

**THE *JIKA iMFUNDO* CURRICULUM INTERVENTION:
NARRATIVES OF THREE PRINCIPALS OF
UNDERPERFORMING SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN A
RURAL CONTEXT**

By

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KwaZulu-Natal

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DATE SUBMITTED: MAY 2021

DECLARATION

I, Promise Khethiwe Zondi, declare that:

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SUPERVISOR’S STATEMENT

This dissertation is submitted with my approval

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the supervisor.

Professor I. Naicker

17 May 2021

Date

DEDICATION

To my late parents, Mr Mfanozi and Mrs Tryphinah (MaHlongwa) Ndimande; my sisters, Mrs Nozipho Mzobe, the late Mrs Nonhlanhla Mhlongo, Mrs Thobile Dladla, Mrs Mantombi Xulu; my brothers, Mthokozisi Ndimande, the late Nkosinathi, Bafanyana and Mduduzi Ndimande; my husband, Mandla Zondi; my sons, Buhlebemvelo, Mthobisi and my grandson, Philasande for their unfailing love, understanding and support.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to examine the experiences of principals of underperforming secondary schools in a rural context, with regard to the implementation of the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. South Africa is experiencing a decline in the outcomes of many public schools. This is evident in secondary schools' National Senior Certificate (NSC) results where some schools persistently perform below 65% academically, which is a benchmark for underperformance by the Department of Education. Further, there are schools which still attain 0% pass rate in the NSC results. This academic decline is an indication that the South African education system is gravitating towards a crisis. Despite the introduction of Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) into the schooling system, the country has not yet reached a level where 90% of candidates achieve at least 50% in mathematics, sciences and languages. Literature reveals that poor academic performance is due to inadequate curriculum coverage. Given the poor learning outcomes, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZN DoE) has partnered with Programme for Improving Learner Outcomes (PILO) and introduced the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. The *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention aims at promoting curriculum implementation by providing support to educators. It aims at ensuring that instruction is taking place and curriculum is covered. Moreover, the *Jika iMfundo* aims at capacitating SMTs and District officials to monitor the implementation of curriculum. This study presents the stories of three principals of underperforming rural secondary schools, in Pinetown District in KZN. McLaughlin's (1987) conceptual framework on the implementation of policy and Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) instructional leadership theory underpin this study. Using an interpretive, qualitative approach and narrative inquiry methodology, I conducted narrative interviews to generate field texts. The analysis of data was done at two levels. The first level was narrative analysis and the second level was the analysis of narratives. Together with the three participants, I constructed their stories which assisted in understanding their experiences of implementing the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. Through the analysis of narratives, it became evident that the creation of an encouraging, warm and conducive work environment has a positive bearing on the working relationships between the school principal and educators and among educators themselves. The healthy relationships contribute to the increased work morale, effective schools and school improvement.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

B. Ed	Bachelor of Education
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements
DAS	Developmental Appraisal System
DoE	Department of Education
DSG	Developmental Support Group
EEA	Employment of Educators Act
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
FET	Further Education and Training
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
ISASA	Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa
KZN DoE	KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NCS	National Curriculum Statements
NDP	National Development Plan
NECT	National Education Collaborative Trust
NEEDU	National Education Evaluation and Development Unit
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NSLA	National Strategy for Learner Attainment
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
PAM	Personnel Administration Measures
PEIC	Provincial Examination Integrity Committee
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education

PILO	Programme for Improving Learner Outcomes
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PLCs	Professional Learning Communities
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statements
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SAMSTIP	South African Mathematics and Science Teacher Intern Programme
SASA	South African Schools Act
SBA	School Based Assessment
SEACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
SONA	State of the Nation Address
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
WSE	Whole School Evaluation

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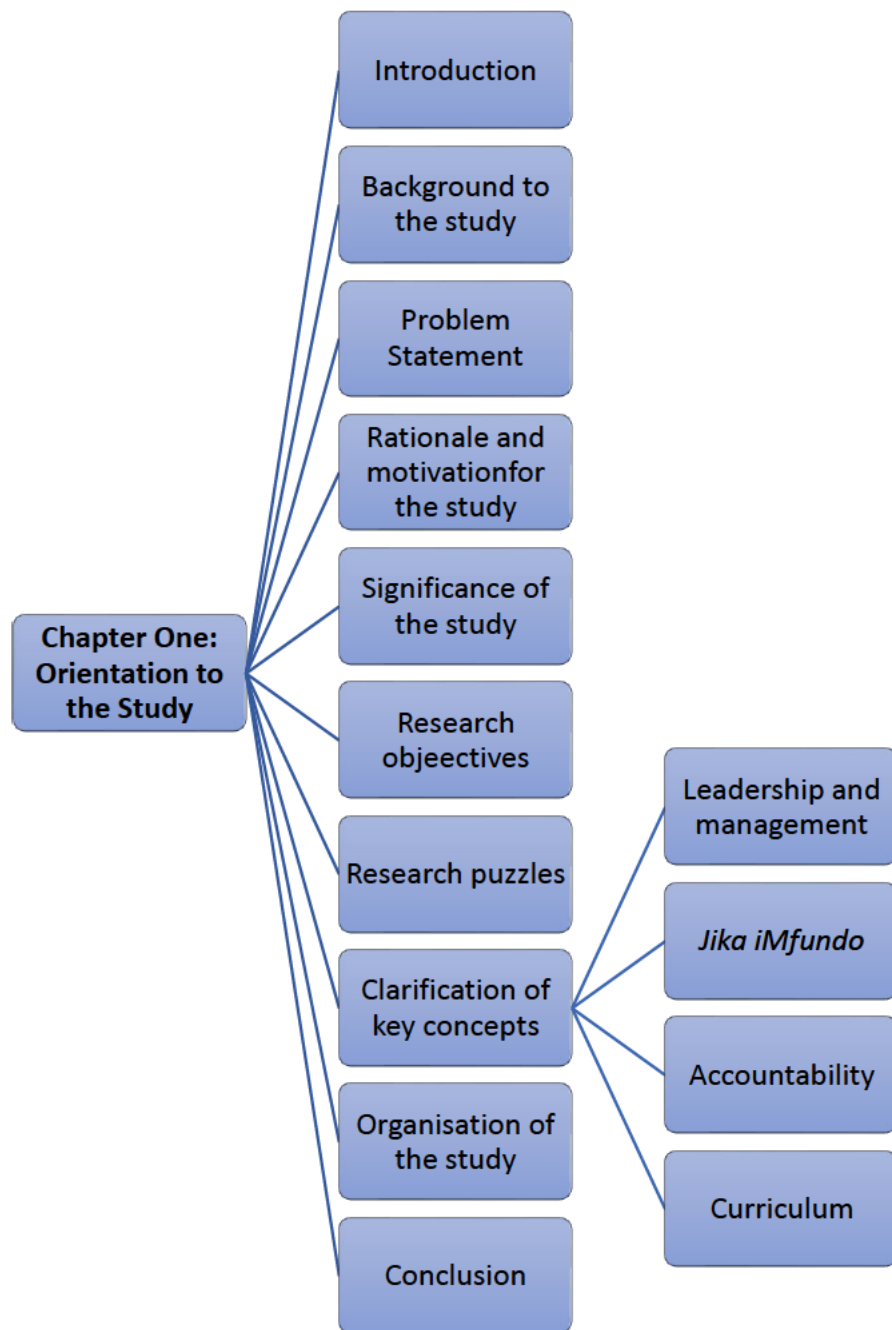
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the introduction, orientation and background to the study. It explains the statement of the problem, rationale and motivation for the study. It then highlights the significance of the study, objectives and research puzzles. It also presents the key concepts, organisation of the study and conclusion. This study focuses on school principals' management of curriculum. The main purpose is to generate narratives of principals of underperforming secondary schools, in a rural context about their experiences of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. Thus, this study is titled *The Jika iMfundo Curriculum Intervention: Narratives of Three Principals of Underperforming Secondary Schools in a Rural Context*. Also, the Department of Basic Education (DBE)'s Action Plan 2019: Towards Schooling 2025 Goal 18 envisages that learners cover all the topics and skills that they should cover within their current school year (Department of Education, 2019). The *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention, focusses more on curriculum coverage as a means of promoting instruction thus improving academic performance especially in rural schools. Further, the *Jika iMfundo* equips School Management Teams (SMTs) with leadership and management skills that they need in improving and sustaining their schools.

1.2 Background to the study

Before 1994 South Africa had nineteen education departments that shadowed diverse syllabi and offered dissimilar ideals of education value (Manganye, 2001). When the democratic government took over, different education departments and tertiary education that operated during apartheid regime were restructured into nine anew designed provincial departments and a distinct national education department (Jansen, 2004; Manganye, 2001; Mda & Mothata, 2000). The restructuring aimed at achieving uniformity in curriculum implementation. Many investigations had to be carried out by the bodies employed by the National Department of Education to investigate ways of democratising educational governance in South Africa. As a result, various legislative frameworks and policy documents were published (Sayed, 1997). Among others, *NEPA*, *SASA*, and *National Qualifications Framework* were formulated. The body that had been assigned with the responsibility of Education Management Development was instructed by the Minister of Education in 1996 to explore means of institutionalizing strategies for education management development in South Africa (Department of Education, 1996). The report by the task team highlighted that the new approach is reinforced by the understanding that although good management is essential in education, its key focus is the

advancement of effective teaching and learning. Therefore, there had to be transformation of the curriculum.

Since 1994, when South Africa transformed from apartheid curriculum to a more democratic curriculum there has been constant curriculum transformation. The curriculum that was introduced in 1997 was Curriculum 2005, commonly referred to as Outcomes Based Education (OBE) (Gumede & Biyase, 2016). A need arose for the review of Curriculum 2005. This curriculum was criticised as it was viewed as the imposition of the western world (Cross, Mungadi & Rouhani 2002). Jansen (1998) contends that OBE did not seem fit enough for all South African schools and it might bring in some aspects of apartheid, unless drastic preparations were made. It was also discovered that learners were frequently tested to cover for continuous assessment, which compromised teaching and learning time (Department of Education, 2001). Some amendments were effected which led to the development and adoption of Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) and National Curriculum Statements (NCS) (Department of Education, 2000; Adu & Ngibe, 2014).

Currently, the curriculum model in use is Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) which was effected in 2012 (Department of Education, 2010). CAPS is a very complex curriculum in terms of its pushy scope and pace, progression policy and the puzzling scope of supervision for Departmental Heads given their high teaching loads (Metcalf, 2018). Metcalf (2018) further argues that the perception of CAPS as rigid in terms of scope and pace poses a threat to curriculum management which yields unfavourable learner outcomes thus compromising quality of education. It is against this background that the Department of Education for KZN Province collaborated with the Programme for Improving Learner Outcomes (PILO) and came forward with the idea of *Jika iMfundo* intervention (Maphalala et al., 2018). *Jika iMfundo* aims at improving learner performance, thus school improvement and school effectiveness.

Al Mekhalafi and Osman (2019) argue that school effectiveness is viewed as theories and research studies on the relationship between educational processes and outcomes in learner achievement in schools and classrooms. Al Mekhlafi and Osman (2019) elaborate by stating that school effectiveness is meant to discover what is operational and beneficial which needs to be maintained so that an ineffective school can be turned into an effective one. Magulod (2017) looks at school effectiveness as referring to the positive impact of improving conditions at school level. On the other hand, Al Mekhlafi and Osman (2019) argue that school

improvement refers to the strategies, initiatives, programmes, and interventions that are aimed at improving learner outcomes and transforming schools towards improved effectiveness.

School effectiveness and school improvement have much in common, complement each other and study from each other. Kelcey and Shen (2016) argue that school-based improvement and intervention programmes have a positive impact on the effectiveness of schools. Kelcey and Shen (2016) elaborate by stating that the change that is brought by school-based intervention programmes includes implementing innovative curricula, improved instruction, instituting school restructuring, organising school management and delivering professional development. School improvement is not a once off event. Al Mekhalafi and Osman (2019) assert that school improvement is a cyclical, ongoing process which has an elaborate plan and systematic framework which requires leaders who are committed to improvement.

Trish et al. (2019) assert that the quality of leadership relates to the achievement of the school as well as the improvement of educational achievement of learners. School effectiveness and improvement have always been a concern and attempts have been made to assist school principals to attain effective skills by improving principal preparation programmes (Davis & Darling-Hammond 2012). However, I note that the needs of school principals differ from person to person, depending on the expertise, how well vested with the curriculum, capability to shape healthy relationships with fellow colleagues and the context under which he finds himself (Gentilucci, Denti, & Guagliano, 2010).

Jika iMfundo intervention programme is conceptualised as a collective project between the KZN DoE and PILO, self-governing entity, which is financed and managed by the National Education Collaborative Trust (NECT) (Pillay, 2018). *Jika iMfundo* was implemented as a pilot study from 2015 to 2017 in all 1200 schools in King Cetshwayo and Pinetown districts in KZN (Metcalf, 2018). One of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030's targets is to increase learner performance, where 90% of learners pass Languages, Mathematics and Science with at least 50% (Christie & Mnyokolo, 2018). The intervention was developed to assess the merits and demerits of strategies for improving learner outcomes at a smaller scale before the actual rollout of *Jika iMfundo* intervention in all twelve districts in 2018. Drawing on Pillay (2018) these two districts comprise of schools with a diversity of contexts and backgrounds of learners. Pillay (2018) declares that these districts contain no-fee paying schools, categorised as the poorest (quintiles 1 to 3) and fee- paying schools, categorised as well resourced (quintiles 4 to 5). To this, Metcalfe and Witten (2019) contend that the education contexts that exist reflect high levels of social and educational inequality. These scholars

continue to reveal that, it is the better resourced and well-established schools that contribute mostly to high learner outcomes.

Research reveals that it is alarming to note that even in the post-apartheid education system, inequality in schools still exists and affirms that schools in rural contexts still face some challenges in their daily operations. Jansen (2019) contends that a learner's race, area (urban or rural), financial status of parents and the type of school attended, determine the academic performance and the future of a learner. Therefore, schools from poor rural communities are the ones which are mostly classified as underperforming. Another factor that contributes to underperformance of poor rural schools is the one mentioned by Naicker, Myende and Ncokwana (2020) when they comment about the categorisation of schools into quintiles, where the poorest 60% of schools are categorised as quintiles 1-3, no fee-paying schools. The challenge with this, is that the monetary allocations are paid to schools extremely late, yet these schools are supposed to function effectively and produce excellent results like their wealthier counterparts.

This study looks at the role of school principals in curriculum leadership and management. The education system is already seriously affected by the outbreak of COVID-19. Schools have adopted the rotation system, where learners alternate days at school in order to comply with COVID-19 protocols. The rotation method has its own demerits as it reduces contact time which continues to create a gap in the education that is acquired by learners. Such a gap is evident in terms of content coverage, especially in rural schools which are clouded by a myriad of challenges in their day-to-day operations.

In order to produce excellent results, schools need adequate resources and this contributes greatly to teacher and learner morale and motivation, thus effective teaching and learning which results in excellent learner outcomes. To attest to this discrepancy, Taylor and Moyane (2005) proclaim that poor curriculum coverage has been known as amongst the crucial causes for poor learning outcomes in schools serving rural communities. *Jika iMfundo* comes as a solution to academic underperformance that is clouding South African education system (Metcalf & Witten, 2018). Christie and Manyokolo (2018) look at *Jika iMfundo* as a journey to improve learning outcomes in all schools. These researchers further explain that PILO is supporting the KZN DoE in implementing *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention, which is more interested in curriculum coverage as a means of promoting instruction thus improving academic performance especially in rural schools.

Another focus of *Jika iMfundo* is on school leadership and management. It looks at all School Management Teams (SMTs) and all district officials as the supporting structures for all schools and educators (Metcalf & Witten, 2018; Maphalala et al., 2018). Teachers are provided with curriculum support material from grades 1 to 12 for languages, mathematics and science. The *Jika iMfundo* intervention serves as a turnaround strategy for improving learner outcomes by encouraging professional conversations among teachers and their departmental heads (Mthiyane, Naidoo & Bertram, 2019; Maphalala et al., 2018). Furthermore, *Jika iMfundo* is in line with the DBE's Action Plan 2019: Towards Schooling 2025 Goal 18 which aims at ensuring that learners cover all the topics and skills that they should cover within their current school year (DBE, 2019). Against this background, the focal point of the study is the role of the school principals in curriculum leadership and management.

1.3 The statement of the problem

The reports on National and International benchmark studies, Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SEACMEQ) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) reveal that South Africa demonstrated great improvement in grade 9 mathematics and science as well as in grade 6 mathematics from 2003 to 2015 (Department of Education, 2016; Reddy, 2019). However, it should be noted that despite improvement in 2003, 2011 and 2015 in TIMSS and SEACMEQ, the proportional marks put South Africa almost at the lowest level of the attainment table (Jansen, 2019). On the other side, reports on Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) results show that 78% of South African Grade 4 learners have difficulty in reading for understanding (Department of Education, 2017; Howie, Combrinck, Tshele, Roux, McLeod & Mokoena, 2018). This means that there is a crisis in the South African education system. Drawing on Christie and Manyokolo (2018), NSC results have not yet reached the level where many learners do well in languages, mathematics and science. Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) was introduced into the school system in 2012 as a means of addressing the poor state of education in South Africa (Department of Education, 2014).

There is a remarkable improvement in the overall pass percentage of NSC results in South Africa, from 75.1% in 2017, to 78.2% in 2018 and to 81.3% in 2019 (Department of Education, 2020). Despite the introduction of CAPS by the Department of Education, some schools are

repeatedly performing below 65% and there are schools that still attain 0% in NSC examination results. The number of schools that achieve 0% raises eyebrows as it seems to increase year by year, from 9 schools in 2017, to 12 schools in 2018 and to 18 schools in 2019 (Department of Education, 2019). This is a sign that quality of education is somehow compromised. This makes me wonder as to what the problem could be. I am fretful about the eminence of education that is received by the children, leadership of school principals and the strategies, methods that they use to track effective teaching and monitoring curriculum delivery and its coverage in schools.

As part of the improvement plan, *Jika iMfundo* intervention has been introduced in KZN with the aim of improving learning outcomes (Christie & Manyokolo, 2018). Literature reveals that the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention is positively received by some schools, others report that they already have their programmes that are working well for them (Christie & Manyokolo, 2018). Given *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention, this study seeks to explore how the principals of underperforming secondary schools experience the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention and its impact on learning outcomes. My personal experience of the phenomenon is discussed under the next section on rationale and motivation for the study.

1.4 Rationale and motivation for the study

The rationale and motivation to conduct this study stem from personal, professional and theoretical dimensions.

Personal dimension

As a mother with children who are attending school, I am concerned about underperformance of rural secondary schools in South Africa. I have also noticed that with some subjects, the written work remains unmarked for the entire school term and there are some discrepancies that remain unresolved. In another instance, the language classwork of ten sentences had only one big tick, only to find that some sentences needed to be marked wrong. In some subjects remedial work is not done. Furthermore, in other subjects revision (in terms of item analysis) is not done after assessments. I am concerned about the quality of education that is received by the children, the leadership of school principals and the manner in which they monitor curriculum and its coverage in schools.

Professional dimension

I taught at a rural secondary school for fourteen years. The conditions were not conducive to effective teaching and learning at all. Even when the apartheid regime was over, there was hardly any improvement. Underperformance remained the order of the day. Schools had a

tendency of making candidates register subjects in Standard Grade instead of Higher Grade so that they would escape the stigma of being labelled as T60, which was referring to underperforming schools. That placed candidates at a disadvantage since they could not meet requirements to enrol for Bachelor Degrees at universities. In that manner quality of education of learners was compromised. Inequality in terms of academic resources and inequity, in terms of access to well-resourced institutions, pushed schools to strive for quantity rather than quality, at the expense of the future of innocent learners. Someone should take the blame. The worry is who? Schools or the system? Currently, I am serving as an office-based educator as Senior Education Specialist (SES) in the Examination Section in the Department of Education. I am involved in statistical analysis of results and I am disturbed by the schools which continuously underperform. My main concern is that they perform well during the first three school terms, and perform poorly at the end of the year. This leaves me with many questions about what is going on in terms of curriculum management in schools.

Theoretical dimension

Literature reveals that there is great improvement of learner outcomes when curriculum coverage is monitored (Pillay, 2018; Mthiyane, Naidoo and Bertram, 2019). Terhoven and Fataar (2018) argue that national and international literature on leadership focuses on the personalities of leaders, not on their practices or collective action. It omits the practices of leadership in specific contexts and how the external conditions of differing contexts affect schools in their teaching and learning practices. Various researchers (Oakland, 1993; Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008) link the school effectiveness with the leadership of the principal. Bush (2010) echoes the notion that the quality of leadership contributes greatly to school improvement and learner outcomes. To this, Clarke (2011) declares that in underperforming schools, the school principals mostly work alone. The School Management Teams (SMTs) do not meet on regular basis. In such schools, leadership is not a collective responsibility, therefore, there is no shared responsibility and accountability for all decisions.

This study will focus on the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention, using narrative inquiry. I will be looking specifically at the principals from underperforming secondary schools in a rural context. Given that *Jika iMfundo* is still new in as far as the studies are concerned, therefore literature is limited.

1.5 Significance of the study

The study aspires to contribute to national and international deliberations. It will achieve this by providing certain insights into the actual voices and the actual predicaments that impede the optimal functioning of schools in rural communities. This study is carried out at the period when there is an outcry left, right and centre about poor learning outcomes. The reports on PIRLS results show that 78% of Grade 4 learners from South Africa are struggling to read in an insightful manner (Department of Education, 2017; Howie, Combrinck, Tshele, Roux, McLeod & Mokoena, 2018). Naicker and Mestry (2016) note that the persistent poor learning outcomes of South African learners poses a threat to the economy of the country and society. Furthermore, the number of schools that achieve 0% raises eyebrows as it seems to increase year by year; from 9 schools in 2017, to 12 schools in 2018 and to 18 schools in 2019 (Department of Education, 2019). Literature reveals that there is great improvement of learner outcomes when curriculum coverage is monitored (Pillay, 2018; Mthiyane, Naidoo & Bertram, 2019). This study may motivate school principals to implement strategies that will maximize teaching and learning time which will enhance learner performance and improve the quality of education as a whole. Therefore, the school principals may benefit from the study because by sharing their narratives and re-looking at their circumstances and the circumstances of their schools and emerge as activists in transforming their schools. This transformation will also benefit learners and the communities, because out of the interventions that may be initiated by the school principals their schools may thrive regardless of the circumstances.

1.6 Research objectives

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives: -

- To examine the extent to which school principals understand their role towards the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention in a rural context.
- To explore the challenges faced by school principals in implementing *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention in a rural context.
- To establish how school principals, mitigate the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention challenges.

1.7 Research puzzles

This study seeks to respond to the following puzzles: -

- What are the principals' understandings of their roles as school leaders in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention in a rural context?
- What are the challenges faced by the school principals in implementing *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention in a rural context?
- How do the school principals mitigate the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* challenges?

1.8 Clarification of key concepts

The following are the key concepts that form the basis in which the study is operated. They are clarified and conceptualised within the context of the study.

1.8.1 Leadership and management

Leadership is defined as a bond based on effect concerning a leader and followers with the shared purpose of achieving noticeable improvement (Cuban, 1988). Allen (2018) posits that leadership is about persuading, developing, instructing, managing, mentoring, or directing individuals. Wajdi (2017) asserts that leaders have a dream of what can be accomplished and then convey this to others and devise approaches for achieving the visualization. They motivate people and are able to negotiate for resources and other support to achieve their goals. Drawing on Kotter (2001); Cuban (1988); Catano & Stronge, (2007) leadership can be conceptualised as evolving an image for the institute, make it known to people, by engaging them, inspiring them, capacitating them, taking into consideration their needs. In a school situation, it is the duty of the school leader to inspire educators and learners to be committed to achieve the desired results. In this manner leaders may emerge out of the leadership of the school principal. Allen (2018) further argue that leadership is about encouraging people to think analytically, provide fresh solutions to challenges and advancement of abilities in individuals and affording them the chance to practice such capabilities. This attests to the fact that people lead without having leadership positions (Lunenburg, 2011; Algahtani, 2014). To further clarify this, Allen (2018) declares that leadership is about command and the skill to discern the right time to inspire people and to be effective and efficient in the execution of their duties. This means that leadership is not about seniority and status.

Management is defined as a relationship based on authority that exists between managers and subordinates in order to achieve the goals of the organisation (Cuban, 1988). Allen (2018)

defines management as the act or skill of guiding, directing, controlling, deciding and supervising. Hissom (2009) views management as the organizational process that includes strategic planning, setting objectives, managing resources, deploying the human and financial assets needed to achieve objectives, and measuring results. Management processes involve planning and budgeting, organizing and staffing, controlling and problem solving (Kotter, 1987; Cuban, 1988; Catano & Stronge, 2007; Tobin, 2014; Adams, 2018). Hissom (2009) further summarises the management functions as planning, leading, organizing and controlling.

