A Case Study of School Principals' Leadership Styles and the Sustainability of Professional Learning Communities

By

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ABSTRACT

The Principal leadership styles play a significant role in professional learning communities (PLCs). Historically most principals have led schools autocratically and this has stifled teachers and the progress of schools. In response scholars have proposed new approaches to leading PLCs. This dissertation reports on the findings of a small scale qualitative case study that was undertaken to explore the leadership styles of three primary school principals in sustaining professional learning communities in their schools. This research study sought to gain insight into how the principals' leadership styles promote or hinder PLCs. It also sought to explore reasons why principals support PLCs in their unique ways. The study was based on the understanding that these principals who attended and completed an Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership (ACE: SL) would have been exposed to new leadership styles within PLCs. The expectation was that these graduates would have adapted their style of leadership in order to promote the sustainability of PLCs.

The research paradigm which was adopted was an interpretive paradigm. This study generated data through two data generation methods namely semi-structured interviews and documents analysis and the data was analysed using content analysis. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in this study. The results of the study revealed that Principals demonstrated a leadership style that was inclusive and supportive in exercising leadership. One can conclude that principals who lead PLCs in a strict hierarchical manner may inhibit the sustainability of PLCs as compared to principals who come alongside and support their teachers. In addition, principals whose leadership style nurtures the empowerment of teachers are more likely to create sustainable PLCs. One of the recommendations therefore is that Principals' leadership approach must change in order to create the conditions necessary for a commitment to the school which can inevitably build sustainable PLCs. In addition, it is recommended that principals who attend future ACE: SL courses should be exposed to and be developed in leadership styles that are conducive to building sustainable PLCs.

In concluding the findings for critical question two, the leadership style of the principal which involves teachers in the leadership of the school can promote PLCs. The opposite may also hold true. If principals do not share leadership with staff by distributing leadership, this may impede PLCs. Leadership styles that promote the growth and development of their teachers and assumes a more shepherding and supporting leadership approach are better able to promote PLCs. Principals whose leadership style values people are more likely to promote

PLCs than those who are only task focused. Principals' abilities to promote teamwork and provide support was also seen as vital to promote the long term objectives of schools. This requires principals to lead schools differently from the authoritarian approaches of the past.

To determine why principals lead the school in their unique ways, four characteristics emerged and these are, pursuit of excellence, experience, passion and character. These four characteristics influenced the principals' leadership approaches.

DECLARATION

I, Sherian Emanuel, declare that

i.   The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated is my original work.

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

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

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This dissertation is submitted **with/without** my approval.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation research study is dedicated to my wife Devash, and daughter Erin who made this journey possible because of their love, devotion, and unwavering belief in my ability to achieve this goal.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my family for their love, support, and patience shown during the time I spent away from them in order to accomplish my educational dream. I would lastly also like to thank all of my family members, especially my mom and dad for instilling in me a love for education, for their words of encouragement and financial support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"I can do all things through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4 verse 13).

ABBREVIATIONS

ACESL   Advanced certificate in Education (School

                 Leadership)

ANA   Annual National Assessment

CPTD   Continuous Professional Teacher Development

DoE   Department of Education

Ed.   Edition

HOD   Head of Department

PLCs   Professional learning communities

SMT   School Management Team

YDP   Youth Development Programme

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

1.1 The aim of this dissertation is to provide an overview of the different procedures that were used in conducting this study which sought to explore the relationship between principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities (PLCs) in primary schools in the Umlazi district in KwaZulu-Natal province. Secondly, the study sought to investigate how principal leadership styles develop or stifle PLCs. Finally, the study sought to explore the reasons why principals support the PLCs in their unique ways.

Chapter One is an orientation to the study, and therefore sets the stage for the discussion of key elements related to the study. It presents the background to the study, rationale for the study, research questions that guided it and the significance of the study is also explained. Moreover, this chapter presents an explanation of key concepts, an outline of the literature that was reviewed in the process of conducting it as well as the theoretical framework that underpins it. It also provides an overview of the research design and methodology that was used. Finally, the layout of the study, which clarifies what each chapter of the dissertation entails, is given.

1.2

Background to the study

Leadership styles perform a critical role in forming long term relationships with all stakeholders (Mestry & Singh, 2007). However, South African school principals' leadership styles may not be relevant to the present demands of education (Mestry & Singh, 2007). Professional learning community (PLC) is a term used to refer to a "school organisation in which stakeholders are involved in joint planning, action and assessment for student growth" (Huffman & Jacobson, 2003, p. 240). The PLC model has been shown to develop the capability of institutions and teachers who work in them. (Stoll & Bolam, 2005). Therefore, leadership is vital for the PLCs success. More especially, principals' leadership style is able to have a significant impact on the sustained progress and functioning of a PLC (Porter III, 2011).

The Department of Education has introduced the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) School Leadership (SL) for principals of schools. The aim of the programme is to develop

leadership, enable principals to manage the schools as learning organisations and to effect transformation (DoE, 2008). This required a change in leadership approaches based on the values of democracy (DoE, 1996). Despite the support given by the Department of Education through the ACE:SL programme to develop effective leadership approaches in order to improve teaching and learning, many of our schools lacked improvement (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011).

Botha (2012) reveals that teachers are stifled by certain leadership styles and as a result they do not focus on the teaching and learning. The question that can be posed is: what is the relationship between school principals' leadership styles (of those who completed the ACE SL programme) and the sustainability of professional learning communities?

1.3 Purpose and rationale

My interest in this study stems from my observation of various leadership styles of seven principals who had been appointed to our school over the past decade. My interest was further piqued when I was appointed to a secondary school where teachers worked in isolation from each other as well as from management, which I regarded as unusual. There was no direction or leadership from the management in terms of teaching and learning.

This study is worth conducting presently because the concept of leadership is receiving much attention locally and internationally. The renewed attention is supported by Bush (2007) who states that there is an immense fascination in educational leadership in this century unlike before. Further, Thompson, Greg and Nishka (2004) suggest that PLCs are one of the most spoken about concepts in education presently. Feger and Arruda (2008) also maintain that schools across America are only now beginning to embrace PLCs as a plan to improve student attainment through building a shared school ethos which emphasises learning.

In view of the attention leadership development is receiving, the research into PLCs as well as the need to understand conditions that would sustain it, I chose to explore the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs. Given this rationale, this study aims to explore the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs through the voices of school principals and teachers, in a selection of three peri-urban primary schools in the Umlazi district.

1.4 **Statement of the problem**

This study sought to explore the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs in three primary schools in the Umlazi district. It sought to gain insight into the two elements; namely, principal leadership styles and sustainability of PLCs as well as how principal leadership styles promote or hinder PLCs. It also sought to explore reasons why principals support PLCs in their unique ways. This also arose from my experience while working under several different principals with varying leadership styles. I noticed that staff responded differently to different leadership styles. Researchers like Adeyemi (2010), Aydin, Sarier and Uysal (2013) and Shouppe and Pate (2010) have studied and shown the significance of different leadership styles on education, yet many principals continue to engage in leadership styles which are not conducive to effective teaching and learning (Botha 2012).

1.5 **Aims and Objectives of the study**

The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between school principals' leadership styles (of principals who completed the ACE SL programme) and the sustainability of PLCs and seeks to accomplish the following objectives:

- To explore the relationship between school principals leadership styles and the sustainability of the PLCs in three primary schools in the Umlazi district.
- To investigate how school principals' leadership styles develop or stifle PLCs.
- To explore the reasons why school principals support the PLCs in a particular way.

This study seeks to answer the following critical questions:

- What is the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of the PLCs in the three primary schools in the Umlazi district?

1.6
- How does the school principals leadership styles develop or stifle the PLCs?
- Why do school principals support the PLCs in a particular way?

Significance of the study

Few studies have been conducted internationally and fewer nationally on the direct relationship between principal leadership styles and PLCs. This study sought to gain insight into the relationship between principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of

professional learning communities in the South African context. It is anticipated that the outcome of this study will provide clarity on how leadership styles either promote or hinder professional learning communities. These insights may prove invaluable to potential leaders willing to learn how to support PLCs.

1.7

Clarification of concepts

It is essential to firstly understand concepts related to leadership and PLCs. Bush (2007, p.403) states that leadership may be identified as a way of persuasion, which is established on well-defined and distinct morals and principles, which leads to a "vision for the school". In this study leadership refers to the inspirational direction and influence of an individual or groups of individuals to elicit commitment, dedication and teamwork in order to enhance teaching and learning. When leadership is discussed in this dissertation, management is subsumed. The first reason is because management is viewed as a sub-discipline within leadership and, secondly, at other times, management and leadership overlap substantially and are used interchangeably in literature (Bush 2007).

PLCs are used to refer to institutions in which all role players collaborate in "planning, action and assessment for student growth and school improvement" (Huffman & Jacobson, 2003, p. 240). For the purposes of this study, PLCs refers to a group of professionals co-operating in a school community to improve the student attainment levels, teacher development and institutional growth.

1.8

Theoretical framework and literature review.

This study is framed by Bass's (1985) transformational leadership theory and Spillane's (2005) distributed leadership theories which are relevant for analysing school principals leadership styles as well as the conceptual framework of PLCs. Hord (1997) highlights five characteristics as a framework of PLCs which will be used in this study.

International and national literature will be reviewed in the following chapter. The purpose of the next chapter is to provide insights about major trends and critical issues relating to the relationship between principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs. Furthermore, eight themes will be presented in my literature review. These are: leadership, leadership styles in PLCs, sustainability of PLCs, types of leaders required to nurture PLCs,

distributed leadership, transformational leadership, teacher leaders, culture and challenges to PLCs.

1.9   **Research design and methodology**

The approach in this study is qualitative. Terre Blanche, Durkheim and Painter (2006) state that qualitative researchers want to make sense of experiences, social situations or phenomena as they occur in their natural settings. I am interested in the experiences of principals and teachers in their natural world, which is a school. The methodology I use is a case study which is a "systematic and in-depth investigation of a particular instance in its context in order to generate knowledge" (Rule & John, 2011. p. 4). More discussion of the methodological issues is presented in Chapter three.

1.10   **Delimitation of the study**

This study was located in a small coastal town on the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and falls under the eThekwini municipality. This is a peri urban area. In other words it is located in the outskirts of an urban area. The population is approximately three thousand people. Residents of this area are mainly of the working class people with pockets of extreme poverty. A large industry located in the area provides employment for most people. Sugar cane, fruit and vegetable farming are common farming plantations in the town. The area is highly politicised and dominated by two political parties. There are four co-educational primary schools with a diverse racial make-up and one secondary school in area. This study was conducted from 1st January 2014 to 1st April 2014.

1.11

Structure of the study

This section outlines the structure of the report about the study on the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs. This study comprises five chapters and these are summarised below.

Chapter One

Chapter One is the overview of the study. It provides the background and the purpose of the study. The aim, objectives and three critical questions that guided the study are also provided. This chapter also provides an explanation of some of the key terms as well as the underpinning theoretical framework used in the study. It also provides an overview of the literature that was reviewed in the process of conducting the study. The chapter finally

provides a brief review of the research design and methodology that was used in the demarcation of the problem.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two focuses on theoretical frameworks and the review of relevant research literature on the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs. The review is presented using eight themes.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three deals with a detailed explanation of the research design, approach, methodology, method of data collection, and analysis procedures that will be followed in carrying out the study.

Chapter Four

Chapter Four presents data that was generated through semi-structured interviews with participants and documents reviews. The themes that emerged from the data analyses are presented and discussed.

Chapter Five

The last chapter presents a synthesis of the key findings of the research on the basis of which recommendations will be made.

1.12

Chapter summary

This chapter introduced the theme of the research project namely the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs. This chapter also served as an introduction to highlight the background, rationale, aims and objectives of the research. Definitions are highlighted and literature review is also presented. Furthermore, the research design and approach was also discussed. The next chapter offers the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study and a review of the literature on the relationship between principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1   **Introduction**

Chapter One provides a background and orientation to the study about the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the establishment and sustainability of professional learning communities. The previous chapter also highlighted the rationale of the study, aim and objectives, key questions, methodological issues and the structure of the dissertation. This chapter will present the findings of researchers in the United States of America, Canada, Europe, Middle East and Africa on the relationship between principals' leadership style and PLC. Finally I will present two theoretical frameworks to frame my study and conclusions drawn from this chapter.

2.2   **Review of literature**

In my review I would be focusing on literature relating to the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs. In presenting literature review, eight themes will be presented, that is, conceptualising leadership, leadership styles and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), sustainability of PLCs, types of leaders required to nurture PLCs, distributed leadership, transformational leadership, teacher leaders, culture and challenges to PLCs. Finally, I will focus on two theoretical frameworks namely transformational leadership and distributed leadership theories and a conceptual framework on PLCs.

2.2.1 Conceptualising leadership

In this section I will briefly examine the concept of leadership, followed by an unpacking of what effective leadership means and, lastly, I will focus on leadership within PLCs. There is a fascination with educational leadership in this era unlike any other (Bush, 2007). The reason for this is because there is a general agreement that good leadership may hold the key to improving learner performance (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). In light of the above, Governments throughout the world view education as vital to improving the skills needed in a rapidly changing world for economic development (Watkins, Al- Samarrai, Bella, Benavot, Liebnitz, Buonomo, and Caillaud, 2009). For this reason developing countries have seen the

successful implementation of policies as dependant on strong leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

Leadership is interpreted differently by various scholars. For instance, Bush (2007) contends that leadership means guiding others' activities in accomplishing necessary objectives and leaders are people who influence the aims, aspiration, and activities of others. Cuban (1988, p. xx) as cited in Bush (2007, p.392) adds that leadership takes much originality, vigour and proficiency. This suggests that school leadership has to be a form of guidance which is influential and inspirational while at the same time being innovative. The purpose is ultimately to achieve the institutional goals. Similarly Adeyemi (2010) views leadership as the practice of encouraging the actions of a band of people through the efforts of a leader towards the accomplishment of an objective. The impression of leadership created by Adeyemi (2010) is one of a coach who spurs his team on to achieve their best. The actions of the leader are seen as inspiring and reassuring. Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, (1996) share a similar perspective with Bush (2007) and Adeyemi (2010) that leadership is conceptualised as a course of persuading people and their activities towards achieving an objective in a given context. In contrast Austin and Leland (1991) state that leadership has been described as action intended to usher in transformation in an organization in order to enhance people's lives. Similarly, Grant (2010) notes that leadership is the talent to lead transformation by casting one's view into the forward. Austin and Leland (1991) and Grant's (2010) conceptualisation of leadership emphasises the aspect of change which is essential in Professional Learning Communities. The implication is that leadership within PLCs will inevitably require a reform of the organisation which aims to improve the lot of workers with focus on the future. From the above researcher's perspectives, most scholars agree that leadership involves two parties who are engaged in a relationship of change where one has an influence on the other in order to reach a goal. This influence includes skilfulness and a form of encouragement and guidance of the activities of the followers.

I will proceed to now explore the concept of effective leadership. Hariri, Monypenny and Prideaux (2012) contend that principals, who carry out effective school leadership functions are an essential constituent in effective schools. This means that effective principals are vital for healthy PLCs. Without effective principals, PLCs may not be effective. When one looks at the concept of effective leadership one realises that it is much more focused. Devos and Bouckenooghe (2009) define effective leadership as sturdy, commanding leadership which gives attention to teaching and learning from the principal. In other words, effective

leadership is strong and durable considering the various obstacles a leader needs to manoeuvre through in order to focus on teaching and learning. Scoggins (2008) further posits that effective leadership is essential in a process of change. This implies that PLCs require effective leaders since PLCs entails a change in how schools operate currently. This view is supported by DuFour & Eaker (1998) who maintain that it is difficult to think of carrying out and sustaining school transformation in spite of the hurdles without effective leadership from a capable principal.

Many researchers; Bush (2007), Fullan (2005), Devos & Bouckenooghe (2009) have offered various new descriptions of an effective leader. However, according to Mohabir (2009) they all offer a perspective that depends on contemporary and fresh bonds with their workers. Leaders can no longer expect to lead by separating themselves from employees and disregarding the network of relationships around which all tasks are realised (Mohabir, 2009). Thus effective leaders who are needed for effective PLCs cannot see themselves in isolation from their staff. Moreover effective leaders need to recognise the deep relationships which they need to foster in order to achieve a shared vision. In addition, they need to recognise the potential in fostering collaboration in order to achieve institutional objectives. This requires a new leadership role. Baron (2008, p. 58) believes this new role requires principals to become "facilitative leaders". By facilitative leaders Baron (2008) means that principals must understand the need to develop their staff and themselves.

Cook (2014) maintains that the immense changes in education requires a new type of leader. Initially, principals had to be both compassionate and autocratic. In the 1980s, principals had to become instructional leaders who could easily delegate responsibilities to other teachers with a view of involving teachers in curriculum issues (DuFour, 1999). In the 1990s, principals had to act as co-workers with teachers to examine instructional practices in order to improve results (DuFour, 1999). There is now a call for principals to come alongside teachers to support and develop teachers (Harris, 2004). This call for a new type of leadership from school principals, particularly within the context of PLCs, means that they have to lead from within. In other words principals must now become "more people centred" (Harris, 2004, p. 24). This view of the new role of the principal is supported by Printy (2010). This requires a change of leadership style from the autocratic approach to one in which the principal leads in the midst of his followers. An effective leader now is one who supports his teachers within the PLCs.

Huber (2004, p. 672) believes that, given the speed of change and the added responsibilities and new skills needed, school principals might be seen as a "multifunctional miracle being". This leads us to conclude that their role can no longer be occupied by individuals with antiquated leadership ideas. This view is supported by (Huber, 2004) who maintains that the image of the school principal as a ruler, tyrant or patriarchal director of modern schools is viewed as unsustainable in the present era. Similarly, Marzano (2003) advises that one of the usual misunderstandings about leadership at schools is that leadership ought to be vested in a single person, which is the principal. Scoggins (2008) shares these views and adds that it is difficult for a single person to successfully lead and manage a school. One resolution would be to develop leadership capabilities in a school staff that is working as a PLC (Scoggins 2008).

Lambert (1998) and Scoggins (2008) are of the opinion that school leadership must not be vested in one individual. Instead, it must be separated from one person. Therefore this suggest that leadership must be shared with all employees for a collective purpose (Harris, 2004). This fresh view of leadership in which both principals and teachers must work together requires well thought out actions on the principal's part (Huffman, 2011). In other words, principals must distribute leadership with their staff and work as a team. This however, is not as easy as it seems. Therefore, this process must be carefully considered so that teachers understand their role and that of their colleagues clearly. This clarity in understanding reduces the level of conflicts which may arise later and increases accountability.

Bush (2007) suggests that today's principals must conceptualise their roles as pedagogical leaders. Johnson (1996) emphasises that principals must be mindful of both the limitations and possibilities of their ranks. Principals must find a balance between their dependence on teachers and their legal authority (Johnson, 1996). In finding this balance they must, over time, develop competence and co-operation for collectively leading a school and jointly ushering in change (Huffman, 2011). This implies that principals must clearly understand their roles and those of their teachers. They cannot abdicate their responsibilities nor take over those of teachers. Their leadership, though, is not as simple and clear cut as in the past.

Similarly, Fullan (2002) asserts, that effective leadership has a role to ensure that capacity increases in schools in order to improve results. By sharing leadership, principals promote interactions between themselves and their followers which ultimately impacts on educational

development (Botha, 2012). The thrust here is that effective leaders are those who develop their teachers with a view to share the leadership of the school and vice versa. When leadership is shared this improves the school as a whole. This new form of leadership occurs within a learning community that learns and focuses on the ethical reason for schooling which aims to enhance individual learner performance (Moller and Pankake, 2006). DuFour (2004) believes that successful PLCs hinges on effective leadership practices. Hipp and Huffman (2010) add that school principals must be skilled in easing change in a fractured organisation, with different people and opposition, for a shared purpose.

Without strong supportive principal leadership it would not be possible to sustain PLCs (Williams, Brien, Sprague & Sullivan, 2008). Shorter (2012) shares similar views with Williams *et al*. (2008) that effective supportive leadership is essential for a professional learning community to develop. Effective leadership employed by principals necessitates a focus on matters connected to school development, interconnectedness, collective goals, constant progress and concern for functioning and organisational change (Fullan, 1991). The implication is that principals need to become more effective in their roles as leaders in order to establish and sustain PLCs. They need to pay special attention to the vision, growth and transformation of the school. The above views presented gives us an indication of the importance of effective leadership in education in general and PLCs in particular.

2.2.2   *Leadership styles in Professional Learning Communities*

Many authors (Lambert 2003, Spillane, 2005, Bush 2007, Devos & Bouckenooghe, 2009, Adeyemi, 2010 and Robinson, 2010,) have cited various leadership styles in their studies. Some researchers have described leadership styles as democratic, autocratic, laissez faire, directive, collaborative, capacity builder, pluralist, situational, transactional, transformational and distributive. While I aim to explore some of these leadership styles, I shall return to the latter two for a more in-depth discussion later on in this chapter. I want to explore how other researchers have examined some of the different leadership styles and their impact on PLCs. We must, however, firstly examine the concept of leadership styles.

Okurumeh (2001) contends that leadership styles is the display of the overriding features of a leader's conduct. This suggests that the dominant feature of a leader's behaviour can be used to conceptualise leadership style. In other words, how a leader acts and comports himself can be described as his style of leadership. In contrast Adeyemi (2010) believes that leadership

style is the practice which one party uses to inspire others in the pursuit and attainment of common objectives. Adeyemi (2010) emphasises habits, customs and methods a leader uses to motivate and encourage others to reach a predetermined goal.

McWhinney (1997) adds that leadership style emanates from one's worldview. In other words, if someone has a masculine world view he would possess a dictatorial leadership style, if someone practices inclusive leadership then he would be influenced by societal worldview McWhinney, (1997). This is significant because it implies it will be difficult to change a person's leadership style with simple, short and periodic leadership courses, especially if they have developed a worldview that is entrenched. The implication for PLCs is that those with a societal world view may be better equipped to establish and sustain PLCs than those with a masculine world view.

Aldoory and Toth (2004) further posit that leadership style has more to do with the perception of leading than the person's primary leadership competence. Okeniyi (1995) and Okurumeh (2001) seem to share a common understanding of leadership style. They associate leadership style with the conduct of the leader. In other words, how a leader behaves while leading. However, Okeniyi (1995) maintains that the needs of a leader are what fuels his behaviour. This resonates with McWhinney's (1997) view that a leader's worldview determines his leadership style. In contrast, Adeyemi (2010) asserts that leadership style is simply a practice of one person over another. In this study, leadership style is viewed as the manner of approach and conduct of a leader as he interacts and influences his followers in order to accomplish organisational goals.

