

**The role of transformational leadership in well performing schools in the Eastern
Cape**

By

Nomonde Mhaga

A dissertation of limited scope

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of

Master in Educational Leadership

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

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SUPERVISOR: Prof MT Schoole

CO-SUPERVISOR: Dr E Eberlein

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DECLARATION

I, Nomonde Mhaga, student number: 29734852 declare that this study titled **The role of transformational leadership in well performing schools in the Eastern Cape** is my own work. It was never presented before either to the University of Pretoria or at any other university. All the sources used to write and complete this work have been acknowledged by means of comprehensive references.

CERTIFICATE OF EDITING

To whom it may concern

This is to confirm that I have completed the language editing of the dissertation **The role of transformational leadership in well performing schools in the Eastern Cape** by Nomonde Mhaga submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Educational Leadership in the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria.

Yours faithfully

Ailsa Williams

09 August 2019

ETHICS CERTIFICATE



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CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE: Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

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CC Ms Bronwynne Swarts
Prof Chika Sehoole
Dr Eric Eberlein

This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:

- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late mother, Nowethu Constance “Mandobe” Mhaga. She was the pillar of my life. She did not have the opportunity to complete formal education, but she encouraged her children and grandchildren to always have the drive for knowledge.

In her own words, she used to say “*Ndifuna nifunde.*” Loosely translated, “*My wish for you is to acquire knowledge, and not get tired in doing so.*”

Later in life, I learnt from her, when she was still alive that her encouragement had nothing to do with economic reasons or status in society nor the accumulation of accolades. Rather, it was driven by her passion for knowledge and the passing on of that value to her children.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the role of transformational leadership in well performing schools in two rural secondary schools in the Eastern Cape. The poor performance of the Eastern Cape in National Senior Certificate examinations is well documented in media press and in academic publications. Yet, there are schools that, although they share much of the context and culture of other schools within the Province, perform surprisingly well. Little is known about whether such successes could be attributed to transformational leadership. As such, this study investigated the practice of transformational leadership behaviours, challenges faced by transformational leaders, strategies they engaged in to overcome challenges and successes of such transformational leadership on increased learner achievement. Case study research design was used involving semi-structured interviews to collect data from a sample of two principals and three members of the Senior Management Team. The selection of the two secondary schools was based on their rural context, poor quintile category, evidence of improvement and continued high levels of learner achievement in the National Senior Certificate examinations in the past five years. The findings have shown that the principal of the first school, after engaging in transformative strategies aimed at improvement, managed to turn itself around. On the other hand, for the second principal, no findings showed that the school had, in the past experienced poor performance, despite being rural and servicing learners coming from poor socio-economic conditions. Rather, it has a history of being a well- performing school and it was shown that the principal has managed to sustain such successes in the period under study. For future research, quantitative studies and observations could provide results for generalization to the entire region. It is time for principals committed to turning around a low-performing school to give priority to teacher growth and professional development.

Key words: Transformational leadership, practice, school success

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ISSPP	International Successful School Principalship Project
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SMT	Senior Management Team
USA	United States of America

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction and background of the problem that embodies the focus of the study. Also, it describes the methodology within which the research problem is addressed throughout the development of the study in understanding the role played by the principals' practice of transformational leadership strategies in well-performing Eastern Cape rural secondary schools. It begins with the contextual background of the study, presents the statement problem of the study, provides the rationale for the study, then the main research question with its subsidiary questions, and concludes with a brief discussion of the methodology, theoretical framework, limitations of the study and finally the structure and content of the chapters of the whole project.

The role of the principal as a transformational leader is at the centre of turning around a low-performing school and maintaining the continuous success of the school. Literature has shown studies that were undertaken by the International Successful Principalship Project on successful principals and the schools they lead. These studies have shown that the principals' skills and behaviours are key in school leadership irrespective of the context of the school (Moss, Day & Johansson, 2011; Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2011; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Day & Gurr, 2014; Gurr & Drysdale, 2015).

Other studies under the same project that were conducted in a different period to focus on exploring principal leadership of successful schools (Drysdale & Gurr, 2015) found that the principal is central to school successes and that successful schools have similarities in how they are led. In addition, to indicate similarities as shown in a report by Barley and Beesley (2017) on an exploratory study of the factors perceived by school personnel to contribute to success in high-performing, high-needs rural schools found that 'although schools differed in context, they all reported a supportive relationship with their community, higher teacher retention and high expectations for students'.

Another study from the International Successful School Principalship Project showed that successful school leaders align their leadership practices to their own unique contextual requirements (Klar & Brewer, 2013). For instance, Klar and Brewer (2013)

examined the ways in which three high-needs middle schools enacted the core leadership practices: setting direction, redesigning the curriculum. The two case studies examined have shown that principals who, among their leadership strategies developed the school vision, developed people, redesigned the school programme and monitored learner progress. Those strategies were shown to have impacted positively on school performance as seen in learner achievement (Klar & Brewer, 2013).

Authors Day, Qing and Sammons (2016) illustrated how successful leaders practiced transformational leadership to foster cultural improvements and learner outcomes. The school leaders' ability to improve and sustain effectiveness over time were not primarily the consequence of the principals' leadership style, but rather their understanding and diagnosis of their school's needs and their application of clearly articulated, organisationally shared educational values.

The report from these projects has contributed greatly to the current understanding of what successful leaders' do that makes their schools successful. Transformational leadership "is one style of leadership that has been advocated for success in the school improvement processes", (Allen, Grigsby and Peters, 2015).

Taking into account what it means to be a transformational leader in the twenty first century, (Sun, Chen & Zhang 2017) noted that transformational leadership theory has been widely studied across all disciplines from both a Western and Asian context. As a result, strategies linked to transformational leadership theory are shown to be greatly practiced by the school principal who intends to engage in school improvement to increase learner pass rate, (Allen et al., 2015). Given the number of these studies, transformational leadership was found to have positive effects on high learner performance (Quin, Deris, Bischoff & Johnson. 2015).

Burns' transformational leadership is shown in research as the most studied leadership theory. Allen et al. (2015) citing Burns (1978) work defined transformational leadership as "the leader's ability to move their followers to higher levels of morality and motivation". Motivation and morality seem to be the key values underpinning Burn's definition of transformational leadership as well as the importance of the relationship between leaders and their followers. This analysis

revealed that leaders who seek to be successful in their organisations need to work hand in hand with their subordinates.

Bass (1985), in reviewing the work of Burns on transformational leadership, noted four elements related to transformational leadership behaviour: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration. Burns' work (1978) and Bass' work (1985) on transformational leadership were reviewed for education settings by Leithwood (1994). His transformational leadership involved leadership strategies such as helping staff members develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture, fostering teacher development and helping staff solve problems. These approaches could be linked with the concept of transformational leadership as shown by Klar and Brewer (2013).