Scholars declare that leadership and management are similar in the sense that they both work with people, inspire them by means of specific powers to attain common goals (Northouse, 2007; Wajdi, 2017). Wajdi (2017) maintains that both leadership qualities and management skills are essential in the work situation. This implies that good managers should strive to be good leaders and good leaders, need management skills to be effective. Despite the highlighted distinction between leadership and management, in terms of definitions and functions, Bush (2007) resonates that leadership and management complement each other and they are both important for schools to survive. As a result, in this study, leadership and management will mean what Bush (2007) espouses. The scholar further clarifies that the relation between purpose and management should be made as strong and as close as possible, otherwise the school principal may end up focusing more on complying with procedures and abdicating educational purpose and values. This may result to managerialism as opposed to instructional leadership (Bush, 2007).

1.8.2 Jika iMfundo

Jika iMfundo, is an education intervention undertaken by the KZN-DoE in partnership with the PILO and with the support of the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT). *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention aims at promoting and encouraging curriculum instruction by seeing to it that curriculum is covered. *Jika iMfundo* was tried as a venture in King Cetshwayo and Pinetown from 2014 to 2017, and it has then been introduced and implemented in all twelve districts and schools in KZN since 2018 (Christie & Manyokolo, 2018).

1.8.3 Accountability

Scholars are in agreement that accountability means that a person has an obligation or responsibility to be called to account (Ingersoll & Collins, 2017; Thomas, 2010; Tredgold, 2017; Mcgrath & Whitty, 2018). This implies that whenever a person is given a responsibility

or obligation to perform a task and fails to deliver, then he should be made to account, to explain or to suffer the consequences of his failure to deliver. On the different perspective Paulden (2015) looks at accountability positively. This scholar refers to accountability as the ability to report or to count. This scholar further describes accountability as the role of tracking progress and speaking up when issues arise. When clarifying accountability, this scholar also touches on responsibility and authority. Cornock (2011) asserts that accountability denotes professionalism. Tredgold (2017) asserts that accountability cannot be delegated. In conceptualising accountability in this study, I will be looking at a school principal who is assigned with the duty of leading and managing the entire community within the school. There are different duties that are carried out, that have to do with the school's daily leadership and management. Therefore, people are responsible for different duties and there are departmental heads who are there to track progress, in teaching and learning. The school principal is not exempted from tracking progress from the departmental heads so that he will be up to date. At the end the principal, as the head of the institution remains accountable for everything good or bad that happens at school. If learners perform poorly, it is the school principal who is held accountable to the community and to all stakeholders.

1.8.4 Curriculum

Curriculum is a set of plans made for guiding learning in the schools usually signified in retrievable documents of several levels of simplification and the actualization of those plans in the classroom, as experienced by the learners and as recorded by an observer, these experiences take place in a learning environment that also influences what is learned (Glatthorn, Boschee & Whitehead, 2019). Nicholls and Nicholls (2018) look at curriculum as all the opportunities planned by teachers for learners. When clarifying the meaning of curriculum, these scholars look at curriculum development as involving the ways in which learners are granted occasions where some knowledge will be made available to them so that their level of reasoning and the manner in which they relate to the world and nature will be more meaningful. Nicholls and Nicholls (2018) state that curriculum development is a cyclical process. This cycle includes objectives of teaching, methods and materials, the assessment of the extent to which the development of work has in fact achieved its objectives. This part of the process may also be expected to provoke new thoughts about the objectives themselves and the last element is feedback of all the experience gained. This implies that curriculum improvement is a never-ending process. Fourie, Grissel and Verster (1990) view curriculum as all themes, topics and activities that all the officials in high leadership positions in the Department of Education

repute as required for the child to spread to a confident level in his or her growth. Curriculum can be conceptualized as the teachings and educational content taught in a school or in a precise subject as authorized by an authorised body which is responsible for schools and education system of a country (Hewitt, 2006). Since the advent of democracy, the country has been changing the teachings and educational content and its structuring. These curriculum reforms are, Curriculum 2005 in 1997, RNCS in 2002, NCS in 2007 and CAPS in 2012 (Adu & Ngibe, 2014).

1.9 Organisation of the study

This study is distributed into six chapters as follows:

The main purpose of chapter one is to present the introduction and background to the study. The problem statement, rationale and motivation are articulated, followed by the significance of the study. The objectives of the study and research puzzle are also enunciated, followed by clarification of terms, organization of the study then conclusion of the chapter.

Chapter two: Literature review and theoretical framework

This chapter aims at discussing two sections, Section A (Literature Review) and Section B (Theoretical framework). Section A will contain themes and sub-themes regarding the studies that have been conducted around the study under investigation. The themes will provide discernment on issues regarding leadership and management in rural schools.

Chapter three: Research design and methodology

This chapter will describe and explain the research design that will be used in the study. It will explain briefly that the interpretivist research paradigm will underpin the study and will take on qualitative approach. It will further explain that the narrative inquiry methodology will be employed in this study. Furthermore, the process of selection of participants as well as the technique for data generation will be discussed. Data analysis will also be discussed as to how it will be carried out. It will then explain how the issues of ethics, trustworthiness and limitations will have been addressed.

Chapter four: Stories of the school principals

This chapter will contain transcripts of the stories of three school principals.

Chapter five: Analysis of the stories

The chapter will deal with the analysis of field texts.

Chapter six: Summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations

This will be the last chapter. The summary of all the chapters, regarding the insights and what will have been learnt up to that far, regarding the study will be presented. Conclusions will then be drawn and outlined. Lastly, the recommendations will be made as they will be based on the findings of the study and on the stories that will be generated by the participants.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter has succeeded in setting the scene for the study. It has touched on the alarming issue of COVID-19 pandemic and gave some background and fears thereof. The main purpose of this chapter has been to present the introduction and background to the study. The problem statement, rationale and motivation for the study have been articulated, followed by the significance of the study. The objectives of the study and research puzzles have also been enunciated, followed by clarification of terms and organisation of the study.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter captured the introduction and background to the study. This chapter aims to present literature review and theoretical framework. Under section A, which is literature review, it will be looking at school effectiveness and school improvement, school underperformance and *Jika imfundo* curriculum intervention. Rurality and school leadership will also be discussed. Under section B, which is theoretical framework, the chapter discusses McLaughlin's conceptual framework on policy implementation. Lastly, it will look at instructional leadership theory.

2.2. Principal leadership role in teaching and learning improvement

This study focusses on the role of school principals as curriculum leaders and managers. The role of the leader is crucial in shaping the environment that make it possible for educators to teach and for learners to learn without any disruptions. School effectiveness refers to the significant effect of enhancing conditions at school level. It involves all important factors which are related to teaching, instruction, management, learning and community involvement. Effective schools focus on the achievement of learners and the interaction of other factors such as learning motivation, classroom management, student learning attitude and participation (Magulod Jr., 2017).

Effective school principals prioritise learners as far as possible (Kaume-Mwinzi, 2016). The decline in education outcomes has been caused by several factors. It is further stated that the success of the school is a collective effort of many people, but the school principal's role remains crucial. Mestry (2017) asserts that it is of paramount importance for all school principals to be equipped with necessary knowledge and skills so that they can meritoriously deal with challenges facing them in the 21st century.

Tingle, Corrales, and Peters (2019) assert that the excellent academic achievement of learners determines quality of the school leader. Institutions that make a huge transformation in students' education are run by instructional principals who support and inspire the educators as well as learners and create the conducive environments (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). This

emphasises the fact that the leadership of school principals plays a major role in the improvement or downfall of schools. Creating a warm, welcoming and protected learning atmosphere and positive, encouraging environment that instils love for schooling is a point of departure that should be maintained by effective schools (Hollingworth & Cunningham, 2017).

Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2020) present seven prerogatives of fruitful leadership that are associated with school effectiveness as follows:

- School leadership enhances the practices that promote the value of teaching and learning.
- The effective school principal sets directions for the school and communicates the school's vision and share it with all stakeholders. The effective school principal renders support to his educators and is thoughtful of his staff and treats them with courtesy. He upholds school's ethics and standards and instils good practices by building strong good working partnership with educators, parents and community as well as other stakeholders.
- Effective school principals comprehend and respond properly to the diverse contextual difficulties which they encounter in their daily execution of duties.
- Effective school principals have a great impact on educator zeal, diligence, and dedication because these school leaders create an atmosphere that is inspiring to effective instruction and education
- School leadership need to understand that shared leadership contributes positively to team performance.
- Some forms of distribution are more operative than others. This claim is based on the notion that both the methods of distributed leadership as well as how leadership practices are performed, inspires the school's output. Forms of distribution unavoidably vary from school to school, as they are influenced by the contexts but that it is the real practice of distributed leadership that, makes a huge optimistic change to schools' academic achievement. The eminence and sharing of leadership roles, especially in accordance with expertise contributes to educator commitment, social connections, collaboration of the leadership team, and participative decision-making.
- A bit of individual characters clarifies a high amount of the disparity in leadership efficiency. Leadership emergence and effectiveness are counted among the four of the five personal leadership traits. These four are extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness. These four leadership traits seem to express and represent the personality of an effective school principal. To sum up this claim the highly effective headmasters are flexible and teachable. They are also supple rather than

rigid in the way they see and respond to the world and nature. They dream big and think high of their fellow colleagues. They cope with challenging situations and maintain positive attitudes (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2020).

2.2.1 School culture, communication, and climate

Munir and Khalil (2016) posit that effective school principals invest in creating and improving school climate. This practice increases teacher performance and learner outcomes and discipline. This undisputable results in teachers' satisfaction and creates healthy working relationship within the school. Proper way of conversing to one another is also enhanced and good morals and principles are practised easily in that form of relationship (Halawah, 2005). Halawah (2005) further argues that the effective school principal models the behaviour that is in line with the school's vision and mission.

School culture, a positive one which motivates people to achieve the school's vision is fundamental for a school to thrive. School culture can be defined as those good habits that are shared by the school community which impacts positively on their functioning (Engels, Hotton, Devos, Bouckennooghe & Aelterman, 2008; Schimmoeller, 2010). Engels et al. (2008) further state that a vibrant school culture and high staff well-being manifests itself through great dedication and excellence. Goal orientedness, participative decision making, innovativeness, leadership and cooperation are five dimensions that clarify the culture of an effective school (Engels et al., 2008).

Ali, Sharma, and Zaman (2017) believe that schools with a strong culture are much concerned about vision and school success. Further, mission statements of such schools clarify the beliefs and goals of schools. School culture is displayed by the sharing of beliefs, values, and norms among the school stakeholders. This sharing results in improved teaching and learning and leads to school effectiveness. Strong school culture results in improved output, suppleness, and compliance within the school. Bellei, Morawietz, Pablo, Valenzuela and Vanni (2020) pronounce that a strong school culture has positive impact on continuous improvement of a school. Msila (2017) echoes the same sentiment as Bellei, et al. (2020) by hinting at the importance of creating an encouraging climate and effective school culture to facilitate a definite environment that would inspire educators to excel in the execution of their duties.

2.2.2 Maximising teaching time

Ekueme, and Nwogu (2018) assert that effective school principals understand that time is an important feature that is necessarily needed to improve learning outcomes. The academic performance of a school determines how time is managed. There are many responsibilities that are undertaken by secondary schools which should be completed within specific times. Therefore, it is crucial for secondary school principals to see to it that time is appropriately used and to ensure that time for teaching and learning is disrupted.

Schools that work use time efficiently and effectively. NEEDU (2018) advocates that effective schools make it a norm that time for teaching is managed firmly. Teachers are concerned that the time they spend with their learners is never enough, therefore, avoid classroom disruptions by ensuring that time that they spend with learners is meaningful and productive (Meador, 2019). They strive to maximise time-on-task. All schools are given exactly the same time to utilise for teaching; there is no extra or special time given to effective schools and their secret is “they guard teaching time jealously” (NEEDU, 2018 p. 2). School effectiveness has to do with how effective the school plans, organises and implements curriculum and the extent of the curriculum coverage (Ekwueme, Abraham & Nwogu, 2018). Ekwueme, Abraham & Nwogu, 2018) emphasise the fact that school curriculum begins from the first day of the school year, therefore time is a vital resource that needs to be used sparingly to ensure that the curriculum is covered. Mulenga and Lubasi (2019) argue that the amount of time that learners spend on learning activities contributes greatly to positive academic performance.

2.3 School improvement and what principals do to improve their schools

Kirori and Dickinson (2020) note that South African learners perform poorly in national and international tests which proves that a hefty many public schools are underperforming. Yet a larger portion of South African public school, 60% of them are categorised as quintile 1-3 and are no-fee paying schools (Naicker, Myende & Ncokwana, 2020). These schools lack resources and are not permitted to charge school fees from parents; they, then run with scarce resources, which justifies their underperformance. Unproductive leadership has been listed as contributing to underperformance. Kirori and Dickinson (2020) discuss Partners for Possibility (pfp) programme which was introduced for the sole purpose of school improvement. Kirori and Dickinson (2020) declare that leadership and management are crucial for school improvement.

School principals consistently shape or reshape the vision in their schools if they want to improve their schools. They do so because they feel that the one that they have is unproductive and not clearly understood by people concerned (Meyers & Hitt, 2017).

The President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa mentioned in the State of the Nation Address (SONA) for 2019 that the country would focus on seven priorities, one of which was school improvement. The president called upon all departments and agencies to direct all the programmes and policies towards the realisation of the main responsibilities that are believed to be able to deliver South Africa from the bondage of poverty, inequality, unemployment, and inequity. The country can confidently achieve the envisaged South Africa by better and improved educational outcomes where even a ten-year-old child would be able to read for meaning, (SONA, 2019). This means that school improvement and education in general has always been among the top priorities of the country since the advent of democracy. This is attested by constant change of various curriculum reforms, since the country had to introduce education curriculum that would be free from the traces of apartheid. The uniformity in curriculum delivery made it possible to analyse performance in learner outcomes. Some schools are underperforming; therefore, they need to be supported so that they can improve.

2.3.1 National Strategy for Learner Attainment

In meeting the Millennium Development Goals, the National DoE introduced the National Strategy for Learner Attainment (NSLA) with the purpose of supporting provinces to implement strategies for improving learner outcomes (Department of Education, 2015). The action Plan to 2019 which is aimed at achieving the millennium goal 2030 seeks to instil a sense of responsibility and accountability to each stakeholder who is involved in the education of learners. It makes a call to all of them to play their part honestly and earnestly (DoE, 2015). The DoE realised that learner outcomes at Grade twelve can be improved if learner outcomes at all grades are improved and all grades receive all the support and service that they can get (DoE, 2015). Section 16A (1)(b) of the *SASA requires* school principals to account for poor performance (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). Furthermore, in terms of section 58B, the Head of Department can, in terms of the report submitted in terms of Section 16A and from other reports declare the school as underperforming and issue a written notice to the school if the academic performance is below the standards prescribed by the National Curriculum Statement. Moreover, Section 58B requires schools to prepare and submit the school improvement plan to the Head of Department which makes it clear as to how the schools will improve their academic performance achievement (RSA, 1996a). All schools are responsible for their improvement and are accountable for their results.

South African matric candidates wrote CAPS examination for the first time in 2014. The country attained 75.8% compared to 78.8% which had been achieved in 2013. That marked a decrease by 2.4%. Several irregularities were discovered. According to the report that was released by Allais (2014) 39 examination centres in KZN Province and 19 in Eastern Cape Province were identified as having practised group copying during the 2014 NSC examination. As a result, the NCS examination results of all the 58 centres were withheld. I also note that matric results constantly improved between 2009 and 2013, however the year 2014 is marked with the decline in the pass rate and several irregularities (Department of Education, 2014).

2.3.2 The bursary scheme for mathematics and science teachers

A partnership was created between the Department of basic Education, Independent Schools Association (ISASA) and Investec bank with the intention of addressing the critical shortage of qualified mathematics and science teachers in South Africa. The South African Mathematics and Science Teacher Intern Programme (SAMSTIP) initiative came into being (Department of Education, 2015). SAMSTIP offers prospective Senior and Further Education and Training (FET) teachers specialising in mathematics and science an opportunity to study for a B. Ed degree or a one-year Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) at UNISA ((Department of Education, 2015).

2.3.3 Policies that inform school improvement and professional development

All professional development interventions, programmes and initiatives that take place at schools are informed by the Department of Education. The policies that were enacted for education and school improvement as well as professional development were, DAS, PMS, WSE, established with the notion that schools can be improved through monitoring, evaluation, and development. The ELRC reached an agreement to integrate the above three policies in 2003. Integrated Quality Management systems (IQMS), Schedule 1 of the EEA, EPMDS and CPTD as required by SACE (RSA, 1996b). It remains a concern as to whether these policies are really improving the practice of educators, especially when we look at the decline in terms of the quality of education in South Africa.

The underperformance of schools remains a concern, given such invaluable professional development policies. Mpungose and Ngwenya (2014) assert that IQMS was introduced to enhance continuous professional development and to integrate quality management in public

schools. Further, it was meant to reward good performance in a developmental way. However, Makubung (2017); Malepe, (2017) argue that the professional development workshops that are meant to capacitate school personnel on the implementation of such policies are done without proper consultation with educators. Such workshops end up not catering for the professional needs of educators, rather they seem like they are non-negotiable which are just enforced. Yet IQMS is invaluable as the vehicle for educator professional development that aims at improving instruction and education in all schools. Amanda (2018) posits that some educators have negative attitudes towards such policies, especially IQMS. This has resulted in improper implementation of such policy. Their negative attitudes stem from the fact that their work conditions, number of learners in their classrooms and lack of resources do not allow them to be as effective as possible. They do not even have adequate time for peer review. In some schools the Developmental Support Groups (DSGs) do absolutely nothing to develop their peers. Professional Development is not properly implemented even in the phase of these policies. I believe that appropriate employment of these policies can contribute greatly to school improvement and better learner outcomes.

2.3.4 Professional learning communities (PLCs)

The study by Trana, Hallinger and Truong (2017) indicates that it is possible for school principals to lead in and through PLCs. The school principals believe that encouraging strong collaboration, supporting one another and inspiring one another assist in enhancing and sustaining professional learning of educators. Antinluoma, Ilomäki, Lahti-Nuuttila & Toom (2018) avow that among the main ideas behind the formation of PLCs are to enhance the competence and welfare of educators and generate positive bearings on learner learning. The school culture changes for the best when educators participate in PLCs. All stakeholders work collaboratively to ensure curriculum delivery and coverage when school principals lead in and through PLCs. The PLCs are built in a culture of collegiality, trust, and commitment as shared powers at all schools. The school cultures supported professional collaboration, and the teachers had the knowledge, skills, and characters to engage in professional collaboration. The study that was conducted by Liang, Song and Sun (2020) affirms that there is a strong relationship between PLCs and educator well-being. The study further revealed that PLCs contribute to educator motivation, increased competency and seemed to perform their duties with much satisfaction and increased diligence, confidence, and commitment.

2.4 School underperformance

Underperformance is achievement which is less than 60% in NSC results (Bayat, Louw & Rena, 2014). However, this has changed since currently any performance at less than 65% for Secondary school and less than 60% for a primary school is regarded as underperformance (Department of Education, 2018).

Although the novice school principals may struggle with their roles as school leaders, it becomes worse if a school has a number of challenges, especial those in rural contexts, since teacher training does not cover strategies of overcoming context related challenges of school principals (Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz & Levy, 2007). Duke et al. (2007) cite various factors as contributing to underperformance. These factors that relate to student achievement and behaviour are reading, maths, discipline, and attendance. South Africa is directly affected by these since the country's performance in national and international standardised (TIMMS, SEACMEQ and PIRLS) tests in maths, literacy and reading show exceptionally low outcomes (Spaul, 2013). Duke et al. (2007) also look at school programmes as contributing to low learner outcomes. The challenges that the scholars Duke et. al. (2007) cite, are ineffective instruction, lack of teamwork, dysfunctional school culture, disregard of barriers to learning, incompetent and underqualified as well as unqualified teachers and ineffective staff development.

The report by Democratic Alliance, Marchesi (2020) indicates that South Africa has twelve schools that have critically underperformed (attained 40% and below) for five and more years. Out of these schools, four have attained below 40% for five years, two for seven years, two for eight years, two for nine years, one for ten years and one has critically underperformed for eleven years. Underperformance is a serious issue that is faced by the South African education system. This issue is also aggravated by the increasing number of schools that attain 0% in NSC results as it seems to be increasing year by year, from 9 schools in 2017, to 12 schools in 2018 and to 18 schools in 2019 (Department of Education, 2019). The national as well as international studies cite the same factors as contributing to poor academic performance of schools. Such factors are poverty, poor leadership skills and practices displayed by the school principals, absenteeism on the part of learners and educators, lack of parental and school community partnership and contextual factors (Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz & Levy, 2007; Skeie, 2009; Terhoven & Fataar, 2018).

2.4.1 Leadership and management of underperforming schools

Maxwell (2007) states that establishments prosper or collapse with leadership. This means that the success or failure of a school lies in the hands of the principal. Various researchers (Oakland, 1993; Skeie, 2009; Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008) link the school effectiveness with the leadership of the principal. Clarke (2011) declares that in underperforming schools, the school principals mostly work alone which makes it difficult to lead and manage curriculum. Curriculum leadership plays a vital role in the improvement of learner performance. If the School Management Teams (SMTs) do not meet on regular basis, it is likely for educators and learners to lack direction, which leads to poor learning outcomes. In those schools, leadership is not distributed, therefore, there is no shared responsibility and accountability for all decisions.

Davidson (2014) argues that the quality of leadership practices contributes to enhanced learner attainment. Kaume Mwinzi (2016) suggests that the strategies for improving learner achievement should involve instilling instructional leadership skills to school principals. Mestry (2017) posits that it is of paramount importance for all school principals to be equipped with essential strategies that empower them to meritoriously deal with challenges facing them in the 21st century. Naidoo (2019) asserts that poor leadership displayed by many contributes to the persistent deterioration in learner academic achievement. Naidoo (2019) further accentuates that it is unfortunate that there are no serious requirements for the appointment of school principals except for matric plus three-year professional qualification and seven years teaching experience. Naidoo (2019) divulges that indeed leadership development for school principals is crucial for school improvement. Kirori and Dickinson (2020) echo the same sentiment when stating that in most countries, including South Africa, school principals assume office without specific preparation. Therefore, leadership development seems vital for all school principals.

2.4.2 Curriculum reforms in South Africa and their implications for schools

Four curriculum reviews have been introduced, OBE, RNCS, NCS and CAPS between 1997 and 2012. This suggests an increased need for educator support (King-McKenzie, Bantwini & Bogan, 2012). De Clercq (2007); Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018) concur that educators in South African schools do not get enough support in terms of curriculum matters. School Management Teams find it difficult to manage teaching and learning because of the high demands of CAPS, which is viewed as inflexible in terms of its scope and pace (Terhoven & Fataar, 2018). They only attend workshops organised by subject advisors, which do not seem to meet their needs as educators, SMTs and Developmental Support Groups (DSGs). The

strategies that are employed by high performing countries such as Finland, Australia, Japan and United States include training, induction, teacher development, and professional development as well as partnership and networking among schools (Abbott, Middlewood & Robinson, 2014; Li & Zhang, 2015; Moore, 2016). I believe that if the South African schools can work together in sharing their successes, strategies and methods, learner outcomes will improve, thus failure rate will also decrease. However, the issue of lack of necessary support by subject advisors needs to be addressed at higher levels of the DoE. I say this on account that the districts are understaffed, yet there are many people who are competent and who can suitably fill the vacant posts. In many cases one subject advisor performs the duties of four people.

2.4.3 School Community Partnerships

Duke et al. (2007) highlight that there is very little or nothing that is done by parents and the community to participate in the education of their children. In as much as teachers are willing to work towards school improvement and turning around underperforming schools, they cannot do this alone. Schools need stakeholder involvement and participation for the school improvement initiatives to be successful. Epstein's theory acknowledges the fact that the child is nurtured by three contexts, these are, school, family and community (Epstein, 1995). This emphasizes the importance of collaboration among these parties for the child to receive proper guidance.

2.4.4 School contextual factors

Literature, local, national, and international reveal that the multifaceted nature of rural principalship limits the rural principals' ability to focus on instructional leadership (Chance & Lingren, 1989; Parson, Hunter & Kallio, 2016). Schools that were previously disadvantaged still experience challenges in terms of infrastructure and resources as compared to the previously advantaged schools (Heystek & Terhoven, 2014). These inequalities have contributed to underperformance of schools. Drawing on Terhoven and Fataar (2018) contextual factors contribute greatly to failure to support teachers and learners by school principals. These factors include socio-economic status, geographic location, lack of resources, impoverished background of learners and inability to recruit qualified teachers. Such factors may lead to demotivation from both teachers and learners, teacher absenteeism, late coming and discipline problems.

2.5 *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention

Jika iMfundo is an intervention that was introduced in KZN with the purpose of improving poor learner outcomes (Christie & Manyokolo, 2018). Christie and Manyokolo (2018) posit that PILO is supporting schools implementing *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention and is funded by NECT. The introduction of CAPS, with its inflexibility in terms of scope and pace brought some challenges to teachers especially the HODs. This view is also endorsed by Christie (2018, p. 7) when stating that “Complaints were voiced about the fast pace of CAPS”. The demanding workload of HODs makes it difficult for them to manage curriculum successfully (Terhoven & Fataar, 2018) as per PAM requirement (RSA, 1996c). This is likely to yield unfavourable results regarding curriculum delivery which may compromise the quality of education that is received by learners, consequently producing poor results.

