 2017). Trait theory as perceived by different authors (Omar, 2005; Sashkin & Sashkin, 2003 & Bensimon, Neumanm & Birnbaun, 2000) see successful leaders as the basis of personal attributes, interpersonal abilities and technical management skills. Personal attributes include humour, courage, judgment, integrity, intelligence, persistence, and work ethic, vision and being opportunity conscious. Moreover, technical management skills include producing results, resolving conflicts, analysing and evaluating problems, the ability to enhance the work environment, and leaders are goal oriented. Furthermore, the researchers believed that leaders are more intelligent, creative, and responsible than average people. From this perspectives, the traits of different principals would determine how they manage the school as well as how they relate with different individuals. The TT can therefore be used to understand school principals' influence on school identity and learner performance.

4.3.2 Behaviour Theory

Sayed (2013) claims that behaviour theories examine whether the leader is task-oriented (initiating structures), people-oriented (consideration), or both. Hersey and Blanchard (1985) argued that there are two major forms of leadership behaviour, namely: employee-centred and production-centred. This study explores amongst other things, which of these exist in schools in relation to school identity construction and learner performance. This study explores the relationships between school identity and how it is constructed from a leadership perspective and the resulting effect on learner performance.

An employee-centred leader is sensitive to subordinates' feelings and endeavors to fulfill their concerns. Whilst, on the other hand, the production-centred leaders' major concern is the accomplishment of the task by the employees. While it is desirable that a leader possesses both the considerate as well as the initiating structure behavioural traits, Hoy and Miskel (2001) assert that it may be difficult to match a leader's behaviour with effectiveness if appropriate behaviour cannot be linked to different situations, as situational factors affect the effectiveness of the leaders' behaviour. However, behaviour is influenced by power structures and dynamics. It is critical therefore to understand the notion of power and how this influence leadership behaviour and the relationship between school leadership and learner performance.

There are two major constructs of power and influence theories, namely: (i) theories that consider leadership in terms of the influence or effects that leaders may have on their followers i.e., Social Power Theory (SPT) and Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) and (ii) theories that consider leadership in terms of mutual influence and followers (Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Transactional Leadership Theory (TLT)) (Sayed, 2013.p. 64).

Sayed (2013) believes that social power theory explores the possibilities of leaders using their power to influence the activities of others. Some researchers use the phrase Charismatic Leadership Theory (CLT) to characterise to such leaders. This theory was originally introduced by Weber in 1947 to describe how followers attribute extraordinary qualities (charisma) to the leaders. The theory was modified by (Conger, 1989; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; House 1977; Shamir et al., 1993) to understand the current leadership of the organisations. This theory explores the level of influence a leader has over his or her followers and the type of leader-follower relationship that emerges. The core behaviour in charismatic leadership varies somewhat from theory to theory and sometimes from older to newer versions of the same theory. The key behaviours in the theory include articulating an innovative strategic vision, showing sensitivity to the environment, displaying unconventional behaviour and taking personal risks. Figure 4.3 below shows the characteristics of a leader. Ho and Low (1997) describe a charismatic principal as "a principal who is understanding and approachable, perceptive, and sensitive, and one who leads the staff in the school's vision and mission..., where the principal has foresight, is visionary and dares to make changes..., and where the principal and teachers share the same vision and work towards common goals", which is to enhance the school identity and improve learner performance. Soucie et al. (2000) further conclude that a charismatic principal is one that is sensitive to environmental

opportunities and constraints, sensitive to the needs of school teachers, and has the ability to effectively articulate and promote a vision for the school.



Figure 4.3: (Soucie et al. 2000) The Charismatic Leadership Theory

From the Figure 4.3 above, the leadership process focuses on the leader, the context, the follower and the outcomes, and in the case of this study, the school, the principal and how he or she manages the school and the outcomes which he or she is expecting from the followers.

4.3.3 Situational Leadership Theory

While trait and behavior theories do help us understand leadership, an important component is missing: the environment in which the leader exists (Khagendra, 2016). The Situational Leadership Theory (SLT) states that effective leadership comprises three factors, i.e., traits, behavior and situation. The SLT was developed by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard, and according to this theory, there is no single right way to lead because the internal and external dimensions of the environment require the leader to adapt to that particular situation (Khan et al., 2016). Instead of using just one style, successful leaders should change their leadership styles based on the maturity of the people they are leading and the details of the task. Using this theory, leaders should be able to place more or less emphasis on the task, and more or less emphasis on the relationship with the people they are leading, depending on what is needed to get the job done successfully (Khan et al. 2016). For example, in a situation where

the leader is the most knowledgeable member of the group, an authoritarian style of leadership might be adopted, but a democratic style will be adopted in a situation where group members are skilled experts. Khan et al. (2016) further state that the SLT theorised that there was no unsurpassed way to lead and for leaders to be effective, they must be able to adapt to the situation and transform their leadership style between task-oriented and relationship – oriented.

Situational Leadership Theory



Figure 3.2 Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory¹⁶

Figure 4.4: The Situational Leadership Theory (Khagendra, 2016)

As illustrated in Figure 4.4 above, the SLT identifies styles (S1, S2, S3 & S4) appropriate for each level of follower readiness (R1, R2, R3 & R4), the implications for learner performance is dependent on how well school principal implement their leadership style. For instance, Franklin (2000) explains situational leadership and some styles the school principal can adopt when dealing with staff to achieve maximum results. He states that in situational leadership, there are four leadership styles, and they are directing, guiding, supporting and delegating. This theory posits that the leadership style of the school principal should be flexible to change. In their dealings with teachers, principals should adopt a directing leadership style for teachers

with low readiness, a guiding leadership style for moderate readiness, a supporting style for moderate-high readiness, and a delegating leadership style for teachers with high readiness (Franklin, 2000). Learner performance is the final result of the principals' leadership style and is also a direct measure of the school identity.

The SLT focuses on particular variables related to the environment that might determine which particular style of leadership is best suited for the situation. The success of a leader here depends on several variables, including the leadership style, qualities of the followers and aspects of the situation (Khagendra, 2016). Effective leadership is not just about the qualities of the leader but, about striking a balance between behaviour, needs, and context. Parag (2014) posits that an application of this theory results in increased levels of competence, confidence and commitment of the followers due to reduced levels of close supervision and increase in delegation by the leader who in this case is the school principal. This theory can play out in a typical South African school setting as it functions with the help of the School Governing Body (SGB) headed by the principal. The SGB is made up of the principal, educators, learners and the host community members, but the principal is regarded as the most powerful member of this group (Xaba, 2011). Although the leadership style for this group is meant to be democratic, the principal may decide to adjust if he finds that his group members are not experienced or have the required skill set to ensure that the objectives of achieving improved learner outcomes are met. This means that the social identity model adopted by the principal will have a direct effect on the identity of the school. According to Hallinger (2003), transformational leadership, on the other hand, focuses on developing the organisation's capacity to innovate. It focuses on selection of organisational purposes to support the changes and practices of teaching and learning. Lunenburg (2010) affirms that the principal's primary role is to promote the learning success of all learners in the school. Also, Cheng (2002) describes a leader in an educational institution as one who does not only adapt his or her behaviour to the situation, but also transforms the institution.

The Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) was formulated by Bass (1985, 1996). Bass (1996) defines transformational leadership primarily in terms of the leader's effect on followers, and the behaviour used to achieve this effect. The followers feel trust, admiration, loyalty and respect toward the leader, and they are motivated to do more than they originally expected to do. Yukl (1999) describes transformational leadership with the underlying influence process that is described in terms of motivating followers by making them more aware of the importance of task outcomes and empowering them to transcend their own self-

interest for the sake of the organisation. Oyetunyi (2006) also states that transformational leadership focuses on a different kind of leader's influence that encourages followers to emerge as leaders. Transformational leaders create organisational conditions in which followers can develop their leadership capabilities. Transformational leadership theory suggests that effective leaders create and promote a desirable vision or image of the institution. Unlike goals, tasks, and agendas, which refer to concrete and instrumental ends to be achieved, a vision refers to altered perceptions, attitudes, and commitments (Omar, 2005). Sayed (2013) affirms that transformational leadership theory shows the sharing of power by leaders rather than exercise power over followers, and by so doing transformational leadership empowers followers to be able to accomplish what they think is important. This study explores, amongst other things, how leadership approaches such as TLT help in attaining the school vision by the principals. The principals exercise leadership in the construction of school identity and improvement of learner performance.

The key ideas of transformational leadership theories focus on rules and regulations and their flexibility and as well as the group norms guiding them. Makgato and Mudzanani (2008) conclude that the leadership styles of school principals are fundamental to the educational functioning of schools and their improvements of results. They explored the impact of the leadership styles of principals in high-and low-performing schools in Vhembe District, Limpopo South Africa and, their results revealed that transformational leadership style contributes to the high educational performance of learners in this district. The essence of TLT is that leaders transform their followers through their inspirational nature and charismatic personalities. It brings a sense of belonging for the followers as they easily identify with the leader and its purpose. It creates solid relationships that result in a high percentage of trust, which will later culminate in an increase of motivation both intrinsic and extrinsic, in both leaders and followers. Figure 4.5 below throws more light on transformational leadership. Balyer (2012) states that transformational leadership can be divided into four factors, and they are; inspirational motivation, individualised consideration, idealised influence and, intellectual stimulation. Inspirational motivation refers to teaching by example; this means that an effective leader must follow their own recommendations. Individualised consideration refers to creating close bonds and relationships with followers so as to acquire their trust; it emphasises on the power of relationships. The third factor which is idealised influence relates to leaders influencing the behaviour and attitudes of the followers for the benefit and success of the organisation through service by example. Finally, the factor of intellectual stimulation

involves challenging and stimulating followers intellectually by involving them in tasks and decision-making process, thereby forcing them to think and create innovative solutions.

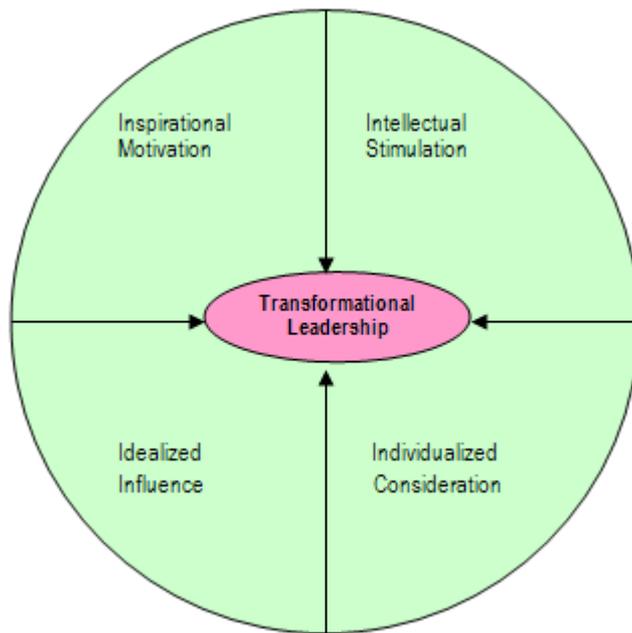


Figure 4.5: The Transformational Leadership Theory

Figure 4.5 above articulates the operations of transformational leadership and insinuates the kind of results it would have on both the learner and the teacher within the school context. Adopting a transformational leadership approach within the school context would therefore work towards the construction of a more positive identity for the school and the improvement of learner performance.

Theories underpin the philosophical ideas on a particular subject and have far-reaching implications in shaping understandings of leadership in the context of the school, where leaders have to influence the construction of school identity and produce better learner performance. Understanding leadership theories is therefore critical in exploring the relationship between school identity and learner performance from school principal's perspective. This is because leadership theories explain organisational capabilities and abilities, and these abilities influence how school principal's work towards school identity construction and learner performance within the school.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has established the rationale for the choice of the two theoretical framings that underpinned the study. Chapter 5, which follows presents the research design and methodology that was adopted when conducting this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Fomunyan (2015) opines that research design and methodology centre on the approaches, methods, instruments, frames, and schema used by a researcher in the quest to develop an understanding of a particular phenomenon. This includes the design of the study, the approach, the instruments used in generating data, who was involved in the generation of the data, and how the data generated were made sense of. To this end, this chapter discusses the research paradigm, research approach, the research field, selection of participants, and biographical profile of participants, school sphere of influence and data generation methods, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical consideration. This chapter is divided into three sections.

The first section states and justifies the research design and maps out the research methodology in line with the critical questions. The motivation to engage in life history research and the use of narrative inquiry as research methodology were guided by the principals telling their stories. The second section describes the steps taken to activate the study. The choice and profile of the participants are explained, and the data generation plan, illustrating the different phases of the study, is provided. The choice and design of instruments for data generation are described and justified. Research protocols as well as ethical considerations are presented in this chapter. The challenges and limitations of the study are also highlighted. The last section focuses on data analysis and the limitations of the study.

5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Maree (2007) defines a research design as a researcher's plan of action that will give direction during the research indicating who or what is involved, and where and when the study will take place. This makes the research design the map for the study. Briggs, Coleman and Morrison (2012, p.107) confirm this when they characterise the research design as the "schema or plan that constitutes the research study". The table below outlines the research design for this study.

Research Design Table

Guiding Research Question	
<p>Research Question</p> <p>How does the school principal account for their learner performance within the context of quintile school categorisation and school identity?</p> <p>The sub-questions were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does the principal account for their learner performance since assuming school leadership responsibilities? 2. What engagements did the school principal embark upon to change the schools' image and identity? 3. What were the outcomes of school initiatives embarked upon by the school principal to change the identity of the school? 	
Paradigmatic Suppositions	
Epistemological Models	Interpretivism
Methodological Models	Qualitative Approach
Research Design	
Case Study	
Selection of Participants	

Purposive Sample	Four Secondary School Principals
Data Collection	
Data Collection Methods	Narrative Inquiry
Data Analysis and Interpretations	
Data Analysis Method	Content Analysis Transcribing Data Categorising and Theming
Data Trustworthiness	
Aspect of Trustworthiness Attended to:	Tape-recorder Transcripts
Ethical Consideration	
Ethical Elements attended to:	Research Permission Informed Consent Confidentiality and Anonymity

The research methodology is a significant component of any research to be conducted. Gough (2000) opines that the word ‘methodology’ is derived from the Greek words ‘*meta*’ (with, after) and ‘*hodos*’ (the way). It is also referred to as ‘*methodos*’ (a following after) and ‘*logos*’ (reason, account). Thus, methodology is basically the principles that guide the theory of producing knowledge. Briggs et al. (2012) contend that the quantitative, mixed methods and qualitative methodologies are the three approaches that researchers use to help them answer

their research questions and find solutions to their research problem. Research methodology assists the researcher to gain knowledge about the phenomenon being investigated (Cohen et al., 2011). Within this study, the research methodology was instrumental in the development or construction of knowledge on the relationship between school identity and learner performance.

Since this study explored perspectives from school principals, a case study approach was used as the methodology. Yin (2003) describes a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. This definition brings to the limelight several key constructs of case study research by emphasising the nature of the problem which should be contemporary within the natural setting. It also highlights the fact that a case study becomes an apt approach when the difference between the phenomenon and context is not quite clear, as is the case with many real-life situations or human relationships. A case study research, from this perspective, is a research approach which provides the researcher an opportunity to explore issues whose core is difficult to find or explain. Therefore, this study is justifiably a case study, and this approach is employed to theorise the relationship between school identity and learner performance from school principal’s perspectives. The case under scrutiny in this study was of four schools from KwaZulu-Natal, and the units of exploration were school identity and learner performance. These four schools are also located in KwaZulu-Natal precisely in Hlokozi rural area within the Ugu and Harry Gwala Districts. Rule and John (2011) add that a case study can shed more light on the phenomenon and provide a thick, rich description of the case and also illuminate its relations to a larger context. The perspectives of school principals could likewise be studied as a case study since the focus was on rich and in-depth insight into the phenomenon. Fomunyan (2015) argues that a case study research fits effectively within the broader frame of qualitative research.

5.2.1 Qualitative Research

As indicated above, this study is qualitative. Nieuwenhuis (2010) postulates that the qualitative approach to research centres on exploring every piece of information about a subject or phenomenon. It brings to the limelight, every detail about the case being explored. Within the confines of this study, the qualitative approach is vital in the generation of detailed, rich, and in-depth data about the relationship between school identity and learner performance

from school principals' perspectives. Creswell (2009) argues that there are diverse components of qualitative research. First, it engages multiple processes and a variety of data generation methods. Second, exploration is a primary feature, and this can take one or more forms like grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and biography amongst others. Third, Qualitative research often focuses on a phenomenon or problem and not a combination of issues. It does not engage in hypothesising or the back-and-forth relationships amongst variables in quantitative research. However, relationships might eventually find themselves in the research project, but this is not the priority. Fourth, how the findings or results of the research are going to be verified are set out at the beginning of the study and rigour is ensured as the researcher is writing out the findings of the study. Fifth, trustworthiness is required to guarantee that readers identify with regards to the issue or become part of the phenomenon as they read the findings. Sixth, a multifaceted approach to analysing the data in diverse groupings is always engaged. Finally, a qualitative research gives the reader the opportunity of engaging with the study, since the findings are often replete with astonishing perspectives while ensuring that trustworthiness is maintained.

Furthermore, Cohen et al. (2011) argue that the qualitative research is used in different ways: to seek out and polish fields or answer questions, to present information for research analyses, to highlight and present the alternative pathways emerging from the research project, to improve data from quantitative research, to fill up or seek answers or explanations to gaps in quantitative research, to offer alternative perspectives on a particular phenomenon, to influence decision making base on research, and finally, to develop new ways of translating results into practice. Neill (2007) adds that qualitative research offers the researcher multiple opportunities of accessing or developing insights about the case being explored through the unraveling of meaning by increasing comprehension. Such an approach to research investigates the depth of the case being explored and is often tied to the interpretive paradigms (Lowe, 2007), in which meaning is principally constructed from content (Henning, 2004). Lichtman (2006) adding to this opine that the qualitative approach to research gears towards understanding and describing the perspectives, relationships and experiences embedded in human life, garnered over the course of the individual's life journey. This research is, therefore, justifiably qualitative because it seeks to explore the perspectives of school principals on the relationship between school identity and learner performance. The perspectives of school principals will be explored to generate rich, in-depth data as they voice out their perspectives (Lichtman, 2006). Exploring the relationship between school identity

and learner performance by looking at perspectives from school principals aids the researcher to develop an understanding of how identity influences performance and vice versa and what needs to be done to improve learner performance in schools.

Maxwell (2005) asserts that the qualitative approach to research should without ambiguity explain particular problems, generate or construct specific kinds of desired outcomes, have practical goals which can be realised and meet a need. He highlights that there are several goals of qualitative research; the first goal which is practical in nature should centre on generating theories and constructing new knowledge which can be understood by anyone literate and which is trustworthy. The second goal, which is also practical in nature, centres on formative evaluation to ensure that the findings of the research can improve both performance and practice. The third goal, which is practical in nature, gears towards collaborative and cooperative action research between several entities or parties. The fourth goal, which is intellectual in nature gears towards understanding the meanings given to situations or problems by the participants, as well as understanding the context in which the participants find themselves. The fifth goal, which is also intellectual in nature aims at recognising unexpected issues or problems working on theories which will explain or resolve such issues or problems. The last intellectual goal seeks to construct simple explanations for complex issues what had hitherto remained unanswered. The qualitative approach was therefore chosen in this study since it aims at exploring and understanding the relationship between school identity and learner performance.

