

UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG



**Exploring Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices in Challenging
Contexts Located in Johannesburg Central District: Case Studies**

A Research Report

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Degree of Master of Education in the Faculty of
Humanities in the subject of Education Leadership and Policy Studies at the Wits School of Education

by

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JULY 2020

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Stephen Kadzakumanja Masina declare that this research project: Exploring Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices in Challenging Contexts Located in Johannesburg Central District: Case Studies, abide by the following guidelines:

- The work presented in this research report is my original work and reference to the work of others has been duly acknowledged by means of complete references;
- This research report has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university;
- This research report comprises no other person's data or any such information unless the source is specifically acknowledged;
- This research report does not contain writings from other sources unless specifically acknowledged and the original sources declared in this manner: original statements have been rephrased and referenced, the exact words have been quoted, written inside quotation marks and referenced with the original document and no text, figures or tables have been copied and pasted from the internet to this research report unless specifically acknowledged and the sources detailed both in the report and in the reference section.

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SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT

I declare that this dissertation has been submitted with my approval

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Dr Geeta Motilal

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude and acknowledgement to all respondents who participated in the study, more particularly the three secondary school principals with their staff members who gave generously of their time and ideas in allowing me to invade their privacy during interview discussions and assisting me in pursuing with my dreams to become a better person. I know it would not have been possible had you decided to shut me out. I have a few individuals that I would like to honour by name:

Dr Geeta Motilal, as I conceptualised this research report, you have been so influential in making me believe in my own ability when no one did. You have been providing useful comments throughout the process of my research and providing valuable insights into the final draft of the study. Thank you very much for being humble and down to earth person that you are. You were always like a mother, approachable and ready to support. Your input in this type of study is fully appreciated.

Dr Mthiyane, S.E. and Dr Johnson, B., I thank you a lot for your commitment and the role played in my academic journey. Your guidance, dedication and support were always valuable to me and I was so fortunate to have found patient lecturers like you;

My fellow students in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, the class of 2018 – 2019 academic year that I have had contact with in my two years of study at Wits School of Education. You were a wonderful bunch; I wish our journey could be endless;

My four year old boy, Junior Masina, your immense understanding and support ‘action speaks louder than words’, you were always joining me with your toy books, you were so special just to be close to me day and night. I know it has never been easy for you as you needed my love. Thank you for understanding and accepting the challenges of helping out; As a Christian, I want to believe that God has a great plan for us all. It is through His strength that I came thus, so far.

Thank you, Father, for the gift bestowed upon me. This would not have been possible without your Divine Intervention and Wisdom. I thank you my endless Father.

DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this dissertation to:

My wife, Ntombizodwa Siwela Masina, my loving son, Junior Masina and the entire supportive family of Masina for their love, encouragement, understanding and the extra commitment of support throughout this academic journey.

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to explore principals' instructional leadership practices in improved-performing schools in challenging contexts. To collect data, twelve (12) teachers were interviewed for measuring principals' practices of instructional leadership. The main results suggested that in South Africa, there is a growing cohort of disadvantaged schools, which, despite of their socioeconomic challenges they face, display great degrees of resilience and perform better compared to the advantaged schools. In order to do this, I drew on theories of instructional leadership. Methodologically, I employed a qualitative approach. I purposively sampled the Johannesburg Central District public secondary schools, specifically, South Western Township (SOWETO) schools in the province of Gauteng, where I interviewed principals of three public secondary schools. In order to triangulate the data generated from the school principals, I also interviewed the HODs and teachers of the selected school principals. The main findings seem to indicate that a distributed form of instructional leadership is prevalent in these schools. There is a strong emphasis on academic success. Instructional time is greatly valued and maximally utilised. Moreover, there is a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning to ensure the quality scholastic performance of learners. Our learning from this study point to a rethinking of instructional leadership practices which should be about shaping structures and the school cultures in response to the realities of the school community. This study contributes to the body of research on instructional leadership practices from the South African cultural context.

Keywords: Instructional leadership, school leadership, school principal, challenging contexts.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPTD	Continuing Professional Teacher Development
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DBST	District Based Support Team
DOE	Department of Education
ESSP	Education School Support Programme
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
HOD	Head of Department
IL	Instructional Leadership
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Materials
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NSCE	National Senior Certificate Examination
SOWETO	South Western Townships

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1. Introduction to the study

This research study sought to understand instructional leadership practices that work in challenging contexts in South Africa. Most research on instructional leadership practices of school principals has revealed that the quality of school leadership has an influence to improve the scholastic performance of learners (Blasé & Blasé, 2000; Southworth, 2002; Hallinger, 2009; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood & Louis, 2011; Bendikson, Robinson & Hattie, 2012; Bush & Glover, 2012; Ogalo, 2013; Bhengu & Mkhize, 2013; Day, Gu & Sammons, 2016; Harris & Jones, 2017; Mestry, 2017). These researchers conclude that there is a general belief that good school principals are the basic foundation of most schools that are good and as such, without the principals’ leadership efforts to increase scholastic learner achievement cannot happen. Specifically, Horng and Loeb (2010) as well as Ng, Nguyen, Wong and Choy (2015) add that a particular brand of leadership is called from school principals that of being instructional leaders. However, instructional leadership is by no means a new concept in school leadership.

There is a strong belief among researchers that as a consequence of many demands on school leaders, there have been an increasing number of research studies addressing the impact that school

leadership has on teaching and learning, and other school outcomes since 1980s (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, 1992; Hallinger, 2003, 2009, 2010, 2011). This notwithstanding, all school leadership and practices should be figured as key factors in the success of schools as well as educational reforms around the world (Murphy, 1994; DoE, 2005; Christie, 2010; Bush, 2011, 2013; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; Hallinger & Lee, 2013, 2014; Kellerman, 2015). In light with the increasing levels of complexity in school leadership and policy implementation (Hargreaves, 2004; Fullan, 2011; Hallinger & Murphy, 2013; Sinnema, Robinson, Le Fevre & Pope, 2013), understanding the development of high-quality school leadership would be a key priority for many education systems around the world.

While noting that there has been a lack of empirical studies on school principals as instructional leaders, less is even known about the instructional leadership practices of school principals in challenging contexts (Chapman & Harris, 2004). Hoadley and Ward (2009) note that knowledge of how school principals manage the curriculum in their schools in South Africa is very limited. In South Africa as well as the continent of Africa at large, there is limited literature, specifically, the successful instructional leadership practices in schools in challenging contexts (Hoadley & Ward, 2009; Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & Van Rooyen, 2010; Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011; Naicker, Chikoko & Mthiyane, 2013; Ogalo, 2013). This study addressed two critical issues; the question of *variables* that are related to instructional leadership practices of secondary school principals in challenging contexts, the second was the issue of related *effects* toward the scholastic performance of learners in the National Senior Certificate Examinations.

However, this study was first conceptualised focusing on the training needs of school principals in South African challenging contexts (Naicker, Chikoko & Mthiyane, 2013). Mendels (2012) also points out what school principals expect in terms of the new roles and responsibilities allocated to them such as setting clear goals, managing curriculum and instruction, monitoring work schedules (lesson plans), allocating resources, coordinating and evaluating teachers and promoting the scholastic performance of learners, thus being instructional leaders. The study has also emphasised the need for financial management training for school principals as part of the training emphasis in addition to the professional development of teachers (Mendels, 2012).

Hoadley and Ward (2009) argue that good teachers cannot necessarily make good leaders if the instructional role of school principals is teaching and learning as the business of the school. Equally important, there is a general consensus in the literature of this study that there is a link between principals' instructional leadership practices and scholastic performance outcomes of learners, which are mediated and indirect. The study findings revealed that it is generally the responsibility of school principals to create a culture of teaching and learning (Mestry, 2017). In other words, in the case of South African challenging contexts, there is a lack of clarity regarding what this empirically entails.

At the same time, the focus of my study was not what school principals must be doing in relation to the management of teaching and learning, as there is a lot in the literature around this. Historically, the study was concerned with *whether or not and how* instructional leadership practices of school principals in challenging contexts contribute toward the scholastic performance of learners in the National Senior Certificate Examinations in South African secondary schools. In addition, through a series of variable analysis, my study identified numerous instructional leadership practices that are showing significant relationships to *Instructional Management Framework of Hallinger's (2009) Model*. In fact, these are the main variables related to instructional leadership practices such as school-wide teachers' professional development activities; defining and communicating shared school vision and goals; monitoring and providing feedback upon teaching and learning progress; monitoring the curriculum and instruction and the structural organisations for maximising teaching and learning which influence learners' growth academically.

Moreover, various recommendations for principals' training flow from the study findings, and comprehensive discussion and suggestions for further research. The concepts 'instructional leadership practices' and 'scholastic performance of learners' are mostly deployed in the literature in considering the relationships pertaining to 'curriculum, pedagogy, assessment standards' and 'improving learner performance outcomes'. My study aims to explore more specificity with regard to what 'instructional leadership practices' means in South African challenging contexts.

Significantly, among the global trends in instructional leadership that have emerged during the 1980s in the United States of America, effective large-scale of reform programmes have been aimed to improve under-performing schools in a high poverty situation (Harris & Chapman, 2002).

However, a considerable amount of literature on school improvements in challenging contexts or urban contexts was derived from American literature (Elmore, 2003; Blasé & Blasé, 2000). Hence, in the last few years, a larger body of researchers in the United Kingdom focused their interest on improving ‘failing schools’ (Gray, 2000; Hopkins, 2001a; 2001b; Reynolds, Hopkins, Potter & Chapman, 2001). Additionally, most recently the work in this field by Reynolds *et al.*, (2001) and Hopkins (2001b) has synthesised the major research evidence base for effective school improvement strategies and also produced school improvement guidelines with regard to the effective school improvement programmes.

My research project was conducted between May and June in 2019, with a sample representative of three secondary schools in Johannesburg Central District, Gauteng Province. Two research methodologies were deployed: a desktop reviewed literature and interviews with School Principals, Heads of Departments (HODs) and post level one teachers. The sample schools under the study are located in South Western Townships (SOWETO) area of Johannesburg city and these schools are situated in historically disadvantaged Black African areas. The majority of parents who send their children to these schools are mostly poor working-class families. Msila (2011) claims how school principals struggle to improve the scholastic performance of learners as a result of family poverties in their schools. Again, school principals are facing challenges working with teachers whose teaching morale and commitment to teaching are very low due to these contributing factors. In brief, I consider this study significant in that knowledge of instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts is required since such knowledge can be applied in order to transform many low-performing schools to high-performing sites of teaching and learning.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Leadership is a complex undertaking in any school, but for schools in challenging contexts, it presents extra challenges. School principals in challenging school contexts are constantly managing tensions as well as problems directly related to the particular circumstances of the school (Hoadley & Ward, 2009). School principals are challenged with solving instructional leadership problems which may not show the extent to which effective leaders have to set direction. Most schools’ performance rate in the National Senior Certificate Examination (NSCE) has been very poor since 2016 (DoE, 2005; DBE, 2011). Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011) claim that one of the

contributing factors of the problem is that school principals are insufficiently prepared and lack proper instructional leadership skills. Many of them are experiencing multiple challenges and struggling in exercising their instructional leadership roles. Therefore, these problems such as: high staff turnover, poor facilities, lack of resources, high rate of falling learners and constant stream of supply teachers are pressures that schools in more prosperous areas do not face. Hence, should be explored as a matter of urgency.

1.3. The Purpose and Rationale for the Study

Turning to contextual realities of the study, the purpose of my study was to explore school principals' instructional leadership practices in high-performing secondary schools in challenging contexts. Based on the experience gathered in my school principal's leadership before turning into educational consultation in South Africa and from my readings of the literature on successful instructional leadership in challenging contexts, my interest is inclined towards an understanding of what school principals do to succeed in challenging contexts. The schools in this study are located in the communities where there is high poverty and high rates of unemployment. There is a large number single parent families. In terms of the schools themselves, the infrastructure is not conducive to effective teaching and learning since classrooms are filled almost completely by a large number of learners. Despite these challenging contextual realities, these schools extremely performed well academically. I utilised the National Senior Certificate Examination results of the schools as my benchmark for academic performance over three years from 2016 to 2018.

Drawing from my personal topology of schools, in the district where I am assigned to, there are three school principals with doctorate degree qualifications in the field of educational leadership and management. All these schools are 'moving schools' because of their effectiveness as well as their commitment for improvement despite of their challenging contexts in which they are located. These schools show strong leadership, the National Senior Certificate Examination results is always 100%. Inevitably, in this study, I present the view that instructional leadership is all about keeping schools focused on the core business of teaching and learning processes and structural changes needed to produce highly-performing schools. Undoubtedly, my view is bound to raise critical questions in support of Naicker, Chikoko and Mthiyane's (2013) assertion that school principals serving at successful schools in challenging contexts are compassionate about the poor as well as

committed to their success through ensuring the delivery of quality education. These principals display an absolute commitment to the activity at hand as well as all instructional leadership efforts and also their activities were focused on excellence in the classrooms.

In addressing the research question on ‘*variables*’ related to the phenomenon of instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts for school principals as instructional leaders emanated from my personal perspective on how school principals showed their leadership skills. For this reason, as an experienced Senior Education Specialist for six years in Curriculum evaluation and leadership practices for Mathematics at the district level of Johannesburg Central District, I have done a variety of visits to secondary schools and I have witnessed many ways on how school principals lead, manage and monitor their secondary schools. Nevertheless, the common understanding of instructional leadership among educationists in South African contexts argue that this is the responsibility of school principals in influencing the quality of education in schools, enhancing learner achievement, managing resources to effectively improve teaching and learning (Bush & Glover, 2009; Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & Van Rooyen, 2010; Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011).

The issue concerning competencies, Southworth (2002) distinguishes between ‘‘narrow’’ and ‘‘broad’’ views of instructional leadership in the literature. The narrow interpretation focuses on instructional leadership as a separate entity from management and is defined as those actions directly related to teaching and learning, observable behaviours such as classroom supervision (Southworth, 2002). In the broader view, instructional leadership practices refer to all other leadership tasks as well as behaviours, which includes managerial behaviours that promote the growth of student learning in schools (Murphy, 1990; Mustafa, Radzi, Jaafar, Rohana & Nawawi, 2015; Ng, Nguyen, Wong & Choy, 2015). Similarly, it is broadly defined as the principals’ guidance as well as direction of instructional improvement (Elmore, 2000). More specific, definitions that attempt to define the nature of the relationships are provided by scholars such as Horng and Loeb (2010), Harris and Jones (2017), Murphy (1990) and Hallinger (2009). Horng and Loeb’s (2010) image of school principals as instructional leaders portrayed the administrator as being ‘resource providers’ in instruction. This image focused on the principals’ efforts to develop a vision and see it to fruition.

By establishing school goals, aligning curriculum, developing a safe school environment, as well as supervising classroom instruction, principals act as instructional leaders (Hoadley & Ward, 2009). To sum up, one can reach the point that there is no one single understanding of instructional leadership in the literature of this study. Yet, as a concept in general, it suggests that principals establish school-wide goals and communicate determined goals with all staff members (Bush, 2013; Bhengu, Naicker & Mthiyane, 2014).

1.4. Significance of the study

The significance of this study, the concept ‘instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts’ is regarded as a contentious issue because there is no single definition that could clearly describe the multiple connotations implicit in many educational settings. As such, it could easily be viewed as a social construct used by school principals in their specific educational contexts (Bush & Glover, 2009). This view is also shared by Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and Van Rooyen (2010) who observed instructional leadership to be the key driver for teachers teaching in multi-grade classrooms in their schools. These teachers had to understand the context, know and understand the learners who attend multi-grade classes, adapt teaching content as well as pedagogies, and be reflexive, context sensitive and collaborative. I personally regard that these leadership qualities are the hallmarks of a professional teacher, suggesting that one has to take leadership within them to adapt to contextual realities while promoting effective teaching in schools.

Bush (2013) notes that ‘one lasting legacy of the effective school movements should be the institutionalisation of the term, instructional leadership into the vocabulary of educational administration’. Within the construct of instructional leadership, many attempts have been made in the literature in this study to define instructional leadership, but there is disagreement concerning its definition, conceptualisation, practices and measurement (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Ginsberg, 1988; Blasé & Blasé, 2000; Southworth, 2002; Hallinger, 2003, 2009; Day, Gu & Sammons, 2016). I suggest that a major reason for these discrepancies, according to Hallinger and Murphy (1985) is the absence of a clear definition for the concept. I also propose that this lack of a concise definition is one of the weaknesses in the research on instructional leadership which leads to miscommunication, role conflict, and low principal evaluation procedures (Hallinger, 2010; Hallinger & Lee, 2014; Ham & Kim, 2015). Hoadley and Ward (2009) as well as Mestry (2017)

assert that this miscommunication is perhaps the major obstacle for effective instructional leadership in South African context.

Using a structural equation model, Grobler (2014) found that school principals play a pivotal role in ensuring coherence between teaching and learning, modelling effective teaching, facilitating scholastic performance of learners as well as protecting instructional time. His findings challenge the traditional roles of school principals as school administrators, and this, concurs with Mestry (2017) who found that most school principals experienced great difficulty in balancing their administrative activities with their instructional responsibilities. He argues that such school principals should be encouraged to make a paradigm shift from managerialism to innovative instructional leadership. Bhengu and Mkhize (2013), as well as Du Plessis (2014) endorse this view. Bhengu and Mkhize (2013) suggest that school principals should foster creative instructional leadership practices, such as sharing their vision among staff members, monitoring curriculum delivery and equipping teachers with professional resource materials. Moreover, Du Plessis (2014) found that effective school principals as instructional leaders depend on a positive learning community where teachers have a sense of security in their work place, there is on-going collegial interaction, as well as time to build positive relationships.

While the roles of the school principals are critical in instructional leadership, I would like to emphasise that such roles are not mutually exclusive. This view is endorsed by Bush (2013) who found that instructional leadership focused too much on the principals as the centres of expertise, power as well as authority and tended to ignore the role of their leaders such as deputy principals and leadership teams, and classroom teachers. The school principals' approach was often 'topdown', directive and leaving little scope for other professionals in order to shape the instructional process. Naicker, Chikoko and Mthiyane (2013) concur with Bush (2013) in arguing that instructional leadership is about shaping structures as well as cultures of the school in response to the school community. In this regard, there seems to be a movement away from thinking about the school principals as the sole instructional leaders in schools. Rather, instructional leadership is stretched across individuals in schools. However, in order to operationalise the distribution of this leadership, there requires to be a sustained development of organisational structures to support this.

In brief, this study, Looock (2013) takes us back to the central focus of instructional leadership which is to improve the quality of education notable in the learner achievement. He contends that part of the dilemma in instructional leadership is the poor ability of interpreting examinations as well as assessment results in a meaningful way to enhance instruction in schools. This is closely linked to the lack of setting standards for learner performance through proper data-mining as well as leadership in schools and district levels on continuous basis. He finally concludes that effective instructional leadership should provide a well-managed data-system as well as supporting software, incentives, skills and time to do the work professionally.

In summary, I note that this study was only successful in addressing the first three research questions, that is, the ones in relation to '*related variables*' for instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts. However, it was not my intention to answer all the questions raised as well as in any event. I acknowledge that many more studies and volumes of books will still not do justice to a topic such as *instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts*. Nevertheless, I would be happy if this study is not seen as the end but more as the continuation of issues pertinent to instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts.

Therefore, the significance of this study is to add a knowledge base in terms of its contribution to improve practices of informed policy and enriching this knowledge base on the topic being investigated. Moreover, the instructional leadership in the literature is restricted and limited. I anticipated that with a different lens, this study would broaden the knowledge base and understand of what constitutes the type of instructional leadership practices of school principals that succeed in challenging contexts. As a result, my study contributes to the body of research on instructional leadership from the South African cultural context.

1.5. Aim and Objectives of the Study

1.5.1. Aim of the Study

The general aim of the study was to explore the instructional leadership practices of public secondary school principals with the view of improving scholastic performance of learners in challenging contexts.

1.5.2. Objectives of the Study

My study has the following objectives:

1. To investigate the variables that are related to instructional leadership practices of secondary school principals in challenging contexts and their effects on the scholastic performance of learners in the National Senior Certificate Examinations;
2. To determine the possibilities of instructional leadership practices contributing to the scholastic performance of learners in the National Senior Certificate Examinations;
3. To examine how the HODs and post level one teachers perceive the role of their school principals' instructional leadership practices;
4. To draw out the organisational conditions under which school principals are prepared to practice their roles as instructional leaders.

1.5.3. Key Research Questions

Collectively, the research question and sub-questions below were addressed in my study through various sub-sections, which formed the main focus of the reviewed literature.

1.5.3.1. The primary question

What are the variables related to instructional leadership practices of secondary school principals in challenging contexts and what are their effects on the scholastic performance of learners in the National Senior Certificate Examinations?