The national and international studies indicate that South Africa continues to attain low learner outcomes (Spaul, 2013; Pillay, 2018; Metcalfe & Witten, 2018). Retention of learners is also an issue; it is reported that 50% of learners leave school before they can reach Grade twelve (Spaul, 2013; Metcalfe & Witten, 2018). Furthermore, Spaul (2013) reports that in terms of the SACMEQ111, many South African Mathematics teachers lack basic level of content knowledge, with the high number of teachers who fail to pass the tests that are set for their pupils. This is an indication that, unless something is done, the education system of the country is sinking. It is against this background that *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention was introduced.

Jika iMfundo was established with the purpose of improving learning and teaching, thus, improved learner outcomes and the improvement of education in South Africa. This is said because it is also implemented in other provinces, for instance, in Northern Cape Province but is known as *A re Tokafatseng Seemo sa Thuto* (Metcalfe, 2018). The *Jika iMfundo* aims at improving the quality of curriculum delivery and the effectiveness of the support services that is rendered to schools by the district officials (Christie & Manyokolo, 2018). *Jika iMfundo* is ‘a national vehicle to implement the NDP in education’ (SADTU, 2019, p.2). The NDP goal is to safeguard that by the year 2030, at least more learners achieve improved marks in mathematics, science and languages (Christie & Manyokolo, 2018).

Jika iMfundo focuses on curriculum coverage in mathematics, science and languages (Christie & Manyokolo, 2018). It is believed that “curriculum coverage provides a lens for exploring the

dynamics of instructional core, which are learning-teaching-content, and that changes must take place if learning is to improve” (Metcalf, 2018 p. 29). *Jika iMfundo* is “designed to have a significant and a sustainable positive impact on learning across the system” (Metcalf & Witten, 2018, p. 335). This implies that change is inevitable and for change to be sustainable and yield favourable outcomes, the accountability for everyone who is involved in the curriculum delivery and monitoring is crucial. Metcalf and Witten (2018) proclaim that quality teaching and learning coupled with close support and monitoring are essential for improved learning outcomes. This ideal sentiment is shared by literature, “quality is enhanced through improved teacher practice” (Pillay, 2018, p. 3). *Jika iMfundo* provides teachers with curriculum support materials to teachers who are teaching languages, maths and science from Grades one to twelve (Christie & Manyokolo, 2018).

The study by Pillay (2018) reveals that the LTSM that is provided by *Jika iMfundo* has boosted teachers’ confidence in the manner that their understanding of CAPS has improved. Furthermore, they have been able to cover the curriculum in record time. Teachers have also improved, in terms of assessment and recording through *Jika iMfundo*. Learners’ reading and writing have also improved. Teachers also comment on the remarkable positive improvement and the positive attitudes displayed by learners towards their learning. This is likely to lead to improved performance “increased learner activity is a marker for improved learner outcomes” (Pillay, 2018, p. 14). Moreover, Pillay (2018) resonates that teachers positively welcome the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* and view it as closing the gaps that have been opened by the constant changes in curriculum review. Pillay (2018) perceives *Jika iMfundo* to be a likely tool to address the many challenges that are faced by rural schools, when considering the International Labour Organisation (ILO) report.

Jika iMfundo also focused its attention on the training of School Management Teams (SMTs) on effective curriculum management (Mthiyane, Naidoo & Bertram, 2019). Research reveals that learners are likely to perform poorly academically if curriculum is not supervised and managed (Maphalala, et al., 2018). Mthiyane, Naidoo and Bertram (2019) contend that SMTs receive intensive training on management and leadership which specifically deals with effective curriculum management, creating partnerships to improve instruction and educational leadership. Maphalala et al., (2018) also argue that SMTs are provided with tools and training that capacitate them in curriculum management.

Jika iMfundo aspires that departmental heads be adaptive leaders in the execution of their duties of curriculum management (Mthiyane, Naidoo & Bertram, 2019). It requires departmental heads to scrutinise their supervision so that it is developmental and results in improved teaching practice of educators that they supervise. It aims at empowering them to be instructional leaders and to be practice oriented rather than compliance oriented. However, some departmental heads indicate that their heavy workload makes it difficult for them to successfully assume adaptive approach to curriculum leadership (Mthiyane, Naidoo & Bertram, 2019). *Jika iMfundo* also requires the departmental heads and teachers to have sessions on curriculum conversations, where they develop one another in terms of curriculum delivery and management (Christie & Manyokolo, 2018).

2.6 Rurality

Many African countries face poverty and unemployment, which become a barrier to the provision of quality education (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). The challenges faced by rural schools are unique to their environments. Other serious challenges are dearth of parental interest in the education of their children, insufficient funding from the state, lack of resources, underqualified educators. It is noted with regret that after so many years of democracy, rural schools are still characterised by inferior education standards and are still far behind in terms of school improvement. That is attested by NSC results where most schools which are classified as critically underperforming, those which performed less than 40% for more than five consecutive years, are the rural schools (Marchesi 2020).

2.6.1 What is rurality?

Literature states that there is no clearly agreed upon definition of rurality. Hlalele (2010) looks at rurality as a way of life, state of mind and a culture which revolves around land, livestock cropping and community. When defining rurality, Addy (2013) groups elements of geographical and social structures. In terms of geographical constructs, it is thought of as small communities, small churches, small villages and small schools. Addy (2013) also looks at geographical construct in terms of isolation, separated from basic services, inadequate infrastructure and limited employment opportunities. In terms of social construct, Addy (2013) looks at rural areas as characterised by a strong sense of belonging where people are friendly and close to one another when compared to urban communities.

Abdulwakeel (2017) maintains that the term rural is unclear, therefore there is no precise meaning that can be assigned to it, however, rural areas can be explained as they are recognisable. Abdulwakeel (2017) further defines rurality as a condition of place-based homeliness shared by people with common ancestry or heritage and who inhabit traditional, culturally defined areas or places statutory recognised to be rural. To sum up Abdulwakeel (2017, p.2) looks at rural areas “as places of tradition rather than modernity, of agriculture rather than industry, of nature rather than culture, and of changelessness rather than dynamism”.

2.6.2 Challenges faced by rural school principals

The principals of rural schools face a myriad of challenges. Klein and Lester (2014) argue that low enrolment, geographical location, social isolation and small staff put the school principals in very challenging situations. This implies that they have to be the educators and the school principals. The multiple roles that are played by the rural school principal impedes their ability to practice instructional leadership (Parson, Hunter & Kallio, 2016). The quality of leadership displayed by the principal has a positive connotation to the morale of both teachers and learners and can therefore improve learners’ academic performance (Grissom & Loeb, 2011). However, in a rural context, the wide-ranging prerequisites of a small rural school, takes all the energy and attention, which makes it difficult for the school principal to focus on instructional leadership (Renihan & Noonan, 2012). Another issue faced by rural school principals is the shortage of qualified teachers (Morton & Harmon, 2011).

Literature reveals that rural schools locally, nationally and internationally are facing the same challenges. These challenges may be due to different limitations in the form of infrastructure, educational, insufficient teacher training programmes, poverty, role of the parents and community, their education and economic status, Government and its educational policies. Poor learning outcomes of learners is a serious trepidation among parents and teachers in present day competitive societies (Nayak, Mohanty & Mohampatra, 2017). Addy (2013) adds that in Northern Ghana some children provide for themselves and even supplement income for their families. This makes it difficult for them to attend school every day. Moreover, their attention is likely to be shifted from school subjects, thus poor learning outcomes. Addy (2013) further asserts that many children drop out of school before they can even complete the nine years of compulsory schooling. Findings of the study by Addy (2013) reveal that there are more serious issues regarding rural education in Ghana than published. Addy (2013) contends that many schools in rural areas do not have enough effective leaders to lead the schools, which

results in them performing poorly academically. Seemingly rural schools are viewed as downgraded and undermined as if there is no hope for them to thrive (Msila, 2010; Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019).

2.7. Conceptual framework on policy implementation

This theory was advocated by McLaughlin (McLaughlin, 1987). This theory is based on the premise that it is difficult to make something happen, especially if it involves the government, departments, institutions, and individuals. This theory uses four concepts for policy implementation. These concepts are, capacity, will (motivation), pressure and support. In order to implement a policy, it is important to look at local capacity and will. McLaughlin (1987) acknowledges that proper capacitation is likely to produce favourable results regarding implementation of a policy. With regard to the implementation of the *Jika iMfundo* intervention, SMTs, teachers and district officials do receive training by PILO. The training focuses on curriculum delivery, coverage, management as well as monitoring (Christie & Manyokolo, 2018). The district and provincial officials were trained by the facilitators that were employed by NECT. Then this was followed by the rolling out of the programme to the schools in King Cetshwayo and Pinetown (Pillay, 2018; Christie & Manyokolo, 2018).

Will is another concept that is crucial in the implementation of any policy (McLaughlin, 1987). Will encompasses “the attitudes, motivation and beliefs that underlie an implementer’s response to a policy’s goals or strategies” (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 172). This implies that the capacitation that is rendered to the implementers of the policy must be able to make them realise the significance and the need of the new policy or intervention. In the study that was conducted by Mthiyane, Naidoo and Bertram (2018) the HODs admitted that the *Jika iMfundo* training gave them enthusiasm to execute their duties with confidence. In other words, they had been appointed as HODs, but their duties had not been clearly defined. With the implementation of *Jika iMfundo*, they knew exactly what to do, including their management duties that come with the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* intervention. These HODs undisputable embrace the need and the usefulness of the intervention. This idea endorsed, “questions of motivation and commitment or will reflect an implementer’s assessment of the value of a policy or the appropriateness of a strategy” (McLaughlin, 1989, p. 172).

Pressure and support are also vital when implementing the policy (McLaughlin, 1987). “Pressure by itself may be sufficient when policy objectives contain their own implementation

directions” (McLaughlin, 1987, p.173). Research reveals that poor curriculum coverage, which also emanates from its poor management contributes to poor learning outcomes (Maphalala et.al., 2018). It is against this background that the KZN DoE and PILO partnered with the purpose of the development of *Jika iMfundo* intervention (Maphalala, et.al, 2018). Pressure behind the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention is “consistent low achievement, resource deficiency and the urgency to find ways to improve learning outcomes” (Pillay, 2018). *Jika iMfundo* was implanted with the purpose of improving learner outcomes. McLaughlin (1987) highlights that pressure is necessary to pay more attention to the objective of the policy whereas support is necessary to make it easy to implement the policy.

For schools to be able to implement the *Jika iMfundo* intervention, they are supported with material (Pillay, 2018). Prior to the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* teachers were provided with the necessary material, information and training that could be needed (Pillay, 2018). Educators and HODs attended enough training workshops.

2.8 Instructional leadership theory

Instructional leadership theory underpins this study. My study looks at the curriculum intervention which is concerned about student outcomes. Instructional leadership refers to leadership that is strongly involved in curricular and instructional issues that directly affect student achievement (Cotton, 2003). In such leadership the school principals provide guidance to teachers on curriculum and pedagogy (Sim, 2011). Hallinger (2005); Robinson (2010) assert that leadership which focusses on curriculum implementation improves student outcomes. This study will look at the model by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), which proposes three scopes for the functions of the school leaders which are summarised as the three dimensions of instructional management. The three dimensions are: defining the school’s mission, managing the instructional program and promoting a positive school learning climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; 1987; Olaoluwa, 2016). These three dimensions are central to the school’s undertaking, supervision of the teaching and learning program and stimulating an optimistic environment. Under each dimension, which denotes the instructional management function, there are practices, functions and behaviours that the school principals need to subscribe to in order to fulfil their responsibilities as the instructional leaders.

2.8.1 Defining the school mission

The principal's role in defining the mission involves framing the school goals and communicating such goals (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). This study focuses on school principals' leadership and management of curriculum with an aim of improving learner performance. This is in line with the Department of Basic Education (DBE)'s Action Plan 2019: Towards Schooling 2025 Goal 18 which foresees to ensure "that learners cover all the topics and skills that they should cover within their current school year" (DBE, 2019). It has been mentioned under Chapter one under 1.4 of this study that literature maintains that there is great improvement of learner outcomes when curriculum coverage is monitored. Therefore, it is crucial for the school principals to have a clear vision of what the school wishes to achieve. Further, the vision and mission need to be shared with the rest of the school community. A clearly communicated goal is owned by all people concerned which makes it easy for all stakeholders to focus their attention, energy and resources where they are mostly needed.

2.8.2 Managing the instructional program

The role of the school principal in managing the instructional program encompasses supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum and monitoring student progress (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; 1987). These functions involve "ensuring that school goals are translated into classroom practice" (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, p.222). An instructional school principal affords instructional sustenance to educators in various ways. Classroom visits can be conducted and feedback be given in a constructive manner which enhances professional development of educators. Coordinating curriculum also plays a major role in school improvement and effectiveness since it promotes collaboration among educators, thus leading to professional learning communities where they discuss instructional and curricular matters. In monitoring student progress tests are used to detect learners' weaknesses, to set goals, assess the curriculum, to evaluate instruction and to measure progress towards school goals (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; 1987).

2.8.3 Promoting a positive school learning climate

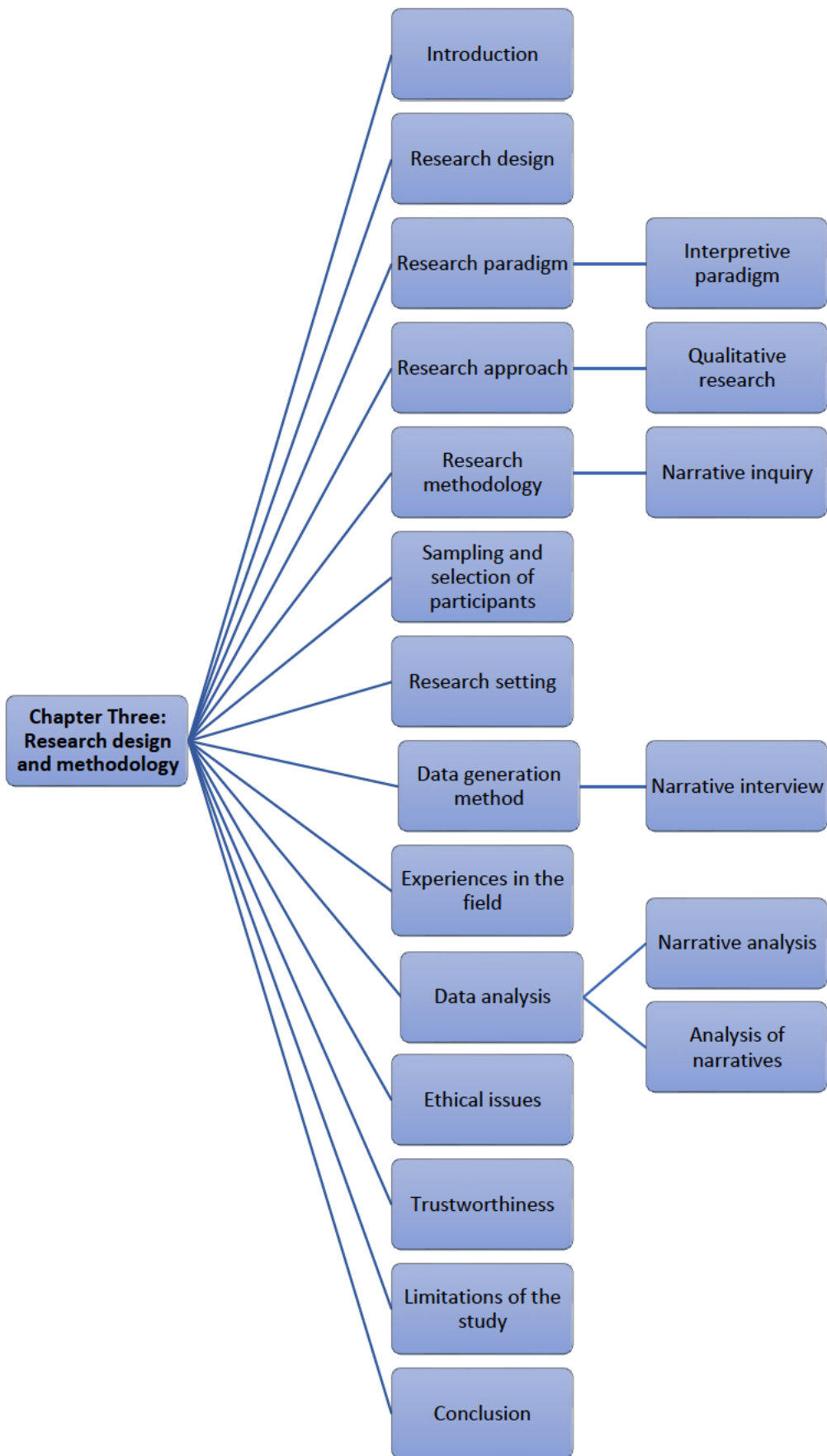
The role of the instructional leaders in promoting a positive school learning climate cover protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, enforcing academic standards and providing incentives for educators and for learners (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The implementation of the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention

requires educators to make use of curriculum trackers in ensuring curriculum coverage. This implies that the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention also protects instructional time. It also promotes professional conversations among educators and their departmental heads where they will learn from each other, thus improving curriculum delivery and coverage thus improved academic performance. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) maintain that the school principals instil positive instructional practices by being visible. Their visibility creates opportunities for school principals to relate with educators and learners and somehow positively influence educators' and learners' attitudes and behaviours. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) further maintain that rewards or just praises serve as positive reinforcement to both educators and learners, thus increase performance which leads to school improvement and school effectiveness. Moreover, high academic standards also reinforce high expectations that are necessary for improving learner performance.

In USA, schools are encouraged to practise instructional leadership in order for them to be more effective (Hallinger, 2005). Hallinger (2005) further argues that instructional leaders are viewed as culture builders, who are highly concerned about fostering high prospects and standards for learners (Hallinger, 2005). This scholar points out that leaders who are concerned about how teaching and learning are taking place are observed as few and are those that are resilient and who stand firm in creating an atmosphere that is conducive to effective instruction. Literature declares that such leaders work towards achieving the school's vision and mission (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). This means that they are able to define a clear direction for the school and inspire others to join in its realization. In instructionally effective schools, this direction focuses primarily on the improvement of student academic outcomes (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986).

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has presented literature review in themes and sub-themes. It has also discussed the conceptual framework on the implementation of the policy. Lastly, it has discussed the theoretical frameworks that underpins the study. The next chapter will outline the research design and methodology that was followed in the collection of data.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with literature review, the conceptual framework on policy implementation and the theoretical framework that underpin the study. This chapter presents the research design and methodology that is used in this study to explore the experiences of principals of underperforming secondary schools regarding the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention in a rural context. The study seeks to respond to the following research puzzles:

- What are the principals' understandings of their roles as school leaders in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention in a rural context?
- What are the challenges faced by the school principals in implementing *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention in a rural context?
- How do the school principals mitigate the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* challenges?

I begin the chapter by discussing the research design followed in this study, the research paradigm within which the study is located and the research approach that is employed in the study. I then look into the methodology, sampling and selection of participants. Research setting, data generation method and pilot study will be outlined. I narrate my experiences in the field. Data analysis, ethical issues, trustworthiness, and limitations of the study will also be deliberated.

3.2 Research design

Research design means the proposed idea or structure which determines a terrain to be followed in conducting research (Hartas, 2010; Creswell, 2009; Nieuwenhuis, 2013). Research design is further defined as the glue that holds all the elements in a research project together (Akhtar, 2016). Research design is conceptualised as the overall strategy that is chosen to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby ensuring that I will effectively address the research problem. It has to do with the plan of how research is carried out as it is reflected in all the steps that are outlined in this chapter.

3.3 Research paradigm

A paradigm is the way people comprehend the reality of the world and interpret it (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). This study is located within the interpretivist paradigm. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2000) argue that interpretivist researchers view the world of individual encounter. Similarly, Creswell (2003) asserts that interpretivism researchers discover reality through participants' views, their backgrounds, and experiences. Wahyuni (2012) affirms that interpretivists believe that reality is constructed by social actors and people's perspectives. Interpretivist paradigm is rooted in the premise that knowledge is socially constructed and there are multiple realities and truths regarding the phenomenon under study. As an interpretivist, I chose this paradigm because the purpose of conducting this study was to understand the experiences of secondary school principals on the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. As I engaged with them, they gave me their different accounts which were based on their school contexts and their individual perspectives thus, multiple realities and multiple truths were discovered.

3.4 Research approach

Qualitative research approach was employed in this study. Carol (2016) argues that qualitative research is generally used for understanding views and perceptions of individuals. To that effect, McLeod (2017) affirms that qualitative research studies people and groups in their natural settings. McLeod (2017) further clarifies that qualitative approach is empirical and pursues to clarify the reasons for existence and behaviour in a particular setting. The exploratory nature of my research puzzle and objectives made the qualitative approach ideal for my study.

3.5 Research methodology

Narrative inquiry is viewed as a form of qualitative research that takes stories as either their raw data or their products (Bleakley, 2005). I chose this methodology because I wanted to gather the narratives or stories of the sampled participants and I was able to get the understandings of what principals of underperforming secondary schools in a rural context, "do, know, think and feel" (Butina, 2015, p.191) about *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. Narrative inquiry is the study of understanding as a narrative and a way of discerning about knowledge and is based on the premise that people lead storied lives. People shape their daily

lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories (Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007). Similarly, Clandinin, Huber, Steeves, and Li, (2011) view narrative inquiry as the study of experience understood narratively. Clandinin, Huber, Steeves, and Li, (2011) further assert that narrative inquiry follows a recursive, reflective process of moving from field-to-field texts to temporary and final research texts.

There are three commonplaces of narrative inquiry; temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007; Clandinin, Huber, Steeves, & Li, 2011). These commonplaces stipulate dimensions of an inquiry and serve as a conceptual framework. The commonplaces serve as check points or places to direct one's attention in conducting a narrative inquiry. Furthermore, the commonplaces need to be explored simultaneously in undertaking a narrative inquiry.

Commonplace One: Temporality

Events being studied are in time-based changeover (Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007; Clandinin et al. 2011). That means that events, places, things, and people always have a past, present, and a future. In narrative inquiry it is important to always try to understand people, places, things, and events as in development, as always in transition.

Commonplace Two: Sociality

Narrative inquirers attend to both individual and collective circumstances at the same time. Personal conditions refer to the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions of the inquirer and study participants (Clandinin et al. 2011). Social conditions refer to personal environment and the conditions under which people's experiences and events are unfolding. These social conditions are understood in terms of cultural, social, institutional, and linguistic narratives. Another dimension of the sociality commonplace is the relationship between participant and inquirer. This dimension emphasises the fact that inquirers are always in an inquiry connection with participants (Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007; Clandinin et al. 2011).

Commonplace Three: Place

Place is defined as the precise real, physical, and topological boundaries of place or sequence of places where the inquiry and events take place. The key to this commonplace is acknowledging that all events occur in some place (Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007; Clandinin et al., 2011). Therefore, in narrative inquiry it is important to be specific and take note of the place of the experience.

Principles of narrative inquiry

The following are the principles of narrative inquiry as advocated by Garman (1996):

Verite: Does the study ring true in terms of consistency with accepted knowledge in the field? Or if it departs, does it address why?

Integrity: Is the study structurally sound? Does it hang together? Is the research rationale logical, appropriate, and identifiable with an inquiry tradition?

Rigour: Is there sufficient depth of intellect, rather than superficial or simplistic reasoning?

Utility: Is the study useful and professionally relevant? Does it contribute to the field?

Vitality: Is it important and meaningful? Do metaphors, image, visual communicate powerfully?

Ethics: Is there evidence that privacy and dignity have been afforded to all participants?

Verisimilitude: Does the study represent human experiences with sufficient detail so that the portrayals can be recognisable as ‘truly conceivable experience’? Does this research render account that readers not only read but feel and believe?

(Garman, 1996).

3.6 Sampling and selection of participants

Purposive and convenience sampling were employed in this study. Convenience sampling was used to select the province and the district where the study was carried out. I selected KwaZulu-Natal which is one of the provinces of South Africa because I live in it. It became convenient for me to choose KZN for easy accessibility to schools, therefore, the province was selected using convenience sampling. Convenience or accidental sampling refers to nonprobability sampling where research participants are selected because of easy accessibility or geographical proximity (Etikan, 2016). I again, accidentally, or conveniently chose Pinetown District because I am working in this district and I am employed to serve schools that are under this district. I am, therefore, familiar with schools in this district. Further, Pinetown district is one of the two districts that have been involved in the intervention for more years as *Jika iMfundo* was piloted in these districts, hence it would provide more insight.