The present study provides a report on what was found about the role of transformational leadership in well-performing Eastern Cape rural secondary schools. To understand the principals' perceptions of their own transformational leadership behaviour and practice was key for this study. Also the degree to which transformational leadership was applied by one principal for one school to turn it around and achieve school improvement. In addition, what were the views of the members of the Senior Management Team in supporting or disagreeing with the role of transformational leadership in bringing about school improvement?

The second school was included to assess whether or not the principal's ability to maintain a successful school could be linked to transformational leadership practices. As well as to assess whether the principal's own effective leadership had anything to do with the transformational leadership style since the principal has shown resilience and maintained a historically well-performing school despite its rural nature and serving learners who come from disadvantaged homes. Again, the principal's views of the practice of transformational leadership would be corroborated by the members of the Senior Management Team.

The Eastern Cape is one of the nine provinces found in South Africa. It is one of the coastal provinces with some parts of it being largely rural, especially those areas that form part of the former homeland, Transkei, where the current study took place. Though, isiXhosa is the main language spoken in this region and an official language, English is also recognised as an official language. In secondary schools, English is

one of the subjects studied as a secondary language and is the medium of instruction for other subjects, except for isiXhosa.

The quality of education in the Eastern Cape has been widely studied from different perspectives. As a result, these publications have shown worrying concerns expressed by policymakers and researchers about the province's continued occupation of the bottom of the ranking scale for learner achievement in the National Senior Certificate examinations because of its poor performance. More concerning is that the poor learner performance is shown to be the greatest indicator of the inequality currently characterises the South African schooling system (Spaull, 2013).

In fact, this province has been shown to be struggling to maintain the high levels of school performance associated with the education reforms that are taking place in the other provinces of the country. It seems the intervention programmes initiated by the government aimed at improvement are taking a long time to impact on how these schools are performing. It can be said that in such situations, transformational leadership becomes important.

According to the document analysis available in the public domain, compared with other provinces, the Eastern Cape is faring poorly in the National Senior Certificate Examinations. The situation becomes worse when it comes to rural secondary schools in comparison with their urban and township counterparts (Spaull, 2013).

Given this negative state of affairs, in 2016, the Eastern Cape Department of Education in an effort to transform the overall education system of the province, adopted a three-year System Transformation Plan. The plan has focussed on quintile one to three secondary schools. Apart from intending to see improvement in the whole schooling system of the province, another central purpose of this plan was to present opportunities for all learners to achieve a good pass when they sat for the National Senior Certificate examinations irrespective of their social background (Motshekga, 2016).

Another primary objective of the plan was that it expected high levels of accountability and responsibility from the executive authority of the Eastern Cape Department of Education as well as from principals and heads of the School

Management Teams. Another goal of the plan was to increase the number of functioning schools within the province (Makupula, 2016). It appeared that these ambitious goals would require a new approach to school leadership and management.

Literature suggests that schools or education systems that were seen to be poorly performing and started to show signs of improvement have adopted the transformational leadership theory (Allen, Grigsby & Peters, 2015). Therefore, in order for the Eastern Cape Department of Education to be successful in its implementation of the System Transformation Plan, specifically in low-performing schools, principals of such schools are expected to demonstrate transformational leadership skills. A province which traditionally has poor performing secondary schools needs a change in its approach to systems and in the behaviour of the principals leading such schools. Literature on school effectiveness has shown that principals who have high expectations for all learners could be one strategy to bridge the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged learners. Also, this strategy may contribute to a desired continuous growth of the overall learner achievement (Wallace Foundation, 2013).

The key behaviours associated with transformational leadership linked to the principal's role to lead change include: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration (Bass, 1985; Balyer, 2012). It is fair to mention that a large amount of literature on transformational leadership has been written from the international standpoint, especially Western countries, though there is growing interest in Asian countries, especially China and Malaysia (Sun, Chen and Zhang, 2017).

The identification of this lack of literature on transformational leadership from a South African context is one aspect that has drawn the interest of the researcher. The second aspect was the missing literature on the best performing rural secondary schools, particularly articles relevant to the context of the Eastern Cape. It appeared that no-one cared about these successes. It is not clear whether the ability of these schools to achieve successes had to do with the principals' practice of transformational leadership.

Hence the purpose of this study is to understand, from the principals' own perspectives, corroborated with views from members of the Senior Management Team, the role played by their own practice of transformational leadership and their engagement in efforts that would bring about school improvements to increase learner pass rate or sustain a successful school had anything to do with transformational leadership strategies.

1.2 Problem Statement

Literature on transformational leadership from international perspectives has shown the positive effect that transformational leadership has on high-performing schools and learner achievement (Quin et al., 2015, Decman et al., 2014, Gurr et al., 2015). The Wallace Foundation (2013) has reported that “no failing school has managed to turn itself around without school leadership”.

Although research studies have shown positive sentiments linked to transformational leadership from international perspectives, the South African education system is different. The South African education system is facing difficulties in terms of education outcomes compared to other countries. Among the challenges that the country is facing are the inequalities and disparities in learner performance as shown in the National Assessments (Spaull, 2013). As a consequence of this reality, the government, in its education policies, expects school principals of underperforming schools to embark on improvement strategies. Though principals are required to be at the centre of transformation activities to improve learner achievement, they do so under a lot of pressure and deal with multiple transformational issues (Mestry, 2017).

Marishane (2016) suggested that school improvement is the core business of school leadership. Literature indicated (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2016) that principals of South African schools are required to facilitate leadership practices and theories suitable for transforming the context of their schools. The opportunity to achieve improvements therefore depends on the style of leadership that has been adopted by the school principal. Also, the context within which principals employ the core leadership practices associated with the transformational leadership style requires principals to align their practices with policy, theory and practice (Marishane, 2016).

In drawing from these studies, transformational leadership was shown to be a leadership style that is effective for school improvements that led to increased levels of school performance (Allen et al, 2015). Though, a large amount of the reviewed research on transformational leadership is written from an international perspective, there is a lack of literature dealing with the South African context, especially the Eastern Cape. The lack of literature on transformational leadership in the context of South Africa contributed to the interest of this study. Also, the current study aims to bring attention to a low-performing school in the Eastern Cape within which the school principal in collaboration with other members of the senior management, community and teachers managed to work together as a team in order to implement turn-around strategies that resulted in school improvements as evident in increased learner achievement. Now, this school has been recognised as one of the best performing school in the region.

Also, the principal and the member of the senior management team of the second sampled school, described her school as a good school. Because historically, it has been among the best performing schools despite catering for learners coming from economically disadvantaged homes. Ever since she took over the reins from her predecessor, the principal and her senior management team have managed to sustain high levels of learner achievement.