Coleman (2005) iterates that researchers have recommended that for educational restructuring to emerge, a change in leadership style is necessary. Zepeda, (2004) shares similar views with Coleman (2005) but goes on to emphasize that strong leadership style is necessary for change to occur. Coleman (2005) further posits that professional learning communities are important to the restructuring of educational organizations. According to Mahdinezhad, Suandi, Silong and Omar (2013) effective styles of leadership can lead to the improvement of teaching and learning in the face of difficulties. This means that PLCs are significant if we are to bring about change to our current education system. It therefore seems logical to conclude that PLCs will need new approaches to leadership if it is to succeed. In addition Sergiovanni (1998) adds credence to the view of Coleman (2005) and Mahdinezhad *et al.* (2013) that, unlike the conventional leadership approaches, where the principal is viewed as a boss who

commands, controls and supervises school matters, new principals are required to assume roles of instructional leaders whose main task is to cultivate schools as learning communities. Furthermore, leadership styles may influence the extent to which a school staff may work successfully as a PLC (Scoggins, 2008). The implication is that a principal's leadership approach could affect the sustainability of a PLC. In other words, principals who use ineffective leadership approaches could substantially limit the growth of PLCs.

Consequently, the principal's leadership role calls for principals to share leadership and authority with teachers and inspire them to extend their leadership capacities (Leclerc, Moreau, Dumouchel and Salla Franque-St-Louis, 2012). In contrast principals can no longer be thought of as dictatorial drivers of transformation or viewed as the prophets of the schools. Instead, principals must be seen as democratic teachers (Hord 1997). Coleman (2005) however, points out that research is limited on the effect of principals' leadership styles on school change initiatives, including professional learning communities. The current research will hope to shed more light on this relationship between principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs.

The principals' view of a democratically based society of professionals is an essential element in the progress of PLCs (Hord, 1997). In other words, principals who see their schools as places where democracy prevails may be in a better position to promote the PLCs. Hord (1997, p. 46) found that PLCs allow for debate, discussions and differing opinions among teachers and this can increase the reflection and learning of teachers. Tradition is confronted and debated as a means to creative understandings and methods (Hord, 1997). This democratic environment is conducive to the sustainability of PLCs. Williams (2008) notes that schools that function as PLCs have greater potential to change than those which function within strict authoritarian structures. This scenario can only work in a democratic environment with a democratic leader. (Hord, 1997)

One of the emergent themes of Huggins, Scheurich and Morgan's (2011) research which explored how a modern high school PLC in Southwest United States was used to usher in reforms with a view to improve student performance, was the leadership style of the principal. This study revealed that the principal focused on instructional matters over other administrative issues and she began engaging with her staff about curriculum matters. This style of leadership showed that the principal adopted a more practical approach (Huggins *et al*., 2011). The principal in the study attended daily meetings of PLCs, posed thought-

provoking questions and assisted teachers with enhancing their teaching methods (Huggins *et al.*, 2011). The principal trained teachers to become more thoughtful about their work and to interrogate their teaching methods (Huggins *et al.*, 2011). This type of hands-on leadership is akin to what DuFour (2007) calls tight and loose leadership which simply means that the principal exercises extra control over core issues as opposed to nonessential issues. This type of leadership is discussed later on in this review. This type of leadership in Huggins *et al.* (2011) resulted in changes in how teachers taught and as a result an improvement in learners' mathematics results. The principal, realising that the teachers were ready to lead the PLC, slowly stepped back and allowed teachers to take over the responsibility for the PLC. The principal seemed to have demonstrated the paradox which DuFour (1999) highlights in his report, that the principal must be a strong leader, yet be able to share his powers with his teachers. The leadership style of the principal in Huggins *et al.* (2011) study dovetails with research by Coleman (2005) and Shorter (2012) that leadership style does impact the sustainability of PLCs.

Research in New York by Robinson (2010) to disclose experiences discovered during the execution of collaborative inquiry in urban schools, highlighted many themes. One of the themes focuses on the type of leadership practices which best supported teacher collaborations about enhancing student learning. Robinson's (2010) research analysis shows, that the principals' leadership style significantly impacted on the make-up and depth of teacher involvement in the inquiry process in the following ways. In schools with a sharing style of leadership the collaborative inquiry was most positive and fruitful (Robinson, 2010). Robinson (2010) noticed that principals used democratic leadership styles to initiate collaborative inquiry in order to rebuild a strong professional culture for learning. Teachers were free under this style of leadership to "deprivatize" classroom traditions and practices so that various educational processes could be laid bare to be examined (Robinson, 2010, p.18). Deprivatizing classroom practice means disclosing to fellow staff members the particular trials and triumphs a teacher experiences in respect of pupils learning in classrooms which can take the form of making available learners educational statistics, cooperatively scrutinising pupils tasks, or viewing each other's teaching practices (Huggins *et al.*, 2011).

Unlike authoritative leadership styles which sought to manipulate and dominate staff learning by focussing on strict supervision only, principals who used a democratic leadership style adopted a less commanding role in collaboration, with a view to enable teachers to build healthy professional connections (Robinson, 2010). However, this is contrary to Huggins *et*

al.'s (2011, p.77) study which showed that the principal, in initiating the PLCs, initially had a much more commanding approach and only later handed over the reins to teachers. The principal in Huggins *et al* (2011) study was not only present at most of the PLC meetings but she participated in important conversations with staff about student performance and learning. The principal furthermore examined children's marks, teachers' teaching plans and supervised teaching through classroom visits regularly (Huggins *et al*., 2011).

In schools with an authoritative style of leadership, Robinson (2010) found that collaborative inquiry was negative and least constructive, which strengthened the power play involving principals and staff. In other words, when principals display an autocratic approach to leadership within PLCs, this adversely affects collaborative efforts and increases the possibilities of divisions within the staff. When staff is divided, it is difficult to develop collaboration. Even if collaboration is developed they could easily become complaining sessions. Hord (1997) adds that an autocratic principal who is a dictator, who fiercely holds on to power and who excludes teachers from decision-making will not model the virtues of sharing, associated with democratic principles. This authoritative style of leadership goes against the central aim of collaborative inquiry since it hinders principals and staff working relationships from developing into an alliance, which is a basis for collective decision making as well as for enhancing pedagogical issues (Robinson, 2010). Robinson (2010) further revealed that the practice of a delegative approach to leadership was to develop teachers' capability for team work and to encourage a shared responsibility among teachers to satisfy scholastic needs of underachieving learners. Principals with delegative leadership style, however, did not focus on creating teams which could have decision making powers to implement change within the school.

Lambert (2003) suggests four different leadership styles of school principals; namely directive, laissez faire, collaborative and capacity builder. Lambert (2003) presents a directive leader as one who engages in authoritarian behaviour. Secondly, a laissez faire leader takes decisions but excludes others from decision making. As a result organisations suffer with little stability thus creating organisational disintegration. Thirdly a collaborative leader supports sincere sharing and involvement. However, he is not clear about how to involve those who are disinterested. The collaborator creates conditions for teacher dependency behaviours. The suggestion is that the first three leadership styles are not conducive to a sustainable PLC since each fails to involve and develop the relevant role players. Lastly, a capacity building leader constructs significance and collective expertise through competent

involvement of many role players (Lambert, 2003). Of all the leadership styles Lambert (2003) maintains the capacity building leader is most likely to assist a school to become a PLC. This is a significant finding because principals who develop their teachers' potential may be in a better position to create sustainability within PLCs. This may entail having a detailed and tailored professional development programme for both the principals and teachers so that both are exposed to the latest research on strategies which can be used to update their knowledge and practice in classrooms. When teachers' knowledge is expanded there is a possibility that they can become more effective in the way they teach. The intimation therefore is that the leadership style of a principal can affect the future of a PLC.

DuFour (2007) maintains that when it comes to school improvement the commonly held belief that the bottom-up approach works, is misleading. DuFour (2007) states that principals who wish to usher in school reforms are never laissez-faire in their approach. Instead, he believes that principals who are adept in using a "tight loose approach" may be more effective in bringing about school improvements (DuFour, 2007, p.39). In other words, there needs to be a leadership approach that encourages freedom and innovation within an organisation that at the same time demarcates clear boundaries and compulsory roles (DuFour, 2007). DuFour (2007) cautions that one of the important features of the tight loose approach is getting firm about the right things. These include systems, procedures and values which emphasize high levels of student achievement. In other words, leadership styles that exert a strong influence on all role players to achieve high student performance is a significant component of tight loose approach (DuFour, 2007). The suggestion by DuFour is that leadership needs to be contextualised according to the situation. Principals need to understand what the priorities of their schools are and to maintain firmer leadership in key areas.

Richardson (2003) examined among other issues, leadership styles that influence PLCs. The research design was both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative analysis generated statistics that classified principals into one of the following leadership styles "initiator, manager or responder" (Richardson, 2003). Gorton and Alston (2009) define the three leadership styles in the following way. The initiators possess clear objectives and maintain great expectation for their schools while managers may begin programmes of action but they display knee-jerk behaviours (Gorton and Alston, 2009). Lastly the responder separates himself from issues and relies on his staff to initiate change while he continues with paperwork tasks (Gorton & Alston, 2009). In Richardson's (2003) view, of all three styles of

leadership, the initiator was most successful and the responder was least successful in influencing PLCs. The school principals who were the initiators engaged in a great deal of delegation of curriculum leadership roles and responsibilities and provided substantial support to teachers with a view to assist teachers and pupils to flourish (Richardson, 2003).

In Canada, Williams (2006) sought to ascertain if principals were prone to use a collaborative style of leadership as well as to display the necessary behaviours related to how decisions are made which are vital in PLCs. Williams (2006) used a decision making style inventory model as a theoretical framework by Rowe and Mason (1987). The inventory categorised principals according to four styles. They are "directive, behavioural, analytical and conceptual styles" (Williams, 2006, p. 9). The directive principals were over-assertive and operated in a bureaucratic organisation. The behavioural principal had weak control of the school but was friendlier. The analytical principal was domineering while the conceptual principal was more people focused and demonstrated principles, moral code, belief and honesty. This leadership model was underpinned by two criteria: These were "value orientation and cognitive complexity" (Williams, 2006, p.10). Value orientation referred to whether a principal valued people more or the assignments more (William, 2006). The second criteria, cognitive complexity was used to explain the level of uncertainty leaders could endure in making a decision. Williams (2006) found that three quarters of the principals in his study were more prone to display the conceptual style of leadership which was more aligned to the PLCs. He concluded that reforms in Canada support the use of conceptual style of leadership. He also noted that some principals indicated that the conceptual style of leadership was one which they hardly considered using. This, according to Williams (2006), was a major challenge for educational reforms in Canada. For educational reforms to be effective it must be sustainable. It is to this important subject that I now turn.

2.2.3 Sustainability of Professional Learning Communities

Before we look at how PLCs can be sustained we need to examine this concept of sustainability. Fullan (2005) believes that sustainability is the capability and resiliency of an organization to participate in the intricacies of constant progress that is in harmony with profound human objectives. When applied to schools this suggests that sustainable schools are flexible to change which is in keeping with advancements that are consistent with important human values. This could also refer to the school's ability to adapt to the changes occurring both internally and externally, provided these changes do not harm the

organisations present nor future capability. This view is partially supported by Hargreaves and Fink (2006) who explain that sustainable progress safeguards and advances profound learning for all teachers that extends and endures without causing injury to others both now and in the years to come. Hargreaves and Fink's (2006) conceptualisation emphasizes that sustainability protects, improves and sustains teacher learning without harming anyone in the process. The endurance that Hargreaves and Fink (2006) refers to allows the organisation to exist longer and become more durable in the face of difficulties. This idea resonates with Korkmaz (2007) citing Miles (1969) who describes a sustainable organisation as one that lives longer in its natural world and persistently makes use of its capacities to deal with adversities and endures in the long term. This may mean that an organisation like a PLC that endures in its natural setting and which taps into the potential of its staff is better able to deal with difficulties it may encounter.

Institutionalising or sustaining PLCs is both a challenging (Hipp & Weber, 2008) and complex task which requires leadership and focus (Teague and Anfara, 2010). Shouppe and Pate (2010) agree with Teague and Anfara (2010) but go on to add that principals' leadership styles could be one of the most significant element in sustainable reforms. Fullan (2006) cautions that reforms will not be sustained if the leaders do not keenly promote and encourage it (Teague and Anfara, 2010). The way in which principals promote and encourage PLCs is suggestive of their particular leadership style. There appears to be a relationship or connection between leadership styles of principals and sustainability of PLCs. As a result, one can conclude; the way principals lead and promote the PLCs could decide whether it is sustainable or not.

While the focus of this study is the relationship between principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs, it may be of benefit to take a closer look at a descriptive research study by Cook (2014). Cook (2014) sought to examine the value and need for sustainable school leadership as well as how sustainable leadership is viewed by teachers and what issues are important to develop sustainable leadership according to teachers. Seventy percent of teachers believed that principal participants indicated that sustainable leadership plays a significant role in pupil attainment levels and teacher professional development. Participants also made known that sustainable leadership is a pre-requisite for sustaining healthy school cultures (Cook, 2014). The results of this study may indicate that where leadership is sustained, PLCs may also be sustained. The converse may also hold true; where leadership is

not sustained the possibilities for a sustainable PLCs may be remote. But what type of leader is able to sustain a PLC? This is the question we turn to next.

2.2.4 *Types of leaders required to sustain Professional Learning Communities*

In this section I will focus on the types of leaders which PLCs need in order to become sustainable. Barton and Stepanek (2012) suggest that principals exercise substantial sway on the positive implementation and sustained operation of PLCs. This suggests that principals are a significant component of a sustainable PLC. They are extremely influential when it comes to the continual development of a school. In other words, they usually determine the direction of the school. In support of this, Louis and Kruse (1995) iterate that robust measures by the principal are necessary, to get the process started in order to develop a school community. However, Coleman (2005) believes that principals cannot be solely responsible for providing leadership for the formation of PLCs because of the numerous burdens placed on them. This is particularly true of the South African scenario where principals are dealing with added responsibilities in challenging contexts. This would therefore require leaders who recognise and nurture teacher leadership.

Huggins *et al*. (2011) clarifies that although some of the PLC research does point to the necessity for principals to engage in a supportive role in the formation and institution of PLC, that assistance is mainly concentrated on organizational factors influencing PLCs and not on the concrete procedures of the PLCs. The study by Huggins *et al.* (2011) demonstrates that PLCs may require leaders to go beyond organizational factors and nurture teachers to become absorbed, to become transformative and to see new possibilities. This suggests that principals should do more than simply support the PLCs. They ought to not only provide organisational support but to also inspire staff to be original and to seize new opportunities that will benefit the learner. This type of leader may be more effective in promoting and sustaining a PLC since he focuses on what Boyd (1992) calls material elements and Louis and Kruse (1995) call human elements. Both these supportive elements need a supportive leader.

Principals are key to transforming schools (DuFour, 1999). Hord (1997), identified three factors essential for principals in schools that attempted transformation, that is the principal's ability to distribute power, assist the work of teachers as well as to participate without controlling (Hord, 1997). The first factor cited by Hord (1997) is extremely important since it highlights key issues that are vital for the sustainability of PLCs. Hord (1997) describes the

type of leaders which PLCs need as ones who are able to share leadership and support teachers in a non-domineering way. This theme seems to be in consonance with researchers like Fullan (2005), Robinson (2010) and Spillane (2005) who maintain that school leaders ought to share and distribute leadership with teachers without being overbearing.

To this end, Baron (2008) describes principals as enabling leaders. As a result, principals who are aware of the value of continuous work entrenched professional development will display these habits for their teachers (Baron, 2008). Baron (2008) suggests one way to display these habits is for principals to be enthusiastically engaged in a principals' learning community. These principals' learning communities often meet to strengthen teachers' knowledge of leadership in teaching and learning (Baron, 2008). The principals' learning communities also find ways to assist teachers enhance the value of their work and those of their pupils, appraise each principal's school development proposals and enhance competences like planning and studying of data (Baron, 2008). The knock-on effect is that principals who are themselves involved in professional growth will lead by example and will be able to support the professional growth of their teachers, which can lead to improvement in teaching and learning. In addition principals who are enabling leaders may be better able to establish PLCs than those principals who see themselves as omnicompetent.

Hairon and Dimmock (2012) found that in the Singaporean model for change, school leadership especially at management level, is responsible for forming and supporting PLCs through the school structures. However, in hierarchical systems like in Singapore where school based leadership is centralised, a more confined model of PLC might reign where professional development is limited to modernizations in teaching methods and field of study (Hairon and Dimmock, 2012). This suggests that when PLCs are transplanted without due consideration for the conditions and type of leaders to sustain it, the final result will simply be a reconstitution of teaching methods and not a genuine attempt to bring about lasting changes to teacher development and the public school system. This view is shared by Hairon and Dimmock (2012) who conclude that in these scenarios, PLCs are not likely to be as powerful tools of systemic change.

PLCs in a South African context will require leaders with special training and skills in order to usher in transformation (Steyn, 2013). Botha (2012) maintains that for change to be successful it requires leaders who understand distributed leadership and responsibilities to usher in development. Botha (2012) further adds that leaders who are informed about

instructional leadership and distributing leadership within the school, are better placed to oversee school transformation, unlike those who focus on school management only. Both Botha (2012) and Steyn (2013) concur that a new type of school leadership approach is required in South African schools if PLCs are to flourish. The inference is that leaders who are trained to tackle the current demands in South African schools and whose approach is geared towards involving teachers in leadership will be better equipped to establish and sustain PLCs.

The value of school Principals can be determined through how they motivate teachers and through their pursuit of distinction in the classroom. This is highlighted by Bottery (2004) who suggests that the worth of school leaders are evaluated through their ability to inspire teachers and to show them excellent standards of teaching. This may mean that principals may need to encourage and enthuse teachers within PLCs to achieve levels of excellence and to do this principals may need to demonstrate these levels which are expected of teachers.

PLCs also require principals who are serious about the professional growth of their teachers and themselves. This view is echoed by Lambert (1998) who believes that school principals must set the tone for development and growth by demonstrating dynamic learning, by spending time in development, demonstrating respect for the opinions of staff and developing leaders. From Lambert's (1998) perspective the manner in which a principal develops himself can set the trajectory for a school's future. In addition the approach which principals utilise to develop teachers and how principals interact with their staff is reflective of their leadership style. Therefore, Principals who work alongside teachers with a view to help improve teaching practices (Printy 2010) have a greater potential to increase the depth of collaborative dialogue in PLCs (Nelson, Deuel, Slavit and Kennedy 2010). This in turn has a greater potential to develop and sustain PLCs (Pedder and Opfer, 2011).

Nehring and Fitzsimons (2011) maintain that it is the job of the principal to provide suitable professional development for staff. This duty encompasses three guiding roles to make sure that teachers' development is engaging and constant (Steyn, 2013). Firstly, principals must create a long term plan for the professional learning of both teachers and learners (Steyn, 2013, p. 284). Secondly, they must initiate teacher learning with a view to helping teachers interpret and appreciate new advances in the field of education and to engage in fruitful discussions (Steyn, 2013). Thirdly, principals must offer and organise well planned and constructive studying opportunities expressly for sustained and deepened teacher learning

(Moswela, 2006). This means that PLCs require leaders who are focused on developing their staff through learning opportunities for the future. This development requires leaders who view teachers as partners and are not afraid to allow teachers to become skilful, knowledgeable and powerful. The review presented above offers some insight into the type of leaders which are needed if PLCs are to be sustained in our schools. Next, we examine distributed leadership within PLCs.

2.2.5 Distributed leadership style and Professional Learning Communities

I begin this section on distributive leadership with Harris's (2003) views on this issue because I found it most relevant to our discussion. Harris (2003) claims if we are committed to establishing and sustaining PLCs within schools, then we need new forms of leadership that will promote and cultivate profound partnerships among teachers. This, unfortunately, cannot be accomplished by sticking to outdated models of leadership which were poorly configured, which as a result restricts the opportunities for teachers to take the lead in transforming schools (Harris, 2003). This view suggests that if PLCs are to succeed then a change in current principal leadership approaches needs to be made. This change in leadership style needs to be reconfigured with teachers as significant partners in PLCs.

Leadership needs to be distributed in order for schools to tap into the vast resources and expertise of teachers (Harris, 2004). Spillane (2005) views distributive leadership as a leadership practice that is seen as a by-product of the relationship between principals, teachers and the circumstances and not the actions performed by a leader. To further understand the idea of distributed leadership, Copland (2003) provides insight through three main points. Firstly, Copland (2003) highlights that distributive leadership is a joint activity with the aim of reaching group goals, which is more than each individual's efforts alone. Secondly, distributive leadership encompasses the expanding of borders among conventionally labelled schools (Copland, 2003). Thirdly, distributed leadership is founded on the bedrock of expertise and not the official title or rank of an individual in groups (Copland, 2003). This therefore means that distributed leadership refers to the interface between the leader and the led in a co-operative manner with the aim of achieving common objectives. Furthermore, distributive leadership increases the sphere of operation and influence of teachers and is based on their capabilities and competencies and not on their title contained in their job description.

Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz and Seashore (2009, p.183) contend that principals can either nurture or destroy distributed leadership quickly through deeds or slowly through disregard. As a result, Louis and Murphy (1994) believe that principals must rethink their roles as leaders because schools not characterised by distributed leadership necessitate a change in thinking, from dependence on managerial and official lenses to viewing schools as micro communities. Bolam, McMahon, Stoll, Thomas, and Wallace, (2005) add that there is consensus that leadership cannot be the territory of a single person or a group of aged or elite people because of the increasingly complex nature of the work involved. Leclerc, *et al.* (2012) share similar views but add that, currently, academics acknowledge that leadership is constantly changing and involves many role players. It also involves distributed management that apportions more responsibilities to other members of a group, instead of the principal only (Leclerc *et al.*, 2012).

Leithwood (2006) believes that principals are strategically placed and by virtue of their position have the necessary influence to design school organisations which could give rise to distributed leadership. If distributive leadership is to take root, principals need to be firmer in redesigning structures which would be conducive to developing more leaders (Murphy *et al.*, 2009). It is the principal's responsibility to nurture distributed leadership through new structures, policies and established practices (Murphy *et al.*, 2009). Spillane (2005) maintains that to initiate distributed leadership, principals must support teachers by giving them the necessary freedom and power to participate in distributive leadership. In order to do this principals must become merely the channels (Hord, 2009). The suggestion is that principals are key to promoting distributed leadership by virtue of their roles. They have the necessary resources to develop and redesign the policies and systems of the school so that the school becomes more aligned to the new leadership approach in which teachers have more leadership and responsibilities coupled with accountability.