Purposive sampling was used for selecting the schools and participants. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling which is also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling (Etikan, 2016; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). This sampling method requires researchers to have prior knowledge about the purpose of their studies so that they can carefully choose and approach eligible participants. Participants were selected because they share some characteristics, therefore, homogeneous purposive sampling was used (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2000). Three principals of underperforming secondary schools that are situated in rural areas were selected.

In selecting the three schools, I used the analysis of NSC results to look for schools that performed less than 65% for the past three consecutive years (2017, 2018 and 2019). *Circular D2 of 2017* stipulates that a secondary school should be deemed to be underperforming if its pass percentage in National Senior Certificate (NSC) results is less than 65% and it has produced less than 30% bachelor and diploma passes combined (Department of Education, 2017). *Circular D2 of 2017*, which became operational as from January 2018 replaced *Circular D1 of 2014* which categorised secondary schools that performed below 60% as underperforming (Department of Education, 2014). Therefore, underperformance in 2017 was identified using *Circular D1 of 2014*. I then looked at the geographical location of all the schools that achieved less than 65% for the past three years. The three secondary schools were chosen purposely because they were the eligible participants since they share similar characteristics. Though schools that fell under the category of underperformance were more than three, others were excluded because they did not meet all the inclusion criteria. Those that were selected met all the inclusion criteria. They are all secondary schools, they underperformed for the past three consecutive years and they are all in rural areas.

3.7 RESEARCH SETTING

The study took place in KZN schools. KZN is one of nine provinces of South Africa. This province, KZN, is situated on South Africa's eastern seaboard, on the edge of the Indian Ocean. The neighbouring countries and provinces are Lesotho, Mpumalanga, Free State and Eastern Cape as indicated in the map below:



The source for the map of South African Provinces

<https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=6GfTtJvu&id=55E065F22DB9C9569BA407EA32DDA2DA6AEF5C8B>

The selected schools are under Pinetown District, which is one of the twelve education districts of KZN Province. This study took place in three rural, public secondary schools as explained in 3.6 above.

3.8 DATA GENERATION METHOD

Narrative interviewing was used to generate data in this study. Narrative interviewing is a method of qualitative data collection whereby a story is generated through the interview (Allen, 2017). Allen (2017) elaborates by stating that an aim of narrative interview is to afford the participants a chance to articulate their experiences for the researcher. Furthermore, Scarneci-Domnisoru (2013, p.23) maintains that a successful narrative interview is “rich in details, full

of descriptions”. Stephens and Breheny (2013) argue that the narratives are about people’s experiences relative to uniqueness and societal life. Dixon (2018) declares that the purpose of a narrative interview is to collect information about the participant’s understandings by questioning them such that the participants reply in a story. Narrative interviews value the participants (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016). Narrative interviews assist researchers to understand well people’s experiences and behaviour.

As I engaged with my participants, I used the narrative interview schedule (see Appendix H, page 134) which contained the pre formulated interview protocol which was based on the research puzzles that needed to be answered by the study. The questions were formulated such that they could generate stories (Scarneci-Domnisoru, 2013). I also probed my participants by asking clarifying questions so that I could get full details of their stories. I audio recorded the interviews. Further, I took notes during the interview, which also assisted me in formulating clarification questions.

3.9 EXPERIENCES IN THE FIELD

The study was conducted during the period when the country was faced with the coronavirus/ COVID-19 pandemic. It had been made a procedure and a norm by the National Department of Health to close a school temporarily in the case where even one staff member or learner or even an outsider who had been in the premises had tested coronavirus positive. My greatest fear was that a set date for the interviews with the participants might not materialise. Another possibility was that if the country could be put on lockdown again, then interviews might be conducted telephonically, thus inhibiting face to face engagement. In short, the spread of coronavirus gave me the worst experience since I was unsure about what was going to happen. Fortunately, I could conduct interviews on the set dates. During my engagements with the participants, I admit that at the beginning of the session I felt nervous since I was uncertain whether I would be able to probe such that I would get information to complete my study. During the session I became relaxed since my participants were talking, narrating their stories.

3.10 DATA ANALYSIS

Polkinghorne (1995) differentiates between the analysis of narratives and narrative analysis. The analysis of narratives is clarified by Polkinghorne (1995) as taking different stages. These

stages are inductively constructing sets from the initial story, applying sets to the raw data, and combination over an account. On the same account, Butina (2015) argues that narrative thematic analysis consists of five phases: organisation and preparation of the data, obtaining a general sense of the information, the coding process, categories or themes and interpretation of the data. Drawing on Butina (2015), the following are the stages that were followed in the analysis of narratives:

- The organization and preparation of the data stage began with transcribing audio recordings. While transcribing the audio recordings from the interviews, some themes emerged.
- Data was coded by hand. Coding means putting data together in a story (Polkinghorne 1995).
- I read the transcripts again and underlined prominent ideas within each narrative and any words or ideas that came over and over again. Then I established a consistent code to easily identify the recurring words/ideas. After completion of coding, I developed a code list.

Narrative analysis is the process of synthesis of experiences into a story (Polkinghorne, 1995). Polkinghorne (1995) states that narrative analysis uses narrative reasoning, and its function is giving reasons for things to happen. Drawing on Polkinghorne (1995) the following steps were followed in carrying out narrative analysis:

- I had to understand and include descriptions of the cultural context in which the story took place, this involved the values and social rules that the schools seem to subscribe to.
- In assembling and constructing the facts into a story as an enquirer, I had to study interviewee's emotional responses.
- I concentrated on the choices and actions of the interviewee. To do that I had to understand the person, his/her understandings and responsive circumstances were also noted.
- In constructing the story, I had to consider the historical continuity of the interviewee.
- The very last stage is the writing of a systemic story.

3.11 ETHICAL ISSUES

I applied and obtained ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal ethics committee (see Appendix A, page 125). I was also granted permission by the KZN-DoE to conduct research in KZN schools (see Appendix B, page 126). Henning, Ransburg and Smit (2004) support that participant should grant permission and must be fully clued-up about the study that will be undertaken. I asked for permission from the school principals to conduct research (see Appendix C, page 129) I sought informed consent from partakers (see Appendix D, page 129). Drawing on Hall and Hall (2004) I also sought permission from the participants to audio record interviews. The participants gave permission by signing the informed consent/declaration forms (see Appendix F, page 132). Anonymity and confidentiality were observed by using pseudonyms (not their real names) throughout the study. The pseudonyms that I have assigned to the participants are Ms Nomathemba, Mr Khayalakhe and Mr Duduzani. I informed the participants that they could withdraw from the narrative interview whenever they felt like.

3.12 TRUSTWORTHINESS

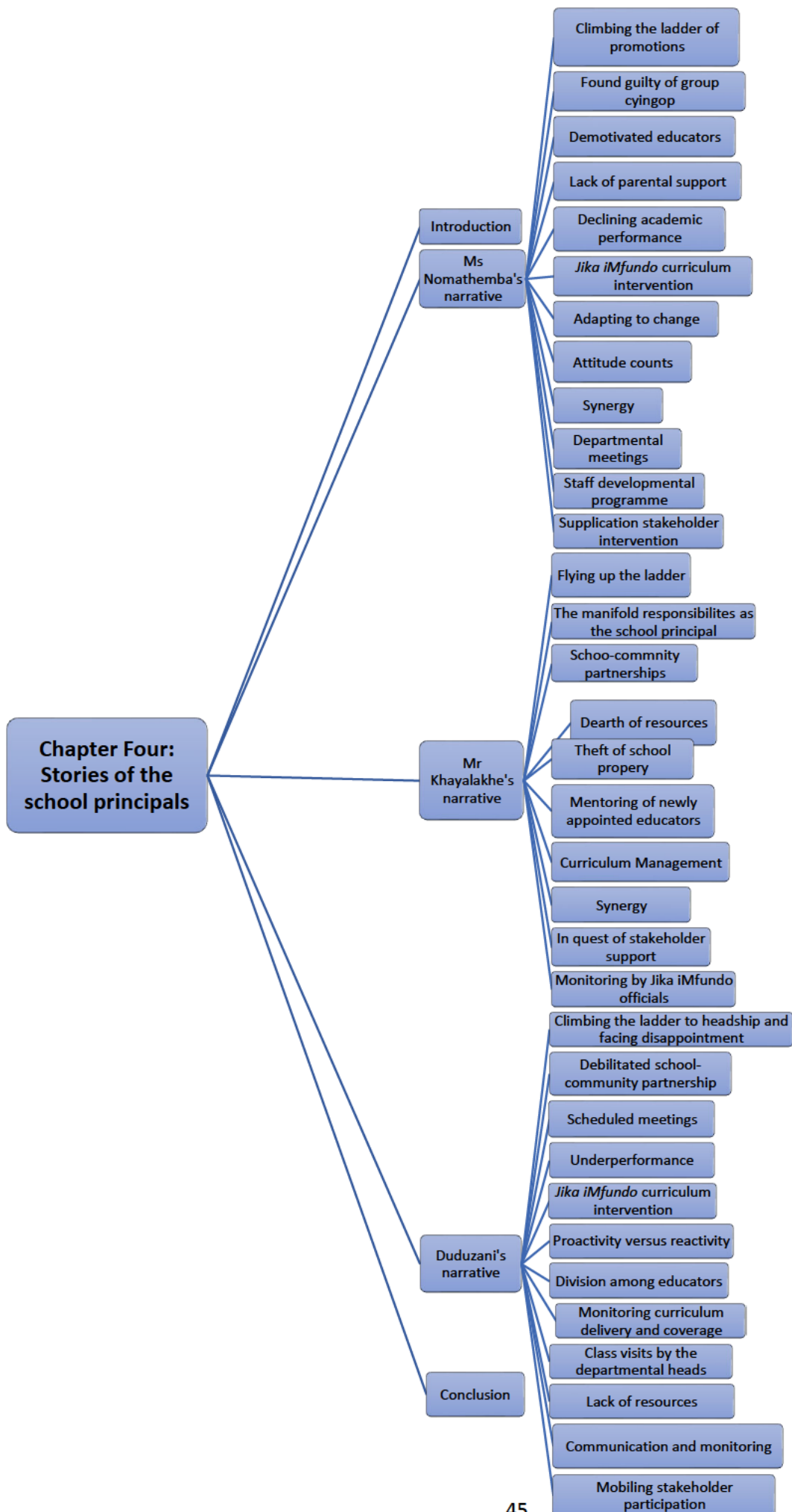
Trustworthiness is defined by Pilot and Beck (2014) as the degree of confidence in data, interpretation and methods that are used to ensure the quality of a study. My study is a narrative inquiry. Therefore, trustworthiness was assessed using verisimilitude and utility criteria. Verisimilitude is defined by Creswell (2007) as a criterion for a good literary study, in which the writing seems real and alive and it transports the reader to the world of the study. This will be achieved by member check and peer validation. Utility is considered as the ultimate test of finding out if narrative research becomes a basis for others' work (Riesman, 2008). In other words, research should be aimed at producing knowledge that contributes to the problem-solving capabilities of people (Hammersley, 2004). Therefore, utility is assessing whether the study will be useful or whether the study will be relevant for use by members of the research community. To achieve this, I will employ the techniques of member checking and peer validation.

3.13 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations are those characteristics of design or methodology that impact or influence the interpretation of the findings (Price & Murnan, 2004). The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of principals of underperforming secondary schools, in a rural context, not to generalize, therefore, results of this study cannot be transferable. Transferability addresses the issues of applicability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.14 CONCLUSION

The chapter has outlined the research design and methodology that I have used in this study to navigate the secondary school principals' experiences of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. It has given a full picture of how the study has been conducted. It has also articulated how the ethical issues and study trustworthiness were ensured during the research. The study limitations have also been highlighted. The next chapter will present the actual research, the narratives that was constructed by my participants and myself.



CHAPTER FOUR

STORIES OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the first level of analysis which is narrative analysis. The previous chapter, chapter three presented the research design and methodology that I used to generate data. To address my research puzzles, data was collected using narrative interviews. After the data generation, I transcribed all the stories. Through narrative interviews, I have allowed my participants to tell their stories.

In this chapter I share the stories of three school principals' experiences of the implementation of the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention in a rural context. I commence with Ms Nomathemba's story, followed by Mr Khayalakhe's story. I conclude with Mr Duduzani's story. All the names that are used are the pseudonyms.

4.2 Ms Nomathemba's narrative

4.2.1 Climbing the ladder of promotions

In 1995 I was appointed as the departmental head. As the newly appointed departmental head, I attended the induction workshop. In that workshop my job description was clearly unpacked. It was emphasised that the purpose of the existence of schools is teaching and learning. It was spelt out that the departmental heads are appointed to assist the school principal in ensuring that learning takes place. I performed my duties as the departmental head with confidence. I knew exactly what was expected of me. I supported teachers where necessary. I monitored curriculum delivery. In 2000 I was promoted as the deputy principal. In 2016 I was appointed as the school principal.

4.2.2 Found guilty of group copying

When I was appointed as the principal, the school had already begun to face a myriad of challenges. The community lost faith in the school. Teachers became hopeless and helpless. The school just fell apart. It all started before the release of 2014 NSC examination results. Grade twelve candidates wrote the first Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) NSC examination in 2014. The school principal was informed that it was alleged that our

candidates had committed group copying during the writing of 2014 NSC examination. That was a serious examination irregularity. It was like a bomb to all of us, as educators. The parents of the concerned candidates were informed about the allegations that were levelled against their children. The matter became worse after the candidates had been interviewed by the Provincial Examination Integrity Committee (PEIC). It became clear that the school would not be acquitted. The evidence that had been presented to all those who had attended the interview was just strong. On conclusion of the investigation, our learners were found guilty and their examination results in three subjects were nullified. Furthermore, they would not be allowed to write NSC examination for some time. That was the outcome of the investigation. The school could not appeal because the matter involved many candidates, and there was no hope of winning that case. That situation affected educators and community badly. It left all of us devastated. Since then, things have never gone back to normal. I ask myself several questions, which are never answered. The school principal resigned.

4.2.3 Demotivated educators

The work environment at school changed since 2014. It was characterised by lack of direction, resistance, indolence, defiance and doing what pleases oneself. Like all other educators, I also felt somehow betrayed. I could feel that nothing could be made to ameliorate the situation. I can say that 2015 was the worst year at school. There was that resentment. I, myself never got the truth. We ended up blaming and suspecting one another about the examination incident. I, like other educators became demotivated. The teaching periods were no longer honoured. The image of all of us as educators had been tarnished.

Unfortunately for me, I had to act as the principal after the former principal could not take it anymore and resigned. As the acting principal I realised that we needed to move on and let bygones be bygones. I tried to motivate educators to accept the situation and regain confidence. It was like I was making sense, but I seemed to deceive myself into believing that they would just change.

As the school principal I monitor curriculum delivery to ensure that learners are being taught. At times I cannot be with the educators in class all the time, but I assume that things are happening. However, the academic results always prove me otherwise. Therefore, I am also as demotivated as the educators. I wish I could run away from this school, go, and teach somewhere else, but it is not easy to change schools anyhow. I do not see a future in this school. Demotivation is just recurring. Even the newly appointed educators seem to be absorbed by the environment. They just adapt to that unhealthy environment.

I have never been successful in dealing with educators who are not willing to do what is expected of them. I try to engage them with the purpose of finding out what the problem can be, but I realised that they come to school just because they are appointed, otherwise till now there is no interest or enthusiasm. Sometimes I end up not knowing how to deal with such situations because educators have that attitude that if they come to school, go to class, then there is nothing more that the school principal or SMT member may need from them. Surprisingly, I know that these educators can do more than what they are doing. Day by day I deal with educators who are unwilling to go an extra mile and not committed. I deal with cases where the departmental heads struggle to persuade educators not to rush finishing the syllabus, but to see to it that learners understand what is being taught.

The educators who display negative attitude towards change and those who are always demotivated usually attain below 60% and some perform below 50% in. Some are doing well. Unfortunately, the performance of the school does not depend on one subject only. There are subjects where you really do not understand why they are performed below 50% when other schools achieve 100% in those subjects, even schools in our circuit. I believe that the subject educators of underperforming educators are supposed to seek assistance from those educators who achieve well and work hand in hand with them. With our educators, I do not know whether it is pride or inferiority complex or whatever it is. They do not ask for assistance, no matter how hard I advise them to do so.

4.2.4 Lack of parental support

Good performance is a team effort. I understand that with the introduction of the SASA, parents have been given authority to govern schools. I believe that everyone should play his or her part, even the learners should have a role to play in their learning. The parents are not happy about the school's academic performance. The challenge that I have is that parents seem to be worried about performance at the beginning of the year, thereafter, everything becomes normal to them. The school underperformed again the following year. They show concern and immediately forget and do not even care about what is happening in as far as teaching and learning is concerned during the year. Most parents do not support the school. Some learners are affected by the environment. For instance, since the schools have been closed for the national lockdown because of the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, all learners are expected to be on their toes in trying to catch up, but it is the opposite with our learners, we drag them to classes. Many learners seem to have lost hope.

4.2.5 Declining academic performance

As from 2015, the school has been performing below 55%, in the NSC examination which puts it into a list of underperforming schools according to section 58B of the *SASA, Circular D1 of 2014 and Circular D2 of 2017*. I always must prepare and submit to the HOD of KZN DoE the school improvement plan as per section 16A (c). I can say that our academic performance has been a disgrace even to us as educators. As I am appointed by the Department of Education, my leadership must ensure the school produces quality results. Producing quality results is a motivating factor on its own. Our school's underperformance is demotivating. Since school improvement is a collective effort, cooperation of other people is especially important. In our school, there is a challenge in as far as cooperation is concerned. The school is located in the country zone where many individuals are illiterate and unemployed. Most community members do not display much interest in what is happening at the school. People in this area show interest when it suits them or when they think they will benefit something from the school. If there is nothing to benefit, they do not care whether the school is prospering or declining. I deal with the situation where people have a tendency of demanding that their family members be appointed at school even if they do not meet the requirements of being appointed. They also believe that if they support the school, then, I am obliged to secretly compensate them. There is no team spirit at all. There is no collaboration among educators, learners, parents, and the community at large.

I also consider, the fact that the educated people from this area, quit the area to work and reside in the cities as depriving our learners of role models. Even the graduates that have been produced by our school, are invisible, but we know that they did well in tertiary institutions and are employed. So, our learners do not know about them. There are very few people that they look up to.

4.2.6 *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention

The introduction of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention has been a blessing. The usefulness of the programme is immeasurable. I learnt a lot especially regarding leadership and management as well as regarding different strategies of approaching lessons in class. I think the programme should have involved all educators and all subjects. Again, if the *Jika iMfundo* workshops could be conducted more frequently, though we had to leave classes to attend such workshops, it was worth it. Presently, we are applying the strategies that we acquired through

Jika iMfundo to monitor educators' work and manage curriculum. *Jika iMfundo* focused on certain subjects, but information and the tools can be used in other subjects. After attending the workshops, I always convened meetings with SMT members and we discussed as to which material could be used even in other subjects. We also devised strategies on how that material could be customised so that it could fit in all other subjects. I can say that *Jika iMfundo* intervention came at the right time.

As a school principal I work through the departmental heads in the enactment of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. It is through the departmental heads that I can be able to disseminate information then the departmental heads cascade it to educators in their departments. I normally check their departments' files. In their files I check their comments, feedback that is given to each educator. Even the form of support that they render to the educators in their departments is indicated in their files. I monitor the departmental heads work once per quarter. I even request them to view educators' files as well as learners' SBA files and their exercise books to check the volume of written work. I then request them to advise educators accordingly.

4.2.7 Adapting to change

The programme was done, completed, then it is upon me as the school principal to see to it that it is fully implemented. *Jika iMfundo* is a good programme indeed. The challenge that I experience day by day is that some educators seem to be against any form of transformation. They are not ready or willing to implement change, therefore, they are reluctant to fully implement *Jika iMfundo* intervention and instead, they prefer to do things their usual way. *Jika iMfundo* is not implemented as it should be. Whenever I spearhead any programme, I receive negative responses. No matter how hard I persuade educators to cooperate, some blatantly and deliberately do not comply. There is no uniformity in what is done regarding the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* intervention.

4.2.8 Attitude counts

The non-compliance of educators has to do with their negative attitudes. The negative attitude of some educators made them believe that attending *Jika iMfundo* workshops was just a waste of time because they had to leave classes unattended to attend such workshops. I can say that their negative attitudes blocked them from seeing the usefulness of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. However, on the perspective of SMT, I can boldly say that it is a useful

intervention, I gained new useful strategies of school management. I encourage departmental heads to use *Jika iMfundo* tools and even adapt them to fit in other subjects.

4.2.9 Synergy between subject advisors and PILO in terms of the implementation of the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention

One of the other serious challenges regarding the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* is the fact that there is much confusion that is caused by the lack of synergy between subject advisors and *Jika iMfundo* officials. Some educators report to me that their subject advisors need things to be done their own ways, which is contrary to what *Jika iMfundo* demands. It becomes difficult for me to force educators to go against their subject advisors because they are responsible for whatever happens regarding their subjects. My greatest fear is that if something goes wrong, the educators, may indicate that they are being misled by the SMT. As the principal, I may be in trouble.

4.2.10 Departmental meetings

In mitigating the challenges that I face with the implementation of *Jika iMfundo*, I convene departmental meetings where all departmental heads meet with educators whom they supervise. The main purpose of such meetings is to discuss barriers concerning their cluster subjects and propose possible solutions.

4.2.11 Staff development programme

To negotiate the barriers that I encounter in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* and in addressing other challenges that have led to the decline of the school, I organised a staff development programme. Before the lockdown of the country, I invited a deputy principal from one of the best performing schools. We had such a fruitful workshop. I could perceive and feel through their comments and facial expressions that they were willing to transform for the better. I could see that they were motivated.

In fact, my good plans were disrupted by the lockdown because after the first developmental workshop, I organised a meeting where we reflected on the development gained through the workshop. I could feel that the educators were displaying a positive attitude towards what had been discussed in the staff development workshop. My plan was to organise a follow-up workshop, then lockdown came and suspended my plans.

4.2.12 Supplicating stakeholder intervention

To ensure that the school receives much support from different stakeholders in working through the barriers that the school encounters in implementing *Jika iMfundo*, I make sure that I warmly welcome any stakeholder who comes to school to support. I have also indicated to the Department of Education that as an underperforming school, that I need more visits from the subject advisors, and they are really visiting the school.

4.3 Mr Khayalakhe's narrative

4.3.1 Flying up the ladder

After six years of teaching, I was appointed as the departmental head. Executing my duties was never difficult because I had been co-opted by my principal to assist him in monitoring the work of educators. Although I attended the induction workshop that was coordinated by the Department of Education, there was nothing new to me because it turned out to be everything that my principal had been training me to do. I was the only departmental head since our school had only one stream, commerce department, due to small enrolment. Further, I was appointed as the school principal, in 2017 after the retirement of the previous principal.

4.3.2 The manifold responsibilities as the school principal

As the principal I am responsible for the daily operations of the school. I perform leadership and management duties. It is my responsibility to give direction about every activity that takes place at school. I monitor curriculum delivery and coverage, ensuring that there is instruction at school. I am a subject educator; I teach mathematics in two grade eleven classes. I monitor the activities of the departmental heads. Otherwise, the departmental heads are the ones who are implementing the curriculum. I ensure that the meetings are held, subject meetings first, then the departmental meetings. We look at subject meeting challenges, then we look at departmental meeting challenges. We then look at possible solutions. After that we discuss the entire school curriculum challenges. We try to resolve the challenges that we have the capacity of resolving.

4.3.3 School-community partnership

I am fortunate to be working with the team that is incredibly supportive and highly informative. The team that I am working with believes much in implementation and they believe in adhering to time frames. The educators in my school are dynamic, disciplined, technologically advanced, young, and energetic, always developmental academically. Another stakeholder that we have is the School Governing Body (SGB). Our SGB members are young and energetic as well and an incredibly supportive school structure. They are consultative as well in terms of making informed decisions. They want our school to have the best image in terms of achieving best academic results in the area. Another stakeholder that we have is Representative Council of Learners (RCL).

4.3.4 Dearth of resources

As the school principal I deal with a myriad of challenges. Our school is under-resourced. There is no proper administration block and furniture. As the school principal I do not have an office. No SMT member has an office. It becomes difficult when I must deal with confidential matters, because I do not have privacy at all. We always experience shortage of textbooks. We do not have a library (media centre) and laboratory. Our classrooms have insufficient desks. Another challenge concern broken windows, and broken doors. Five years ago, learners protested about several issues and ended up throwing stones, destroying the school property and broke windows and doors. Since then, the windows and doors have never been fixed. However, some are broken by ill-disciplined learners during break times. Such cases are reported to the disciplinary committee which reports the matter to the parents concerned. However, that has never been helpful because parents simply apologise verbally and mention that they are not employed, therefore they cannot fix whatever that is broken by their children. One educator has successfully approached one big shop for donations and some windows and doors have been fixed. Furthermore, there is no separate room for photocopying, which sometimes puts us at the risk of leakage of examination question papers, though it has never happened. Shortage of computers is another serious concern especially because I would love to prepare my learners for the fourth industrial revolution (4IR). Therefore, curriculum needs learners to be computer literate so that they can understand that education is transforming.