The lack of understanding of whether the two rural secondary schools' achievement of improvement and the sustaining of a high learner pass rate could be attributed to the principals' practice of transformational leadership strategies (idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration) (Bass, 1985) as they work with others was the focus for this study. Hopefully, the current study will contribute to the literature on transformational leadership, especially in the South African context.

1.3 Rationale for the study

The interest in the study to understand the role of transformational leadership in well-performing schools in the Eastern Cape was driven by the desire of the researcher to show the positive side of the education system of this province from the experience of principals and the members of the Senior Management Teams who are at the helm of the day-to-day leadership activities of these schools.

In addition, the worrying concerns about the poor state of the Eastern Cape schooling system as raised by policymakers and researchers needed to receive attention. A large amount of research done in the Eastern Cape has focused on its underperformance and reasons that contribute to this effect. Upon inspection of the archived data on previous annual report on National Senior Certificate student performance and schools, this information showed that within this province, there are schools, that despite being rural, categorised in quintile one, two and three and facing the same challenging cultural, and rural context, perform surprisingly well in the National Senior Certificate Examinations. Yet, they receive less or no attention at all. In fact, there is lack of literature on how these rural secondary schools have achieved and sustained such successes and whether these successes were as a result of the principals' engagement of transformational leadership strategies.

Given this background, it was important to understand from the participants' perspective, whether the principals' practice of strategies associated with transformational leadership were effective in turning a low-performing school around. On the other hand, it was important to establish whether the principal of a school perceived to be a good school, practiced transformational leadership strategies to sustain continuous high levels of learner achievement. Also, the purpose of the study was to uncover the best practices adopted by these principals and their management teams associated with transformational leadership theory.

1.4 Purpose statement

The purpose of this study was to understand lived experiences, perceptions and behaviours of two rural secondary schools principals of well-performing schools in the Eastern Cape and to understand their self-perceptions of their own transformational behaviour corroborated by the views of members of the Senior Management Team. In addition, it was important to understand how the one principal turned his school around from being a low-performing school to one of the best performing schools in the region and how the second principal has managed to sustain high levels of learner performance in the National Senior Certificate in the past five years in his school despite the school catering for learners coming from areas badly affected by poverty, unemployment and crime.

1.5 Aims of the study

The main aim of the study was to understand the role, if any, of transformational leadership on well-performing rural secondary schools in the Eastern Cape. Also, the study investigated whether the two school principals engaged the four elements of transformational leadership, *idealised influence, inspiration and motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration* (Bass, 1985) to achieve school improvement or sustain a good school in the context of the Eastern Cape.

1.6 Research Questions

The research questions that directed the study consisted of the main research question which was divided into subsidiary questions which had operationalised the inquiry.

1.6.1 Main research question

What role does transformational leadership play in sustaining functioning rural secondary schools in the Eastern Cape?

In order to address the research question, the following sub-questions guided the study.

1.6.2 Sub-questions

1. What strategies do principals employ to effect transformational leadership in the sustainability of functioning schools in the context of the Eastern Cape?
2. What challenges do they experience in effecting transformational practices?
3. What strategies are in place to overcome these challenges?
4. How do the outcomes of these strategies help in the understanding of the practices of the school principal as a transformational leader?

1.6.3 Significance of the study

The main objective of this study is to draw from the existing literature in the field of education leadership practices that contribute to school improvements and school success in a rural context. However, the review of the literature on transformational leadership showed a lack of qualitative information nationally from South Africa. It appeared that effective leadership studies relied largely on international standpoints, especially those influenced by Western perspectives.

In my view, literature on transformational leadership for different school contexts could be significant for the current education reforms taking place worldwide. There is therefore a need for educational research that investigates transformational leadership practices, school improvement and learner outcomes in the contexts of rural schools, and this study set out to do that. This study sought to make a contribution to the knowledge and literature on transformational leadership in South Africa and on the literature on functioning schools in the rural parts of the Eastern Cape where learner performance is traditionally poor.

1.7 Research Methodology

Creswell (2014) describes methodology as “procedures to be taken in the collection of data and its analysis and the reasons behind the choice”. These procedures include selecting the research method (qualitative), research design (case study), indicating the population of the study, sampling procedures, sample size, research instruments, validating the research instruments in order to get credibility and trustworthiness of the data, methods of data analysis, ethical considerations and limitations of the study (Creswell, 2014).

1.8 Clarification of concepts

To clarify the concepts, this study begins by providing definitions of leadership, followed by transforming as a way of tackling transformational leadership and well-performing schools, the key variables of the title.

1.8.1 Concept clarification – Leadership

Bellibas, Esen, Gumus and Gumus (2016) have defined leadership as “a process of social influence, which maximises the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a

goal.” For the purposes of this study, leadership refers to the abilities of the two principals, the first one of a poor-performing schools who, in his capacity as a school leaders collaborated with members of the senior management team, teachers and community members and managed to implement effective strategies that moved the school from being a poor performing to a well-performing school. While the second school principals in interaction with members of the senior management team and teachers sustained a historical high performing school found in a high-need social context.

1.8.2 Concept clarification - Transformation

School principals who are faced with the challenge of poor learner performance are expected by local authorities and the government to develop turnaround strategies aimed at transformation (Bush & Glover, 2916). Literature has shown that the rural contexts of schools poses additional challenges for school principals (du Plessis, 2017).

In general terms, transformation refers to an individual’s ability to bring change. However, the two principals’ successfully implementation of transformation strategies whose intentions was to bring change that resulted in school improvements and school effectiveness is an interest for this study. Therefore, it is important for principals to understand that transformation is a process to bring about innovation that would ensure the achievement of school improvement and sustainable school effectiveness.

1.8.3 Concept clarification - Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership has been employed as a theoretical framework for this study. Transformational leadership was first conceptualised by Burns (1978). In his conceptualisation, it is clear that transformational leadership is referred to as a process whereby leaders engaged with their followers in a manner that increases the level of motivation and moral behaviour in order to achieve organisational goals.

Literature has shown that transformational leadership has been used in many studies as a theoretical framework as is the case in this current study. In conceptualising transformational leadership as a theory for change, leaders apply it by integrating its four elements: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration advanced by Bass and Riggio (2006)

Applied by principals as turnaround strategies, or for sustaining success in the rural context, transformational leadership was found to have a potential impact on their ability to introduce change mechanisms as shown by the level of influence exerted on the members of the community as well as collaboration approach to change.

1.8.4 Clarification of concept – Well-performing schools

In conceptualising the term ‘well-performing schools’, this study preferred to use a conceptualisation associated with high performing schools which is generally synonymous with well-performing and widely studied in education research.

