

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

Research can be defined as the systematic process of collecting and logically analysing data for a given purpose (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). However, this definition is generalised to some degree, since many methods are used to investigate a problem or question. Research methods (constituting a research methodology) are the ways in which one collects and analyses data. These methods have been developed for acquiring knowledge reliably and validly. A research methodology is systematic and purposeful, planned to yield data on a particular research problem (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This chapter aims to introduce and explain the rationale for the research methods chosen for the study. The chapter begins by restating the research problem, provides a philosophical positioning of qualitative research and a description of research design.

As I have chosen a qualitative, case study approach for this study, these concepts are described in detail. Further to this, this chapter identifies and describes the population, sample, research instruments and methods of data collection utilised in the study. This chapter also provides a description of how the data will be analysed, and discusses the issue of reliability and validity as it pertains to the study. The chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter.

#### 3.2 Research problem

With the introduction of the new education system in South Africa, traditional approaches to school leadership are being challenged. Hierarchical, top-down approaches are being set aside for a more democratic, distributed form of leadership. In particular, there is a call for teachers to take on positions of leadership in the school. Teacher leadership is, however, a relatively new concept to the South African education system. While the Government Gazette for the Norms

and Standards for Educators (2000) calls for teachers to take up leadership positions within and beyond their classrooms – there is no mention of how this should be done. Studies conducted in South Africa focused on teachers' understanding of the concept, and their readiness for teacher leadership (De Villiers and Pretorius, 2011). Other studies by Grant (2006, 2008) Singh (2007) and Khumalo and Grant (paper in progress) have investigated the enactment of teacher leadership, and barriers to teacher leadership.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the way in which teacher leadership is developed in schools. The study also aimed to investigate teachers' and SMTs understanding of the concept of teacher leadership. The reason for this is twofold, where: (1) teachers' understanding of the concept could impact on their uptake of teacher leadership roles; and (2) the SMTs understanding of the concept has a direct and significant effect on whether teacher leadership is actually developed in a school. This study also investigated the barriers that hinder teacher leadership. The study further investigated the way in which teacher leadership programmes are developed, implemented and evaluated.

### **3.3 Positivism and interpretivism**

It is important to philosophically position qualitative research among other forms of research. Such a positioning entails what one believes about the nature of reality (ontology), and the nature of knowledge (epistemology) (Merriam, 2009). Traditional research paradigms make certain assumptions about the world. They assume that there is an objective reality that researchers ought to try and uncover as they conduct their research. Further, it is also assumed that the role of the researcher is neutral, and that the main purpose is to discover the objective reality. These are referred to as positivist paradigms. A positivist orientation assumes that reality exists 'out there' and that it is observable, stable and measurable (Merriam, 2009). However, it became evident that capturing a reality that was 'out there' was difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. This led to a postpositivist point of view, which held that researchers should strive to capture reality using multiple methods. In such a way, reality might be approximated (Lichtman, 2006).

In contrast to the positivist approach, interpretive research, where qualitative research is most often located, assumes that reality is socially constructed, that is, that there is no single, observable reality (Merriam, 2009). Rather, there are multiple realities or interpretations of a single event. According to the tenets of this paradigm, researchers do not 'find' knowledge, they construct it. Multiple realities, as constructed by the researcher, replaced the traditional single approximation of an objective reality (Lichtman, 2006). Constructivism is a term used interchangeably with interpretivism. Constructivists claim that truth is relative and that it is dependent on one's perspective. This paradigm recognises the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning, but doesn't reject objectivity per se Miller and Crabtree (1999) cited in Merriam (2009). The choice of a case study approach used here is based on the constructivist paradigm.

### **3.4 Research design**

Quantitative research designs emphasise objectivity in measuring and describing phenomena (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). As such, the research design maximises objectivity by using numbers, statistics, structure and control. An important sub-classification of quantitative design is experimental and non-experimental. The difference between the two has significant implications for the nature of the design, and the types of conclusions that can be drawn. Qualitative research designs, however, use methods that are distinct from those used in quantitative designs. While qualitative designs can be said to be just as systematic as quantitative designs, they emphasise gathering data on naturally occurring phenomena. Most data gathered is in the form of words and the researcher must search and explore with a variety of methods, until a deep understanding is achieved. Qualitative research designs can be organised by: (1) focus on individual lived experience, as seen in phenomenology, case study grounded theory and some critical studies; and (2) a focus on society and culture, as defined by ethnography and some critical studies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2011). For the purpose of my study I have chosen to use a qualitative research design.