1.5.3.2. The secondary questions

1.5.3.1.1. How can instructional leadership practices possibly contribute to the scholastic performance of learners in the National Senior Certificate Examinations?

1.5.3.1.2. How do the HODs and teachers perceive the roles of their school principals' instructional leadership practices?

1.5.3.1.3. To what extent do the school principals prepare for their roles as instructional leaders?

1.6. Clarification of Key Concepts

This section of my study deals with the clarification of three key concepts, namely: social context; practices and instructional leadership.

1.6.1. Social Context

A large body of researchers in the literature paid attention to how important it is to consider the *social context* when doing research (Bhengu & Mthembu, 2014; Bush, 2013; Chikoko, Naicker & Mthiyane, 2015; Christie, 2010; Msila, 2012). However, social context for them refers to those aspects that are relevant to geographical isolation or school location, such as rural, suburb, urban and township. In support of these aspects above, Hoadley and Ward (2009) also added the school level, such as primary, secondary in addition to the size of the school, such as small and big schools, learner population or enrolment. Moreover, Marishane and Botha (2011) add socioeconomic position and those support agencies, the historical and policy context.

In summary, my research study also revealed that the key relationships are also those aspects between the school and its community where schools are serving. This is one of the major emerged variables identified in this study.

1.6.2. Practice (s)

Chikoko, Naicker and Mthiyane (2015) consider the concept of '*practice*' to indicate those aspects such as all activities, programmes and strategies that school principals use in order to influence instruction in their schools. However, in the school leadership domain, Chaiklin (2011) indicates that practices are only effective if school leaders address the contexts and have a clear vision. Moreover, Chaiklin (2011, p. 24) highlights those aspects that are part of the practices such as, behaviour, attitudes and social practices. He also provides another example that focuses upon good practices which school leaders must be familiar with in the education leadership domain.

Hence, school principals must foster the professional development of teachers' leadership; ensure that other school leaders across all levels are focusing on instructional leadership roles; select activities that develop teachers' reflections on instructional leadership practices; reflect current conditions and practices about professional learning communities and evaluate the effectiveness of the professional learning communities (Harris & Jones, 2010; Nehring & Fitzsimons, 2011).

1.6.3. Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership is a model in educational leadership that emerged in the United States of America in the 1980s. Bush and Glover (2012) define instructional leadership as concerned with teaching and learning in addition to the behaviour of teachers who are directly working with learners. Principals' leader influence is targeted through teachers for learner's participation in learning. According to them the emphasis of instructional leadership is upon the direction and the impact of the influencer rather than the influence itself.

Southworth (2002) argues that research about school instructional leadership since the early 1980s confirm Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) findings, which so far delivered less than its intension based upon various aims. In other words, instructional leadership over emphasised upon school leadership in terms of improving low performed schools. There was less regard upon the school sizes, the gender of the leaders and the main focus of instructional leadership within schools' changes over time. At the same time, as instructional leadership is socially constructive, the concept was finally expected to change from one setting to the other.

Southworth (2011) connects to three United States of America reviews for their definite perspectives upon the nature and the concern of instructional leadership practices. Moreover, Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbeck (1999) also identify instructional leadership practices as that of setting clear goals, managing curriculum and instruction, monitoring lesson plans, allocating resources and evaluating teachers' work regularly in order to promote learners' learning and their academic growth.

Hallinger and Heck (2010) define instructional leadership in terms of instruction quality for school principals to be the top priority. They indicated that the core business of instructional leadership is teaching and learning in schools. The teaching staff members must meet on a regular basis to discuss how they can run the schools and how to support learners more effectively.

Above all, Hallinger (2009) identifies the four key skills being significantly important for effective instructional leadership practices of school principals, namely: first, communication skills; school principals must be excellent in communication. People skills are more important in order to be effective school principals. Second, effective use of resources, thus, school principals must be fully

equipped to know schools' strength and weaknesses. School principals must be prepared to provide the required resources to all staff members. They must also be prepared to reward teachers and learners for high-level performance. Third, be visible and accessible, effective school principals are positive, vibrant and visibly present all the time in schools. School principals have to model to the core business of the school in teaching and learning. Fourth, serving as instructional resources, all teaching staff members rely on the school principals as administrators and officials who are the sources of information related to effective instructional practices in education. That is to say, school principals being instructional leaders must be aware of current information related to curriculum and instruction, effective and quality assessment and pedagogical approaches.

Within the South African context, instructional leadership is based on the central position and school principals have to concentrate on quality National Senior Certificate results (Loock, 2013). Bhengu and Mkhize (2013) attempt a deep analysis of the definition of instructional leadership in terms of learners' scholastic performance. They are concerned with the process within the schools as opposed to the teacher relationships and effective instructional leadership practices and quality levels of learner academic achievements. Using a case study methodology, Bhengu and his colleague (2013) identified six key characteristics which are most common in all effective school principals, thus: principals' consistent support for teachers; orderly conditions which are conducive for teaching and learning; principals who take decisions and communicate these decisions to all teaching staff members; and school principals who set the tones for the schools.

1.7. Structure of the Research Report

My research was reported in five chapters outlined below as follows:

Chapter one: In this chapter, I introduced the introduction and orientation of my study, statement of the problem, purpose and rationale, significance, aims and objectives, key research questions and also the chapter provides a brief account of the clarification of key concepts used in my study.

Chapter two: In chapter two I presented the literature review in which various international, continental and local articles, journals and books were explored. This chapter also provides an understanding of principals' instructional leadership practices in under-performing schools; these are core concepts of my study.

Chapter three: In this chapter, I discussed research design and methodology in which research paradigm, design, methodology, population, sampling instruments, data generation methods, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness and ethical issues. The chapter also highlighted the delimitation of my study.

Chapter four: In this chapter, I presented the findings of data sets collected through semistructured interviews and documentary reviews based on the three themes that emerged from the data analysis. First, I presented three profiling schools' results from 2016 to 2018. The data were not presented per school. All the interviews with school principals, HODs and teachers were interpreted and discussed together.

Chapter five: In this chapter, I presented the summary, discussion, conclusions and recommendations. The recommendations were influenced by my experience over the years through my practice as a teacher, an HOD and as a Senior Education Specialist for Mathematics at a district level and my personal observations of the diversity of school principals I have worked within nine secondary schools in a period of sixteen years.

1.8. Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter outlined the background to the concepts of instructional leadership that provided some key ideas regarding my plans on how to do with various chapters. The chapter provided the insights to principals' instructional leadership practices in three underperforming secondary schools in Soweto Township as evidenced in the empirical research. As a point of departure, the next chapter starts with an overview of a historical context of instructional leadership by various scholars.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

For the purpose of my study, this chapter reviews the relevant literature for understanding and showing where the research fits into the existed theoretical knowledge base for my investigation. Regarding the literature review, Akintoye (2015) refers to ‘the literature’ as all the works consulted in order to establish an understanding and investigating the research problem. Cananagh (2013), and Grant and Osanloo (2014) refer to ‘literature review’ as the review of the collection of published research relevant to the research question and research problem. They also have the view that ‘literature review’ means an account of what has been published on a specific topic by accredited scholars and researchers. In my study, two different types of reviews have been utilised, such as context reviews approach to place my study in a ‘big picture’ and theoretical reviews approach that compares how different theories address my researched problem (Simon & Goes, 2011; Sinclair, 2007).

The research findings revealed that none of the literature has provided a definite response on how to improve better scholastic performance of learners in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examination in township schools, particularly in South African context.

In brief, Looock (2013) refers us back to major activities of school principals as instructional leaders of how to improve the standard of scholastic performance of learners in schools. Looock (2013, p.

15) contends that the other part of the challenge in school instructional leadership practices is “the poor ability for interpreting examination and assessment outcomes in a proper and analytic way in order to create the culture of learning and teaching in schools”. Hence, this is the possible school leadership domain and school leadership practices, a big number of studies have reflected on the growing interest by different researchers in South Africa. Specifically, my research findings have revealed various views, which exist among the scholars as to whether instructional leadership practices of school principals have any measurable effect upon scholastic performance in the National Senior Certificate Examination (Loock, 2013).

2.2. Historical Context of Instructional Leadership

The historical context of *instructional leadership* in my study includes its emergence. Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan and Lee (1982) contend that the concept of instructional leadership emerged and fully developed in the United States of America within poor urban elementary schools’ movement in the 1980s. Research shows that critical focus for attention by school principals was on the behaviours of teachers as they directly engaged with learners’ tasks that affect their growth (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Ginsberg; 1988; Smith & Andrews, 1989). The research also revealed that interpersonal characteristics of the ideal school principals are those with strong directness, mindedness, top-down leadership and management.

Research findings also revealed that during the 1990s, the strong emphasis of instructional leadership model was mainly the central focus of the educational leadership discussions because of the major paradigm shift of its effectiveness in schools. However, since then this concept has been more criticised because it was still focusing a lot on underperforming individual school principals’ role (Hallinger & Murphy, 1992). Later on, several scholars began to explore other models of leadership in order to supplement or deviate these criticisms and pointed out the distributed nature of instructional leadership, for instance, transformational leadership, teacher leadership, shared leadership, and distributed leadership. The exploration aimed at understanding educational leadership in a broader perspective, including practices, which involve school communities (Sanders, 2006).

Moreover, due to the growth of quality-based accountability systems in the 21st century highlighted the new light upon instructional leadership in the education systems of the world, including South Africa. However, this paradigm shift also puts more focus on the teaching and learning outcomes for learners (Hallinger, 2009; Bush & Glover, 2009). Therefore, the conception of instructional leadership, which was held in the 1980s has changed during the first half of 1990s since the concept of school-based management and facilitative leadership emerged (Crawson & MacPherson, 1994). Now instructional leadership is widespread and as a result seems to be considered the most top skill of school leadership (Weber, 1996). Literature also promotes the view that effective supervision of instruction could improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom (Hallinger, 2003). Moreover, various scholars and researchers school leadership practices have emphasised the key importance of instructional leadership on learner performance in the Matriculation Examinations.

Blasé and Blasé (2000) also argue that instructional leadership is mostly practiced in schools. In support with the views above, Southworth (2002) suggests that among the reasons cited for the lack of instructional leadership practices thereon, were the lack of in-depth training of school principals for their roles as curriculum and instruction leaders, lack of time for executing instructional functions, multiple increased paperwork and also the community's expectations which school principals 'roles are that of school managers. In addition, other factors were the various complexities of the school principals' roles that involve the understandings of the historical contexts, purposes, functions, personal qualities and behaviours of instructional leaders (Dwyer, Lee, Rowan & Bossert, 1983).

Elmore (2003) in support of the above views, contrary to the management roles that are associated with school principals such as, organising, leading, monitoring and planning, argues that modern school principals should be trained in order to be effective instructional leaders. Also, similar views have been concurred by Sanders and Lewis (2005) and other scholars at different periods have made also reference to Hallinger (2009) who proposed one of the first models of instructional leadership practices. Hallinger identified three instructional leadership forces, such as Defining School's Mission, Managing the Instructional Programme and Promoting the Positive School's Learning Climate.

Consequently, the symbolic and cultural contexts are driven by instructional leaders' abilities in order to become the symbol of what is most important and purposeful. The instructional leader

articulates the values and beliefs of a school as a cultural organisation over time (Elmore, 2003; Sanders & Lewis, 2005), Therefore, the emergence of instructional leadership in the 1980s and 1990s is viewed by Sanders and Lewis (2005) as a critical phenomenon of a breakthrough in an educational organisation in terms of its direct related links with learner academic performance in schools. These researchers contend that school principals who are instructional leaders in schools mostly define the school goals, work effectively with teachers, provide authenticity of professional teachers' development and other additional resources to teachers and create new learning opportunities for all the teaching staff members in schools. Hallinger (2003; 2009) summarises the challenges that school principals are facing as instructional leaders in their schools (Table 1 overleaf adapted from Bush & Glover, 2009) as follows:

IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES	EXAMPLES
CONTEXTS: ▪ Attrition of leadership ▪ High demand for multiple roles of responsibilities ▪ Socio-economic and demographic changes ▪ Lack of support from various stakeholders ▪ Globalisation	▪ Leadership constant changes ▪ Too many extra-curricular functions, for instance: work overloads, some schools don't have skilled deputy principals ▪ Insufficient access to teachers' professional development Principals are not respected since they do not have proper skills of solving the problems faced by the schools and their staff members ▪ Technological changes and increased scrutiny
KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS: ▪ Insufficient knowledge and skills ▪ Insufficient qualified staff members	▪ Limited training as instructional leaders in the field of education ▪ Most teachers are lacking subject content knowledge in their field of study
COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SCHOOLS:	▪ Traditional morals and practices are in conflict, tension with

▪ Cultural incongruence versus contemporary demands	what the school is trying to do, thus, poor parental involvement, more demanding community and challenges in modern family structures
POLITICAL AFFILIATION: ▪ Conflicting priorities among decision-makers ▪ Legal or contractual limitations	▪ Priorities of teachers differ from those political leaders, ▪ Teacher unionism, thus, Unions protect poor teachers whereby most teachers are losing their jobs, principals spend time in hearings with no legal support, as a result teachers are suffering because they do not meet with employer and departmental expectations of schooling

The views of Bush and Glover (2009) are also supported by various researchers (Bhengu & Mkhize, 2013; Bhengu & Mthembu, 2014; Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & Van Rooyen, 2010, Bush, 2013, DoE, 2005) who by drawing upon the works of some scholars (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger, 2003; 2009; 2010; 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Hallinger & Lee, 2013) identified some critical factors that contribute to the challenges that school principals are facing. As a result, some schools are categorised as ‘*under-performing schools*’, specifically in the townships. For this reason, it was upon these challenges in Table 1 proposed by Bush and Glover (2009) that my investigation was focused on whether the preparation of the school principals for the practices of instructional leadership would help them to disentangle these challenges (reference, research question 3).

Currently, the concept of instructional leadership has broadened its horizons to include all aspects that impact on teaching and learning (Horng & Loeb, 2010; Hallinger & Murphy, 2013). Furthermore, it is inclusive of all stakeholders, teachers, learners, parents and the wider community that influences teaching and learning in schools (Sanders & Lewis, 2005; Hallinger & Heck, 2010). In brief, the constructs of instructional leadership have been reincarnated as a new term, thus, ‘*leadership for learning*’ (Bush, 2013). Moreover, it has become the catalyst for schools and ‘a new paradigm shift for the 21st-century school leadership’ (Hallinger, 2009). However, I have deliberately not used the new term ‘*leadership for learning*’ since many school principals in South

African context are still challenged in understanding the concept of instructional leadership and what exactly this entails in practice (Hoadley & Ward, 2009; Naicker *et al.*, 2013; Pierre du Plessis; 2014).

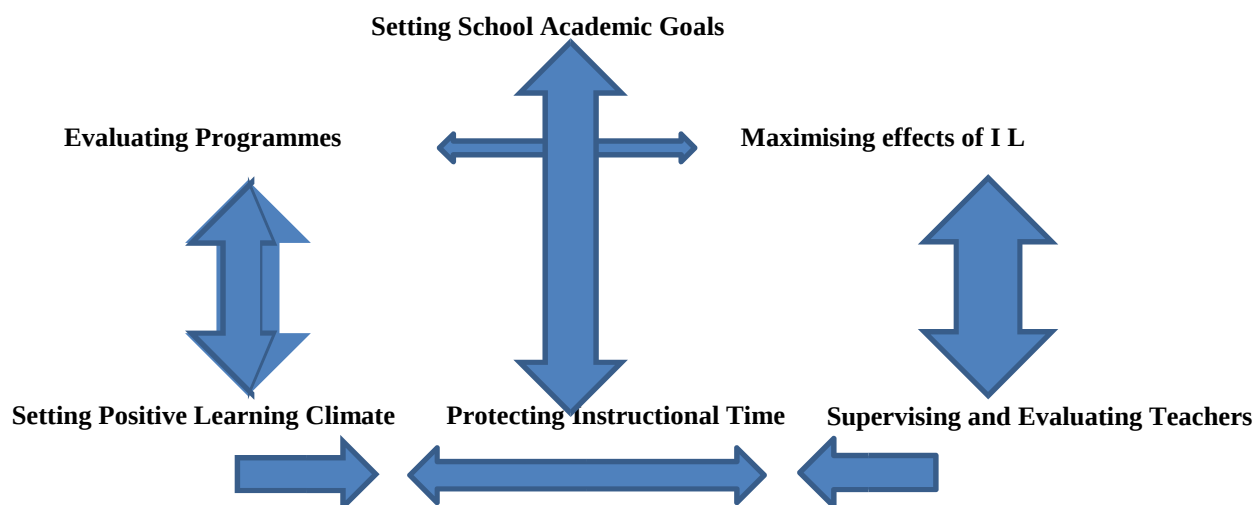
Therefore, by clearly defining the concept of instructional leadership and the practices it entails, I think some school principals may gain greater insights and understanding into their instructional leadership roles without being confused by other terms like ‘*leadership for learning*’ which enables them to act in accordance to this role (Robinson, 2010; Bush, 2013). Ogalo (2013) claims that once school principals have a clear understanding of their instructional roles they can begin to adopt other concepts of instructional leadership practices in schools like leadership for learning (Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

2.3. Purpose and Functions of Instructional Leadership

According to Hallinger and Murphy (1992), the quality of school achievements for both teachers and learners depends on the school principals’ instructional leadership. The school principals work with leadership functions, which are most often shared or not. However, this section explores the development of instructional leadership practices that have included the models, which I utilised in order to express the purposes and functions of my study. By so doing, this section is concluded by considering the purposes and functions of instructional leadership through time. Hence, the first model explores the six interactive functions of instructional leadership practices. Therefore, these functions are presented as interactive functions since they affect each other. Moreover, each function has been explained in short soon after the structural diagram of these functions.

Figure 1: Interrelationships of six functions of instructional leadership (IL)

(Adapted from Hallinger& Murphy, 1992)



From figure 1 above, there are two important concepts, which are associated with instructional leadership practices in schools; *Supervision and positive school learning climate*. To ensure that the sections of this chapter are clear, these two concepts, and their relationships with instructional leadership practices are discussed. However, instructional leadership in this study has the primary goal of being leadership for teaching and learning processes in schools (Hallinger, 2009).

Hence, the function of *setting school academic goals*, in support of the views of Hallinger and Murphy (1992), refers to the responsibilities of the school principals for providing guidance and central themes of the schools' goal. This guidance requires school principals to be used to all levels of instruction in their schools. Hallinger and Murphy (1992) also emphasise that instructional leaders work individually with followers who have different capacities in order to achieve the desired goals, in this case, the teaching staff members and all workers in the school. Moreover, school principals as instructional leaders make sure that all the staff members in a school must work together in order to perform and achieve similar desired goals.

With regard to *maximising the effects of instructional leadership (IL)*, this implies that in schools as organisations, instructional programmes are one of the functions of instructional leadership which is directly in line with setting up instructional goals of schools. However, Hallinger and Murphy (1992) suggest that the strategies of taking or bringing these goals into reality depend on the allocation of teaching staff and organisational resources in order to maximise the effects. Therefore, regarding the different capacities of the staff members, instructional leaders should be familiar with

the utilisation of individual teaching staff members in order to attain the progression. *Supervision and evaluation of teachers* in schools are other major functions of instructional leadership activities of school principals. Moreover, Hallinger and Murphy (1992) indicate that the primary choice of people is very important to the life of instructional programmes in schools and real choices that can help to save school principals' problems and to allow more time in instructional leadership practices. Hence, on the other hand, even best teachers cannot renew their own skills, but need the proper interventions of instructional leaders in order to provide in-service training opportunities. In this sense, it is very reasonable that school principals as instructional leaders provide their staff with ongoing opportunities for in-service training for ensuring that the schools' goal is considered.

In addition, *the protection of instructional time* is the last and equally important function of the instructional leadership practices. However, school principals should be in a position to monitor unpredicted challenges to the curriculum and instruction in order to put in place relevant measures to restore the lost instructional time. Once again, in this research study, creating a positive learning climate is also considered by Hallinger and Murphy (1992) as one of the real factors in motivating teaching staff and learners in schools in order to grantee the quality expectations for them and learner performance at their best levels. It is very imperative in this sense that school principals being instructional leaders create and provide a suitable school environment for a positive learning climate.

To sum up, the process of *evaluating programmes* is also regarded as one of the important functions of school principals as instructional leaders. However, Hallinger and Murphy (1992) conclude that it is through the instructional leaders' engagement of this function that instructional programmes could be revised. Hence, instructional leaders should be able to use that data collected on learner performance levels in order to evaluate the schools' programme.

Sinnema, Robinson, Le Fevre and Pope (2013) argue that the practices of instructional leadership have been consistently changed with time from its emergence during the 1970s and 1980s to how it is practiced up to date. Sinnema *et al.*, (2013), drawing upon the work of Kiat, Tan, Heng and LimRatnam (2017) and Day, Gu and Sammons (2016) indicate that contemporary definitions of the concept of instructional leadership are richer and expansive compared with those of the 1980s.