5.2.2 Interpretive Paradigm

According to Christiansen, Bertram and Land (2010), a research paradigm represents a particular worldview that defines for the researcher who carries that view, what is acceptable to research and how. Each research paradigm is defined by the way it generates and interprets data and consequently, the meaning made from the data. A research paradigm can therefore be a reflection of a certain set of beliefs about the nature of the world, what can be known about it and how we can know and understand it better. Christiansen et al. (2010) believe that the way we see the world influences the way we research the world. This is why it is important for each study to define which paradigm it uses for its research. Fomunyam (2015) adds that a paradigm is an intellectual perception or view, accepted by an individual or a society as a clear example, model, or pattern of how things work in the world. This study adopted the interpretive paradigm. Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) argue that the interpretive, Interpretivism or interpretivist paradigm is alternative names for the paradigm which originated from the

philosophy of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and Wilhelm Dilthey's hermeneutics. Interpretivism gears towards understanding "the world of human experience" (Cohen et al., 2011, p.39). In this light, the interpretivist researcher seeks to understand the participant's vision and perceptions of a particular issue (Creswell, 2003, p.8) and also recognises the subjectiveness of their perception since it is based upon their personal or lived experiences. Since the focus is on depth, interpretive research most often engages qualitative data generation approaches and methods of analysis in research or a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve the objectives of the study. Göran (2012) argues that Interpretivism considers reality or knowledge to be embedded in people's subjective worldview, making reality to be socially constructed. He further explains that interpretivists believe that there is no one single approach or correct answer to any research problem; neither is there any 'correct' or 'incorrect' theory or idea. In interpretive research, knowledge is judged based on how interesting they are to the researcher and those involved in the same learning area. As such, this idea, no matter how varied it may be, is constructed through a careful examination of its relationship to the phenomenon. Since knowledge and meaning only emerge from interpretation (Thomas, 2010), there is no objective knowledge which is independent from human thinking. Myers (2009) supports that the central idea for interpretive research that access to reality both in cases where it is given and in those where it is socially negotiated is only through social constructs like language, consciousness and shared meanings. This makes knowledge in interpretive paradigm a product of interpretation, since by interpreting the researcher makes meaning in relation to the phenomenon being explored. The interpretivist paradigm, therefore, offers the researcher an understanding of a phenomenon through the meanings people give to it. Reeves and Hedberg (2003, p. 32) also point out that the "interpretivist paradigm stresses the need to put analysis in context". Creswell (2008) adds to this by opining that the interpretive paradigm emphasises the construction of a comprehensive analysis of a particular case and this caters for a thorough understanding of the relationship between school identity and learner performance from the perspective of school principals. Since experience is subjective, meaning can only be constructed from experience through the interpretive paradigm since it offers the opportunity of understanding the problem afresh and creates room for diverse interpretation and meaning-making. This, therefore, is justifiably an interpretive study.

Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p. 31) argue that the interpretive paradigm acknowledges the fact that "results are not kept somewhere out there waiting for the

researcher to come and take, but it is created and recreated through the interpretation of data''. In the same vein, Creswell (2008) opines that the interpretive paradigm is principally orchestrated towards meaning-making and knowledge construction processes of an individual from his or her perspective. This, therefore, means that the school principal's behaviour or experience is mechanically affected by his or her knowledge of the social world making reality a multiple phenomenon and socially constructed across space and time (Creswell, 2008). Nieuwenhuis (2010) concludes that within the interpretive paradigm, reality can only be socially constructed and its knowledge is personal or self-objective, generated from a lifetime of experiences and constructed through careful interpretation leaving meaning to be constructed within the individual. In this context, the researcher wants to explore the relationship between school identity and learner performance from school principal's perspectives.

According to Sarantakos (2005), critics of Interpretivism have argued that the paradigm comes short of "acknowledging the organisational structures, particularly divisions of interest and relations to power and as a result presents partial accounts of social behaviour by their neglect of the political and ideological contexts of much educational research" (p. 24). This study bypasses such criticism since it looks at the experiences of individuals within a social order and since the society shapes the individual, the individual can effectively represent the society or a social order and all that happens in it. Figure 4.1 below represents the representation of the interpretive paradigm.

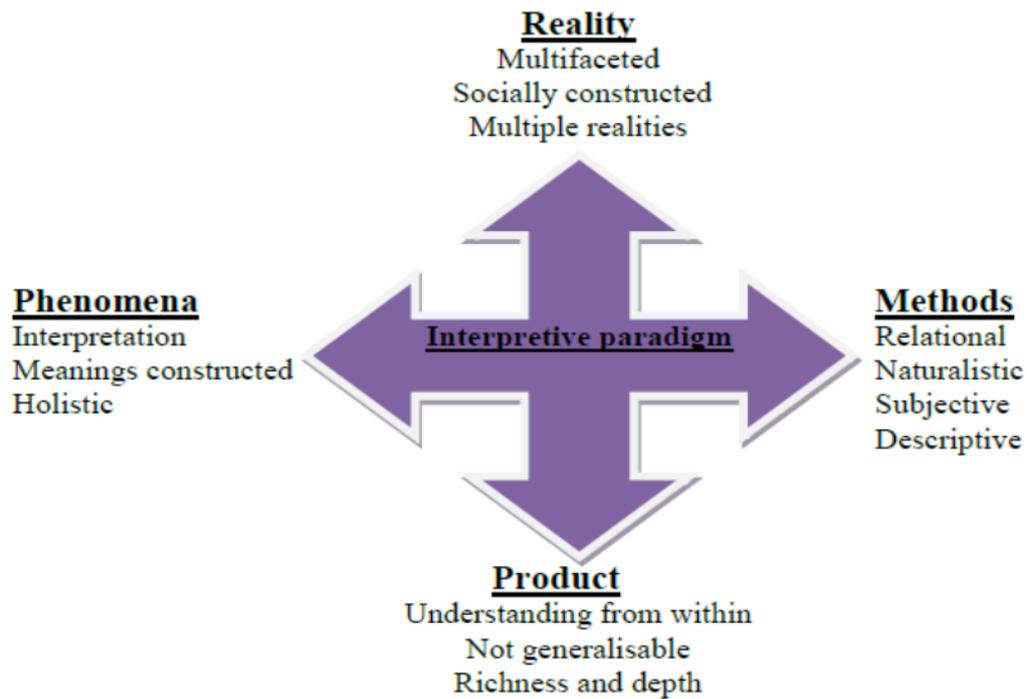


Figure 3.1: The Interpretive Paradigm (adapted from Nieuwenhuis, 2010, p. 55)

5.2.3 Sampling

Babbie (2013) defines sampling as the group of people where the researcher wants to draw conclusions. The eight school principals were sampled, and four eventually participated in the study. They were Methusi, Hleziphi, Melusi, Mdabe, Thekwani, Ntelezi, Duzuka, and Mkhunkuli. These principals were chosen because of the location of their schools and the categorisation and quintile rankings of the schools. But, for the analysis chapter, I opted for the rural secondary school as the focus of my study. The four principals were purposively sampled. Cohen et al. (2011) and Creswell (2012) define purposive sampling as an approach to sampling wherein a researcher chooses participants from a target population which he or she believes have the characteristics they are looking for based on the researcher's personal judgement. This gives the researcher the opportunity of selecting a sample which he or she thinks is satisfactory to his or her specific needs. Teddlie and Yu (2007) add that purposive sampling can be used when a researcher desires to establish some level of representativeness, compare one phenomenon against the other or focus on exceptional cases so as to develop theory through the continuous generation of data from a variety of sources. Hence Cohen et al. (2011) pointed out that purposive sampling is a key aspect of qualitative research. As such, purposive sampling was chosen in this study because of the in-depth details required from school principals on the relationship between school identity and learner performance. This

research was therefore justified in engaging purposive sampling to get participants who fall within the target population. The study which centres on the relationship between school identity and learner performance had four participants. These four school principals whose experience of more than fifteen years both as a teacher and a principal were specifically chosen by the researcher based on the understanding that they possess a sea of knowledge and experiences on school identity and learner performance and how the two mutual enforce one another. The researcher chose four participants for the research based on Cohen et al.'s (2007, p. 101) assertion that “there is no clear-cut answer, for the correct sample size”. Therefore, any researcher chooses the sample size he or she thinks will provide the kind of data needed to answer the research questions. The tables below provide more insight on the participants.

Table 5.1: Participants’ profiles

Name of participant; teaching experience	Name of school; location	Category	Primary Feeder school to secondary school	Children’s family background	Language spoken by children
Methusi,26	Hlokozi	20	Nolizwe	Poor class	IsiZulu
Hleziphi,25	Hlokozi	21	Mpande	Poor class	IsiZulu
Melusi,27	Hlokozi	21	Gabuza	Poor class	IsiZulu
Mdabe,28	Hlokozi	20	Sondwe	Poor class	IsiZulu

Table 5. 2: Participant and school profile

Name of participant; teaching experience	Name of school; location	Quintile Ranking	Home Language	Language of Teaching and Learning
Methusi,26	Mdala; rural	1	IsiZulu HL	English FAL
Hleziphi,25	Dumehlezi; rural	2	IsiZulu HL	English FAL
Melusi,27	Mlaku, rural	1	IsiZulu HL	English FAL
Mdabe,28	Bhece, rural	1	IsiZulu HL	English FAL

5.2.4 Data generation methods

Data generation spanned over a period of eight (8) months, from February 2016 to September 2016. Data were generated using three major approaches, narratives interviews (lived stories), observations and artifacts.

Data generation methods process

The method for data collection was devised in line with critical questions. The tools were chosen and designed according to the type of data required. Since the focus of this study was on principals’ construction of school identity and learner performance within the school leadership, the primary tool for data generation were biographical interviews which involved the narrative stories of school principals. However, because the study aimed at obtaining a better understanding and deeper insight into learner performance and school identity, the interviews were supplemented with school walkabout observations, informal conversations prior to and post-observation, field notes and artifacts. The use of large data collection tools helped to create a three-dimensional representation of the participants rather than a narrow perspective.

Biographical narrative interviews

The researcher’s endeavor to unearth rich, in-depth data from the participants created the need for narrative interviews. Muylaert, Sarubbi, Gallo, Neto and Reis (2014) argue that narrative interviews combine the socio-historical context with the life stories of those in this context to

bring out contextual meaning. Narrative interviews aim at revealing individual experiences and often through more light on the identities of individuals and the images they have of themselves or the phenomenon they are narrating. Ziebland (2013) adds that narrative interviews more often than not are able to reproduce structures that inform the actions of individuals (in this case, school principals) than any other interview method. Thus, “the objective of narrative interviews is not only to reconstruct the life history of the informant, but to understand the contexts in which these biographies were constructed and the factors that produce change and motivate the actions of informants” (Muylaert, et al 2014, p. 187). Anderson and Kirkpatrick (2016) add that narrative interviews bring the participant to the centre of the discourse or research. They offer a means of generating data on people's own stories, which highlights their subjective experience and perspectives on particular issues like school identity and learner performance. Narrative interviews give researchers the opportunity to have a better understanding of people's experiences and behaviours. They do not use a strict agenda or set of questions, but let the interviewee guide the content, direction and pace of the interview, and are the only data generation methods which come closest to representing the context and integrity of people's lives (Jupp, 2006).

Ziebland (2013) concludes that the value of narrative interviewing is in its ability to get close to what is most important to participants through allowing them to focus on their own perspectives and priorities, using the language and terms that they prefer. This means that the participant would be in more control than in other interview approaches since they decide what to say, how to say it, and what not to say. Jupp (2006) argues that critics of the method warn against naive readings of the data and caution that a desire to collect ‘successful’ narratives could privilege certain groups while excluding or alienating other important perspectives from research.

In narrative interviews, subjectivity and positionality are privileged (Reissman, 2000), and the focus, is not on the events themselves but the participants’ understandings of these (Kouritzin, 2000). What better way is there of understanding how people see and understand the world and how they represent themselves in its midst than by studying their lives told in their own voice? Narrative interviews constituted the main source of data generation in this study and they gave the participants freedom of speech to talk and respond the way they wanted about issues they wanted to talk about. The interview schedules were designed in prompting principals to talk about their early life of teaching experiences, leadership roles in uplifting the learner performance success and failure stories.

Maree (2017) states that an interview is a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participants questions to generate data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participants. The narrative interviews lasted between two hours thirty minutes to four hours (2; 30mins to 4:00 hrs) each. A follow-up interview was conducted to fact check and ask clarifying questions on what emerged from the first interviews. The second set of interviews lasted between one hour and one hour thirty minutes each. The participants were also made to check the transcripts of the interviews to correct all errors.

All the interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participants. Maree (2017) states that the recording of interviews must be done in a meticulous manner and permission must be obtained from the participant before the recording is done.

Observation

According to Maree (2017), observation is the systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of participants, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them. The school observations were done before the engagement with the school principals. The observations were done for the morning sessions, during break times and after school. Observation is an everyday activity whereby we use our senses (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting) - and intuition- to generate data (Maree, 2017). Since some interviews were done during the holidays, the observation of these schools happened while schools were on-going.

Observation according to Cohen et al., (2011) is a vital tool for generating data about a phenomenon since it gives the researcher the opportunity of seeing and experiencing things that can otherwise not be spoken of easily. It also gives the researcher the opportunity of triangulating and ensuring that what was said during the interviews actually transpired in real life. Seeing the participants in action also revealed how they manage the school as principals and the roles they play in the construction of the identity of the school. The data gathered in observation also helped me to have probe questions during the interviews and vital insights on the principals' interactions with the staff, learners and stakeholders. Maree (2017) believes that observation is used to enable the researcher to gain a deeper insight into and understanding of the phenomenon being observed. Donley (2012) concurs that observation allows the researcher to study the social phenomenon of interest in its natural environment.

Artifacts

Artifacts were the third source of data in this study, and they constitute certificates of appreciations, certificates of awards, trophies of different categories, sports, excellent educational reports, displayed within the school premises.

Table 5.3 below provides the deeper insights on each artifact and how it contributes to school identity and learner performance.

Table 5.3: Artifacts and data generated

Artifacts	Data produced
Code of Conduct	Learner Discipline
Letters to Parents	Parental Involvement
Trophies of Excellent: (i) Sport (ii) Educational Matters (iii) Leadership Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learner Sports Participation• Academic Achievements• Continual Teacher Professional Development
Time- Tables	Time Allocations and Duties
Academic Work schedules	Learner Performance

Trustworthiness

Cohen et al. (2011) characterise trustworthiness as the level of assurance researchers in the qualitative approach can have as far as their data generation and analyses are concerned. It is assessed using credibility, dependability, and transferability and authenticity as criteria. Trustworthiness was established in this study using a variety of means. These three were considered in the process of establishing trustworthiness in the study. Trustworthiness was established in this study principally through triangulation and it is discussed in relation to the key constructs of trustworthiness pointed above.

Maree (2017) highlights that credibility can be established and strengthened through the researcher making a conscious effort to establish confidence and accuracy in the interpretation of the data, and the fit between description and explanation. The level of engagement at this point would determine to what extent the research findings are believable (Maree, 2017). Member checking was used to establish credibility in the study. On the one hand, the researcher ensured that the participants checked and corrected the transcripts of the interview and made sure everything was correct before he proceeded with the analysis. On the other hand, reliability and dependability were established through triangulation, which according to Cohen et al. (2011) refers to the use of two or more approaches or methods to generate data. The researcher was able to check one source against another to ensure that what the participants had said was in line with the observations and the artifacts. Since the data were also generated over a period of eight months, a level of consistency was established in the process ensuring that what was said in the interview was seen on campus or what was seen on campus represented or was in line with the artifacts or what the principals said.

According to Maree (2017), transferability denotes the point to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transmitted to other contexts or settings using different participants. Since the phenomenon of school identity and learner performance cuts across all schools, the use of four different schools as context for the study ensured that the findings were transferable since the different contexts produced similar ideas.

5.3 RESEARCH PROTOCOLS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The procedure for gaining access to schools, establish contact with the participants and enlisting them on the study was as follows:

- In the first instance, ethical clearance was applied for and obtained at the level of the university committee at UKZN. See appendix ...
- I identified eight secondary schools which I found in the same quintile rankings. However, the study was conducted in four rural schools from which permission was received from both the Department of Education and the school principals.
- The researcher gave the participants consent forms and explained the research procedure. They were made to understand that their participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time. They also granted permission to be recorded and were made to understand that the research process and their participation were confidential.

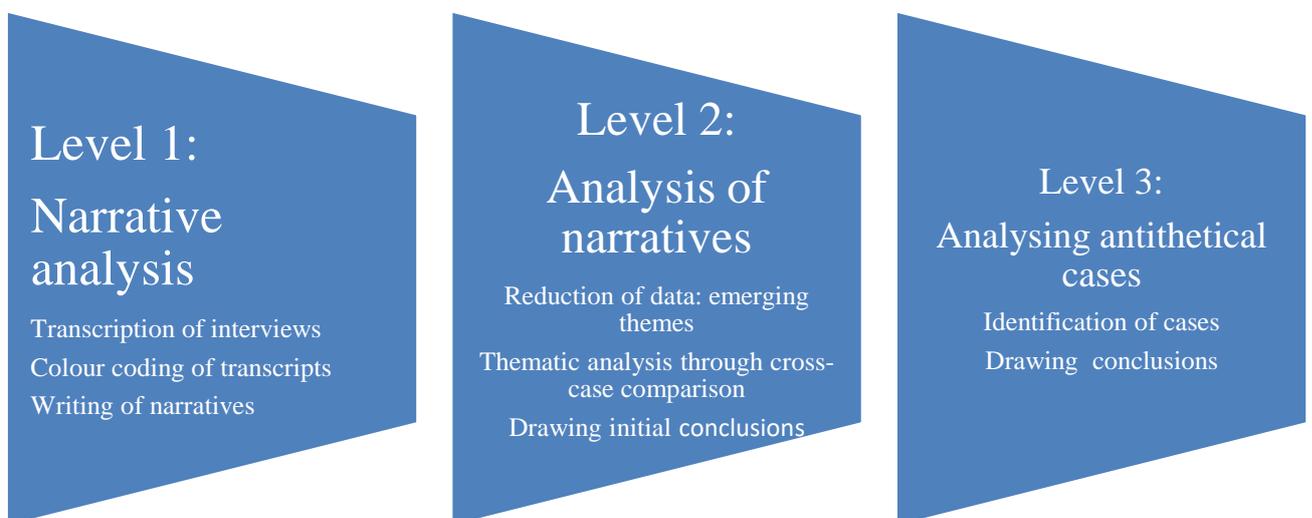
- As part of the ethical considerations, the real names of the participants, the persons mentioned in the story and the schools have not been given. Rather, pseudonyms have been used and any information likely to give them away has been left out. I must however admit that, while this was quite easily done for the participants, it was difficult for the schools as the pictures were displaying the actual school. The schools were easily recognisable by some people because of locality. However, the research did everything possible to crop out every identifying element.
- I obtained the permission from the Department of Education to conduct research in schools.

5.4 DATA ANALYSIS

In this section, I described the different phases of data analysis I undertook. This stage is consisted of three levels

- I. Level 1 was devoted to narrative analysis, that is writing the storied narratives of the participants after the interviews had been transcribed;
- II. Level 2 entailed carrying out cross-comparisons whereby the themes that had emerged in level 1, during narrative analysis, were examined in all the storied narratives to identify similarities and differences; and
- III. Level 3 focused on an in-depth analysis of cases that stood out from the rest to their dissonances.