Shorter's (2012) research in the United States of America aimed to analyse the effect of the relationship between principals' leadership behaviours and the growth of PLCs, specifically teacher study groups. The theoretical framework used in this study is the social capital theory in relation to distributed leadership, teams at work, and PLCs (Shorter, 2012, p. 9). This was a study conducted using a quantitative approach to ascertain the relationship, if any, between principals' leadership behaviours and the establishment of schools as PLCs. The findings of Shorter's (2012) study concludes in totality that there is a powerful relationship between principals' leadership practices and the development of professional learning communities.

Shorter (2012) further found that as distributive leadership procedures by the leader intensifies, the level of growth and development of a PLC also intensifies. While my study also aims to determine the relationship between principals' leadership style and the sustainability of PLCs within a qualitative approach, my research will be conducted in a South African context using a case study methodology. The theoretical framework of my study will differ from Shorter's (2012) study in the sense that my study is framed by two theoretical frameworks namely, transformational leadership and distributed leadership. With these two lenses the current study will hope to better understand the relationship in question.

Shorter's (2012) study also highlights the role of the principal in growing and channelling confidence and a framework of significance within a school, as vital in cultivating shares of social capital to help propel the school to achieve its potential. Shorter (2012) describes social capital theory as involving numerous aspects of a social environment, which includes relationships of trust and a framework of what is acceptable and what is not which supports activities of individuals within a particular context. Shorter's (2012) study also demonstrates the link between distributed leadership and organizational trust and the establishment of PLCs. PLCs which therefore cultivate school values and trust, produce social capital which in turn greatly assists a school to progress (Shorter, 2012). The school principal therefore plays a pivotal role in creating trust within the school (Bolam *et al*., 2005 and Hipp, Huffman, Pankake & Olivier, 2008).Without this foundation of trust and values Shorter (2012) maintains social capital cannot grow, and this restricts the organisation. This indispensable element of trust, dovetails with distributive style of school leadership and PLCs (Shorter, 2012).

Even though Cranston's (2009) study aimed to find a comprehensive perspective of principals' perceptions of schools as PLC, he states that principals listed confidence as one of the most powerful features for schools to develop into PLCs. Cranston (2009) further notes that this relationship of trust between principals and teachers is what binds the whole school together. Cranston's (2009) and Shorter's (2012) findings seem to support the idea that trust between principals and teachers is essential if schools are to develop into PLCs. The implication therefore is that principals need to distribute leadership in order to sustain PLCs and this requires a trust relationship between principals and teachers. This according to Cranston (2009) and Hord (2004) is crucial in the growth and sustainability of a professional learning community. I now turn to the challenges to facing distributed leadership.

2.2.5.1 Challenges to Distributed leadership

Many challenges are encountered in distributing leadership. Murphy *et al*. (2009) informs us that schools with their well-established structures of the past are filled with challenges to distributed leadership. Leclerc *et al*. (2012) further clarify that traditional structures that define the role, for example, of the principal creates a barrier between ranks and are hurdles to flowing leadership within the school. Smylie, Conley and Marks (2002) conclude that these hindrances can ultimately prevent distributed leadership from taking root.

Murphy *et al*. (2009, p.185) further believe that researchers are only now demonstrating how the ideals which are required to strengthen distributed leadership are not compatible with the norms which are strongly entrenched in the rigid and inflexible structure of schools. In addition, the ideas of hierarchies are in themselves chains of restraints which can retard shared leadership (Leclerc *et al*., 2012). Copland (2003) sums up that if distributed leadership is to flourish and thrive, additional supports will need to be established and schools will need to be radically reorganised. This re-organisation of schools is a necessity for PLCs to flourish.

Murphy *et al*. (2009) highlight several threats to distributed leadership. Firstly Smylie and Denny (1989) declare the culture of equality of schools are incompatible with the values of distributed leadership, and are also poisonous to the establishment of shared leadership. There seems to be unwritten codes of practice within school staff where the belief and practice is that all teachers must be treated equally and no one is better than the rest. This divisive codes creates additional barriers to distributed leadership.

Hart (1990) as cited by (Murphy *et al*., 2009) lists another threat called the model of politeness which obstructs the development of distributed leadership and thwarts the work of teacher leaders. In other words, schools have long been institutions where conflict and confrontations were avoided. These outdated yet powerful norms pose a threat to distributed leadership (Murphy *et al*., 2009). Thirdly, the model of lawfulness as documented by Hinchey (1997) as cited in (Murphy *et al*., 2009) maintains that the classroom is the domain of teachers only. According to this norm no one else has jurisdiction in the class except the teacher. This practise of privatization needs to be deprivatized for distributed leadership to mushroom.

Lastly the model of demarcation described by Fay (1992) as cited in (Murphy *et al*., 2009) entrenches the perception that teachers have to be in the classroom at all times and if they are not, they are neglecting classes. According to this norm teachers are to teach while managers must manage. This clearly creates barriers for distributed leadership. Murphy *et al*. (2009, p.186) conclude that distributed leadership must be nurtured in transformed organisations which have ushered in professional changes and it must be enthusiastically encouraged by principals in creative ways. If distributed leadership is to flourish it is evident that many hurdles need to be overcome and principals are key to this process (Harris, 2004). In keeping with our discussion on the principals leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs, we need to examine transformational leadership style and the PLCs.

2.2.6   *Transformational leadership style and Professional Learning Communities*

Reform efforts in education throughout the world have placed enormous burdens and expectations on principals to find new ways in which to maximise output in schools (Shorter 2012). Shorter (2012) suggests that a leadership style which is obliging is essential for education reforms to occur and for PLCs to grow into a group of professionals whose sole focus is to improve student learning.

Leadership styles in education has developed from the dictatorial and bureaucratic approaches to one of transformational leadership (Shorter, 2012). This evolution of leadership styles has led to an involvement and capacitation of many other role-players in the development of the school (Shorter 2012). According to Burns (2003) an effective leader should be able to transform society. Burns (2003) identifies the transformational leader as one who cares for his people and marshals their joint energies to meet the objectives. Bennis and Nanus (1985) enhanced the definition of transformational leadership to incorporate sustainability for the institution, creating and fostering belief among teachers and aiding institutional growth. Avolio and Bass (1988) shed more light on this concept by referring to transformational leadership as leadership with value where excellent teaching and learning practices are not only valued but shared with the entire staff in order to meet the demands of a changing society. Bush (2007) on the other hand, maintains that transformational leadership presupposes that the main view of leadership should be the degree of allegiances and competences of staff. Increased levels of these allegiances and competencies is believed to result in extra determination and more output (Leithwood *et al*., 1999). Shorter (2012) explains that transformational leadership is an approach to leadership expressed in terms of

the leaders' effect over their fellow workers as well as the kind of relationship that exists between the head and his followers.

The significance of principals in the establishment of PLCs, according to teachers' perceptions, was examined in research conducted by Huffman and Jacobson (2003) in Texas. The researchers tried to determine whether educators who were studying could recognise the main features of a learning community and discover the relationship between their principals' leadership styles and the main features of PLCs. This was a quantitative study which concluded that principals who displayed collaborative leadership or transformational leadership style, possessed greater chances in establishing a PLC (Shorter, 2012).

In another study, Mulford and Silns (2003) demonstrate that principals who led from the middle of the school, who were supportive of their staff, promoted collaboration to enhance the culture and inspired staff to involve themselves in collaborative inquiries have better opportunities to establish and sustain PLCs. In other words, those who possess transformational styles of leadership may enjoy more success in institutionalising positive cultures which promotes PLCs.

While the results of the above studies may point to the positive relationship between transformational leadership styles and PLCs, one must heed the caution offered by Chirichello (1999) as cited by Bush (2007) who believes that transformational leadership may also be slated as being a method to dominate subordinates and as a style of leadership, it finds greater audience with principals than teachers. In addition Allix (2000) as cited by Bush (2007, p.396) cautions that transformational leadership has the potential to become autocratic and repressive because of its emphasis on robust, superhuman and captivating features. The above therefore points to the duality of transformational leadership. In other words transformational leadership can have either a positive or negative effect on teachers. (Yukl, 1999). Next we look at how principals' leadership style can promote teacher leadership.

2.2.7   *Teacher leaders and Professional Learning communities*
When principals' engage in distributed leadership one of the many results is the development and growth of staff (Anderson, 2008) which gives rise to teacher leaders. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2011) view teacher leaders as leaders whose leadership extends both inside and outside the classroom. In addition, teacher leaders relate to and promote the cooperation of teacher leaders by encouraging others to enhance their teaching style. Finally, teacher leaders

acknowledge their role of leadership and how this impacts institutional goals (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2011). The effect is that teacher leaders relay the value of their role in the school to other teachers and endorse this new form of leadership. In this way teacher leaders foster the collaboration of other teachers. The final result that teacher leaders will eventually lead and guide other teachers to re-examine their teaching methods.

Leclerc *et al*. (2012) are explicit in their claim that leadership from the principal is an important aspect to encourage the development of a PLC. Huffman (2011) partially agrees that while the principal is central in school transformation, she maintains that distributed and broad leadership is vital for establishment and sustainability of PLCs. Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) share a similar view with Huffman (2011) that although leadership by the principal is important for transformations within the school, teacher leadership is just as essential. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2011) maintain that teacher leaders flourish in PLCs. Where staff is gaining knowledge collaboratively and sharing in decision making about its processes, such a school needs a principal who can loosen his grip on power and accept that he will need to depend on other members of his staff and thereby share the leadership of the school (Hord, 1997). Enabling teachers to share in the leadership of their schools is based on the modest but potent notion that to meet the scholastic needs of learners, managers need to first offer options for their staff to transform, mature and explore collectively (Harris and Jones, 2010).

This sharing of leadership between principals and teachers is supported with research findings by Hipp *et al*. (2008) whose intention was to record the progress of two schools in developing into PLCs and to ascertain the results of co-operation and teacher learning. Hipp *et al*. (2008) found that principals and teacher leaders in PLCs were creative and shared leadership around curriculum matters. Hord (1997, p.58) also agrees that it is essential for the principal to share responsibility, but adds that principals must also share control, authorization and the ability to decide with the teachers in a joint manner. The question that must then be posed is to what extent is the principal to share his control, power and decision making ability? The answer may be provided by Southworth (2009) who maintains that it is leadership which focuses primarily on learning which needs to be dispersed, and not any other form of leadership. This therefore means that principals should not abdicate other responsibilities under the guise of distributing leadership in the process of leading schools.

A research study was conducted by Schechter (2012) to examine Israeli teachers, principals and superintendents' insights of factors which hinder and enhance the PLCs. Schechter

(2012) found that superintendents and teachers identified principals' candidness and enthusiasm to embrace stakeholders in joint decision making as very important in the creation of a learning community. As a result, principals who entrust responsibilities to teachers, who facilitate sincerity and expedite collaboration among staff are able to create a learning community (Schechter, 2012). It is no longer a pecking order of those who are considered to be more knowledgeable but instead a necessity for all staff members to jointly develop the community (Hord, 1997). It is implied that when principals encourage teachers to adopt leadership responsibilities, this adds to the formation of PLCs in which teachers take a leading role based on their area of expertise. This therefore means that teacher leaders have an integral part to play in the creation and sustenance for PLCs.

Schechter (2012) believes this joint method of leadership is similar to what Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, and Hann (2002) call parallel leadership and Spillane (2005) calls distributed leadership. When leadership responsibilities were spread throughout the staff, principals were not seen as relinquishing their duties, but as decisively developing capabilities (Hipp, 2004). A principal who has difficulty sharing leadership with the staff creates a frustrated team who is demotivated and side-lined, leading to dissatisfaction and burnout (Hipp *et al*., 2008).

Finally, Barton and Stepanek (2012) suggest principals should demonstrate how empirical research can be utilized to investigate topics and to present questions which may be applicable to their schools. Principals ought to also lead the way in providing material resources and up-to-date research to staff so that they may be well informed of the latest trends (Spanneut, 2010). By providing resources and exposing teachers to current research, principals provide leadership for teacher leaders to take the reins in leading PLCs (Huggins *et al*., 2011). To promote teacher leaders who lead PLCs, Anderson (2008) further notes that a change is required by principals from ranked leadership styles to more informal and flatter distributive leadership styles. The inference is that principals need to create school structures that promote inclusive leadership with the leadership gap between principals and teachers being narrowed. Principals also need to reconsider and adapt their leadership styles in order to promote teacher leaders since outdated leadership styles are inconsistent with the PLCs which was alluded to earlier in this section on teacher leadership. I now turn to the section on the relationship between culture and principals' leadership style.

2.2.8   *Culture and Principals' leadership style*

Zembat, Adak, Sezer, Ozdemir, and Biber (2012) claim that a significant relationship exists between school culture and principals because productive and capable principals help in fashioning the school culture. In addition, Zembat *et al*. (2012) postulate that leadership styles displayed by school leaders are a requirement for an influential and constructive school culture. Jones, Stall and Yarbrough (2013) agree that there are researchers who perceive the role of the school principal as essential to enable the culture for authentic PLCs. Zembat *et al*. (2012) offers the following conceptualisation of school culture as a combination of the morals, standards, norms, philosophies and viewpoints that hold and bind people together in a learning community. Similarly, Bolam *et al*. (2005, p.16) citing Schein (1985) articulates that school culture is a deep-seated yet simple set of norms and values which are mutually understood and practised by an organisation. These basic norms and values function intuitively, and provide a definition of how the school sees itself and its surroundings (Bolam *et al*., 2005). These views articulate that culture involves values and assumptions and it regulates how an organisation and its members behave toward each other and the community and it is this commonality that defines and holds the organisation together.

Vescio, Ross and Adam's (2008) study presented a re-evaluation of 11 studies, mostly American, on the effect of PLCs on teacher practices and pupil learning. It was found that where PLCs had been launched it had altered the proficient ethos of the school (Vescio *et al*., 2008). These changes in the proficient ethos and cultures were associated with an increase in collaboration through arrangements such as team teaching, the use of common policies for educational judgements, classroom observations, and engaging in a form of peer review. However, such a change in culture requires a leader who is willing to learn with his staff and share leadership with staff in an environment which is conducive to innovation and investigation (Hipp *et al*., 2008). Therefore, the leadership style which appears conducive to the development of a PLC according to Hipp *et al*. (2008) is one which is inclusive.

Phillips and Wagner (2003) have highlighted two significant variables which they found in school culture; namely, mutual respect and effectiveness. Phillips and Wagner (2003) maintain that professional partnership is indispensable to creating positive cultures. In other words staff should function as a team in relation to professional matters since this gives rise to a healthy school culture. Firstly, Phillips and Wagner (2003) stress that when people feel part of a team, appreciated, and valued then collegiality is present in the school. Secondly, efficacy is noticeable only when staff feels that they own the programme or the conditions in

which they work. Ownership is vital from employees' perspective to fostering a healthy culture and to nurturing professional learning communities (Jones *et al*., 2013). When collegiality is present staff believes that they can shape critical decisions, they are positive, and they can resolve issues. (Jones *et al*., 2013) The leadership style adopted by the principal therefore can foster this healthy culture of ownership which is pivotal to sustaining a PLC (Huffman & Jacobson, 2003).

How does the leadership style of a principal impact upon school culture? Blackburn and Williamson's (2010) report on staff viewpoint on professional development suggest that if there is a keenness that is the yearning to team up to work together to increase attention to detail within the school, then this willingness or lack of it mirrors the culture of one's school and this is as a result of one's leadership in this area. Bolam *et al*. (2005) in their earlier studies seem to have arrived at a similar conclusion that the type and value of the leadership which is offered by principals and more experienced members of staff notably shapes the character of school culture. However, they go on to add a culture which enriches learning has leaders who are friendly, easy to talk to and welcoming (Bolam *et al*., 2005). In other words leadership style may have a bearing on school cultures particularly in PLCs.

Although the study by Zembat *et al*. (2012) was conducted in preschools to investigate the relationship between principals' leadership styles and school culture, they make an important point that both leadership styles and culture play a vital role in school. Zembat *et al*. (2012) further maintain that leadership style is a foundation to a learning community, the climate of a school and innovation.

Smith and Andrews (1989) cite ten qualities that successfully cultured schools have. Within this list of ten qualities, I found the following four relevant to our discussion: The first attribute is that the principal has high academic expectations and values and esteems his teachers. Principals also involve all staff and other stakeholders in decision-making processes. In addition, the principal gathers his resources to enable his staff to achieve their goals. Lastly, the principal attempts to remove any obstacles to the learning process (Smith & Andrews, 1989). These qualities can easily be attributed to leaders with a leadership style that is shared and democratic. One can therefore conclude that principal leadership styles can affect the culture of a school. Lastly, we turn our attention to the challenges facing PLCs.

2.2.9 Challenges to Professional Learning Communities

Vescio *et al*. (2008) and Hashmi (2011) observe that the tendency of establishing PLCs in schools has not been without its challenges. Challenges which surface in PLCs may hinder people from making significant inputs to school culture, school aims and objectives and, ultimately, student attainment (Sunddip, 2010).

Doolittle, Sudeck and Rattigan (2008) argued that the inadequate time for planning and lack of support from principals for professional development endorses Little's (1990) observation that it becomes difficult for schools to improve standards of education when school values sustain traditions of seclusion and isolation. These practices reduce and deter significant collaboration between staff members (Doolittle *et al*., 2008). Thus according to Little, Gearhart, Curry and Kafka (2003) valuable teaching practices are rarely disseminated and inferior education is seldom detected or challenged.

In their study which focused on developing professional development schools, Doolittle *et al*. (2008) observed that public schools occasionally lacked hands-on or co-operative approaches that allow for refocusing enthusiasm and communicating main concerns. Doolittle *et al*. (2008) found similarities with a study by Housman and Martinez (2001) that teachers and heads in schools which performed poorly have a tendency to work in seclusion from each other rather than as collaborators in a PLC. Further afield, Rismark and Sølvberg (2012) found similar practices in Norwegian schools where the absence of the practice of knowledge and information sharing between principals and staff may hinder schools from developing into PLCs. However, Barton and Stepanek (2012) caution that collaboration on its own will not improve an institution and may help to strengthen an undesirable culture if PLCs are allowed to become purely a time to complain.

Leaders themselves could be obstacles to the establishment and sustainability of PLCs. This is supported by Fullan (2007) who found that the shortage of principals who are well trained and skilled in the transformation process could also be an obstacle in the sustainability of PLCs. McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) emphasize the difficulties present in establishing and sustaining PLCs. Among these difficulties mentioned are principals who operate more as officials than as teaching and learning leaders. Hairon and Dimmock (2012) further highlight that a major challenge for principals will be developing of staff responsibility since principals are more absorbed with organisational aspects instead of developing the ethos and collegiality.

Finally, in their study of the organized implementation of PLCs in schools in Singapore, Hairon and Dimmock (2012) found that the practice of domination and oppression within society, reliance on different levels of power as well as a deep and genuine appreciation for authority in Singapore presents difficulties for teachers and principals tasked with establishing and sustaining PLCs. Hord (1997, p. 16) refers to this as the "omnicompetence" which has been adopted by principals and strengthened by staff in the school. Omnicompetence is a term used to describe a principal who believes he has all the competencies to run a school. In other words he believes that he can do all things by himself. Therefore it is challenging for principals to admit that they need professional growth themselves or to appreciate and understand the vibrant capability of their staff (Hord, 1997). Furthermore, it is tough for members of staff to suggest differing opinions about how well a school is performing or not when the principal is viewed in a domineering position (Hord, 1997).

Hairon and Dimmock (2012) believe PLC guideline poses new difficulties for Singapore school principals to develop their leadership capability and responsibilities beyond regular duties in three ways. Firstly, principals are challenged to build a sound rapport with teachers in order to bring about change in teachers commitment to collective goals. Secondly, principals are also expected to positively influence instructional improvements through mentorship programmes. Lastly, they are expected to develop and train stakeholders to participate in school decision making processes in respect of instructional issues (Hairon and Dimmock, 2012).

Hairon and Dimmock (2012) found that in hierarchical systems like in Singapore, where school based leadership is centralised, a more confined model of PLC might reign where professional development is limited to modernizations in teaching methods and field of study. In these scenarios where bureaucracies do not undergo transformation, PLCs are not likely to be powerful tools of systemic change (Hairon and Dimmock, 2012). The conclusion one can draw from Hairon and Dimmock's (2012) study is that PLCs cannot simply be forced on a school, particularly if the school system itself operates using an outdated leadership model. This enforced implementation is inconsistent with the values of a PLC and, if implemented, it would simply be superficial improvements that miss the opportunities for real change.

A literature review is one's personal interpretation and analysis. My focus in this review was to look at empirical research which highlights the relationship between principals' leadership

styles and the sustainability of PLCs. While many studies have been conducted on leadership styles, few have focused on the direct relationship between these styles and the sustainability of PLCs. Still fewer have been conducted in South Africa. Of those studies which have focused on the relationship between principal leadership styles and PLCs, there appeared to be a strong relationship between leadership styles and their effect on PLCs. This review has attempted to show that principals' leadership styles does have an impact on the sustainability of PLCs. Leadership styles do seem to affect how PLCs are guided, how PLCs operate, how leadership is distributed and transformed, how teacher leaders are involved and how cultures eventually take root. In the next section, I discuss the theoretical framework of transformational leadership theory and distributed leadership theory and the conceptual framework of professional learning community.

Theoretical framework

2.3 This study is framed by transformational and distributed leadership theories which are relevant for analysing school principal leadership styles as well as the conceptual framework of PLCs. Transformational theory is important for the study because it will be used to address how leaders develop and nurture teachers in order to sustain transformation. The distributed theory is important for my study because it reveals how principals go about sharing the responsibility of leading their schools and the results of this leadership approach on the future of the organisation. Both the transformational theory and distributed theory appear to build on each other. These theories also show a progression, from the growth of followers to the assumptions of responsibilities of followers within the organisation. In this sense they form a holistic framework. In the next sub-section, a detailed presentation of the theoretical and conceptual framework follows.

2.3.1 Transformational leadership theory

According to Conger (1999), Burns (1978) is credited with formulating the ideas of transformational leadership. But it was Bass (1985) who conceived the four components of transformational leadership which are idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration.