### **3.4.1 Qualitative research**

Qualitative research is characterised by strategies that take the subject's perspective as central. This approach also pays significant attention to detailed observation in an attempt to produce a 'rich' and 'deep' description (Morrison, 2002). In qualitative research, detailed consideration is given to the holistic picture in which the research topic is embedded. The underlying idea is that researchers can only make sense of the data collected if they are able to understand the data in a broader educational, social and historical context (Morrison, 2002).

Qualitative research defies a simple definition (Merriam, 2009). There is also much confusion over what constitutes qualitative research. One of the problems in doing this is that qualitative research is often described by what it is not, namely, research that is not quantitative (Best & Kahn, 2006; Lichtman, 2006). This is a problem for two reasons: (1) some qualitative research results in some quantification; and (2) it represents a negative connotation – that qualitative research is only what quantitative research isn't, rather than positively stating what it is (Best & Kahn, 2006). Unlike quantitative research designs, qualitative research designs can vary significantly, depending on the theoretical framework, philosophy, assumptions about the nature of knowledge and the field of study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2011), resulting in different definitions of what constitutes qualitative research.

#### **3.4.1.1. Definitions of qualitative research**

Creswell (2007) describes qualitative research as research that begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. This definition stresses the importance of assumptions and the worldviews that provide the basis of the design. Lincoln and Guba (1985), cited in (Merriam, 2009), refer to this type of research as 'naturalistic inquiry', which implies that participant observational techniques result in a more natural approach than do those tests and surveys used in the more traditional quantitative approaches.

Marshall and Rossman (1999) suggest that qualitative research offers opportunities for conducting exploratory and descriptive research that uses the context and setting to search for a deeper understanding of the person(s) being studied. Qualitative research is a way of knowing that assumes that researcher gathers, organises and interprets information (usually in words or in pictures), using his or her eyes and ears as filters. It is a way of doing that often involves in-depth interviews and/or observations of humans in natural and social settings (Lichtman, 2006). Basically, qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world (Merriam, 2009).

#### **3.4.1.2 Characteristics of qualitative research**

Another strategy, to understand the complexity of qualitative research, is to determine its fundamental characteristics. As with many of the concepts in education, different writers have emphasised different characteristics, although there is some overlap. According to Merriam (2009) the following four characteristics are identified by most as the key to understanding qualitative research: (1) the focus is on process, understanding and meaning; (2) the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; (3) the process is inductive; and (4) the product is richly descriptive.

A distinguishing characteristic of qualitative research is that behaviour is studied as it occurs naturally. There is no manipulation or control of the behaviour, nor are there any externally-imposed constraints (McMillan & Schumacher, 2011). As qualitative researchers are interested in how people interpret their experiences, construct their worlds, and attribute meaning to their experiences; an understanding of the situational context is very important. Qualitative researchers, therefore, need to have context sensitivity, as any explanation of behaviour that does not take into consideration the context is assumed to be incomplete (McMillan & Schumacher, 2011). In qualitative research, the researchers themselves are the primary instruments of data collection and analysis. Qualitative researchers spend a large amount of their time engaging with the participants and documents, thus enabling them to be

immediately responsive and adaptive. However, the human instrument has shortcomings and biases that might have an impact on the study.

The qualitative research process is inductive. Researchers gather data to build concepts, hypotheses or theories, rather than deductively testing hypotheses as in positivist research (Merriam, 2009). Theory is developed from the bottom up, from detailed particulars, rather than in a top down manner. This approach is important, because qualitative researchers want to be open to new ways of understanding (McMillan & Schumacher, 2011). Lastly, the product of a qualitative study is richly descriptive. The descriptions are generated in the form of words or pictures, however, rather than numbers. The descriptions capture what has been observed in the same form in which they occurred naturally in a particular context. In addition, the qualitative researcher may use data in the form of quotes from documents and interviews in support of the findings of the study (Merriam, 2009).