Figure 2: Source, Ankiah-Gangadeen, 2013 below, is a diagrammatic representation of the analytical procedure and highlights the main steps of the process..



5.4.1 Level 1: Narrative analysis

The first stage of analysis constituted composing the storied narratives and itself embedded a number of steps. The participants were also assigned specific pseudonyms with justification. Bamberg (2012) as cited by Ankiah- Gangadeen (2013) indicates that analysis begins the moment we adopt the reflective posture of indwelling as we listen to recordings of interviews to immerse ourselves in the data. The table below indicates the pseudonyms and reason for the choice.

Table 5.4: Attribution of pseudonyms to participants

Participant	Status	Ethnicity	Personality	Justification for choice of pseudonym
Methusi	Working	African	Confident, sense of humour, intelligent, hardworking person	Name means 'wake up' representing him as a person who is fast in thinking and changing things
Hleziphi	Working	African	hard worker, clear goal, initiator, visionary person	Name reflects 'whereabouts' for the leadership and transformation
Melusi	Middle	Indian	Hyperactive, matured, negotiator, confident person	Name reflects 'shepherd' for community

Mdabe	Working	African	Quiet, matured person	Name means 'slow' but surely succeeding
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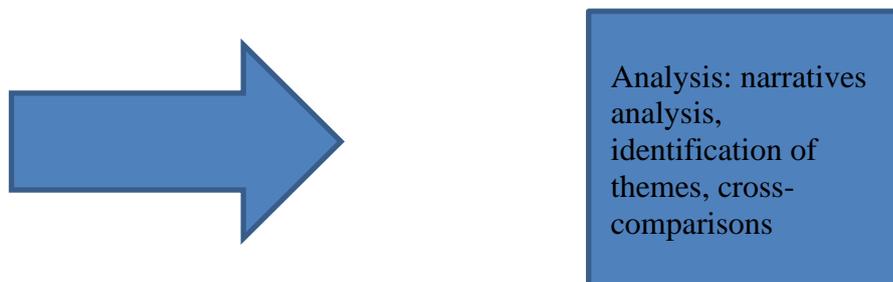
5.4.2 Level 2: Cross-case comparison

When all the narratives had been written, the researcher moved on the next level; analysis of the narratives. A process of coding and categorisation was engaged from which theme were developed. A thematic analysis was then carried out through cross-case comparison. In line with the critical questions, the researcher identified factors that had influenced school identity construction and learner performance. He further classified the information systematically in a grid, inserting a column to the left where initial conclusions pertaining to each theme were encapsulated. This refinement enabled the researcher to recognise the themes by subsuming sub-themes under broader ones.

As I engaged in an in-depth analysis of these themes in the storied lives of the participants, I could identify the specific conditions under which certain factors impacted on individuals. This exercise allowed me to earmark resonances and dissonances across the four narratives and shed light upon the phenomenon I was studying.

5.4.3 Level 3: Analysis of antithetical cases

Traditionally, research studies involve carrying out analysis by taking things apart and synthesis and bringing the parts together (Stake, 2010). This two-step process may however turn out to be quite restrictive and simplistic and hereby lead to drawing to hasty conclusions. This third level focused on a study of antithetical cases. This level of analysis was a significant validation check of conclusions that had been drawn. The diagram below throws more light on this.



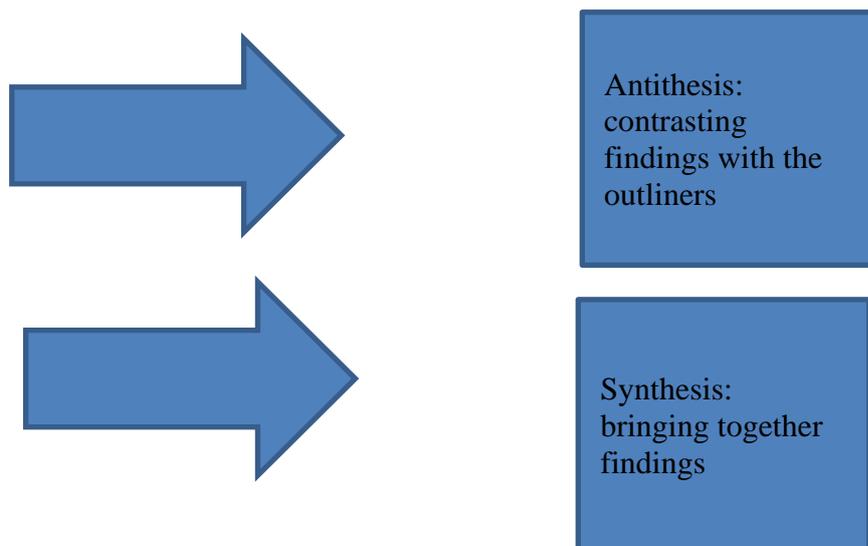


Figure 5: level three analysis Source, Ankiah- Gangadeen, 2013

The different levels of data analysis undertaken led to further degrees of abstraction and the formulation of a thesis wherein the emergent concept of school leadership in the light of their biographical experiences was depicted (Maree, 2017).

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although the strength of qualitative research lies in its focus on extracting meaning, like quantitative research, it still has serious limitations. According to Creswell (2012, p.199), “limitations are potential weaknesses or problems with the study identified by the researcher”. He add that “they often relate to inadequate measures of variables, loss or lack of participants, small sample sizes, errors in measurement, and other factors typically related to data collection and analysis” (Creswell, 2012, p.199). Since this study only focused on four schools, the findings cannot be generalized to cover the entire province or the nation. However, the researcher tried to resolve this through analytical generalization (Henning, 2004). Secondly, the principals, as heads of educational institutions, had busy schedules as they were called in meetings frequently and scheduled interviews were disrupted due to the commitments by the principal towards his responsibilities. To reduce the effects of this limitation, the researcher requested the interviews be conducted during holidays and perhaps after school.

5.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on research design and methodology. With the chapter, case study research was discussed, alongside the paradigmatic approached. The qualitative style to research was further discussed as well as the data generation methods, sampling procedures ethical considerations, trustworthiness, data analysis and limitations of the study. The next chapter which is Chapter six presents the findings of the study.

CHAPTER SIX

RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the study. It details the experiences and perspectives of the participants in line with the focus of the study. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section constitutes the stories and narratives of the participants whose pseudonyms are: Methusi, Hleziphi, Melusi, and Mdabe. The following schools have been given pseudonym names which formed the research sites of my study: Mdala, Dumehlezi, Mlaku and Bhence. The stories are also presented across Quintiles 1 and 2 schools, and in relation to how the principals of the respective schools viewed their school identity constructions and learner performance. The second section draws from the four narratives to identify the most significant influences on school identity constructions and learner performance and also examines these relations to the existing knowledge base as brought out in the review of the literature.

6.2 STORIED LIVES

6.2.1 Mdala Secondary School

The school is situated in the area called Inyavini Tribal Authority, in the vicinity of Umzinto town. The road to school is untarred and is approximately 20 km to the tarred road. It is under the tribal authority of Inkosi uNgcobo. Although the school is under the tribal authority, modernity has not influenced the community in substantial ways. Some aspects of the traditional way of life still exist, and these include, amongst others, girls taking part in the reeds dance (a traditional event to encourage young girls to maintain their virginity) and people fetching firewood from the forest for their cooking and heating. The school is under Umzumbe Local Municipality, which is the rural municipality under Ugu District Municipality. The picture below shows an aerial view of the community.

Figure 6.1: Mdala Secondary School



The school was established in 1955. It was the only secondary school in the area of Inyavini. It previously catered for African learners coming from the surrounding areas like Jolivet, Emabheleni and Gudlucingo, which constitute a very large span of rural land. In the past few years the school's buildings became dilapidated and they were renovated between 2013 and 2015. The school buildings are conducive for teaching and learning purposes. The picture below is a front view of the school.

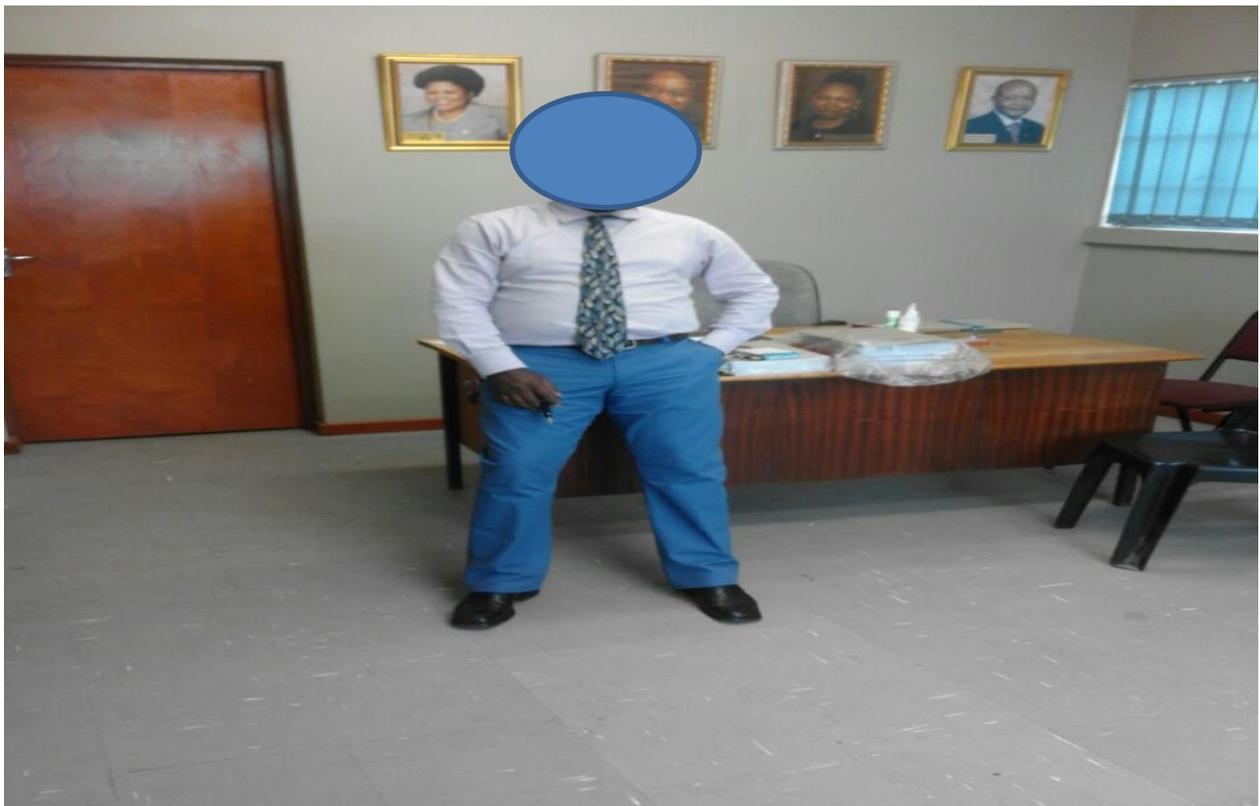


There is a library and a science laboratory which was donated by BMW. The classrooms are clean with full ceiling boards and fully electrified. As the old structure of apartheid African

schools, the classrooms layout are characterised as block classroom following the chain-like manner pattern as seen in the picture below.



The administration block is attached to the classrooms. The principal's office is attached to the staffroom and administrative clerk office. There are pictures of the parliamentarians and the Department of Education Officials hung on the wall of the principal's office.



Currently, with the establishment of more schools, the learners are mainly coming from the areas of KwaMaqhikizana, KwaGonti and Esinyameni, which while still is a large geographic rural area, is closer to these communities than the wider communities that it drew its learners from when it was initially established. Most of these learners travel to school on foot. There is no transport subsidy or arrangement for learners by the Department of Education. Those

parents, who can afford it, do hire taxis to transport their children to school. The learners are mostly well-behaved although there are often incidences of indiscipline ranging from late coming to noisy classrooms, amongst others.

The school has qualified teachers, but some of them are still studying towards teacher qualifications. They stay at the school cottages to facilitate early morning and late teaching. The school accommodates learners from Grades 8 to 12. It is situated in an area with low socio-economic status and poor living conditions. Most of the people are unemployed and depend on social grants offered by the government. Hence the Quintile 1 ranking of the school. At the entrance gate, there is a South African flag, which is a national symbol for learners. It stands as a symbol of the nation, reminding them of the values the nation holds dear. The flag stand was raised by the Representative Council of Learners chairperson and the secretariat. All learners stand still when the flag is raised and lowered.



The school has two heads of department (sciences and commercial streams). It has seven post level one educators. At the time of conducting the research, there was a total 291 learners within the school. In Grade 8, there were forty-seven (47) learners; in Grade 9 there were fifty-seven (57) learners. In Grade 10, there were seventy-one (71) learners while in Grade 11 they were sixty-five (65) and finally in Grade 12 they were fifty-one (51) learners. Grade 10 seems to have the most number of learners.

Mdala Secondary School has educator committees which help in the running of the school. There is a School Governing Body (SGB) which also assists in the governance of the school

to ensure the school functions smoothly. Within the constitutionalised body, there is a Representative Council of Learners (RCL) which is democratically elected by learners with the top five executives led by the president. Mdala Secondary School is governed and regulated by the Department of Basic Education in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The picture below is a representation of the Representative Council of Learners.



Learner performance at matric is regulated and administered by the examination and assessments board and monitored by Umalusi. The school's identity related to learner performance is then evaluated based on the performance of the learners for that year. It is the responsibility of the school principal and the entire stakeholders to achieve the standards set by the Department of Education.

Mdala Secondary School is headed by Methusi, the principal. He is an African aged 42 years. Methusi was promoted to be a HoD after two years of experience in teaching in another school. He later went to Mdala Secondary school as an acting principal. He has been teaching for nineteen years, of which fifteen years were in management positions. He is a Mathematics and Physical Sciences teacher. He holds the following professional qualifications: Secondary Teachers Diploma (STD), Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), Advanced Certificate

of Education (ACE) and Honours degree. His entire teaching experiences were located in rural areas.

With nineteen years of teaching experience, and with fifteen years of experience in school management, Methusi is one of those principals who have grown to strongly believe in themselves and the work they do. As a teacher of Mathematics and Physical Sciences, a positive mind-set and a smile on his face, is his approach to everything within the school. He believes that charity begins at home, and does all in his power to ensure this is a practical reality in his school. Speaking in relation to this, he narrates his journey as principal as follows:

As a principal, I started instilling self-belief to myself before instilling self-belief to educators. I came with clear goals and visions of the school. As a leader, I produced distinctions in Mathematics between the year 2000 and 2008. This is the most motivating strategy I used to motivate my educators as the principal. I was a HoD from year 2000 to April 2010, and then I moved to be an acting principal in May 2010 to December 2010. I was promoted in January 2011 to be a principal.

Reflecting on his first days as principal, Methusi concluded that success in the school is dependent on the leadership style used by the principal.

Speaking about the dire situation in the school before his arrival, Methusi pointed out the following:

When I came here, the school pass rate in Grade 12 was 10 %. The school enrolment was 325 learners. There were thirteen educators according to the PPN. (1 principal, 2 HoDs, and 8 Level 1 educators). On my arrival one HoD was displaced, and the second one was on maternity leave, and there was no SMT member to welcome me. I had to rely on the administrative clerk, ward manager and office documents like Logbook to get information about the school and its functionality.

He further stated that:

The ward manager would visit the school once a month after several calls having been made to invite him to the school. The Logbook was written in way

that it was not easy to make the follow-ups on matters of the school, especially on the infrastructure development and learner performance. And the administrative clerk would tell me that some of the things were done in her absence.

Reflecting on the challenges faced in the drive to revamp the identity of the school and improve learner performance, Methusi opined that:

I wanted to be somebody different in the community and school. On my arrival, the school results in Grade 12 were 10%, and internal results (Grades 8 to 11) were between 80% to 100%. The school had no principal for about three years; it seemed as if I was starting from scratch. The community did not believe in the school since the results were very poor. Learners flew to nearby schools. The school was totally disorganised. I have to eradicate late coming for both educators and learners, reduced absenteeism and, introduced proper uniform for learners. I have to introduce the submissions of monthly reports by educators.

Looking back at the strategies he employed in improving learner performance and consequently the image of the school, he added that:

There was a lot of pressure on the side of the Department of Education to increase the school's performance. I had to think and devise strategies on my own as I was the only SMT member. I started with frequent morning briefings and staff meetings, where I tried to motivate educators to do their work and try to conduct morning classes and afternoon classes. In the absence of HoDs, I had to give educators the opportunity to nominate and elect two educators to act as HoDs without being paid for the work they were going to do, and fortunately they agreed. I gave them a schedule of things to do, administrative files and learners' files and that work was to be checked every afternoon. More of departmental programmes were put in place to assist educators in terms of subject content knowledge. I invited different subject advisors and educator specialists from better performing schools to assist. I also encouraged educators to do team teaching where it was possible. The Grade 12 results improved in 2012 to 42%. In 2013, I started evening classes from 18h00 to 21h00. The learners were sleeping at school, and results improved

to 83, 3% in 2014, which was the highest pass rate the school has ever achieved in its history.

Methusi strongly believes that the leadership style he used played a crucial role in the reconstruction of the school's identity as well as the improvement of learner performance.

Speaking about this, Methusi sighed and lifted his chair up and down and swerved sideways and stated the following:

I believe that the learner performance is mainly directed by commitment of educator's as they set the tone of what their learners should do in their respective subjects. For me as a principal, it is easy to construct the school identity as long as the management, educators, learners and parents all come on board and contribute on issues that will make their school unique. For instance, learners should have good and positive behaviour throughout the year for the best learner performance. This cannot be achieved if educators are not on par with teaching skills and strategies.

Highlighting the secret of the school's success in relation to educators, bravely he stated that:

The secret of my improvement in Grade 12 results was the work of the staff. The educators worked tirelessly, committed and with enthusiasms. The staff went back to teaching basics. We hold departmental meetings, staff meetings on a regular basis, and in all meetings teaching and learning was the main agenda to be discussed. The analysis of results was done on a regular basis normally on a quarterly basis. The extra classes and support from the other stakeholders were accepted by educators. I was always telling my staff that they can still do better than the previous performance.

Going back to basics by educators transformed the school from what it was to a better school. Methusi believed that the collaboration of educators in working towards a common goal helped the school to achieve success. Creating a conducive space for learning in a dysfunctional environment is not an easy task, as pointed out by Methusi:

As a principal of a Quintile 1 school, it is frustrating to manage the school with funds secured by the department somewhere. The school does not have enough resources. The allocation of funds is given as a guide of requisition

to the school. It is difficult to obtain school resources from the department as they delay the process of ordering and delivering to schools. As a principal of the high school, I need resources for current curriculum. As a Quintile 1 school again, we are a no-fee school - the school that is not collecting school fees from parents. You cannot ask money from the parents as stipulated by the department while they keep these norms and standards to themselves. The school does not have a library, proper computer laboratory and science laboratory.

Expressing his gratitude regarding the successes of the school Methusi pointed out that:

My prayers were answered when the science laboratory was recently donated by BMW with the interventions of the KZN Premier's office in the Flagship Programme which was initiated by former Premier Sbusiso Ndebele to promote rural schooling. BMW supplies science chemicals to the school on request. This assists science learners to do experiments for science subjects.