In the idealised influence component of transformational leadership the head believes in his workers and supplies a foundation for change in so far as how teachers work. (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). Inspirational motivation gives hope to the followers that difficulties can be seen as

opportunities. This component is significant in creating a vision which is a catalyst to achieving the objectives of the institution. The manner in which the head conducts himself provides the inspirational motivation which gives significance to followers (Hoy & Miskel, 2005).

Intellectual stimulation attends to issues of creativity (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). The transformational leader nurtures followers to be innovative and challenge outdated traditions. This leader challenges followers to think in new ways, to steer clear of damaging criticisms and to think of rational solutions. Leaders in this theory are transparent and open to scrutiny while at the same time willing to undergo transformation (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). The individualised consideration means that transformational leaders are attentive to the needs of their followers for development. The reason for individualised consideration is to determine the positive and negative aspects of followers (Hoy & Miskel, 2005).

Transformational leadership theory is appropriate for use in this study because a significant aspect of transformational leadership is the development and growth of followers (Avolio and Gibbons, 1988). Transformational leaders appraise the ability of all followers to not only execute their current responsibilities but also look at developing their abilities for the future. In addition transformational leaders focus on preparing followers for independence and enablement (Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002). Bass and Avolio (1990) maintain that transformational leaders aim to improve groups' competence to become independent thinkers, come up with innovative concepts and challenge unsound educational practices. In PLCs, similarly, principals are expected to develop teachers for the present and the future to become competent thinkers, innovative practitioners and trailblazers in educational matters where they can steer the PLCs. When teachers assume a leading role in PLCs this suggests that leadership has been shared or distributed. The second theoretical framework I will be using in this study is distributed leadership.

2.3.2 Distributed leadership theory

Spillane (2005) believes that distributed leadership theory was originally informed by the work of Thompson (1967). Spillane, (2005) adds that interdependency is a central feature in how leaders interact in distributed leadership. Interdependency takes shape in how both leader and follower interact and not through the actions of the leaders (Spillane, Diamond, Sherer & Coldren, 2005). Distributed leadership disputes the belief that one person has to be

in control to initiate transformation (Heller and Firestone, 1995). In other words, distributed leadership means depending on many members within the organisation to steer and conclude many tasks which differ in magnitude, intricacy and range (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). Some of these tasks include regular and unforeseen responsibilities. (Hoy & Miskel, 2005).

Robinson (2008) claims that distributed leadership is a must when one thinks about the vastness and complex responsibilities of a modern school. Supporters strongly maintain that one person alone does not have all the competencies needed to run a school (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). In view of the above claims the responsibilities for leading all these tasks is spread across several members (Spillane, 2005). Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001) describe distributed leadership as leadership which is extended and spread over many people. In totality, distributed school leadership is more than what a leader knows and does. It is constructed through vibrant exchanges between numerous supervisors, followers and their situation as particular leadership tasks are engaged (Spillane *et al*., 2001).

The use of the distributed leadership theory is appropriate for my study because within a PLC, staff will need to be discovered, matured and harnessed (Robinson 2008). This leadership practice is more aligned to PLCs than other leadership practices (Harris, 2008). Schools which are characterized by a strong distributed leadership practice will have a staff who are well-informed about educational matters and take responsibility for students learning outcomes (Robinson, 2008). This is a view similarly shared by Harris (2004) that distributed theory has been linked to teacher empowerment which is indirectly linked to possible improvement in student outcomes. Similarly, the development of organisational capacity which includes the empowerment of teachers is pivotal to the sustainability of PLCs (Williams, Brien, Sprague & Sullivan, 2008). I present the conceptual framework of a PLC adopted by Hord (1997) as a penultimate section in this review chapter.

2.3.3 Professional Learning Communities

Hord (1997) highlights the following characteristics as a framework of PLCs which will be used in this study. These are: "supportive and shared leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning, shared practice and supportive conditions" (Elbousty & Bratt, 2009, p.4). The supportive and shared leadership between the principal and staff, which is the first dimension, leads to a co-operative and mutual leadership where all parties can develop as

professionals. (Hord, 1997). The principal also provides a supportive environment for teachers to grow within the PLC (Hord, 1997).

The second dimension of Hord's (1997) PLC framework is the shared values and vision where staff is involved in developing a collective vision and to using it as a marker in deciding issues of educational practices. Here, there is a clear emphasis on the learners' ability to learn (Hord, 1997). Staff demonstrates compassionate relationships for each other (Hord, 1997). The third dimension of Hord's (1997) PLC framework is the combined creativity; which is joint learning by staff and the use of that learning to solve and address student difficulties (Hord 1997).

The fourth dimension of the PLC framework according to Hord (1997) is the sharing of personal practice. In sharing practices, teachers observe each other's lessons with a view to learn and not condemn (Hord, 1997). Sharing personal practice requires staff to esteem, count on and appreciate each other (Hord, 1997). In sharing their personal practice, teachers feel at ease to share both their highs and lows of teaching (Hord, 1997). According to Hord (1997, p.26) here teachers also offer assistance, compassion, admiration and credit to all staff members.

The final dimension of a PLC framework which is supplied by Hord (1997) which will be used in this study is supportive conditions. Supportive conditions are conditions that determine time, place and manner in which staff consistently meet to engage in PLC work (Hord, 1997). There are two supportive conditions necessary for PLCs to flourish (Hord, 1997). The first according to Boyd (1992) as cited in Hord (1997, p. 26) is "physical conditions". Physical factors include opportunities to meet, material supplies, staff development and reporting structures. The second, according to Louis and Kruse (1995) as cited in Hord (1997, p.26), is "people capacities". People capacities refers to the teacher's eagerness to receive constructive criticism from others in order to improve their practice. It

2.4 also includes respect and trust among teachers (Hord, 1997). It is to the summary of this section that I now turn to.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have presented a review of literature in relation to the study. Eight themes were presented, namely: conceptualising leadership, leadership styles and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), sustainability of PLCs, types of leaders required to nurture

PLCs, distributed leadership style and PLCs, transformational leadership style and PLCs, teacher leaders, culture and leadership styles and finally challenges to PLCs. I have presented the theoretical underpinnings of the study which are transformational leadership theory, distributed leadership theory and professional learning communities. These are the frame of reference for the study. In the next chapter, I present the research design and methodology employed in the study. Motivation for the choice of research design and methodology will also be included in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1   **Introduction**

Chapter Two reviewed literature on the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities (PLCs). Besides reviewing relevant literature, that chapter also presented and discussed the theoretical frameworks that were deemed relevant for understanding the PLC phenomenon. Chapter Three discusses key issues relating to research design and methodology that was utilised in this study with a view to answering the research questions generated in Chapter One.

In presenting this chapter, I firstly discuss the research paradigm in which this study is located. Thereafter, I explain the qualitative approach which was used in the study. Next I describe the method of data generation and instruments that were used during the study. Furthermore, I discuss information on target population and sampling procedures. Finally, I discuss analysis procedures, issues of trustworthiness, ethical considerations as well as the limitations of the study.

3.2   **Research paradigm**

Paradigms are frames of orientation through which one looks and comprehends (Babbie, 2013). According to Terre Blanche, Durkheim and Painter (2006), amongst others, there are three key paradigms: positivism, interpretivism and constructionism. Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006) further maintain that the three dimensions which separate one paradigm from the other, and these are: ontology, epistemology and methodology. Ontology refers to a particular perspective of a type of reality (Taylor & Medina, 2013), epistemology is the association between the scholar and what is knowable and methodology refers to a manner in which a researcher can analyse what they believe can be analysed (Terre Blanche *et al*., 2006).

3.2.1 Interpretive paradigm

Paradigms are lenses through which researchers understand the context of the phenomena under study and as such they are neither right nor wrong as methods of observation (Babbie, 2013). In addition paradigms provide coherence in so far as methods and research instruments are concerned (Creswell, 2009). I have located my study within the interpretive

paradigm. Interpretivism aims to understand the sphere of personal experience (Cohen & Manion, 1994). A researcher who operates in the interpretivist paradigm will depend on the subjects' views of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2009). For this reason, the interpretive paradigm was the most suitable paradigm for me to locate my study in because the study sought to elicit the views of school principals and classroom teachers on how they experience and understand the relationship between principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities. Meaning is created when the researcher and participants work together to understand the phenomenon of leadership in PLCs. I have also discussed how issues of ontology, epistemology and methodology were dealt with in this qualitative study. Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006) state that qualitative researchers want to make sense of experiences, social situations or phenomena as they occur in their natural settings. I was interested in the experiences of principals and teachers in their natural world, which was a school.

3.2.2 Ontology

Ontology is the "study of reality" (Mouton, 1996, p. 8).Within the interpretive paradigm there are manifold realities that are collectively created (Wahyuni, 2012). In relation to this study I elicited multiple views from principals' and teachers' perspectives in order to understand and shed light on the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs. These views were subjective. In other words, many people can arrive at different meanings about one issue (Robson, 2002). These multiple realities can create a rich tapestry of information which can shed light on the relationship between principals' leadership styles and PLCs.

3.2.3 Epistemology

Epistemology is how a researcher can gain knowledge of reality (Hart, 1998) and, within this paradigm, the assumption is that knowledge is socially constructed by participants and the researcher must present this social construction from the perspective of the participants (de Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2005). In my study, knowledge of the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs was socially constructed based on information from principals and educators. This preserves the authenticity of the data and removes any preconceived notions on the part of the researcher.

3.2.4 Methodology

In the interpretive paradigm, researchers align their methods to be interactive and qualitative in nature (Terre Blanche *et al*., 2006). Unlike quantitative research, in qualitative research, researchers generate data in language that can be stated or scripted (Terre Blanche *et al*., 2006). Qualitative research is therefore located within interpretivism as a research paradigm. The methodology which I use is a case study which is an organised and comprehensive examination of a specific occurrence in its environment in order to create knowledge (Rule & John, 2011). The case study as a preferred choice of a methodology gave me an in-depth view of my study and allowed me personal interaction with my participants. The research was a case study of school principals' leadership styles within PLCs. The case in this study is the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs in three primary schools.

Population and sampling

3.3 Population refers to every case (Robson, 2002) and clearly neither time nor resource permits us to interview all the principals who completed the Advanced Certificate Education (ACE) School Leadership (SL) programme. For this reason I selected a sample from the population of ACE: SL graduates. The sample for this study involved three school principals and nine teachers of three primary schools within the Umlazi district.

Sampling refers to the choice of participants from the whole population (Terre Blanche *et al.,* 2006). Precisely who is to be sampled is governed by what is to be analysed and sampling ought to take into account characteristics within the grouping of people to be researched (Terre Blanche *et al.,* 2006). There are three main types of sampling used in qualitative research namely, random sampling, purposive sampling and stratified sampling. Purposive sampling was used in this study. When a researcher makes choices about people to be included in the sample this is referred to as purposive sampling.

Purposive sampling is where the participants who are selected are suitable and appropriate to achieve the outcomes of the study (Rule & John, 2011). In this research school principals, of three primary schools, who completed the ACE: SL training were selected purposively together with nine school teachers (three from each school). The reason for the choice of the three schools for this study was their close geographical proximity to the researcher. In view of the many research studies conducted at secondary schools, this study focussed on primary schools.

Principals who are gatekeepers were approached to gain permission to conduct the study in their schools. Even after permission was granted, gaining access to the research sites was difficult because some teachers were suspicious of researchers and each other. In one school, in my preamble I mentioned that the study was about principals' leadership styles. Immediately, without a word, teachers hastily got up and left the staff room while I was still speaking. I thought that something had happened outside the staffroom. One HOD, who was new at the school, approached me to inform me that a serious breakdown in relationship between the principal and teachers occurred months before I arrived at the school. I had to find a new school.

In other schools teachers were apprehensive at first, but after outlining the aims of the study as well as the principles of privacy and confidentiality, staff was at ease to participate in the study. Other principals and teachers were too busy to consider participating in the study.

3.4 Participants in the study

The selection of participants in this study included three principals and nine educators for the interviews. Only principals who participated in the ACE: SL training were purposively selected for this study. The reason for the selection of only ACE: SL graduates was because the study focussed primarily on the principals' leadership styles of these graduates and its effects on sustaining PLCs. In addition principals were selected because they possessed appropriate "knowledge, interest and experience in relation to the case" (Rule & John, 2011, p. 85). Teachers from the three schools, where the principals were selected as participants, were also deemed important participants, and were identified for participation in this study. The nine educators, three from each school, were selected based on years of experience. Of the three educators from each school two had to be in the profession for more than ten years while the other educators had to be in the profession for less than ten years. The current

3.5 criteria for the selection of teachers was to ensure that there was a fair and balanced view presented of the principals leadership styles within the PLCs.

Method of data generation

I will provide greater details on semi-structured interviews and documents reviews which were used in this study.

3.5.1 Semi-structured interview

In this study I attempted to gain a detailed and in-depth understanding of the relationship which exists between principals' leadership styles and the manner in which professional learning communities (PLCs) were established and sustained. For this reason I used semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are defined as those arranged around points of interest (de Vos *et al.*, 2005) which according to Rule and John (2011) would allow me a degree of freedom to probe issues which arise during the interview. In semi-structured interviews the researcher is flexible with regard to the order of the questions but more importantly it would allow the participant to expand on ideas and talk more broadly on matters raised by the interviewer (Denscombe, 2003) This flexibility and allowance to speak broadly puts the participant at ease to speak openly and provide detailed insider's perspectives on the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and PLC.

Interviews are mostly used in qualitative designs because researchers attempt to understand the world from the perspective of the participant (de Vos *et al.,* 2005). I have chosen interviews for in-depth and better understanding of principals' leadership in PLCs as perceived by themselves and teachers. The interview schedule was generated using the three critical questions as a guide. The interview questions sought to answer the critical questions. All interviews were digitally voice recorded and transcribed *verbatim* because digital audio recording was more comprehensive than hand written records (Smit, Harre & Van Langenhoven, 1995).

3.5.2 Documents reviews

The second method of data collection which I used was documents reviews. Nieuwenhuis (2007) argues that the use of documents as a method to obtain data assists the researcher to comb through written data which may illuminate the phenomenon under investigation. The phenomenon in my study was the principals' leadership styles and PLCs. For this study, I examined the minutes of staff meetings from October 2013 to August 2014 which were made available to me to examine during my own time. I combed through the data looking for information directly related to my key and interview questions. The minutes of staff meetings were analysed using content analysis. The minutes of staff meetings were also used to determine if what the principals had mentioned in the interviews were indeed happening in their schools.

3.5.3 Pilot study

Pilot studies are a minor version and a trial run of the actual study in order to ascertain its viability (Robson, 2002). In order to ascertain the suitability of the instrument and to look for possible problems a pilot study was conducted. The interviews were piloted by involving other school teachers and principals to participate in the study. The pilot participants were different from the actual participants of the study. My job as an interviewer was to get participants to open up and speak without restraint (Robson, 2002). To this end, I piloted the interview schedule questions with the principals and teachers of other schools.

The aim of the pilot study was to clarify issues and detect problems with regard to the interview schedule. Before piloting the study I obtained informed consent from all pilot participants. When the pilot study was concluded I was able to attend to errors, ambiguities and insert more probes where it was needed. In the pilot study, question one posed a challenge because of its broad scope. As a result, probes were inserted to guide the participants in responding. I formulated an updated interview schedule and used the final version for the actual study.

3.6   Data analysis

The data for this study was analysed using content analysis. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) content analysis consists of coding, classifying, matching, deducing and extracting theoretical suppositions from the textual data. This involves reducing the vast amount of texts into fewer categories (Cohen *et al*., 2007). I began by firstly reading through the entire transcript a few times. During the reading process, initial stage of coding was carried out which entails labelling each of the segments of the text with codes (Robson, 2002). Thereafter second stage of coding was carried out so that initial codes could be combined into smaller number of themes (Robson, 2002). This merging of first and second level coding allowed comparisons and conclusions to be made regarding the themes.

3.7

Ensuring trustworthiness of the findings

Guba (1981) suggests that trustworthiness of a study is achieved through transferability, confirmability, credibility and dependability. Transferability is where the researcher provides enough depth and detail to allow their findings and conclusions to be determined by the reader (Rule and John, 2011). To address transferability, I included in my research, the data-

generating instruments, interview transcripts and data analysis so that researchers could duplicate the study in similar contexts.

The second principle of trustworthiness is confirmability. This relates to objectivity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasises the importance of determining whether findings of a study can be confirmed by other researchers. To ensure confirmability I took notes during the interviews as well as digitally audio recorded the interviews. Note taking and audio recording was used to confirm the authenticity of the data. I relied on a critical reader who was my supervisor to confirm my results.

The third principle is dependability, which emphasizes "methodological rigour" and unity towards producing conclusions which researchers can confidently accept (Rule & John, 2011, p. 107). Put differently, dependability is an appraisal of the specification and quality of the processes and means of collecting and analysing data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure the dependability of the instruments, I conducted a pilot study to fine tune the instruments. In addition to this I had relied on an independent critical reader (Rule & John, 2011) to ensure that the findings stem from the data and that there is congruence between data analysis and findings. This congruence was determined by my cohort and supervisor.

Credibility refers to the degree to which a case study has documented the completeness and core of the actuality of a case (Rule & John, 2011). In other words credibility refers to the extent of compatibility of the findings with reality (Shenton, 2004). To ensure credibility in my study I went back to my participants to ascertain if my interpretation was consistent with those of the participants.

3.8

Ethical consideration

Practices for ethical behaviour involve "autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence" (Rule & John, 2011, p. 112). Autonomy guarantees that the participant's identity will remain concealed while their privacy and confidentiality will be respected and upheld (Rule & John, 2011). Written permission was sought from participants for their participation in this study. The request outlined the purpose, the right to withdraw, confidentiality, anonymity and any risks or benefits associated with the study. Permission and ethical clearance was sought from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).

The second principle I observed is non-maleficence which is an ethical obligation of the researcher to protect subjects from any form of harm that may arise from the study (Babbie,

2013). One way of preventing harm was by protecting the identity of participants and respecting confidentiality. The third principle I observed is beneficence which refers to adhering to agreements and commitments like offering comments or follow-up after the visit to the site (Rule & John, 2011). I informed participants of the value of the study to guide future understanding of leadership styles and PLCs.

3.8.1 Ethical issues pertaining to participants

With regard to the various individuals and schools, I observed strict codes of confidentiality and anonymity by ensuring that no names of schools or principals or teachers were revealed. Pseudonyms were used for all participants as well as schools. Before the study commenced, all participants were informed of the nature of the study, as well as their right to confidentiality and privacy. Permission was requested from them to be interviewed and to have the interview audio recorded. Furthermore the participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage, if they so desired, without any repercussions.

3.9 Limitations of the study

My research was a case study using two methods for data generation. As a result the findings cannot be used to generalise other cases. However, case studies do have their advantages. One of the outstanding characteristic of a case study is its focus on the individual (Babbie & Mouton 2003). This characteristic allowed me to get an in-depth view of the relationship between principals' leadership style and the PLC and to reach conclusions by examining one limited sample. In addition, my aim was to make meaning of the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and PLCs.

3.10 Chapter summary

Within this chapter I have written of the research design and methodology which was utilised in the study. I maintained that because I located my study within the interpretivist paradigm, I was guided by the qualitative approach which offers a rich in-depth insight and subjective views emanating from diverse contexts. This approach assisted me to understand how principals led and supported the PLCs and why they supported the PLCs in their unique ways. I used semi-structured interviews which gave the participants freedom to answer the questions posed to them as well as freedom for me to enquire more about issues and probe

further about matters not touched on. In addition, I used documents reviews to triangulate the data. The next chapter focuses on the data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the research design and methodology employed in this study. In this chapter I present and discuss the data that was generated through two data generation methods. I gathered data through semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers as well as documents reviews of staff meetings for the period October 2013 to August 2014. Using information from different sources is described as data triangulation (Guion, Diehl & McDonald, 2011). While there are many different types of triangulation, like theory triangulation, available to improve the validity of a study, I used data triangulation to enhance trustworthiness of the findings of this study. The data for this study was analysed using content analysis. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), content analysis consists of coding, classifying, matching, deducing and extracting theoretical suppositions from the textual data. The textual data in this study was read several times before coding could begin. After coding, the data was classified and combined to form issues which answered the interview questions.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the first interview question: do principals characterise their school as a place where leadership is shared, where there is collaborative learning and where there are shared values and vision. Principals had to elaborate on how they exercised shared leadership, collaborative learning, shared values and vision sharing. From there, I move on to the manner in which principals lead their schools and how this promotes: shared leadership, collaborative learning, shared values, vision sharing. Thereafter, I proceed to determine how collaborative learning was established and how it is sustained by principals. Lastly, this is followed by the reasons school principals support the PLCs in the way they do.

4.2 Principals leadership styles and how they exercise shared leadership, collaborative learning, shared values and vision sharing.

Principals were asked if they would characterise their school as a place where leadership is shared, where there is collaborative learning and where there are shared values and vision. If they characterised their school as such, they were encouraged to explain how they exercised:

shared leadership, collaborative learning, shared values and vision sharing.

4.2.1 Shared leadership

When asked about how principals characterised their respective school in relation to leadership styles that are used, they all mentioned that it was largely a shared leadership. When asked to explain that further, they highlighted partnership as significant elements of shared leadership.

4.2.1.1 Partnerships

The idea of partnerships emerged from the data under the theme of shared leadership. All three principals who were interviewed acknowledged that they needed to work with teachers. Principals acknowledged that they needed their staff in order to lead their schools effectively. With this in mind, principals supported shared leadership and were willing to involve others in leadership within the school. Principal Anderson from Astin Primary acknowledges the frustrations and futility of working alone by stating that: *"I cannot work in an island"*. He maintains that he would not be able to successfully run the school without the participation of his staff. It could also mean that Principal Anderson recognises his strengths and weaknesses as well as the capabilities of his staff. In recognising his teachers' abilities, Principal Anderson has developed a relationship with his staff and included them as leaders in the daily running of the school. Principal Anderson supports the above view by stating: *"I have to work with my teachers"*. The suggestion here is that Principal Anderson views his staff as partners in education and as co-leaders within the school. In approaching leadership in this way Anderson depends on the views and opinions of his teachers to give him a better perspective of school issues.