#### **3.4.1.3 Types of qualitative research**

The diversity of forms of qualitative research have been organised in various ways. Cresswell (2007) presents five approaches: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and the case study. Merriam (2009) presents six approaches: basic qualitative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, narrative analysis and critical qualitative research. Lichtman (2006) presents an extensive summary of ten approaches: ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, the case study, feminist theory, generic approach, narrative analysis, postmodernism, post-postmodernism, and mixed methods. While these approaches have some similarities, they each have a different focus, sample selection, data collection and analysis and write up (Merriam, 2009). Finally, case study, the chosen design for the current research will be discussed.

### **3.5 Case study**

A case study refers to the study of the singular, the particular, the unique (Simons, 2009). In the literature on case study, different authors refer to case study as a method, a strategy and an

approach. For the purposes of my research, I will be using Simons (2009) preference for the term approach. This indicates that the case study has a research intent and methodological purpose which affects which methods are chosen to gather data. The primary purpose for choosing a case study is to explore the particularity of a single case, in this instance, teacher leadership development.

Simons (2009) defines a case study broadly as that process of conducting systematic, critical inquiry into a phenomenon of choice and generating understanding to contribute to cumulative public knowledge of the topic. In contrast, Thomas (2009) and Lichtman (2006) assert that a case study involves in-depth research into one case or a small set of cases. The 'case' that forms the basis of the investigation is normally something that already exists (Descombe, 2007); it is a 'naturally occurring' phenomenon Yin (1994) cited in Descombe (2007). According to Merriam (1998), the qualitative case study can be defined as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit.

Merriam's (2009) definition will form the basis for this study: namely, a case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system. Part of the confusion surrounding case studies is that the process of conducting a case study is conflated with both the unit of the study (the case) and the product of this type of study (Merriam, 2009). The aim of using a case study approach is to gain a rich, detailed understanding of the case by examining aspects of it in detail. This is in line with the aims of my study, which was to provide an in-depth understanding and description of teacher leadership development in a secondary school.

The single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of the study, the case (Merriam, 2009). As Cresswell (2008) states, a case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system. Being bounded means being unique, according to place and time and participant characteristics (McMillan & Schumacher, 2011). It is a single entity, a unit around which I can put a boundary (Merriam, 2009). Irrespective of whether the term system, event or case is used, the emphasis is on a single instance of something or a single entity, not on a methodology. In line with this, it is possible for a case study to be both quantitative and qualitative in nature. In this study, I am using the term to refer to a qualitative case study.

### **3.5.1 Strengths and limitations of case study design**

One of the strengths of the case study approach is that it allows the researcher to use a variety of sources, a variety of types of data and a variety of research methods as part of the investigation (Descombe, 2007). This, in turn, facilitates the validation of data through triangulation. The case study also offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). The main benefit of using a case study approach is that the focus on one or a few instances allows the researcher to deal with the subtleties and intricacies of complex social situations (Descombe, 2007). This results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon. Lastly, a case study is flexible. It is neither time dependant nor constrained by method. It is responsive to shifts in focus and unanticipated consequences (Simons, 2009).

Although a rich, thick description and analysis is desired, researchers may not always have the time and money to engage in such an undertaking. Qualitative case studies are also limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the researcher (Merriam, 2009). As a result, subjective bias is a constant threat to objective data gathering and analysis (Best & Kahn, 2006).

Further limitations involve the issues of reliability, validity and generalisability. Case studies are often perceived as producing 'soft' data and lacking the degree of rigour expected of social science research (Descombe, 2007). Also, access to documents, people and settings can lead to ethical considerations such as confidentiality. Lastly, it is difficult for case study researchers to achieve their aim of investigating situations as they naturally occur without any effect arising from their presence. Observer effects need to be taken into account during data collection and analysis.