In most studies, high performing schools or well-performing schools are conceptualised by incorporating their characteristics. To be a high-performing schools, ‘schools should have a clear sense of direction as evident in the school vision; set high standards and expectations for all learners; effective school leadership; high levels of collaboration and communication, to mention but a few (Bylsman & Shannon, 2007).

To re-iterate the characteristics of high-performing school as advocated by Bylsman et al (2007), well-performing schools can be summarised as the principals’ abilities to develop a shared vision where all stakeholders understand its purpose and their roles in achieving it and where the principals in collaboration with teachers work together to ensure school improvement focusing on teaching and learning

1.9 Structure of the study

This study consists of five chapters and concludes with a list of references used in the study and supporting documents as appendices.

Chapter	Content
1	Introduction: This chapter deals with the introduction and background of the study. It also provides the theoretical framework of the study
2	Literature review: This chapter deals with a review of existing literature on the subject matter of the study.
3	Methodology and research design: This chapter describes the processes involved in addressing the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. It also shows the major components of research design such as epistemology, ontology, sampling, data collection, data

	analysis, credibility and trustworthiness of the data, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.
4	Presentation and data analysis: This chapter deals with the presentation and analysis of the data. It reflects whether the collected data was able to assist the researcher in addressing the research question.
5	Discussions, conclusion and recommendations: This is the concluding chapter comprising of discussions, the practical implications, contributions of the study, suggestions for future studies and concluding remarks.
References	List of sources used in the body of the text
Annexures	Ethical clearance certificate, letters of permission to and from the Eastern Cape Department of Education and District Director, letters of informed consent from the participants.

1.10 Summary of the chapter

The introduction provided the background and the general overview of the topic on the investigation of the role of transformational leadership in well-performing rural schools in the Eastern Cape. Also, it was in this chapter that the two key variables of the topic were clarified and conceptualised. The section of this chapter that provided the clarification of these key variables began by defining leadership which is a process of individual's influence on others, followed by transforming referring to change required to move a poor performing school to a well-performing school. These concepts were clarified as a way of tackling transformational leadership which is commonly used in research as a theoretical framework to understand leaders' practice of this theory for success. Somewhere in this chapter, there was a discussion of the context of the Eastern Cape and the well –performing schools.

The other parts of this chapter presented a brief discussion of the problem statement, rationale of the study, aims of the study and the research questions. The research methodology included brief discussions of the research paradigm and approach, research design, sampling, data collection and analysis methods, credibility and trustworthiness issues, significance of the study, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study.

The chapter also laid out the theoretical framework of Bass' Transformational Leadership Theory (1985) which incorporates the four dimension: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual; consideration. These dimensions provided the lens through which the practice of transformational leadership was studied. Also, this chapter presented a brief outline of the methodology that guided the study including the research approach, research design, research paradigm, data generation methods, sample, sampling techniques, data analysis and reporting.

In its conclusion, it laid an outline of the chapters of the dissertation. Next is the discussion of the literature review.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews existing literature in education management and leadership research. It considers what is already known as evident in peer-reviewed scholarly work in the field of education management, administration and leadership. Literature review is defined in research as the researchers' effort to evaluate, analyse and synthesise scholarly articles found in peer-reviewed journal books, conference papers and other sources relevant to the research topic under investigation (Fink, 2014). The purpose of the review of the previous research is to identify gaps that exist in that literature and, hopefully, extract ideas that will add to the current study.

Then the study organises the review relevant to the best practices of transformational leadership by principals who moved poor performing schools found in rural contexts to become well-performing schools. The chapter concludes with the discussion of transformational leadership as the theoretical framework that serves this study. Finally, a summary of the chapter is provided.

Bellibas, Esen, Gumus and Gumus (2016), have defined leadership as “a process of social influence, which maximises the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal.” For the purposes of this study, leadership refers to the abilities of the two principals, one of a poor-performing schools who, in his capacity as a school leader in collaboration with members of the senior management team, teachers and community members managed to implement effective strategies that resulted in school improvements and increased learner achievement. While the other school principals in interaction with members of the senior management team and teachers sustained a historical high performing school.

School principals who are faced with challenges of poor learner performance are expected by local authorities and the government to develop turnaround strategies aimed at transformation. How these principals successfully implemented these transformation strategies is an interest for this study.

2.2 Transformational leadership

Allen, Grigsby and Peters (2015) described transformational leadership within its conceptualisation by Burns (1978). According to Burns, transformational leadership is the ability of a leader to move followers to high levels of motivation and morality to achieve organisational goals. In other studies, to understand the concept of transformational leadership, it was contrasted with transactional leadership (Bass 1985).

In showing the distinction between the two leadership behaviours in terms of their effect to subordinates, Sadeghi and Pihie (2012) say that transactional leadership is about the relationship between leaders and their followers while transformational leadership is about the leaders encouraging their followers to do more than expected and proactively help subordinates to increase their performance. Other studies conclude that transactional and transformational leadership coexist and are interdependent of each other (Bass, Avolio, Jung & Berson, 2003).

Bass (1985), in contributing to the development of transformational leadership theory, emphasises the importance of transformational leadership practices in influencing follower's behaviour to increase their competence in order to attain organisational goals. As a result, Bass' transformational leadership as shown in literature has four elements used by leaders in their operations to achieve organisational successes. These are: *idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration*.

Leithwood (2000), in further developing transformational leadership for education settings, describes it as having four dimensions. These are: building vision and goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualised support, symbolising professional practices. In this definition, transformational leadership has been conceptualised in terms of leadership behaviours. Likewise, Abu-Tineh, Khasawneh and Al-Omari (2008), in citing Kouzes and Posner's model in transformational leadership suggest that "leadership is not a position, but a collection of practices and behaviours. These behaviours and practices include: challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modelling the way, and encouraging the heart."

From the above definitions, transformational leadership could be analysed as putting emphasis on the ability of leaders to motivate their followers in order to achieve organisational goals. Motivation of followers is necessary in order to ensure that they perform beyond expectation (Bass, 1999). Also, transformational leadership is about the interdependence of leaders and their followers and how the leaders' practices influence the behaviour of their followers.

In essence, it appears that for leadership to occur there must be a leader and followers. As indicated in the literature, Amanchukwu, Stanley and Ololube's (2015) leadership theories are concerned about the leaders' characteristics (trait theories), their behaviours when leading (behavioural theories), circumstances under which they lead (situational theories) and the relationship between leaders and their followers (relational theories).

2.2.2 Historical development of transformational leadership

The beginning of the twenty first century saw the emergence of transformational leadership theory in leadership studies which presented a swing away from other theories such as instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2011). As mentioned earlier on, the first author of transformational leadership, Burns (1978), defined transformational leadership as "a process in which leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation". Burn's transformational leadership has shown the importance of the relationship between leaders and their followers to achieve high morality behaviour and increased commitment. Also, it emphasises motivation and morality as the set of values guiding the behaviour of leaders.