In support of the idea of partnership Mrs Lungelo, who is also from Astin Primary, presents a teacher's perspective when she states that *"educators need to help the principal in sharing work as a team at our school"*. She hints that teachers also have an equal responsibility to share leadership and accountability with the principal, which results in teamwork. The end result is that teamwork helps relieve the burden of the principal through the involvement of other role-players. When many people share leadership it improves the functioning of the school. Mrs Gumede from Astin Primary further acknowledged that Principal Anderson consistently includes staff in the running of the school when she states: *"he always gets the staff involved"*. This involvement implies that the principal sees great value in consulting

with his staff. When principals consult and involve teachers in their schools this inevitably draws teachers to get involved in what goes on in their schools. When teachers are involved in the running of the school, a sense of ownership is created which gives teachers a sense of purpose and belonging. Teachers, as a result, feel that they belong to a family of professionals where their views are valued and welcomed. Such teachers become invaluable assets to their schools.

On the subject of partnerships Principal Utica from Union Primary notes that she is only one of the many leaders at her school. This observation suggests that there is a degree of equality amongst the staff. She admits that responsibility has to be shared with teachers when she says: *"I'm not the only leader in my school because I got teachers, the SMT, the HOD that I have to work with"*. She maintains that the SMT, HODs and teachers are allies and leaders in their own right. In other words, teachers are seen as co-partners in the leadership of the school. This view is also supported by Principal Anderson which was alluded to earlier on in this discussion. In support of Principal Utica's view of teachers as partners she encourages teachers to learn all aspects of leading and managing a school. She is willing to open up the domains of her leadership and responsibilities which was once seen as the privilege of an elite few. One could describe her as a co-leader within her school.

Similar to Principal Anderson, Principal Donald from Damascus Primary points out that he involves his staff in the running of the school which denotes a form of partnership. He maintains that involving teachers is indispensable to leadership. Principal Donald goes to great lengths to portray himself as a leader who shares leadership. The involvement is confirmed by his statement: *"I ensure teachers are involved in terms of management and in terms of leading the school"*. When quizzed about how the principal involves teachers in leadership of the school, Mr Moodley from Damascus Primary further explains that principal Donald provides opportunities for teachers to participate in policy issues at the school when he states: *"He allows all stakeholders to take part in formulating policy"*. The suggestion is that teachers have been given greater responsibilities in policy issues of the school. Greater responsibilities in this regard is indicative of shared leadership and partnership in leading the school. In addition Mrs Sachin, also from Damascus Primary, gives us an idea on how her principal involves staff when she comments: *"He shares the meetings most of the time"*. In other words, Principal Donald allows others to lead the meetings while he gently steps back. The theme of partnerships suggests that principals who share leadership with their staff are more likely to develop sustainability within their schools (Cook, 2014).

To triangulate the data a second method of data generation, which is document reviews, was employed. Staff meeting minutes indicated that Astin Primary school principal did indeed share leadership with teachers. At a meeting on the 20 January 2014 the opening comments were: *"The principal rendered his apology for not being present at the meeting"*. The indication is that the principal was confident that someone other than himself was able to conduct the staff meeting and obtain feedback. Even though the principal was not available, he allowed others to assume leadership roles in his absence. The suggestion here is one of shared leadership in the form of partnerships with staff.

In addition, on 14 January 2014, Principal Anderson urges his staff to: *"Work with office staff"*. Evidence supports the notion that the principal at Astin Primary encourages his staff to develop a partnership approach in running the school. He pleads with his staff to form a supportive working relationship with him and the other managers. The principal's willingness to work with his teachers is highlighted in this instance.

Furthermore, on 14 January 2014 the minutes reflect that the principal stated that: *"The sports roster should include educators, SGB and parents"*. Comments made earlier by Principal Anderson that he cannot work in an island, supports the document review finding. He seems to establish partnerships with teachers and the community through the SGB because he recognises the value of having others share the responsibilities with him in leading the school.

Minutes of staff meetings from Union Primary seem to corroborate Principal Utica's assertion that she also shares leadership through partnerships with various staff members. However, one entry in the minutes indicate otherwise. At a staff meeting 31 January 2014 Toyota seemed to have been unhappy that the principal was leading admissions of new learners into the school. Complaints like the above may suggest that that principal does not share responsibilities with the staff. However, other entries contradict these views because entries made on 16 April 2014 indicate that more teachers were involved in the finance sub-committee than parents. In addition on 16 April 2014, the minutes suggest that there were numerous tasks to improve the school. The minutes reflected that these: *"responsibilities lay with the school development team"*. The intimation is that the principal does allow others to share responsibilities with her. In addition the school has three level one educators, which may explain why the principal had to carry out the responsibility of admissions since that may have unduly burdened the staff.

The theme of partnerships is further supported by staff meeting minutes at Damascus Primary school. It appears that the teachers at the school run a youth development programme (YDP). Teachers were grouped into teams and each team runs the YDP per term. The staff meeting minutes on 10 April 2014 show that Principal Donald allows these teams to devise their plans for the YDP. The YDP initiative is evidence of shared leadership and a partnership between the principal and teachers to assist learners. Support for the above is found in the following extract: *"educators in the youth development programme need to forward a plan of what you are doing this term"*. Principal Donald also commended his teachers for the sterling work which they did and acknowledged the efforts of his teachers to work as partners in running the school. The commendation is authenticated by minutes of a staff meeting on 15 May 2014 whereby Principal Donald iterated his gratitude to staff when he says: *"thanks to the teachers for the work they are doing in the school"*.

When comparing the views of principals and teachers as well as the minutes of meetings on how principals exercise shared leadership, there appears to be a congruence in the data. Data supports Lambert (1998) who believes that school leadership must not be vested in one individual, instead it must be separated from one person. Therefore the connotation is that leadership is shared with all employees for a collective purpose. The fresh view of leadership in which both principals and teachers must work together as partners, requires well thought-out actions on the principal's part (Huffman, 2011).

Many participants commented on how their principal shares leadership with them. Sharing of leadership may be described as distributed leadership. Distributed leadership rejects the notion that one person has to be in control to bring about change (Heller and Firestone, 1995). In other, words distributed leadership means depending on many members within the organisation to steer and conclude many tasks which differ in magnitude, intricacy and range (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). Distributed leadership requires a partnership between teachers and principals.

Generally, teachers' views on how principals' exercise shared leadership seem to suggest that principals create partnerships and delegate responsibilities to teachers. In addition, it appears that principals do not take decisions alone. Instead, principals consult with their staff on school matters. Through a partnership approach, principals exercise shared leadership with their staff.

The approach adopted by principals in this study with their staff is indicative of their style of leadership. Therefore, principals who shared leadership demonstrated leadership that is inclusive. The inclusive approach to leadership is a necessity in PLCs (Williams, 2006). Principals were willing to allow others, particularly teachers, to have meaningful roles in leading their schools. As a result, the willingness to involve teachers in school leadership in turn appears to sustain the PLCs (Cook, 2014). Therefore, the leadership style of the principal can affect the sustainability of PLCs. Next, we look at how principals exercised collaborative learning.

4.2.2 Collaborative learning

When asked about whether principals characterised their respective schools as places where collaborative learning takes place, they all answered in the affirmative. When asked to explain that further, they highlighted teamwork and principals support as essential elements in exercising collaborative learning

4.2.2.1. Team work

All principals seem to agree that they exercised collaborative learning through a collective approach. Principal Anderson states that it is his responsibility to ensure that teachers work as teams to make sure that they are effective in their work. Support for Principal Anderson's view is found in the following comment: "*I have a particular job to make sure that… educators are working as a team*". In other words, principals have a role to encourage the collaborative process however, that role should not be overbearing or dominating since this approach may actually impede the collaborative process. It seems that the need to work together had a particular purpose in Astin Primary. Mr Radebe alludes to that purpose when he states that they work together in order to "*share ideas, educate each other and help teachers with challenges*". When teachers begin to share their successes and challenges as well as innovative thoughts, it assists other teachers to see the value of collaborative learning. Teachers begin to see these collaborative structures as valuable opportunities for the improvement of learner achievement, teacher effectiveness and the whole school development.

Principal Donald tells us that his teachers are constantly interacting with each other and discussing how they teach when he states: "*we share our system of teaching*". Principal Donald seems to encourage teachers to share strategies that work as well as hurdles which

they encounter in the classrooms. The actions of the principal to encourage sharing, creates the perception that the practice of teaching is becoming more open for discussion and debate. The practice of sharing and reflecting on what goes on in classrooms is a significant step in removing the secrecy that surrounds the actions of the teacher in the classroom. When teaching as a process is unveiled, it allows teachers safety and freedom to share their areas of weaknesses as well as to acknowledge their need for support. The collaborative process therefore requires a principal who is supportive. Mrs Sachin from Damascus Primary further adds that, at staff meetings, all facets of the school are discussed and that Principal Donald highlights and impresses upon the need to work together rather than alone:

> *Most of the time he emphasizes collaborative learning... because you cannot be a teacher at your corner... all the work that we must do, we must do it together. He encourages us to do that.*

Mrs Sachin highlights an important aspect in so far as the principals' leadership in collaborative learning. She emphasizes that Principal Donald tends to attach special importance to working together. Mrs Sachin suggests that Principal Donald promotes collaborative learning through his encouragement of teamwork which is an important aspect in how he exercises collaborative learning.

Finally, Principal Utica supports both Principals Anderson and Donald when she says that: *"we call all these teams and we work together"*. She maintains that she exercises collaborative learning by assembling teams and ensuring that they work as a unit. She seems to suggest that she creates the conditions which are necessary for her teachers to work in. The conditions could include the provision of resources but more importantly an atmosphere and culture which values the expertise of teachers. To emphasise how principal Utica exercises collaborative learning, Mr Morgan maintains that they collaborate as a staff, together with the principal, concerning teaching and learning when he says: *"we sit together ...and plan the work we are going to do"*. The principal is not only present but seems to offer some guidance and leadership in the collaborative process without being too prescriptive which is supported by the following comments: *"the principal is always with us and guides us"*. Mr Morgan's comments suggests that the principal participates in the collaborative process and offers a supportive role. This supportive role is further discussed in the next section under principals' support.

Similarly Mrs Muller clearly articulates that Principal Utica not only encourages them to plan but the principal and the SMT are present, as teachers discuss their work which is validated by the following claim: *"she encourages us to plan for the work we are going to do… she is also there".* Most of the participants also note that the principal is present during the collaborative process. The principal's presence is important since he involves himself in the process as a member of the team and not as the team leader. His presence however does not mean he imposes his will on the collaborative process. It does mean that he is willing to offer his insights as one of the many insights offered by teachers in the collaborative process. Principals' abilities to therefore promote teamwork was seen as important to promote long term objectives of schools (Cook, 2014). The process of promoting effective teamwork requires a change of schools from "hierarchical organisations into PLCs" (Williams, 2006, 17).

4.2.2.2. Principals Support

On the matter of how the principal exercises collaborative learning, the following was noted. None of the participants mentioned the overbearing role played by the principal to enforce collaborative learning. As a matter of fact, most of the participants spoke of the supportive role played by their principals in exercising collaborative learning. A second way in which principals exercise collaborative learning is through the support which they afford the PLCs. Two of the three principals suggested that they provide some form of support for their staff as they work. Principal Donald maintains that as his teachers plan and implement their programmes, he provides assistance for them to achieve their goals which is highlighted by his comments: *"I am promoting and supporting teachers to teach".* He seems to provide support in the form of policy guidelines. In other words he ensures that there is an alignment of the school plans to existing policy. Principal Utica similarly articulates that she also provides support for her staff so that they might in turn achieve the goals which are set out for them when she says that she: *"supports them so that their work is successful".* Mrs Muller expands on how Principal Utica supports them. She says that the principal not only inspires them to plan but the principal is present, as teachers discuss the work they are going to do. Mrs Muller confirms her views by her comment: *"she [Principal Utica] encourages us to plan for the work we are going to do. She is also there".* The supportive role includes providing teachers with resources to collaborate. These resources include setting aside specific blocks of time for teachers to meet and undergo training. It also includes the

provision of specific resources and a re-organisation of the school which elevates teachers as leaders. Another way for principals to support teachers is for them to develop and create the necessary cultures which allows teachers to freely talk about their challenges without fear of harsh criticisms. When principals promote cultures which enhance trust and respect, such actions are supportive of collaborative learning. Principals who therefore adopt a supportive role in collaboration may enhance the sustainability of the PLCs.

The approach of working as a team is also supported by minutes of staff meetings on 10 March 2014 at Astin Primary. The minutes state that educators ought to be working as a team, particularly when there is more than one educator teaching that subject in the same grade. The principal stressed the need for teachers to come together and collaborate. The futility of working alone was highlighted to staff. The comments above are supported by the following extract from the staff minutes: *"When there are more than one educator teaching a certain subject, they should be working together, you cannot work in isolation"*.

In a review of the minutes of a staff meeting dated 17 February 2014 from Astin Primary, the records also indicate that the Principal Anderson had set up a school website exclusively for his staff to share teaching materials, methods, successes and challenges. The following extract supports the above claim: "*In future lesson plans, questions, notes, etcetera are to be scanned and uploaded so that it can be easily available and information can be shared amongst educators…"* The technological development demonstrates that the principal is serious about improving teaching and learning as well as the results at his school. In addition, the technological development provides the necessary curriculum support for his staff. In an age where time is rarely available, this type of support allows teachers the flexibility to access material and advice from various colleagues, at any time of the day at any place, provided they have access to a computer and the internet. This scenario, which is ideal in many ways, is not without its limitations. While some schools possess the resources to access this kind of support, many schools are still without the necessary infrastructure to do so. The second, more serious limitation, involves whether face-to-face interaction is more beneficial and supportive to collaborative learning than interaction through the internet. This discussion is however outside the scope of this dissertation and may be worth exploring by other researchers in the future.

In the minutes of a meeting held on 31 January 2014, Principal Utica outlines specific times which were set aside to ensure that teachers met regularly to discuss curriculum matters.

"These were set for once a week". Here teachers were given time to decide on their planning for their classes. In addition teachers were encouraged to meet regularly to discuss memoranda for school examinations. The process of meeting together which was encouraged by Principal Utica, is further indication of her support and encouragement of teamwork. The support and encouragement which was mentioned above is evidenced by the following comment made by Principal Utica: *"Teachers will also come together and discuss the memoranda"*.

Principal Donald, it seems, met with his staff to discuss the results of the first term tests at his school. The process of meeting together could be described as teamwork because here statistics and strategies were identified and discussed to improve the results. Discussions were also focused on re-evaluation of existing strategies. In addition, Principal Donald also provided support for teachers by promoting open discussions on the challenges which they faced daily when he states: *"explain the challenges that you are having"* to the SMT so that the necessary support can be provided. It appears that the minutes support Principal Donald's earlier assertion that a great deal of sharing in respect of difficulties is encouraged by himself.

Teamwork and support by the principal is further undergirded by research on the type of leadership practices which best supports teacher collaborations. Robinson's (2010) research analysis shows, that the principals' leadership style affects the depth of teacher involvement in collaborative learning in the following ways. Robinson (2010, p.20) found in schools with a "participatory style of leadership" the collaborative inquiry was most positive and fruitful.

Principals in the current study seemed to have exercised collaborative learning through teamwork and support. These approaches are indicative of a leader whose leadership style includes others to jointly participate in improving learners' attainment levels. In schools where principals adopt a participatory style of leadership the collaboration was most encouraging and prolific according to Robinson (2010). The suggestion here is that principals who operate within strict hierarchical approaches may impede the sustainability of PLCs (Williams, 2006,) as opposed to principals who come alongside and support their teachers.

4.2.3 Shared values

When asked about how principals characterised their respective school in relation to shared values, they all explained further that they exercised shared values through a culture of

Ubuntu.

4.2.3.1. Culture of Ubuntu

All principals in this study exercised shared values through their concern for different role players in the school, particularly teachers. Principal Donald values the contribution of the community to the education of learners. He believes that the *"school belongs to the community"* which suggests that he values communal ownership and interest in the welfare of learners and the school. The implication is that the principal encourages stakeholder participation in the school. There appears to be a culture of shared responsibility and concern for the school and its learners.

Principal Utica underscores the value and importance of people which is supported by Mr Morgan who says that the: *"principal promotes values of Ubuntu". "Every learner... is important, every teacher ...parent is valued."* Each component is vital, according to Mr Morgan. A great deal of emphasis is placed on human values as one of the most important values. It appears that the principal cares deeply for the various role players. Mrs Lungelo confirms the above when she suggests that Principal Anderson is a hard worker who is willing to help anyone when she claims that: *"if we need help he would assist us"*. Mrs Lungelo seems to suggest that Principal Anderson acts as a partner with staff. She maintains that when given duties to perform, staff is not left alone. Principal Anderson is described as one who comes alongside staff to see that it is completed: *"he himself will go all out to see that it is done"*. In addition, according to Mr Moodley, Principal Donald leads by example. He is punctual at school and dedicated to his work. Staff is free to approach Principal Donald because of his *"open door policy"* and approachability. The open door policy and approachability may suggest that Principal Donald is a good listener and is ready to assist his teachers, as alluded to earlier in the analysis. Principal Donald is seen as someone who is focused on both his staff and learner well-being.

In addition, Mrs Muller, also from Union Primary, reveals that Principal Utica not only *"asks us to have respect, she also respects us"*. Mrs Muller further points out that her principal leads by example in displaying the values that she [principal Utica] would like to see in others. To further emphasize how the principal exercises sharing of values, Mr Norton explains how his principal approaches matters of collective interest by stating that *"she will put the problem in front of us... we discuss it... we come up with solutions...then we agree on the solutions". "Solutions must cater for everyone".* The explanation supplied by Mr Norton

gives clear insights into how his principal goes about exercising shared values. Her approach demonstrates that she values her teachers input and opinions in school matters. She is also willing to share issues with all staff members and arrive at an inclusive solution. In other words, principal Utica's leadership is transparent, consultative and comprehensive.

Mrs Gumede from Astin primary gives us the impression that there is a sense of community where people are helping, working and getting involved: *"we work together…we help each other"*. Mrs Gumede seems to suggest that teachers co-operate and work with the principal in order to assist pupils when she says: *"teachers get involved with the principal in order to help the children"*. It appears that Principal Anderson has created an environment and culture for teachers to come together and get involved particularly in the education of learners. He partners with teachers and vice-versa which suggests a team approach to issues related to learners. In support of the above, Principal Anderson confirms that they: *"work as a team… so that… we can get the best for our learners"*.

The theme of Ubuntu and the caring nature of Principal Anderson from Astin Primary is supported by documents review on the 20th January 2014 which states: *"Grade R educators must escort the little children from the gates to their classes"*. Principal Anderson's concern for the safety of the little children is highlighted. It appears that these children may be scared of the bigger children, which prompted Principal Anderson to take this stance.

Ground duty was another aspect which was a cause for concern for Principal Anderson. It appeared that many children sustained injuries while they were playing on the school grounds. Principal Anderson was concerned about the time it took for the child to be attended to. In view of the above he urged teachers to provide the necessary care on site, which is confirmed by the comment: *"Educators on duty must attend to the injured"*. This concern for little children is also supported by staff minutes from Union Primary on the 31st January 2014 where Principal Utica encourages her staff to ensure that all is well on the school grounds when they are on ground duty. Principal Utica says: *"the educator must move around the school…. To see if everything is OK"*.

Minutes of a staff meeting on the 12 March 2014 at Damascus Primary shows that Principal Donald announced that the school will observe teacher appreciation day on 25 of March 2014. On this day a special assembly was planned in which teachers were presented with tokens of appreciation followed by a lunch. The inference is that the principal used this opportunity to show his gratitude to his teachers. It appears that Principal Donald publicly

thanked his staff for their efforts in running the school. To confirm this, Principal Donald is quoted as saying: *"thank you, to the teachers for the work they do"*.

On the issue of Ubuntu, the principals' leadership style shows their concern for all stakeholders. As a result, their approach creates a healthy culture of mutual respect. Research by Zembat, Adak, Sezer, Ozdemir, and Biber (2012) to investigate the relationship between principals' leadership styles and school culture, make an important point that both leadership styles and culture play a vital role in school. In other words, the approach which is adopted by a principal has bearing on the culture which prevails.

In addition, Smith and Andrews (1989) cite many qualities that successfully cultured schools have. The one attribute relevant to our discussion is that the principal values and esteems his teachers. Principals who display a caring attitude to staff and learners are more likely to change a school culture. Such a caring attitude is also consistent with a leadership style which is necessary to support a PLC (Huffman & Jacobson 2003).

The values which the principals exercised in this study were Ubuntu; which encapsulates, care, assistance, approachability, respect and consultation. These values are important to support PLCs. Clearly, leadership styles which are bureaucratic are not consistent with the values listed above but a leadership style that demonstrates concern for staff creates a culture of concern which may be more consistent and effective to sustain a PLC.

4.2.4 Shared vision

When asked about how principals characterised their respective school in relation to vision sharing, they all mentioned that there was largely a shared vision. When asked to elaborate further, principals highlighted collective visioning and communication of the vision as methods or ways to exercise a shared vision.

4.2.4.1 Collective Visioning

Two of the three principals' comments suggest that sharing the vision is not one person's responsibility. Both principal Anderson and Donald seem to concur that sharing the vision of the school is a collective responsibility because of the enormity of the challenge. Both Principals Anderson and Donald go on to demonstrate the importance of having all teachers on board in the vision sharing process. When sharing the vision, it is the responsibility of the

principal to ensure maximum participation. While this is the ideal, it does not mean that the process of collective visioning cannot move forward even if there are saboteurs to this process. It is up to the principal to address the concerns if there are detractors so that when the opportunity arises they will be willing to be part of the vision building and sharing process.

Principal Anderson from Astin Primary exercises the sharing of the vision by developing his staff and, collectively, the staff realises the vision of the school which is supported by the following comment: *"staff is empowered …to work as a team to achieve the… vision".* Here the role of the principal and his approach are alluded to. It suggests that Principal Anderson has a systematic approach to first develop his teachers' skills and capabilities before he embarks on the vision sharing process. A principal who leads by involving his teachers in the vision of the school may be able to sustain development and growth for the future. This collective approach is echoed by Principal Donald from Damascus Primary who said: *"this vision cannot be accomplished by one person".* Where principals own, develop and implement the vision of a school unilaterally, this tends to lead to a dogmatic approach to changes which are not sustainable. To sustain the development of schools, Principals may need to adopt an approach to vision-sharing that involves as many of the role players as possible to ensure success in the accomplishment of the vision. To further cement the idea of a collective approach to vision sharing, Mrs Naidoo, also from Damascus Primary says that the principal allows staff to brainstorm these ideas by stating that: *"when there are things the principal has in mind… he doesn't do that in isolation".* This approach reminds us of a leader who shares the vision development and vision implementation process with his staff.