However, the original roles of instructional leaders in schools were involved the traditional activities, including the setting up of clear goals, resource allocation for instruction, managing the curriculum and instruction, monitoring academic programmes such as lesson plans and supervising and evaluating teachers. Therefore, instructional leadership nowadays includes the deepest involvement in the core technological approaches of teaching and learning, it also includes more complicated or sophisticated views of professional learning communities in addition to the emphasis of the use of data analysis in decision making in schools.

2.4. Key characteristics of Instructional Leadership

Blasé, Blasé and Philip (2010), in their analysis about school instructional leadership improvement, argue that instructional leadership practices place priorities in:

1. Setting academic clear goals;
2. Creating a climate of high expectations by allocating necessary resources for the instruction;
3. Functioning as instructional leaders in managing the curriculum;
4. Monitoring all the activities that involve lesson plans; and also
5. Evaluating all teaching staff.

Moreover, it concerns with those functions, which the school principals perform in order to promote learners' growth. Some other key characteristics of instructional leadership are Priority on the focus of instructional leadership; issues of curriculum, instruction and assessment; data analysis and many more. These key characteristics of instructional leadership are discussed below.

2.4.1. Priority on the focus of Instructional Leadership skills

This characteristic deals with the fact that learning and teaching in schools should constantly be a priority. Blasé with his colleagues (2010) contend that school leaders must be a balance of both management and the vision that instructional leaders should provide that vision into realisation. Providing the vision into realisation requires school principals who are in constant contact with their leadership teams in addition to the entire members of staff in order to evaluate their potential capacities to assist them in improving their competencies. However, this can only be possible only if school principals themselves being instructional leaders are knowledgeable and they are thinking

people who could appreciate the values of the intellectuals who are interested in new ideas, respond to the new changes and they are innovative (Bush, 2011).

2.4.2. Issues of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

School principals being instructional leaders must make sure that between curriculum, instruction and assessment standards are up to the quality in order for learners to meet with the best academic achievements. For this objective to be realised, Blasé *et al* (2011) argue that the school principals as instructional leaders must be full practising teachers. They also contend that being instructional leaders, they must know what is going on in the classrooms which is an opportunity for them constantly go around. **Table 2** below, four skills that school principals must have as instructional leaders:

SKILLS	MANIFESTATION
School principals as resource providers	As instructional leaders, build community resources in order to achieve the vision and goals of schools, they plan, organise, assign staff members based upon their strengths, schedule and prioritise work to be done.
School principals as instructional resources	As instructional leaders, they actively engage in school improvement, discuss with staff, facilitating teaching and learning to improve the instruction.

School principals as communicators	As instructional leaders, engage in two way communication, sensitively and reliably, promote mutual conflict resolution, problem solving and sharing.
School principals as the visible presence	As instructional leaders, provide clear vision for schools, organise people and resources in order to accomplish the building and district goals

When school principals are involved of what is happening in the classrooms, they can be able to acknowledge some of the problems that teachers and learners encounter and in advance instructional issues can be addressed rather than from their teaching experience perspectives, hence the required purpose of schools is to serve the educational requirements of learners (Blasé & Blasé, 2000).

Moreover, the key characteristics addressed above, Blasé, Blasé and Philip (2010) reiterate that school principals must always perform professional leadership skills and interrelationship skills in their instructional roles. However, these are necessarily more important for the development of high-quality educational outcomes. Therefore, in supporting Blasé *et al.*, (2010), Leithwood and Louis (2011) propose certain leadership behaviours and some specific functions of school principals that seem to have positive effects upon learner academic performance. These researchers contend also that good leadership practices collaborate, communicate, provide feedback; influence and professionalism are established through the vision and value systems. In addition, these scholars indicate that good leadership presupposes having consistent policies that reflect the schools' vision, mission and goals, policies reflect the schools' beliefs regarding rigorous and relevant instruction, positive learner relationships and highly engaged learning, thus, sharing leadership responsibilities, risk-taking modelling, concerning upon people and nurturing staff for growth.

2.4.3. Data analysis

Data analysis as a characteristic of instructional leadership, school principals being instructional leaders must use data in order to be helped for the guidance in instructional focus and professional development of all staff members (Bush, 2011). School principals should be able to collect data from the previous performance of learners in different phases and different subjects in order thereafter the data to be used for the development improvement of learning and teaching in their schools. In support of the above views, Bush (2013) contends that the analysis from previous data and current performance is regarded as stepping-stones for school principals in the practice of their roles as instructional leaders.

2.5. Variables related to Instructional Leadership Practices in Challenging Contexts

For the purpose of my study, the research findings identified four variables that are independent. Their relationships with regard to principals' instructional leadership practices and the possible contributing factors towards an improvement of the scholastic performance of learners were explored (Bhengu & Mkhize, 2013). Accordingly, all these variables helped me in formulating key research questions for principals, HODs and teachers. Above all, the exploration of each variable is as follows:

2.5.1. Promoting School-wide Teacher Professional Development Functions

Hallinger (2009, p. 59) refers to diagram 2.1 for the ten functions of principals' instructional leadership practices. It reiterates the factors that school-wide teacher professional development functions are the main activities of school principals being instructional leaders. Formerly, teachers' ability in delivering the curricular need is to be a priority for school principals to provide in-service training to all teaching staff members in the school despite their experiences or performance outcomes. In addition, Hallinger (2009, p. 61) also emphasises the needs of teachers' training opportunities for illustrating that *'even teachers who are excellent cannot evaluate themselves, they require the intervention of principals' instructional leadership practices in order to provide these training opportunities'*.

Conversely, in supporting the views above, Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011) and Christie (2010) indicate that schools' as organisations have become less in the needs of control also more in the needs of both capacity professional development and the supportive side. According to Bush

and Glover (2009) also explained, as above, that organisational needs are more importantly served by principals' instructional leadership practices with regard to the concept that is associated with leadership styles than focusing on administrative activities.

Again, in support of the above information, Blasé and Blasé (2000) identified the emphasis of support by school principals with regard to their staff by viewing the elements of instructional leadership practices. In their study, which was conducted with 800 teachers in the Asia-Pacific Area, Blasé and Blasé (2000) viewed that in both the teachers studied and their school principals emphasised that teachers' professional development is an element to support the characterised instructional leadership practices.

In Blasé and Blase's (2000) study, all teachers agreed that their school principals support collaborative also build the positive climate of teaching and learning, develop the relationships of coaching among teachers, they use the principles of adult learning and the development to all levels of teaching staff members' development programmes, utilise inquiry-driven to teachers' professional development. On the other hand, school principals also appreciated that to ensure teachers' professional development, they usually support and focusing teaching and learning progress, lead and develop teachers with regard to their needs, support them and provide direction for their professional development, help and conduct development also attend all necessary professional development tasks with all teaching staff. Hence, the practices and attendance of these professional development functions with regard to teachers is significantly important for school principals in an instructional leadership role because their exposure to different contents of most learning areas will provide and facilitate their interventions and helping them with content knowledge related to staff experience where there are challenges.

In short, this view above, was also supported by Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and Van Rooyen (2010) by contending that in providing the opportunities in professional development workshops is equally important. It is the practical point of you in interventions that successful school principals instill participation in the development functions, that is to say, modelling.

2.5.2. Defining and Communicating Shared Vision and Goals

Harris and Jones (2017) associate the term of vision with regard to ‘strategic leadership practices’ that is described as viewing a ‘big picture’ which is interpreted as a ‘big pattern’ trying to understand the challenges whereby others in the organisation may do the same, for establishing structural processes in order to bring the vision into realisation and monitoring the specific outcomes. In other words, it follows that school principals should prioritise the clear sense of providing with vision, mission and goals in addition to its objectives, which are supported and understood by all decision-makers.

Hallinger and Lee (2014) also support the views above by indicating that, school principals as instructional leaders are people with vision who are ready to evaluate the requirements of the school communities. Principals as instructional leaders are clear with the articulation of their vision with regard to their action plan whereby all stakeholders may participate and feeling the senses of entitlement or ownership, which can make high quality of learning to happen. According to Hallinger et al., (2014, p. 17) providing life to the vision of schools depend mainly on the entire commitment of school principals as instructional leaders with regard to empower their staff members, to ensure that each member can be energised his own or her own selfesteem, that is to say, all the components of the school members become as one part of the school as a whole.

The views of Hallinger and Lee (2014) are shared by the views of Hallinger and Heck (2010) who contend that with regard to the setting of high expectations in learners and teachers, establishing quality academic goals also creating a positive vision were traditionally the functions of school principals. Contemporary views and debates stress much on the collaborative aspects with regard to the process (Harris & Jones, 2017). Eventually, school principals as instructional leaders, then, have the role in articulating, publicising and promoting the positive vision and goals of the school through the engagement of all stakeholders (teachers, learners, parents and the whole community at large). This should be done as a continuous dialogue process on the school vision and goals. Hence, I regard that this dialogue must make sure that all the parties as a whole are in line with the school vision and goals. I guarantee that this will build a strong platform whereby the school vision may be contested based upon its changing contexts.

To repeat, the acknowledgement with all these views discussed above mainly depends with school principals' capacity and their willingness in communicating and engaging with all stakeholders involved in order to understand the needs which should be done and why. In addition, it also depends on an individual part to play in terms of the performance achievement record (the school vision and goals). Hallinger (2009) guides that school principals have the duty in communicating the vision and goals in both subtle and challenging ways, attempting, by all means, everyday events with regard to the vision needs, thereby to allow this vision to serve as core reminder to all parties for their purposes and the goals.

2.5.3. Monitoring and Providing Feedback on the Process of Teaching and Learning

In this study, the research findings indicate that monitoring and providing the feedback on the process of teaching and learning is one of the core requirement variables, which has characteristics of instructional leadership roles. Hallinger (2009, p. 34) assumes that this role of the school principals as instructional leaders is regarded as 'facilitative leadership' that means, school principals need to facilitate the entire provisioning of quality teaching and learning through teachers. Hence, with regard to the outcomes depend on the results reflected upon the scholastic performance of learners in the National Senior Certificate Examination.

Moreover, Looock (2013), Leithwood and Louis (2011) indicate that the behaviours of school principals as instructional leaders have important impact with regard to scholastic performance of learners, such as provisioning of instructional leadership through dialogue with instructional challenges; classroom teaching observation and providing feedback; protecting instructional time; teachers' autonomy should be supported and giving improvement support through learner progress monitoring; also by utilising data analysis improvement programme for learners. Equally important, Sinnema, Robinson, Le Fevre and Pope (2013) also recommend that school principals as instructional leaders must take much time in classroom observation for teaching and learning with the aim of encouraging quality teaching, tracking the scores of learners and some other indicators of learning needs in order to support teachers how they can focus their attention to the major needed issues. In short, providing teachers with the opportunities of sharing the information and they can work together as a team in the discussion of curriculum and also instruction issues.

Subsequently, research on the roles of school principals as instructional leaders has emphasised their responsibilities in order to set high quality and good expectations from both teachers and learners (Ali-Mielcarek, 2003). Moreover, school principals as instructional leaders have a lot of work of communicating the high-quality work to teachers and learners at the same time. Also, AliMielcarek (2003, p. 84) indicates the appraisal to teachers with regard to their duties as formal instructional leaders in communicating school's goals, the concept of quality teaching and values to their schools. Hence, it is more significant once again to the goals of the school to be set, school principals must monitor the overall implementation of all school strategies in order to achieve these goals, then giving feedback to the required teachers based upon their attainments.

2.5.4. Monitoring the Curriculum and Instruction

Bendikson, Robinson and Hattie (2012) identify that the effectiveness of the schools depends on what goes on in the classroom, what teachers are doing in the classroom with regard to learners' attainments, such as curriculum and instruction delivery is always reflected through the scholastic performance of learners. Thus, the research on the duty of school principals being instructional leaders indicates that school principals should show high capability of their skills and their competencies for them to lead the schools successfully with regard to the requirements of high quality of educational needs also meeting with the baseline of monitoring their skills to the best of curriculum and instruction delivery.

Historically, West (2010) suggests that effective school principals need to understand classroom dynamics for them to identify and implement instructional strategies. Such an understanding enables implementation of educational programs like curriculum for professional development. School principals need to master and coordinate other support services in instruction for the establishment of effective relationships.

Moreover, for school principals to fulfil the mandates discussed above, Ubben, Hughes and Norris (2015) contend that school principals as instructional leaders require to have updated knowledge of three components of the quality educational leadership skills, that is, curriculum, instruction and

assessment. Owing to this, for the purpose of my study, I focused on the curriculum coverage and thereafter, the instruction.

Therefore, with regard to the curriculum, Ubben *et al.*, (2015) show that school principals require knowledge on the changing demands of the curriculum, its educational philosophies and its beliefs, curricular issues and the conflicting impact of it, the curricular evaluation and its improvement. For this reason, school principals require not only being the leader or head of their teaching staff but also they must be school's leaders for learners. In support of the views presented above, Hallinger and Murphy (1985; 1992) and Hallinger (2003) also indicate that school principals should always bear in mind the new ideas concerning curriculum workshops in collaboration with their teaching staff. Hence, this gives proper assistance of support to their teachers with regard to the implementation of this curriculum.

To sum up, in terms of the instruction, I also agree that school principals require the knowledge of different models of teaching strategies, the theoretical impact behind that particular teaching aspects, the theories behind the modern technology with regard to learning demands (Hargreaves, 2004; Horng & Loeb, 2010). Jones *et al.*, (2015) stick to the significance of classrooms' visit made by school principals as instructional leaders with regard to work with their teachers also the learners. Jones *et al* (2015, p. 78) also support the views of participation of school principals with regard to curriculum-related issues in order to support the development of successful teaching and learning aspects. Thus, Kiat, Tan, Heng and Lim-Ratmam's (2017) and Mestry's (2017) views, I sum up as proper strategy for enabling school principals in order to give instructional learning materials or resources and supporting them in professional development and instructional leadership opportunities which can assist with the improvements of teaching, learning and high quality assessment practices.

2.6. Professional Development and Instructional Leadership link

Hallinger (2009) and Blasé and Blasé (2000) have touched on several times the concept of professional development and its link with instructional leadership. These scholars indicated that professional development in the instructional leadership link or paradigm mainly emphasises the role of school principals being instructional leaders in influencing the professional development of

teachers in their respective schools and it is also the responsibility of school principals themselves to be developed professionally to ensure that they can be able to perform their new duties skillfully.

Mathibe (2007) defines professional development as those functions in which professionals are concerned with the purpose of achieving professional competences. It is moreover viewed as a variety of functions in which teachers are mainly involved in order to comply with the modern demands to improve their practices. It has also been touched a number of times in his discussion that even though from its conception, instructional leadership as a model of educational leadership has been documented as being in the top position with regard to its learner influence on quality achievements, but it is not yet fully implemented in schools. I suggest that maybe this failure to be implemented in the instructional leadership domain is because of school principals' lack of skills in this new duty, which is more importantly necessary in the implementation of professional development as a programme in order to deal with these challenges in schools.

In short, the best example of these programmes in South Africa is the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE), is Leadership and Management skills' programme for school principals (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011). Hence, this programme aimed for school principals to address the leadership and management school challenges that school principals contended within their instructional leadership practices. I also assume that the introduction of the Advanced Certificate in Education in School Leadership programmes by the National Department of Education in South Africa (Mathibe, 2007; Mestry *et al.*, 2007). In this view, I regard it as the beginning of new knowledge in the department's strategies in order to improve the quality and standard of education in schools (Bush *et al.*, 2011, p. 2).

Bush *et al.*, (2011, p. 5) suggest that the core values of ACE as a stipulated programme in leadership is categorised into five assessment standards as follows:

- Module 1. Focused the understanding of school leadership in South African approach;
- Module 2. Concerned with the management of teaching and learning;
- Module 3. Highlighted mainly on leading and managing the staff;
- Module 4. Focused on the management of financial constraints and finally,

- Module 5. Concerned with the management of policies, planning, school development and also school governance.

According to the Centre for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement and the South African Standards for Principals Directorate (DoE, 2005), the professional development of teaching staff members in terms of instructional leadership practices is one of the critical responsibilities of school principals nationally. School principals have the role in providing guidance that improves teachers' capacity in the classroom practices.

In support with this view above, Bush *et al.*, (2012) contend that school principals must also give teachers with appropriate model by supplying them with the services of an instructional leadership coaching whose duties would be that of serving as a mentor, particularly for the new teachers in the field of education and also provide them with experienced teachers in order to develop them with strong leadership practices. They further state that in order for school principals to be effectively engaged in the practices presented above Bush (2013) identifies three components in the development of instructional leadership, such as knowledge, skills and context. Bush (2013) moreover contends that knowledge is regarded as the central to effective decision making and fundamental to the skills development that is necessary for carrying out instructional leadership goals. Hence, knowledge and skills are required within the context of a set of beliefs and values, one's beliefs and value systems are the servers of foundational in decision-making. Table 3 below represents the dimensions of improving scholastic performance of learners in the most disadvantaged areas including inter alia, the knowledge, skills and context for school principals as instructional leaders (Adapted from Bush, 2013):

KNOWLEDGE: PRINCIPALS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS MUST KNOW AND UNDERSTAND:	SKILLS: PRINCIPALS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS MUST BE ABLE TO:	CONTEXT: THE CONTEXT MUST SHOW EVIDENCE OF:
▪ What is going on in classroom	▪ Take risks	▪ Effective discipline
▪ How to evaluate the entire school expectations at different grades	▪ Establish good working relationships with staff members	▪ Good instruction between quality teaching and teachers

Curriculum development and accountability	Plan, coordinate curricular, social and cultural diversity	Teaching the concept that addresses learners' ethnicity, culture, language and differences in learning approaches
Teachers' strengths and areas for development	Manage time effectively, mediate, coordinate and facilitate	Excitement, collaboration, empowerment of teachers and learners
Standard of assessment for quality desired outcomes and	Support staff members in providing quality education to all learners	Active community partnerships and good customer services
Political dynamism in the community	Nurture collaboration between schools and communities they serve	Trust at all levels

In other words, the research finding revealed that success in most challenging context can be very fragile in schools, hence, emerging evidence base suggests that teachers must have to maintain the effort of sustaining improvement in high poverty schools which are falling to get into simple starting point for learner scholastic performance in the NSC (Chapman & Harris, 2004).

2.7. Effective Instructional Leadership Practices in the Context

The literature underpinned this study revealed that effective instructional leadership provides effective schools that in turn, produces effective learner achievements. It is very crucial at this point to briefly identify the key characteristics of what effective school principals' practice, as this will help us in giving a broader scope of what instructional leaders do in order to make a difference how schools should be regarded as effective. Bhengu and Mthembu (2014) summarise the major features of effective schools in South African context into which has become well known as the *five major factor models* of school effectiveness, such as; purposefully instructional leadership; challenging teaching and learning as a model of high expectations of learners' achievement; involvement and consistency among teaching staff; a positive school learning climate; and frequent evaluation of learner progress (see also the model of the theoretical framework diagram for this study).

The five major factor models in this study continue to supplement what should be termed as an optimisation account of effective instructional leadership practices in terms of school effectiveness. This is an account which provides a positive view of the roles and the efficacy of contextual schools' influence. In support of this view, Blasé and Blasé (2000) identify the five major factor models and the optimisation account of school effectiveness and provide a comprehensive framework in terms of a review of the major key factors which influence scholastic academic performance of learners. According to Felber-Smith (2015) there are additional sixteen positive factors related to school effectiveness which are divided into four major sections, such as the supporting inputs from external school influences; enabling conditions; school climate; teaching and learning processes. Flow diagram 1 below represents positive dimensional frameworks that are related to effective instructional leadership in the context (Adapted from Chapman & Harris, 2004):

1. SUPPORTING INPUTS:

- Strong parental and community support;
- Effective support from education system (district);
- Frequent and appropriate teacher professional development.



2. ENABLING CONDITIONS:

- Effective instructional leadership practices;

- A capable teaching and learning force;
- Flexibility and teachers' autonomy;
- A high amount of teaching time in schools.



3. SCHOOL CLIMATE:

- High level of learner expectations;
- Positive teacher attitudes;
- Proper order and learner discipline;
- Organised curriculum and instruction;
- Teachers' and learners' rewards and incentives.



4. TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS:

- High amount of teaching and learning time;
- Different varieties of teaching strategies;
- Frequent classwork and homework given to learners;
- High quality learner assessments and feedbacks.

Chapman and Harris (2004) indicate that supporting inputs are concerned with conditions which sustain the schools' effectiveness. He further explains that the inputs can be regarded as also prerequisite conditions such as support materials or any support from anywhere outside the schools (parental or community involvement and educational support team, for example, district or circuit), hence, he regarded these factors as very relevant in creating the environment of school effectiveness.