### **3.6 Population and Sample**

The defining characteristic of case study research is the delimiting of the object. I have chosen to focus my research on teacher leadership development in a secondary school, at which I was a Head of Department (HOD) and a member of the SMT. This school started out as a Model C

school under the supervision of the Transvaal Education Department. Currently, the school is classified as a fee-paying, public school. The school has an enrolment of 1008 learners and a staff of forty, which includes thirty one teachers and nine management staff. However, this population is still far too broad a unit of analysis, and so, further selection criteria was applied.

Even in a case study approach, it is not possible to study the entire population of a single school. A population is defined as a group of individuals, with at least one common characteristic which distinguishes that group from other individuals (Best & Kahn, 2006). The population would firstly, be too large for a study of this limited scope and secondly, too diverse to be able to generalise the findings. It is for this reason that it is necessary to have a target population. A target population consists of a specific group to whom findings might be generalisable. In this study, the target population would be the teachers and SMT.

To solve the problem of size, it is necessary to select a sample from the target population that would form the basis of the research study. A sample is a small proportion of the population that is selected for observation and analysis (Best & Kahn, 2006). For the purpose of this study, all forty members of staff were chosen to answer the questionnaire and ten members of staff were chosen to participate in the interview. By observing the characteristics of the sample, one can make certain inferences about the characteristics of the population from which it was drawn. Probability sampling allows the investigator to generalise results of the study from the sample to the population from which it was drawn. Since generalisation in a statistical sense is not a goal of qualitative research, probabilistic sampling is not necessary or even justifiable in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). Non-probability sampling is thus the method of choice.

Non-probability sampling techniques include convenience, volunteer, purposeful and snowball sampling. For this study, purposeful sampling is employed, as appropriate to research where the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight, and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned (Merriam, 2009). Patton (2002), cited in Merriam (2009), argues that "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great

deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful inquiry”.

To begin purposeful sampling, it is necessary to first determine what selection criteria are essential in choosing the people or sites to be studied. For this study, when choosing the participants for the interviews the following selection criteria was applied. Participants had to be from both the teaching and management staff. This was an essential criteria as the aim of the study was to explore the role of both SMTs and staff in the conceptualisation and development of teacher leadership. The interview sample comprised of five teachers (PL1), three Heads of Department (PL2), one Deputy Principal (PL3) and the Principal (PL4).

### **3.7 Research instruments**

As Descombe (2007) states the case study approach to research allows for a variety of methods to be used in data collection. In this study, I have chosen to use questionnaires, document analysis and semi-structured interviews. The use of the questionnaire allows me to collect a high proportion of usable answers from a large sample. There are three procedures for eliciting opinions and beliefs that have been used extensively in opinion research: (1) Thurston Technique; (2) the Likert Method; and (3) the Semantic Differential. In the questionnaire for this study, I utilised the Likert Method, as this was of a more appropriate level for the scope of the study.

The questionnaire comprised 25 questions and consisted of both closed and open-ended questions. This enabled me to gather factual information, and gave me insight into the respondents’ frame of reference and possibly their reasons for their responses. The second method of data collection that I utilised was semi-structured interviews. Interviews in case studies are normally open-ended in nature. The purpose of open-ended interviewing is not to put things in someone’s mind but to access the perspective of the person being interviewed Patton (1990) cited in Best and Kahn (2006). It is therefore critical for the interviewer to ensure

that the person being interviewed clearly understands that the researcher does not hold any preconceived notions regarding the outcome of the study.

Depending on the level of skill of the interviewer, the manner in which the participants were approached to participate in the study and the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, where interviews can be a superior form of data collection. As compared to a questionnaire, people are more willing to talk about their experiences than to write about them. When rapport is established, the subject may also be willing to share confidential information that they may be reluctant to put into writing. Another advantage of interviewing is that the interviewer is able to explain the purpose of the investigation more explicitly. Further, if questions are misinterpreted, the interviewer may follow up with a clarifying question. During interviews it is also possible for the interviewer to evaluate the sincerity and insight of the interviewee. Through the interview technique, it is also possible that the interviewer may stimulate the subject's insight into his or her own experiences, thereby exploring significant areas not anticipated in the original plan of investigation (Best & Kahn, 2006).