Even though many participants highlighted the need to have a collective approach to exercise the vision, Mr Moodley from Damascus Primary felt that the principal is still central in the execution of the vision as illustrated by this comment: *"The principal drives that process".* Mr Moodley believes that Principal Donald renders assistance to staff to ensure that they can also realise the vision. The collective visioning by the principals gives us some insight about their leadership approach and sustainability of PLCs. The continuous development of the PLC adds to the sustainability of leadership when investors understand and participate in the vision of the school (Cook, 2014, p.14). It seems that principals who collectively exercise the sharing of the vision with staff may be in a position to sustain the PLCs in the long term.

4.2.4.2 Communication

The second issue which emerged from the data on how principals exercise vision sharing is clear communication. Communication is the clear message that a principal conveys by what he says and does or not. When principals communicate with staff, particularly about the vision they have, they need to be pointed in their discussions. The clarity of communication gives staff a clear understanding about the principals' perspective and the route he is proposing. When principals share their perspective of the vision with staff, this suggests that the principal is willing to include staff in the joint fashioning of the vision. Such an approach with regard to vision-sharing alludes to the style of leadership adopted by the principal. Therefore, the style of leadership which principals in this study adopted was one which viewed teachers as essential to the realisation of the vision. Principal Donald firstly communicated, with role players about the vision in so far as the: *"kind of learners they want to produce at the end of the day"*. He proposes that role players must understand the type of learners they wish to create. This requires the principal to be clear about where he wants the school to be in the years to come. He communicates the vision to stakeholders through this process. Principal Utica explains how she communicated the vision to various stakeholders at her school by stating that she: *"called the traditional leaders, all the parents, SGB, SMT and educators" together.* Principal Utica also invited Toyota Teach to help in crafting and communicating the schools vision to all parties. Principal Utica's approach to the vision-sharing shows that she values the inputs of all other parties in this process. This communicates her willingness to see others as important. She could have unilaterally communicated a vision and expected teachers to adhere to the requirements of her vision. This would have demonstrated an authoritarian approach to this process. Instead, Principal Utica communicated and consulted widely by inviting various role players so that the vision becomes one which everyone owns. The approach adopted by Principal Utica suggests an inclusive approach to designing, owning and sharing the vision.

In addition Mrs Naidoo shares with us that principal Donald: *"elaborates on what he is thinking and makes us brainstorm"*. In other words, Principal Donald shares his vision with staff by discussing the vision with them. Mrs Sachin agrees with Mrs Naidoo that principal Donald shares his vision with staff through meetings as supported by the following comments: *"Ideas are shared through staff meetings"* and he invites input from staff and in that regard: *"he gives us a chance to say something"*. When teachers are consulted and involved in the process of developing the vision there is a sense of ownership which creates

the perception that their views are taken seriously by the principal. This communicates to teachers that their perspective is valued and allows teachers to be seen as vital components of the leadership of the school.

Mr Norton from Union Primary maintains that principal Utica shares her visions and thoughts for the school with staff. One gets the impression that principal Utica goes into detail about what she envisions the school should look like well into the future. Support for the above impression is conveyed through the following comments: *"She would start by telling us what she thinks… what her dreams are about the school".* It appears Principal Utica is not afraid to share her vision with staff and is quite open about it. She has a dream for the school and is passionate about its future. This passion is contagious. She shares what is on her mind about where the school should be in the next few years. Principals who openly communicate the vision sharing process communicate more than the vision. They communicate their willingness to share the leadership role with teachers.

The issues of collective visioning and communication seem to describe transformational leadership as stated by Bennis and Nanus (1985) who maintain that transformational leadership incorporates a far sightedness for the institution. Principals in this study appear to have exercised their vision for the school by sharing it with their staff. In addition, they did so clearly. In doing so it seems that their leadership approach involved consulting all stakeholders in drawing up the vision and transparently communicating the vision to all sectors. This approach by principals further communicated their view on the importance of teachers in this process.

Secondly, the findings of the sub-question on shared vision dovetails with inspirational motivation of transformational leadership theory which gives hope to the followers that obstacles can be successfully overcome. The inspirational motivation component is significant in creating a vision which is a catalyst to achieving the objectives of the institution. The principals in my study shared their vision with staff and the wider community and allowed staff to shape that vision. The sharing of the vision also finds support in Hord's (1997) PLC framework where staff is involved in developing a collective vision and in using it as a marker in deciding issues of educational practices.

It appears that principals exercised the vision-sharing through a process of collective visioning and communication at school. Collective visioning and communication require leadership styles which are not bureaucratic. Since bureaucratic leaders rarely share power

and leadership with staff and tend to hoard power for themselves. Support for the above claim is provided by Williams (2006, p.7) who proposes that principals who hope to distribute leadership must exchange command with assistance for teachers. Those leaders who hoard power for themselves create unsustainable learning communities. Collective visioning and communication require leadership styles that are democratic and participative so that stakeholders can participate in the vision-building process and their views can be heard. Once principals create surroundings committed to the vision of schools this contributes to laying the foundation for sustainability (Cook, 2014). As principals allow for the democratic participation and sharing, this in turn can have a positive impact on the sustainability of PLCs. We now proceed to the second interview question.

4.3 Leadership styles and the promotion of Professional Learning Communities

Interview question two sought to determine how principals promoted shared leadership, collaborative learning, shared values and vision. Principals explained that they promoted shared leadership, collaborative learning, shared values and vision sharing through distributed leadership and development of human resources; sharing of knowledge; concern, trust and inclusivity.

4.3.1 Shared leadership

When the researcher enquired about the manner of the principals leadership at their school and how this promotes joint leadership in relation to leadership styles that are used, all principals mentioned that it was mostly through distributed leadership and the development of human resources.

4.3.1.1 Distributed leadership

The first issue that arose from the data was distributed leadership. Principal Anderson, Principal Donald and Principal Utica practiced a form of distributed leadership. Principal Anderson mentioned that he often consulted with his staff and distributed the decision making power to them which is supported by the comment: *"before I take a decision I discuss issues… with the staff so that my decision becomes participatory and we all become part of the decision"*. The approach which adopted was to ensure that there was a wider participation in the running of the school which led to greater ownership of the decisions and programmes.

Similarly, Principal Donald understood shared leadership to mean a form of *"delegation"*. He shares responsibilities through distributing them to his staff. He maintains that potential leaders are given the opportunity to lead staff meetings and other committee meetings. In some cases, Principal Donald says, he sits in a meeting merely as a participant while others lead the meetings. Similarly, Principal Utica alludes to the distribution of responsibilities by stating that staff has to report back on what they have done concerning the distributed responsibilities. She contends that when there are obstacles, the staff meets to find solutions. In this way she distributes leadership. In this way, principal Utica maintains shared leadership is promoted.

The interview data suggests that principals promote shared leadership through a form of distributive leadership. A review of minutes of staff meetings supports the above findings. Minutes of staff meetings from Union Primary seem to suggest that Mr Morgan chairs some of the staff meetings. In addition, Mr Morgan conducts report backs from external meetings which he attends. This finds support in the minutes dated 26 May 2014 where it is recorded: *"there will be a report by Mr Morgan from conference at Ukhosi Conference Centre"*. A number of items were reported on, which has a bearing on staff and the school. Mr Morgan, it seems, was tasked with attending a meeting because the principal was not available. The distributed leadership alluded to here supports the data from the semi-structured interview which showed that Principal Utica does engage in distributing leadership within her school. In another entry on 6 May 2014, it seems that *"Mrs Manny had to purchase items for the school"* which included office stationery and kitchen utensils. The responsibility of purchasing items for the school means that the teacher was seen as responsible and able to execute this responsibility. The implication here is that the principal distributed the responsibility to teachers as a result of her trust in them. Excerpts of staff minutes on 7 of February 2014 provide support that Principal Utica promotes shared leadership through distributive leadership. In this set of minutes Mrs Manny is tasked with *"chairing the athletics meeting for the school"*. These extracts from the staff meetings seems to imply that leadership was distributed by principal Utica. However, my personal interaction with Principal Utica contradicted the data. She complained outside the interview that she was inundated with all the work. In addition she could not cope with the workload. However, the complaint was soon clarified when she revealed that there were only five members of staff in the entire school. In view of the limited personnel available at the school and vast responsibilities, the principal's complaints were placed in context.

Minutes of staff meetings at Astin Primary on 20 January 2014 also supports the claims made by Principal Anderson that leadership is promoted through distributed leadership. According to these minutes Mr Radebe who was tasked with attending a technology workshop was cited as having given a report back to the staff on the new requirements for Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). This entry presents an understanding of why Principal Anderson was willing to allow one of his staff members to attend a workshop. It suggests that Principal Anderson understood that he could not be an expert in all areas of the school and instead relied on the expert knowledge of his teachers. This reliance on teachers and their expert knowledge of the curriculum demonstrates that the principal relied heavily on teacher leaders. Separate entries on 3 February 2014 reflected that teachers were urged to *"inform the management about dates and venues of possible excursions"* which they are planning. The above entry highlighted that teachers were given the freedom to plan school tours and to subsequently keep the office informed about the details. There is a possibility that teachers were given the responsibility to share leadership in this aspect of the school. Furthermore, on 22 April 2014 the minutes indicate that *"Mrs Duma will accompany learners to a speech contest"*. These minutes suggest that Principal Anderson is willing to allow teachers the freedom to share in the leading of the school and its activities. The implication is that there is a degree of distributed leadership.

The findings support the distributed leadership theory since three of the principals maintained that they promote shared leadership by distributing responsibilities within staff. According to Robinson (2008), distributed leadership is a must when one thinks about the vastness and complex responsibilities of a modern school. One person alone does not have all the competencies needed to run a school (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). The responsibilities therefore for leading all these tasks is spread across several members (Spillane, 2005).

It seems therefore that principals who consult with staff on important matters as well as distribute leadership among their teachers have a better opportunity to improve teaching and learning. The leadership approach adopted by the principals to involve teachers in the leading of the school therefore, can promote PLCs. The converse may also hold true. If principals do not promote shared leadership, PLCs may be limited in their potential. Research by Schechter (2012) shows that a principal who entrusts responsibility to teachers, facilitates sincerity and expedites collaboration among staff can promote the creation of a learning community. Therefore principals who adopt a distributed leadership approach to promote shared leadership can promote the development of PLCs. Cook (2014) describes such leadership,

where responsibilities are shared, as sustainable leadership. Sustainable leadership in turn sustains PLCs. We now look at how principals promote shared leadership through human resource development.

4.3.1.2 Human resource development

Data from this study indicates that principals promote shared leadership through the development of staff. The leadership styles that promote the growth and development of human resources contributes to the promotion and sustainability of PLCs. All three principals alluded to a form of staff development to improve the functioning of their schools. Firstly, Principal Utica's leadership approach focused on the development of the teachers at her school. Coming from an impoverished community Principal Utica embarked on a programme to develop staff, members of the SGB and other parents through workshops which she had conducted. This is confirmed by the statement: "*I make sure that I am developing teachers*".

In addition, Principal Donald was emphatic that he was successful in bringing changes to human resources at his school. He maintains: "*it's about ensuring people are … capacitated*". He argues that parents who are elected onto the SGB at his school usually come without experience and knowledge of the roles they need to fulfil. However, by the end of their tenure he contends that they are highly developed and trained. This is confirmed by Mr Moodley who says:

> *members of the SGB when they come…they have no clue about the responsibilities that lie ahead of them but …here in this school they are given training as to what is expected in their new roles and responsibilities and with time… they are able to grow with and part of that growth result from workshops which are held in order to improve their capabilities.*

Principal Anderson also alludes to the development of human resources at his school as a way to promote the smooth functioning of the school. He maintains that he gets ideas from his teachers because they are a part of his team. This process "*strengthens his team… and empowers them*". This suggests that he wants teachers to grow professionally in order to spread leadership laterally which is akin to distributed leadership.

The findings that emerged from the semi-structured interviews by Principal Anderson are extended by the documents review. The documents reviews tells us more about how he develops teachers. He depends on outside agencies to develop the competencies of his staff.

At a staff meeting held on 3 February 2014 Principal Anderson urged teachers: *"to attend union meetings"*. His urging to do so could be reflective of his view that unionised members tend to be better informed and thus better developed. Principal Anderson also encouraged teachers to familiarize themselves with the digital age and become more technologically aware and skilled. He urged teachers to: *"make an attempt to use the computer"* which has obvious benefits for learners, teachers and the school. These encouragements seem to indicate that Principal Anderson wants his staff to become more efficient in their various roles.

In addition, Principal Anderson invited a representative from Old Mutual to develop staff through a *"presentation on professional development"*. The principal further urged teachers to attend a *"Continuous Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) course which was offered by a College"* at a nearby school. The uses of external agencies to develop teachers points to the principal's acknowledgement that he alone cannot develop the human resources at his school. He understands that developing teachers requires a multi-pronged approach from various agencies. This is also an admission that the principal may not view himself as the omnicompetent leader. Such an admission dispels the myth that the principal must know all things. When principals admit that they need the expertise of teachers this may enhance the PLCs.

A review of the staff minutes at Union Primary confirms that the development of teachers does occur. Principal Utica also seemed to acknowledge that we live in a digital age where all aspects of education are undergoing a revolution. With this in mind, she urges teachers to develop themselves technologically by attending *"workshops on computer use"*. In addition she has included on her year plan a series of *"staff development workshops at school"* for her teachers. It seems that Principal Utica also uses outside agencies like Toyota Teach and the Department of Basic Education to develop her staff. The semi-structured interviews and documents reviews therefore seem to support the findings that principals' leadership approach can have a bearing on whether teachers are developed. Developed teachers, as a result, can contribute to the promotion of PLCs.

The issue on human resource development is supported by the theoretical framework of distributed leadership theory. The participants in my study articulated that they develop teachers and School Governing Body (SGB) members. Principals in distributed leadership theory discover teachers, mature them and harness their potential (Robinson, 2008). This leadership practice is more aligned to PLCs than other leadership practices (Harris, 2008). In

my study, principals adopted a leadership style that was conducive to develop human resources. The result of this development is teacher empowerment. Consequently schools which are characterized by a strong distributed leadership practice will have a staff who are well-informed about educational matters and take responsibility for students learning outcomes (Robinson, 2008). This view is also supported by Harris (2004) who maintains that distributed theory has been linked to improvement in teacher classroom practice.

The findings of the data suggests that leaders who adopt an approach to leadership which develops teachers can promote PLCs. The style of leadership that is consistent with developing people is consistent with the transformational leadership. A change in leadership style is therefore necessary from the bureaucratic style of leadership to one of transformational (Shorter, 2012) in order for PLCs to flourish. This evolution of leadership style leads to an involvement and capacitation of many other role-players in the development of the school (Shorter, 2012).

In addition, the issue of human resource development is supported by Zepeda (1999) and Lambert (1998) who believe that school principals must set the tone for development and growth by demonstrating dynamic learning, by spending time in development, demonstrating respect for the opinions of staff and developing leaders. This development of teacher leaders is central in the success of PLCs. A leadership style which therefore does not promote teacher leaders may hinder the development of PLCs. However, a leadership style which promotes human resource development can promote PLCs. Principals in this study promoted shared leadership through distributed leadership and development of human resources. Next, we turn our attention to how principals' leadership promotes collaborative learning.

4.3.2 Collaborative learning
In this sub section we look at the principals responses to how their leadership style promoted collaborative learning.

4.3.2.1 Sharing of knowledge
This section aims to answer interview question two which related to how the school principals leadership styles promotes PLCs. Data from Principal Donald was silent on this issue. However the common theme that appeared in the responses of principal Anderson and

Utica was the sharing of information. Principal Anderson states that he leads by *"sharing information"* with his staff. This sharing and subsequent feedback gives him a better perspective of an issue. He maintains that we all may have a blind spot which prevents us from seeing issues from another person's perspective which is supported by Principal Anderson's thoughts: *"you may not be able to see the other side of the issue"*. However, when we share issues we see it differently which is confirmed by the following comment from Principal Anderson: *"when you get an opinion from others you see it differently"*.

Similarly, Principal Utica alludes to sharing in a team as one way of promoting collaborative learning by stating: *"if you are a member in a team you need to share knowledge"*. She maintains that she allows discussions and inquiries between staff which allows for exchanges of ideas. This exchange of ideas from different people allows for growth and development of teachers.

Principals whose leadership style promotes the sharing of knowledge with staff are more likely to encourage collaborative learning. This willing approach to sharing knowledge may indicate the openness and transparent nature of the leader. Leaders who display a transparent approach are more likely to be viewed as leaders of integrity by their followers. Such leadership approaches may be able to promote PLCs more successfully than those who lack integrity.

The review of documents does support Principal Andersons claim that he promotes collaborative learning by sharing knowledge. At a staff meeting held on 10 March 2014 the meeting began with a *"report back"* by Principal Anderson of a principals' meeting which he attended. He demonstrates this knowledge-sharing through his example. At another meeting on 17 March 2014, Principal Anderson shares a *"prefect monitoring document"* with his staff for them to comment on. It appears that the principal wants to share this process of drawing up the prefect monitoring instrument with his staff. At the same meeting on 17 March 2014, Principal Anderson brings circulars to the attention of the staff. He says: "*A circular was received from the department about exam time concessions"*. These entries suggest that the principal is willing to share information and knowledge with his staff. It appears that he wants to keep his staff up-to-date on the latest development. His approach to leading the school promotes the sharing of knowledge.

Principal Utica, who also alludes to the sharing of knowledge, declares all information at staff meetings. She appears open with her staff about sensitive information like names of orphans,

poor children and pregnant children. In addition, Principal Utica shared the contents of a tribal council meeting held with the School Management Team with the staff (SMT). This showed that she was transparent. The principal also shared detailed results of Annual National Assessment (ANA) with staff in order to hear their views on learner performance. This included actual weaknesses which learners displayed in the ANA.

Collaboration was also promoted through knowledge sharing by teachers. Principal Utica, in promoting knowledge-sharing, made time for teachers to meet. She drew up meeting schedules for teachers to collaborate regularly through "*learning area committees at least once fortnightly*". This leadership approach which values and protects teachers' time for collaborative planning are more likely to promote PLCs.

In promoting collaborative learning, principals demonstrate a sharing approach to leadership. This implies that principals are leading in a transparent manner. Findings from the data appear to support the intellectual dimension of transformational leadership theory. In this dimension, leaders are transparent and open to scrutiny while at the same time willing to undergo transformation (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). In other words, leaders who have no hidden agendas or covert plans in leading the school, demonstrate a willingness to share knowledge with a view to promote collaborative learning.

Therefore, principals' leadership styles that promote knowledge sharing seems to promote PLCs, while leadership styles that do not promote knowledge sharing may hinder PLCs. This claim finds support in a study by Doolittle, Sudeck and Rattigan (2008) which found similarities in the study by Housman and Martinez' (2001) that teachers and heads in schools which performed poorly have a tendency to work in seclusion from each other rather than as collaborators in a PLC. Further afield, Rismark and Sølvberg (2012) found similar practices in Norwegian schools where the absence of the practice of knowledge and information-sharing hindered schools from developing into PLCs.

Data suggests that principals, in sharing knowledge, adopted a more guiding role which is important to promote collaborative learning. This thought is echoed by Shorter (2012) who suggests that a helpful and encouraging leadership style is essential for education reforms to occur and for PLCs to grow in order to improve student learning. Principals who therefore adopt a leadership style that promotes and encourages knowledge sharing may be more likely to promote PLCs. We now examine how principals' leadership promotes shared values.

4.3.3 *Shared Values*

Principals elaborated on how their manner of leadership at their schools, promoted shared values. The data here revealed differing views.

4.3.3.1 *Concern for role players, freedom of expression and trust*

There were varied perspectives on this sub question. Principal Anderson articulates his concern for his pupils' wellbeing. He details the difficulties which his pupils experience and he strongly suggests that it is vital to get learners to "*imbibe issues like correct morals, correct values*". His concern for learners is extended to his teachers. Principal Anderson's leadership demonstrates his concern for both learners and teachers and this in turn is internalised by his teachers and practiced by them in their classrooms. Given the above scenario, this gives us some insight into Principals leadership approaches. In Principal Anderson's case he is deeply concerned about the welfare of his pupils which, if taken further, could also point to his concern for his teachers. Principal Donald also cares about his teachers views. Therefore he allows his teachers freedom of expression to raise issues which directly affect them.

On the other hand, Principal Donald notes that teachers are allowed freedom of expression to discuss issues that affect them. In other words, Principal Donald allows staff to meet on their own to deliberate on matters which need to be resolved. These issues are then taken to a full staff meeting. These values that the school aspire to, are then openly discussed by staff. Principal Donald mentions that these values are shared and promoted by all role players from the SGB to the ordinary parent.

Finally, Principal Utica highlights the values of the vision and mission statement of her school. The vision and mission helps to keep role players focused on the goals and values. In addition, these values, we are told, are promoted through discussions at staff meetings. Principal Utica says that she promotes two of the most significant values that teachers must demonstrate. These values are that: "*we must show respect to each other, we must trust each other*". These values are significant if teachers are to break down the barriers of mistrust and isolation. When these, among other barriers, are removed teachers will be better placed to focus on authentic educational practices. When compared to the second dimension of Hord's (1997) PLC framework, one notices that the data supports the framework in which principals appear to have a caring attitude towards their staff. This caring attitude describes the leadership style of the principals in this study.

The data seems to support the intellectual and individualised component of transformational leadership. In the intellectual component the leader challenges followers to think in new ways, to steer clear of damaging criticism and to think of rational solutions. One way of avoiding damaging criticisms and thinking rationally is to show respect and demonstrate trust toward fellow colleagues. The individualised consideration means that transformational leaders are attentive to the needs of their followers for development. In the data above, principals appear to be in tune with the needs of their teachers. When principals' leadership is characterised by respect and trust this may enhance the PLCs.

Principal Anderson's leadership reveals his concern for learners and teachers while Principal Donald allows teachers the freedom to discuss school issues. In addition, Principal Utica promotes respect and trust for all role players. One could therefore conclude that principals' whose leadership style values people more are more likely to promote PLCs as opposed to those principals who view their followers as mere subordinates or workers. The last issue, in question two, which we will examine is how principals promote vision sharing.

4.3.4 Vision sharing

When principals were asked how their leadership style promotes vision sharing, one of the issues which emerged from the data was inclusivity.