Although literature shows that Burns (1978) was the first person to write about transformational leadership from a political perspective, his work was developed later by Bass (1985) for industrial psychology. Balyer (2012) in his study of the transformational leadership behaviours of school principals, cites Bass' work (1985) identifying four characteristics of transformational leadership. These are conceptualised as: Firstly, *idealised influence* defined as the leader's behaviour and the follower's attribution to the leader. Leaders who exhibit idealised influence are trusted, respected and admired by their followers. Secondly, *inspirational motivation* referring to the ways in which transformational leaders motivate and inspire their followers to perform beyond expectations. Thirdly, *intellectual stimulation* represents

the leaders' efforts to stimulate followers to be innovative and creative problem solvers. Intellectual stimulation expects leaders to create an atmosphere that encourages participation in problem-solving. Fourthly, *individual consideration* where leaders take into consideration the professional needs of their staff and act as mentors or coaches in an attempt to unleash their potential (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Fenn & Mixon, 2011; Balyer, 2012).

Bass' transformational leadership was coupled with his development of a Multifactor Questionnaire instrument used to measure the leadership practices associated with transformational leadership, especially its four aspects.

2.3 The differences between transformational leadership and transactional leadership

In conceptualising transformational leadership, Bass and Avolio (1990) compared transformational leadership with transactional leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1990). In contrasting these important theories in leadership, he noted that Burns (1978) on transformational leadership put importance on basic values such as trust, respect and admiration of followers. While transactional leadership was defined as the leaders' ability to influence their followers to perform tasks and responsibilities in exchange for reward (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

It is clear from these factors that transformational leadership and transactional leadership, as leadership theories, are different but complement each other. Although, authors (Bass, Avolio, Jung & Berson, 2003) reported a different perspective on the two theories, 'that in fact, transformational leadership was an extension of transactional leadership and, according to them, these two theories co-exist. For instance, it seemed from the literature that distinguishes transactional leadership and transformational leadership, that leaders who practice transactional leadership use rewards to motivate their subordinates to enhance their performance

While school principals who practice transformational leadership do so by modelling the behaviour they expect from their followers in order to inspire them to commit to the achievement of the broad vision.

2.4 Criticism levelled against transformational leadership theory

Those who have different opinions about the effectiveness of transformational leadership have noted that transformational leadership behaviour was not monitored

and lacked checks and balances (Bass, 1997; Hay, 2006). In their criticism, they said that the transformational leadership influence might lead to authoritarianism and the control of followers. Despite these criticisms, other reviews of transformational leadership in the field of education identified its effectiveness when it came to school transformation programmes (Bunaiyan & McWilliams, 2018).

2.5 Transformational leadership in the education context

Among the various reasons principals engage in transformational leadership behaviours as shown in the literature (Decman, McCarley & Peters, 2016) is that “transformational leadership is more facilitative of educational change and contributes to organisational improvement, effectiveness and school culture”. Another argument for transformational leadership is that principals who employ transformational leadership behaviours achieve increased performance for their schools beyond what was expected. Given these observations, transformational leadership in the literature is shown to be the most advocated leadership style for school improvement and for sustaining high learner performance (Allen, Grigsby & Peters, 2015).

Allen et al. (2015) state that attributes of transformational leadership that are likely to be important in education studies include the leaders’ ability to exert influence on their followers in order for them to commit to attempts aimed at school improvement. Earlier on it was mentioned that Bass (1985) in his conceptualisation of transformational leadership from an industrial psychology perspective provided aspects that may hold improvement practices for transformational leaders.

Transformational school leaders influence, inspire, stimulate and develop staff to achieve the shared goals (Bass, 1985). Moolenaar, Daly and Slegers, (2010) added that transformational leadership behaviours include the leaders’ ability to increase organisational members’ commitment, capacity and engagement in meeting the goals.

Literature on transformational leadership has shown that transformational leadership accomplishes what has been discussed above by engaging the four behavioural components of transformational leadership: *idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration* (Arokiasamy, Kanesan, Ahmad and Ismail; 2016).

2.6 School principals as transformational leaders

Enormous pressure is exerted on principals as part of the educational landscape (Quin et al., 2015), especially principals of poor performing schools. They are expected to bring about change that would lead to increased learner pass rate. Research has indicated that principals, as transformational leaders, are responsible for creating a culture that would bring about the required change for school improvements (Decman et al., 2016).

Given this key responsibility, the context within which these principals operate becomes important as they always lead in diverse situations. This is especially the case in South Africa where the education system is seen as having performing schools on one hand and underperforming schools on the other (Chikoko, Naicker & Mthiyane, 2015).

In summary, literature for education studies has shown that school principals whose intentions are to turn things around for improvement that would result in increased learner achievement can integrate the elements of transformational leadership as proposed by Bass (1985, 1998).

2.7 Well-performing schools

2.7.1 What are well-performing schools?

As indicated earlier in the introduction chapter, the term 'well-performing schools' was used interchangeably used in the literature to describe 'high performing schools' as well as effective schools (Day et al., 2016). Also, other research studies show that high performing schools were conceptualised in terms of their characteristics of effectiveness resulting from the comparison of effective schools and ineffective schools (Blysam et al, 2007).

According to Botha (2010) "in the past two to three decades of research, thirty years, there has been a major shift towards allowing educational institutions greater self-management and self-governance in a drive to improve school effectiveness". In the opinion of Botha the term 'school effectiveness' has different meanings that have led to the worldwide debate around the concept.

Hence, other authors have identified functioning schools by their success factors such as the principals' ability to promote both capacity building, systems of evaluation of performance and accountability (Mulford & Silins, 2011). These characteristics of successful schools cited above can be linked to the positive effects of transformational practices (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000).

Transformational leadership has not only been associated with the leader and follower performance, but also with the collective and organisational levels (Colbert, Courtright, Oh, & Wang, 2011). It is further argued that "despite the abundance of primary studies linking transformational leadership and performance, the current transformational leadership literature does not provide a clear understanding of the generalisability of the 'beyond expectation' role of transformational leadership in performance.

Gurr (2014) on the other hand has provided a review of the practices of principals of successful schools from a project commissioned by the International Successful School Principalship Project. He reported that "while principals are not easily labelled as practising a particular leadership style, it was clear that across countries and contexts, there was support for the four core practices of setting direction, developing people, leading change and improving teaching and learning". Klar and Brewer (2013) affirmed the effectiveness of these practices in the context of high-needs schools.

In the above discussion successful schools, or in the case of this study, well-performing schools are linked with the leadership practices of principals as transformational leaders. This observation is in support of the argument of Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) who reported that principals are central in achieving school successes although principals who exhibit transformational leadership behaviours do not achieve school successes alone. Instead, they adopt a collective leadership approach to their behaviour where leadership roles are not assumed by one person, rather there is shared leadership including teachers, parents, learners, and support (Hallinger and Heck, 2010; Fenn and Mixon, 2011).