However, the results have not been what they were expected to be because of human resource challenges. Speaking about this, Methusi averred that:

Human resource is the challenge; educators who are qualified in terms of science are limited. I sat without a Physical Science educator for three months because the department could not get a qualified teacher. I ended up hiring a person with an Engineering qualification and who had no Physical Science teaching qualifications and background of teaching. Another case; it was when the Life Sciences educator left; I was left without an educator and the Life Science results dropped.

He added that:

The existence of Phungashe Resource Centre helped us a lot. The staff from the Centre would visit the school with library books and internet facility. CASME (a Science and Mathematics Education NGO attached to a university) allowed us to borrow apparatus to be used in the science laboratory; that was vital to us. The supportive input from associated bodies was of great success since the school received 83.3% in 2014 matric results.

The English as Medium of Instruction also improved as learners embarked on public speeches.

School identity construction and better learner performance is achieved through stakeholder involvements. Methusi involved all stakeholders in order to achieve better learner performance. In this school, the principal leads, believes, and gets commitment from teachers and support structures; consequently, learner performance keeps improving.

6.2.2 Bhece High School, a Quintile 1 school

The school is situated at Jamangweni circuit. It is in the vicinity of Gudlucingo area. The school was established in 1992 as the satellite of Thekwani Secondary School. In 1993, it became a school on its own. It starts from Grade 8 to Grade 12. It has two Heads of department and eleven post level one educators. The school has the following personnel: administrative clerk; security guard and general assistant. The total enrolment at the time of data collection was 262 learners. The school participates in the following sporting activities: soccer; netball; athletics and Zulu dance. It is a Section 20 school in terms of school norms and standards funding. The school has been supplied with mobile classrooms by the Department of Basic Education because of a lack of adequate classrooms for its teaching and learning processes.



The permanent classrooms that are available are in dire need of renovations to make them conducive for effective teaching and learning.



The prefab classrooms that were provided by the Department of Education are used as administrative offices for the entire SMT and administrative clerk. This is due to non-availability of administrative buildings. There is no privacy for the principal as he shares office space with the entire SMT.



The same prefab office is used as a display room for school achievements.



The storage of various useful teaching and learning material is in the same prefab classroom which is used as the administrative block. This prefab administrative office is used by the administrative clerk, principal and two HoDs.



The school is headed by Mdabe, who is an African male and 54 years of age. He holds the following educational qualifications: B.Pead and B. Ed (Hons). He has 28 years teaching experience, and has been in management positions for 16 years. He majored in English and he has been teaching this subject in Grade 12. Mdabe believes that leadership should be by example. Speaking about this, he pointed out that:

I am supportive to my staff. I give guidance to all people at school. I live by example. I come early to school and leave late. I used to teach English Second Language in Grade 12 since I started teaching till 2015, before the department gave us a lot of work and attend a lot of meetings. When I was

full-time teaching, it helped me to gauge the standards of learners because I engaged with learners on a daily basis about their performance. Now I rely on the HoD reports, which sometimes do not give a true reflection of my learners and expectations. When you receive the mark list and progression schedule, you will find that learners are passing. But come the end year results, marks decline drastically. This shows that somewhere and somehow teachers are not doing justice to check learners work properly. I am a dedicated and humble person to my staff; I love my staff. I do a lot of networking with better performing schools.

Reflecting on his past as an educator, Mdabe raised several issues which he thinks must be taken into consideration for learner performance to improve. He pointed out that educators need to be supported if they are to produce the desired results. He believes that principals must lead by example, and both the principal and the educators must network with better performing schools to understand how to achieve such results and to mirror the same in their schools.

Speaking about this, he averred that:

This was the best school in terms of results. The highest pass rate was 100% in 2004. (With a smiling face and immediately changed his face). We are sitting at 40, 7 % now. This is a disgrace indeed. But what spoiled the results were the riots which were instigated by the educators when they were fighting with each other.

Conflict amongst educators hampered the smooth functioning of the school. As such, the educator's commitment and dedication to school work lead to better learner performance. Adding to this, he pointed out that:

The high absenteeism here at school is one of the major causes of learner performance decline. Can you imagine today I told my grade 12 learners that we writing a test; but guess what there are learners who are absent from school. Learners are not serious. I even told them that today we are verifying the NCS registration but some are absent.

He further outlined other causes of failure by saying:

The lack of discipline to our learners is a major threat to educators. Most of our learners participate in community violence. They come with that kind of behaviour at school, that of being unruly. Some are ring leaders in these community fights. Even some of the educators do participate in these community riots and find it difficult to discipline the learners because, outside of school, they are friends.

Mdabe pointed out that curriculum intakes also create problems and result in poor performance. Justifying this, he stated that:

The subject intake and packages on offer at school is one of the problems of the school. Most of our learners take Physical Sciences and Mathematics. These learners are not capable of doing these subjects, hence the failure rate is high.

Mdabe shared the same sentiment with Methusi in losing excellent educators, which led to a decrease of learner attainment standards at school. Those who are left loose interest in teaching and disciplining learners because their colleagues have left. As a result, everyone becomes demotivated including students resulting in poor learner performance. This has resulted in indiscipline amongst learners as they exhibit unacceptable behaviours, like violence and high levels of absenteeism without formal reports.

Reflecting on the challenges he had faced as a leader in the school over the years, Mdabe pointed out that:

Leading is not an easy task. I remember in 2005 when the strike took place in school. This strike was started by educators because they did not want to follow school procedures and legislations. I was blamed by the educators for being very strict when I needed submissions of work to learners subsequently, they started calling me names. For example, I am a principal who does not care, principal who is an oppressor and many more.

Based on his leadership experiences, Mdabe had similar challenges with other participants like Hleziphi where most educators are not qualified. Educators want to behave in the manner they want in school without the proper procedures. Adding to this, the Department of Basic Education makes numerous demands, which according to Mdabe, is a deterrent to achieving the kind of results he wants. Speaking about this, he pointed out that “*unbearable desires*

which caused by the Department of Basic Education through the quintile ranking system frustrates me as a principal with the entire staff.” Heaving a sigh, he added that:

The department requires us to produce best results, just the same as in well-resourced schools. We are a section 20 school and in quintile 1. The poorest of the poor schools in categorisation. The school receives the allocations from the department and does requisitions of school needs according to the budgets that are given. Some resources that we order do not arrive in time. Since the school is located within a poor community, the school does not have access to resources from the community or parents that may uplift the results of the school. As I have said that the school is coming from the poor community; it is difficult for a learner to purchase a calculator and all other modern resources. Also lack of parental involvement hinders the learner performance in this area. When I call parent to come to school to discuss the learner’s behaviour and progress; parents do not come to school. Even if it’s the parents meeting to discuss crucial issues, parents are not available. Most of learners are staying with grannies and youth who they do not pay respect to.

Lack of parental commitment to Mdabe is amongst the reasons for poor learner performance.

6.2.3 Mlaku High School

The school is located in Hlokozi. The school had 24 educators and 726 learners at the time of data collection for this research. It is a Section 21 school. It is also a Quintile 1 school in the rural area of Hlokozi. The school is under Chief Dlamini, who is well-known as Lusibalukhulu clan.





The school is headed by Melusi the principal. He is an Indian male educator. He is 53 years old and holds JSED, FDE and ACE as the educational qualifications. He has 27 years teaching experience, 19 of which are in management positions. He majored in the following subjects: Technical Drawing, Needlework, Woodwork, Fitting and Turning. He is currently teaching Technology in Grade 9. Melusi, pondering on the initiatives that have been taken to make a difference in the school, was of the opinion that strategies are the key to successful leadership. Self-efficacy, practical evidence and confidence of the principal are also at the heart of this. Melusi elaborated his leadership style by pointing out that his confidence undoubtedly derived from successful experiences of practice; as a principal, he has grown to influence the strategies

he uses in working for a better identity for the school as well as the improvement of learner performance. Elaborating on this he stated that:

The school was dilapidated and old. The buildings looked like 'pig sty but through my initiatives of seeking donations in different companies to uplift the standard of education and learning, I successfully obtained numerous donors to renovate the school.

He added that “*I am the principal with a difference; I know how to make things happen. The computer laboratory which was donated by Department of Energy, I made it a point that it is fully functioning.*” However, having equipment or resources does not instantly guarantee a pass for the learners; they need to study. And studying is made easy with the right conditions and atmosphere. Melusi speaking on this, pointed out that:

As you know that the school is in a rural area, it is difficult to have learners residing far away from the school and still have better results. What I requested from the parents was to get rented houses for the learners next to the school in order to have better results. Parents welcomed the idea and it improved the school performance.

To Melusi, therefore, the quality of learner performance is dependent on the initiatives taken by the school principal. Elaborating on this, he pointed out that:

The learner performance is based on the principal's initiatives and support to the entire staff members. It is not easy where a lot of educators have their own conflicts and agendas. This negatively hampers the learner performance. But as the principal, I decided to hold constant meetings with my staff to fill-in the gap of rumours about decision-making at school. I involved the learner structures in decision-makings to avoid conflict with educators.

Describing this situation as harder than anything he had ever done before, Melusi added that:

The situation began when there was promotional post for deputy principal. All head of departments applied for the position. The only senior head of department was appointed. The aggrieved head of departments started to neglect work, they absent themselves from school and even did not want to attend SMT meetings. The school has three HoDs; Sciences, languages and

humanities. The science HoD was appointed to be the deputy principal. The situation started to be odd with the other HoDs. The situation forced me to engage labour unions and departmental officials to address the matter. A stable and co-operative staff is a key factor in improving learner performance.

Expatriating on the difficulties such behaviour created, he narrated that:

I remember when a Grade 12 learner was alleged to have assaulted and kissed the educator in a Grade 12 class. The learner came to the office unruly, and he was behaving as if he was drugged. He shouted at all the educators. I was forced to call the police to sort out the matter. (Sighs)I was then accused of arresting the learner by members of the community. The SGB was also on the side of the learner.

Melusi focused on departmental policies in achieving his vision and goals to develop the school identity and learner performance. Speaking about the consequences of disagreements and lack of qualified educators, Melusi observed that:

The image of the school was dragged by the decline of the school's results in Grade 12 to 47.5% in 2015. When I arrived in this school, the results were sitting at 80%. But due to lack of experienced educators, results dropped. Most of the educators moved to other schools for promotional posts. The school was then left with little appropriate human resource, especially in Mathematics and Accounting. The school had computers that were donated, but these were not properly serviced resulting in a decline of their utility. Furthermore, there was a decline in interest in the subject Information Technology.

The decline of learner performance has been shared by Methusi, Mdabe and Melusi. This was due to lack of skilled and qualified educators in these schools. To add to this, Melusi was of the opinion that the attitude of the community towards hiring skilled professional is also part of the problem. Expatriating on this, he averred that:

There is a lot of community intolerance in this area. The members of the community feel that they can employ someone they know who comes from within the community. I felt discriminated when I came here as an Indian

person to the rural African community. They never understood that during apartheid I was called Black. It was very difficult to adapt to the situation. It was even worse when I wanted to communicate with learners in English. Even the teachers treated me very badly in staff meetings. All in all, I was not accepted, and that had an impact on the matric results.

Melusi encountered the challenge of not being accepted by the community because of colour and race. Racial discrimination causes the shift on creating and constructing school identity and focus was on racial differences and community preferences. Such a factor is a contributor to the declining performance of learners in the school.

6.2.4 Dumehlezi Secondary School

The school is situated in Gobhamehlo at Highflats. It is under the tribal authority of the Kwa Xaba clan. The entrance from the gate leads to the administrative block with unpaved parking for staff cars.



The school is along the road, which is gravel, and which makes it easier for travelling by educators and learners.



The display of governmental officials brings with it a sense of acknowledgment of the current government to the school.



The front office has several trophies displayed as the pride of the school.



The sports field is still under construction.



The sanitary conditions in the school are not conducive for learners. The portable toilets within the school do not have proper doors, and the number of toilets compared to the number of learners is outrageously small. The school is categorised as Quintile 2 although it has features of a Quintile 1 school. The nearby primary school across the road is Quintile 1 and falls under Section 21 school.



The school is headed by Hleziphi. She is a 42-year old African with qualifications in the following areas: Secondary Teacher's Diploma, Higher Diploma in Education. Ed (Hons) and M. Ed. She has taught for twenty years and has been in management positions (HoD, deputy principal, acting principal and principal) for fifteen years. She majored in English and

Geography. She is currently teaching English in Grade 11. Speaking about the condition of the school before she arrived, Hleziphi pointed out that:

I am the principal of the school since 2005. I was an acting principal after the dismissal of the principal by the community and learners. When I arrived in this school in 2005 as deputy principal, the school was not performing very well in the matric results. The 2004 matric results were 44%. I was promoted to this school coming from the school which was obtaining 100% results in matric. That school was performing badly before I arrived. I remember that the school results were 44%. On my arrival in 2005, it was not easy to focus on learner performance since the school did not have enough human resource. There was no HoD for science as the previous one was displaced due to some reasons. The HoD for Humanities was seconded to another school to become a principal. The Language HoD was promoted to another school to become a deputy principal. It is difficult to run a high school with different staff members. But what makes the school to be unique is the democracy that we have in SMT.

To her, the democratic nature of the SMT ensures buy-in on all school governance matters. Speaking on the strategies she had to engage to ensure the smooth functioning of the school, Hleziphi noted that:

As a principal, I take note that the school is led with the help of RCLs, SGBs, SMTs and educators. I constantly have meetings with these structures to give feedback especially on how learners perform. I am the grade manager of Grade 12, which gives me understanding of the Grade 12 class of each year. I deal with challenges that emanate from learners like late coming, absenteeism, being rude to educators. This helps me to have an understanding of the results each year. I constantly meet with Grade12 educators to check the annual teaching plan coverage before examination commences. In the first meeting the agreement made is that as Grade 12 educators (Annual Teaching Plan) ATP must be finished in June holidays.

She further added that:

Constant meetings are arranged. Normally the school has four annual parents' meetings, but I separated the academic meetings with daily lives of the school. I decided to have meetings per grade. The meetings are conducted by grade managers to outline the programmes of the year. Mid-year meetings focus on the results of learners and parents have the time to contact educators to check the learners' progress. The final meeting prepares for the final examinations. What I have seen working too, is to group learners who are not doing well and call their parents separately and discuss the learners' progress.

To her, the process and structure of governance is the key to leadership in a school. This structure is what most departmental officials are interested in when they visit. And when this happens, this is the most critical moment for the school. Speaking about this, Hleziphi pointed out that:

I came to this school when the results were not good. The school had obtained 44% in matric results. I came to this school as the deputy principal. I had obtained 100% pass rate in my previous school, and it was very challenging to be in a school where learners were performing very poorly. The shock that I had was when the principal was dismissed in September of the year, which is 2005. As the deputy principal, I had to deal with the situation of increasing the learner performance. When the dismissal of the principal happened, I started working with the RCL chairperson and the entire body to put things together since there was disruption at school. I had constant and regular meetings; mind you, it was towards the final examinations. I had SGB meetings too. I had no SMT members since HoDs were promoted to other schools, and one was displaced. I was on my own with the educators. I started extra classes although it was very late to mend the damage. Most of the learners were unruly and ill-disciplined. I had started with 07h00 morning classes and 17h30 to 20h30 supervised study where educators came to school to check learners if they are doing the work. I also had constant meetings with parents and Grade 12 learners to discuss the problems and the need to attain good results in Grade 12. I focus on how to raise the level of education at school. I invited motivational speakers to Grade 12 although it was too late for the year. The final results were 55% from 44%. The year 2006 was the

year of achievement, and it proved the quality of my leadership. I started with staff development workshops which were then followed by the election of committees. The SGB was invited to motivate learners at the beginning of the first school day. Social partners like SAPS and Social Welfare were invited to speak to learners. The educators were developed in terms of subject's specifications. It was hectic at school when the promotional posts came out. There was a split amongst educators on who should get the post. I remember when one educator wrote a letter to the SEM saying he is not treated fairly at school. He tried to instigate other educators to buy his story; he even went to classes saying some educators are not teaching well. He even went further by accusing the SGB as not fit to run the school. After the long conversation between him and the people he accused; he said he was sorry. In 2006, I introduced morning class for Grade 12 learners; starting at seven. We as the staff agreed that the first period starts at 7h00 and to change the terminology of morning class to ensure that all learners come to school on time. As a principal, I monitored the process of late coming in order to assist the educators. Saturday classes and study time were also introduced. I copied this idea from Mthwalume high school; because the school had obtained 100 percent rate over the years. I convened a meeting with parents to request learners to stay around in order to be in school in time to uplift the standard of results. I went further with learners by calling for a meeting to discuss ways in which the performance of learners at matric could improve from that of the previous year. Through this consultation, I further introduced March, June and September classes. The educators agreed to work without getting any incentives. All these initiatives had great success. We had an Excellence Awards at the end of the year where I invited parents and Motivational Speakers to motivate the school. I also had Matric Dance, where I took learners to the Orissa Inn Hotel and a motivational speaker was there to motivate both educators and learners. The learner performance increased in 2006 from 55% to 68%.

Ensuring buy-in from all and sundry within the school guaranteed improvement of learner performance as all stakeholders worked together to improve both the performance of learners

and the image of the school. Hleziphi showed excitement when she spoke about the results for each year:

The status of learner performance here at school is fluctuating. In 2005, the performance was 55% as opposed to 42% in the previous year. In 2011, there were 71 learners who enrolled for NCS. There were 65 passes which gave us 91, 5%. These were the best results we ever had with the new vision we had for the school. The RCL president was focused. He would stand in the assembly and deliver the speech to learners in English. I remember he had attended numerous workshops when he was in Grade 11. He had the vision to pass Grade 12. He was coming from another school and had attempted Grade 12, but he failed. When he was elected to become RCL president, he focused on studies and changed the whole class of 2011 to focus on studies. Peer encouragements help learner performance of the school to grow. This was the year of challenges when HRM circulars 98, 99 and 100 was to be implemented. This HRM circular was all about reinstating all terminated unqualified educators. In the school, as SMT, we had resolved to terminate unqualified educators and employ qualified educators. The union SADTU called for reinstatement of these educators. The challenge was that, the school had employed suitable qualified educators in those positions of unqualified educators. In 2012, there were 140 learners who were progressed because of age. They spent a lot of years in Grade 11. As a school, we felt that they ought to be pushed in order to have a subject certificate. I remember when I had consultation with parents. It was only 60 out 140 who were capable of passing. Through intervention programmes that I spoke about, the school managed to pass 102 learners which made 72.9%. In 2013, there were 83 learners who enrolled for NCS. There were 83 passes which gave us 87%. In 2014 there were 100 learners who enrolled for NCS. There were 77 passes which gave us 77.0%. In 2015, there were 77 learners who enrolled for NCS. There were 63 passes which gave us 81.8%.

Hleziphi added that:

Working extra hard with extracurricular activities put the school on the map. In the same year 2006, the school embarked on several extracurricular

activities. I championed soccer and netball as a starting point so as to restore the dignity of the school. I also embarked on cultural activities. The school excelled in 2005 by obtaining 13 position ones in all categories. In 2006, was the continuation of that success especially Afro- Gospel, 'Umshado' and I introduced 'indlamu' which was the new Zulu dance in the area by networking with the Impunga High school. The confidence of the school was brought through extra-curricular activities. The school participated in sports and won the biggest tournaments at Ixopo which is called Mother of All Tournaments. The school gained trust in terms of extra-curricular engagements. The athletics club was established. The success of the school rest upon the shoulders of the committees; i.e., cultural and sports committees. I, as a principal, was to monitor and call meetings where necessary.