There are factors that are important for the effectiveness of the school climate such as high expectations; teachers' positive attitudes; orderly discipline conditions; organised curriculum and instruction; and teachers' and learners' rewards and incentives. Enabling conditions are those

factors which are related to instructional leadership capabilities of teachers, flexibility and amount of teaching time in schools. Thus, for school to be effective they requires principals' effective leadership practices that are coupled with school vision to influence teachers, learners and the community at large in order to incorporate them into the schools' vision.

Moreover, the model of teaching and learning process is considered necessary since the quality of instructional leadership practices is determined by the quality education outcomes. In addition, teachers are regarded as a central component in schools because as an individual, a teacher is the one who implements pedagogical strategies, assesses the learners' performance and provide with feedback and learning time (Leithwood *et al.*, 2011; Le Fevre *et al.*, 2015).

Recent research studies (Chapman & Harris, 2004; Harris & Chapman, 2002) have identified five dimensions for effective school improvement leadership in challenging contexts, such as vision and values; distributing leadership; learner-centred leadership; investing in staff development and community building. In addition, in the literature in this study also highlighted that more research is needed that offers an insight into effective and successful instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts in secondary schools (Hoadley & Ward, 2009). The following dimensions below illustrate more issues for instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts, such as Vision and values; distributed leadership; learner-centred leadership; investing in staff development and community building.

2.8. Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Akintoye (2015) views the concepts of theoretical and conceptual frameworks as the plans or paths that every research must follow and grounded firmly in theoretical constructs of a particular study. Imenda (2014) also contends that theoretical and conceptual frameworks guide the paths of any research and offering the foundation in establishing research credibility. Moreover, Sinclair (2007) indicates that though these concepts look the same, they are different from each other in their

functions in the research inquiry. Imenda (2014) and Sinclair (2007) contend that the overall purpose of the two frameworks is to make the research findings more meaningful and acceptable to the theoretical constructs in the research field and also ensures generalisability. Hence, both assist in stimulating research in ensuring the extension of knowledge by providing direction to the research inquiry.

2.8.1. Theoretical framework

Grant and Osanloo (2014) refer to the theoretical framework as a path, plan or guide for research. According to Imenda (2014), theoretical framework is regarded as a structure that is concerned with an existed theory in a field of inquiry that is related to reflections and the hypothesis of the study requirements. However, Simon and Goes (2011) contend that theoretical framework gives a broader set of the scope of the research within which a research study belongs.

In conceptual definition of models, the concept of instructional leadership failed to take variations in schools into account due to the lack of concrete theory behind it in identifying key dimensions of instructional leadership practices in the 1980s (Bossert *et al*, 1982; Dwyer *et al*, 1983; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Ginsberg, 1988; Smith & Andrews, 1989; Murphy, 1990; Weber, 1996). As a consequence of the awareness that instructional leadership was not conceptualised properly, and of the lack of evidence concerning its influence on student learning (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbeck, 1999; Leithwood & Louis, 2011). Various researchers started developing models that later brought about substantial scholarly attention in the field of instructional leadership (Ali-Mielcarek, 2003; Hallinger, 2003, 2009; Alghanbousi, 2010). Three prominent examples of those models seem to feature in the literature of this study, namely:

A. Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) Model examined the instructional leadership behaviours of school principals and developed a framework of instructional management with three dimensions: *defining the school's mission, managing the instructional programme and creating a positive school climate* which were theorised to encompass ten (10) functions that school principals engaged in to represent instructional leadership practices.

B. Murphy's (1990) Model augmented Hallinger and Murphy's (1985). He argued that school principals in effective schools demonstrated instructional leadership in both directly and indirectly.

Using this review, he built an instructional leadership framework which emphasised four sets of dimensions / activities with implications for instruction: *developing mission and goals, managing the educational production function, promoting academic learning climate, and developing a supportive work environment of instructional leadership*, later was developed and broken into sixteen (16) different behaviours.

C. Weber's (1996) Model of instructional leadership extends Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) model by identifying five essential domains of instructional leadership. The first three dimensions of the

Weber's (1996) model correspond with that of the Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) model. The first dimension of their model is indicated as *defining the school's mission*. The expectation here is for the instructional leaders to collaboratively develop a common vision and goals for the school with all stakeholders. *Managing the curriculum and instruction* is the second dimension which involves the instructional leaders making themselves available instructional resource providers and support in the use of instructional best practices. The third dimension incorporates *promoting a positive learning climate*. This is actioned when the instructional leaders promote a positive learning climate by communicating goals, establishing expectations and an orderly environment. The fourth dimension involves *observing and improving instruction*. Here, the instructional leaders observe and improve instruction through classroom observation and professional development opportunities. The final dimension is about *assessing the instructional programme*. This is the dimension that involves the instructional leaders contributing to the planning, designing, administering and analysing the assessments that evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum (Weber, 1996). In this regard, Weber's Model claims that effective instructional leadership would depend on to a large extent on two important factors, such as the flexibility, a school principal's exhibits in sharing leadership activities with individuals who can perform them collaboratively.

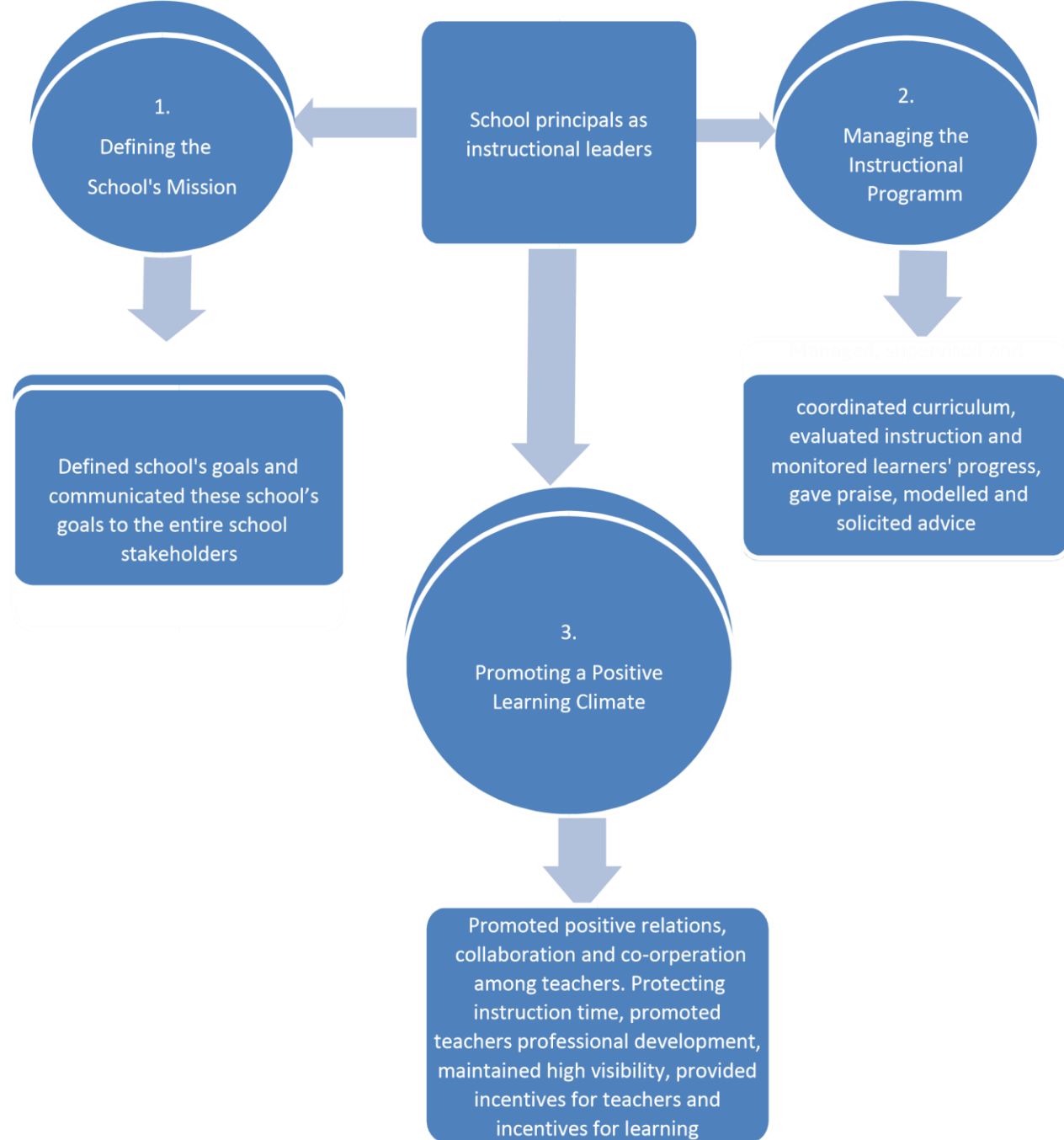
I selected the comprehensive model proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) as an appropriate theoretical framework for this study because it theorises instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts. However, I believe that the three dimensions and job descriptions of: *Defining the School's Mission, Managing the Instructional Programme, and Promoting a Positive School*

Learning Climate identified should not be the sole responsibility of school principals only, rather, they can be achieved through the distribution of activities across individuals in the school.

Figure 2: Below is the Theoretical Framework diagram of Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) Model:

A model of assessing the instructional management behaviours of school principals.

Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) Model: Assessing the Instructional Management Behaviours of School Principals.



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2.9. Research gaps in the Literature Review

Moreover, research gaps are noted in South Africa in the factors identified from the discussion above. Nevertheless, various scholars and researchers agree that instructional leadership practices of principals must be intensified (DoE, 2005; Hoadley& Ward, 2009; Bush & Glover, 2009; Fleisch, 2010; Bush, 2013; Grobler, 2014). Specifically, Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and Van Rooyen (2010) argue that there are very limited resource materials for managing teaching and learning in most

South African secondary schools. In other words, school principals are continually striving for balancing their roles as instructional leaders since there is no overarching preparation for the position of principalship (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011).

For this reason, a lack of overarching preparation for principalship position also the emphasis on instructional leadership practices in their schools is a lack of comprehensive training. Again, the research revealed that principals are appointed based on their teaching experiences rather than their school instructional leadership skills (Mestry & Singh, 2007). Proper induction, mentorship and a deficit of proper are always limited for school principals to execute instructional roles were also noted as gaps in managing overall operations of their respective schools. At the same time, a lack of stringent proficiency also the absence of proper instructional leadership training for the appointment of school principals, as a result, has created for most schools to be failing schools (Mestry & Singh, 2007; Marishane & Botha, 2011; Spaul, 2013).

To sum up, evidence suggests that there is a positive link between high-quality instructional leadership practices and scholastic performance of learners in schools (Bendikson, Robinson & Hattie, 2012; Day, Gu & Sammons, 2016; Hopkins, 2001b; Leithwood & Louis, 2011; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010). Significantly, it can be concluded that the lack of successful instructional leadership practices in curriculum and instruction issues contributes to poor scholastic performance of learners in schools. Naturally, it is clearly reflected with the results in the NSC Examinations. Likewise, the ineffective instructional leadership practices of principals are among the reasons presented for poor scholastic performances of learners (Mendels, 2012; Le Fevre & Robinson, 2015). In South African literature, there is increasing evidence that guarantees the views that successful instructional leadership practices are more critical if schools are significantly improving scholastic performances of learners (Hoadley & Ward, 2009; Bush & Glover, 2009; Christie, 2010; Bhengu & Mthembu, 2014).

2.10. Chapter summary

In summary, this chapter has focused on the literature review concerning instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts and scholastic performance of learners to gain a better

understanding of the theoretical framework of my study. The reviewed literature included, inter alia, literature about the historical development of instructional leadership and how it manifested in the school contexts, the purpose and functions, key characteristics of instructional leaders, the challenges and possibilities of instructional leadership.

Above all, scholarly articles, journals and books that were reviewed reiterate the fact of direct relationships between instructional leadership practices, school culture and climate; and how school principals in developing school vision, develop the culture and the climate in their schools. Equally important, this literature review has been my vehicle through which I have managed to establish what other researchers contend regarding the roles of principals as instructional leaders.

Significantly, this reviewed literature helped me to develop the main focus in attempting to respond to the key research questions that were the focus of my study. Next chapter focuses on the research design and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The literature review chapter discussed the phenomenon of instructional leadership practices. Significantly, this chapter presents the research design and methodology employed in my study. Also, the research design consists of the research context and description and the research

methodology consists of the description of the research population, the research instruments used and procedures. Moreover, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, ethical issues and delimitation of my study are discussed.

3.2. Research Paradigm

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) refer research paradigm as an integrated research culture with different sets of beliefs, values and assumptions, which the community of scholars and researchers have in common regarding the nature of the research findings. Moreover, the research paradigm guides the processes of research inquiry to the researcher with regard to research methods and methodologies. According to social scientists, Creswell (2012) as well as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) claim that there are four dominant research paradigms: post-positivism, constructivism, transformative and pragmatism. A new paradigm has emerged recently known by social scientists as the critical realism paradigm. This paradigm addresses the issue of validity of interpretive research methods, assumes that real world objects exist apart from the human knower. There is an external reality. This theory claims that reality must be subject to wide critical examination to achieve the best understanding of reality.

This study is located in the interpretive paradigm. Some researchers (Creswell, 2013; Cohen *et al.* 2011; Yin, 2015) contend that based on this paradigm perspectives, there is a nature of multiple realities (ontology) and what we comprehend or know with regard to these realities, how we come across to understand the nature of knowledge (epistemology) with regard our personal interactions as an individual. However, this theory was suitable to my study because it elicited or displayed the information from school principals upon their perceptions of instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts. Specifically, engaging with school principals, knowledge was socially constructed in nature by locating my study in the theory of interpretive paradigm. Moreover, the interpretivist paradigm deals with an individual understanding; the nature of the interpretations of the world-views of the natural phenomenon of an individual.

In other words, ontology is specifically concerned with the existence with regard to the world around us that is the nature of reality and what is learned from it. Hence, it is an individual view of reality. To repeat, Yin (2009) contends that ontological perspectives of the interpretive paradigm

and the nature of reality is constructed indirectly with regard to the interpretation of an individual person, likewise, it is subjective. Again, Creswell (2012) refers to epistemology as an acquisition of knowledge and is more concerned with the relationships between what an individual person knows, what may be known through the phenomenon with how we know of what we know. Equally important, in epistemology the observers come to their knowledge for the world around them through their experiences.

Epistemology also concerns that knowledge is needed through contemporary liberation of human beings and respects with regard to differences between people and objects of the natural sciences, therefore, needs social scientists to know the subjective interpretations with regard to social actions (Maxwell, 2012). Moreover, Cohen *et al* (2013) state that knowledge is understood in order to generate the theory. That is to say, with regard to the creation of knowledge, it comes from a specific context and as such, it cannot be minimised to a simple interpretation in nature. Also, knowledge is regarded as a personal assumption (Cohen *et al*, 2013, p. 47). To sum up, I regard both ontology and epistemology as personal individual views of the world around them. Hence, one's views of the nature of reality, which is ontology, the view of how an individual perceives knowledge is defined as epistemology.

In summary, the interpretive approach aims to explain the subjective reasons and meanings that lie behind social action. The interest of the interpretive paradigm is not to generate the new theory but evaluating and refining the interpretive theories.

3.3. Research Design

Maxwell (2004) and Maree (2011) define research design as a process that goes from one philosophical perspective to another in order to stipulate the selection of research respondents. In this study, the research design was located in the interpretive case study that was analysed through qualitative methods in order to explore school principals' instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts. Moreover, I selected this type of design because case studies provide rich data with regard to its thick description of cases (Yin, 2009). Again, Yin (2011) states that case studies portray, analyse and interpret the differences of individual respondents and the contexts in which can be accessible. Hence, this approach for my study was considered suitable design since this study

was mainly focused on principals and their behaviours and also to establish how these school principals enacted their instructional leadership practices at their respective schools. In my design approach, the research deployed cases of three secondary schools in Johannesburg Central District. Basically, they were cases of three principals.

Rule and John (2011) noted the challenges of case studies such as the limitation to the scope in selecting case studies' site for the researcher, limited time and resource availabilities in studying each particular case and the results of the research cannot be generalised. Yin (2011) also notes some other challenges of case studies with regard to their lack of rigorous, hence, challenges include the position or role of the researcher how to interpret research processes, for instance, the researcher can be biased. Silverman (2013) also indicates the ethical challenges for case studies' research with regard to the issues of consents from the respondents in order for them to be involved in the case studies or to be a case studied. Therefore, this study I took precautions of the major challenges of case studies' research and I also tried to minimise some of these challenges so that I had to get the consent from each research participant by permitting all of them to have an access to their interview transcripts if they were interested in order to avoid my personal biases as a researcher.

In brief, the research design for this study was an interpretive case study that was analysed through qualitative methods. Given the interpretive position adopted in this research and the nature of the research question, the case study methodology was considered the most appropriate approach to employ because it provides a systematic way to collect data, analyse information and report the results, thus, understand a particular problem in great depth (Rule & John, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Also semi-structured interviews were used to generate data. The researcher selected this design because there is flexibility during data collection and also created the impression of space for an enquiry, which was stimulated by the respondents and also the case study application highlights in-depth as well as rich insights (De Vos, Strydom & Fouche, 2011).

3.4. Research Methodology

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011; 2013) regard research methodology as a process of inquiry that goes from a perspective of a particular assumption with regard to the research design and data generation. However, methods, which are commonly used in the research design, are qualitative,

quantitative and mixed-method (Creswell, 2013). Hence, research methodology is regarded as the method or plan of how the data can be generated, and analysed and how data can be generalised. Therefore, qualitative research methods give the researcher the cultural and social phenomenon of the study. For this reason, I deployed a qualitative research method because it aimed to help me as a researcher to understand human behaviour and their social contexts in which they believe or live.

Maxwell (2012, p.66) enumerates five research purposes for which qualitative methods are particularly useful, thus: understanding the meaning that participants in a study give to the events and actions that they are involved with; and of the accounts they give of their lives and experiences; understanding the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence this context has on their actions; identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences, and generating new, grounded theories about them; understanding the process by which events and actions take place; and finally developing causal explanations. Data generation in qualitative research methodology is obtained through interviews, public documentary reviews and reflective sessions (Henning *et al*, 2004).

In addition, my study focused on school principals' practices and experiences. Therefore, I basically thought of case study methodology to be employed as suitable for my study. Rule and John (2011) add that the case study approach gives rich insight for a particular context and allowing in-depth boundaries of my study. In other words, my study was cases of three secondary schools in the Johannesburg Central District. Moreover, it was cases of three school principals, three HODs and six teachers.

For the purpose of this study, I used a combination of purposive and convenience sampling methods in order to identify the sample schools (LoBiondo-Wood, 2010). However, it was purposive since I wanted schools that were located in previously disadvantaged and socio-economically depressed areas and also schools known in the community as having fairly improved academically in the National Senior Certificate Examinations in the past three years (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010). And, it was convenient in the sense that I wanted schools that were not far away so that I had to minimise my logistic of travelling costs since it was self-funded study. In brief, in light with this

sampling methodology, no generalisations could be made to the population of the respondents in Johannesburg Central District (Savin-Baden & Howell-Major, 2013).

In short, this section on, my research methodology with regard to research population and sampling instruments were discussed. Van Rensburg *et al.*, (2004) claim that the keywords pertaining to research methodology are participation, collaboration also engagement.

3.4.1. Research Population

Denscombe (2014) refers research population as all the possible elements of the research, which must be included in the research study. However, in order to address the objectives of my study, there were a total number of fifty-six secondary schools within Johannesburg Central District as a population. In fact, my population sample schools were three public secondary schools comprised of a total number of twelve participants as a representative sample of the population, including three school principals, three HODs and six teachers who were conveniently selected in the Johannesburg Central District. Owing to this, the method bridges the gaps of the entire variation among these secondary schools under my study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Significantly, to gain better insights into the participants' realities and understandings of principals' instructional leadership practices, all sample-selected schools have both improved in their matric results over the past three years and those whose results have declined. However, for comparative purposes, my study looked at schools in different contexts and different challenges that confront each particular school principal and how different challenges also organisational conditions translated into a different scholastic performance of learner outcomes. Wits School of Education issued me with an Ethical Clearance Certificate a proof to be submitted to the Gauteng Department of Education for recommendation to conduct the research at the participants' schools. Thereafter, the schools and teaching staff members agreed to be part of the research project by filling the informed consent forms (Cohen, *et al*, 2011).