When *Jika iMfundo* started, we were given packs but when *Jika iMfundo* team left Pinetown District to focus on uMgungundlovu District we were told that we would be given CDs and

that is where the problem started. The schools had to print documents on their own and that costs a lot of money. If they can print documents as they were doing before it can be much better, rather than sending CDs to schools. They sent CDs, then schools must print. Printing one document takes about thousands of pages. It becomes a burden on the side of the school. When *Jika iMfundo* was here in Pinetown, it was much better in terms of implementation and there was an improvement in terms of academic results because we were getting printed documents. What we normally do, teachers use laptops, they put CDs to check for information to minimize costs, but it is not as effective as it would be if we were provided with hard copies.

4.3.5 Theft of school property

The other factor is theft. There is a tendency of stealing of school resources. Twenty computers have been stolen this year. The deputy principal opened the case at police station, but so far nothing has happened. Suspects are unknown. The members of the society sometimes mistakenly believe that the school is rich and that is where they should benefit. Because they are unemployed, they believe that they must come and steal from the school so that they can sell and get money for survival purposes. That means that they do not consider that even the school can be poor.

4.3.6 Mentoring of newly appointed educators

I have a turnaround strategy as a means of improving curriculum delivery, thereby improving the academic performance. I have sought for capacity where there are weaknesses in terms of curriculum. I have identified a sister school which I strongly believe that it will strengthen the school academically. I have also organised extra classes where I have requested for the assistance of experienced educators who are not teaching presently. Currently, I have educators who are teaching physical sciences and mathematics in grade twelve, who are inexperienced. They are fresh from the university. I strongly believe that if I can get the experienced educators to mentor them, then the school can overcome underperformance.

4.3.7 Curriculum management

Jika iMfundo curriculum intervention was introduced in 2015. I like *Jika iMfundo* intervention so much because it emphasises the fact that educators should be on task on time. *Jika iMfundo* focusses on curriculum coverage more than anything else. This intervention makes life very simple for educators in terms of unpacking the curriculum. It also provides educators with Learning Teaching and Support Material (LTSM). It also promotes team teaching. Through *Jika iMfundo* I have been able to motivate the departmental heads to see to it that the newly appointed educators are mentored by the experienced educators.

I work through the departmental heads in implementing *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. I ensure that the curriculum documents are provided to the departmental heads so that the relevant meetings can sit and decide on further strategies of successful implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. I always made sure that workshops that were organised by the *Jika iMfundo* officials were attended by the departmental heads as well as by educators. After every meeting feedback session were done. I always fully support team teaching. I have noticed that the academic performance of learners has been gradually improving since the introduction of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention.

4.3.8 Collaboration among stakeholders in terms supporting the implementation of the *Jika iMfundo* Curriculum intervention

Jika iMfundo motto is ‘What I do matters’. This motto speaks volumes about collaboration among different stakeholders. Some of the difficulties with the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* is that there is no connection between *Jika iMfundo* and the Department of Education, especially the subject advisors. That is one tough area. The subject advisors want things to be done their way while *Jika iMfundo* officials prefer things to be done in a different manner. The subject advisors even mention that schools must forget about what is said by *Jika iMfundo*. There is no synergy at all. If *Jika iMfundo* personnel and subject advisors can work together, the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* can work well and there would be no difficulties at all. I can say that most subject advisors do not believe in *Jika iMfundo*. They see *Jika iMfundo* as a threat, as something that has come to take their jobs. That causes a lot of confusion to educators. There is resistance on the side of subject advisors. They say straightaway that they do not work with *Jika iMfundo*. That is a big challenge and that is the reason *Jika iMfundo* intervention is not fully implemented in this school.

4.3.9 In quest of stakeholder support

To ensure that we receive much support from different stakeholders, we hold special departmental curriculum meetings, but SMT meets more often to identify the challenges and the possible solutions. Further, we also meet the entire staff in terms of deliberating about the challenges as well as the solutions. If needs be, we also consult the other schools that are in the area. We also use technology to seek for more information. We also invite subject advisors for support, they are supportive. To resolve those that we cannot resolve, we network with well performing neighbouring schools.

4.3.10 Monitoring by *Jika iMfundo* officials

There is no monitoring since they left in 2018, they never came back for monitoring. I would appreciate it, if the *Jika iMfundo* officials were monitoring the implementation of the programme. Had they been around, it would be easy for me to share my frustrations with them. Since 2019, they have been silent as we have not received any communication from them. That poses a serious threat regarding its implementation.

4.4 Mr Duduzani's narrative

4.4.1 Climbing the ladder to headship and facing disappointment

I was appointed as the departmental head in a rural secondary school. Everything worked very well. The educators, learners, parents, and community at large collaborated in the activities of the school. The academic performance of learners was excellent. I was then appointed as the school principal in 2013. The school's academic performance dropped the following year, in 2014 since the school obtained 48% compared to 78% that had been obtained in 2013. I was frustrated and disappointed because there was a huge drop in NSC examination results.

4.4.2 Debilitated school-community partnership

After the drop in NSC academic performance, the school no longer received support that had been rendered by the community. It was like the school was being boycotted by the parents as well as the community. They detached themselves from the school when I needed them the most. I tirelessly invite them to school and try to delineate the significant role that they are anticipated to play in the functioning of the school. I think people in the area are a little bit

disturbed. Sometimes when I try to involve them in anything that pertains to education, they just withdraw without even talking to me. I have just learnt that they fear that they might be bewitched. Once they come closer to the school, they become scared or maybe they think that the community may assume that they may become troublesome as they are closer to the school and educators.

Every year, especially at the beginning of the year, I meet parents who come to complain about their children's results when the learners have not passed their grades. That is the only period that they come up with something to say, which is not good. The words that they utter, are not good, for instance, they say that they wonder why they keep sending their children to a hopeless school. Even major stakeholders involved and who have direct interest in education have also criticised educators and I when the results are out, knowing very well the challenges of the school. I think that is also a factor that has put myself and educators down. Instead of getting encouraged and motivated, we were pressed down. We were disgraced in front of our learners, I felt less of a professional. They do nothing to support the school, but when the results come out, they come and talk anyhow. Anyway, as I said before, I learn from such situations and I will rise above them.

4.4.3 Scheduled meetings

I make sure that the relationship between the SMT and educators is a healthy one. I hold staff meetings once or twice a week where I share my wishes as to what type of people I want to work with. I also try to work systematically where I plan the dates on which the SMT members give reports on curriculum coverage where they show me the tools that they use in monitoring curriculum. We were supplied curriculum monitoring tools by Department of education officials as well as by *Jika imfundo* officials. As a school we also do SWOT analysis whereby we always gauge our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities as well as threats. That helps us to know our level of performance.

4.4.4 Academic underperformance

My school's performance in NSC results is not at all satisfying. I am actually struggling, but I always have a belief in the saying 'Never let a crisis go to waste' which means that although we are not satisfied about our learners' academic performance results, but that gives us a chance to do things differently, for the best. In other words, through our misfortune, we learn and

rectify our blunders. Since 2014, the school has been achieving less than 55%. We have never come closer to the set target. The target is to achieve 70% in the NSC examination.

My main challenge concerns two subjects, geography, and mathematical literacy. My learners have performed badly in these subjects, for consecutive years. Performance of these two subjects during the first term common tests was good. If that performance can be maintained, the school can do very well in the final examination. I have likewise organised previous examination question papers and memoranda for the two problematic subjects and have suggested to the educators that after each section, they must familiarise learners with the style of questioning by giving them activities that are extracted from the previous question papers.

4.4.5 *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention

Jika iMfundo curriculum intervention has been extremely helpful. It has given us as SMT a system that we can apply in the running of the school, down to the HODs and to the educators. Although we have not yet achieved what we wish but we are going there because we have everything that we need to implement *Jika iMfundo*. With full implementation we can get the results that we wish to achieve. I strongly believe that with *Jika iMfundo* my school can be turned around.

As the school principal, I have not yet engaged the SMT and the staff on full implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. Again, I also have not yet encouraged educators to engage on conversational session as per *Jika iMfundo* requirement. I have realised that SMT fear that educators may interpret the conversational sessions as being confrontational. I need to address that fear because the departmental heads need to know what is going on regarding curriculum in their departments. I believe that it depends on the approach by the departmental heads because at the end the educator needs support. The educator needs to believe that the departmental heads can support him/her. I always make my educators aware that in whatever we are doing as educators, we need to think about learners because they are the beneficiaries. When they pass, they make us, their parents, and the community proud. They even contribute to the economy of the country. I strongly believe that one on one discussions with subject educators can contribute to effective teaching and learning and to improved academic performance of learners.

Jika iMfundo is an especially useful intervention. I must ensure that the *Jika iMfundo* intervention is fully implemented at my school. The *Jika iMfundo* officials gave me a lot of useful information on proper running of the school. In fact, I should not be complaining about

the poor academic results owing to rich information with which I was supplied. I need to convene a meeting where the proper implementation of *Jika iMfundo* will be discussed and spearheaded. For now, I admit that I am leading as if I do not have a direction. I need to organise myself, so that I can be able to direct other people. I am going to make sure that together with SMT and all educators we map out as to how many meetings we are going to have per quarter, where the issues of curriculum delivery and coverage will be discussed.

The role that I play in the execution of *Jika iMfundo* is to make sure that every meeting that is held has resolutions. Secondly, I also need to have records of what I am going to do daily. I need to diarise my daily activities of what I am going to do, rather than going to school without having something in mind to do for the school. I need to take the school at heart where I will have to think about its wellbeing and its production.

4.4.6 Proactivity versus reactivity

I do not like it when educators and some SMT members expect me as the school principal to know everything regarding the curriculum. I feel like that is an excuse for being lethargic. My belief is that the departmental heads are the people who are supposed to inform me about what is going on in terms of curriculum delivery in their departments. As the school principal I have not yet encouraged SMT and all educators to be proactive rather than being reactive.

4.4.7 Division among educators

In the past, I had a difficult time when the staff was divided. There was no cooperation at all. There were two educators who were the cause of that division among staff. They were the bad influence such that the school was unmanageable and academic performance of learners dropped. Some staff members would oppose any instruction from the principal or any SMT member. Thing went back to normal when those two educators were removed from this school. That left the school with the spirit of unity among all educators and SMT. Now, I can say that with the staff that we have, once we fully implement *Jika iMfundo*, the school is going to improve.

4.4.8 Monitoring curriculum delivery and coverage

In monitoring the curriculum, I need to map out the system where I will have to monitor the activities that are given to learners. I will be checking if the activities are of the acceptable standards. I also monitor progress on the meetings that the departmental heads hold with the educators in their departments. Reports also on monitoring SBA are submitted to me on regular basis. I also need to get information from departmental heads on punctuality of educators to school and to classrooms. Some educators have a tendency of being busy doing some other things when they are supposed to go to class. When the bell rings and the educator rushes to class, learners know exactly that this educator is ready to teach them, that motivates them. I think that is the punctuality that I really need. I always stress on punctuality of coming to school not to class. I also need to monitor if educators do exhaust the entire duration of the teaching period because others only spend forty-five minutes in class and the remaining fifteen minutes is not utilised. With regards to extra time, I also need to know what educators and learners are doing, to check if there is any learning that is going on.

4.4.9 Class visits by the departmental heads

The departmental heads regularly report to me their findings in terms of class visits. I have received reports by departmental heads that in their meetings with educators, they ask educators to invite them to their classes to observe and support them as they are teaching. They do that to do away with the idea that class visits are a fault-finding mission. Sometimes, before the start of a lesson, the departmental head would explain to learners that he/she has joined the class because he/she wants to learn more about the subject or topic being taught.

4.4.10 Lack of resources

The major barrier that the school encounters is that there is an old photocopying machine which breaks every now and then. We normally give learners handouts to save time, rather than writing on the board. We do not receive enough norms and standards allocation because we have few learners. Sometimes we run short of funds. I do not think it is proper for norms and standards to be determined using the number of learners per school because resources are always needed regardless of the number of learners. *Jika iMfundo* team left Pinetown District, I was supplied with the CDs and schools were supposed to print documents on their own. I was not able to print those documents. As a school, we do not have funds. Printing these documents costs a lot of money.

4.4.11 Communication and monitoring

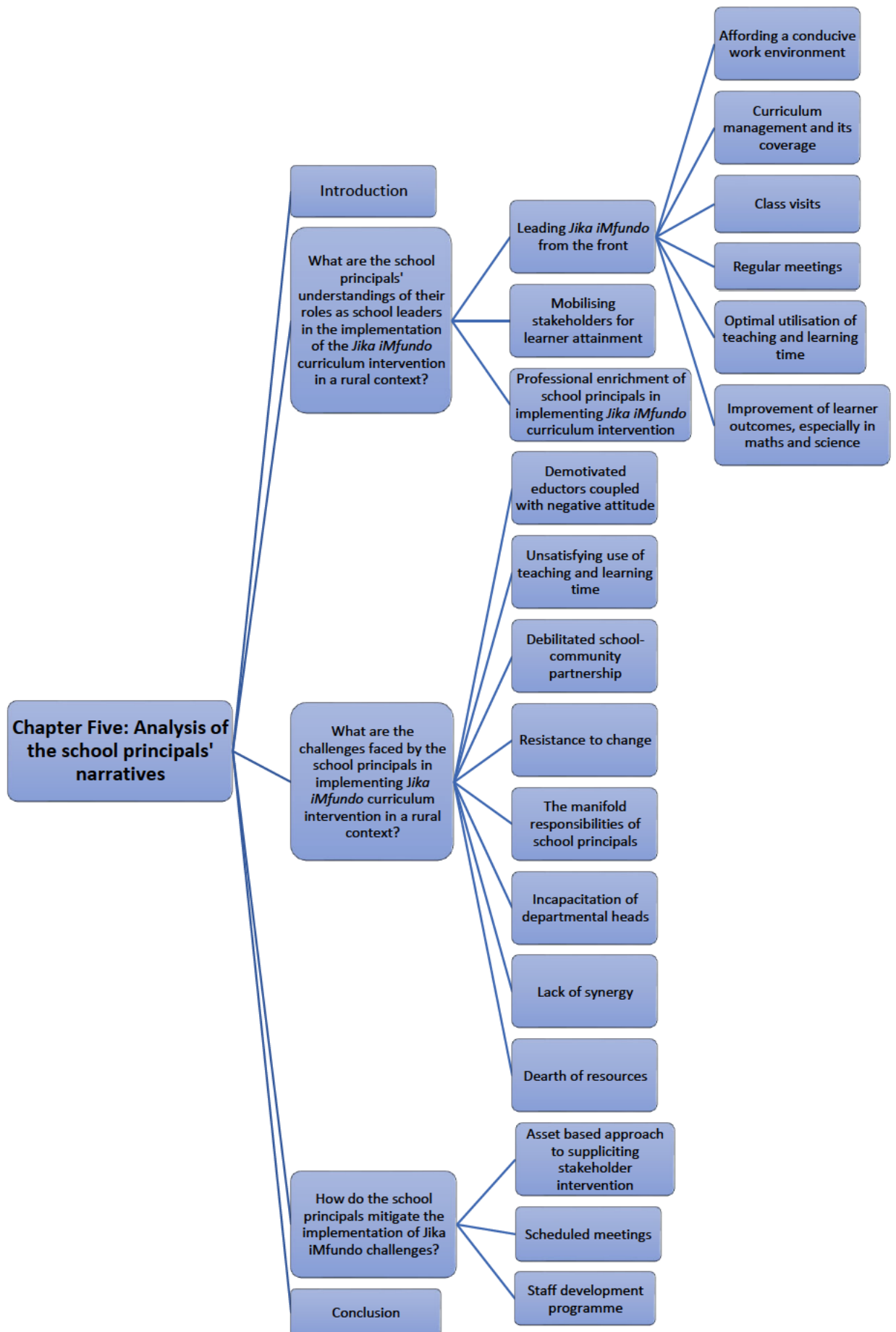
I have realised that I need to ensure that the school has regular communication with the District and CMC. The circuit manager who is responsible for the school once promised to be with us at least three days a week to monitor the implementation of *Jika iMfundo*. That never happened. I would appreciate if there is close monitoring of the implementation of *Jika iMfundo*.

4.4.12 Mobilising stakeholder participation

As a technique of receiving support from stakeholders, I have made local leadership aware of the challenges faced by the school and even sought their intervention. Further, I have partnered with the non-profit organisations (NPO). The NPO has started to assist the school with fundraising techniques. Again, there are several businesses which have social programmes, like Lotto, MTN, Vodacom companies. I believe that if they are wisely approached, they can come up with plans that can help us as a school because soon all schools will be following fourth industrial revolution (4IR). Therefore, we need to be ahead of time.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter related the storied narratives of Ms Nomathemba, Mr Khayalakhe and Mr Duduzani. These narratives were co-constructed with the participants. The stories were generated from the data that was produced through the narrative interviews. The next chapter will concentrate on the analysis of the narratives.



CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' NARRATIVES

5.1 Introduction

Chapter four presented the re-storied narratives of Ms Nomathemba, Mr Khayalakhe and Mr Duduzani and represented my first level of analysis, namely narrative analysis. This chapter presents the next level of analysis, namely the analysis of narratives. In this chapter I address the following research puzzles:

- What are the principals' understandings of their roles as school leaders in the implementation of the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention in a rural context?
- What are the challenges faced by the school principals in implementing the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention in a rural context?
- How do the school principals mitigate the challenges in the implementation of the *Jika iMfundo*?

The findings are presented according to the themes and sub-themes that emerged from an inductive analysis of the narratives. To ensure that the voices of the participants are expressed, I use verbatim quotes from the stories in the presentation of the data. Furthermore, the findings are discussed in terms of the literature review and the theoretical framework presented in chapter two. I commence by discussing the understandings of school principals of their roles as school leaders in the implementation of the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. This is followed by the challenges faced by the school principals in implementing the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. I will then discuss the strategies that are employed by the school principals in mitigating the challenges that they encounter in implementing the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention.

5.2 What are the school principals' understandings of their roles as school leaders in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention in a rural context?

This section presents and discusses the following understandings of school principals: leading *Jika iMfundo* from the front, mobilisation of stakeholders for learner attainment, professional enhancement, and school principals as instructional leaders.

5.3.1 Leading *Jika iMfundo* from the front

Ms Nomathemba, Mr Khayalakhe and Mr Duduzani felt that the school principals should lead the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* intervention. They believe that if school principals do not play a leading role, educators may become reluctant to implement this invaluable intervention, which they believe will contribute greatly to the improvement of learner outcomes. Vogel (2018) proclaims that school leaders who show interest in teaching and learning have a strong bearing on learner attainment. The belief by the school principals is in line with instructional leadership theory which emphasises the fact that school principals play a major role in managing the instructional program which is the second dimension of instructional leadership (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The school principals shared the same sentiment that since *Jika iMfundo* intervention focuses on curriculum implementation and its coverage, it is their responsibility to see to it that the departmental heads monitor the work of all educators under their supervision in terms of curriculum coverage. Under this section I will be looking at the following sub-themes that emerged from the data: affording a conducive work environment, curriculum management and its coverage, class visits, regular meetings, optimal utilization of teaching and learning time, improvement of learner outcomes, especially in maths and science.

5.3.1.1 Affording a conducive work environment

Both Mr Khayalakhe and Mr Duduzani understand that the wellbeing of educators is crucial in achieving effective rural schools. They believe that if educators are happy and satisfied, they are likely to work with enthusiasm in the execution of their duties, thereby producing quality academic results amidst the challenges of teaching in a rural context. Mr Duduzani even makes his educators aware of his expectations of them. He does that because he is always concerned about healthy relationship between himself as the school principal and all educators. Further, he always desires to create and maintain a healthy relationship between the SMT and educators. This is what Mr Duduzani had to say:

I hold staff meetings once or twice a week where I spell out the importance of working harmoniously to achieve quality academic results.

This is what Mr Khayalakhe had to say:

... come to work with the team that is incredibly supportive ... together we make informed decisions.

The participants seem to indicate that the promotion of a conducive work environment has a positive impact on the working relationships which in turn contributes to effective rural

schools. Munir and Khalil (2016) assert that the positively perceived relationship between the school principal and educators contributes greatly to achieving good school academic results. However, Munir and Khalil (2016) further proclaim that job satisfaction and effectiveness are other factors that contribute to academic performance of educators. Though the participants are concerned about a conducive work environment, Bellei, Morawietz, Pablo, Valenzuela and Vanni (2020) pronounce that a strong school culture has positive impact on continuous improvement of a school. Msila (2017) echoes the same sentiment as Bellei, et al. (2020) by hinting at the importance of creating an encouraging climate and effective school culture to facilitate a definite environment that would inspire educators to excel in the execution of their duties. The participants even make the educators aware of what is expected of them and even involve them in decision making. Moreover, promoting school climate is the third dimension of instructional leadership that involves making educators aware of their expectations (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). This implies that the three school principals are performing their duties as instructional leaders.

5.2.1.2 Curriculum management and its coverage

Instructional leaders lead and manage curriculum, they oversee and monitor instruction (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). Mthiyane, Naidoo and Bertram (2019) assert that the *Jika iMfundo* assisted in clarifying the role of SMTs on curriculum management which also made it easy for them to discover the areas where educators needed further development. Curriculum coverage is viewed as a strategy towards school improvement in South African schools, thus leading to school effectiveness since it provides learners with better opportunities to learn (De Clerg, Shalem & Nkambule, 2019). Therefore, it was the intention of PILO to strengthen school community partnerships to achieve quality education.

Ms Nomathemba, Mr Khayalakhe and Mr Duduzani understand that the *Jika iMfundo*'s focus is on curriculum coverage. *Jika iMfundo* was introduced on the premise that SMTs must monitor curriculum implementation and its coverage to improve learning outcomes (Christie & Manyokolo, 2018). Ms Nomathemba had this to say:

... educators were provided with curriculum trackers that are assisting them in tracking curriculum coverage, thereby gauging their pace, and devising some means and strategies of covering up should they lag.

Mr Khayalakhe reported:

The departmental heads monitor the work of educators to ensure that educators cover curriculum. They use tools that they were supplied by Jika iMfundo officials.

Mr Duduzani stated:

...the Jika iMfundo intervention focussed on three subjects, mathematics, science, and languages.

Ms Nomathemba further reported:

... through the Jika iMfundo officials' advice, the schools managed to customise tools and other material for it to be employed in other subjects.

All three school principals categorically echoed that they monitor curriculum through departmental heads. Ms Nomathemba, Mr Duduzani and Mr Khayalakhe declared:

...I normally check their departments' files. In their files I check their comments, feedback that is given to each educator. Even the form of support that they render to the educators in their departments is indicated in their files. I monitor the departmental heads' work once per quarter. I even request them to view educators' files as well as learners' SBA files and their exercise books to check the volume of written work. Presently, we are applying the strategies that we acquired through Jika iMfundo to monitor educators' work. We have even customised other tools so that they are utilised in other subjects other than maths, science, and technology (Ms Nomathemba).

Ms Nomathemba seems to be involved in the teaching and learning processes which is in line with the instructional leadership theory. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) assert that managing instructional program is a scope of instructional management which requires school leaders to monitor progress of learners in terms of curriculum delivery as well as learner outcomes. Also, the focus of the study is the role of school principals in curriculum leadership and management. It is evident that Ms Nomathemba and her departmental heads are ensuring that curriculum delivery is taking place. Further, feedback is given to educators which assists SMTs in mapping up the support that is needed by educators, thereby improving learner performance.

...reports on monitoring SBA are submitted to me on regular basis (Mr Duduzani).

The fact that Mr Duduzani monitors the implementation of SBA is an indication that he supports the processes that lead to the advancement of learners to other grades. Again, Mr Duduzani is ensuring that learners comply with the administration of School Based Assessment (SBA). The National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 (2013) states clearly it is compulsory for learners to comply with the requirements for SBA.

... and for educators in terms of unpacking the curriculum because there are packs that are designed for educators. It also promotes team teaching in that way it makes the weaker educator stronger as they learn more from one another and support one another. They come with new strategies and methods of unpacking the knowledge to learners (Mr Khayalakhe).

Mr Khayalakhe indicates that educators in his school learn together to better deliver curriculum to learners. They capacitate one another, thereby enhancing self-confidence as they learn from one another and practise team teaching. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) maintain that professional development is one of the functions of instructional leadership.

The participants manage to utilise the *Jika iMfundo* LTSM even in other subjects, other than mathematics, languages, and science. The participants also seem to manage curriculum through the departmental heads. The rural school principals are dealing with many contextual responsibilities, therefore do not have enough time for curriculum leadership, rather rely on distributed leadership, hence managing curriculum through the departmental heads. Witten and Makole (2018) assert that school principals are the key in leading the improvement of curriculum instruction in schools. However, it is the departmental heads who have direct impact on daily instructional activities in schools (Tapala, Niekerek & Metntz, 2020). The participant school principals draw on the expertise of the departmental heads to lead teaching and learning. Witten and Makole (2018) hold that improving curriculum coverage is believed to be an area that contributes to improved learning outcomes in schools. The participants are deeply concerned about the improvement of instruction and curriculum coverage.