As indicated earlier, although the term 'functioning schools' overlaps with effective schools and successful schools, it is important to note that in terms of characteristics they are not different. Among other characteristics of effective schools are school leadership and high levels of learner outcomes identified in the study commissioned

by the International Successful School Principalship Project (Gurr, 2014). Following is the discussion of the characteristics of well-performing schools.

2.7.2 Characteristics of well-performing schools

2.7.2.1 A clear school vision

According to the Wallace Foundation (2013), school principals as leaders have five key responsibilities: shaping a vision for academic success based on school standards, creating a climate conducive to education, cultivating leadership in others, improving instruction and managing people, data and processes. Other authors who have identified a school vision as among the features of an effective school cited its effectiveness and being central in setting the direction for the school in order to achieve success (Day, Qing & Sammons, 2016). Also, it has been shown in literature that role of the school principal is critical in the efforts to initiate the development of the school vision and making it clear to other key role players in order to buy-them in for their commitment to it.

A study to determine a degree to which a school-based vision was used to impact the student learning experience with high school principals in Alberta, Canada (Mombourquette, 2017) found that school vision was an important requirement for effective school leadership. Also, the findings showed that schools that were identified as high performing in this study were led by principals who made the vision and mission clear. Hence, it can be said that the school vision is among the characteristics of functioning school.

2.7.2.2 High expectations for success

In functioning, effective or successful schools, there is a culture of setting high standards for learner performance by the principal for both teachers and learners. Also, within functional schools, there is a shared belief among principals and teachers that all learners are capable of learning and achieving beyond expectations (Day, Qing and Sammons, 2016). At the same time, it is the role of the school principals and their goal as transformational leaders to ensure that there is learning and achievement beyond expectations (Bass, 1985, 1994, 1998 and Bass & Riggio, 2006). Since high learner achievement in assessment is among the characteristics of effective schools,

setting standards for learner performance is seen to be one of the key responsibilities of school principals (Wallace Foundation, 2013).

2.7.2.3 A safe and orderly environment

Education research has argued that for learning to take place effectively, schools should provide safe conditions both within the school environment and in the classroom (Ojukwu, 2017). Also, his findings revealed that an unsafe school environment has negative effects on the academic achievement of secondary school learners. Thus, beyond physical facilities, learners should feel protected and supported in their academic endeavours. Creating a safe and caring environment for learning as indicated earlier on is one of the key responsibilities of the principal as a transformational leader (Masitsa, 2011). Moreover, safety of learners in schools is a constitutional right.

2.7.2.4 Monitoring of learner progress

Monitoring learner progress was shown in research studies to be among the important key responsibilities that showed interdependence between principals as transformational leaders and their teachers (Bowers, Marks & Printy, 2009). One of the practices of effective leaders of well-performing schools is their ability to monitor learner progress through assessment (Gurr, 2014). Assessment is the measure of performance by learners and is related to curriculum activities taking place in the classroom. Often in education, assessments are done in the form of tests or examinations. Hence, in some studies the outcomes of these assessments are used to measure school effectiveness.

In summary, similarly with effective and successful schools, well-performing schools are conceptualised according to certain characteristics as published in the literature. From the standpoint of reports released by the Wallace Foundation (2013), shaping a school vision, setting standards for high expectations, creating a safe environment and monitoring learner progress was shown to be a framework to understand well-performing schools. From the above discussion, it appears that the characteristics of well-functioning schools could be linked to the key roles of transformational leadership as revealed in the studies that developed transformational leadership for education studies (Leithwood, 1994).

2.8 Transformational leadership and well-performing schools

Research studies on transformational leadership have shown its significant effect on well-performing schools, especially those that had in the past faced challenges of poor learner performance in the National examination assessments. In fact, the transformational leadership of the principal was viewed to be central in schools that experience underperformance and seek to turn themselves around by fostering school improvements (Finnigan, 2012). In addition, research on effective schools has shown that the principals' leadership combined with the leadership style have a positive influence on learner achievement (Decman, McCarley & Peters, 2016).

Notably, transformational leadership has been advocated as the best leadership practice for schools that engage in school improvement and seek to sustain academic successes (Allen et al., 2015). From the point of view of Yang (2014), "one of the roles of transformational leadership is to bring school improvement". Hence, the current study investigates the strategies employed by transformational leadership to turn around an underperforming school for success as well as a principal who has managed to sustain high learner achievement despite the school serving learners coming from disadvantaged communities. According to Money (2017), the key to school improvement and development is the willingness and the ability of the principal to assume the role of an agent for a positive change. This is the case in most studies, though the principal's role is shown to be indirect and secondary to teaching and learning in its effect on learner achievement (Jacobson, 2011).

From the reviews, it appeared that principals of underperforming schools were confronted with many challenges such as poor learner performance. One of the primary responsibilities of principals who faced academic challenges was to adapt their leadership practices. Moreover, the accounts of how effective schools managed to turn themselves around were drawn from the principals' transformational leadership practices.

For instance, literature has shown that the key transformational leadership practices to institute school improvements included articulating an inspiring vision for setting a direction, modelling the way, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organisation and managing teaching and learning (Day, Qing & Sammons, 2016). Klar and Brewer (2013) reported that, "while principals are not easily labelled as practising

a particular leadership style, it was clear that across countries and contexts, there was support for the four core practices of setting direction, developing people, leading change and improving teaching and learning". These leadership practices appeared to be common in the field of effective leadership studies and seemed to have a positive impact on school improvements (Leithwood, Harris & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood, 2010; Quin, Deris, Bischoff & Johnson. 2015).

Despite these observations, Quin et al. (2015) have claimed that principals of high-performing schools engage more of the transformational leadership practices espoused in Kouzes Posner's transformational leadership theory (2007) than principals from low-performing schools. Therefore, from the above discussions, it seemed that principals who intend to engage turnaround strategies to improve learner performance need to adopt transformational leadership practices that could be linked to the specific context of their schools (Leithwood, 2010).

Transformational leadership and effective schools are concepts that form the topic for the current study. As mentioned earlier in the conceptualisation of transformational leadership, Bass (1985) has determined that transformational leadership has four components. These are: *idealised influence* idealised defined as the leaders' behaviours and the followers' attributions, *inspirational motivation* referred to as the ways by which transformational leaders motivate and inspire those around them, *intellectual stimulation* defined as the leaders' efforts to stimulate followers to be innovative and creative in dealing with problems confronting them and finding new ways of approaching them and finally *individualised consideration* which represents the leaders' continued efforts to pay attention to individual's needs and playing the role of a mentor or coach to support followers to reach their full potential (Balyer, 2012).