3.4.2. Sampling Instruments

Maree (2011) refers to sampling as a process applied to the selection of the research population for a qualitative research study. In addition, Silverman (2013) assumes that there is a multiplicity of sampling procedures of qualitative research, for instance, purposive, stratified, convenience and snowball sampling. Hence, with regard to qualitative research, sampling is done purposively (Cohen, Manion& Morrison, 2013). That is to say, purposive sampling according to Savin-Baden and Howell-Major (2013) refers to where the researcher specifically picks up the cases to be included in the study with regard to the characteristics to be explored. De Vos, Strydom and Fouche (2011) also state that in purposive sampling, the researcher identifies the participants' information that is rich in meaning that they are possibly knowledgeable on the studying phenomenon. Therefore, in my study, participants were selected on the basis that they could supply information relevant to my statement of the problem and research objectives under my study.

However, as my study was a qualitative one, it therefore utilised a purposive sampling technique of three secondary schools located in the Johannesburg Central District. Since the sample of selected schools was not high at the District level, I regarded it as important to be selective in identifying schools from my total population of fifty-six secondary schools for inclusion purposes in a District level analysis based on convenience. Hence, I purposively selected three public secondary schools to constitute my study sample.

At the same time, I purposively selected Johannesburg Central District school principals as my participants because they were located close to my location. Likewise, this helped me for easy access to meet with my participants. For this reason, my sample schools were three secondary schools comprised of a total number of twelve participants, three school principals, three HODs and six teachers who were also purposively selected. Above all, I purposively selected three secondary schools in order to gain knowledge of principals' instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts.

3.5. Data generation Methods

In data generation, qualitative methods were derived from multiple sources such as interviews and documentary reviews (Cohen, Manion& Morrison, 2011). To explore principals' instructional leadership practices in three secondary schools in my study, I used the commonly prominent

method in the qualitative research approach of interviews (Yin, 2015). Equally important, in data generation, I used a semi-structured approach with one-to-one interviews with all participants. My aim of this approach was to capture ‘rich data with thick description’ of principals’ instructional leadership practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). However, a reviewed literature related to schools facing challenging contexts were undertaken, specifically from the three secondary schools.

Again, semi-structured interviews were deployed out with principals, HODs and teachers from a range of three secondary schools within the District. Semi-structured interviews offered flexibility to the participants and the opportunities to open up and talk freely (Maxwell, 2012). Documentary reviews were also used. Document reviews were comprised of various school records like, time books, NSC results, teaching staff meetings, subject departmental meetings and other documents for verification purposes.

Moreover, once the interview responses were collected, they were transcribed *verbatim* from an audio-tape into written form and subjected to qualitative content analysis technique that entails creating codes of meaning and later was organised into themes that Henning *et al.*, (2004) refer to as chunks of meaning. Since semi-structured interviews are fluid by their nature that could lead to the relevant issues being lost, it was important for me, therefore, that broad themes and issues that recurred most often to be identified in the discussions. Guided by Creswell’s (2013) framework, before breaking it down, I read thoroughly the transcripts in order to get an overall sense of the data. I then organised the data under thematic headings guided by both research questions and a theoretical framework from the literature review. Hence, this process is also called the classification of the data. Thereafter, it was interpreted in order to provide clear and logical responses to the research questions.

In brief, to ensure trustworthiness, it was important for me that findings must be trusted. Various techniques were used, such as triangulation of data sources, principals’ responses were triangulated with those of the HODs and teachers. Again, different methods were applied, so that semistructured interviews, and documents kept within the schools, were studied thoroughly. Therefore, throughout the study ethical issues were observed (De Vos, *et al*, 2011). Hence, these included seeking and obtaining written permission from the Gauteng Department of Education and from each participant. Additional issues like voluntary participation, the right to withdraw at any time during the study, the guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity were explained to all participants and adhered to.

3.5.1. Interviews

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) elaborate that interviews are mostly conducted in qualitative research and are flexible techniques with regard to data generation. Still, Cohen *et al* (2013, p. 67) maintain that interviews permit intimate prolonged involvements for me as a researcher with regard to the research participants. For this reason, it enabled me to get into the entire context of what has been researched also into the personal knowledge of likes and dislikes, attitudes and beliefs on the specific phenomenon. Maree (2011) and Yin (2015) have the opinion that interview questions of qualitative research are structured in an open-ended and they are intended to reveal what is most important with regard to the phenomenon under the study.

Accordingly, all the interviews with participants took place at their convenience times specified by each individual school. In corroboration with what school principals articulated during the interviews, interviews with HODs and teachers were also conducted. De Vos, *et al* (2011) believe that interviews are very productive because the interviewer can pursue with specific issues of concern that might lead to focused and constructive suggestions. Silverman (2013) concurs that interviews have advantages of direct contact with participants to specific and constructive suggestions, they are good at obtaining detailed information and few participants are needed for gathering rich and detailed data. Cohen *et al* (2013) describe that interviews are methods of collecting information through a set of pre-planned core questions. Also, Yin (2015) states that interviews are useful in focusing specific information on the study topic, so as in providing insights from which inferences are deduced.

Specifically, in this study, I used semi-structured interviews to engage the school principals, HODs and teachers. Semi-structured interviews were regarded as a means for me to have a deep and insightful understanding of the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2012; 2013). Yin (2009; 2011; 2015) notes that semi-structured interviews are regarded as conversations between a researcher and the participant through open-ended questions which allows the individual participant to provide a clear description of the phenomenon under the study. Silverman (2013) states that semi-structured interviews provide a simple means of data generation since it offers the interviewer a chance in probing for the clarity and elaboration of participant responses. Also, Savin-Baden and Howell-Major (2013) have similar sentiments that semi-structured interviews provide participants

with the freedom to express themselves and it allows the researcher to observe the body language of the participants.

In brief, I interviewed every participant in using a semi-structured interview approach in order to appraise the pedagogical design of the Model. Thus, the semi-structured interviews were based on predetermined questions, which are also called interview schedule (Maxwell, 2004). I considered semi-structured interviews suitable for my study in data collection. Hence, I tried to be consistent with all participants by setting of pre-planned core questions for guidance, such that the same information was covered with each participant. As the interview progressed, an individual participant was given an opportunity to elaborate or provide more relevant information if she or he opted to do so. As far as the interviews progressed, the data enabled me to cross-case comparisons (De Vos, Strydom & Fouche, 2011). This analysis led me to the emergence of a number of common themes and key findings. These are outlined in the data analysis section of this study.

3.5.2. Document Reviews

Creswell (2013) has an opinion that all qualitative researches often use document reviews in order to establish the relationships between data to the background and historical context under the study. Mostly, it involves the reviewing of documents, for instance, minutes of staff meetings, departmental meetings and the official reports with regard to the purpose of learning outcomes of how the past events and the interactions with the related context to provide meaning and also value to the phenomenon under the study (Silverman, 2013; Denscombe, 2014).

Above all, in my study I utilised the document reviews. These documents were purposively selected in order to cover a period of the previous three years and also were reviewed in order to find the trail into school issues, progress and daily practices or functioning of the schools. Document reviews in this sense were also used to prove some advantages to my study because they were rich in portraying the beliefs and values to the participants with regard to their naturalistic settings (Yin, 2015). At the same time, document reviews in this study revealed the actual behaviours of the research participants (Cohen, *et al*, 2013).

For this reason, document reviews allowed me to access the comprehensive and historical information contexts, which were gathered from different school periods that were used to explore

principals' instructional leadership roles under the study. These documents made it easier for me in analysing the data (Creswell, 2013). In other words, Cohen *et al* (2011) assume that document reviews cannot provide the researcher with the required interpretation of what is expected to him or her.

3.6. Data Analysis

Denzin and Lincoln (2009) refer to qualitative data analysis as a progressed process that entails the organisation of the data and its explanation under the study. For the purpose of my study, data analysis was done with reference to the research questions guided in my study. The interviews of school principals', HODs' and teachers' were digitally voice recorded (Cohen *et al*, 2013). Naturally, this allowed me to focus on how the interviews were progressed and following what is the next step (Maxwell, 2012). In other words, it also assisted me in the process of transcriptions of the interviews in verbatim for analysis purposes (McNeil & Chapman, 2009).

Subsequently, all the transcriptions from the interviews were subjected to content data analysis by generating the categories derived from the key research questions that were guiding my study (Maree, 2011). Data generated from semi-structured with individual interviews and document reviews were also subjected to content data analysis by generating the emerging patterns and themes against what was articulated during participants' interviews and they were also analysed through qualitative methods (McNeil & Chapman, 2009).

In support with the views above, the choice here lies on me as a researcher to provide meaning to that generated data also to be eager enough for identifying themes, patterns, incidences and trends (Creswell, 2013). In addition, discourse analysis in the other hand was utilised in order to understand fully and highlight the meaning to raw data, which was obtained (Silverman, 2013, p.84). Additionally, Denzin and Lincoln (2009, p. 43) describe discourse analysis as a way of refining, framing and inferring the meaning from a conversation. To repeat, raw data was transcribed and recorded as discussed below.

3.6.1. Transcriptions

Yin (2015) describes that transcribing as one way straight to the technical activities that involve a finely considered appraisal about the level of details to be chosen, data interpretation and data representation. This involves mainly the representation of visual and audio data in a written format. In this study, data generated were recorded with the help of a voice-recorder. For this reason, I assigned the transcription of the data to a qualified data transcriber. The transcription, therefore, was not without challenges as the interview sessions were conducted after school hours in one of the schools. The challenge was due to hunger interference since some participants were in a hurry to go home. Also, at one point a participant had to excuse himself or herself to attend emerging issues such as afternoon invigilation sessions since the research study was conducted during the mid-year examination while other participants continued with the interviews.

3.6.2. Stages of data analysis

The data analysis according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) and Yin (2011) is described as a chain of tasks that include data display, data reduction and drawing the conclusions and verifications. Hence, McNeil and Chapman (2009) refer data reduction as the process of selecting, abstracting, simplifying and transforming data from the transcribed documents, whereas data display refers to the format in which data is placed into the logical and the meaningful categories.

Then data was examined holistically such that others can easily understand the data in simplifying and categorising them. These categories in this study refer to the coding process that enabled me as a researcher to access relevant data simply. The last stage of my data analysis was the data verification, this was simply referred here as a process of interpreting and inferring meanings to the displayed data. Hence, this involved in noting themes and patterns, contrasting and comparing in order to confirm triangulation (Cohen, et al, 2011). In my study, discourse analysis was carried out in the following steps as laid out by Creswell (2012):

Step 1:

I reduced the transcribed data by separating the trivial from the relevant information before I proceeded in organising and coding;

Step 2:

All the interviews from the school principals, HODs and teachers were organised and prepared for data analysis; **Step 3:**

All transcripts were read in order to be familiar with the emerging decisions from the interviews with all participants (see step 2) and the document reviews related to the principals' instructional leadership practices in secondary schools. Then, the main themes were identified and to be written out;

Step 4:

The texted data was then coded and arranged in categories. The coding in this study refers to the process in organising the data before discourse analysis is started within the categories; and

Step 5:

School principals, HODs and teachers discourse and the emerging themes from document reviews were conveyed using narrative interpretation.

3.7. Issues of Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of my study, Lincoln and Denzin (2011) argue that the issue of trustworthiness has been criticised by the post positivists partly because of their concepts of reliability and validity cannot fit into the naturalistic settings. Moreover, Yin (2015) the construct of trustworthiness that includes: Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were utilised in this study.

3.7.1. Credibility

Denzin and Lincoln (2009) describe credibility as those aspects that deal with questions of how the findings from the study relate to the realities. Denzin *et al.*, (2011) and Silverman (2013) present various assumptions through which credibility of qualitative research can be ascertained including member checks, long term observation, persistent, prolonged engagement and thick description. This means the extent to which the data and data analysis are believable and trustworthy. De Vos *et al.*, (2011) assumes that credibility is an analogous to internal validity, that is, how research findings match the reality. However, from an interpretive position of a qualitative study, Yin (2009) claims that reality is relative to the meaning, which people construct within social contexts.

Hence, in order to ascertain the trustworthiness of this study, I ensured that my colleagues were engaged to help in reviewing the consistency of the findings with reality. Moreover, I ensured that I immersed myself in the data generation before providing the interpretations by listening to the recorded interviews repeatedly and reading through for at least three times the transcribed interviews.

Furthermore, I requested my colleagues who were also conducting research to ask me reflective questions about the fieldwork experiences these steps enabled me to give a thick description of my findings.

3.7.2. Transferability

Transferability according to Silverman (2013) refers to the extent to which the findings from the study can be applicable to other contexts. De Vos *et al.*, (2011) goes on to explain that transferability can be enhanced through the use of triangulation where data can be generated from other sources. However, there is an understanding that findings from qualitative case study inquiry are very limited to the individual within a particular context (Cohen et al., 2013). Hence, I suggest that it is impossible to generate such findings. In addition, it is arguably, however, that though the findings from each study are unique, it is an example from a broader sense.

Therefore, in my study I provided a clear description of the context in which the study is undertaken in order that the lessons from the study might be applied to schools that share the same contextual realities within the context of the study.

3.7.3. Dependability

In order to address trustworthiness in a qualitative study, Creswell (2013) assumes that the issue of dependability should be clearly indicated. This process involved in conducting the study which must be clearly addressed so that in the future other researchers will be able to replicate the study, such that the findings from the repeated study should align in detail with the previous research (Maree, 2011; Leedy *et al.*, 2010; Maxwell, 2012).

Thus, in reporting my study, I have presented the research design and its implementation of the operational details of data collection and the instruments utilised in data generation. Hence, Yin (2011) refers to an attempt by the researcher to focus on methodological rigors and coherence towards generating the findings, the case account that the research community can accept with confidence. MacMillan and Schumacher (2010) concur that dependability in this context is analogous to reliability in this study. Thus, it requires the consistency of observing the same findings under similar contexts.

3.7.4. Confirmability

Confirmability is regarded as to what extent the researcher accepts her or his own predispositions (Creswell, 2013). Hence, this accentuates the researcher's concern for objectivity. Moreover, triangulation is also utilised as a tool in order to reduce the effects of the researcher's bias (Cohen, et al, 2013).

For this study, I ensured that I triangulated the information from different sources. I compared the data collected through semi-structured individual interviews with each participant with the data from document reviews from their different schools. Moreover, I proceeded in order to confirm the authenticity of the triangulated data from different three sample schools involved in the research project with the documents obtained from those schools. In short, my possible biases were eradicated.

3.8. Ethical issues

Issues of ethics are in any study which involves human beings is very important in order to prevent risks, privacy and participation rights. De Vos, Strydom and Fouche (2011) assume that ethical issues are 'sets of moral principles'. Thus, the University of Witwatersrand, School of Education provided permission after the submission of my research proposal for candidature. Thereafter, the University of the Witwatersrand provided ethical clearance protocol certificate to be submitted to the Gauteng Department of Education for an authorisation letter to conduct research in Gauteng

schools. Approval was granted to me in order for school principals to accept to be part of the research project. Therefore all three of the sample school principals responded positively in writing.

As a researcher, I endeavoured to abide by the University of the Witwatersrand Code of Ethics in carrying out the study at the approved schools. Hence, the research informed consent referred to the participants of the study being given the rights to confidentiality, anonymity and privacy. Based on Yin (2015) assertion that participants in a study provide informed consent in order to be part of the research study, all participants in my study signed an informed consent form to declare that they were in no way coerced into my study. Moreover, the purpose of my study and the issues of ethics such as informed consent, non-maleficence and non-beneficence were explained to all participants involved in my study (Cohen, *et al.* 2013).

Furthermore, Denscombe (2014), non-maleficence refers to the fact that the study will not constitute undue intrusion, distress and harm to the participants. All participants were informed that pseudonyms would be utilised instead of their names and the names of their respective schools. In brief, my research study was conducted between May and June 2019, the second term of the school academic year.

3.9. Delimitation of the study

Maree (2011) views delimitations of a study to be the researcher's choices, which ought to be mentioned. Delimitations also described as the set of boundaries for the study. However, my study included three secondary schools in the Johannesburg Central District, specifically, South Western Townships (SOWETO). Whilst, the geographical boundaries of my study were limited to the Johannesburg Central District, it therefore cannot be generalisable to all other districts. Hence, I, therefore, used three secondary schools so that my study might be identifiable to all schools in varying districts. This delimited the spatial boundaries of my study.

3.10. Chapter summary

In summary, this chapter has outlined the research paradigm, research methodologies, strategies and design utilised in my study, including procedures, research participants, data generation tools and

data generation, data analysis methods and data credibility issues. Moreover, the research design for my study was an interpretive case study that was analysed largely through qualitative methods approach.

Furthermore, I also briefly described various stages involved in the design and development processes of the research in my study. Next chapter will provide the data presentation, analysis and the pedagogical framework for my study that assisted me with the translation of the philosophy into actual instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the research design and methodology underpinned in this study. This current chapter presents the data analysis and presentation of research findings, data generated through semi-structured interviews and document reviews. A discussion of the key findings is facilitated through interrogating the research questions, reviewed related literature and the theoretical framework outlined in chapter two.

4.2. Profiling Case Study Schools

Table 4 below represents the results of National Senior Certificate (NSC) of three sample schools in South Western Townships (SOWETO) of Johannesburg City (School A, B and C) from 2016 to 2018.

Sample Schools	School Academic Year	Total Number of Learners Enrolled	Drop-outs	Total Number of Learners Wrote	Total Number of Learners Passed	Percentage Pass Rate (%)
School A	2016	98	4	94	42	44.7%
	2017	84	6	78	51	65.4%
	2018	114	8	106	77	72.6%
School B	2016	163	2	161	69	42.9%
	2017	166	1	165	92	55.8%
	2018	157	0	157	94	59.9%
School C	2016	171	1	170	122	71.8%
	2017	192	0	192	170	88.5%
	2018	194	0	194	193	99.5%

Sources: Gauteng Department of Education (2016; 2017; 2018).

The profiling schools selected were those whose results have improved in their National Senior Certificate over the past three years. As such, the study looked at how different challenges and

organisational strategies translated into different learner academic outcomes. All the three sample schools are serving learners from a low-income earning community about 18 kilometers from Johannesburg City.

Drawing on Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) topology of schools, these schools are all 'improved or moving' schools because of their successful and commitment to improvement despite of their challenging contexts in which they are located. The leadership behaviour of the school principals at these schools seem to support Naicker, Chikoko and Mthiyane's (2013) assertion that principals serving at effective schools in challenging school contexts tend to be organised around a number of core personal values; the modelling and promotion of respect for individuals; fairness and equality; caring for the well-being and whole development of learners and staff members and integrity plus honesty. It is clear that their leadership values and visions of successful school principals in challenging contexts are primarily moral, thus, they dedicated to the welfare of staff members and learners.

In short, effective leaders in schools facing challenging contexts ensure that improving the quality of teaching and learning is at the centre of all development work and ensure that all teachers focus upon this central priority.

4.3. Data analysis of research findings

For the purpose of this study, the presentation of key findings is presented thematically based on the emerged content analysis of the semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted with each participant and document reviews that was discussed in chapter three above. Moreover, in presenting these findings, I used audio recording to ensure that the voices of the participants were not lost. Therefore, verbatim quotations are used throughout the data presentation and discussion.

In the case of the school principals, questions were asked why they considered themselves as instructional leader. Also the HODs, and teachers, were asked if they regarded their respective school principals to be instructional leaders and why? However, all participants in their respective

schools were asked how and whether their school principals in secondary schools practiced instructional leadership. Further, they were asked if they believed that their leadership practices were effective on learner academic achievements. From the analysis of the study of the three sets of data (principals, HODs and teachers), two major themes and sub-themes were identified which emerged from this study in Table 5 below:

THEME	MAJOR THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1.	Talking with teachers to promote reflection	▪ Making suggestions; ▪ Giving feedback; ▪ Modelling; ▪ Using inquiry and soliciting advice and opinions; and ▪ Giving praise.
2.	Promoting teachers' professional growth	▪ Emphasising the study of managing teaching and learning; ▪ Supporting collaboration efforts among teachers; ▪ Developing coaching relationships among teachers; ▪ Encouraging and supporting the redesign of programmes; and ▪ Implementing action research to inform instructional decision-making.

4.3.1. Theme 1: Talking with teachers to promote reflection

According to the data, the findings revealed that effective school principals valued dialogue that encouraged the teaching staff to critically reflect on their learning and professional practices. This theme is directly linked to the research question. The

question seeks to identify the challenging contexts faced by secondary school principals. However, the research question enhances the context of this study and the understanding the challenges faced by school principals in their schools. Under this theme, there are five sub-themes of primary talking strategies, making suggestions, giving feedback, modeling, using inquiry and soliciting advice and giving praise.

4.3.1.1. Making suggestions

School principals made suggestions to teachers during post-class visit observations and informal, day-to-day interactions. These suggestions were purposeful, appropriate and non-threatening. Teachers gave positive feedback on support from their school principals as instructional leaders.

A teacher of school A stated that:

I was encouraged by my principal to be continually reflective about this teaching and learner academic outcomes. As I am teaching, I am more conscious of learners' attention.... I am not afraid to change these strategies.