5.2.1.3 Class visits

Borg (2018) assert that class visits are generally used to assess the quality of teaching with the aim of finding out what can be done to improve educator- learners' interaction. Alshehri (2019, p.58) states that class visits offer "rich information about teachers' actual classroom performance". This implies that the school principal, the departmental heads, and educators get to understand the areas where educators need to improve or to be developed through class visits.

Mr Duduzani indicated that his departmental heads engage in class visits where they observe educators as they are teaching. They get the exact experience on how educators interact with learners in the classroom situation. Such visits are not imposed on educators, but it is the educators who invite departmental heads into their classrooms. Such activity had transpired on one-on-one conversation sessions between the departmental heads and subject educators. Mr Duduzani is also aware that he needs to have a plan in place for his systematic curriculum management. Mr Duduzani reported:

I need to map out the system where I will have the departmental heads to regularly report to me their findings in terms of class visits and the activities that are given to learners. I will be checking if the activities are of the acceptable standards.

Mr Khayalakhe had the following to say regarding the classroom observations:

I engage in classroom observation where I observe departmental heads as they interact with learners. I then give feedback to them regarding the improvement of teaching and learning. Departmental heads submit their reports on their classroom observations with educators under their supervision.

Mr Duduzani does not seem to have received any reports from his departmental heads regarding class visits. It looks like he has not yet made plans for his departmental heads to submit their reports to him. However, the participants do engage in classroom observations and even provide feedback which contributes to improvement of teaching and learning. Classroom observations seem to benefit educators in terms of their professional development. This is also supported by literature. Teachers reveal that classroom observation is important for their ongoing professional development, while observers believe that it is significant for measuring and enhance the quality of schooling that affects learner attainment and educators' professional development (Alshehri, 2019; Sebastian, Allensworth, Wiedermann, Hochbein and Cunningham, 2019).

5.2.1.4 Regular meetings

Ms Nomathemba and Mr Khayalakhe shared their understandings of *Jika iMfundo* intervention by expressing how they tackled feedback meetings and curriculum meetings between departmental heads and educators. They reported that after attending *Jika iMfundo* workshops they held feedback meetings with SMTs first, where they deliberated about what had been discussed in their workshops, so that they would also be able to report back to educators. Thereafter, all educators met to plan together and reached agreements as to when the departmental meetings would sit. They also planned as to when and how they would hold the one-on-one sessions, which are the curriculum meetings between the departmental heads and the subject educators. Mr Duduzani revealed that he foresees successful implementation of *Jika iMfundo* intervention when educators have a sense of ownership of such a worthwhile intervention. Therefore, he encourages them to come up with the agenda for all the meetings pertaining to the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* intervention. Mr Duduzani also monitors progress of the meetings that the departmental heads hold with the educators in their departments. Ms Nomathemba and Mr Duduzani recounted:

After attending the workshops, as SMT members, I convened a meeting where we discussed as to which material could be used even in other subjects and even devised strategies on how that material could be customised. I also monitor progress on the meetings that the departmental heads hold with the educators in their departments. (Ms Nomathemba)

Mr Duduzani admitted that he understands that as a school they need to have a serious engagement where they will view and discuss the *Jika iMfundo* LTSM including the tools. Moreover, the types of meetings that they are still going to hold are still going to be discussed. Mr Duduzani proclaimed:

*We have not yet mapped out exactly what we have and how we are going to move forward. Further, the SMT and I need to decide as to how many meetings we are going to hold, in ensuring proper implementation of *Jika iMfundo* intervention.*

The participants seem to acknowledge receipt of material that they got from *Jika iMfundo* workshops. The material was meant to be utilised by all educators; therefore, regular meetings were inevitable since the utilisation of material had to be discussed. The meetings took different forms as per departmental heads. As part of curriculum leadership, the departmental heads and

educators are required to hold professional conversations where they identify developmental needs (Andrew- Larson, Wilson & Larbi-Cherif, 2017).

Meetings are a necessity, crucial and completely inevitable element of getting the task well accomplished in any organisation, and a school is no exception to that (Gada & Hassan, 2018). Gada and Hassan (2018) further argue that meetings are the simple means of deliberating the organisation's aims and objectives and are vital in organisation and management. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) assert that an important dimension of the principal's role as instructional leader is to define and communicate a mission or purpose for the school. This implies that the principals as the instructional leaders need to engage in meetings since they need to define the school mission to all staff members and to the entire school community.

Meetings also serve as pressure mechanisms to develop and share professional knowledge about professional responsibilities (Midha, 2020). This implies that it is through meetings that continual reminders about the accomplishment of professional tasks are made until they are completed. Meetings shape professional knowledge. When educators and departmental heads hold professional conversations, they build each other professionally. They also give each other pressure until what is required, either by the department of education or by each of them from each other, is achieved. The participants seem to agree that meetings are crucial for accomplishment of goals.

5.2.1.5 Optimal utilization of teaching and learning time

School effectiveness has to do with how effective the school plans, organise and implement curriculum and the extent of the curriculum coverage (Ngozi, Ekwueme, Abraham & Nwogu, 2018). Ngozi, Ekwueme, Abraham and Nwogu (2018) emphasise the fact that school curriculum begins from the first day of the school year, therefore time is a vital resource that needs to be used sparingly to ensure that the curriculum is covered. Mulenga and Lubasi (2019) argue that the amount of time that learners spend on learning activities contributes greatly to positive academic performance.

All three participants, Ms Nomathemba, Mr Khayalakhe and Mr Duduzani avowed that *Jika iMfundo* takes into consideration the fact that the main existence of schools is for learners to learn and for educators to teach, therefore demands utmost usage of instructional time. Mr Khayalakhe asserted:

I can say that Jika iMfundo is a useful intervention because it came from an angle that was saying that an educator must be on task on time.

Mr Duduzani accounted:

I also need to get information from departmental heads on punctuality of educators to school and to classrooms

Ms Nomathemba had this to say:

In our staff meetings I always present a slot on punctuality and honouring of teaching periods. I always emphasise that educators should always be physically and mentally present

The participants seem to agree that teaching and learning time should be protected at all costs. Mulenga and Lubasi (2019) declare that learning time should provide learners with the opportunity to acquire meaningful and necessary knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed in their everyday lives. This denotes that each moment should be accounted for, hence, time on task policy. This means that each school day should be dedicated to instructionally relevant activities, therefore educators should be in class teaching and learners should be in class, learning. That should be supported by evidence as the *Jika iMfundo* demands utilization of curriculum trackers to maximise accountability for proper utilisation of instructional time to fast track curriculum coverage (Witten and Makole, 2018). Protecting teaching and learning time is one of the functions that instructional leaders perform under the third dimension of instructional leadership of promoting school learning climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

5.2.1.6 Improvement of learner outcomes, especially in maths and science

Mr Khayalakhe understands that as a strategy for improving the quality of education in South Africa, the Department of Education targeted maths, science, and languages as per NDP goal of ensuring that more learners will be able to pass maths, science, and languages (Christie & Manyokolo, 2018).

Mr Khayalakhe had this to say:

... for instance, if we look at the results in general, they are not bad, but what is failing the school is the department of science. If our school can improve performance in science subjects, we can do well. The problem in our school is maths and science. If we can look at 2019 results our learners did well. Those who were doing science were the biggest number, hence they failed because they ended

up failing two subjects, which are Physical Sciences and Mathematics and they passed five subjects. As a school we ended up getting 41%. That 41% is coming from the department of humanities.

Mr Khayalakhe further reported:

I strongly believe that if we can strengthen our department of science, we can be one of the schools that are doing well.

Ms Nomathemba reported:

We are struggling to achieve at least 40% in Mathematics and physical sciences. Some educators proposed that we phase out these two subjects. That idea never materialised because we are optimistic that through Jika iMfundo intervention we will gradually improve.

The participants feel that the results of their schools have been pulled down by physical sciences and mathematics since these two subjects have been the most failed ones in their schools. However, they are positive that with the introduction of *Jika iMfundo* intervention, the results will improve especially because *Jika iMfundo* also targets the improvement of learner outcomes in these subjects. There are challenges that are cited as contributing to high failure rate of mathematics and science. Ntlanganiso (2019) recommends that something be done to curricula of grades 8 and 9 natural sciences. There is a belief that if there is a link or some form of continuation of grade nine (9) curriculum to grade ten (10) science curriculum, learners may better understand science, thus increase learner outcomes. Ntlanganiso (2019) further cites inadequate teaching and learning aids, LoLT, poor subject choices, poverty, weak school-community partnerships, overcrowded classes as the factors that contribute to poor performance in physical sciences. The aforementioned challenges are always cited and have not yet been fully addressed. With the introduction and implementation of *Jika iMfundo* intervention, they will be gradually addressed.

To echo the claim by Ntlanganiso (2019) on the issue of learners who are doing Mathematical Literacy instead of Mathematics, Mr Duduzani reported:

I believe that proper implementation of Jika iMfundo will put our school 'on the map' in terms of results because we phased off Physical Sciences and Mathematics since these two subjects were the most failed subjects in our school.

It is sad that Mr Duduzani's school phased out physical sciences and mathematics. This is exactly what Ntlanganiso (2019) has cited above. This may mean that some learners are not properly guided in terms of their potentials and therefore end up doing mathematical literacy instead of mathematics.

5.2.3 Mobilisation of stakeholders for learner attainment

All the three participants understand that the employment of *Jika iMfundo* intervention requires the collaboration of all patrons. This is in accordance with SASA which gives parents and the community authority to have a say in the governance of schools. The three participants, Ms Nomathemba, Mr Khayalakhe and Mr Duduzani work pleasantly with the educators, SGBs, RCL, CMs, District officials especially, Subject Advisors and Local leadership.

All three participants believe that parents are entitled to information regarding academic performance of their children, therefore invite them to schools so that such information is shared with them. The report cards are also collected by parents. All these structures have the best interest of these schools. They aspire to see the schools thriving and producing the best academic results. The school principals narrated:

.... invite parents to school to collect report cards for their children (Ms Nomathemba).

.... meetings where each subject educator discusses academic progress with parents (Mr Duduzani).

... before issuing of end of the year report cards, parents of those candidates who do not meet requirements for promotion or progression to the next grade are made aware. Even those whose children only meet requirements for progression, not promotion, are made aware (Mr Khayalakhe.)

An inference can be drawn that the school principals value parental involvement in school matters. They also believe that parents should be informed about the academic performance of their children so that they can be able to motivate them. Parental involvement in education is crucial and it addresses many challenges (Gwija,2016). Segoe and Bisschoff (2019, p.36) emphasise the crucial role that is played by parents in the improvement of learners' academic performance by stating that the "Active parental involvement in any child's academic performance is regarded as an essential aspect to enhance high learner achievement particularly

in disadvantaged communities”. Stakeholder collaboration is a core goal to the undertaking of the NECT (Christie & Manyokolo, 2018).

Hoadley, Levy Shumane and Wilburn (2016); Mahuro and Hungi (2016) declare that the world countries are successfully achieving access to primary education, which is one of the Millenium Development Goal (MDGs). However, the remaining challenge is on improving educational outcomes. Mahuro and Hungi (2016) assert that several research studies point to the strong interconnections among schools, families and communities as having a great impact on the education of learners, thus improvement of learner outcomes. This implies that the role of school community partnership in improving learner academic performance should be overemphasized.

Furthermore, one school principal has organised some form of mentoring and coaching of newly appointed educators as a means of mobilising stakeholder participation. This is what Mr Khayalakhe had to say:

I have a turnaround strategy as a means of improving curriculum delivery, thereby improving the academic performance. I have sought for capacity where there are weaknesses in terms of curriculum. I have identified a sister school which I strongly believe will strengthen the school academically. I have also organised extra classes where I have mobilised the retired educators who have been producing excellent results to mentor the newly appointed physical sciences and mathematics educators. Currently, I have educators who are teaching physical sciences and mathematics in grade twelve, who are inexperienced. They are fresh from the university. I strongly believe that if I can get the experienced educators to mentor them, the school can overcome underperformance.

Mr Khayalakhe believes that the practice of the newly appointed educators will improve through mentoring and coaching that is provided by the experienced educators. Vikaraman, Mansor, & Hamzah (2017) proclaim that mentoring includes affording skilled and individual direction to an assigned mentee and coaching involves offering attentive career support to a coachee. Through this endeavour the novice educators receive classroom instructional coaching and mentoring.

5.2.4 Professional enrichment of school principals as instructional leaders

It could be deduced from all three school principals that *Jika iMfundo* intervention contributed greatly to their professional development. They admitted that because of *Jika iMfundo* intervention they better understand their roles as instructional leaders. They all emphatically echoed one another in affirming that the *Jika iMfundo* workshops equipped them with skills of leadership and management. Further, through *Jika iMfundo*, they successfully lead and supervise curriculum implementation and its coverage. Moreover, they declare that they have greatly improved in how they plan their daily activities. Ms Nomathemba reported:

I gained new useful strategies of school management through Jika iMfundo intervention.

Mr Khayalakhe recounted:

This intervention makes life very simply for SMT in terms of leading and managing the day-to-day functioning of the school.

Mr Duduzani narrated:

Jika iMfundo intervention has taught me that I need to have records of what I am going to do daily. I need to diarise daily activities of what I am going to do, rather than going to school without having something to have in mind to do for the school. I need to take the school to heart and to think about its wellbeing.

Duduzani further related:

I think Jika iMfundo helped us a lot. Jika iMfundo has given us a system that we can apply in the running of the school, down to the HODs and to the educators. Although we have not achieved what we wish but we are going there because we have everything that we need to implement Jika iMfundo. With full implementation we can get the results that we wish to achieve

The school principals agree that *Jika iMfundo* intervention prepared them to be instructional leaders. Trish et al. (2019); Bush (2016) argue that leadership is critical in school improvement and school effectiveness. Bush (2016) argues that leadership has an indirect effect on learner outcomes. Leaders have a bearing on learner outcomes if leaders motivate educators and shape classroom practice. Therefore, school principals as instructional leaders should monitor teaching and learning for them to contribute to learner outcomes.

It transpired that since the focus of *Jika iMfundo* is to capacitate all stakeholders at school for better execution of their duties, hence increased curriculum coverage. All three participants, Ms Nomathemba, Mr Khayalakhe and Mr Duduzani spearheaded the formation of Professional Learning communities (PLCs).

Ms Nomathemba had this to say:

I personally organise meetings where educators who teach subjects which are under the same department hold conversational meetings together. I even expand these meetings by involving educators of other schools into such meetings. I do so to harness quick and practical solutions to some challenges.

Mr Khayalakhe narrated:

Identification of a sister school will strengthen us academically. Network meetings are organised where educators who teach the same subjects come together to discuss as to how to tackle subjects related challenges.

Mr Duduzani recounted:

To resolve those challenges that we cannot resolve, we network with a well performing school that we know.

The above narratives confirm that the participants better understand that it is important for educators to learn together with other educators where they come together to discuss their professional matters. Aas and Paulsen (2019) assert that to expand pupil learning, numerous school principals develop collective practices among the teachers and, if necessary, improve the teachers' professional learning by creating the enabling opportunities for them to discuss their professional matters. This implies that through *Jika iMfundo* intervention the participants saw the importance of capacitating their educators through mentoring and coaching as they participate in PLCs.

5.2 What are the challenges faced by the school principals in implementing *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention?

This section presents the following themes: Demotivated educators, Unsatisfactory use of teaching and learning time, Debilitated school-community partnership, Negative attitude

coupled with Resistance to change, The manifold responsibilities of the school principals, Lack of synergy, Incapacitation of departmental heads

5.3.1.1 Demotivated educators coupled with negative attitude

Motivation refers to a feeling of eagerness, interest or commitment that makes somebody want to do something, it is a passion for doing something with diligence (Cuminghud & Arevalo, 2020). Kelvin (2016) looks at motivation as the preparedness of an employee to contribute high levels of effort towards his or her work. Kelvin (2016) further asserts that motivation encourages teachers to facilitate knowledge and academic skills to learners. A motivated teacher is always willing to go an extra mile because he/she always wants to achieve the best results. On the other hand, a demotivated teacher lacks all that is in a motivated teacher. Ms Nomathemba reported:

It is challenging to fully implement Jika iMfundo intervention when educators are reluctant to give their best in the execution of their duties.

She explained that her school was allegedly involved in group copying, which was identified at the marking centres. That incident alarmed all educators and the community. However, it is years ago since that incident took place, surprisingly, some people still hold on to that, even the educators who were appointed after the incident seem to be affected. Ms Nomathemba described:

The work environment at school is characterised by lack of direction, resistance, indolence, defiance and doing what pleases oneself...

Ms Nomathemba emphatically asserted that the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* is a serious challenge at her school. Further, she said:

The teaching periods are not honoured. Some educators hardly spend 20 minutes in class, they come late to class or they leave classes earlier, before they can finish their teaching periods.

Lack of commitment and lack of cooperation make it difficult to rate the usefulness of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention.

Ms Nomathemba reported with disappointment:

Day by day I deal with uncooperative educators. Furthermore, I attend to cases where the departmental heads struggle to persuade educators to see to it that learners understand what is being taught instead of rushing to cover curriculum.

This is what Ms Nomathemba had to say:

... there is no enthusiasm at all

.... They teach just to finish the syllabus; they do not care whether learners understand the content or not

Drawing on Ms Nomathemba's narrative regarding the behaviour of educators in her school, I can draw an inference that they are demotivated. Ms Nomathemba's school is underperforming according to Circular D2 of 2017 which stipulates that a secondary school is deemed to be underperforming if its pass percentage in National Senior Certificate (NSC) is less than 65% and it has produced less than 30% bachelor and diploma passes combined (Department of Education, 2017b). Circular D2 of 2017 replaced Circular D1 of 2014 which categorised secondary schools that performed below 60% as underperforming (Department of Education, 2014). The school where most educators are demotivated is unlikely to be functional in terms of systems and programmes. Educator's drive, motivation and high esteem play a major role in moulding the character of a school, thus determining whether a school functions at its best or not. Esdras and Andala (2021) further argue that educators' motivation refers to educators' perception of their profession, learners, duty, employer, teaching and learning environment, parents, and the school community, especially the level of support that all these stakeholders render to the school. Cuminghud and Arevalo (2020) hold that effective leadership and management plays a major role on the motivation of educators. If educators are not fully supported and not well directed, they are likely to lose direction professionally and their morale becomes affected.

The conceptual framework that was advocated by McLaughlin (1987) stipulates that it is difficult to implement a policy if it involves institutions unless capacity and will are given much attention. In the case of capacity, SMTs as well as educators were given training workshops. The issue of will, or the attitudes, motivation and beliefs that inspire an implementer's response to policy goals is not easily controllable. Once the implementer of a policy has gained understanding of the worth and the significance of the policy, then it is likely for the implementer to be enthusiastic and dedicated to its implementation. In the case of educators in Ms Nomathemba's school, she has a responsibility as an instructional leader to motivate them so that they will understand the usefulness of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. The other two concepts that encompass McLaughlin's conceptual framework are pressure and support

(McLaughlin, 1987). Pressure is needed especially because most people are just reluctant to accept change whereas support is most needed when the implementation requires some form of support like resources. SMTs and educators were provided with resource packs and some LTSM for them to be able to successfully implement the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum programme.

Mazana, Suero Montero and Olifage (2019) assert that failure and success in the implementation of a programme is a result of attitude towards a programme, instructional practices, and school environment. If people develop a negative attitude, the school environment becomes un conducive to effective teaching and learning and the proper instructional practices are not put in place, any programme is not likely to succeed. The school principals still struggle to get *Jika iMfundo* off ground. The non-compliance of educators has to do with their negative attitudes. The negative attitude of some educators made them believe that attending *Jika iMfundo* workshops was just a waste of time because they had to leave classes unattended to attend such workshops. I can say that their negative attitudes blocked them from seeing the usefulness of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. *Ms Nomathemba narrated:*

Implementing Jika iMfundo is easy, however it depends on a person's attitude. Some educators display a negative attitude towards this [Jika iMfundo] intervention, there is no chance that they can see anything positive about the intervention. At times they [educators] felt that it was wasting their time because they had to leave classes to attend Jika iMfundo workshops. Most educators do not want change instead, prefer to do things the usual way.

... is being implemented in a way, though I cannot say that it is implemented as it should be (Ms Nomathemba).

...once we fully implement Jika iMfundo... (Mr Duduzani).

... we struggle with the implementation, mostly because we are not monitored... (Mr Khayalakhe).

5.3.1.2 Unsatisfying use of teaching and learning time

Poor timing for workshops also erodes teaching and learning time, since they are attended during teaching and learning time. Ms Nomathemba reported:

... though we had to leave classes to attend such workshops...

Mr Khayalakhe had this to say:

Late coming and learner absenteeism are the major factors contributing to underperformance. Most of our learners walk long distances, for more than five kilometres to school. The rate of unemployment is remarkably high in the area; some parents complain that they cannot afford money for transport.

It can be deduced that lack of direction on the part of our learners is another factor leading to late coming. These learners do not seem to have goals for their future. Their living arrangements too, can attest to this notion. Mr Khayalakhe reported:

Some learners live with their partners, boyfriends, and girlfriends. Surprisingly, their parents do not seem to have a problem or feel ashamed about such an issue. They unapologetically reveal such issues. It is like a way of life in the area.

Ms Nomathemba conveyed:

Some learners are affected by the environment. For instance, since the schools have been closed for lockdown, learners are expected to be on their toes in trying to catch up, but it is the opposite with our learners, we drag them to classes. Many learners seem to have lost hope.

Mr Duduzani said:

Some educators have a tendency of being busy doing some other things when they are supposed to go to class. When the bell rings and the educator rushes to class, learners know exactly that this educator is ready to teach them, that motivates them. I think that is the punctuality that we really need, we always stress on punctuality of coming to school not to class.

I also need to monitor if educators do complete their periods because others only spend 45 minutes in class and the remaining 15 minutes is not utilised. With regards to extra time, I also need to check if educators are really teaching, if they are not teaching, are they giving learners practical work or activities to do?

I can deduce that the conditions at these schools and in the communities also have a role to play towards lowering the morale of educators as well as learners which leads to unsatisfying utilisation of teaching and learning time. Witten and Makole (2019) argue that many learners are from households where many family members cannot read and write and from rural areas where learners must walk long distances to and from schools. They also suffer from poverty, and social disparity. Literature reveals that some educators can be present at school, attending to non-teaching activities but absent from class, therefore, SMTs should investigate how instructional time is utilised in schools (Mulenga & Lubasi, 2019).

5.3.1.3 Debilitated school-community partnership

Ezugoh and Adesina (2020) look at school-community partnership as the shared interaction, relations that exist between a school and the community stakeholders where the school is sited. It is also a strong collaboration that exists, and which should exist between a school and its community for all stakeholders to take part in the school matters in their community. If the school community partnership is strong and functional the school and community work together in the successful running of the school which leads to improved and effective schools. Contrary, weak school community partnership is likely to result in the decline of schools. The SASA gave authority to communities to govern schools (RSA, 1996).

All three school principals believe that good performance is a team effort. Ms Nomathemba, Mr Khayalakhe and Mr Duduzani strongly believe that parents and community should build strong ties with the schools. The three school principals categorically expressed their dissatisfaction about their weakened school-community partnership. They reported that the detachment of parents and community from schools contribute to the decline of schools at all spheres. Learners too, have an active role to play in their education. After the drop in NSC academic performance in their schools, the schools no longer received support that had been rendered by the community. All the three school principals reported:

...after the decline of the school's NSC results in 2014, the school never received enough support from parents and community ... (Ms Nomathemba).

... it was like the school was being boycotted by the parents as well as the community. They detached themselves from the school when I needed them the most (Mr Khayalakhe).

I tirelessly invite them to school and try to delineate the significant role that they are anticipated to play in the functioning of the school (Ms Nomathemba).

I think people in the area are a little bit disturbed. Sometimes when I try to involve them in anything that pertains to education, they just withdraw without even talking to me. I have just learnt that they fear that they might be bewitched. Once they come closer to the school, they become scared or maybe they think that the community may assume that they may become troublesome as they are closer to the school and educators (Mr Duduzani).

Every year, especially at the beginning of the year, I meet parents who come to complain about their children's results when the learners have not passed their grades. That is the only period that they come up with something to say, which is not good (Mr Duduzani).

The Circuit Manager who is responsible for the school once promised to be with us at least three days a week to monitor the implementation of Jika iMfundo. That never happened (Mr Duduzani).

... there is no monitoring of the implementation of Jika iMfundo at all Mr (Khayalakhe).

The schools cannot do without families and communities, sometimes words that are uttered by such lucrative school structures are discouraging. Mr Duduzani had this to say:

The words that they utter, are not good, for instance, they say that they wonder why they keep sending their children to a hopeless school. Even major stakeholders

involved and who have direct interest in education have also criticised educators and me when the results are out, knowing very well the challenges of the school. I think that is also a factor that has put myself and educators down. Instead of getting encouraged and motivated, we were pressed down. We were once disgraced in front of our learners, I felt less of a professional. They do nothing to support the school, but when the results come out, they come and talk anyhow. Anyway, as I said before, I learn from such situations and I will rise above them.