In addition to the questionnaire and semi-structured interview, I also utilised document analysis. Documents are the records kept and written by actual participants in, or eyewitnesses of an event. Documents may include primary or secondary sources of data. Primary sources of data are eyewitness accounts; they are reported by an actual observer or participant in an event. Secondary sources are accounts of an event not actually witnessed by the observer (Best & Kahn, 2006). Secondary sources of data are usually of limited value for research purposes due to the errors that may result when information passes from one person to another. The documents used in this study are the minutes of SMT meetings and morning briefings as such are primary sources of data.

The use of multiple methods enabled me to supplement one with others to counteract bias and generate more adequate data. In addition, a researcher may utilise piloting to ensure more accurate data collection. In this study, the questionnaire and interview schedule were piloted on sample groups of ten and five, respectively. The characteristics of the sample group were the same as those utilised in the study. In both cases, respondents were encouraged to

comment and provide feedback. Piloting enabled me to collect data on whether the questionnaire takes too long to complete, whether the direction and items are clear and whether questions are rephrased unambiguously. All of this contributes to the reliability and accuracy of the data collected.

### **3.8 Data collection**

As the school that I chose to conduct my research in is a public school in Gauteng, it was necessary for me to obtain permission from the respective education department prior to beginning data collection. An application to conduct research was submitted to the Gauteng Education Department. As part of this application, I also submitted the proposal, ethics clearance number, as well as copies of the questionnaire and interview schedule. Included in this application were also the participant consent forms and the letter of introduction. The application was successful and permission was granted.

The next stage involved obtaining permission from the principal and School Governing Body (SGB). This application was also successful and I was granted permission to begin the investigation. The data collection process began with the administering of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to all staff at the case study school. The sample for the questionnaire included 31 teachers 6 Heads of Department (HODs), two deputy principals and the principal. Questionnaires were accompanied by an introduction letter detailing the study being undertaken, as well as a consent form for the respondents to complete. Questionnaires were placed in each respondent's pigeonhole in the staff room, and they were requested to return the document to my pigeonhole once completed.

While the questionnaire allowed for the gathering of information from a relatively large group of people in a short space of time, I was also interested in more detailed and personal experiences. Using purposeful sampling, I chose ten individuals to participate in the interview: five teachers, three HODs, one deputy principal and the Principal. The potential interviewees were approached with a letter of introduction and given a consent form. All ten agreed to

participate in the interview process. The scheduling of interviews, however, proved difficult. The entire interview process took five days, as I was, eventually, able to schedule two interviews, of forty minutes each, every day. Interviews were conducted in private to ensure confidentiality, and recorded so as to be transcribed at a later stage. Permission for the interview to be recorded was obtained from the subject prior to commencing. The last phase of my data collection involved me obtaining copies of the minutes of the SMT meetings and morning briefings. These were provided by the principal's secretary.

### **3.9 Data presentation and analysis**

Qualitative data analysis according to Cohen et al. (2007) involves organising, accounting for and making sense of the data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. They further state that there is no single way of analysing and presenting the data however, that it must 'fit the purpose'. The intention of my study is to contribute to the existing knowledge on teacher leadership and to revisit previous findings on teacher leadership to examine if they are still applicable today. As such, the coding draws on many concepts from the theoretical framework underpinning the study, namely distributed leadership; as well as from teacher leadership. Using significant keywords from the above literature enabled me to contextualise my data analysis in existing research, and further enabled me to look for similarities and/or disparities.

The questionnaire was designed in such a manner as to reflect the concepts found in distributed and teacher leadership. As a result, it was not necessary to code the data from the questionnaires. Data from the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and document analysis were categorised according to themes. The themes that emerged from the data coincided with the research questions being asked. The results were presented in the form of graphs and the analysis followed thereafter. Data analysis focused on answering each of the research questions by focusing on the data collected from all three methods of data collection.

### **3.10 Validity and Reliability**

Reliability is problematic in the social sciences because human behaviour is never static. Reliability in a research design is based on the assumption that there is a single reality and that studying it repeatedly will produce the same results. This is incongruent with qualitative, case study research. Rather, researchers seek to describe and explain the world as those in the world experience it (Merriam, 2009). As there are many interpretations of what is happening there is no standard means by which to establish reliability in the traditional sense. The more important question for qualitative research is as to whether the results are consistent with the data collected. This is referred to as dependability, or consistency.