School principal A was not sure what instructional leadership is and he suggested as follows:

Authentic leaders breathe the life force into the workplace and keep the staff members' feelings energised me and be focused. As they lead and guide, they build staff members and their self-esteem. I am sure, this helps to derive the credibility from the personal integrity of an individual.

School principal C suggested that:

An instructional leader is a person who has a vision and is able to assess the school's needs and the community, for example, a leader is able to articulate his or her vision into a plan of deeds in which all parties can participate and feeling a sense of ownership that would enable quality teaching and learning to happen.

School principal B suggested that:

The concept of instructional leadership is associated with a vision and values of the school as ‘‘strategic leadership’’ which is defined as seeing the ‘‘big picture’’, discerning the understanding the challenges and ensuring that others in the school can do the same, establishing structures and bringing vision to the realisation and monitoring the learner’s academic outcomes.

The HOD of school B indicated that:

This school principal prioritises the provision of a clear sense of our school mission, vision and goals as well as objectives that are understood and supported by all staff members as key decision-makers.

A teacher of school B reported that:

This school principal established a vision for change that was based on new or revised goals, the school community began to see the possibility of improvement. Using current instructional technology in the classroom helped to introduce 21st-century teaching and learning and also engaged learners. I am happy that Instructional technology conveyed a vision that our school is up to date with contemporary society and relevant to preparing learners for their future despite school’s poor performance.

A teacher of school C quoted the words of his school principal during the morning briefing that:

This school principal was always reminding teachers that ‘‘the main aim of instructional leader as a principal is to allow staff members to flourish and grow, whether teaching staff or learners, it doesn’t matter. I want to make it clear that the aim is to develop you all and to generate self-belief and self-esteem for those who currently lack it’’.

A teacher of school A also had a similar sentiment of his school principal during staff meeting dated on 12 / 05 / 2018 that:

Giving life to the school vision depended on the commitment of his school principal as instructional leader in empowering his or her teachers, ensuring that each individual can be

built his or her own self-esteem, and where all the school components become part and parcel of the whole.

The view of school principal C was shared by school principal B who suggested that:

Whilst the setting of high expectations for teachers and learners, establishing academic goals and creating a vision were traditionally the practices of the effective instructional leader, recent views and discussions emphasise the collaborative aspects of the process.

The same convictions were shared by school principal A and B that:

Instructional leaders, therefore, have duties to articulate and promote the vision, mission and goals of the schools by engaging all parties concerned such as community, parents, teaching staff and learners in a continuous dialogue on the schools' vision and values. Furthermore, school principal A stressed that: 'I am on the view that it will further give a platform on which the vision of the school can be contested and changed in line with its challenging contexts'.

Moreover, the HODs of school C and A respectively recommended what their school principals suggested in their responses. The minutes of the staff meetings of their schools dated 10/08/2018 and 19 / 09 / 2018 referred to some of the policies where the deputy principals from these schools were responsible in curriculum and instructional issues in managing teaching and learning. To support this, the minutes of the staff management stipulated that:

There would be an audit of school visits on teachers and they would be monitoring and providing feedback on the teaching and learning processes based on curriculum coverage for teachers and learners' work.

Southworth (2002) highlights key findings that instructional leaders value most the blend of supervision, teacher development and curriculum and instruction development. Hence, the promotion of teachers' professional growth was a priority to be the most influential to be in practice. From this, three emerged aspects of effective principals' instructional leadership practices, such as *talking with teachers, promoting teachers' professional growth and fostering teachers' reflection*. Southworth (2002, p. 3) moreover indicated that all these aspects were linked to school

principals' behaviour in terms of *being visible, praising results and extending their autonomies* as instructional leaders. Blasé and Blasé (1998) concur that at the heart of this influence is the issue of inter-personal interaction with effective instructional leaders in realising that, some teachers increase their teaching experiences only through carefully designed support and assistance from their school principals.

Therefore, the effects of these suggestions were to enhance teachers' reflective behaviours, for instance, using greater variety in teaching, responding to learners' diversity, planning more carefully and taking more risks (Hallinger, 2009). According to Bendikson, Robinson and Hattie (2012), Mendels (2012), Bhengu and Mkhize (2013), Naicker *et al.*, (2013), Bhengu and Mthembu (2014) suggest that the interaction should be seen as a demand to a range of expertise from the school principals, from classroom observations and data collection to the awareness of teachers' level of growth and also personal reflective skills.

However, the findings revealed that, the school principals in this study communicated their personal vision, goals and belief systems through direction, words and actions. Based on the variety of symbolic gestures and deeds during interviews, they were considered effective at realigning both the teachers and learners to their school vision. Du Plessis (2014) comments that, when school principals made frequency visits to classes, they modelled the behaviour that they considered desirable in achieving the schools' goal. In this sense, they shared a vision.

Moreover, Grobler (2014) claims that a consistent and shared vision is an inherent part and parcel of instructional leadership practices. It also helps them to communicate a sense of direction for their schools. Looock (2013) assumes that school principals communicated their shared vision through relationships with teachers and learners. They built these around core values. Hence, the vision, and practices of these principals, were organised around personal values such as the modelling and promotion of respect for individuals, fairness, equality caring for the well-being and whole development of teachers and learners, integrity and honesty. Robinson (2010) and Hoadley and Ward (2009) maintain that it was evident that their leadership visions and values were primarily moral, that is, they dedicated to the welfare of teachers and learners, with the latter at the centre.

These values underpinned their relationships with all stakeholders and guided their day – to – day actions.

4.3.1.2. Giving feedback

This second sub-theme shows that effective school principals engage in thoughtful discussions with teachers. Their feedbacks focused mainly on classroom observation behaviours, which were specific, expressed caring and interest, gave praise, established a problem-solving approach, responded to the concerns about learners and stressed their availability for the follow-up talks.

School principal C explained that:

The effects of the feedbacks increased teacher reflections, creativity, instructional variety, risk-taking, better planning for instruction, improved teacher's motivation, sense of security and building self-esteem.

An HOD of school A stated:

This strategic approach built this confidence. This principal reinforced me the fact that I am a teacher. As I collaborated with him, I learnt more about this teaching. I always look forward to his next visit as a chance to grow. The confidence I have described reflects in this teaching. As I gained positive feedback, I continued using what worked in the classroom. And because I did not fear negative evaluation, I am willing to take risks.

School principal A indicated for personal satisfaction and also admitted that it helped him when managing his teachers, he reported:

I think it is important that you keep your feet on the ground so that you experience what that little post level 1 teachers are experiencing and you can relate because you know what I always say, it's something this father taught me, don't expect somebody to do something that you cannot do. That's a simple application of the philosophy in life. All these teachers see me there, going wild, teaching and doing what they do daily, I think it is important because you

know that, it creates a sense of teamwork. I am not sitting up there doing what they don't know. I am with them in the class, you know and I think that is so important.

School principal B has a proactive attitude and believes in looking forward:

I analyse everything, I have a moderation technique tool that I look at and when I have a look at the statistics, it's not a question of you haven't been performing, it's a question of how do we improve? What strategies can we put in place to make it better, it's not you did not do the work.

An HOD of school B indicated that:

Our principal gives us feedback whenever he does or attend a workshop. He puts systems in place where he gives his teachers a target to work towards, achievable ones. He gives us goals and he tells us that we don't go on holiday without having a destination. So, we have to plan our routes. This is our destination, 80% He makes sure that all teachers have got the best handbooks and teachers' resources.

4.3.1.3. Modelling

School principals as teachers, there was a common sentiment to all participating teachers by commenting that:

Effective school principals demonstrated teaching techniques in classrooms and during staff meetings, they also modelled positive interactions with learners. These forms of modelling were viewed as impressive examples of instructional leadership practices, which initially gave positive effects on teachers' motivation and also as reflective behaviour.

An HOD of school A stated that:

This school principal uses a great deal of informal coaching and mentoring. He is in and out of the entire school classes. I value his insights because he is an excellent teacher himself. His loving care of his teachers and learners was so obvious that as a school we

trusted him somehow.... Often he asks if he could teach a class. Watching him is a joy. I honestly believe I did some of this best reflection after talking with this man to teach.

School principal A indicated:

It is nice to teach from time-to-time just to be hands-on, to know what is still happening with discipline and challenges that these teachers face.

School principal B taught for personal satisfaction, but also admitted that she felt it was necessary to teach in order to stay current with her teachers. She confidently stated that:

I am teaching for personal satisfaction and because we have got to be in touch with what's happening on the ground level, especially, with the learners and the teachers, now that I am teaching myself, I realise that these expectations must also be realistic from the teachers.

School principal C also taught for personal satisfaction, but also admitted that it helped a lot when managing teachers, he commented:

I think it is important that you keep your knees on the floor so that you experience more.

You can relate what I always preach and it's something this director taught me. This teachers see me going from one class to the other teaching and what they do daily, I think it is important since you know that, it creates a sense of teamwork.

An HOD of school C stressed:

It is so important that our principal at least teaches one class in our school, he indicated that he wants to understand the complaints and behaviour and the frustrations as teachers we are experiencing. He is our model, he frequently analysed results and set high standards.

School principal B indicated to the teachers that during the June holiday, 26 /06 /2016 went for the workshop at the district office, *'then, there were others who like teaching.... there are different areas you could go for, please, I advise you to go for it so that you know, you keep abreast of what is currently happening'.*

An overview of the modelling instructional leadership literature was used at this section of analysis of research findings, the conceptualisation acknowledges that school principals as instructional leaders have a positive impact on students' learning, but this influence is mediated (Southworth,

2002). This was the conceptualisation of instructional leadership used in the 1980s and was normally applied within the context of poorly-performing or struggling schools (Hallinger, 2003). The broad view of instructional leadership includes all leadership tasks that indirectly affect student learning such as school culture and protecting instructional time procedures. These might be considered to be aspects of leadership that have impact on the quality of curriculum and instruction delivered to learners in South African context (Hoadley & Ward, 2009).

A comprehensive model of instructional leadership was proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). This dominant model proposes three broad dimensions of the instructional leadership construct:

defining the school's mission, managing the instructional programme and promoting a positive school learning climate. These dimensions are further delineated into ten (10) instructional leadership functions as follows: 1. framing the school's goals, 2. communicating the school's goals, 3. coordinating the curriculum, 4. supervising and evaluating instruction, 5. monitoring learner progress, 6. protecting instructional time, 7. providing incentives for teachers, 8. providing incentives for learning, 9. promoting professional development and 10 maintaining high visibility.

The first two activities, framing the school's goals and communicating the school's goals are incorporated into the first broad dimension, defining the school's mission. These two leadership practices emphasise the principal's role in establishing and articulating a clear school vision with the focus on enhanced student learning. This dimension is proposed to reflect the principal's responsibility for collaboratively building an appropriately context-based vision, ensuring it is widely known by other school stakeholders as well as ascertaining that teaching and learning processes are aligned with the vision.

The second dimension includes three leadership activities, such as supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum and monitoring learner progress. This dimension assumes the principal's engagement in supervising, monitoring and evaluating instruction-and-curriculum-based tasks in the school. These roles of school principals are treated as the key leadership responsibilities in the present model.

The third dimension comprises of five leadership activities, that is, protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers and providing incentives for learning. Compared with the two former dimensions, this dimension is

broader in scope and intent. Leadership functions included in this dimension are assumed to be highly influential principal practices. This dimension points to the importance of creating and maintaining a school climate that supports teaching and learning practices and promotes teachers' professional development.

Therefore, the model presented above as my theoretical framework for this study is regarded as the most fully tested among existing models of instructional leadership (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999; Southworth, 2002; Leithwood & Louis, 2011). However, the qualitative data analysis of the research findings of my present study suggested a *meritorious level* (deserving reward or praise) of school principals' engagement in the three dimensions of instructional leadership. The lowest rated dimension was *managing the instructional programme* whereas the highest rated dimensions were defining the school's mission followed by *promoting a positive school learning climate*. There were no significance differences between the first and third dimensions. However, I still left the scope for the possibility of new sub-themes and theme 2 to emerge.

4.3.1.4. Using inquiry and soliciting advice.

This study established that all effective school principals often use an inquiry or questioning strategy with teachers and they frequently solicited the teachers' advice about instructional issues.

Resultantly, using inquiry and soliciting advice had positive impacts on teachers' motivation, efficacy, self-esteem, sense of security and reflective behaviours. As one HOD of school A said:

The principal, in observing what is taking place in this classroom, will ask me questions about why I am doing what I am doing, or what are these intended outcomes. This encourages me to be reflective of what I do. He rarely has a suggestion, but his questions caused me to evaluate what I do.

School principal C stated that '*using inquiry and soliciting advice approach in teaching and learning is one of the key roles, as well that you, as a principal, you must focus on since this is what the school is about.... teaching and learning, making progress, meeting the target*'.

School principal B said:

We have got processes in place where this deputy, HODs and teachers do training. I do training from time to time myself. I get skilled people in to train all the teaching staff. I send

all the teaching staff on courses from the various unions as well. I pay for people to come in and solicit this teaching staff.

School principal A indicated:

In many respects, we have more power of asking questions than before. We are involved in decision - making, we are able to take ideas forward and to challenge new ideas and solicit advice. I guess, we are more involved, more part of the decision making process than before as I said earlier.

School principal C's responses show that he does play a somewhat active role in inquiry and soliciting advice by attending teaching professional development courses and ensuring that his teaching staff are informed by current trends and instructional issues. He said:

As the entire SMT, we attended teaching and learning courses offered by Mathew Goniwe

School for Leadership and Governance.....some of the modules they dealt directly with curricula matters.....So, we encourage questions in terms of new trends that come upon in terms of your curriculum delivery.....in our principals' forum, we have got a committee that is referred to as curriculum and instruction so, we also organise information sessions.....We invite people from outside the school.....we invite district officials to come and assist us.

In using inquiry and soliciting advice the study found it helpful in establishing an environment which supports schools' improvement. However, Southworth (2002) notes that different strategies can be used to complement school structures in order to reinforce the school principals' educational expectations. Southworth (2002, p. 4) stresses that the effects of school principals "direct and indirect contact also creates a teaching culture which is characterised by professional collaboration and professional learning growth." It helps to reflect high levels of knowledge and the application of effective leadership practices that will sustain significant instructional improvement (Hallinger, 2009). According to Msila (2011), Marishane and Botha (2011) and Mendels (2012), ensuring that every learner succeeds frequently, it requires timely intervention in order to provide with personalised, alternative instruction. They also indicate that when teachers share high-quality learners' work with one another, they support the inquiry of high-quality instruction in schools. Hence, Bush *et al* (2011) conclude that, using inquiry and soliciting advice strategy, there is a collective responsibility among all teaching staff toward the success of each learner in schools.

4.3.1.5. Giving praise

According to the findings of this study, all in participating sample schools, teachers reported that their school principals gave praise that focused on their specifications and concrete instructional leadership behaviours.

A teacher in school C reported his principal's recommendation:

The school principal wrote a note at the bottom of the evaluation form that said, 'you are a credit to the teaching and learning profession''. In our school staff meeting, he asked me if he could send the other teaching staff members to observe the classroom.

According to Hallinger's (2009) model of instructional leadership in this study, praise significantly affected teachers' motivation, efficacy and self-esteem. Moreover, it also fostered teachers into reflective behaviours, such as reinforcement of effective teaching approaches, creativity and risktaking. A teacher from school A said:

The school principal's praise gets me searching for new and innovative issues on his own. In addition, Hoadley and Ward (2009) concur with the ideas of Hallinger (2009) to the approaches discussed above, the participating school principals enhanced teachers' reflective behaviours by distributing their professional learning, encouraging teachers in attending workshops and cluster meetings and encouraging them in participating reflective discussion inquiries for collaboration with others.

A school principal of school B stated that:

It is essential for all school leaders to create school master calendars that ensure that time is being used wisely and that instructional matters enable teachers to apply their talents toward greater school effectiveness.

School principal C had this to say about teacher professional learning:

It is a pleasure to humbly praise you the teaching staff that our staff meetings are more productive and have a greater impact on the school effectiveness when agendas focus on instructional matters rather than on managerial issues.

School principal A stated that:

To me, that staff professional growth is a passion since if you grow academically, the learners as well grow since I believe that if you don't grow, you end up to be unproductive.

I always encourage you that a ship is as good propelling as its captain. That's the bottom line, but you have to lead by example and you have to show the society that they are working with you, not for you – with you, that you mean what you say and that there must be support, growth and development in any school that applies to you as well.

School teacher B reported that:

The school principal reminded us as a school that staff reviews and evaluation have an impact in results improvement from periodic, high-quality teacher reviews and evaluation.

Bush (2013) adds that a distinctive feature of schools that are improving is how far they work as a professional learning community. Within the schools in this study, I see that a climate of collaboration existed and there was a commitment to work together. However, this environment was the result of a long-term commitment amongst those working within the schools. Hence, opportunities for discussion among all the stakeholders, such as the teaching staff, parents and learners.

In summary, this theme shows that instructional leadership requires school principals to be involved in various instructional tasks, through demonstrating their subject, curriculum and instructional leadership. It also shows that the involvement of school principals' in instructional tasks leads to positive outcomes as explained in this instructional practice. The next instructional practice focuses on principals supporting teachers.

Participant responses reflected that principals provided support to teachers and encouraged professional development. Principals indicated that some form of support was offered to the

teachers in their respective schools. A more formal type of support was provided to teachers through either a structure or processes. However, it was also revealed during research that informal support was also given to teachers.

4.3.2. Theme 2: Promoting teachers' professional growth

Under this theme, the three participating school principals used five strategies for promoting teachers' professional growth, namely, emphasising the study of managing teaching and learning, supporting the collaborative efforts among teachers, developing coaching relationships among teachers, and encouraging and supporting the redesign of programmes.

4.3.2.1. Emphasising the study of managing teaching and learning

All participating school principals provided teaching staff professional development opportunities that addressed emergent needs for teachers. As the HOD of school A stated that:

At this school, we are given so many professional opportunities of learning redesigned strategies and new learning and teaching techniques at the staff development meetings, some of them are optional. Our teaching staff development always supports our major instructional vision, mission and goals that we have inputs on them. We also have a lot to say on what and how we want to do them.

School principal B stated that:

I persuade the teaching staff to attend as many professional development workshops as they can since they have had their morale eroded and chipped away... I make them aware of the workshops, most often I sent out the reminder to all of them. I think it is important to invest in them and their capabilities to raise their morale.

School principal C was of the firm opinion that staff development opportunities along with their inputs, discretion in attending support as well for innovation resulted in increased staff creativity, risk-taking, instructional focus and effects on motivation, self-esteem and efficacy.

The teacher felt that:

In giving us the voice and choices, he commented, ‘we are more motivated to go to in-service trainings and learn new things that we can try out our best’.

The HOD of school C also expressed that:

It is very interesting to note that most effective school principals often became learners themselves in participating in teaching staff development sessions. It is dynamic ‘I am so impressed that the principal values this shared learning so much’.

Emphasising the study of managing teaching and learning, Hallinger (2009) assumes that school principals were trying to maintain teachers’ morale and motivating them. According to Chikoko, Naicker and Mthiyane (2015) critique that the majority of schools in low economically areas the pass rate has been very low, especially in townships. Therefore, several schools, teachers’ morale has been low and individual self-esteem has been eroded by successive criticisms of schools from the community at large, for example, the pressure from the department of education and lack of parental involvement in schools. Consequently, school principals consistently and vigorously promoted teachers’ professional development through workshops. In challenging times, it is important for teachers to maintain their sense of self-worthiness by valuing them.

4.3.2.2. Supporting the collaborative efforts among teachers

The findings showed that, effective school principals observe that collaboration networks among teachers were essential for successful learning and teaching. School principals modeled teamwork, initiated time in collaborative work and also advocated active sharing and peer observations. A teacher of school A stated that:

Our school principal always encourages us about our teamwork to meet together every fortnight to discuss our school’s Mathematics challenges. We discuss about our current state of affairs, individual learner and staff needs, as well as new programmes of how to implement changes if changes are necessary and planning as well for parental involvement.

School principal B felt that:

Collaboration teamwork build common focuses, enhances school wide problem-solving, embraces data-based decision making and sharing best leadership practices.

School principal A had the same sentiment that:

Collaboration teamwork results in increased teachers' self-esteem, efficacy, motivation and reflective behaviours, such as risk-taking, instructional practices and creativity.

One of the teachers of school A reported that:

I stretched out and tried new strategies since the support that the team initiated.... I became a better teacher, I worked harder in order to find out the solutions and I was also anxious to share whatever I learnt. All our discussions were more open and therefore, our professional dialogue skills became richer.

HOD of school B remarked that:

Observing exemplary instructional leadership practices in action is an extremely strong technique for teachers in order to improve their own individual instruction.

School principal C had similar perspectives that:

Individual professional learning, there is self-directed learning that provides more professional development learning opportunities which relate directly to their specific needs.