... lack of capacity on the side of parents (Mr Khayalakhe).

Parents are not cooperating at all; they do not even attend meetings (Mr Duduzani).

... they show interest when it suits them or when they think they will benefit (Ms Nomathemba).

... most of the parents do not participate pertaining to the work of learners, like homework. With others, it is not that they do not want to assist their children, but they do not understand because they are illiterate. There are those who are negligent by nature. They simply ignore (Mr Khayalakhe).

The other factor is cooperation on the side of educators. We have experienced the challenge of non-cooperation (Mr Duduzani).

School community partnership is sometimes weak such that educators end up not knowing what to do when they are faced with testing experiences. Mr Duduzani and Ms Nomathemba explained:

We have drugs problem, but seemingly, there is no solution because one parent strongly believes that dagga is not an issue, he once said "I do not recognise dagga as a drug, rather, I regard it as a family breakfast". Those words were uttered by a respectable member of the community. As a result, we did not know what to say (Mr Duduzani).

The school is situated in the rural area where the community, does not show any interest of what is happening at the school (Ms Nomathemba).

The school principals feel that their schools do not have the full cooperation of the stakeholders that they think should be working hand in hand with the schools. They [school principals] feel that it is the parents and community members that are supposed to build the relationship with the schools. I think it is the other way round, it is the school principals who should try hard to get the support of all the stakeholders who form part of the school-community partnership. This is also supported by literature. Ezugoh and Adesina (2020) argue that the management of the school system is left in the hands of the leader whose function is to maintain effective school-community relationships or partnerships. Roche and Strobach (2019) echo what is brought forth by Ezugoh and Adesina (2020) when affirming that the school principal's role is crucial in creating strong and effective collective relationships among all partners and holding them accountable for the attainment of the goals of the school. On the same note, educators should frequently communicate with community partners to update them about the successes and challenges that are encountered by the school learners. It is important for school community partners to be aware that they are all accountable for the education of learners in the community. Zuckerman (2020) declares that it is important for school- community partnerships to develop mutual trust that encourages action for the good course within the community.

5.3.1.4 Resistance to change

The challenge that Ms Nomathemba, Mr Khayalakhe and Mr Duduzani experience day by day is that some educators seem to be against any form of transformation. They are not ready or willing to implement change, therefore, they are reluctant to fully implement *Jika iMfundo* intervention; instead, they prefer to do things their usual way. The *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention is not implemented as it should be. Whenever they spearhead any programme, they receive negative responses. No matter how hard they persuade educators to cooperate, some blatantly and deliberately do not comply. There is no uniformity in what is done regarding the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* intervention.

This is what the school principals had to say:

... Jika iMfundo intervention is being implemented in a way, though I cannot say that it is implemented as it should be. The programme was done, completed, then it is upon the schools to implement it. Then, it depends upon the individuals (Ms Nomathemba).

Some educators are against class visits. I was delighted when Jika iMfundo was introduced because I thought it would create an opportunity for educators to assist one another in terms of improving curriculum delivery strategies. Some educators and HODs positively welcome class visits in my school and submit the findings thereof. Some strongly believe that class visits are for appraisal systems only. They allow such practices for Quality Management Systems (QMS) purposes only. Their reluctance to adapt to change is a barrier to improved learner outcomes (Mr Duduzani).

... some educators do not take professional conversation meetings seriously... (Mr Khayalakhe.)

I can draw an inference that some educators of these three schools look at transformation in a negative way, not as something that may contribute to their professional growth. Nadim and Singh (2019) avow that change and transformation require self-discovery and improvement. It needs one to realise what really is pertinent and supportive to their collective vision of a desirable future and attending to their advancement and development.

5.3.1.5 The manifold responsibilities of the school principals

The school principals reveal that they have so many responsibilities which are all equally important. Their multiple accountabilities make it difficult for them to give it all in terms of curriculum leadership. As a result, they find themselves relinquishing most of their duties to the departmental heads.

Mr Khayalakhe declared:

As the school principal I have a lot on my plate. I must see to it that all the structures are effective and functional. I also need to attend meetings, SGB, departmental, coordinate the running of examinations, responsible and accountable for everything that takes place in school. Anyway, we work as a team, I discuss matters that pertains to curriculum with the departmental heads.

This is what Mr Khayalakhe had to say:

It is my responsibility to give direction about every activity that takes place at school. I monitor curriculum delivery and coverage, ensuring that teaching and learning takes place. I am a subject educator; I teach mathematics in two grade eleven classes.

I monitor the activities of the departmental heads. Otherwise, the departmental heads are the ones who are implementing the curriculum. I ensure that the meetings are held, subject meetings first, then the departmental meetings.

Mr Duduzani asserted:

...reports on monitoring the implementation of SBA are submitted to me on regular basis.

An inference can be drawn that as the school principals must perform myriad tasks, they sometimes fail to perform other duties, like curriculum management to the best of their expectations. Literature also attests to this. Tapala, Van Niekerk and Mentz (2020) argue that the fact that school principals are responsible for daily operations of schools and again monitor curriculum implementation makes it difficult for them to have a measurable impact. The running of the school entails being responsible for everything and for everyone at school. Some studies have revealed that school principals have little effect on learners' performance, but great influence on classroom instructions and in educators' performance, discipline, beliefs, knowledge, practice, and competency (Ismail, Don, Hussain & Khalid, 2018).

Tapala, Van Niekerk and Mentz (2020) maintain that the departmental heads are the people who are the real custodians of curriculum management and leadership in schools. Besides, the job description of departmental heads as stipulated on the PAM document clearly indicates that they [departmental heads] are responsible for monitoring curriculum implementation and its coverage (Mthiyane, Naidoo & Bertram, 2019). This view is supported by Hompashe (2018) when asserting that the departmental heads are supposed to devote their time seeing to it that teaching and learning takes place.

The school principals are the determining factors in the success of all schools and the most significant elements in creating quality education processes and outcomes (Ismail, Don, Husin & Khalid, 2018). They give direction and inspire all stakeholders to work together for the common goal of achieving excellence (Kartini, Kristiawan & Fitria, 2020). Looking at the

manifold responsibilities of school principals, they can try to perform better if they can have full complement of the School Management Team (SMT).

5.3.1.6 Incapacitation of departmental heads

As the school principals rely on teamwork with the departmental heads, sometimes curriculum leadership and management lags. They all reported that their departmental heads devote much of their time to their duties as subject educators than on curriculum leadership and management. Without proper supervision the intervention cannot be adequately implemented. Ms Nomathemba reported:

One departmental head complains that he is teaching grade twelve, therefore does not have time for all Jika iMfundo material and tools.

Another departmental head related that she has decided to stop using Jika iMfundo stuff because it needs a lot of time for paperwork.

My Khayalakhe reported:

The departmental heads are slow in the implementation of Jika iMfundo, I have just realised that they do not understand how Jika iMfundo material and tools work. The educators are secretly reporting that their departmental head confuses them when it comes to the implementation of Jika iMfundo intervention as a result there is no uniformity in what educators do.

Mr Duduzani said:

Two departmental heads reported to me that they needed thorough training on Jika iMfundo. They further reported that it had taken them some time to master CAPS with its inflexible scope and pace, therefore they feel that they are not ready to implement Jika iMfundo. They strongly emphasize that they still need to be trained on Jika iMfundo intervention.

Mr Duduzani further reported:

The departmental heads complain that Jika iMfundo programme is coming with added responsibility, especially for those who are teaching grade twelve.

It is with us as SMT members. As I have mentioned that we have not yet fully implemented Jika iMfundo. We are short on one-on-one discussion with educators of certain subjects. That is where I think we are lacking. There is a tendency of expecting the principal to know everything. The first people in line are the HODs who need to inform the principal about what is going on in their departments. I have realised that we react too much rather than being proactive.

It can be deduced that the school Ms Nomathemba, Mr Khayalakhe and Mr Duduzani give up some of curriculum related responsibilities to the departmental heads. To their surprise, they find that it becomes difficult for the departmental heads to spearhead the implementation of Jika iMfundo intervention. Govender (2018) avows that the lack of suitable considerable assistance in classroom practice, and guidance in effecting the changes necessary were deficient in the implementation of the *Jika iMfundo*.

5.3.1.7 Lack of synergy between PILO and subject advisors in terms of the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* intervention.

Synergy is conceptualized as the interaction or cooperation that gives rise to a whole that is greater than its parts. It is the working together of different people so that one person will know what the other one is doing. Septian and Dharmastuti (2019) argue that synergy increases performance. *Jika iMfundo* intervention is an initiative of PILO in partnership with the DoE (Christie & Manyokolo, 2018).

Jika iMfundo's motto is 'What I do matters' (Department of Education, 2020). This motto speaks volumes about the importance of collaboration among different stakeholders. Some of the difficulties with the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* is that there is no connection between PILO and the Department of Education, especially the subject advisors. That is a big challenge and that is the reason *Jika iMfundo* intervention is not fully implemented in these schools. It seems like there is no synergy at all. Ms Nomathemba complained:

One of the other serious challenges regarding the implementation of Jika iMfundo is the fact that there is much confusion that is caused by the lack of synergy between subject advisors and Jika iMfundo intervention. Some educators report to me that their subject advisors need things to be done their own ways, which is contrary to what Jika iMfundo demands. It becomes difficult for me to force educators to go against their subject advisors because they are responsible for whatever happens regarding their

subjects. My greatest fear is that if something goes wrong, the educators, may indicate that they are being misled by the SMT. As the principal, I may be in trouble.

That is what Mr Khayalakhe had to say:

Some of the difficulties with the implementation of Jika iMfundo is that there is no connection between Jika iMfundo and the Department of Education, especially the Subject Advisors. That is one difficult area. The Subject Advisors want things to be done their way and Jika iMfundo wants things to be done the other way. They [The Subject Advisors] even say that we must forget about what is said by Jika iMfundo. There is no synergy at all. If Jika iMfundo personnel and Subject Advisors can work together, the implementation can work well, there would be no difficulties at all. I can say that most Subject Advisors do not believe in Jika iMfundo. They see Jika iMfundo as a threat, as something that has come to take their jobs. That causes a lot of confusion to educators. There is resistance on the side of Subject Advisors. They say straightaway that they do not work with Jika iMfundo.

Mr Duduzani narrated:

I assumed that when Jika iMfundo officials had left Pinetown District, the department officials, especially the subject advisors would monitor the progress on the implementation of the intervention. To my surprise, nothing was done by the department of education. There is no monitoring since they left in 2018, they never came back for monitoring. I would appreciate it, if the Jika iMfundo officials were monitoring the implementation of the programme. Had they been around, it would be easy for me to share my frustrations with them. Since 2019, they have been silent as we have not received any communication from them. That poses a serious threat regarding its implementation.

The participants seem to agree that they do not seem to experience any collaboration between the Department of Education and *Jika iMfundo* officials at district or circuit level, whereas the schools strongly believe that stakeholders are supposed to be working together for the improvement of learner outcomes. In rural schools the collaboration of stakeholders assists in addressing many contextual challenges which contribute greatly to the smooth running of schools. Literature reveals that with the introduction of *Jika iMfundo*, PILO hopes to create the good working relationship among all the educationists (Clerg, Shalem & Nkambule, 2019).

“Synergy is a feature emerging at the level of the excellence of teamwork, the state of greater effects obtained through the growth and use of free and enhanced in the teamwork activity” (Jasińska, 2020, p.1909).

5.3.1.8 Dearth of resources

The school principals deal with countless challenges. Scarcity of resources is one of the challenges that impede proper implementation of *Jika iMfundo* intervention. The school principals had the following to say:

Our school is under-resourced. There is no proper administration block and furniture. As the school principal I do not have an office. No SMT member has an office. It becomes difficult when I must deal with confidential matters, because I do not have privacy at all. We always experience shortage of textbooks (Khayalakhe).

We do not have a library (media centre) and laboratory. Our classrooms are overcrowded and have insufficient desks. Another challenge concerns broken windows, and broken doors. Five years ago, learners protested about several issues and ended up throwing stones, destroying the school property and broke windows and doors. Since then, the windows and doors have never been fixed. However, some are broken by ill-disciplined learners during break times. Such cases are reported to the disciplinary committee which reports the matter to the parents concerned. However, that has never been helpful because parents simply apologise verbally and mention that they are not employed, therefore they cannot fix whatever that is broken by their children (Mr Khayalakhe).

Furthermore, there is no separate room for photocopying, which sometimes puts us at the risk of leakage of examination question papers, though it has never happened. Shortage of computers is another serious concern especially because I would love to prepare my learners for the fourth industrial revolution (4IR). Moreover, curriculum needs learners to be computer literate so that they can understand that education is transforming (Khayalakhe).

When Jika iMfundo started, we were given packs but when Jika iMfundo team left Pinetown District to focus on uMgungundlovu District we were told that we would

be given CDs and that is where the problem started. The schools had to print documents on their own and that costs a lot of money. If they can print documents as they were doing before it can be much better, rather than sending CDs to schools. They sent CDs, then schools must print. Printing one document takes about thousands of pages. Schools do not have funds for papers and ink and the photocopying machines are not in good conditions (Khayalakhe).

Education is digital these days; we do not have enough computers (Mr Duduzani).

We do not have computers for learners even, our learners are computer illiterate (Ms Nomathemba).

The participants seem to agree that their schools do not have enough resources. I suggest that schools can be assisted by the communities if strong relationship exists between the schools and communities. This is supported by literature. Ezugoh and Adesina (2020) declare that a school as a social institution, requires to unite with other stakeholders like their immediate community members for the improvement of education of learners. Both the community and the schools need each other, there are community services that can be rendered by the schools. On the other hand, the communities can support the schools by providing the necessary resources. Therefore, schools need to forge good relationship with communities. The school community partnership should be of mutual benefit to both the school and the community. “The community supports are best achieved through community stakeholders’ involvement like the parents, PTA, community chiefs and leaders, village heads, community unions, financial institutions and cooperative societies, private organizations and individuals, NGOs, women, traders” (Ezugoh & Adesina, 2020, p. 94). The participation of parents in school activities is a key factor for learner attainment.

“The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) framework emphasizes the need for stakeholders to have a common understanding of the interrelatedness of learning and health prior to policy or programmatic changes; success is also predicated on schools and communities having a shared responsibility for the health and education of children” (Ballard, Farrell & Long, 2020, p. 1). This emphasises participation of community in the activities of the school, thus resulting in school effectiveness and sustainable improvement.

5.4 How do the school principals mitigate the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* challenges?

The following section presents the following mitigation strategies regarding the implementation of the *Jika iMfundo* intervention: Asset based approach to supplicating stakeholder intervention, Scheduled meetings, and Staff development programme.

5.4.1 Asset based approach to supplicating stakeholder intervention

To ensure that the schools receive much support from different stakeholders in working through the barriers that the schools encounter in implementing the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention, the school principals had the following to say:

I make sure that I warmly welcome any stakeholder who comes to school to support. I have also indicated to the Department of Education that as an underperforming school, I need more visits from the subject advisors, and they are really visiting the school (Ms Nomathemba).

... we also hold special departmental curriculum meetings, but SMT meets more often to identify the challenges and the possible solutions. Further, we meet the entire staff in terms of deliberating about the challenges as well as the solutions. If needs be, we also consult the other schools that are in the area. We also use technology to seek for more information. We also invite subject advisors for support, they are supportive. To resolve those that we cannot resolve we network with well performing neighbouring schools (Mr Khayalakhe).

I have realised that I need to ensure that the school has regular communication with the District and CMC (Mr Duduzani).

As a technique of receiving support from stakeholders

I have made local leadership aware of the challenges faced by the school and even sought their intervention. Further, I have partnered with the non-profit organisations (NPO). The NPO to assist the school with fundraising techniques. Again, there are several businesses which have social programmes, like Lotto, MTN, Vodacom companies. I believe that if they are wisely approached, they can

come up with plans that can help us as a school because soon all schools will be following fourth industrial revolution (4IR). Therefore, we need to be ahead of time (Mr Duduzani).

The school principals seem to acknowledge that they need any form of support in terms of harnessing assets from their communities to address some challenges that they encounter in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. This is also confirmed by literature. “The premise of the asset-based approach is that rural school improvement is possible and sustainable when local community members are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort” (Myende, 2017, p.37). This is also the prescription of SASA which gives authority to parents, all staff members, SGBs and other members of the community to govern schools, thereby having a say in the education of their children (RSA,1996). Myende and Hlalele (2018) maintain that it is the responsibility of educational leaders to safeguard that local assets, capacities and skills are gathered in generating a common dream and assignment within their schools. Myende (2014, p.28) argues that asset-based approach “sustains school programmes and creates social networks and social capital”. Asset-based approach sustains the programmes because have a sense of ownership since they are investing their talents and potentials in it and they feel confident that they created it, therefore cannot die on their hands. Moreover, with social networks, they always have people to turn to in case they experience some challenges on the way. I can deduce that asset-based approach is about community empowerment. It equips people with skills of solving their own challenges.

5.4.2 Scheduled meetings

The school principals sit in meetings to mitigate the challenges that they encounter in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo*. Mr Duduzani had the following to say:

I make sure that the relationship between the SMT and educators is a healthy one. I hold staff meetings once or twice a week where I share my wishes as to what type of people I want to work with (Mr Duduzani).

*I also try to work systematically where I plan the dates on which the SMT members give reports on curriculum coverage where they show me the tools that they use in monitoring curriculum. We were supplied with curriculum monitoring tools by Department of education officials as well as by *Jika iMfundo* officials (Mr Duduzani).*

As a school we also do SWOT analysis whereby we always gauge our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities as well as threats. That helps us to know our level of performance. We look at subject meeting challenges, then we look at departmental meeting challenges. We then look at possible solutions. After that we discuss the entire school curriculum challenges. We try to resolve the challenges that we have the capacity of resolving (Mr Duduzani).

One participant believes in holding meetings, in small groups where he meets with one or more departmental heads, and as well in big groups where the whole staff meets. That is where they discuss critical issues regarding strategies on how to address the challenges that they encounter in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* intervention. “Workplace meetings take place for many reasons. Employees meet to talk about problems, develop solutions, generate ideas, reach consensus, and make decisions. But in addition to the outcomes, they are intended to achieve, meetings are also sites for many other organizational phenomena, including sense making, leadership influence, relationship building, team dynamics, conflict, and the shaping of employee attitudes” (Lehmann-Willenbrock, Rogelberg, Allen & Kello, 2018).

5.4.3 Staff development programme

To negotiate the barriers that I encounter in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* and in addressing other challenges that have led to the decline of the school,

I organised a staff development programme. Before the lockdown of the country, I invited a deputy principal from one of the better performing schools. We had such a fruitful workshop. I could perceive and feel through their comments and facial expressions that they were willing to transform for the best. I could see that they were motivated (Ms Nomathemba).

In fact, my good plans were disrupted by the lockdown because after the first developmental workshop, I organised a meeting where we reflected on the development gained through the workshop. I could feel that the educators were displaying positive attitude towards what had been discussed in the staff development workshop. My plan was to organise a follow up workshop, then lockdown came and suspended my plans. (Ms Nomathemba)

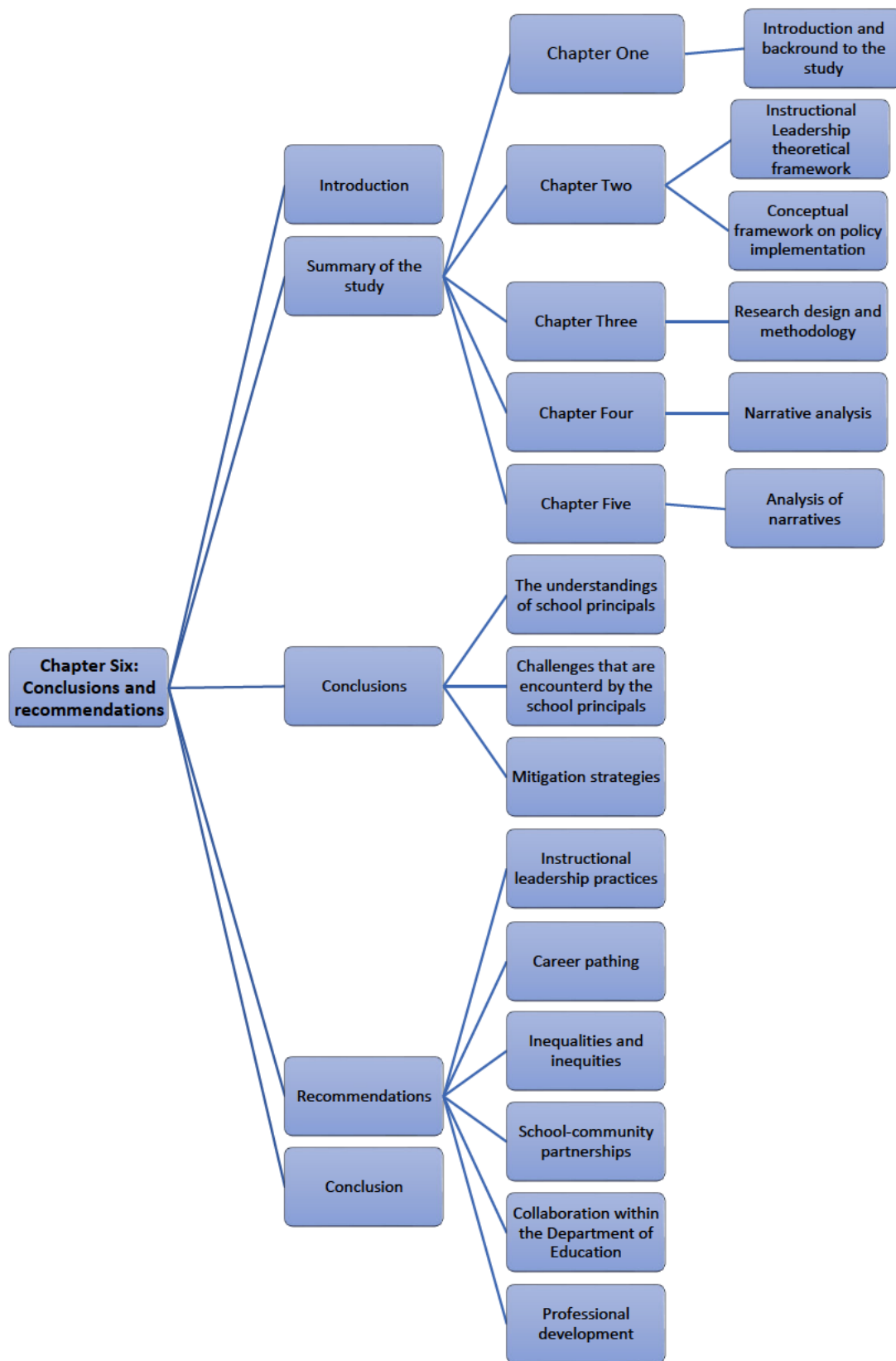
Drawing on Ms Nomathemba's narrative, indeed her educators needed some professional revitalisation and the professional development workshop that she had organised seemed to have worked, considering the positive attitude displayed by educators afterwards. This is reinforced by literature. Harrison-Bernard, Augustus-Wallace, Souza-Smith, Tsien, Casey & Gunaldo (2020) acknowledge the fact that the workshops bring about professional renewal, changed organisational behaviour and improved learner outcomes.

The study by Hervie and Winful (2018) reveal that training and development are critical for educators and for every school. Further, a close link exists between educators' performance and poor outcomes of learners.

"Enabling teacher to continue to grow, learn and be excited about their work depends on both ongoing high-quality learning opportunities and career opportunities that enable them to share their expertise in a variety of ways. Around the world, job embedded forms of professional learning are taking greater root, often organised around teachers' work with curriculum development through collaborative planning, lesson study and action research of various kinds" (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

5.5 Conclusion

I have deliberated on the findings concerning the experiences of secondary school principals on the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. The data that has been engendered and analysed and discussed in terms of themes and subthemes that emerged from the stories that have been narrated by the school principals. The main themes discussed in this chapter were the understandings of school principals of their roles in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention in a rural context, the challenges that were encountered by the school principals and the mitigation strategies that were employed by the school principals in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. The next chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations of this study



CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

In chapter five I presented and discussed the analysis of the storied narratives of the experiences of the underperforming secondary school principals in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention and the findings thereof. In this chapter I present the summary of the study, conclusions around the critical questions and recommendations that emanate from the findings of the study.

6.2 Summary of the study

Chapter one presented the introduction and background to the study. I indicated when the democratic government took over in South Africa, different education departments and tertiary education that operated during apartheid regime were restructured into nine provincial departments and a single national education department (Jansen, 2004; Manganye, 2001; Mda & Mothata, 2000). The restructuring aimed at achieving uniformity in curriculum implementation. Since that period there has been constant curriculum transformation. The curriculum model that is in operation currently is CAPS which is perceived as rigid in terms of scope and pace poses a threat to curriculum management which yields unfavourable learner outcomes thus compromising quality of education.