4.3.4.1 Inclusivity

The Principals leadership styles from Astin Primary, Damascus Primary and Union Primary schools resemble that of a democratic leader. This leadership style seems to promote an inclusive approach to sharing the vision for their school. Principal Anderson believes that his manner of leadership promotes vision sharing by working as a unit. This, he believes, is significant in order to create a unified vision. Principal Anderson shares this insight when he says it is important that the educators *"work as a team"* in order to achieve the vision. In other words there is an inclusive approach to sharing and implementing the vision so that there is a clear focus and expectation for the future.

Principal Donald takes inclusivity further. He maintains that he involves teachers through structured meetings where the future of the school is planned and shared as alluded to in sub section 4.2.4.1 on collective visioning on page 58. He also shares this vision with the extended members of the community. In addition, Principal Donald's leadership approach allows him to network with other organisations to share his school's vision for the future. In

essence Principal Donald's leadership allows him to *"involve everyone"* in developing sharing and implementing the school's vision.

Principal Utica supports Principal Anderson and Principal Donald when stating that she shares the vision for her school with her teachers and SGB. Her assertion seems to indicate that her leadership style involves others in sharing the vision. This is supported by her comment: *"When we have meetings I make sure the vision and mission is clearly articulated"*. The findings from the semi-structured interviews indicate that all the principals in this study promoted the vision for their schools using an inclusive approach with various role players in order to ensure ownership of the vision.

The findings from the semi-structured interviews could not be supported by the documents' review of minutes of staff meetings. Part of the reason for this silence in the minutes is that principals rarely discussed the vision of the school during their staff meetings. These meetings are normally used to issue directives, discuss routine matters and practical problems. Despite the claim made earlier by Principal Utica that she articulates the vision of her school at meetings, the documents review could not support her claim.

The data findings from the semi-structured interviews support the inspirational motivation component of transformational leadership theory. Inspirational motivation gives hope to the followers that problems can be successfully conquered. This component is significant in creating a vision which is a catalyst to achieving the objectives of the institution. The leadership approach of inclusivity which is adopted by the principals in this study provides the inspirational motivation which gives significance to followers (Hoy & Miskel, 2005).

The findings from the data also supports Hord's (1997) PLC framework. The second dimension of Hord's (1997) PLC framework is the shared values and vision where staff is involved in developing a collective vision and to using it as a marker in deciding issues of educational practices. Here there is a clear emphasis on the learners' ability to learn (Hord, 1997). The principals in my study promoted a shared vision through an inclusive leadership approach which saw all role players involved in not only developing the vision but also owning it and implementing the vision. One can conclude therefore that principals who shared the vision for their schools did so using an inclusive approach.

The data suggests that principals who distribute leadership and develop human resources; practice sharing of knowledge; show concern for stakeholders; allows freedom of expression

and promote trust, as well as lead inclusively are more likely to promote PLCs than those who do not. We now move on to the discussion on interview question four which dealt with how collaboration was established and sustained by principals in their schools.

4.4 Sustainability of Collaborative learning

When asked how collaborative learning was established and how it is sustained in their schools, all principals noted that empowerment drives sustained collaboration.

4.4.1 Empowerment

The sustenance of collaborative learning in PLCs appears to be built on the bedrock of empowerment. All three principals intimated that empowerment sustained collaboration. Principal Anderson submits that when others become part of a cohesive group this leads to development and capacitation and this he advises is one way of sustaining collaboration. He supports the above by stating: *"You need to get others to become part of the team so that you empower the others and that's one of the ways of sustaining team work"*.

Principal Utica says that she sustains collaboration by assigning responsibilities to teachers. This allows teachers to develop and acquire the necessary skills in the process. But this assignment is followed up with guidance, assistance and inspiration with the aim of achieving success. Teachers are supported if they encounter any hurdles. The following is confirmation of what Principal Utica says above: *"I delegate, but my delegation goes with a certain type of follow up encouragement, motivation and support so that they are be able to do it and successfully"*.

Principal Donald suggests that after collaborative learning is established it is sustained at his school through regular review meetings which are held every quarter. At these meetings all work done thus far is analysed. The implication here is that teachers are tasked with the responsibility and thereafter to present their reports to staff and this report helps to determine how well a programme is operating under the leadership of teachers. Possible challenges are overcome through discussions. Another implication is that this reporting process empowers and develops teachers so that collaboration in PLCs can continue even if the principal is away. Principal Donald says: *"to sustain that we ensure that each and every quarter we have our meetings whereby we review whatever we are doing...where we present reports and recommendations"*.

All three principals seem to concur that empowering their teachers is essential to the continued growth and sustainability of PLCs well in to the future. Principals who rule autocratically and who aim to subjugate teachers may create order in the short term but may be sowing instability for the school in the long term. These principals may hoard information, knowledge and skills to maintain their authority while sacrificing the promotion and sustainability of the institution. Principals whose leadership style disempowers teachers cannot expect to sustain PLCs. The reason for this is because disempowered teachers retreat into their shells and await directives from the top (Rasberry & Mahajan, 2008). But principals whose leadership style fosters the empowerment of teachers are more likely to create sustainable PLCs.

The data from the semi-structured interviews showed that principals whose leadership approach fostered teacher empowerment were more likely to sustain PLCs. This finding could not be directly substantiated with the findings from documents reviews. Principal Utica maintains that teachers are developed and subsequently empowered through workshops which occur at least once a month. This is further supported with an entry on 14 January 2014 which states between 14h30 and 14h45, time will be set aside for "*teacher development*". This, however, was contrary to what I observed. Since many teachers left school early on the days when I was present. On some days, teachers left school as early as midday. In addition, minutes of staff meetings at Astin Primary did not reflect evidence of empowerment programmes as was alluded to earlier by Principal Anderson. While Principal Donald spoke of meetings which are held every quarter to assess their progress, this was confirmed by minutes on 10 April 2014. However, little data existed in the minutes to show how this empowerment occurs.

The data findings from the semi-structured interviews that principals' leadership style fosters the empowerment of teachers is congruent with transformational leadership theory because a significant aspect of transformational leadership is the development and growth of followers (Avolio and Gibbons, 1988). The data supports the individualised consideration component of transformational leadership theory where the transformational leaders are attentive to the needs of their followers for development. Transformational leaders not only determine the needs of their staff for the present but also look at developing their abilities for the future which was a practice adopted by principals in this study. Bass and Avolio (1990) maintain that transformational leaders aim to improve groups' competence to become independent thinkers, come up with innovative concepts and challenge unsound educational practices.

This seems consistent with the data that leadership styles of principals can determine the level of empowerment of teachers. As a result, principal leadership can affect the sustainability of the PLCs.

The findings that principals' leadership style which fosters the empowerment of teachers are more likely to sustain PLCs is corroborated by research. One of the emergent themes of the research by Huggins, Scheurich and Morgan's (2011) which explored how a modern high school PLC in Southwest United States was used to usher in reforms with a view to improve student performance, was the leadership style of the principal. This study revealed that the principal posed thought-provoking questions and assisted teachers with enhancing their teaching methods (Huggins *et al*., 2011). The principal trained teachers to become more thoughtful about their work and to interrogate their teaching methods (Huggins *et al*., 2011). This empowerment resulted in changes in how teachers taught and as a result an improvement in learners' mathematics results. The principals in my study also led their staff by empowering them to ensure the promotion and sustainability of the learning community. We now examine the final interview question which sought to understand why principals supported their schools in the way they did.

4.5 Principals support for the Professional Learning Communities

This theme explores the manner in which principals support professional learning communities and why they do it the way they do. Four characteristics emerged and these are pursuit of excellence; experience, passion and character. These characteristics are discussed below.

4.5.1 Excellence

All three principals seemed to agree that the need to strive for standards of excellence in education influenced them to support their schools in the manner in which they did. Principal Anderson stated that it was his responsibility and goal to give of his best in guiding and supporting the school when he maintains: *"I have to make sure I can do the best for my school"*. In a similar vein, Principal Utica was adamant that *"I have to make a difference somehow"*. In her desperate quest to improve the standards of education at her school, Principal Utica encountered numerous hurdles and challenges. These challenges included theft, poverty, lack of funding, unemployment, orphaned and vulnerable children. However,

this was not enough to discourage her. As a matter of fact, one could suggest that this in fact strengthened her resolve to improve the quality of education at Union Primary.

When articulating his thoughts on the schools future, Principal Donald was determined to ensure that the excellent standard of education at his school was not going to change after his departure. This is confirmed by the following comments: *"I ensure that the excellent standard of the school will be the same"*. This seems to indicate that Principal Donald supports his school in his unique way so that when he leaves the school, it will continue to provide excellent education. Another reason Principal Donald seems to suggest for supporting the school in his way is because of the future vision which is shared by all. This, he maintains, helps him: *"to lead successfully"*.

Mrs Lungelo supports Principal Anderson's quest to do his best for his school. Mrs Lungelo believes that her principal has the staff and learners best interest at heart which is confirmed by her statement: *"he wants the best for the educators and the learners"*. In wanting what's best for his school, Principal Anderson is described by Mrs Gumede as someone with: *"management skills which are excellent"*.

Mr Moodley from Damascus primary suggests that this repertoire of skills are essential for his principal to: *"enable him to perform at the excellent level that he is performing"*. In other words Mr Moodley's principal is supporting and guiding the school at an optimum level. This suggests that he supports the school in his unique way because of his quest for optimal efficiency and excellence.

Mrs Naidoo, also from Damascus Primary iterated that her principal leads the school because of his need for praise and recognition. She maintains that her school is surrounded by many other good schools and her principal supports the school in his way so that they could be the best school in the ward. This is confirmed by the statement: *"I think since we are surrounded by so many schools I think the competition ... every principal wanted to be praised for his work for what he has done"*. Mr Morgan from Union primary seems to support Mrs Naidoo from Damascus Primary by confirming that his principal supports the school because: *"She likes her school to be a winning school"*. It seems that Mrs Naidoo from Damascus Primary and Mr Morgan from Union Primary, both support the idea that principals guide their schools because of the need to be the best school.

The findings of excellence from the semi-structured interviews are supported by documents review. At a staff meeting on 17 February 2014, the minutes show that Principal Anderson urged teachers to attend a continuous professional teacher development (CPTD) course so that teachers could gain the necessary points if they attend workshops or are currently studying. His insistence on the CPTD attendance is evidence of his drive to get his teachers to excel in and out of the classroom.

On 3 March 2014 and at other staff meetings, Principal Anderson made known his intention to examine teachers teaching and learning records. This points to the principal's search for excellence in the classroom. This constant supervision could also be seen as a way to determine which teachers and learners are not performing in the classroom. To improve on learners' performance principal Anderson recommended a remedial programme be followed. These illustrate Principal Anderson's vision for excellence.

The staff minutes of Damascus Primary school is a testament of Principal Donald's support for excellence. He reiterates his gratitude at various staff meetings for the many excellent teachers who are *"making a difference in their classroom"*. On 24 July 2014, Principal Donald also informs his staff of the SMTs intention to conduct classroom visits. He however, maintains that the sole purpose of the SMTs classroom visits was to help teachers manage the curriculum and focus on learners records. This suggests that Principal Donald not only acknowledges excellence but is willing to nurture it within his staff.

At Union Primary this concept of distinction is also highlighted. On 14 January 2014 Principal Utica states that *"teaching and learning was to start on the first school day"*. This informs us that the principal wants the best from her teachers from the first day. Similar to her counterparts in this study, Principal Utica's search for quality is further noted at another staff meeting on 6 May 2014 where she made known her intention to examine teachers' records. This course of action shows that the principal intended to ensure that quality teaching and learning took place at her school. It demonstrates her support for excellence.

The intellectual stimulation component of the theoretical framework of transformational leadership supports the data that principals nurture their staff in their quest for excellence in the classroom and the school. The intellectual stimulation component refers to issues of creativity (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). In this component the transformational leader nurtures his teachers to be innovative and challenge outdated traditions. The data findings of excellence from participants also supports Avolio and Bass's (1988) contention that transformational

leadership is leadership with value where excellent teaching and learning practices are not only valued but shared with the entire staff. The principals in this study supported the PLCs in their ways because they were driven to excel.

One of the reasons that principals supported the PLCs as outlined above was because of their search for academic excellence. Most principals supported their schools in their way because they wanted their schools to improve. This assertion is supported by Okeniyi (1995) who contends that leadership styles could be conceptualised as the primary desires of a leader which influences his behaviour. In other words, in this study principals desired to have successful schools. This motivated them to demonstrate certain leadership behaviours which were needed to support their schools. According to Bottery (2004), the worth of school leaders are evaluated through their ability to inspire teachers and to show them excellent standards of teaching. The principals in this study, when evaluated, demonstrated that they supported PLCs because of their quest for excellence. We now examine the second reason that principals support the PLCs in their unique way.

4.5.2 Experience

When asked what influenced him to lead the school in the way he does, Principal Anderson spoke of the experience he gained in various capacities at various schools. This is supported by the following comment: *"I would think that through experience I have been to a number of schools"*. He maintains that he relies on and has learnt from his experience to support the school in his way. This could mean that he has learnt through experience what works and what does not work in a school situation. While experience may generally be welcomed, it is the contention of the researcher that experience in leadership styles which may have been gleaned from past principals and dispensations may be difficult to unlearn. Here-in lies the challenge for service providers who intend to train older leaders and develop newer ones for the journey ahead.

Likewise, Principal Donald expresses confidence in his abilities to perform a task. One could speculate that he developed this confidence over time and through experience. Principal Donald emphasizes that he knows what needs to be done, the time that it needs to be done and the manner in which it should be done. This is supported by the following comments: *"I am confident. I know what to do, when, how and the way I should do things"*. Mr Moodley supports Principal Donald's assertion about his ability and experience. He maintains that

Principal Donald has been well developed and trained through his past experience in various positions of leadership both within the community and at a teacher union level which is supported by the following statements:

> *I think coming from a leadership background does assist him because he has held a number of positions within the community trying to assist the community. He also has a background in skills development training.*

Principal Utica has studied extensively and it appears through her studies in the past she has also learnt that when something does not work she has learnt to approach the matter differently. Principal Utica shares the value of her studies by noting that: *"they tell us this way is not working so try this way, so you try the different roles"*. In other words she has learnt to support the school based on the situation.

The above findings could not be confirmed by documents reviews of staff minutes from Astin Primary school, Damascus Primary school nor Union Primary school. Part of the reason for this inconclusive finding is that minutes of meetings do not clearly reflect the past experiences of principals. Literature partially supports the theme of experience. Cranston (2009) states that principals listed confidence as one of the most powerful features for schools to develop into PLCs. This confidence develops only through the experience gained from spending years in the profession. Next, we turn our attention to other issues which arose from the perspective of the teachers who were also interviewed.

4.5.3 Passion

A characteristic which emanated from teachers at all three sites was the passion which principals possessed. All three principals were described as being passionate about education and children in particular.

Mr Radebe believes that the reason that Principal Anderson supports his school in his way is because of his: *"his passion for education"*. Mr Radebe emphasizes that Principal Anderson supports the school because of *"his love for children that inspires and leads him on to continue"*. Even though Principal Anderson can retire from the profession immediately, Mr Radebe maintains he perseveres and carries on because of his enthusiasm for education. In describing the extent of Principal Andersons passion for children's education, Mr Radebe suggests that the principal will go out of his way to assist needy children by arranging food parcels and lunch for hungry children. In other words, he would do whatever it takes to help

his pupils. The principal displays a concern for the physical, spiritual and educational well-being of his learners. The actions of Principal Anderson shows he has a special bond with children and his teachers. This may explain why he leads the school in his unique way.

In support of the above, Mr Norton from Union Primary also believes that his principal supports the school because of her *"passion for the school"*. The reason advocated for the unwavering support of the principal is because: *"The principal loves her school very much"*. The data suggests that even when she is extremely sick, she will attend school. To further support Mr Norton, Mrs Muller suggests that her principal is kind and passionate about education. These attributes suggests that Principal Utica has an attachment to this school and community. She appears deeply concerned about the extreme levels of poverty, illiteracy and spread of diseases. These concerns seem to be influencing her leadership style at this school.

Mrs Sachin from Damascus Primary suggests that the reason her principal supports the school in his way is the healthy interpersonal interaction between staff and the principal. However, it may be suggested that the reason for the healthy interpersonal interaction between staff and the principal may be the way the principal leads. His leadership style and approachability which was alluded to earlier may be influencing how the staff interacts. This in turn may be influencing his leadership style. There is a close-knit relationship within the school. It seems people enjoy the camaraderie and positive atmosphere which is confirmed by the comment: *"there is a good spirit... so we are like a family"*. The final characteristic which arose from the data from the perspective of teachers is the character of the principal.

4.5.4 Character

Teachers who were interviewed to determine why their principals supported their schools in the way they did, had the following to say. Many teachers believed principals supported their schools in their unique ways because of their characters. They believed that the character of the principal influenced the way they supported the PLCs. Principal Anderson was described by Mrs Lungelo as a good man who was welcoming, which was evidenced by the following: *"I suppose his friendly nature, his good nature"* is why teachers like him as a leader. This gives certain insights to Principal Anderson's personality and relational skills. His personality, which includes his behaviour and temperament, reveals that he is calm, patient, professional, warm, accommodating and not easily angered. Relationally he is able to associate with children, teachers, parents and officials easily. The true nature of a principal

therefore determines how he leads. No doubt as a result Principal Anderson's leadership is strongly influenced by his character.

Mrs Gumede supports other teachers' views by commenting: *"I think it's his character, it's his human character"* which influences him to lead uniquely. She further explains that he is a humble person and he is very approachable, which is attested to by the data and other teachers' impressions of the principal. These qualities are what seems to guide Principal Anderson as he supports his school. He is described as a deeply religious and a very committed man which leaves no doubt in one's mind about why he supports the school in his way.

Mr Moodley believes that his principal's support for the school has no limits. It seems that Principal Donald is not constrained by boundaries which allows Mr Moodley to state that: *"His belief that the sky is the limit, is for me what I think motivates him"*. When one considers the vast changes ushered in by Principal Donald, the above thoughts seem appropriate.

The data suggests that principals lead schools in their unique way based on their character type. McWhinney (1997) explains that leadership style emanates from one's worldview. If someone has a masculine world view he would possess a dictatorial leadership style, if someone practices inclusive leadership then he would be influenced by societal worldview. In the data presented above, principals gravitated towards the societal world view by involving all stakeholders in the running of the school. Thus, their leadership styles could be described as democratic. Principals supported their schools in their unique ways because of their search for excellence, because of the experience they have acquired over the years, because of their passion for education and, lastly, because of their character. We now turn our attention to the summary of the current chapter.

4.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter, data was generated through semi-structured interviews and documents review. This chapter presented a detailed analysis and discussion of the data. The data for interview question one suggested that principals' who exercised partnerships, teamwork, support, Ubuntu, collective visioning and communication may be able to sustain PLCs. Secondly, the data for interview question two suggested that principals who distributed leadership and developed human resources; shared knowledge; showed concern for stakeholders; allowed

freedom of expression and trust and promoted inclusivity were more likely to promote PLCs. Interview question three indicated that principals who empowered teachers were more likely to create an environment for sustainability. Finally, Principals supported PLCs in their ways because of excellence, experience, passion and, lastly, because of their character. The ensuing chapter summarises these findings, offers some concluding remarks on principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs and presents a few suggestions for future research. The next chapter presents the summary of the whole study, the findings as well as the recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will present a summary of the study, findings, recommendations and a chapter summary.

5.2 Summary of study

This section outlines the structure of the report about the study on the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs. This study comprises five chapters and these are summarised below.

Chapter One

This chapter was the outline of the study which provided the background and the purpose of the study. The aim, objectives and three critical questions that directed the study were also provided. Chapter One also provided a clarification of some of the significant terms as well as the underpinning theoretical framework used in the study. It also provided an outline of the literature that was reviewed in the process of conducting the study. The chapter finally provided a brief review of the research design and methodology that was used in the demarcation of the problem.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two centered on theoretical frameworks and the re-examination of relevant research literature on the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs. Eight themes were used in presenting the review.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three dealt with an explanation of the research design, approach, methodology, method of data collection and analysis procedures that were followed in conducting this study.

Chapter Four

Chapter Four presented data that was generated using two methods namely: semi-structured interviews and documents reviews. The emerging themes from the data analyses using content analysis were presented and discussed.

Chapter Five

The last chapter presents a synthesis of the key findings of the research. Recommendations will also be made based on these key findings.

5.3 Presentation of findings

The discussion below focuses on the findings of this research based on the research questions. These questions are as follows: What is the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of the PLCs in the three primary schools in the Umlazi district? ; How does the school principals' leadership styles develop or stifle the PLCs? ; Why do school principals support the PLCs in a particular way?

5.3.1 What is the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of the PLCs in the three primary schools in the Umlazi district?

This question sought to determine the relationship between principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs particularly of principals who attended the Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership (ACE: SL). The following sub-themes emerged from the data. They are partnerships, teamwork, principals' support, culture of Ubuntu, collective visioning, communication and empowerment.

Principals exercised shared leadership by creating partnerships and delegating responsibilities to teachers. They also involved teachers in decision-making on school matters. This leadership approach which was embraced by principals in this study was revealing of their style of leadership. Therefore, principals who created partnerships and delegated responsibilities demonstrated a leadership style that was inclusive. This inclusive approach, as a result, was viewed to be an essential requirement to sustain the PLCs. (**4.4.1.1.**)

The participants agreed that they exercised collaborative learning through teamwork. Principals' leadership approach to promote teamwork was regarded as important to promote sustainability of the PLCs. Teamwork requires a change in leadership approach of schools from bureaucracies into PLCs. (**4.4.2.1**)

A second way in which principals exercise collaborative learning is through the support which they afford the PLCs. In the case of how the principal exercises collaborative learning, the following was found. Principals were not seen as dictatorial to enforce collaborative

learning. In fact, most of the participants highlighted the supportive role played by principals in exercising collaborative learning. (**4.4.2.2**). This leads one to conclude that principals who adopt a supportive role towards their staff may be better able to sustain PLCs than those principals who do not adopt a supportive role toward their staff.

Principals in this study exercised collaborative learning through teamwork and support. This leadership approach is suggestive of a principals' leadership style which involves teachers in improving learner academic standards. One can conclude, therefore, that principals who lead PLCs in a strict hierarchical manner may inhibit the sustainability of PLCs as compared to principals who come alongside and support their teachers.