With regard to data collection procedures, the notion of reliability can be applied in the traditional sense. The reliability of questionnaires may be inferred by a second administration of the instrument with a small subsample, comparing the responses with those of the first. Reliability may also be estimated by comparing responses of an alternate form with the original form (Best & Kahn, 2006). I will also be administering a questionnaire. The dependability of the questionnaire will be established by correlating the findings with other sources. In this case, study it will be cross-checked with documents from the school, as well as with responses to the interview questions.

In the interview process, reliability may be evaluated by restating a question in a slightly different form, at a later stage in the interview. Repeating the interview at another time may provide another estimate of the consistency of response. In this study, I used semi-structured interviews as the primary means of data collection. It was difficult to ensure reliability, due to the deliberate strategy of treating each participant as a potentially unique respondent. In addition, the distinctive context of each school also makes it difficult to ensure reliability in using semi-structured interviews for research (Bush, 2002). However, the dependability of the interview can be assessed by comparing it with answers to the questionnaire and the documents from the school. Lastly, the reliability of documents can be assessed through triangulation.

Internal validity concerns the extent to which research findings accurately represent the phenomenon under investigation (Bush, 2002), and to which they can be applied to other situations (Merriam, 2009). As established, the main objective of case study research is to produce a deep understanding of the phenomena being investigated. Case study research does not aim to generalise findings to other situations. Therefore, the external validity of this study will be low. It is important, however, that a study is internally valid. The main potential source of invalidity in interviews is bias. This can be controlled for by careful formulation of questions and a pilot-test of the interview schedule. The interview schedule utilised in this study was revised based on the feedback from the pilot test.

Fundamental to the validity of the questionnaire is asking the right questions phrased in the least ambiguous way (Best & Kahn, 2006). Both the research instruments will be pilot-tested on a sample that is representative of the sample chosen for the study. Findings from the pilot-test are then used to revise the existing interview questions and questionnaire to ensure high internal validity. The internal validity of the documents can be further established by triangulation with the other methods of data collection.

### **3.11 Ethics**

Educational research focuses primarily on human beings. The researcher is therefore ethically responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of the subjects who participate in the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2011). For my study, I submitted an application for ethical clearance to the University Ethics Committee. My application was approved, and I was able to begin my data collection. The public nature of educational institutions means that permission to conduct research had to also be obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education. Here, too, an application was submitted and permission was granted. Lastly, the principal was approached and permission to conduct the study at the school was requested. Approval was given. In addition, ethical guidelines for informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity were adhered to.

The participants in the case study were informed of the purpose of the study, and they were invited to participate in the research. The participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, as well as the ability to withdraw from the research at any given time. Dates and times for answering the questionnaires were negotiated with the participants. This is the first stage of building a trusting relationship with the participant. On agreeing to participate, consent forms were given to participants, thus obtaining informed consent from the participants. Participants were also asked permission to have their interviews recorded and their responses used in the presentation of the study.

Confidentiality and anonymity are also discussed with the participants. They were assured that the school and their names would not be identifiable in print. To ensure anonymity the school and all participants were given code names. Complete confidentiality and anonymity, however, cannot be guaranteed. This is because interviews that had been recorded need to be transcribed and this entails a third person having access to the recordings. The transcriber, however, has no vested interest in the school or participants and is unlikely to be a threat. Issues of anonymity are of concern. As the research was conducted at the school at which I was previously employed, it is possible that there might not be complete anonymity when it comes to determining at which school the research was conducted. While this may present a potential problem, the anonymity of the participants is still fairly high.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

This chapter described the methodology and design of the research study. The chapter began by restating the research problem, provided a philosophical positioning of qualitative research and a description of the research design. The study took the form of a qualitative case study, which was interpretive in nature. A defining characteristic of case study research is the ability to use a combination of methods to collect data. As such, I utilised a multi-method approach and data was collected by means of a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis.

The chapter further presented a summary of how the data would be presented and analysed. Issues of reliability and validity as they pertained to the data collection procedures were examined. Lastly, the ethical considerations for the study were highlighted.