Hence, the key findings revealed that collaborative efforts reflect the high standards of instructional leadership practices but suffers from the lack of a fully defined common school vision, mission and goals (Hallinger, 2009). According to Bhengu and Mkhize (2013) and Bhengu and Mthembu (2014) claim that school principals adopted a highly creative approach in tackling complex challenges and demands for implementing multiple changes. However, the decision for working with and through teams and individuals was a common response to the leadership of change in a challenging context.

4.3.2.3. Developing coaching relationships among teachers

In this study, school principals actively encouraged teachers to become peer coaches. A teacher of school C remarked that:

The school principal sent some teaching staff members to observe the classes. This made me feel good about myself and the teaching inspired me to look for ways to stay on top of current topics. I was more confident when I went into the classroom. It caused me to think about what I did well and figure out what can be done better.

A teacher of school A concurs with a teacher of school B and admits that a serious challenge is ‘‘with the current situation with the changing in the curriculum, with the so-called training that was supposed to take place’’

An HOD of school C felt that:

Team teaching is important because as teachers working collaboratively build on strengths and share best practices to benefit learners’ academic performance.

A teacher of school B stated that:

It is very important that teachers, parents and learners are involved in the life of the school and relate to each other in a positive way.

The HOD of school B explained that:

The school principal as the leader of this school has ensured that we work more in teams and we work across our subject areas to deepen our subject content knowledge areas. This has made us build broader relationships and working together as a team.

The HOD of school A also felt that:

In many respects, we have more energy than before, we are involved in decision making and we are able to take ideas forward and to challenge new ideas and developments. I guess we are more involved, more part of the decision-making process than before.

The district circular document dated 11 / 06 / 2018 also highlighted the importance of developing coaching relationships within a school. The school principal of school C reminded the all staff in a morning briefing meeting that:

As a head of this school, I have deliberately devolved leadership practices to you all. I was concerned at first that this would mean we would lose control over the management of the school, but it has generated much more interest from the teachers in being involved in decision makings. I am convinced that there is now less apathy and less resistance to changes.

The school principal of school C explained further:

Frequent classroom observations reinforce expectations, create many opportunities to engage and support teachers and build a rich culture that supports quality instruction. I am sure this effort leads to a greater teacher motivation, self-esteem, efficacy and impacts on reflective behaviour, such as creativity, risk-taking, instructional variety in teaching, planning and focus.

School principal B tries to balance the two roles (developing coaching and coaching relationships) by prioritising and develop a ‘to do’ list, but she confessed that ‘attending to the difficult parents, district demands, discipline learners and day-to-day problems of the school interfere with the completion of the activities’. School principal A had a similar sentiment that:

In most cases, it is a difficult parent coming inand then, it is with district demands. You how, they will phone you and tell you they want something now for now and now being a new principal you don't want to be defiant ... and then also sometimes discipline of the learners.

Coaching or mentoring are often used interchangeably as a means of sharing effective leadership practices (Hallinger, 2009) model. Thus, effective schools have leaderships that uses a blend of top-down and bottom-up decision-making processes. According to Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011), coaching or mentoring is designed to facilitate the leadership practices of school principals. However, effective coaching provides strong potential for deep-rooted learning. There is substantial

international evidence that supports the efficacy of coaching for leadership development (Christie, 2010; Bush, 2011; 2013).

4.3.2.4. Encouraging and supporting redesign of programmes

Western research has revealed the importance of school principals' instructional leadership practices in coordinating and supervising curriculum, instruction and monitoring learners' progress in order to ascertain the quality of learning and teaching (Hallinger, 2003; 2009; Murphy, 1990; 1994). However, findings of this study demonstrate that potential school principals encouraged teachers to redesign instructional programmes and they acknowledged the importance of managing the curriculum, instruction and learner progress. The HOD of school A stated that:

The principal does what he can to give the necessary instructional resources. The school has a form that all teachers fill out and listing the resources they need. Most often, the request is approved immediately and the materials are given.

When three participating principals asked how they would improve professional learning opportunities, school principal A explained *“communal meetings where school principals could get together to discuss problems that affect them”*.

School principal B felt that the Department of Education should allow them to *“study courses that were relevant to them”* while school principal C suggested a *“well organised and well planned programmes catering for their needs should be scheduled with the aim of improving teaching and learning in our schools”*. School principal A was of the opinion that although he has not attended *“well-structured professional development programmes, school principals should be resourceful in arranging professional development programmes for all school principals situated in a particular area”*. He was also critical of the workshops arranged by the Gauteng Department of Education. He indicated that the programme was not well planned, the district officials *“were not specialists and I suggest that the district does not have the capacity of facilitating the workshops”*.

A common sentiment was expressed by school teacher B who said:

I am more willing to try various functions that might be considered a little extreme. I really don't mind taking some chances because of our support base from our school principal.

4.3.2.5. Implementing action research to inform instructional decision-making

In this study, all participating school-teachers' reported that, their school principals were thriving to implement the use of an action research plan for their schools to be effective. The key findings revealed that their principals were working towards conducting teachers' professional learning as a large-scale action research plan. This follows after many years of neglecting to study learner readiness, progress, conduct and performance. It was after the department of education had noticing what went wrong with learner academic outcomes. Without school-based data about learning, teachers would not properly determined the effects of what they do in the classroom. School principal C thrived in saying:

By centering action on the careful collection of data to diagnose problems, a disciplined search for alternative solutions, an agreement to action and the conscientious monitoring of whether and how much the solution would work.....with a recycling of the process, either attacking the problem again or else focusing on another one.....we live the problem-solving process for our side and model it for our learners. The importance is with the creation of professional development ethos that all staff members of the school as an organization continually thrive in order to improve learners' achievements through learning how to solve the problems.

Therefore, based on the conviction of this school principal, this study established that school principals' efforts were however, still leaving a lot to be desired according to data analysis of research findings. Bush and Glover (2009), Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011) and Blasé and Blasé (2000) assume that, the model for professional development may incorporate a selection of programmes, thus, training and networking. Hence, training through workshops provided by education specialists and experts from district offices who have a thorough understanding of

curricular issues. The training can take the form of one-day conference, short courses over a period of time, single-session activities and formal meetings by subject specialists.

4.4. Chapter summary

In summary, the research findings revealed that effective leadership in schools in challenging contexts built sustainable capacity. Also, has a relentless focus on learning and teaching. The research findings focused on school leaders who created strong internal accountability processes and the sets of high expectations in terms of learner academic achievements. They are also school leaders who recognised the importance of sharing responsibilities and generating the cultural conditions where an individual person feels valued and the willingness to take responsibilities. This chapter discussed the findings generated through semi-structured interviews and documents that were reviewed with the key research questions. This was accomplished by closely examining the common themes that emerged during data analysis. The next chapter presents the study discussion of key themes emerging, conclusions, recommendations and implications for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF KEY THEMES EMERGING, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the data presentation and analysis of research findings gleaned from semi-structured individual interviews with all participants and documents reviewed. Subsequently, careful consideration of the data, strong conclusions emerged in relation to the key research questions asked in the first chapter. Based on the study findings drawn in Chapter four, the discussion of key themes emerging, conclusions and recommendations and implications for further research are offered.

5.2. Discussion of key themes emerging

Two interrelated themes emanated from the study formed the school principals' overarching experiences of exploring their duties as instructional leaders in challenging contexts as *Talking with teachers to promote reflection and promoting teachers' professional growth*. The research findings revealed that two school principals had a clear understanding of the instructional leadership concept, particularly with their duties as instructional leaders. However, they acknowledged that their major duties included teaching and learning in their schools. In selecting Hallinger's (2009) Model on Instructional Leadership to Leadership for Learning, these selected school principals set directions for their teaching staff members and created a positive environment, which is conducive for teaching and learning. Their school instructional leadership activities include developing a shared

vision and goals, giving essential resources, creating a conducive learning climate, undertaking classroom visits, setting high expectations from teachers and learners (Southworth, 2011).

Moreover, school principals committed most of their contact time in monitoring, coaching, mentoring and controlling the work of teachers and learners. It is clear that the district officials from the department of education work together with school principals in addition to the SMTs and teachers so that instructional leadership duties must be approached as distributed leadership in coordinating the curriculum and instruction, evaluating and monitoring learners' progress. In brief, the three interviewed school principals acknowledged their strengths upon administrative and management issues. Those who did not engage their SMTs and teachers on issues experienced challenges in balancing their administrative and management roles with their instructional activities (Hallinger, 2009; Blasé & Blasé, 2000).

In addition, as a way of self-reflection, the participating school principals also emphasised the significance of taking professional development programmes seriously. This is based upon Hallinger's (2009) Model of Instructional Leadership. Almost all the participating school principals lacked the essential instructional leadership skills and they had serious challenges in developing strategies in coordination and control in order to be aligned with their schools' mission academically and the way forward for action. Thereafter, they realised that instructional leadership is one of the core administrative and management duties of their required roles. They admitted the need for proper training on how to carry out their administrative and their managerial tasks with their instructional leadership activities. The negligence of one of them could seriously lead to the disadvantaging the school culture of teaching and learning (Blasé *et al* 2010; Leithwood & Louis, 2011; Harris, 2014).

Therefore, school principals after realising the importance of professional development training, they identified the need of arranging their own special professional development programmes, instead of depending the one conducted by the education district office which takes time to be conducted depending on their budgets. The research findings also indicate that effective school principals are always lifelong learners who must always be engaged in professional development opportunities continuously. School principals have serious reservations or limitations upon the duties of education districts of how they conduct their professional development programmes.

However, they prefer to take their own initiatives in taking professional development programmes outside the education district arrangements. Hence, school principals acknowledged the need of peer collaboration and encouragement with every effort in the areas and encourage teachers in participating educational training opportunities either within or outside the schools (Talip & Kiflee, 2016; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; Mathibe, 2007).

5.3. Conclusions

In conclusion, my study confirms that strong instructional leadership is essential for school success. However, what we are learning is that, there seems to be a reconceptualisation of instructional leadership practices because of the contextual realities of secondary schools. In challenging contexts, instructional leadership is about shaping structures as well as cultures of the school in response to the school community. In this regard, there seems to be a movement away from thinking about the school principals as the sole instructional leaders in schools. Rather, instructional leadership is stretched across individuals in schools. Moreover, in order to operationalise the distribution of this leadership, there needs to be a sustained development of organisational structures to support this.

Sub-theme 1

In short, the research findings also showed that effective school principals in challenging contexts tend to be above all, for instance, people-centred that is combined with a willingness to be collaborative and in promoting the highest focus levels of teaching and learning (Hoadley & Ward, 2009). Evidence suggests that the challenges facing school principals' as instructional leaders are considerable. The sample schools in the study also revealed a wide range of their poverty quintiles which were found to be more likely to experience challenges of a small improvement in their National Senior Certificate results over time. For this reason, all the sample schools were not sure of their poverty quintile designations.

Sub-theme 2

Regarding the interest in this study was whether principals' instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts I could see any significant effects in improving scholastic performance of learners. There were six dimensions of instructional leadership practices that I was interested in exploring principals' instructional leadership roles, such as:

1. The instructional focus of schools;
2. Instruction and its expectations;
3. Distributed leadership;
4. Social relationships within the school;
5. Investing in staff development; and
6. Community building.

From these six instructional leadership dimensions, I developed twelve constructs from the data analysis results. Here they are presented as constructs of the relevant dimensions, which were explored as represented in Table 6 below (Instructional leadership dimensions and significant variables):

Dimension	Construct of Significant Variables
1. Instructional focus of schools	The curriculum is covered in the school Balanced assessments to improve learner achievements Managing instructional time
2. Instruction and its expectations	Supervising instruction Academic intervention
3. Distributed leadership	-----
4. Social relationships within the school	Collaborative team teaching Positive relationships among the staff Team peer review of learner progress
5. Investing in staff development	Individualised professional learning Professional development workshops
6. Community building	Parental involvement and support in education of their children School Governing Bodies' willingness to support in schools

From my research findings revealed that there are many conclusions that can be drawn from the results of data analysis. Considering the limitations of the study, the conclusions though exploratory confirms also the findings of the literature, it provides greater specification with regard to what I am looking for the future research of principals' instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts.

Sub-theme 3

What the research findings indicated was the central importance of the principals' instruction focus of teaching and learning in schools. This is mainly provided in the construct that emerged from the curriculum coverage. I am certainly sure that the most important role of the school principals is to make sure that the curriculum is covered. In the absence of this curriculum coverage, it is likely that learners' chance of learning and a high level of achievements can give the quality outcome, therefore, what the data analysis provide here is the specification of central aspects of principals' instruction roles on which improving schools must focus. However, the study has revealed that many school principals put more emphasis upon their managerial and administrative activities rather than concerning with teaching and learning in their schools. With regard to school principals to be accountable for their managerial and administrative duties, the literature shows that still there is an urgent need for them to be actively involved in their school instructional leadership roles that are pivotal to the enhancement of scholastic performance of learners.

Sub-theme 4

Moreover, the research has shown that school principals must be conversant with their theories of modern innovative teaching and learning practices and to model their teachers in the classrooms. However, the duty of school principals is to influence student – learning outcomes in setting the vision and goals of the schools with the view of promoting effective school instructional leadership practices. Additionally, the duty of school principals as school instructional leaders is to transform conducive school environments whereby teachers and learners manage to reach their potential goals. Teachers' culture as read through relationships within the schools also proved significant in

the data analysis. Particularly the relationships between teachers and management team, teachers and teachers, and teachers and learners were found to be positively associated with a high quality level of learner achievement outcomes. In the instructional leadership literature, there is a shred of growing evidence that the link between positive school culture and leadership practices is indirect. However, the social relationships among the teaching staff are unlikely to happen and maintained if there is no support from the senior management team. In this way, the culture of teaching and learning in schools where learner academic performance features powerfully with school principals' roles are bound and balance with their managerial and administrative functions in accordance with school instructional leadership practices.

Sub-theme 5

With regard to distributed leadership, there is no proven evidence neither culture of expectations in schools. What table 2.6 indicates, however, is that many aspects of the given six dimensions that were identified from the literature were found to be significant. I can, therefore, manage to raise the argument that the importance of instructional leadership practices lies amongst various dimensions rather than putting strongly in a specific dimension. Therefore, I conclude that effective instructional leadership of curriculum and instruction lies mainly upon the ability to oversee the wide range of activities most of which do not relate directly for learning and teaching. I can also make the argument that although distributed leadership emerged in the study as not significantly related to the key research findings, in terms descriptive, the study revealed that leadership practices of the curriculum and instruction were distributed. However, the leadership of the curriculum and instruction in this sense was found to be distributed and as a result, has some implications in terms of training and who is supposed to be trained in what activities in order to make sure the effective leadership of teaching and learning in schools.

In short, the study concluded that strong and directive school principals focused on curriculum and instruction issues as essential for successful schools. School principals interviewed in the study were characterised as effective instructional leaders, they engaged with curriculum and instruction roles, they were not afraid to directly with their staff members who were always attending their classes. Therefore, this is evidence that real school leaders influence classroom teaching and learning. For this reason, school principals who are trying to develop being successful instructional

leaders must work extra hard in order to integrate reflections and growth in building school culture also shared critical National Senior Certificate Examination with the aim of improving instructions.

5.4. Recommendations

In order to establish instructional leadership practices in school programmes, it requires a strong action plan at classroom levels. Owing to this, in order for instruction to be improved, school principals must really:

Sub-theme 1

Focus on instructional improvement, which is supported by the instructional vision, develop highquality instructional expectations for individual classroom, develops the community of instructional pro-active teachers who can collaboratively engage in instructional focus, which could likely improve scholastic performance of learners. Regarding the autonomy of the school principals, they are recommended to be provided with a measurement of authorities based upon the principals' directorate or departmental guidelines, making decisions in terms of key areas which directly affect the management of teaching and learning process. However, school principals must have those authorities of selecting and placing the teaching staff members and beheld the accountabilities for the outcome that are achieved by staff members themselves. School principals should constantly exercise authorities in order to create or establish objectives of the success for developing comprehensive evaluation processes for their staff members while being held accountable in monitoring the evaluation of the programmes, learners and teachers. In brief, school principals have and must exercise the authorities by involving teachers, learners and parents and other school community members for other matters that can promote the schools' vision and mission while being held accountable into the impact of those decision issues.

Sub-theme 2

It is very interesting to note that the research findings suggest the recommendation of professional development duties of school principals and other staff members to be seriously undertaken through various institutions such as, university faculties, also practicing or qualified school principals and prospective skilled school principals in engaging team studies, curricular development matters, peer observations and through collaborative school-based research. However, school principals are recommended to be exemplary innovative in creating more professional development and training opportunities instead of depending upon the department of education to arrange for them these professional development programmes.

Sub-theme 3

With regard to the programmes such as, ACE diploma to be replaced with all others, this is a strong recommendation because it emphasises the assessment criteria upon desirable outcomes for school principals and personal qualities which school principals are supposed to have in terms of the specifications of learning for the training course. However, the curriculum is really influenced by the literature with regard to transformational leadership aspects. It is also recommended that the training must rather be inclusive than having selective effects upon or specific staff members to be trained. For instance, core themes must be those which have inclusive aspects such as: Curriculum planning, teaching and learning support materials, proper utilisation of resources, school instructional leadership practices, procuring physical assets and finally learner discipline which must be in a form of a nucleus of the continuing professional development programme that can be applied to all of them.

Sub-theme 4

Finally, it is true that even poor schools where parents concentrate heavily in certain schools such as low performing schools always tend to be of leaking social and cultural capital over time. However, the research findings around the importance of parents in the school community, their support in schools must be clear in order to make us relax and considering what types of interventions between schools and communities we can make so that we can improve the culture of teaching and learning. I need to imply the ways that I must include and empower parents in order to exercise what is a clear dimension of parents' support and the positive relationships with schools, which are educating their children. I also need to take seriously the ongoing training of school principals, the ways in

developing positive school social relationships for both within schools and between schools and its communities.

Sub-theme 5

To sum up, this study would not be complete without mentioning the individual commitment and the dedication of school principals. Therefore, the research findings provided in this study I considered them as preliminary. The research report presented in this study attempted to highlight a broader picture of principals' instructional leadership practices in secondary schools in challenging contexts, hence, one set of qualities which always stood out from school principals as instructional leaders I interviewed was their dedication and passion for improving scholastic performance of learners, their faith in their efforts and their passion to their work. If there is any dimension identified must be explored further in a more delicate way. There is also a need for clear qualitative research that can provide some more insights into the process which involves in school leadership aspects, particularly those schools which are declining or improving significantly. I hope this research provides the most starting point of departure for further investigation.

5.5. Limitations of the study

The research findings are comprised of the following major limitations.

The first limitation is the scope of the study, it is a small scale research and it is a challenge to make generalisation. The study explored the instructional leadership practices of three secondary school principals. Despite the value this study contributes to the body of knowledge and to the practice of school principals' leadership, it cannot be generalised to the other settings too. Nevertheless, I have provided a thick description of the research methods, findings and the context of the study. This will enable clear interpretations to be made and encourage appropriate adaptations in cases where the similarities in context are similar to the contexts of this study. The second limitation of the study is

that National Senior Certificate results of the study are based upon self-reported data analysis. Thus, participants' responses could have reflected subjective bias rather than being actual reflections of reality. The attempts were made during the development of the interview sessions in order to capture the reality of facts and opinions in an attempt to minimise study subjective bias. In many cases, the responses were triangulated between school principals, HODs and teachers as a strategy to limit bias. However, the fact remains that the responses were not independently verified.

In brief, these limitations curtailed the claims that can be made in the study, the purpose here is to open up the area of inquiry and lay the basis for further research. I am not in a position to make any strong causal links between instructional leadership practices. Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) suggest that through confirmation of findings in the literature and through pushing the boundaries of the knowledge in a modest way, they propose how the future inquiry might proceed. The research in this sense is exploratory and preliminary. The research represents, however, a more comprehensive picture of instructional leadership practices in South Africa than has been existed up to the present period of time.

5.6. Implications for further research

A noteworthy point here is that an implication for policy makers is to recognise that practice in schools challenging contexts might vary from practice in other schools and that aim of replicating the teaching and learning processes in a good school may not be appropriate. As Maringe, Masinire and Nkambule (2015) argue at the level of the school that we need a better understanding of effective practice in particular contexts, in addition to the generic practice lessons that are already available. For instance, what is the maximum size of groups for learners in class in challenging contexts with emotional as well as behavioural needs? What are the benefits to different groups of learners from mixed ability in such schools? How are parents engaged most effectively in challenging contexts? More radically, we need to consider alternative models of schooling for learners who find it challenging to learn within the standard organisational framework of a school.

A contextualised school improvement programme would undoubtedly need a high degree of flexibility and diversity to meet the needs of different types of learners in different types of school. As Hargreaves (2004) has suggested that there is an *apartheid of professional development as well as school improvement* which has been generated by default rather than design. He argues that while

schools that are performing well enjoy earned autonomy while those categorised as *failing have prescribed programmes and endlessly intrusive monitoring as well as inspection* (Hargreaves, 2004, p. 190).