Balyer (2012) carried out a study in Turkey through the lens of the four characteristics of transformational leadership espoused by Bass (1985). The findings from this study revealed that school principals exhibited high levels of transformational leadership in terms of *idealised influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation* and *individual consideration* behaviours.

Decman, McCarley and Peters (2016) used a Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire to assess the principals' transformational leadership in terms of being a transformational leader and from the perspective of the teachers. The purpose of the study was to

examine the relationship between teacher perceptions of the degree to which a principal displays the factors of transformational leadership and the perceived climate. The results revealed that there was a correlation between transformational leadership and the supportive, engaged and frustrated elements of school climate.

Arokiasamy (2016) carried a related study whose aim was to determine the level of transformational leadership practices by school principals in the national secondary schools in the state of Pulau Pinang and Kedah Darul Aman, Malaysia. The three dimensions of transformational leadership: *vision identification, intellectual stimulation and high performance expectations* were used as the theoretical framework for the study. Also, the study looked at the level of the organisational health as well as the relationship with the practice of transformational leadership by the national secondary school principals from the perceptions of teachers.

The findings for this study showed that school culture functions as a moderator in the relationship between the transformational leadership of school principals and the organisational health of the secondary school teachers' in the state of Pulau Pinang and Kedah Darul Aman. The study went further and claimed that school culture as a moderator in the relationship between transformational leadership and organisational health is a new discovery in the field of leadership. In spite of the cited findings, this study noted that there were previous studies that have, in fact, mentioned it as having a direct influence on school improvement.

Another study was conducted in the district of Kinta Selata, Perak, Malaysia and showed that the practice of transformational leadership by school principals in the district of Kinta Selatan, Perak, Malaysia, was moderate and the job satisfaction of primary school teachers was below satisfactory with a significant relationship between the level of transformational leadership and job satisfaction (Arokiasamy, Kanesan, Ahmad & Ismail, 2016).

According to the evidence of studies that adopted transformational leadership theory to understand the leadership effectiveness of principals, they found that school leaders who model the behaviour required for followers to emulate are likely to inspire motivation and commitment to the achievement of the school goals (Arokiasamy, 2017; Arokiasamy et al., 2016). When transformational leadership was conceptualised

earlier in this chapter, it was defined as having an impact on the motivational aspect of followers (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985).

Researching the literature has shown limited literature available on transformational leadership within well-performing rural secondary schools in the context of South Africa. A search for this literature carried out for the current study found nothing that offered a broad perspective of findings on the role of transformational leadership within well-performing schools in the South African context, though there are indications that there is a growing interest in transformational leadership theory studies.

However, Bantwini and Moorosi (2016) conducted a related study to investigate how leadership style in the Eastern Cape school districts support school improvements. The results on school principals surveyed on district leadership and school improvement using the questionnaire, indicated that the majority of principals were positive (agree or strongly agree) that the school districts lead in ways that enhanced school improvement, though the study does not mention that this was due to transformational leadership.

Hence, from this review, it is important to note that the success of transformational leadership as a leadership style was widely researched similarly to effective leadership. In some cases, the transformational leadership behaviours of school leadership were studied with other variables such as organisational climate, student achievement and teacher motivation with the exception of the South African study which looked at district leadership in support of school improvements from the perspectives of school principals.

Also, the analysis revealed similarities and differences located within the frameworks used to understand these works. For instance, findings of these studies revealed that principals of successful schools work towards developing and articulating a school vision and mission, developing and managing people, redesigning the organisation, setting performance standards for themselves and their teachers, providing inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

Additionally, both effective leadership and transformational leadership behaviour of principals for successful schools is understood from the perceptions of other

stakeholders such as the teachers (Ariosakamy, 2014). Furthermore, these studies looked at how the role of the principal has contributed in these successes. Thus, the principals' behaviour was at the centre of these studies.

The second similarity was the use of context to understand principals' leadership for school success. For instance, Giles et al. (2011) undertook a study under the auspices of the International Successful School Principalship Project in challenging high-poverty schools. Decman et al. (2016) conducted their study in Texas and another study was from the Asian context in Malaysia.

However, there is a difference in the framework within which transformational leadership is studied. Drawing from the works of Leithwood (1994) and Bass (1985), other authors identified different frameworks, sometimes overlapping strategies that transformational leaders embark on and their effect on other variables. All the other studies put importance on the articulation of the school vision, school culture and the motivation of people for the achievement of the school goals (Finnigan, 2010; Giles et al. 2011; Decman et al. 2016, Arokiasamy et al. 2016; Bantwini & Moorosi, 2016).

Studies on transformational leadership highlighted *idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration* as behaviours linked to transformational leadership. In terms of achieving success, it has been seen that the core set of behaviours of transformational leadership overlap. (Balyer, 2012). Articulating the school vision requires idealised influence. Developing people to increase their capacity expects school principals to draw from intellectual stimulation and individual consideration. All these actions require leaders who can inspire and motivate their staff for the achievement of success.

Finally, although transformational leadership has been widely studied from international perspectives, especially the USA and Malaysia, the lack of studies from the South African perspective, especially of the Eastern Cape, was a concern that has led to the current study. This is the gap in literature that the current study intends to address. The findings of this study are important in understanding the transformational leadership of principals of rural functioning secondary schools in the Eastern Cape.

The following part of this chapter discusses transformational leadership, the theoretical framework through which the principals' practice of transformational

leadership is understood. Previous studies have shown that transformational leadership theory is widely used in leadership studies.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

2.9. 1 Transformational Leadership Theory

2.9.1.1 Introduction

This section of this chapter presents the theoretical framework, being the transformational leadership theory chosen for this study. The current study investigates the role of transformational leadership in functioning schools in the context of the Eastern Cape. Transformational leadership theory is the most used theoretical framework in research studies developed by Bass (1985) from earlier works of Burns (1978). Transformational leadership theory explains the behaviours of leaders by pinpointing the leaders' influence on followers by inspiring and motivating them to perform beyond expectations. In the discussion of transformational leadership theory, it is important to describe its four aspects in relation to this study. Allen et al. (2015) conducted a study in the United States of America to examine the relationship between transformational leadership, school climate and student achievement. The study used Bass' Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire to measure the degree to which a principal displays the factors of transformational leadership based on the teacher perceptions and was used by the principals surveyed to self-assess. Allen et al. (2015) measured the components of transformational leadership using the Multifactor Questionnaire from the perception of teachers.

The findings revealed a positive relationship between transformational leadership and school climate. Interestingly, the study found that no relationship existed between transformational leadership and student achievement.