Hleziphi gave the green light for learners to participate in the provincial championships with excitement and acknowledgement. Expatriating on this, she pointed out that:

In 2011, the school did the same extracurricular activities. I ensured our learners trained to be the best. The 'Umshado', 'Amahubo' boys and girls, 'Indlamu', Afro- Gospel and 'Umshado' won at the provincial level. The 'Indlamu' won position one, Afro- Gospel won position three and 'Umshado' won position three. Remember the school was representing the Ugu District. There were twelve districts in these competitions. This was the greatest achievements of the school and brought the discipline as most of learners were participating on these activities.

Beyond focusing on extracurricular activities, Hleziphi also focused on improving the general outlook of the school so as to give learners a friendlier and accommodating environment to study. Speaking about, this she stated that, *"In 2006, I also focused on physical infrastructure development. Fortunately, the school was awarded two classrooms by Project Built"*. These classrooms created suitable space for teaching and learning, which otherwise was missing. Hleziphi added that:

2007 was the year of excellence. The focus was on the ongoing infrastructure development. The administration block was renovated. The structure was

designed by educators who champion the expansion project. The new staff room was also built.

Hleziphi presented some of the ways that helped her breakthrough in creating learning space. The creation of learning space gave the school the opportunity to rebrand itself and create a more positive image as well as sell this image to the rest of the district and the province. Elaborating on this, she pointed out that:

In 2008, I introduced the new sports codes. I introduced chess, volleyball and table tennis. Learners had no time to lazy around during break time; they played these sports. On Wednesday, it would be either a school tournament with one class playing the other or the school would be visited by another school. This put the school on the map within the district and province. The great success was on cultural activities where the school won up to the Provincial level. The athletics won up to National level where two learners flew to Cape Town.

Other initiatives happening around the school after school hours also helped boost the image of the school. For example,

The school was the centre for the following: Masifundisane Centre for adult people. The initiative taken by the community to learn reading and writing; the Budget Speech of the Umzumbe local municipality is usually presented in the school since the community did not have a hall and the Health Lifestyle was presented to the people of the community in the school by the Department of Health when the MEC was Honorable Peggy Nkonyeni. The school was chosen by the Department of Education to be visited unannounced during the Public Service Week. The MEC for Sports and Recreation, Honorable Rajbansi visited the school and gave sports jerseys to learners. One of the major visits was by the Durban University of Technology; the Human Resource Department to capacitate learners in the field of learning. The Faculty of Commerce gave learners briefings on passing all subjects. The Department of Forestry in the National office also visited the school to build partnership with the school.

All these activities helped transform the image of the school, made the government as a whole aware of the kind of challenges the school was facing, thereby ensuring that it got the support it needed.

The introduction of educational programmes like the Science Expo helped the school to participate in scientific activities and exposed learners to scientific thinking. I did this because I adjudicated up to the regional level, speeches and debates especially Festival of Books where learners compete in different reading programmes and enactments together with role plays. This initiative uplifted the standard of results at the school. In the same year, the experience I gained during the Service Excellence Adjudication was wonderful. The school entered the Batho Pele excellence awards to improve its services rendered to all customers. The first entry, the school won the Bronze. This was then an event which took place every year. The school won this award in 2010, 2011 and 2013. The purpose was to check the services that are rendered by the school. There were challenges in dealing with the gathering of the information. The success was based on the committee which was elected.

As Hlezphi rounded up her recollections, her tone evoked a sense of self-determination, self-belief and self-satisfaction. Displaying testimonials, showing certificates of appreciation and awards from the community and parents, she showed that she is eager to keep improving the identity of the school as well as the performance of the learners.

The table below illustrates the contextual analysis of each participant. It helps to give a clear understanding of the participant and the school he/she leads as a principal.

6.3 CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANTS

In reviewing the testimonies of the participating principals on how they account for their learner performances and the image of their respective schools, I identify some emerging findings that account for their school improvements, both in terms of the school identity and their schools' learner performances as judged by the Grade 12 results. Table 5.1 below presents a summary of the participating principals in terms of their biographies and the schools' biographies with a view to contextualising their contextual realities, both of themselves and the schools that they lead so that a nuanced understanding can be obtained through the testimonies that they have presented to account for their schools' image.

Table 6.2: Biographical summary of the participating principals and their respective schools

Pseudonym of participants	Methusi	Hleziphi	Melusi	Mdabe
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Male
Age	42	43	53	54
Ethnicity	African	African	Indian	African
Qualifications	STD, ABET,ACE, HONS	STD, HED, B.Ed.(Hons) M.Ed.	JSED, FDE, ACE	B. Pead, B.Ed.(Hons)
Years of Teaching	26	25	27	28
Total years in School leadership	15	15	19	16
School Location	Rural	Rural	Rural	Rural
Quintile Ranking	1	2	1	1
Grades in School	8 – 12	8 – 12	8 - 12	8 – 12
Subjects Taught	Mathematics & Physics	English, Geography & History	Technical Drawing, Needlework, Woodwork, Technology	English
School Funding Category	Section 20	Section 21	Section 21	Section 20

Total Number of Educators	11	26	24	14
Current Learner Enrolment	336	721	726	265
School Nutrition	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 6.3 below illustrates the matric results of each school. It shows fluctuations of results over a five-year period. The pseudonyms of the schools are used to protect the actual image of the school. This table summarises the performance of learners and indicates to an extent when the initiatives taken by the principals have been producing the desired results.

Table 6.3: Matric Results Distribution across the participating schools

Pseudonym of school	Year	Wrote	Passes												
	2011			2012			2013			2014			2015		
Mdala		36	11.1 %		19	42.1 %		18	83.3 %		29	75.9 %		39	53.8 %
Mlaku		81	58.0 %		77	83.1 %		110	65.5 %		101	76.2 %		99	47.5 %
Bhence		33	33.3 %		42	54.8 %		46	45.7 %		33	51.5 %		59	40.7 %
Dumehl ezi		71	91.5 %		140	72.9 %		83	88%		100	77.0 %		77	81.8 %

An examination of the narratives as testified by principals of each of the participating schools leads to the affirmation that school identity construction and improvement of learner performance cannot be narrowed down to a single factor or site as a multiplicity of forces act upon and influence the process whereby school identity and learner performance are formed and achieved. The challenges that the principals faced included the quality of teaching staff, discipline of learners, poor infrastructure and funding, low levels of interest by parents, inadequate school processes and structures and the image of the school within its communities. Of interest is that each of the principals had come into or been promoted to principalship in their respective schools and noted the poor state of affairs within the school that accounted for its poor image based on learner performances. Of further note is that each of these principals had taken the initiative of doing radical things in their schools to change the atmosphere, perception and image of the school, not all doing the same things and in the same order. Some sought to work internally with staff and learners, others sought external support for the infrastructure of other important things that could turn around the school. Others sought external validation of its potential by engaging in extramural activities and cultural and community activities.

The recollections of all the participants reinforce the notion of school identity and learner performance as an on-going process that requires collective engagement, more importantly, from within the school. They realised that there are things that could be done within the parameters as principals and with less reliance for permission from outside of the school (e.g. Department of Basic Education). They also used their insights and experiences of other teaching and learning contexts to influence their leadership within their schools. The stories illustrate how principals' dedication and commitment to shaping the school as the centre of learning, can influence the performance of the school as well as transform the identity of the school. Learner performance, as judged by the Grade 12 results, had improved in most schools or kept relatively stable in maintaining high Grade 12 results through the intervention by the principals of the respective schools.

6.4 CONCLUSION

The narratives have brought out the multiplicity of factors that act upon the principals in different ways and at different points in time. They have shed light upon school identity construction and learner performance through school leadership of the principal. They have also presented principals as genetic beings capable of gearing their educators and learners in

the direction they deem appropriate for school identity construction and learner performance. It was noted that enabling environments, such as democratic management styles in the school, foster such agency. While similarities are noticeable in the different journeys, the narratives are however indicative of the fact that the principals' selves are shaped up differently as the stimuli to their growth and the ways in which they respond to these are varied. The next chapter is an analysis of the data presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVES OF THE PRINCIPALS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the testimonies of principals of the research school. The emerging findings related to how they viewed their respective schools and how they account for the learner performances in particular that of their Grade 12 learners. In this chapter, I draw on these descriptions to do a deeper analysis on how the principals describe their school identity, their learner performance and the development of the school with a view to illuminate their perspectives on how they account for learner performances in their schools. The individual stories presented by the principals in the previous chapter have revealed a kaleidoscope of issues that they had to be dealt with in an attempt to transform their schools in the context of learner performances. This chapter is, therefore, organised according to themes that provide a 360-degree scope to show the complexity of a multitude of factors to be addressed in transforming a rural school and improving learner performance. The themes, therefore, include the complex nature of learner performance, school identity construction, and pathways to school transformation.

Due to the purposive selection of the schools within a single school district, the contextual variations across these schools are minimal, including the communities that these schools are located within, the learners and parents' experiences of rural life, socio-economic status of the communities and the kinds of educational experiences that the community is subjected to. This, therefore, gives the researcher an opportunity to analyse the findings using these themes which cut across. This chapter is divided into three parts in line with the three themes mentioned above.

7.2 THE COMPLEX NATURE OF LEARNER PERFORMANCE

The participants of the study articulated multiple perspectives on the performance of their learners across a broad spectrum. The performance of these learners was looked at in line with national benchmark testing, like the Grade 12 national senior certificate examinations, the annual national assessment for Grades 6 and 9 learners and other international comparative assessments (like the TIMMS and PERILS assessment). Based on the outcomes of these national and international assessment systems as articulated by the principals, learner performance is constantly in a state of flux. Within the South African education system, schools that underperform are identified by the Department of Basic Education and are regarded as underperforming schools with implications for greater oversights, external interventions and close monitoring. Hence school leaders and the school

community are concerned with learner performances, both as an indication of poor leadership and management of the school as well as its image within the public domain. The nature of the learner performance therefore points towards leadership, learner preparedness, quality of teaching and learning and appropriate allocation of resources that cater for and support better learner performance. Learner performance within this study, though encompassed a wide variety of assessment products, focuses principally on the Grade 12 pass rates since this is the principle measuring yardstick which matters the most to the individual school and the learners within the school. This pass rate is significant for the schools as it contributes to the image of the school within the communities that it exists in. Schools in rural areas are assumed to be educationally disadvantaged due to poor infrastructure and educational facilities, lack of career guidance, and are less likely to produce such results as their geographic location is under-resourced (Malia & Ross, 2018). Noting that the selected schools were all located in rural communities, the only assessment that matters is Matric.

All four participants expressed concerns over the changing nature of learner performance. For instance, Mdabe pointed out that her school scored *100%* in 2004, but the performance has been very unstable since then with pass rate going as low as 40, 7 % in a particular year. Melusi arrived as principal of the school when the pass rate was 80%, and as such witnessed a decline to 47.5% in 2015. Hlezphi left a school which obtained a hundred percent pass rate to one which currently scored 81.8 percent. These principals therefore left better performing schools to take up positions in their current schools, and have since been struggling with the fluctuating performance of learners which has been more on the decline.

Dhurumraj (2013) argues that learner performance in South African schools has been an issue of concern for over a decade. The performance of learners has been fluctuating, and most often gone from bad to worse as evidenced by the pass rates that have been declining almost every year. Fomunyam (2017) further argues that the quality of learner performance has been poor with the pass grade dropping to as low as 30 in some subjects. The reasons for this, he says, are varied. However, the lack or scarcity of qualified teachers in critical subjects like mathematics, natural sciences, physical sciences, just to name a few, are amongst the causes of poor learner performance. As pointed out by all the participants, the lack of qualified teachers was a major challenge as the qualified teachers were leaving for schools with better pass rates or schools located in better neighbourhoods or having higher quintile rankings. Since all the schools in this study are in the rural areas, very few qualified teachers want to teach in these places over a prolonged period of time. As the data for this study shows, the results improve when qualified teachers come, and drop when they

leave. The identity and quintile ranking or location of the school indirectly influence the performance of the school since these factors dictate the kind of teachers who stay there. This is confirmed by Fomunyam (2017, p. 110) who adds that “experienced and qualified teachers are scarce in South Africa creating room for inexperienced and unqualified teachers, especially in learning areas like chemistry, biology and mathematics to take the reins and dabble with the future of learners. The result of this most often is poor learner performance”. While some researchers (Rammala, 2009; Spaul 2013) have argued that this is a challenge in most countries in Africa, the situation is dire in South Africa in general and rural South Africa in particular.

All of the principals blamed the past leadership, management, and staffing issues for the decline of the learner performance in their respective schools. Some were concerned that their schools’ learner performance had declined substantially, and some were consistently low. The continuous fluctuation in the performance of learners within these schools constitutes part of the reason why it is ranked as Section 20 and within Quintile 1. The identity of the school reinforces the performance image of the learners, and the performance of the learners contributes to the poor image of the school. Wedekind (2010, p. 1) argued that “strong leadership is the key to school efficiency, which is ultimately reflected in learner performance. Schools that produced poorly performing learners were identified and labelled (non-performing schools) and interventions made to assist the schools to improve their learner performances”. If a principal therefore lacks leadership skills, this would evidently be seen in the performance of the learners within his or her school. The findings from this study confirm the role of school leadership in learner performance outcomes as suggested by Wedekind (2010). Principals of the respective schools took vital steps to ensure that learner performance improved as pointed out in the previous chapter. Some principals encouraged and co-opted staff and students in their quest to improve the image of the school, while others sought both, internal and external support for the changes needed to improve the image and learner performance of the school. Varying degrees of successes were noted in the learner performance of Grade 12 students as a result of the interventions that the principals of the researched schools claimed to have made since their appointment as the heads of the schools under study. However, it is critical to note that the reasons for this are varied, and some of these reasons could be explored in further research.

Noting that the researched schools were secondary schools located within rural communities, the literature on learner performances amongst rural learners in rural schools is extensive and the reasons articulated are substantive and include access to appropriate resources for schooling, lack of adequate parental support, low teacher qualifications, high turnover of teachers, lack of finances,

lack of adequate support from the Department of Education, discipline problems and low-socio-economic conditions of the community that impact on schooling (Rammala, 2009; Dhurumraj, 2013; Fomunyam, 2017). School education was viewed as almost fatalistic based on the analysis of the vast amount of literature on rural school education, both nationally and globally. Hence expectations of high learner performance amongst rural schools may be considered a myth, but the principals of the researched schools identified localised reasons for their schools' low learner performances and attempted to address these in incremental ways that brought some positive outcomes in terms of learner performance, and these positive outcomes had become motivators for persevering. In general, within the South African landscape of schooling, Ramrathan (2017) argues that a combination and a complexity of factors, rather than individual factors, can explain poor learner performance in South African schools. The findings from the principals' testimonies in accounting for their learner performances in their respective schools supports Ramrathan's (2017) notion of complexity and confluence of factors that inform learner performances in schools within South Africa. Rurally located schools are not immune to such a confluence of factors, hence the diversity and complexity associated with learner performances.

Common to all schools was the issue of human resources. In some schools, it was the school management team that was either not present or dysfunctional, and in others, it was because of teachers. For example, in Dumehlezi Secondary School, there were no Head of Departments for Science, Humanities and Language. In Bhece High School, it was the discipline of teachers that the principal believed caused the decline in learner performance. Mdala Secondary School had no principal for three years before Methusi came to the school. In addition, there were no Heads of Department or management team. Hence the first thing that the principals of these schools embarked on was to get in place a school management team that would assist him/her in managing the school. Managing the teachers then became a manageable and achievable task for the principals.

Another issue that emerged from the principals' narratives on how they account for their learner performance was the low levels of discipline amongst learners and teachers. The level of discipline exhibited by learners contributes to the way people see the school (identity) and the learners' performance in the National Senior Certificate (NSC), Grade 12 examinations. Poor discipline amongst learners can be understood as a result of the socio-economic background from which they come from, as well as their attitude towards school. It is not uncommon for learners to fight with teachers in rural areas (Fomunyam, 2017), and when such happens, the teacher is always considered to be at fault. A case in point is one pointed out by one of the participants where a learner harassed

a female teacher in class to the point of kissing her, and when the learner was disciplined, the principal was denigrated by the learners and the communities for letting the police handle the matter. Indiscipline and high attrition rates of learners are amongst the reasons for poor learner performance in rural schools (Marais & Meier, 2010; Mathaba, 2014; Modisaotsile, 2012). In the researched schools, learner ill-discipline was noted as a concern for the principals, and some found ways of addressing such disciplinary challenges. For example, one of the principals engaged the school learners in various extra-mural activities, including sports and cultural activities, to the point that the learners became winners in such activities and as such drew much interest from the learners to support and continue participating in such activities. Learner ill-discipline was managed through channeling the learners' interests to successes outside of the academic field as a way of re-directing interest and discipline within learners.

Furthermore, Methusi, Hleziphi and Melusi consider parental involvement and social issues as factors in learners' low discipline levels. The socio-economic status of parents in these rural communities is low. The educational levels of the parents are minimal, and many of the children live with their caregivers and not their parents. The situations at these schools are consistent with many studies (Makgato & Mji, 2006; Fomunyam, 2017) that have shown that the socio-economic status, educational qualifications and academic outcomes of parents have a significant predictive impact on children's educational development and attainment. Tungata (2006), for example, argues that children coming from homes with no tradition of valuing education often develop learning problems. He continues to argue that such children mostly fail to see the value or importance of education, and this failure negatively influences the child's interest in education. Parents who are alcoholics, abusive to their children and absent for long periods of time often cause children's poor intellectual, academic and socio-emotional development (Ellof & Ebersohn, 2004). They also argue that the harsh life conditions of lower income parents, the powerlessness they feel, the lack of confidence they have in their jobs, the authoritarian model presented by employers, and the lack of higher education that would reform values onto abstract ideas, may result in such parents using authoritarian methods to enforce external characteristics in their children such as obedience, neatness and cleanliness. The children who grow up in such situations are likely to be troublesome at school and add to learner discipline problems. Hence socio-economic conditions of families in rural communities influence the interest and discipline of learners in these communities, which all of the researched principals have noted as a major concern in their schools.

Parental socio-economic status within communities is amongst the criteria used in profiling or categorising schools into quintiles. If the neighbourhood is poor, then the school falls within Quintiles 1, 2 or 3 and if the parents are wealthy, then the school falls within Quintiles 4 or 5. Spaul (2013) argues that there are two school education worlds that exist within South Africa. One world comprises Quintiles 1 to 4 schools that are characterised by low learner performance, poor school infrastructure and low interest in schooling; and the other world comprises Quintile 5 schools with higher learner performance, good teaching and learning infrastructure and greater interest in teaching and learning. The socio-economic status of the parents as well as their educational background, which by and large determines their socio-economic status, influences the image and identity of a school as well as its predictive learner performance. Drawing from the data of this study, Spaul's (2013) perspective of two distinct school world types exists. In this research, the principals of the researched schools have clearly alluded to both the socio-economic situation of the communities as well as the lack of interest by parents or care-givers in the education of their child/ward, which is consistent with the school world of Quintiles 1 and 2. Drawing from this engagement, the principals of the researched schools acknowledged the influence of the impoverished community and the lack of support by parents being amongst the reasons for the state of their schools and the performance of their learners.