The implication of a contextualised approach to school improvement is to reverse this trend and allow schools in the most challenged contexts the opportunities to innovate, experiment and divert, if necessary, from the educational school norms in more favourable settings. It also implies a steady supply of well qualified teachers who are recruited and retained in poorer areas. As Maringe, Masinire and Nkambule (2015) note, this will only be achieved if there are the right financial as well as career incentives in place in order to attract the best teachers to some of the most challenging teaching contexts. It is also possible that both initial training as well as ongoing professional development programmes need to be more carefully differentiated to prepare teachers for the particular challenges of disadvantaged schools.

In brief, this has been a small-scale qualitative study that only looked at instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts from the perspectives of school principals in three secondary schools and their HODs as well as teachers. I suggest a larger study be conducted using mixed methods and involving other school stakeholders to fully understand the complexities around instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts.

5.7. Chapter summary

In summary, the research findings revealed that leadership is a complex undertaking instructional leadership in any school, but for schools in challenging contexts, it presents extra challenges. The core message about effective leadership in schools facing challenging contexts is one of building capacity through empowering, involving and developing others as well as by providing systems of teaching and learning support, guidance and assistance. Capacity building should be the central aim of all schools, but for those in challenging contexts, it is imperative to ensure that school improvement is long term rather than short lived.

Research has constantly shown that while gains in learner outcomes are hard fought as well as sustainable improvement is particularly difficult to achieve in such challenging contexts, both are

possible. However, to succeed in these challenging contexts require a school improvement process that fits the individual school context and is underpinned by an unrelenting focus on improving conditions at the learning level. The resilience capacity for hard work as well as continuing adherence of school principals and teachers under the most challenging contexts to provide the best opportunities for the learning as well as achievement for learners has been shown to make a significant difference to a school's ability to improve.

The research evidence suggests that while effective school principals in challenging contexts are constantly managing tensions and problems directly related to the particular contexts of the school, the main leadership activity is one of coping with unpredictability and conflict on a daily basis without discarding their moral purpose and core values.

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7. LIST OF APPENDICES

The following appendices have been used in my study:

- 7.1. APPENDIX A – Research Information Sheet to the Gauteng Department of Education;
- 7.2. APPENDIX B – Research Information Sheet to School Principals;
- 7.3. APPENDIX C – Request Information Sheet to be a Research Participant for Principals;
- 7.4. APPENDIX D – Request Information Sheet to be a Research Participant for HODs;
- 7.5. APPENDIX E – Request Information Sheet to be a Research Participant for PL.1 Teachers;
- 7.6. APPENDIX F – Research Informed Consent Form;
- 7.7. APPENDIX G – Semi-Structured Interview Schedule Questions for Principals;
- 7.8. APPENDIX H – Semi-Structured Interview Schedule Questions for HODs;
- 7.9. APPENDIX I – Semi-Structured Interview Schedule Questions for PL 1 Teachers;
- 7.10. APPENDIX J – Documents Review Schedule;
- 7.11. APPENDIX K – Ethical Clearance Certificate;
- 7.12. APPENDIX L – Turn-It-In Report;
- 7.13. APPENDIX M – Language Editor’s Clearance Certificate.

7.1. APPENDIX A: RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET TO GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Dear Sir / Madam

REQUEST LETTER FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am Stephen Kadzakumanja Masina, a M.Ed. student in the Wits School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of this degree requirements, I am conducting research on the phenomena of the instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts of school principals in Johannesburg Central District (D14), specifically, Soweto Township secondary schools.

The title of this research is: **Exploring principals' instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts located in Johannesburg Central District: Case studies.** In this regard, I request permission to conduct research in the following secondary schools: Naledi secondary school, Aurola Girls secondary school and Mndeni secondary school. The research participants will include school principals, HODs and post level one teacher (s).

I will be interested in questions around curriculum coverage, relations with communities, teachers and the supervision of teaching, the monitoring and improvement of matriculation results. I will select schools that have both improved in their matric results over the past three years, and those whose results have declined. This is a comparative study which will look at secondary schools in

different contexts, the different challenges that confront leaders, and how different challenges and organisational dynamics translate into different learner outcomes.

In order for the research to be effective, the focus will be on school principals to solicit their views and experiences on the phenomena of instructional leadership practices. This study will use semistructured interviews and document reviews to generate data. The individual participant will be interviewed for approximately 30-45 minutes at the time and place convenient to them. The research will be conducted in the third term of the school academic year of 10 to 31 of July 2019.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

Risks: There will be no foreseeable risks to all participants in the study. Should they experience any anxieties, they will be advised to approach either this supervisor of the project or the HSRC for support. Participation in the study will not disadvantage them in any way.

Privacy: Their individual privacy and that of their school will be preserved in all published or written data from this study. Pseudonyms will be used in any data that will be published. In addition, information which will be gathered from different participants in a school will not under any circumstances be shared amongst those participants. For example, responses from teachers will not be made available to principals, and vice versa. All data from the study will be stored securely at the Faculty Office for a period of five years.

Payments: All participants will receive no payment for participating in this study.

Participant rights: After reading the consent form and understand, the participation will be voluntary and they will have the right to withdraw their consent at any time without any penalty. If they will have any questions about this study, they may contact Stephen Kadzakumanja Masina, Ben Naude Drive, No. 1800 B. Zone 2, Diepkloof 1862. Cell: 0608304999 /

0727192587 / 0119853996 (H). Email address: masinastephen@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Geeta Motilal, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Faculty of Education leadership and policy studies

Contact: 0117173207 (W), Cell: 0825630246. Email address: geeta.motilal@wits.ac.za

The HREC Research Office of the GDE (Mr. Gumani Mukatuni, Tel. 011 3550775, E-mail address: gumani.mukatuni@gauteng.gov.za or researchinfo@gauteng.gov.za

The interview schedule is attached herewith for your perusal.

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Stephen Kadzakumanja Masina

7.2. APPENDIX B: RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS



Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

My name is Stephen Kadzakumanja Masina, a student at Wits School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. I will be undertaking a research project on **exploring principals' instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts located in Johannesburg Central District: Case studies**. This research will involve semi-structured interviews for individual participant and document reviews, such as circulars and subject meetings.

In order for the research to be effective, the school principals, HODs and post level one teachers will participate in the research. In this regard, I am requesting permission to conduct research in your school so that we can share the experiences of how we can understand the challenging contexts which lead the schools to be failing schools. The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. The participants will be reassured that they will withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. The names of the research participants and the identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times. Your individual privacy will be maintained. All research data for this study will be destroyed after 5 years after the completion of the research project.

Please be informed that I have already requested the necessary permission from the Research Office of the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct this research. I am looking forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Kadzakumanja Masina,

Ben Naude Drive, No. 1800 B, Zone 2, Diepkloof 1862.

Email address: masinastephen@gmail.com, Cell: 0608304999 / 0727192587 / 0119853996 (H).

The interviews will be audio-recorded to assist the researchers in concentrating on the actual interview rather than focusing on writing voluminous notes. You will be contacted in time about the interviews.

Supervisor: Dr Geeta Motilal, Cell: 0825630246; 0117173207 (W); 0117872595 (H)

Email address: geeta.motilal@wits.ac.za

The HREC Research Office of the GDE (Mr. Gumani Mukatuni: Tel. 0113550775 and E-mail:

Gumani.Mukatuni@gauteng.gov.za; Davide. Makhado@gauteng.gov.za; Faieth.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za; and Researchinfo@gauteng.gov.za).

7.3. APPENDIX C: REQUEST INFORMATION SHEET TO BE A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS



Dear sir/madam

REQUEST TO BE A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT AT YOUR SCHOOL

I am Stephen Kadzakumanja Masina, a M.Ed. student at Wits School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of this degree requirements, I am conducting research on instructional leadership practices of school principals in Soweto Township, Johannesburg Central District (D 14). In this regard, I request permission from you to be a participant in this research project at your school. Please be informed that I have already sought out and are awaiting the necessary permission from the Research Office of the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct this research.

The title of the research project is: **Exploring principals' instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts located in Johannesburg Central District: Case studies.**

I will be interested in questions around curriculum coverage, relations with communities, teachers and the supervision of teaching and learning, and the monitoring and improvement of matriculation results. I have selected schools that have both improved in their matric results over the past three years, and those whose results have declined. This is a comparative study, which will look at schools in different contexts, especially township secondary schools of Soweto, the different challenges that confront leaders and how different challenges and organisational dynamics translate

into different learner outcomes. This study will use semi-structured interviews and documents review to generate data. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 30-45 minutes at the time and place convenient to them at their schools.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project. Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s, during and after the reporting process. All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. Fictitious names will be used to represent your names.

Participation will be voluntary; therefore, you will be free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalty on your part. The interviews will be voice-recorded to assist me in concentrating on the actual interview rather than focusing on writing voluminous notes. You will be contacted in time about the interviews. For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact me:

Contact details: Stephen KadzakumanjaMasina;

Ben Naude DR. No. 1800 B, Zone 2, Diepkloof 1862

Tel: 011 985 43996 (H); Cell: 072 719 2587 / 0608304999

E-mail: masinastephen@gmail.com **Supervisor's contact details:**

Dr. Geeta Motilal: Cell: 0825630246 / Tel: 0117173207;

E-mail: geeta.motilal@wits.ac.za

The HREC Research Office of the GDE (Mr. Gumani Mukatuni, Tel. 0113550775,

Email: gumani.mukatuni@gauteng.gov.za or researchinfo@gauteng.gov.za.

The interview schedule is attached herewith for your perusal. Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thanks very much in advance. Yours sincerely, Stephen K. Masina

7.4. APPENDIX D: REQUEST INFORMATION SHEET TO BE A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENT (HODs)



Dear sir/madam

A REQUEST TO BE A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT AT YOUR SCHOOL

My name is Stephen Kadzakumanja Masina, a Master's student in educational leadership and policy studies at Wits School of Education, the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of this studies, I am undertaking a research project entitled: **Exploring principals' instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts located in Johannesburg Central District: Case studies**. The research project will be based on the questions about curriculum aspects, relationships with the communities, teachers and supervision of teaching and learning and the monitoring and improvement of matriculation results. As a requirement of this study, I would like to invite you to take part in an individual interview discussion at your school.

Therefore, there will be no foreseeable risks to you in participating in the study. Should you, however, experience any anxieties, you will be advised to approach either the supervisor of this research project. Participating in the study will not disadvantage you in any way. Your individual privacy and that of your school will be preserved in all published data from this study. Pseudonyms will be used in any data that will be published. In addition, information gathered from different participants in a school will not under any circumstances be shared amongst those participants. For instance, responses from teachers will not be made available to principals, and vice versa. You will

receive no payment for participation in this study. There will be no disadvantages or penalties for not participating. You may withdraw at any time if you do not want to continue. The duration for your participation will be between 30 – 45 minutes. The interviews will be after school hours.

If you will have any questions afterwards, you will be free to contact me and this study will be written up as a research report.

Yours sincerely,

Masina, S.K. (072 7192587 / 0608304999)

Supervisor: Dr. Geeta Motilal (0825630246 / 011 7173207).

7.5. APPENDIX E: REQUEST INFORMATION SHEET TO BE A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT FOR PL 1 TEACHERS



Dear sir/madam

A REQUEST TO BE A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT AT YOUR SCHOOL

I am Stephen Kadzakumanja Masina, a student at Wits School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. I am studying for a Master's degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. As a requirement of this study, I am undertaking a research project entitled:

Exploring principals' instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts located in Johannesburg Central District, especially Soweto Township schools.

I will be interested with questions around curriculum coverage, relations with the communities, teachers and the supervision of teaching and learning, and the monitoring and improvement of matriculation results. I have selected secondary schools that have both improved in their matric results for the past three years and those whose results have declined. Hence, this study is a comparative which will look at schools in different contexts.

Therefore, in order for the study to be effective, I would like to invite you to participate in an individual interview discussion at your school. It will take you approximately 30 – 45 minutes to complete. Your individual privacy and that of your school will be preserved in all written data from this study. Pseudonyms will be used in any data that will be published. All data from the study will

be stored securely at the HREC for at least five years in the office of the principal investigator who has sole access to the locked cupboard in which the data will be stored. There will be no foreseeable risks in participating in the study and participating in the study will not disadvantage you in any way. You will receive no payment for participating in this study. Please, understand that your participation will be voluntary and you will have the right to withdraw your consent form at any time without any penalty.

If you will have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact me:

Masina, SK: (0727192587 / 0608304999)

Supervisor: Dr. Geeta Motilal (0825630246 / 0117173207)

Thanks very much in advance

7.6. APPENDIX F: RESEARCH INFORMED CONSENT FORM



I (Full name & surname of participant)
hereby confirm that I have been fully informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the
study: **Exploring principals' instructional leadership practices in challenging contexts located
in Johannesburg Central District: Case studies**

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 voluntarily to take part in the study. I also
understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time, should I so desire.

Finally, I also consent to this interview being audio-recorded.

Signature of Participant:Date: ----- Thanks

very much in advance.

Yours faithfully

Mr. Stephen K. Masina

7.7. APPENDIX G: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS:

7.7.1. INTRODUCTION

7.7.1.1. Age group

25-30: ()	30-40: ()	40-50: ()	50-60: ()
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7.7.1.2. Gender

Male: ()	Female: ()
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7.7.2. FOCUS ON CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT

7.7.2.1. How many teachers are there in the school?

7.7.2.2. How many years have you been a school principal at this school?

7.7.2.3. What is the major challenge you face as a school principal at this school?

7.7.2.4. In general, do teachers in your school complete the required curriculum coverage?

7.7.2.5. As a principal of the school, how often do you visit the classrooms of teachers?

7.7.2.6. What do you do when a teacher in the school is struggling with teaching?

7.7.2.7. How are the matric results over the past three years?

7.7.2.8. What are the three most significant factors inside the school affecting teaching and learning?

7.7.2.9. What are the three most significant factors outside the school affecting teaching and learning?

7.7.2.10. Who takes a decision on what teacher professional development courses will go on?

7.7.3. DISPERSAL OF LEADERSHIP

7.7.3.1. Do you share responsibilities in the school? If yes, how does it work?

7.7.3.2. Tell me about any committees you have in the school that relate to curriculum or teaching and learning.

7.7.4. SOCIAL RELATIONS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

7.7.4.1. How do teachers in the school plan their teaching?

7.7.4.2. Do you ever check teachers' lesson plans? If not, who does it? If yes, what do you look for?

7.7.4.3. Who oversees what teachers will cover in a term and whether they cover it?

7.7.4.4. How often do School Management Team and teachers get to talk about issues of teaching and learning if it happens all?

7.7.5. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND PARENTS, COMMUNITY, THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND THE BROADER POLICY CONTEXT

7.7.5.1. What are the main challenges in the communities from which the learners come?

7.7.5.2. In what ways, if any, does the school deal with these?

7.7.5.3. In what ways, if any, does the School Governing Bodies (SGB) get involved in issues of teaching and learning?

7.7.5.4. Do you ever interact with people from the district? Do you find them helpful?

7.7.5.5. What policies do you find the most difficult to get a handle on? What policies do you think are the most important in doing what you need to do in the school?

7.7.6. CONCLUDING

7.7.6.1. What do you think what makes this school successful? OR What are the main challenges that make this school becoming successful?

7.7.6.2. If in any, how do you think teaching and learning at this school have changed over the past few years?

7.7.6.3. If you have anything to share with me apart from what we have discussed, do so, please!

Thanks very much for your time.

7.8. APPENDIX H: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENT (HODs):

7.8.1. INTRODUCTION

7.8.1.1. Age group	20-30: ()	30-40: ()	40-50: ()	50-60: ()
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7.8.1.2. Gender	Male: ()	Female: ()
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7.8.1.3. How many years did you teach before you became an HOD?

7.7.1.4. What is the major challenge you face as an HOD in this school?

7.8.2. FOCUS ON CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

7.8.2.1. As an HOD, how often do you visit the classrooms of your teachers?

7.8.2.2. What is your position as an HOD if one of the teachers is struggling with teaching in your department?

7.8.3. SOCIAL RELATIONS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

7.8.3.1. How do you share responsibilities in the school with other departments as an HOD?

7.8.3.2. To what extent do the School Management Team and teachers get to talk about the issues of extended curriculum support?

7.8.4. CONCLUDING

7.8.4.1. What do you think teaching and learning at this school has changed over the past three years? How?

Thanks very much for your support.

7.9. APPENDIX I: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS (PL 1):

7.9.1. INTRODUCTION

7.9.2. AGE GROUP

20– 30 ()	31–40 ()	41–50 ()	51–60 ()
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7.9.3. GENDER

MALE ()	FEMALE ()
----------------	------------------

7.9.3.1. How many learners are you teaching for your subject (s)?

7.9.3.2. How many years have you been teaching?

7.9.3.3. What is the major challenge you face as a classroom teacher in this school?

7.9.4. FOCUS ON CURRICULUM MATTER, SOCIAL RELATIONS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

7.9.4.1. How were the matric results for your subject (s) last three years?

7.9.4.2. How often does your HOD support you if you are struggling with teaching?

7.9.4.3. Tell me about any subject committees you have in the school related to the curriculum.

7.9.4.4. How do teachers in the school support each other?

7.9.4.5. Who oversees what teachers will cover the contemplated curriculum schedule?

7.9.4.6. How often do the SMT and teachers get to talk about issues of teaching and learning?

7.9.4.7. What are the main things that disrupt teaching and learning time in this school?

7.9.5. CONCLUDING

7.9.5.1. How do you deal with misconduct learners at the school level?

7.9.5.2. What do you think teaching and learning at this school has changed drastically?

7.9.5.3. What is your perception about the leadership of your principal?

7.9.5.4. Finally, is there anything you want to share with me which you think is not discussed?

Thanks very much for your time.

7.10. APPENDIX J: DOCUMENTS REVIEW SCHEDULE

The documents that will be reviewed will not be older than three years and will be: Subject policies, results improvement plan for the subject, minutes of the meetings with the principals, HODs and PL 1 teachers. These will be discussed and the deliberations recorded.

These official documents will be used in collaborating with the interviews, thus, improving the trustworthiness of the findings. The documents may reveal aspects that will not be found through the interviews.

Thanks in advance

Mr. Stephen K. Masina.

7.11. APPENDIX K: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

WITS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 2019ECE001M

PROJECT TITLE

Exploring Principals' Instructional Leadership practices in challenging contexts of three secondary schools in Johannesburg Central District: Case studies

INVESTIGATOR

Mr. Stephen Kadzakumanja Masina

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR

WITS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

DATE CONSIDERED

20 May 2019

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

Approved unconditionally

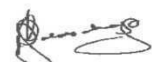
EXPIRY DATE

Date of submission of the project report

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE

27 May 2019

CHAIRPERSON:



(Dr. Paul Goldschagg)

cc: Supervisor: Dr. Geeta Motilal

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.



Signature

04, 06, 2019

Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

7.12. APPENDIX L: TURN – IT- IN REPORT

00658019:Stephen_Masina_Turn_it_in_Purpose.msg_(rev).msg.docx

Submission date: Wednesday, November 6, 2019 09:32AM (UTC+0200) **Submission**

ID: 103946091

File name: 3ef9f3b136f376_

Stephen_Masina_Turn_in_Purpose.msg__rev.msg.docx (105.34K) **Word count:** 32197**Character count:** 27110

00658019:Stephen_Masina_Turn-it-_in_Purpose.msg_(rev).msg.d...

ORIGINALITY REPORT

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SIMILARITY INDEX

INTERNET SOURCES

PUBLICATIONS STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

Neeta Baporikar. "chapter 49 Educational

<1%

1

Leadership for Enhancing Quality in Teacher Education", IGI Global, 2017 Publication

Submitted to Grand Canyon University

2

Student Paper

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Exclude quotes

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On

7.13. LANGUAGE EDITOR'S CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

7 Yellow Wood
255 Glover Avenue
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Centurion
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Phone 011 717 3343
071 777 6880
E-mail arethamaposa1@gmail.com
Freelance academic editor

ARETHA M. MAPOSA

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

EDITING CERTIFICATE

Master's Research Report

Study Topic /Title: Exploring Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices in Challenging Contexts Located in Johannesburg Central District: Case Studies

Student's Name: Stephen Kadzakumanja. Masina

Student number: 1473224

I confirm that I have edited this research report and the references for clarity, language and layout. I am a freelance editor specialising in proofreading and editing academic documents. To the best of my knowledge, all the suggested corrections or amendments have been effectively edited and the work is free of grammatical and spelling errors. I am of the view that the quality of language used meets generally accepted academic standards.

Yours faithfully

a.m. maposa

Aretha M. Maposa

18 JULY 2020

electronic