I have also provided the rationale and motivation to conduct this study which stem from personal, professional, and theoretical dimensions. The aim of the study was to examine the experiences of underperforming secondary school principals in a rural context regarding *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. The research puzzles that guided the study were:

- What are the principals' understandings of their roles as school leaders in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention in a rural context?
- What are the challenges that are faced by the school principals in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention in a rural context?
- How do the school principals mitigate the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* challenges?

In chapter two, through my engagements with literature I learnt that in most cases curriculum coverage as well as curriculum leadership has an impact on learner outcomes. Again, school

environment and school climate have a role to play in teacher and learner morale and motivation, thus, academic performance and school improvement and school effectiveness. There are also challenges that schools, especially in deprived contexts encounter, which contribute to academic underperformance. I also discussed Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) instructional leadership theory and McLaughlin's (1987) conceptual framework on policy implementation that underpinned the study.

In chapter three, I presented the research design and methodology that I employed in the study. I adopted a qualitative approach and narrative inquiry methodology. The study is located within the interpretivist paradigm. The three principals of underperforming secondary schools were purposively selected to participate in the study. The narrative interview schedule was used to generate data. The ethical issues and research protocols were observed which involved securing permission to conduct research from the Department of Education and securing the consent of the participants. The limitations of the study were also delineated.

In chapter four, I presented the first level of analysis which is narrative analysis. In addressing my research puzzles, data was collected using narrative interviews. After the data generation, I transcribed all the stories. Through narrative interviews, I allowed my participants to tell their stories about their experiences of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. In this chapter I shared the stories of three school principals' experiences of the implementation of the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention in a rural context, namely, Ms Nomathemba's story, followed by Mr Khayalakhe's story and Mr Duduzani's story.

In chapter five, I presented and discussed the findings based on the stories that were narrated by the three participants. The instructional leadership theory by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) and the conceptual framework on policy implementation by McLaughlin (1987) were used to theorise the data. The related literature was also infused in the discussion of findings. The findings were presented in themes and sub-themes.

6.3 Conclusions

Looking at the findings of the study, the conclusions are drawn based on the research puzzles guiding the study.

6.3.1 The understandings of school principals of their roles as school leaders in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention

The promotion of an encouraging work atmosphere has a positive bearing on the working relationships which in turn contributes to effective schools. A conducive work environment enables school principals to perform their duties as instructional leaders. Therefore, teaching and learning activities run smoothly. As teaching and learning takes place smoothly, the morale and motivation of educators as well as that of learners is enhanced which minimises disruptions which can compromise teaching and learning time, thus leading to inability to cover curriculum since research indicates that curriculum coverage contributes to improved learning outcomes. The work conditions in rural contexts are not always appealing, therefore the improved work environment is one of the strategies that is used by the school principals to attract educators with an aim of retaining them. Further, the fact that schools have succeeded in customising the *Jika iMfundo* tools that are meant to be used in specific subjects for use in other subjects as the participants have indicated, shows that they have worked on building healthy relationships with their staff members.

Professional development has a central role to play in the enactment of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention and to deal with transformation in the schooling system, particularly in rural areas where the school principals face countless challenges which hinder school improvement and school effectiveness. Through the workshops that had been provided by PILO in collaboration with the DoE, the school principals experienced some confidence as their role as instructional leaders were clarified. Moreover, with the actual implementation too, as they had been mentored and coached, they learnt to do the same with their staff members. The school principals were equipped with necessary skills that enabled them to implement instructional leadership practices. As the school principals sometimes monitor curriculum through the departmental heads, professional development becomes cyclical; it is never ending as one received professional renewal in one way or the other. Furthermore, through professional conversation sessions, as well as class visits that the heads of department together with the educators who are under their supervision engage in, emphasise the fact that professional development is a cycle. Through such engagements, educators end up learning together, thus turning schools into learning organisations which leads to the development of

PLCs. Collaboration among educators results in the improvement of rural schools that face some challenges. Challenges involve scarcity of resources. As educators learn together, they learn to cope with context related challenges. Further, rural schools sometimes receive limited attention and support from stakeholders which becomes a barrier toward providing quality education (Willis & Templeton, 2017). Therefore, PLCs serve as professional development on its own. Successful rural principals invest in strong school-community partnerships and shared leadership (Harmon, 2017). This implies that rural school principals strongly believe that through PLCs they can bring about change in their schools.

6.3.2 The challenges that are faced by the school principals in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention

Jika iMfundo was developed as a strategy for improving learning outcomes by focusing on curriculum implementation, monitoring and supervision. However, the participants in the study seem to indicate that they do not experience the collaboration between the DoE and PILO. They say so because they experience much confusion regarding the use of tools that were supplied by PILO. They just experience opposition from the subject advisors, who blatantly display negative attitudes towards *Jika iMfundo* programme. There is no synergy between PILO and the Department of Education. Since PILO left the district there has been no monitoring of the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. That is unbelievably bad especially for rural schools which are usually labelled as underperforming because of their poor learning outcomes. Such schools do not need any negative attitudes from the stakeholders because of the challenges that they encounter in their rural contexts. They only need support and collaboration of stakeholders.

PILO meant to bring about collaboration among the stakeholders for the improvement of learning outcomes. However, schools still experience weak school-community partnerships. The relationship that is needed between the schools and communities is crucial for the prosperity of both parties. Schools are the lifeblood of any community, therefore the two cannot do without the other. Weak school community partnership leads to the decline of schools, thus poor learning outcomes. When the relationship between the school-community partnerships is frail, it becomes difficult for the community to render the services to the school, therefore many challenges that are faced by schools remain unresolved. In school-community partnerships, schools' needs are identified and addressed to strengthen the schools' improvement and effectiveness. Even the dearth of resources in schools can be addressed by investing in strong

school-community partnerships through the belief that everyone has a potential of bringing about a positive change through their contribution to school improvement, through asset-based approach.

Demotivation of educators and learners as one of the challenges that are encountered by the school principals in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* contributes to low morale, thus poor performance. Echazarra and Radinger (2019) contend that the small enrolment in rural contexts force educators to even teach subjects that are not their specialisations. The scarcity of resources and inadequate infrastructure too pose a threat since budget cannot be predicted due to constant drop in enrolments which may lead to closure of schools. Further, lack of support by parents and community members contribute to demotivation of educators. The working conditions of educators in rural contexts are not appealing. The demotivated educators do not commit themselves to their duties. They do not even honour their teaching periods. They are sometimes present at school but absent from class. They find excuses of not attending to learners. Even when they teach, they do not care whether the learners understand or not, they just rush to cover curriculum, therefore producing poor learning outcomes. On the other hand, rural learners also are affected by several circumstances and end up displaying negative behaviour towards school thus performing academically poor. They walk long distances to and from schools. Their low socio-economic status sometimes does not allow them to use transport to schools. Most parents of rural learners are illiterate which hinder their active involvement in the education of their children. Rural schools have limited or no resources, they also have limited or no role models, therefore have low self-worth and motivation. The demotivated learners become aggressive, break school property, arrive late at school, bunk classes and even absent themselves from school.

6.3.3 The mitigation strategies

There are challenges that are encountered by the school principals as they implement *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. The school principals are devising some strategies of addressing such challenges so that they can successfully implement *Jika iMfundo* amidst those challenges. The school principals invite and warmly welcome the Department of Education into their schools with the purpose of getting the assistance and support regarding the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* and school improvement and school effectiveness.

The implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention requires several resources. Learners are expected to engage in reading, writing, and researching. Therefore, schools need to have photocopying machines, computers or laptops or tablets as well as the internet so that learners and educators can be able to download curriculum related material. The participants

revealed that as a strategy to mitigate the lack of resources, they rely on the communities for harnessing some assets. The asset-based approach seems ideal in mitigating some difficulties that are encountered by the school principals in employing *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. Through asset-based approach the school community partners can meet and organise themselves as a team, render services through providing resources, development programmes.

Strengthening school-community partnership is a strategy of getting the collaboration of all school community partners. This is done in a form of convening regular meetings. Strong school-community partnership assists in emphasising the fact that the child is nurtured by the school, family, and community, therefore collaboration of these three spheres of influence assists in addressing challenges that schools confront in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention.

Creating networking partnership of rural schools with performing schools is also a strategy that assists, especially in sharing expertise and resources. Schools partner with either a rural performing and or urban performing school, provided they can share experience and resources. These networks assist in the development of PLCs.

The creation of supporting working environment through enhanced instructional leadership practices is also a mitigating strategy for educator retention. The school principals believe that if educators are happy, they are likely to commit themselves to the execution of their duties regardless of the rural context under which they teach. Instructional leadership encourages shared leadership; therefore, educators are involved in decision making and their professional environments are made a priority.

6.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings and conclusions.

Recommendation One

The Department of Education needs to ensure that the instructional leadership skills are instilled in all school principals. In preparing school principals to be instructional leaders, they also need to be ready to lead teaching and learning in rural contexts. In rural schools the principals deal with various challenges that are context related, such that they sometimes overlook monitoring of instruction. It has become evident that learners at schools underperform academically because curricula are not covered. In such schools there is minimal or no curriculum monitoring and supervision, therefore, teaching and learning activities are easily

disrupted. I believe that if instructional leadership skills are instilled in school principals, teaching and learning time will be used appropriately. The induction workshops need to be carefully planned and such workshops need not be a once off session but should be continuous until the school principal is evaluated and the Department of Education is confident that the school principal can apply instructional leadership skills, even in rural contexts.

Recommendation Two

The school principals, educators and learners need to be educated about career pathing. When doing this, the focus should be on learner abilities, interests, personalities, and values. This is because a lot of learners easily choose mathematical literacy instead of mathematics. Again, it becomes easy for schools to phase out mathematics and physical sciences, claiming that these subjects are the most failed subjects in their schools. By doing so, they mislead learners in terms of their career pathing and abilities by disregarding the fact that there are learners whose careers need mathematics and physical sciences. The *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention was introduced by the DoE together with PILO for the purpose of improvement of learning outcomes in mathematics, science and languages, therefore proper implementation of *Jika iMfundo* intervention can turn around the NSC results.

Recommendation three

The DoE needs to address the inequalities and the inequities of the past. In most cases the contexts of schools say more about the financial status of parents of learners who are attending either rural or urban schools which further determines the academic performance and future of such learners. The categorisation of schools into quintiles intensifies the inequalities since the poorest, 60% of public schools are categorised as quintiles 1-3 and no fee-paying schools. It is obvious that the funding of schools was introduced for the good course, however, it seems to expose the inequality that exists between the poor versus rich schools and rural versus urban schools. This discrepancy creates further division between fee- paying schools and those that do not pay school since they receive ‘full government subsidy’ schools in terms of access to quality and sufficient resources as well as academic performance of learners. In addressing such disparities, the funding policies need to be context sensitive. In rural contexts where almost all schools are classified as no fee-paying schools, it is illegal to charge any fee from parents, yet these schools usually have inadequate infrastructure and minimal or no resources. Another serious challenge with this, is that the monetary allocations are sometimes paid to

schools extremely late, yet these schools are supposed to function effectively and produce excellent academic results like their counterparts who are permitted to charge school fees.

Recommendation four

The school-community partnership needs to be strengthened. Almost all cultures have a saying which emphasises the fact that a child is not only nurtured by his own parents or family, but all community members assist one another in the upbringing of children. That is where the African proverb “It takes a village to raise a child” comes from. The school, family, and community are essential in the education of children. Educators and learners in rural contexts face several challenges which result in low morale and negative attitude which may hamper learning outcomes. Other learners are affected by their psycho-social challenges which end up affecting them academically. The rural contexts of schools expose learners to a myriad of challenges. Where the strong school community partnership exists, many challenges are identified at earlier stages and are sometimes addressed collaboratively. Weak and unhealthy school community partnership leads to the decline of schools.

Recommendation five

Collaboration within the Department of Education needs to be strengthened for interventions to be successfully implemented. My recommendation arises because when PILO had piloted *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention, the Department of Education was supposed to take ownership of the programme and ensure that it is successfully and properly implemented. This could be done by monitoring the implementation of the programme and providing support thereof. Lack of synergy between the Department of Education and PILO or among Department of Education officials because the *Jika iMfundo* intervention had the steering committee whose responsibility was to orientate all district officials about the programme. However, it seems like the *Jika iMfundo* programme was not made known to all the officials. If there was proper orientation, the different sub-directorates in the district would be working collaboratively, not in silos as the case is now. Working in silos has contributed to improper and lack of uniformity in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention.

Recommendation six

For the improved quality education, the country needs to invest in professional development of educators. This can equip educators with skills for addressing the challenging classroom conditions that they encounter day by day. Further, professional development can assist them in becoming better educators. Through professional development, educators can be encouraged to learn together through the development of professional learning communities, thereby transforming schools into learning organisations. Professional learning communities in rural contexts should be a priority given the nature of challenges that rural contexts face. In some cases, educators are isolated, and they teach several subjects, others not even their specialisations, yet they lead and manage curriculum. Networking can also be encouraged where rural schools form their clusters where learners as well as educators share resources, ideas, experience and do extramural activities together, thereby keeping learners occupied to protect them from malpractices and instil love for education instead.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented the summary of the study and the conclusions that have been drawn. Based on these conclusions, I made recommendations. These recommendations may assist the school principals and the Department of Education to relook at the practices of the school personnel. Furthermore, these recommendations may assist to develop and amend policies that have to do with curriculum leadership and the provision of resources, taking into consideration the schools in rural contexts.

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Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Certificate



15 April 2020

Mrs Promise Khethiwe Zondi (219094173)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Zondi,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001260/2020

Project title: The Jika Imfundo Curriculum Intervention: Narratives of three principals of underperforming secondary schools in a rural context

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 10 April 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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

This approval is valid until 15 April 2021.

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

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

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

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)


/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix B: Permission to Conduct Research in KwaZulu-Natal Schools



education
Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma/Buyi Ntuli Tel: 033 392 1063/51 Ref: 24/184093


Mrs Promise Khethiwe Zondi
P.O. Box 795
TONGAAT
4400

Dear Mrs Zondi

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"THE JIKA IMFUNDO CURRICULUM INTERVENTION: NARRATIVES OF THREE PRINCIPALS OF UNDERPERFORMING SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN A RURAL CONTEXT"**, 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 03 March 2020 to 10 January 2022.
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 Phindile Duma/Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.
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.


Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 03 March 2020

...Leading Social Compact and Economic Emancipation
Through a Revolutionary Education for all...

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Postal Address: Private Bag X9137 • Pietermaritzburg • 3200 • Republic of South Africa
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Appendix C: Permission to Conduct Research – Letter to the Principal

1 North Lane

Tongaat

4399

14 January 2020

The Principal

..... Secondary School

Dear
Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

My name is PK Zondi (Student number: 219094173), a Master of Education student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am required to conduct research as partial fulfilment of the requirements of this degree. I, therefore kindly seek your permission to conduct research in your school. The title of my study is: *The Jika iMfundo Curriculum intervention: Narratives of three principals of underperforming schools in a rural context.*

The study will focus on the school principals' understandings of their roles as school leaders in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. It will also explore the challenges faced by school principals in implementing *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention. Furthermore, the study will establish how school principals mitigate the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention challenges. The study will be beneficial to your school since it will initiate discourses regarding *Jika iMfundo* as a curriculum intervention, thereby maximising teaching and learning time which will enhance learner performance and improve the quality of education as a whole.

Narrative interview method will be used in the study, which provides an opportunity for participants to narrate their experiences for the researcher, thereby deciding what and how to relate their stories. The interview will be approximately two hours (2hours) in duration.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING:

There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project. Participants' identities will not be revealed under any circumstances,

during and after the reporting process. All responses will be treated with strictest confidentiality. Pseudonyms (false names) will be used to represent participants' names. Participation is voluntary therefore, participants are free to withdraw at any time, should they so wish, without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences on their part. The interview will be audio-recorded to ensure accurate reporting. Participants will be contacted in advance about the interview date and time.

For further information on this project, please contact my supervisor whose contact details are provided below. I trust that you will consider my request and grant me a written consent to conduct my research at your school.

Yours faithfully

PK Zondi

Email: promisezon@gmail.com

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Supervisor

Prof Inba
Naicker

University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood
Campus)

School of
Education

Email:
Naickeril@ukzn.ac.za

Tel: 031 260 3461

Appendix D: Informed Consent Letter for each Participant

1 North Lane

Tongaat

4399

14 January 2020

Dear Participant

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH

I am Promise Khethiwe Zondi. I am currently registered for the Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus. The title of my study is: **The *Jika iMfundo* Curriculum intervention: Narratives of three principals of underperforming secondary schools in a rural context.** The purpose of this study is to **examine the extent to which** school principals understand their role towards the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention.

You have been purposively selected to participate in this study. You are required to participate **in narrative interview**. This interview will be approximately two hours (2hours) in duration. Participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from this study at any stage and for any reason. Should you decide not to participate, no disadvantages will result thereof.

Please take note
that:

.

Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion. Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only. Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years. Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.

The narrative interview will be audio-recorded.

I can be contacted
at:

Email:
promisezon@gmail.com

My Supervisor
is: Prof Inba
Naicker

University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood
Campus)

College of Humanities in School of
Education

Email:
Naickeril@ukzn.ac.za

Tel: 031 260
3461

Thank you for
your
contribution to
this study.

Yours
faithfully

PK Zondi

I _____ (Full names of participant hereby
confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research
study,
and I consent to participating in the interview. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw
from the study at any time, should I so
desire.

I hereby provide consent to audio record the interview (circle which is
applicable):

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----	--------------------------	----	--------------------------

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

© 2006 The Authors

University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus)

College of Humanities in School of Education

Email: Naicker1@ukzn.ac.za

Tel: 031 260 3461

Thank you for your contribution to this study.

Yours faithfully

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT

I Robert M. L. ... (Full names of participant hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research study, and I consent to participating in the interview. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time, should I so desire.

I hereby provide consent to audio record the interview (circle which is applicable):

Yes	No
-----	----

Email: promisezon@gmail.com

My supervisor is: Prof Inba Naicker

University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus)

College of Humanities in School of Education

Email: Naickeril@ukzn.ac.za

Tel: 031 260 3461

Thank you for your contribution to this study.

Yours faithfully

PK Zondi

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT

I _____ (Full names of participant hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research study, and I consent to participating in the interview. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time, should I so desire.

I hereby provide consent to audio record the interview (circle which is applicable):

Yes	No
-----	----

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

05/03/2020
DATE

_____ **SECONDARY SCHOOL**

STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE **SIHONQANE RI**
TEL: 0

Mrs Promise Zondi

Tongaat 4400

Dear Madam **RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT**
_____ **SECONDARY SCHOOL**

The above-mentioned school hereby gives you permission to conduct research titled: "The *Jika iMfundo* Curriculum Intervention:

Kindly be informed that the school will cooperate and make all necessary arrangements to accommodate your exercise. We are looking forward to your innovations and expertise.

Kind regards

Principal
Cell: 0

SCHOOL STAMP



HIGH SCHOOL

PO BOX 53, [Address]
Tel: 033 270 7000
Email: principal@highschool.co.za

To Whom It May Concern

Date: 06/03/2020


UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
College of Humanities

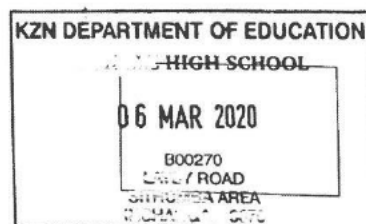
Dear Sir/ Madam

We hereby give permission to **Promise Khethiwe Zondi** to do research in relation to her study: The Jika Imfundo Curriculum Intervention: Narratives of Three Principals of Underperforming Secondary Schools in a Rural Context.

We hope that she will be able to gain the desired knowledge through this study and we wish her all the best.

Yours faithfully


Deputy Principal
High School
T: 033 270 7000
M: 033 270 7000
E: principal@highschool.co.za





HIGH SCHOOL

Physical Address: [Redacted] Road
Postal Address: P.O. Box 3107
Cell Number: [Redacted]
Email: [Redacted]@gmail.com

2020/03/06

Dear Sir/Madam

GATE KEEPER'S LETTER

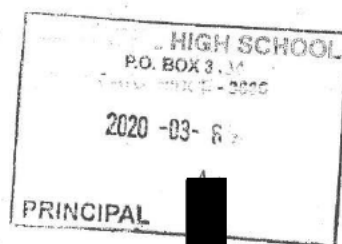
Dear Sir/Madam

I hereby give permission to Promise Khethiwe Zondi to do research on the Jika Imfundo curriculum intervention narratives of the three principals of underperforming secondary schools in a rural context.

We hope she will benefit and gain experience and expertise in meeting the requirements towards achieving her Masters Degree.

Yours faithfully,

J.N. Mbeje (Principal)



Appendix F: Turnitin Certificate

3/30/2021

Turnitin Originality Report

Turnitin Originality Report
 Ma by Ph Z
 From MEd (MEd 2021)
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 Assignment: MEd Dissertation
 Paper ID: [927724533](#)
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- < 1% match (student papers from 25-Nov-2015)
[Submitted to University of Alabama on 2015-11-25](#)
- < 1% match (Internet from 08-Dec-2020)
<https://thesesonline.com/theses/thesesonline.pdf>
- < 1% match (student papers from 11-Dec-2018)
[Submitted to University of South Africa on 2018-12-11](#)
- < 1% match (student papers from 04-Oct-2017)
[Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal on 2017-10-04](#)
- < 1% match (Internet from 12-Apr-2014)
<http://www.cernanetjournal.org/files/TFP/Summer2011.pdf>
- < 1% match (student papers from 19-May-2018)
 Class: Master of Education
 Assignment: Dissertation
 Paper ID: [925915426](#)
- < 1% match (student papers from 03-Feb-2020)
 Class: PhD Thesis
 Assignment: Thesis
 Paper ID: [9250725902](#)
- < 1% match (student papers from 06-Nov-2017)
[Submitted to CVT Nigeria Consortium on 2017-11-06](#)
- < 1% match (Internet from 08-Oct-2018)
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1185915.pdf>
- < 1% match (publications)
[O. Jean Chardin, Debbie Poshor, Anne Murray Orr, "Navigating Sites for Narrative Inquiry", Journal of Teacher Education, 2016](#)
- < 1% match (publications)
["South African Schooling: The Enigma of Inequality", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2019](#)

https://www.turnitin.com/newreport_printview.asp?eq=1&eb=1&esm=0&id=1546252366&sid=0&n=0&m=0&svr=29&r=93.45969745698048&lang=en... 1/49

Appendix G: NARRATIVE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS)

Introductory phase

The issues of informed consent and confidentiality will be clarified to all participants. It will be indicated that participants are free to withdraw should they feel uncomfortable in participating in the research process. Permission will also be sought from participants to audio record the interview. The aim and the purpose of the interview will be discussed in details with the participants.

Biographical details

- ✓ Tell me about yourself and your experiences as the principal of this school.

Interview protocol

To answer the first research question **“What are the principals’ understandings of their roles as school leaders in the implementation of the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention?”**

- ✓ Tell me how you feel about your school’s performance in NSC examination?
- ✓ What are some of the factors that lead to this performance?
- ✓ Do you think that the rurality of your school’s location can be connected to under performance of candidates? Tell me how?
- ✓ Do you think *Jika iMfundo* is a useful intervention? Can you please elaborate?
- ✓ Tell me about your role as the school leader/principal in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* Intervention.

To answer the second research question **“What are the challenges that you encounter in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo*?”**

- ✓ Tell me whether you find it easy or difficult to implement the *Jika iMfundo* Curriculum Intervention.
- ✓ What are some of the difficulties you encounter in implementation of the *Jika iMfundo* curriculum Intervention?

To answer the third research question **“How do the school principals mitigate the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* challenges?”**

- ✓ Tell me how do you negotiate the barriers you experience in the implementation of *Jika iMfundo* Intervention?
- ✓ How do you ensure that you receive much support from the different stakeholders in working through the barriers that you encounter in implementing *Jika iMfundo* curriculum intervention?

Conclusion phase

- ✓ Is there any further information that you would like to share with me regarding the *Jika iMfundo* intervention?

Wrap up phase

The participants will be thanked for their time and being helpful. They will be asked about their experiences during the entire process of the interview (Debriefing). They will also be given a chance to ask the researcher questions if they have any.

Appendix H: Language Editor's Certificate

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KLOOF
3610

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E-mail:
dr1govender@te.komsa.net
sathsgovender4@gmail.com

Dr Saths Govender

14 MAY 2021

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

This serves to inform that I have read the final version of the dissertation titled:

THE *JIKA iMFUNDO* CURRICULUM INTERVENTION: NARRATIVES OF THREE PRINCIPALS OF UNDERPERFORMING SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN A RURAL CONTEXT by PROMISE KHETHIWE ZONDI.

To the best of my knowledge, all the proposed amendments have been effected and the work is free of spelling and grammatical errors. I am of the view that the quality of language used meets generally accepted academic standards.

Yours faithfully



DR S. GOVENDER

B Paed. (Arts), B.A. (Hons), B Ed.

Cambridge Certificate for English Medium Teachers

MPA, D Admin.