Learner interests, attitude to schooling and behaviour in school and within their classrooms have been noted as a concern by the principals of the researched schools. Mdabe blames the level of violence experienced in the communities as influencing unruly behaviour in schools, while Hleziphi felt that learners were not fully integrated into the school life and therefore misbehaved. In attempting to change the attitude towards schooling, these principals engaged the learners and teachers gainfully to manage discipline issues by either introducing them to extra-curricular activities so they can excel and be recognised or by increasing the teaching and learning time through additional classes, early morning and late evening classes. In some instances, learners were encouraged to live in or near the school so that they can be engaged in the further learning processes to enhance their chances of passing the NSC. Thus the principals in this research recognised that learner discipline needed to be addressed and based on their appraisal of the contextual issues that influenced learner discipline, found innovative ways of managing learner discipline productively.

The principals have also acknowledged the choice of subjects by learners and the constant turnover of experienced staff over the years as reasons for learner poor performances in the researched schools. Two aspects are relevant here. Firstly, teachers have gone through several curriculum

policy changes within the school education system and they have not kept up to these changes in any substantial way; and this has had a huge impact on learner performance. Participants agreed that most of the educators are still struggling to master the curriculum. Spaul (2013) believed that South Africa's education system is in a state of crisis, and the instability of the school curriculum is one of the reasons for this state of crisis. Ntombela (2014) agrees with this when she argues that the government invests more money in curriculum innovations with the understanding that this can or will improve the state of education in the country. However, the ongoing curriculum innovations are impacting on the teachers' knowledge and teaching skills related to these innovations. In addition, the focus on curriculum innovations is largely related to the envisaged skills shortage of the country, and in most cases, it relates to Mathematics, Sciences and Technology. The principals of the researched schools indicated that many learners tend to avoid Physical Sciences and Mathematics because of their fear of the subjects and a lack of self-confidence. This negative attitude can result in learner underperformance, and as a result, they are unable to get the required results for university entrance (Mullins 2005, p.45). The fear of Physical Sciences and Mathematics has resulted in a decrease in the number of learners taking the subject both at the secondary and tertiary level (Gough 2009, p. 183). Hence the constant curriculum changes experienced in these rural schools have not been able to produce the desired results. Hence, both teachers and learners are not benefitting from constant curriculum changes, and this is reflected in the performance of learners in these schools.

The second issue related to curriculum and learner performance is the subject choices taken by learners where learners are encouraged to take subjects that have been promoted through curriculum change as a pathway to social and economic development. These subjects include mathematics and sciences which the principals of the researched schools indicate as a serious concern to both the learners and learner performance. For learners, the fear of failing and not getting a passing grade to enter into university renders taking these subjects high-risk and impediments for the future trajectory of the learners beyond school education.

In addition, support for learners who take such subjects is minimal in the rural contexts.

Hence taking these subjects (Mathematics, Sciences and Technology) in such schools is a futile exercise and often is the reason for lower learner performance. These principals therefore think that they should have a say in the subjects learners choose to take, so they can be sure they would be able to provide them with the kind of support they need. Therefore, it is difficult for the principal to implement the curriculum policy as planned where there are no experts of that particular curriculum. When the principal monitors curriculum and participates in learner's supervision of work and follow

up student's progress, it can influence schools' success to a great extent, reaffirming the role of the principal in curriculum choices of its learners.

Drawing from the above engagement on principals' accounts of the learner performances in their respective schools, it is clear that the variables are all-encompassing, interrelated and complex to address. This means a holistic analysis of school is needed within a situated analysis that takes into consideration the realities of the school, the learners, the community and the home of the learners. However, worthy of note here is that principals are aware of the wide-ranging issues that plague their schools and have identified school issues that can be addressed under their locus of control.

7.3 SCHOOL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

The nature of learner performance also contributes to the nature of school identity, and this was reflected in the unhappiness of the principals with regards to how the school was viewed based on the Grade 12 learner performances. In their narratives, they reflect their concerns about the prevailing learner performance and how the school was viewed by the learners, teachers and the community, spurring them to do something about the prevailing image of their schools. It must be noted that each of the principals interviewed for this study began their narratives on becoming the principal of the respective schools with some reflections on how the school was viewed and how they aspired to change that prevailing image to a more positive image of their school. Hence, changing how the school is viewed was foremost in their minds as they assumed leadership of the schools. Robinson (2017) describes school change as requiring shifts in beliefs, practice and systems, which these principals had attempted in various ways. Within the narratives of the principals, it is evident that beliefs, practices and systems needed to be changed in order to create a new image of the school. Robinson (2017) argues that school identity construction requires shifts in beliefs, practices and systems to necessitate a recognition for the need to change. Hence, recognising the need for change is the beginning of change and this recognition by the principals of the research schools was based on the Grade 12 learner performance. Learner performance became the yardstick for measuring school identity and the conduit for changing the image of the school. In this respect, Methusi said that creating a new identity for the school is not something that is easy. He cited the difficulties he encountered when he arrived at the school in 2009 such as poor performance, lack of structural leadership, lack of vision and community support, amongst others. Being recently employed as a principal of the school and noting that school life was difficult for him as a result of poor learner performance, inadequate staffing and little help from the Department of Basic Education through its regional structures, Methusi recognised that change is needed. Fomunyam (2015) argues

that people advocate for change when they are tired of the status quo or desire to improve it. With the performance of the learners and the other prevailing factors destroying the image of the school, these principals set out to reconstruct the identity of the school thereby affecting the performance of learners.

Mdabe like Methusi recognised the need for the reconstruction of the identity of the school based on the performance of the learners. He emphasised that learner performance is related to teachers and learners. The discrepancy noticed in the performance of learners between the continuous assessments and summative assessments was the first sign pointing to issues in teachers' abilities within the school. Continuous assessment indicates that learners are performing excellently, while summative examinations like matric indicate a 40, 7 % pass rate. This, coupled with the infighting amongst educators created the need for rebranding or reconstruction of the identity of the school. Responding to this, Mdabe created an environment where every teacher would feel welcome and believe in the vision of the school by ensuring that they participate in decision-making. The community and other stakeholders were also made to participate in the rebranding of the school, thereby ensuring that the new vision of the school does not stay within, but is also seen by all. The literature on school leadership and identity construction within the school (Sindic & Condor, 2014; Korte, 2007; Sayed; 2013) indicates that the approach used by the principal would determine what the image of the school looks like and ultimately the performance of learners within the school. Principals, therefore, are at the forefront of identity construction for the school, and the approach which they use would determine whether or not the school's identity is positive. Sayed (2013) argues that leadership theories recognise that effective leadership depends on the interaction of three factors, namely: the trait and behaviours of the followers, the characteristics of the followers and the nature of the situation in which leadership occurs. As such, without the principal being able to resolve the infighting amongst educators, the leadership approach chosen would remain unproductive. McCrae and Costa (2003) add that the habitual patterns of behaviour, thought, and emotion that often manifest themselves in a wide range of situations amongst educators would determine how they see the school and how they ultimately make learners and the entire community see the school. If teachers believe in the potential of the school to give learners the best educational experiences, they would inculcate this in the mind of learners. These features being relative stability over time, and exerting alternative degrees of expression in different individuals would influence the behaviour of everyone within the school and consequently, the performance of learners. Leadership processes focuses on the leader, the context, the follower and the outcomes and in the case of this study, the

school. How the principal manages the school would determine whether or not the outcomes he or she is expecting would be realised.

Since the schools which form the context of this study are all Section 20 schools and fall within Quintile 1 or 2, they receive allocations from the department and do requisitions of school needs according to the budgets that they are given. Some resources that are ordered might not arrive on time. Since the school is located within a poor community, the school does not have access to resources from the community or parents that may uplift the results of the school. Under such circumstances, the principals in this research have endeavoured to seek out or source resources where appropriate to ensure that their schools get facelifts.

A biographical look at the profiles of the principals within this study throws more light on their drive to reconstruct the identity of the school and how they do so in their daily endeavours. Many researchers (Pinar, 2010; Clandinin, 2013; Avalos, 2011; Day) have articulated the influences of the biographies of teachers and schools' principals on the work that they do as well as the image of the school they work in and the performance of the learners within the school. School leaders as principals, in the case of this study, engage in a reflective process as way to reconsider how their experiences, beliefs, and ways of knowing influence the reconstruction of self and their role in the reconstruction of the identity of the schools they are leading. A sensory curriculum considers how school leaders came to understand their sense of self through the influence of personal knowing and being, both in and out of formal institutional contexts, such as districts, schools, and classroom (Pinar, 2010; Wallin, 2010) and school leadership is about the ability to take initiative and to act decisively (Mestry, 2013 & Mafora, 2014). It involves the degree of influence on colleagues in making decisions (Mkhize, 2005; Vilakazi, 2016; Sayed, 2013; Ntombela, 2014). Such studies have shown how individuals' biographies have influenced their practices within education. In a similar vein, the narratives of the participating principals have illuminated how their biographies have influenced their jobs as principals.

Hleziphi, for example, believes that the year 2006 was the year of achievement for her and the school; and she has had to build on this bedrock ever since then. She suggested that in taking charge of her school's situation, she consciously embodied the power of leadership in order to lead her school to change from the current image of a poor performing school. Melusi's characterisation of himself claiming self-efficacy, drawing on practical evidence supported by confidence built up from

successes in previous positions of leadership as qualities of being a school leader to lead the school out of its current image as a poor performing school is also indicative of the role of biography in the reconstruction of school identity. This characterisation of himself as self-efficacious, and confident is shown in his resolve to make a difference in the school. His argument is that he successfully obtained numerous donors to renovate the school based on his self-efficacious confidence. He believes he is a principal with a difference, and knows how to make things happen. These examples of biographical data from the principals indicate where and what they drove from and give insight into the action and decisions they take as they strive to reconstruct the identity of the school. Who they believe they are, what they believe they can do to reconstruct the identity of the school were important factors that influenced their actions within the schools. Malinen, and Savolainen (2016) argue that teacher or principal (in this case) efficacy is the evaluation of one's own capability as a teacher. Self-efficacy for the principal and collective efficacy for all stakeholders within the school become critical in the reconstruction of the identity of the school. Dellinger, Bobbett, Olivier, and Ellett (2008) argue that teacher self-efficacy depends on the “teacher's individual beliefs in their capabilities to perform specific teaching tasks at a specified level of quality in a specified situation” (p. 752). For the school principal, this would mean driving all school initiatives to ensure the appropriate reconstruction of school identity. Self-efficacy is anchored on four main sources of information: (1) mastery experiences, (2) vicarious experiences, (3) social persuasion, and (4) somatic and emotional states (Malinen & Savolainen, 2016). The principal's experiences, persuasive abilities and the emotional state become key ingredients in the reconstruction of school identity. With these tools, the principal can develop or inspire others within the school to conceive initiatives that would improve the image of the school as seen from the findings.

All four principals had taken the Grade 12 results as representing the image of their school. They were not happy with their schools' image when they had taken leadership of the school and they committed to changing this image. These principals aspired for their school to be known differently and set about this task through different pathways. One of the principals sought to develop school recognition of excellence through sporting and other extra-curriculum activities in competitive engagements with other schools, while another focused on encouraging and sustaining additional study time to improve their school Grade 12 results. The third principal focused on developing its infrastructure through partnerships with organisations and businesses with a view to promoting and sustaining learner engagement in their curriculum. Hence, while the goal was common to all (that of improving the image of the school), the pathways to achieving this image were different for every

principal. All of the principals recognised that learner performance in the form of Grade 12 pass rates were the indicators of new school identities.

These principals also took steps to ensure that appropriate teaching and management staff were present or hired for the school since this is critical for the smooth functioning of the school and consequently the identity and performance of the learners within the school. Spaul (2013) observes that while a school may have appropriate staffing, there are other staffing issues that will compromise learner achievements. These staffing issues include illness, long periods of absenteeism amongst teaching staff and mismatch between subject specialisation and teaching responsibilities. With respect to staffing, the principals of the researched schools established various challenges with regards to teaching and management staff and set their sights on strengthening this resource in their respective schools. For example, Hleziphi from Dumehlezi Secondary School became the principal of the school at a time when there were no permanent Heads of Department (HoD), and the absence of these HoDs made accountability difficult for her. Mdabe from Mdala secondary school became the principal in this school when there was no School Management Board or any managerial structure. He had to initiate teaching and learning developments that were previously non-existent. The school had no HoDs, and there was no accountability or management of the curriculum amongst educators. Vilakazi (2016) opines that lack of curriculum management in schools remains a challenge to most of principals, which leads to poor learner performance. In these schools, the lack of curriculum management was seen as a problem and a cornerstone for turning the schools' learner performances. Hence, stabilising the management of the teaching staff and the teaching and learning process was foremost and was aimed at internal stability of the school. One principal sought assistance from the current staff in taking on the HOD's task without the formal recognition of such a post with a view to stabilising the management of the school. Some sought the assistance of external intervention, while others believed that there is sufficient scope for internal resolutions that could be harnessed through different methods. Hence the pathways for stabilising staff were different, but the intention was the same. In the school headed by Melusi, for example, the confusion and distrust amongst staff started when a promotional post for deputy principal was advertised. All heads of department applied for the position. The only senior head of department was appointed. The others became angry and indiscipline ensued. They failed to teach the required classes, stopped attending SMT meetings. Only external intervention sought by the principal brought some normality to the school. Mkhize (2005) argues that the principal's leadership is crucial to academic learner performance and school identity construction. It determines the quality of learner performance. The principal has to ensure that he adopts the style of leadership that would ensure that everyone within

the school is working towards the realisation of his or her vision. If there is division within the school, such a vision can never be accomplished. To Mkhize, therefore, the principal's leadership style can elicit the best performance from both the learners and the teachers. A high standard of performance is necessary because the effectiveness of the principal's leadership is measured by the academic success of the learners. Stabilising the management staff of the school had ripple effects on the staff discipline as professionals. For example, in one school, reporting and record-keeping became a feature of the school's accountability, as such; reports and records were now checked by the school management team. By creating a culture of democracy within the school, the principal inadvertently altered the ethos of the school and teachers felt important in the school to the extent of taking morning classes before the commencement of formal teaching hours and as well as late evening classes for Grade 12, a strategy to improve their performance and reconstruct the identity of the school. Zhu et al. (2011, p. 320) contend that "school culture is closely related to the healthy and sustainable development of a school, the development and well-being of the school members, and objectives of the school and education. An important dimension of school culture is the multiple interactions among groups and individuals". As such, the democratic culture inculcated in the school worked towards the reconstruction of the school's identity.

7.4 PATHWAYS TO SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION

Noting that having appropriately qualified teachers is crucial to making changes to learner performance at the respective schools. Principals responded in various ways to transform their schools into centres of excellence. From the findings of the study, it is clear that principals engaged alternative pathways to transform their schools. While some used extra-curricular activities, others engaged infrastructural development. Better still, some engaged a rebranding of academic activities, while others sought collaborative engagement amongst all stakeholders of the school. All these pathways led to the transformation of the school, and to some extent, the positive reconstruction of the image of the school and the performance of the learners within the school. With regards to the rebranding of academic activities within the school, Nkanzela (2015) argues that teachers should be appropriately qualified to teach their subject specialisation based on the knowledge of the content to be taught and of the kinds of teaching methods that would optimise learning. The teaching methods play a major role in the learner performance of the child. Teaching is a profession in which the educator should have confidence in what he/she is doing. Some principals took steps to ensure professional development for educators, while others ensured the hiring of more qualified staff to engage in teaching and learning. Makgato and Mji (2006) converge on the principle that an educator

of any subject must possess an interest in his/her subject, commitment and dedication. They further suggest that teachers should be able to eradicate the fear that many learners have about the subject and encourage learners to look at the subject with confidence. Ensuring teachers get the support they need to be efficacious is crucial for the transformation of the school and the provision of such support can be championed by the school principal. Hallinger (2003) argues that school leadership is crucial for the transformation of the school and when a principal engages in transformation leadership like those in this study, they ensure capacity development for both staff and learners and the drive to ensure better results. Lunenburg (2010) affirms that the principal's primary role is to promote the learning success of all learners in the school. Sayed (2013) confirms this by describing the transformational principal as a leader in an educational institution who does not only adapt his or her behaviours to the situation, but also ensures others follow suit for the transformation of the institution. In this respect, the principals of the research schools took different paths to strengthen the teaching capacity of the schools with a view to changing the image of the school in terms of its learner performance.

Furthermore, transforming the school is also about changing the school culture and ethos thereby ensuring accountability, collective responsibility and collaborative engagement. Sayed (2013) believes that social power is when effective leaders can use their power to influence the activities of others. The core responsibility of the principal as a leader, in collaboration with all the stakeholders, is to set realistic goals, through strategic planning, designing, coordinating, evaluating the curriculum, teaching and proper allocation of resources. (Allie, 2014, p. 23). Recognising the input of teachers in the management of the school ensures that they put in their best to drive the initiatives designed at the SMT for the transformation for the school. This kind of approach motivates teachers to continue their good work and to be recognised in the school transformation process as social and professional partners in the change process. Working collaboratively allowed all participants to produce what they intended to in terms of the school results. The collaboration engendered an institutional climate of cohesion and space for establishing sound decisions and judgments that will take the school forward. Taole (2013) emphasised that through an effective school-based management system, principals become more accountable internally to the school and externally for the school's performances. Hence establishing a supportive and accountable institutional climate contributes to the principals' accountability regimes and image building of the school. Learner performance has become the indicator of school transformation and is the marker through which the school is known (its identity) (Lunenburg, 2010).

Eliminating the disciplinary challenges amongst both learners and teachers was engaged as another strategy for the transformation of the school. Masekoameng (2010) states that the disciplinary problems faced by teachers and school principals in South African schools are not unique as they are found in every part of the world with the highest rates of learner indiscipline found in the United States of America. However, in South Africa, unlike elsewhere, learner indiscipline is a threat to teachers and the smooth functioning of the school. The principals engaged disciplinary measures which they believe would work towards the transformation of the school. While some principals sanctioned or suspended learners, others engaged the police in extreme cases, all in the bid to ensure that the behaviour which was being disciplined, never resurfaced within the school. The intention of the principal was to build a school character that everybody would come to know and accept. The suspension of learners by Hleziphi over the three-year period brought about the realisation that learners would be suspended if they continued with their disruptive and deviant behaviour. This contributes to the transformation of the school through recurring practices that build recognition and expectations.

All the principals were of the opinion that discipline plays a major role in the transformation of the school and in improving the performance of learners within the school. The lack of discipline impacts negatively on learner performance. A well-controlled classroom has positive outcomes as it will embark on certain techniques to overcome discipline problems (Memela, 2013). Holloway (2002) affirms that teacher quality is at the centre of the national agenda for improving students' achievements and monitoring classroom management. But the reality of classroom management is far from a theoretical stance and requires input from school leadership to be effective. Maphosa and Mammen (2011) state that learners manifest unacceptable behaviours in classrooms and they are generally noisy and disrespectful to teachers. They argue that every teacher expects learners to be cooperative when teaching and learning is being enacted in the classroom. No meaningful learning occurs in a chaotic classroom environment, and for this reason, learner discipline problems become an epicentre in the process of teaching and learning.

Principals of the researched schools also recognised that learners are the key role players in transforming the school for better learner performance. Mdabe stated that when learners are not serious about their work, learner performance declines drastically and this was shared by the other principals. Hleziphi, in addressing learner discipline issues in relation to learner performance introduced several strategies including inviting a motivational speaker to Grade 12 learners, organising early classes for Grade 12 and Saturday classes, as a way of ensuring academic discipline

and rigour amongst learners, as well as the enhancement of their educational experience. The positive results of this change reinforced the value of disciplining learners. Hleziphi also encouraged and organised extra-curriculum activities for the learners who would compete with neighbouring and regional schools, the outcomes of which transformed the image of the school to a more positive one. Through this external recognition, the school's image began to change and learners were encouraged by these recognitions and sustained good performance.