On the last finding within this sub-section all three principals agreed that empowering their teachers is indispensable to the continual growth and sustainability of PLCs. It was found that Principals who rule autocratically and who aim to overpower teachers, create order temporarily. These principals may hoard leadership in order to maintain their authority while sacrificing the sustainability of the institution. These leadership styles disempower teachers which forces teachers to retreat in their private spaces and become dependent on their principals. But principals whose leadership style nurtures the empowerment of teachers are more likely to create sustainable PLCs.

Within the theme of shared values, the principals' leadership style exhibits their concern for all stakeholders. As a result, this approach creates a healthy culture of mutual respect. Principals who demonstrate a caring attitude towards teachers and learners can change a school culture. The caring attitude is also in harmony with a transformational leadership style which is essential to sustain a PLC. Principals in this study employed shared values which were Ubuntu. These values of Ubuntu are crucial to support PLCs. Bureaucratic leadership styles are not coherent with the values of Ubuntu. However, a leadership style that demonstrates concern for staff creates a culture of Ubuntu which is consistent and effective to sustain a PLC. (**4.4.3.1**)

Principals exercised the vision sharing through a process of collective visioning and communication at school. Leadership styles which are autocratic are not suitable for collective visioning and communication. The reason for this is that autocratic leaders seldom share power and leadership with others and they tend to amass power for themselves to maintain control over teachers. As a result, the vision is not shared and co-owned by teachers.

Principals need to transform their leadership style from domination to assistance, for teachers. Principals who amass power for themselves tend to create unsustainable learning communities. Therefore, collaborative and participative leadership styles are more appropriate in collective visioning and communication so that teachers can share in building and implementing the vision. Principals' leadership styles which can therefore create the conditions necessary for a commitment to the vision of the school can inevitably build sustainable PLCs. **(4.4.4.1).** The above discussion highlights the very tangible relationship which exists between principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of PLCs. In conclusion, if principals use harsh and coercive methods to lead their staff this can have negative consequences for the future of the institution. In contrast, principals whose leadership style is people centred, may be better able to sustain the PLCs. Put differently, the sustainability of PLCs depends largely on the type of leadership that is offered.

5.3.2 How does the school principal's leadership style develop or stifle the PLCs?

The second research question sought to understand the extent to which principals' leadership styles promoted shared leadership, collaborative learning, shared values and vision. Principals explained that they promoted shared leadership, collaborative learning, shared values and vision-sharing through distributed leadership and development of human resources; sharing of knowledge; concern; trust and inclusivity.

Principals who involve staff in discussing important matters and distribute leadership among their teachers have a better opportunity to improve and promote teaching and learning within PLCs. This type of leadership approach therefore adopted by the principals in this study to involve teachers in the leading of the school can promote PLCs. The opposite may also hold true. If principals do not share leadership with staff by distributing leadership, this may impede the growth and sustainability of PLCs. **(4.5.1.1.)** In addition to distributed leadership, data from this study indicates that principals promoted shared leadership through the development of their staff. The leadership styles that promote the growth and development of human resources contributed to the promotion and sustainability of PLCs. All three principals alluded to a form of staff development to promote the functioning of the PLCs. (**4.5.1.2**)

Principals whose leadership approach promotes the sharing of knowledge with staff are more likely to encourage and promote collaborative learning. This approach to sharing knowledge is indicative of the sincerity of a principal. Leaders who demonstrate sincerity and openness

are more likely to be seen as leaders of integrity by others. This kind of leadership approaches may be able to promote PLCs more effectively than those who lack integrity.

In sharing knowledge the data also suggests that principals assumed a more shepherding role which is important to promote collaborative learning. A supporting leadership approach, therefore is important for education developments to take place and for PLCs to flourish so as to improve teaching and learning. Principals who therefore adopt a leadership style that promotes and encourages knowledge sharing may be more likely to promote PLCs. **(4.5.2.1)**

While there are differing perspectives, this gives us some rich insight into Principals leadership approaches. One principal demonstrated his concern for his teachers. Another also cared about his teachers views and nurtured free expression to discuss matters which concerned teachers. The third principal promoted respect and trust. These Principals demonstrated a caring attitude towards their staff. This caring attitude describes the leadership style of the principals in this study. Principals whose leadership style values people are more likely to promote PLCs than those who are task oriented. The findings from the data reveal that all participants in this study promoted the vision for their schools in an inclusive manner with various role players. This particular leadership approach was adopted to ensure that all role players owned the vision of the school. **(4.5.3.1)**

In concluding the findings for critical question two, one notes that Principals' leadership style does have the potential to either nurture or stunt the PLC. These are some of the ways in which principals nurture PLCs. When principals share leadership, distribute leadership and develop human resources; practice sharing of knowledge; show concern for stakeholders; allow freedom of expression and promote trust as well as lead inclusively they are more likely to promote PLCs than principals who do not. One can presume therefore that certain carefully considered leadership styles or practices can promote the growth and sustainability of PLCs more readily than other styles or practices.

5.3.3. Why do school principals support the PLCs in a particular way?

This question explored the manner in which principals support professional learning communities and why they support these communities in the way they do. Four characteristics emerged and these are pursuit of excellence; experience, passion and character. Principals in this study sought to support the learning communities because they

aimed for excellence in their schools. All principals aimed to improve the quality of teaching and learning within the learning communities using various means.

The second reason that principals supported their school in their unique way was because of the vast experience they gained over the many years in the teaching profession. Experience has developed and prepared them for their roles as school principals. The experience which they gained allowed them to understand the complexities and pitfalls of supporting a learning community.

Principals supported the PLCs because of their passion for education. They were passionate about the education of young minds and passionate about their schools. This passion for education influenced their leadership approach. This was the third reason that Principals supported the PLCs the way they did. The character of principals seems to have played a significant role in why principals supported the PLCs in their way. Principal Anderson was described as a friendly, good natured, humble and approachable man and this influenced his leadership style. His leadership style was consistent with his character. Principal Donald was described as a person who saw great possibilities. His character was positive and he saw no limits. This is how he led and supported the learning communities.

5.4   Recommendations

The following recommendations are made and are based on the findings of this study.

5.4.1 Recommendations directed at ACE: SL programme designers

This study aimed to determine the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of the PLCs particularly of principals who attended the Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership (ACE: SL) in the three primary schools in the Umlazi district. The findings demonstrate therefore that, it is recommended that principals who attend future ACE SL courses should be exposed to and be developed in leadership styles that are conducive to building sustainable PLCs. Future graduates of ACE: SL should also be exposed to current research on how leadership approaches can affect the future of schools. Graduates of the ACE: SL course should also undergo evaluations and annual refresher courses in their approach to leadership at their schools with a view to staying current and to adopting conducive leadership strategies. Secondly principals who have never attended ACE: SL courses and who are currently leading schools ought to be encouraged to revisit their style of leadership and determine how this impacts on the sustainability of PLCs.

5.4.2 Recommendations directed at school principals

This study also sought to understand how the school principals' leadership styles develop or stifle the PLCs. As a result of these findings, it is recommended that principals should develop teachers and other personnel at schools so that, as a result, the growth of PLCs can be encouraged. Principals need to also reconsider their current leadership styles and exercise new leadership approaches in order to promote the development of PLCs. One way of exercising new leadership approaches is by supporting and involving teachers and other stakeholders in promoting PLCs. Another consideration for principals to note is that principals whose leadership style values people, may be better able to promote PLCs than principals who place emphasis on tasks alone.

Chapter summary

5.5 This chapter has presented a synopsis of the study, presentation of findings and recommendations. The findings of this study has illustrated that leadership style does have an impact on PLCs. Principals who therefore adopt a leadership style that favours support and collaboration have a greater opportunity to sustain and promote PLCs. The recommendations have given guidelines on how principals can go about leading PLCs so that it can be sustained. In addition, it can be concluded that one of the reasons that principals chose to support the PLCs is because of academic excellence, passion and their character. The implications for principals are that those who wish to support their schools must examine the goal of their style of leadership. This examination may reveal a need to adapt their leadership approach to become more supportive.

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7. LIST OF APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix A: Template of consent letter requesting permission from school Principals

16 Wesley Road
Kingsburgh
4150

14 January 2014

The Principal
Primary School
P. O. Box 1111
4170

Dear Sir/ Madam

Request for permission to conduct research at Primary School in the Umlazi District.

I, Mr. S. Emanuel (student no. 213570067), currently an Educator, request permission to conduct research at the above school. As part of my professional development, I am presently enrolled for a Master in Education Degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In order to successfully complete my studies I am required to compile a dissertation. My study will focus on *The relationship between principals leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities*. This is an under researched field in South Africa and it needs to be built upon. In this regard I have chosen your school because I believe that you and your teachers have the potential and can provide valuable insight in extending the boundaries of our knowledge on this relationship.

Please note that this is not an evaluation of performance or competence of your teachers and by no means is it a commission of inquiry. The identities of all who participate in this study will be protected in accordance with the code of ethics as stipulated by the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
I undertake to uphold the autonomy of all participants. They will be free to withdraw from the research at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to themselves. Participants will be asked to complete a consent form. In the interest of the participants, feedback will be given to them during and at the end of the study.

You may contact my supervisor or myself should you have any queries or questions you would like answered.
  Researcher's contact details:

Name: Sherian Emanuel
Address: P.O. Box 308
   Winkelspruit
   4145
Contact Number: 083 324 9660 (C) 031- 9201021 (H)

Student Number: 213570067
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Edgewood Campus

Supervisor's contact details:

Dr. TT Bhengu
Faculty of Education
School of Education and Development
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Cell no. 082 377 5253 Edgewood Tel. No. 031-2603534
Email : bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za

University Research Office contact details:

HSSREC Research Office
Ms.P.Ximba
Telephone: (031) 2603587
Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Yours faithfully

Mr S. Emanuel

7.2 Appendix B: Template of letter requesting permission from Principals to participate in the study

<div align="right">

16 Wesley Road

Illovo

4150

14 January 2014

</div>

Dear Sir/ Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

I am Sherian Emanuel, a Masters student specialising in Education, Management and Leadership. I am studying through the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). Please be informed that I have sought the necessary permission from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and permission has been granted. I therefore seek your permission to conduct an interview with you. The title of my study is:

A case study of school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities (PLC)

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities. Through my survey of literature on leadership styles and PLCs, there is evidence that much has been written on leadership styles. However, not much has been researched or written on relationship between school principals' leadership styles and PLCs in South Africa. This study aims to fill the gap that exists in literature.

The study will use semi-structured interviews. For the semi-structured interviews teachers will be individually interviewed for approximately 60 minutes and each interview will be voice-recorded. Responses will be treated with the strictest degree of confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of actual names in the reporting of data. You will be contacted well in advance for interviews. The time and venue will be

at the participants' convenience. Absolute care will be taken to avoid disruptions to teaching and learning during the school day. In further ensuring confidentiality the interviews will be conducted behind closed doors. A "do not disturb" sign will be posted outside the room. Your participation will always remain voluntary which means that you may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time if you so wish.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact me or my Supervisor: Dr T.T. Bhengu at 031-260 3534 or email at Bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za or

Mr. S. Emanuel at 031- 920 1021 or email at Emanueltribe@gmail.com

University Research Office contact details:

HSSREC Research Office

Ms P. Ximba

Telephone: 031 260 3587

Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

_____

Mr S.Emanuel.

(Student Number: 213570067

7.3 Appendix C: Template of letter requesting teachers to participate in the study

CONSENT LETTER TO THE PARTICIPANTS

(INFORMED CONSENT BY PARTICIPANTS)

16 Wesley Road

Illovo

4150

23 January 2014

Dear Educator

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

I am Sherian Emanuel, a Masters student specialising in Education, Management and Leadership. I am studying through the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). Please be informed that I have sought the necessary permission from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the principal to conduct this study and permission has been granted. I therefore seek your permission to conduct an interview with you. The title of my study is:

A case study of school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities (PLC)

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities. Through my survey of literature on leadership styles and PLCs, there is evidence that much has been written on leadership styles. However, not much has been researched or written on relationship between school principals' leadership styles and PLCs in South Africa. This study aims to fill the gap that exists in literature.

The study will use semi-structured interviews. For the semi-structured interviews teachers will be individually interviewed for approximately 90 minutes and each interview will be voice-recorded. Responses will be treated with the strictest degree of confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of actual names in the reporting of data. You will be contacted well in advance for interviews. The time and venue will be at the participants convenience. Absolute care will be taken to avoid disruptions to teaching and learning during the school day. In further ensuring confidentiality the interviews will be conducted behind closed doors. A "do not disturb" sign will be posted outside the room. Your participation will always remain voluntary which means that you may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time if you so wish.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact me or my Supervisor :Dr T.T.Bhengu at 031-260 3534 or email at Bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za or

Mr. S. Emanuel at 031- 920 1021 or email at Emanueltribe@gmail.com

University Research Office contact details :

HSSREC Research Office

Ms. P. Ximba

Telephone : 031 260 3587

Email : ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

_____

Mr S.Emanuel.

(Student Number: 213570067)

7.4 Appendix D: Template of informed consent letters to teachers

INFORMED CONSENT- Teachers

Declaration: I,………………………………………………….(full name of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:

A case study of school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities (PLC)

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and:

I ***consent/do not consent** to voluntarily take part in the study and to have this interview audio recorded. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time, should I so desire,without any negative or undesirable consequences. I am also aware that there are neither any foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant:………………..........Date:…………………………

7.5 Appendix E: Interview instruments for principals

7.5.1. Would you characterise your school as a place where leadership is shared, where there is collaborative learning and where there are shared values and vision?

If yes, please explain how you exercise:
- shared leadership
- Collaborative learning
- Shared values – What are those values?
- Vision sharing

7.5.2. In **what way does the manner** in which you lead the school, **promote**?
- shared leadership
- Collaborative learning
- Shared values – What are those values?
- Vision sharing

7.5.3. Explain how **collaborative learning** was **established** and show how it is **sustained.**

7.5.4. What **influences you to support** your school **in the way you do?**

7.6 Appendix F: Interview instruments for teachers

7.6.1. Would you characterise your school as a place where leadership is shared, where there is collaborative learning and where there are shared values and vision?

    If yes, please explain how your principal exercises:

- shared leadership
- Collaborative learning
- Shared values – What are those values?
- Vision sharing

7.6.2. In **what way does the manner** in which your principal lead the school, **promote?**

- shared leadership
- Collaborative learning
- Shared values – What are those values?
- Vision sharing

7.6.3. Explain how **collaborative learning** was **established** and show how it is **sustained** in your school.

7.6.4. What **influences** your principal **to lead** your school **in the way that he does do**?

YAKWAZULU-NATALI

13 May 2014

Mr Sherian Emanuel (213570067)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0395/014M
Project title: A case study of school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning

Dear Mr Emanuel,

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application dated 14 January 2014, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

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

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

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

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

Yours faithfully

....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr TT Bhengu
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Morojele
cc School Administrator: Mr Thoba Mthembu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymanm@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za
Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

1910 - 2010
100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

7.8 Appendix H: Permission letters from principals and teachers

RIMARY SCHOOL

P.O.Box 1022

Tel: 039
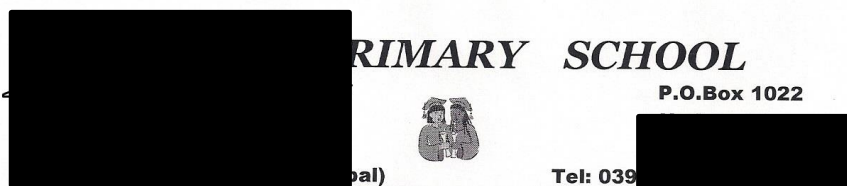
14 January 2014
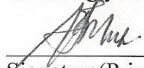
Mr. S.Emmanuel

RE-PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Your letter seeking permission to conduct a study among teachers has reference.
Permission is hereby granted provided that interviews are not conducted during
school hours.I fully understand the contents of your letter and agree that the teachers
participation is voluntary.
Your assurance of confidentiality and anonymity is appreciated, I would like to take
this opportunity of wishing you well and every success in your studies.

Thanking you

_____
Signature(Principal)

14/01/14

Date

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
& CULTURE

2014 -01-

PO BOX 1022 UMKOMAAS 4170
TEL 039 9707771

14 January 2014
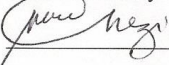
Mr. S. Emanuel

<u>*RE- PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH*</u>

Your letter seeking permission to conduct a study among teachers has reference. Permission is hereby granted provided that interviews are not conducted during school hours. I fully understand the contents of your letter and agree that the teachers participation is voluntary. Your assurance of confidentiality and anonymity is appreciated I would like to take this opportunity of wishing you well and every success in your study.

Thanking you

Yours faithfully
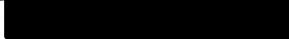
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Signature   (Principal)   ‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾

                                                     Date

DEPT OF EDUCATION & CULTURE

AMANZIMTOTI, 4125

INFORMED CONSENT- Principal

Declaration: I,......NTABULO MATHE...........(full name of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:
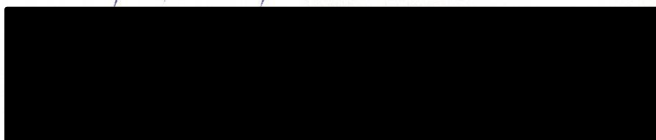
A case study of school principals leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities (PLC)

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and:

I ***consent/do not consent** to voluntarily take part in the study and to have this interview audio recorded. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time, should I so desire,without any negative or undesirable consequences. I am also aware that there are neither any foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with my participation in this study.
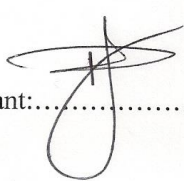
Signature of Participant:..

Date:....14/01/14...........

Date:............................

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION & CULTURE

P.O BOX 1022 UMKOMAAS 4170
TEL 039 9707771

INFORMED CONSENT

Declaration: I,...*Mngadi Petros Yakhumuzi*...(full name of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:
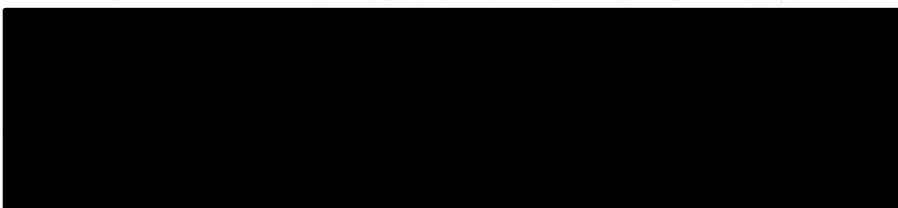
A case study of school principals leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities (PLC)

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and:

I *consent/~~do not consent~~ to voluntarily take part in the study and to have this interview audio recorded. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time, should I so desire,without any negative or undesirable consequences. I am also aware that there are neither any foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant:................................

Date:..14./.01./.2014........

INFORMED CONSENT

Declaration: I, W/SEMAN....NDLOVU.........................(full name of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:

A case study of school principals leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities (PLC)

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and:

I *consent/~~do not consent~~ to voluntarily take part in the study and to have this interview audio recorded. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time, should I so desire,without any negative or undesirable consequences. I am also aware that there are neither any foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with my participation in this study.
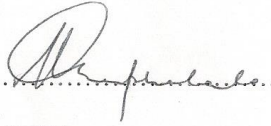
Signature of Participant:.............................

Date:..14/.01./.2014.........

4

INFORMED CONSENT- Principal

Declaration: I,...........PRASHAN SINGH..............................(full name of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:

A case study of school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities (PLC)

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and:

I *consent/~~do not consent~~ to voluntarily take part in the study and to have this interview audio recorded. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time, should I so desire,without any negative or undesirable consequences. I am also aware that there are neither any foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with my participation in this study.
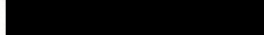
Signature of Participant:.......................Date:.....23/01/14......

3

INFORMED CONSENT

Declaration: I, ..*THANDAZILE*...*M*...*LUTHULI*........(full name of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:

A case study of school principals leadership styles and the sustainability of
professional learning communities (PLC)

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and:

I ***consent/do not consent** to voluntarily take part in the study and to have this interview audio recorded. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time, should I so desire, without any negative or undesirable consequences. I am also aware that there are neither any foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant:....*YMLuthuli*...................
Date:.*14*...*JAN*...*2014*..

INFORMED CONSENT

Declaration: I, *Nompilo Maphalala* ....(full name of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:

A case study of school principals leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities (PLC)

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and:

I *consent/~~do not consent~~ to voluntarily take part in the study and to have this interview audio recorded. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time, should I so desire,without any negative or undesirable consequences. I am also aware that there are neither any foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant:...........................

Date: 15-01-2014

INFORMED CONSENT

Declaration: I, NGUTHENI FLORENCE NYAWOIE (full name of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:

A case study of school principals leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities (PLC)

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and:

I ***consent/do not consent** to voluntarily take part in the study and to have this interview audio recorded. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time, should I so desire, without any negative or undesirable consequences. I am also aware that there are neither any foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant: Nyawoie

Date: 14/01/14

INFORMED CONSENT- Principal

Declaration: I, Sibongile Patricia Shezi ....(full name of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:

A case study of school principals leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities (PLC)

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and:

I *consent/do not consent to voluntarily take part in the study and to have this interview audio recorded. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time, should I so desire, without any negative or undesirable consequences. I am also aware that there are neither any foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant:.................................

Date:...14 – 01 – 2014.....

u

INFORMED CONSENT

Declaration: I, NASHREEN BANOO LIMALIA (full name of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:

A case study of school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities (PLC)

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and:

I *consent/~~do not consent~~ to voluntarily take part in the study and to have this interview audio recorded. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time, should I so desire, without any negative or undesirable consequences. I am also aware that there are neither any foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant:......... Date: 2014 - 01 - 28

INFORMED CONSENT

Declaration: I, Puniavathie Govender ......(full name of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:

A case study of school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities (PLC)

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and:

I *consent/~~do not consent~~ to voluntarily take part in the study and to have this interview audio recorded. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time, should I so desire, without any negative or undesirable consequences. I am also aware that there are neither any foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant:....Govender.........Date:..30/01/2014......

0823050875

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7.9 Appendix I: Turnitin certificate

7.10 Appendix J: Language clearance certificate

25 Maple Crescent
Circle Park
KLOOF
3610

Phone 031 – 7075912
0823757722
Fax 031 - 7110458
E-mail:
wyebanksec@telkomsa.net
sathsgovender4@gmail.com

Dr Saths Govender

27 NOVEMBER 2014

LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

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

'A case study of school principals' leadership styles and the sustainability of professional learning communities' by S. Emanuel, student no. 213570067.

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.