Another step engaged by the principals for the transformation of the school was improving on school facilities. All the principals believed that school facilities are very crucial for the school to be well-developed. The availability of resources ensures that teaching and learning is effective and leads to better learner performance. The absence of school facilities hinders learner performance. These principals took various steps and worked with various stakeholders for the transformation of the school. Rammala (2009, p.27) points out the provision of appropriate resources to a school, especially one located in the rural areas where parents are unable to get basic school needs for their children would transform both the identity of the school, as well as improve the performance of the learners within the school. Instead of taking a fatalistic position, the principals of the schools, who through their strong biographies and their will to transform the schools, sought alternate means to make such resources available to their learners. Hleziphi engaged Project Built, while Melusi engaged the Department of Energy. On his part, Mdala engaged BMW, and Methusi engaged the Department of Basic Education. All these endeavours led to the transformation of the school.

7.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter analysed the findings presented in Chapter 6. It provides more insights into the perspectives of principals and supports these with literature and the theoretical framework. Three key themes which emerged from the findings are; the complex nature of learner performance, school identity construction and pathways to school transformation. Chapter 7, which follows is the theorisation of the findings. It articulates the crux of the thesis.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE ECOLOGY OF IMPROVING LEARNER PERFORMANCE

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous two chapters presented and engaged with the data produced for this study leading to the thematic analysis and emergent findings of the study. This chapter builds on the analysis and findings by identifying key findings of the study with a view to engaging with them theoretically to form the basis for my theorising about school identity construction as led by school leaders (principals). Hence, this chapter commences with a presentation of the key findings of the study that emerged from the analysis of narratives of principals (Chapter five) of the researched schools and the more fine-grained narrative analysis (Chapter six). The key findings are discussed using key constructs of the theoretical framing that informed the data collection and data analysis processes. The second aspect of this chapter presents a theoretical analysis of the key findings. The Social Ecology Theory (SET) used in this chapter, articulates the relationship between school identity and learner performance; it further provides a pathway for improving learner performance.

The chapter concludes with a narrative response to the research questions followed by recommendations to significant persons and structures based on the key findings of the study.

8.2 KEY FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Drawing from the narratives of the school principals, several key findings emerge. These relate to:

- I. One of the key findings of the study is that the school identity construction cannot be narrowed down to a single factor, site or person. It is a confluence of a multiplicity of factors and forces of influence, and these factors and forces are situation and time-dependent. This is consistent with the notion of intergroup processes that includes the genesis of conflict between social groups, and the factors which influence support for, or attempts to change established social hierarchies (Sindic & Condor, 2014). Support, influence and conflicts are considered as drivers of change in identity

construction as one aspires to move away from an ingrained image to a new image, which each of the school leaders in the researched school sought to do. In each of their narratives, the identified key element of changes, influenced people (staff, school managers, learners, parents, and communities) for the need to change the school image and put in place processes to change the key elements as drivers of school change. In each of the researched schools there were several key elements that needed to be changed and simultaneously working with these key elements contribute to the confluence of change realised within each of these schools. The confluence nature of change is significant as it does not attribute the school image change to any one factor, event or person. Rather, the way that each of these elements interacts with each other, and in varying combinations, forms the ecology of change in the school identity construction.

- II.** The second key finding is that the challenges of schooling are consistent with literature. The challenges include issues of quality of staffing, infrastructure and resources for teaching, learning and managing school education; learner discipline and disruption to teaching, learning and school management; parental engagement being extremely low to non-existence in such rural communities; low financial resources within the community, including that of families, thereby providing low levels of stimuli for teaching, learning and interest in school education; and the poor image of school education that the community has.

This key finding is significant in that these challenges are well known, researched extensively, interventions made at systemic, regional and school levels, yet they persist. The significance of this key finding is that school leaders are aware of these challenges to schooling and, as the narratives of the school principals suggest, have engaged in reviewing and finding ways within their schools to address them, not sequentially or individually. Rather, they found configurations around these challenges and sought to address these configurations as character building of the schools' images leading to new school identities. For example, one school principal saw a configuration around community recognition through extra-curriculum activities (e.g., cultural activities) and used the success of this configuration to build the image of his school. This path to new social identity construction is consistent with Tajfel and Turner's (1979) notion of social identity construction through intergroup contextual engagement, whereby other social groupings recognise strengths and

values in individual social groupings, and these recognitions become the beacons for new social identity constructions.

- III.** A third key finding of this study is that to change ingrained identities requires a set of fresh insights. This is only possible when a new school leader (principal) enters a school site and derives first-hand information of the school. In each of the narratives of the school principals, it was clear that they came into a new school context and were able to quickly identify the challenges that the respective schools were facing and proposed practical solutions to change the negative image of the schools. Furthermore, these solutions were largely school-based and within the capacities of the existing resources of the respective schools. The significance of this finding is that, in order to change the image and identity of a school, a fresh perspective is needed. This fresh perspective is achievable through new school leadership, meaning that new school principals should be a periodic feature in schools to stimulate change. This finding speaks to the motivational element of social identity change in that there has to be a motivating factor or element to initiate social change. In the case of this study, the new school leaders (principals) became the motivational element for school change in that they were able to identify the need for change, find practical solutions to support the school change and convince the school community to aspire for the envisaged school change. Invariably, the envisioned outcome of this change was improved learner performance, a key indicator of a school image and identity.
- IV.** This finding is also consistent with notions of transformational leadership in that the new principals wanted a new school identity of the organisational purpose of the school, in this case, a better Grade 12 learner performance (Sindic & Condor, 2014). As noted earlier, Grade 12 results were the key indicator of a schools' success and image and identity within communities. Hence, the strife to improve learner performance as the organisational purpose of the school meant that these new school principals had to transform their schools to achieve this institutional purpose.
- V.** A fourth key finding relates to the above key finding in that this study found that a personal initiative by the principal to radically transform the school is needed. The narratives of principals indicated that the new principals did not want the status quo to remain. They used their experiences of their past schools and their biographies as drivers to initiate change in their schools. As Sayed (2013) suggests, this personal initiative of the school principals is also consistent with transformational leadership qualities that suggest that leaders should lead the change that they envision for their

schools. The narratives of each of the principals in this study alluded to their personal interest and initiative to lead change in their respective schools. This personal initiative to lead school change is only possible if they come into a new school environment. The thinking behind this assertion is that these new principals aspire for personal foot-printing. That is, they are keen to make their mark of presence in the school as a symbol of their leadership capacity and quality to transform poorly organised and performing schools. A further analysis of this assertion reveals that this transformational change may not be possible in a school environment where the principal has been in and was part of its poor image because of the difficulty in stepping out of the familiar environments to envision new pathways. Hence being newly appointed to a new school as school leaders would then provide the school principal with a new school environment that he or she was not part of and, therefore, the ability to envision change is not compromised by familiar context and influence.

Drawing from the narrative analysis, the following key findings emerged:

- i. Learner performance is a complex concern and requires a multi-perspectival gaze. The narratives suggest that concern is central to improving learner performance. In other words, someone needs to be concerned about the status quo. In this case, the concerned person has to be in a leadership position with authority to do something about the status quo. Hence, concern become a stimulus for change. This concern also speaks to the issue of transformational leadership in that, all of the principals initially blamed the previous school leadership for the dismal learner performance of their schools. As such, they were challenged (personally) to be different (Sayed, 2013) through this blame discourse. Hence improving learner performance in their respective schools became their beacon of transformational leadership. Since learner performance was noted as a key indicator of a school image and identity, improving the learner performance especially that of Grade 12 learners in their National Senior Certificate examinations, was key to their transformational leadership quality.
- ii. The second key finding of this study is that while the goal of each principal was the same (i.e, improving the Grade 12 results of its learners in national examination), the pathways to realising this goal were varied and different (Robinson, 2017). Some aspired for external recognition of the capabilities of the

learners before shifting to internal recognition, others sought a management solution to improving learner performance, and some sought learner motivation and support in improving their performance. These different pathways suggest that various factors do play a substantive role, individually and collectively, in improving learner performance. The varied and different pathways suggest that school leaders (principals) have a repertoire of possibilities for transforming their schools, and that the chosen pathways are dependent upon the decisional capital (Hargreeves and Fullan, 2012) that they have acquired and deploy in deciding and envisioning on learner success.

- iii. A third key finding emerging through the narrative analysis is that the principals' biographies do influence their role as school leaders in transforming their school identities. The narratives alluded to personal beliefs, self-efficacious and confidence and sense of self as drives of leadership that led them to change their school images and identities. The implications of this key finding is that of confidence in school principals to lead change. This confidence does not randomly happen. It matures in individuals and is reinforced with minor successes along the way. This means that school leaders emerge through their biographies and their leadership qualities are enhanced through their experiences (Wallin, 2010) of being in various leadership positions along the journey to becoming a principal of a school.

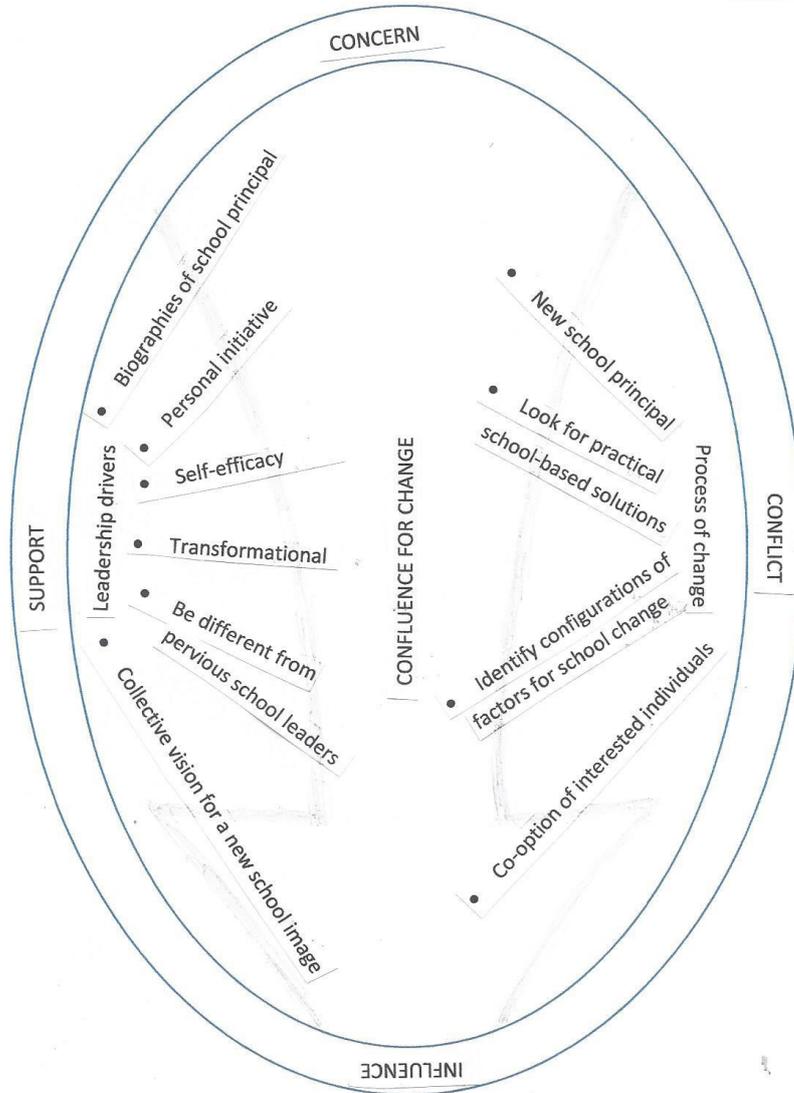
The key findings emerging from this study have led the current researcher to conceptualise the socio-ecological theory of school change that is proposed in this thesis as an explanation to school leadership's (principal) perspective on school change through learner performance and ultimately, to new school identity constructions.

The diagram below attempts to structurally describe the socio-ecological theory of school change advanced through this study.

Socio-ecological theory of school change

School Status Identity

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner poor performance • Poor school image • Staffing quality and interest • Poor infrastructure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate resources • Poor learner discipline • Low levels of stimuli for teaching and learning • Low levels of parental involvement |
|---|--|



Improved learner performance

New school identity

8.3 THE SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL THEORY OF SCHOOL CHANGE

The socio-ecological theory of school change is developed from the key findings of the study, and is informed by the transformational leadership and social identity theories that framed this study. The proposed theory attempts to bring the two framing theories into dialogue within the ecology of the school environment. Two central concepts are introduced within this dialogue. The first concept is of ‘confluence’ that captures the momentum of school change and in its path to new school identity, draws in a number of influencing elements, both of school leadership factors and process issues. The second is the concept of ‘ecology’ that captures the image of an eco-system comprising living and non-living entities in relationships that harmonise the eco-system. In this model, the ‘confluence’ concept is used to show that no one specific element (e.g., transformational leadership qualities) can be traced to school improvements (in this case, school learner performances) and that force of the confluence draw in other factors and issues (like self-efficacy) in its path to a new school identity. The ecology concept is used in this model to highlight the relativity of the various factors, forces and issues as these come into dialogue with each other and amongst other factors that may work together in some configurations (e.g., extra-curricular competitive activities) leading to a new school identity. This ecology is framed by the identified need for school change and, drawing from this study, entails four elements. These are a shared concern of the status of the school, the identification of conflicts that led to this status of the school, the influence of the new school principal to make a change to the school’s image and the reliance on support that is school-based, including that of parental support.

The school leadership drivers established through this study include the personal biography of the new school principal that shapes his or her views, aspirations, values and resolve in changing the school’s image. School change needs to be located with the personal interest of the school principal; that sets the stage for the new principal to take a personal initiative to drive change in the school. The new school principal needs a sense of self in that he or she needs to know his or her abilities, past successes, and the recognition of limits to what is possible for him or her. Hence, the principal needs to have a sense of his or her self-efficacy. Blame discourse is a common discourse within the school environment. Therefore, the new school principal’s resolve is to be different from the previous leadership of the school. Being a transformational leader, the new school principal must develop a collective vision for a new school identity and co-opt others into this new vision.

The process aspect of school change includes having a new school leader (not necessarily a new principal – but someone from outside of the current staff of the school). The process aspect also needs to recognise that changing any one element or factor may not result in school improvement. Rather elements or factors that cohere to form a configuration (e.g., staffing and school management configuration) should be identified and targeted for change. There could be more than one configuration identified (e.g., support for learners to study for the exams and school facilities) and these configurations could simultaneously work together to drive school change. The changes that are needed should be school-based and accessible to the new school principal, his/her management team, and the staff of the school, learners and parents. Being school-based and accessible to the school community would then create opportunities for practical school-based solutions that are easily implementable without much external support or resources.

The practical school-based solutions will then influence learner performance in substantial and incremental ways leading to a new school image and if sustained over time will lead to a new school identity. It is important to note that this model is an ecological model that relies on the various elements and factors that are located within the school environment. While the model has identified several elements and factors in creating a new school identity as viewed through the lens of school principals, there may be other elements or factors in this ecology that could be considered and included. Hence the leadership drivers and the process of change components are not fixed and may be context and person- dependent.

7.4 RESPONSES TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS GUIDING THE STUDY

In this section, I return to the research questions that guided this study and provide a narrative response to these questions. The main research question was: How does the school principal account for their learner performance within the context of quintile school categorisation and school identity?

The sub-questions were:

1. How does the principal account for their learner performance since assuming school leadership responsibilities?
2. What engagements did the school principal embark upon to change the school's image and identity?

3. What were the outcomes of school initiatives embarked upon by the school principal to change the identity of the school?

In attempting to provide a narrative response to the main research question and its sub-questions, I draw on the findings of the study and locate it within the framework of the proposed conception of the socio-ecological theory of school change. By framing the narrative response to the research questions in this way, this research acknowledges that there may be other interpretations and explanations of the findings using the same data set. Hence, this narrative is but just one narrative developed from an informed and empirical-based exploration.

Noting that the selected schools are all categorised into the lower quintile ranking system (usually Quintiles 1 and 2), the image that these schools have includes being underperforming schools with poor infrastructure, poor teaching and learning facilities, low levels of resourcing and huge discipline problems. These schools are also located in rural communities and the images of rural schools include erratic and poor learner attendance, access to facilities and services are poor to non-existent, low levels of interest by learners, teachers, parents and the community in general and low expectations of schooling. Taking all of these into consideration, improvements on learner performance seems central to school change, irrespective of the quantum of the improvement. The accounts of the school principals of their learner performance in these schools are that they were not satisfied with it and expressed concern for the well-being of the school.

The concern became the initiator of school change as these principals wanted to be different from their predecessors. In addition, they wanted to do something within their immediate reach to make a difference to their schools. The concerns also include an examination of the current situation to identify areas of conflicts that led to the poor image of the school as viewed through its operations, its teaching and learning processes and in its Grade 12 learner performance. The accounts of the principals suggest that persuasion through influencing school managers, staff, learners and parents would contribute to a shared view on what needs to be changed, how changes in the schools would unfold and what would be the outcome of such changes. This shared view ensured the support that the school principals needed, for school change would be forthcoming from the different sectors of the school.

8.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This section engages with the findings of the study nuanced to address what is significant in these findings and who would benefit from these findings. It also suggests recommendations arising out of the findings and directs these recommendations to respective individuals and offices that are implicit in quality school education. Three key issues stand out from the findings of the study which would be discussed here, and the recommendations would be based on these key issues. Firstly, this study erodes the veil or cloud of weakness on the relationship between school categorisation, identity and learner performance. Since these three are mutually enforceable, the process of school categorisation needs to be re-orientated to avoid the obvious backlash schools have been experiencing. In this line, the researcher recommends that the rudiments of school categorisation be redefined to ensure that they do not set schools up for failure, as is seen within the study. Secondly, the findings highlight several challenges which principals are facing when dealing with learner performance as well as managing the schools they find themselves in. The Department of Basic Education must, therefore, create both room and resources to cater for these challenges to ensure that principals can build or maintain the performance of the schools they find themselves in, for without such resources, these leaders would not be able to drive performance in their school the way it should go. Thirdly, the process of change is also worthy of note as the reconstruction of school identity and the improvement of learner performance is not a day's event, but a product of continuous engagement on a variety of fronts to foster growth and change. For this to happen, the researcher recommends that buy-in from all staff is paramount to arrive at the confluence of change where all parties work to achieve the desired change. The principal and the general leadership of the school must, therefore, develop a vision which is articulate and apt enough to get buy-in from all parties. Finally, improving learner performance and creating a new identity for the school is the product of influence, support, concern, and conflict all working at different times to ensure that the vision is on course. Recognising and taking measures to deal with or handle these stages as they come along, rather than shying away from them, is what would result in school change.

8.6 CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY

This chapter is the conclusion of the study's School identity and learner performance: a school leadership perspective on their relationships. It provided a theorisation of the findings and articulated a theoretical pathway for school change and improvement of learner performance.

The chapter further engages the key findings of the study and also summarises the key issues that arise from the findings. The chapter moves beyond providing the key findings and issues to theorising them. The chapter also returns to the research question to provide insight on their questions as pertains to the study. It also highlights the significance of the study and makes recommendations for school change and improvement of learner performance.

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APPENDIX ONE: EDUTORIAL REPORT AND CERTIFICATE



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Date issued: 12/07/2019

SUPREME EDITOR

This document certifies that the above manuscript was proofread and edited by Dr Gift Mheta (PhD, Linguistics).

The document was edited for proper English language, grammar, punctuation, spelling and overall style. The editor endeavoured to ensure that the author's intended meaning was not altered during the review. All amendments were tracked with the Microsoft Word "Track Changes" feature. Therefore, the authors had the option to reject or accept each change individually.

Kind regards



Dr Gift Mheta (Cell: 073 954 8913)



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CHAPTER ONE ORIENTATION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY 1.1

INTRODUCTION This is the introductory chapter of the study entitled School Identity and Learner Performance: A School Leadership Perspective on their Relationships. This study focuses on school identity and learners'

APPENDIX THREE: APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION



kzn education
Department:
Education
KWAZULU-NATAL

Application for Permission to Conduct Research in
KwaZulu Natal Department of Education Institutions

1. Applicants Details

Name Of Applicant(s): GODFREY KHULULEKANI SIHLE MEMELA

Tel No: 0827648618

sihlememela@vodamail.co.za

Fax: _____

Email sihlekhululekani@gmail.co &

Address: 145 GUM TREE ROAD SEA COW LAKE DURBAN NORTH 4051

2. Proposed Research Title: School identity and learner performance: A school leadership perspective on their relationships

3. Have you applied for permission to conduct this research or any other research within the KZNDoe institutions?

Yes No

If "yes", please state reference Number: N/A

4. Is the proposed research part of a tertiary qualification?

Yes No

If "yes"

Name of tertiary institution: UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Faculty and or School: EDUCATION

Qualification: PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION (PhD)

Name of Supervisor: PROF. L. RAMARATHAN Supervisors Signature _____

If "no", state purpose of research: N/A

Briefly state the proposal outline: This study has been conceptualized within a broader NRF funded research project that explores the influences of school categorization on school identity and ethos that accounts for the status of teaching and learning in schools. This study takes a specific focus on school leadership within this broad project focus.

The study discusses and explore various literature related to schools identity, school categorization, school leadership and learner performance. The choice of this delimitation is related to the key areas of exploration within the study focus. The review will be divided into the following sections, school identity and categorization, principals as leaders and finally principals' perspectives on learners' performance

5. What is the main research question(s):

Main question: How does the school principal explain the relationship between its school categorization and learner performance?

Sub-questions:

- What is the school principal's version of its school identity and ethos?
- How has the principal come to this version of its school identity and ethos?
- What are the learner performance trends in the selected schools?
- How does the principal explain the learner performance trends in terms of teaching and learning status?
- How might the principal explain the relationship between teaching and learning in relation to its identity and ethos of the school?

**6. Methodology including sampling procedures and the people to be included in the sample:
Qualitative Research Method**

The study is located largely within a qualitative research approach, taking on an interpretivist epistemology. Quantitative trend analysis of learner performance forms a minor component of the research data production design.

Qualitative research method focuses on the phenomenon that occurs in natural settings and data are analyzed without use of statistics. Qualitative research usually takes place in the field or wherever the participants normally conduct their activities (Jackson, 2011). The use of qualitative research would help me as a researcher to learn more about the experiences of the principals in school identity constructions in relation to learner performance as deeply located within their subject experiences. The qualitative researcher believes that the way of knowing reality (epistemology) is by exploring the experiences of others regarding a specific phenomenon. It is an attempt to see how others constructed their reality, thus locating this study within an interpretivist paradigm (Maree, 2007). In this study the principals' perspective is focused on with a view to exploring his/her interpretation of their respective school identities, how these identities emerged and how they relate their school identities to their learner performance. My approach as a qualitative, interpretivist researcher is to make meaning of the principals' subjectivities in articulating their school identities and the relationship between their school identities and their learner performance. Furthermore, qualitative research approach focuses on people, how and why they interact with each other, and their motives and relationships. Therefore, the study is embedded on the notion that school leadership perspectives influence the school identity and learner performance. Moodley (2009) affirms that the qualitative research is about the reflections of values and in this regard my perspective is on how school categorization influences the school identity and how this identity influences learner performance with a specific focus on how principals lead the school embedded in its identity and learner performance.

Sampling

A purposive sampling strategy to sample principals for this study will be used, where the researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgments of their typicality; the sample is chosen for a specific purpose (Moodley, 2009). The sample of the research participants would be four principals from the five high schools in the Hlokozi area. The researcher selects individuals to participate on the research based on a specific need and purpose (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013). In this study, the focus is on principals as specific members of the school leadership, hence the sample participants are principals of the secondary schools in the area.

Narrative Inquiry methodology

In this study I have chosen to use narrative inquiry as the methodology in the data production design. Narrative inquiry, according to Clandinin, Pushor and Orr (2007) is a methodology through which data is produced through the telling of stories as recalled by the participant. It is the study of experience understood through the narrations of the participants and it follows a recursive and reflexive process of moving from lived stories and/or experiences to data. In this study the focus is on the principals perspective of the relationship between its school categorisation, the school identity and learner performance. The principal perspective would, most appropriately, be obtained through a narrative dialogue that links their lived experience to the accounts of this lived experience. These lived experiences are one of the ways that

we fill our world with meaning hence arguing for narrative inquiry as the most appropriate methodology for this study.

Reflecting to the experiences that one had or encountered enables one to understand one's past better, although Clandinin, *et al* (2007, p.21), warns that:

"It should not be assumed that narrative inquiry just involves simple telling of stories but it has more complexities that are entailed, for instance; the designing of the narrative inquiry based on teachers' experiences personally and professionally as well as their practices, as it demands particular kinds of wakefulness".

Thus, telling your own life story is a methodology of understanding oneself, as one should reflect on experiences of personal, professional and practices (action) that have been involved that shaped one's identity as a teacher, in this case the principal.

Furthermore, narrative inquiry as a dynamic process of reclaiming and revisiting personal and professional identities (Ritchie and Wilson, 2000), it is quite imperative that it is characterised by four components. These components are; self-study, biography, autography and lastly the autobiography. The latter will be the focal point that will be appropriate in claiming and revisiting principals' personal and professional identities in relation to learner performance and school identity constructions.. Sen (2006, p.19), also affirms that "a person has to make choices-explicit or by implication- about what relative importance to attach". Therefore, the actions that principals attach to their schools' identities result in meanings that direct their actions to learner performance.

Therefore, this study will enable principals to narrate their stories in order to theorise their personal and professional identities in relation to school identities and learner performance. Through theorising their identities, their beliefs, attitudes, fears and victories will be unveiled. They will examine the ways in which their "personal and professional developments are interdependent" (Ritchie and Wilson, 2000, p.75). In support of this, they will narrate the interconnectedness of their personal and professional identities on how they had perform their duties in school leadership as Clandinin and Connelly (1994, p. 415), point out that "people understand and construct meanings using their experiences".

7. What contribution will the proposed study make to the education, health, safety, welfare of

the learners and to the education system as a whole?: The study will influence the policy makers in terms of school categorisation is concerned. It will also influence the principals by illuminating the impact of school identity construction and how leadership influences the learner performance in school categorisation. It also unpack the influence of school

8. KZN Department of Education Districts from which sample will be drawn (please tick) –
Please attach the list of all schools

Amajuba		Umlazi		Sisonke	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Othukela		Pinetown		Ugu	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Zululand		Ilembe		Umgungundlovu	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obonjeni		Empangeni		Umzinyathi	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Research data collection instruments: (Note: a list and only a brief description is required here - the actual instruments must be attached): Quantitative data on learner performance over a five year period, retrospective from the year of data collection, will be collected through the database of learner performance either at the school site or from the District Office. This data source would provide a trend analysis of learner performance.

Qualitative data would be collected using narrative inquiry methods. These methods include iterative interviews with participant and artifactual recalls through events and incidents that profile the school. I would establish how participants make meanings of specific phenomenon; which in this study principals' perspective on learner performance as influenced by their school identity and further influenced by their school quintile rankings, "by analyzing their attitudes and understanding in order to understand how their nature of reality (ontology) is constructed (Moodley, 2009:39). In order to produce this data, several narrative methods of inquiry will be used. Initially, the selected principals will be asked to develop their personal biography of themselves as leaders of their school. Using this biography, one-on-one semi-structured interviews will be held with each participant, with the purpose of probing deeply the issues, experiences and feelings that have been expressed through their biographies. The semi-structured interviews will be iterative in nature; each subsequent interview will deepen the probe. The third set of data will be through a campus tour, facilitating an observation of site and activities that would contribute to a deeper understanding of school identity construction within the respective schools. This campus tour will be followed by conversational interviews to get a fuller picture of the school environment and its activities with the purpose of exploring how these observations of site and activities have come to be and how they have influenced learner performance in the respective school.

10. Procedure for obtaining consent of participants and where appropriate parents or guardians:

The letters to the School Governing Body will be submitted to request the utilization of schools as research sites. The letters to principals as participants in the study will be submitted. The principals as participants will be given the chance to read the letters. They will be given the chance to consult any relevant stakeholders concerning the research project. They will then be given the consent forms to sign. The fictitious of names and participants will be used.

11. Procedure to maintain confidentiality (if applicable): The fictitious of names of schools and participants will be used.

12. Questions or issues with the potential to be intrusive, upsetting or incriminating to participants (if applicable): _____

13. Additional support available to participants in the event of disturbance resulting from intrusive questions or issues (if applicable): _____

14. Research Timelines :

Ethical Clearance	September 2014
Design and Development	December 2014
Data Collection	February 2015
Data Analytical Framework	June 2015
Writing	August 2016
Final Writing	November 2016

15. Declaration

I **G.KS. MEMELA** declare that the above information is true and correct



Signature of Applicant

12 February 2015

Date

16. Agreement to provide and to grant the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education the right to publish a summary of the report.

I/We agree to provide the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education with a copy of any report or dissertation written on the basis of information gained through the research activities described in this application.

I/We grant the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education the right to publish an edited summary of this report or dissertation using the print or electronic media.

12 February 2015

Signature of Applicant

Date

Return a completed form to:
Sibusiso Alwar
Research Unit
Resource Planning
KwaZulu Natal Department of Education

Hand Delivered:
Office G25; 188 Pietermaritz Street
Pietermaritzburg 3201

Or

Ordinary Mail
Private Bag X9137
Pietermaritzburg
3200

Or

Email

sibusiso.alwar@kzndoe.gov.za or smiso.sikhakhane@kzndoe.gov.za

APPENDIX FOUR: LETTER GRANTED TO PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Nomangisi Ngubane

Tel: 033 392 1004

Ref.:2/4/8/370

Mr GKS Memela
145 Gum Tree Road
Sea Cow Lake
DURBAN NORTH
4051

Dear Mr Memela

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: "SCHOOL IDENTITY AND LEARNER PERFORMANCE: A SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE ON THEIR RELATIONSHIPS", in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 March 2015 to 31 March 2016.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Connie Kehologile at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

Sisonke District
Ugu District

Nkdsinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education
Date: 25 February 2015

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa ...dedicated to service and performance
PHYSICAL: 247 Burger Street, Anton Lembede House, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Tel. 033 392 1004 beyond the call of duty
EMAIL ADDRESS: kehologile.connie@kzndoe.gov.za / Nomangisi.Ngubane@kzndoe.gov.za
CALL CENTRE: 0860 596 363; Fax: 033 392 1203 WEBSITE: WWW.kzndoe.gov.za

APPENDIX FIVE: NARRATIVE INQUIRY PROB QUESTIONS

NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF PARTICIPANTS

TOPIC: School Identity and learner performance: A school leadership perspective on their relationship.

The narrative inquiry is based on the school identity and learner performance in relation to leadership.

1. Tell about the school setting:

- a. Ethos of the school- the way of life of the school
- b. How has the school constructed this way of life
- c. The experience of leadership on school identity construction and learner performance
 - As a principal of a quintile 1,2,3,4 or 5 school:
 - What does it mean to you as leader of the school
 - What message does the school portray to you as a leader?
 - How has the quintile influenced the leadership of the school based on teaching and learning?
 - What are daily routines of the school by engaging with staff, learners, school management team, teaching personnel and non- teaching personnel?
 - How have you come to this routine?
 - How does the routine influence the school identity and learner performance?
 - What sort of guide that is given or shared with educators in improving learner performance?
 - What sort of guidance is given or provided to learners in improving their performance?
 - Why do you feel that guidance is important in school identity construction and learner performance?
 - How would you describe the learner performance in the past five years in this institution?
 - What explains the learner performance?
 - Why there is difference in learner performance?
 - What interventions introduced to improve learner performance in this institution?
 - Why interventions are the most appropriate to improve learner performance?
 - What is the status of your school in relation to teaching and learning?
 - How do you rate your school in terms of teaching and learning?
 - What need to be done to sustain/ improve/ address challenges of learner performance in your school?

APPENDIX SIX: LETTER TO SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

Sea Cow Lake
Durban North
4051
18 February 2015

CHAIRPERSON OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

GATE KEEPER'S CONSENT LETTER

My name is Godfrey K. Sihle Memela. I am a Humanities- Education PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa. My research topic is on School identity and learner performance: A school leadership perspective on their relationships. Schools within South Africa has been categorized in terms of quintile rankings, geography (urban, rural, townships), performance and poverty indices. This study explores the relationship, if any, between these school categories and school identity and ethos that accounts for its status of teaching and learning. The focus of this exploration is through the lens of the principal as leader of the school.

Your school has been selected as one of the four secondary schools in the Hlokozi area through a purposive sampling of schools. As a school governing body chairperson of this school, you are notified that the school principal is the participant in the study. The participation of the principal would include a series of interviews that will take place over a period of one month from commencement of the interview process. The interviews will be of a conversational type, making reference to object, events, activities and learner performance of your school. The interviews will take place at a time convenient to the principal and will not disrupt the day-to-day functioning of the responsibilities and that of the school.

Please note that:

- All confidentiality is guaranteed as inputs from participants will not be attributed individually to person. Should the need arise for participant attribution, these would be done with the express permission of the individual concerned, and that pseudonyms would be used to protect the participants' anonymity.
- Any information given by the participants cannot be used against any of the participants, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- The choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research is left on to the participant. No one will be penalized for taking such an action.
- The research aims at obtaining information about schooling.
- Participants' involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.

I can be contacted at:

Email: sihlekhululekani@gmail.com

Cell: 082 764 8618/0718890962

My supervisor is Prof. Labby Ramrathan who is located at the School of Education, Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Contact details: email: ramrathanp@ukzn.ac.za,

Telephone 031-260 8065/ 0826749829

You may also contact the Administrative Office through:

Mr S. Mthembu

Administrative Officer

Higher Degrees and Research

College of Humanities

School of Education

Edgewood Campus

Telephone: 031 260 3888

E-mail: Mthembu@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I..... (full name of the Chairman of the School Governing Body) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I give permission for my school to be participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw my school from participating in the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF CHAIRMAN OF SGB

DATE

.....

19.02.2015

145 Gum Tree Road
Sea Cow Lake
Durban North
4051
18 February 2015

CHAIRPERSON OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

GATE KEEPER'S CONSENT LETTER

My name is Godfrey K. Sihle Memela. I am a Humanities- Education PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa. My research topic is on School identity and learner performance: A school leadership perspective on their relationships. Schools within South Africa has been categorized in terms of quintile rankings, geography (urban, rural, townships), performance and poverty indices. This study explores the relationship, if any, between these school categories and school identity and ethos that accounts for its status of teaching and learning. The focus of this exploration is through the lens of the principal as leader of the school.

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- The choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research is left on to the participant. No one will be penalized for taking such an action.
- The research aims at obtaining information about schooling.
- Participants' involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.

I can be contacted at:

Email: sihlekhululekani@gmail.com

Cell: 082 764 8618/0718890962

My supervisor is Prof. Labby Ramrathan who is located at the School of Education, Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Contact details: email: ramrathanp@ukzn.ac.za,

Telephone 031-260 8065/ 0826749829

You may also contact the Administrative Office through:

Mr S. Mthembu

Administrative Officer

Higher Degrees and Research

College of Humanities

School of Education

Edgewood Campus

Telephone: 031 260 3888

E-mail: Mthembu@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I, (full name of the Chairman of the School Governing Body) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I give permission for my school to be participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw my school from participating in the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF CHAIRMAN OF SGB

DATE

.....

18-02-15

145 Gum Tree Road
Sea Cow Lake
Durban North
4051
18 February 2015

CHAIRPERSON OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

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DATE

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18.02.2018.....

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Durban North
4051
18 February 2015

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SIGNATURE OF CHAIRMAN OF SGB

DATE

(M. D. ...)

20/02/2015

APPENDIX SEVEN: INFORMED CONSENT LETTERS FOR PRINCIPALS

145 Gum Tree Road
Sea Cow Lake
Durban North
4051
18 February 2015

Dear Participant

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR PRINCIPALS

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Edgewood Campus

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E-mail: Mthembu@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

PARTICIPANT DECLARATION

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

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I also understand and give permission for the use of the following recording devices during the interview and data production process.

	Willing	Not willing
Audio recording	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photographic equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Video recording	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

Paula S. Jones

DATE

20/02/2015



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU NATAL
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

HIGH SCHOOL

P.O. BOX 27830 UMZINTO, 4200
EMIS NO. 213453



Fax to e-mail. 086 225 7297
Facsimail: 082 205 0629

E-mail: high@gmail.com

Office No. 079 207 7548

9th September 2014

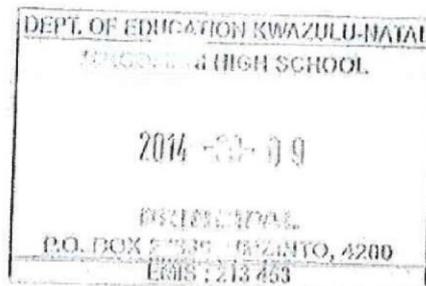
Dear Mr. G.K.S Memela

Re-Informed Consent Letter For Principals

Mngomeni High School received your letter dated 25 August 2014. On behalf of the school I wish to inform you that you are at liberty to come and visit the school and do the interviews concerning your research. We are willing to assist you with all the information you might need.

Yours Sincerely

Principal



145 Gum Tree Road
Sea Cow Lake
Durban North
4051
18 February 2015

Dear Participant

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR PRINCIPALS

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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

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	Willing	Not willing
Audio recording	✓	
Photographic equipment		✗
Video recording		✗

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....
083560 1967

5/3/2015
.....

145 Gum Tree Road
Sea Cow Lake
Durban North
4051
18 February 2015

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School of Education
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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

PARTICIPANT DECLARATION

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

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I also understand and give permission for the use of the following recording devices during the interview and data production process.

	Willing	Not willing
Audio recording	X	
Photographic equipment		X
Video recording		X

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....*Erin J. Clark*.....

DATE

.....*19. 02. 2015*.....

145 Gum Tree Road
Sea Cow Lake
Durban North
4051
18 February 2015

Dear Participant

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Audio recording	✓	
Photographic equipment		✓
Video recording		✓

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

[Handwritten Signature].....

18.02.2014.....

145 Gum Tree Road
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4051
18 February 2015

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SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

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18/02/2014
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Edgewood Campus

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E-mail: Mthembu@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

PARTICIPANT DECLARATION

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

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

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	Willing	Not willing
Audio recording	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photographic equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Video recording	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

[Handwritten Signature]

DATE

03/05/2016