The other study in Turkey, Balyer (2012) proposed to discover the level of transformational leadership behaviours that school principals demonstrate at schools during their administration practices on a daily basis. Findings showed that school principals demonstrate high levels of the characteristics of transformational leadership in terms of idealised influence, inspirational motivation, individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation behaviours.

Taking into consideration the review of these studies cited above, they presented clearly how the elements of transformational leadership were applied with some success in schools facing challenges and requiring transformation, and where principals were seeking to move their schools to higher levels. For any school improvements to take place, the principal’s transformational leadership behaviours seem to be important. However, the question arises as to the impact that these transformational leadership behaviours have on school improvements and the achievement of recognised successes.

Following is a table that represents the elements of transformational leadership as they relate to the topic and the nature of the overlapping with other leadership behaviours found in functioning schools.

Table 1 - Elements of transformational leadership, (Bass, 1985, Balyer, 2012)

Element	Leaders’ behaviour
Idealised influence	Considering the needs of others before their own
Inspirational motivation	Motivate and inspire those around
Intellectual stimulation	Efforts to stimulate followers to be innovative
Individual consideration	Act as mentor or coach to develop followers’ potential

From the above table, it is clear that school principals who are faced with challenges of poor learner performance could employ the four elements of transformational leadership in order to achieve the desired outcomes. This study’s intention therefore was to investigate how the principal of a previously underperforming school practiced the four aspects of transformational leadership: *idealised influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation* and *individual consideration* to turn the school around and achieved school improvement that was sustained over a longer period. Also, how the principal of another school has applied these elements to sustain high levels of learner performance over a long period of time. According to Bass and Riggio (2006), in order for transformational leaders to achieve success, “they behave in ways that employ the four core components of transformational leadership”.

Following is the discussion of the four elements of transformational leadership as developed by Bass (1985).

2.9.1.2 Idealised influence

Subsidiary question one deals with the strategies employed by transformational leaders in addressing challenges facing the school. Firstly, how was idealised influence applied to involve key stakeholders in problem-solving?

According to Decman et al. (2016), idealised attributes include instilling pride, going past self-interest to that of the group, gaining respect through actions, and exhibiting confidence and power. In addition, other idealised behaviours may include communicating important values and beliefs, and articulating a strong sense of purpose in the form a vision. Thus transformational leaders behave in a manner that motivates followers to achieve the organisational goals (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

2.9.1.3. Inspirational motivation

When conceptualising transformational leadership and citing the theoretical perspectives provided by Burns (1978), among the best practices of transformational leaders is their ability to motivate and inspire staff to perform beyond expectations. Hence, this study sought to understand how principals motivated their staff to commit to the improvement programmes set to increase learner achievement.

Leaders who practice this element of transformational leadership do so by inspiring followers with challenging tasks that would provide meaning and understanding. This transformational leadership behaviour would enable followers to be motivated and encouraged to perform at levels beyond expectations (Decman et al., 2014).

2.9.1.4 Intellectual stimulation

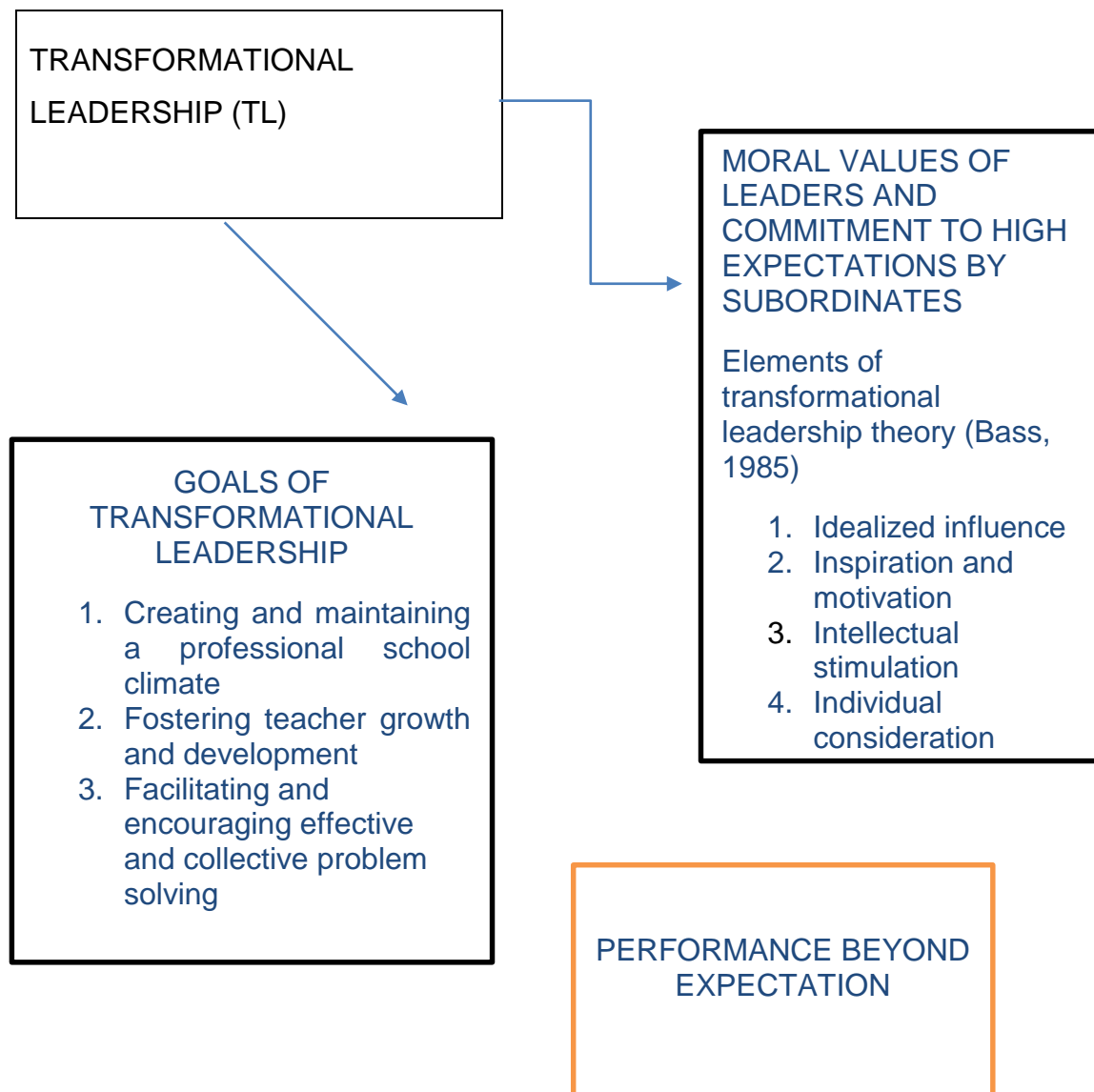
Transformational leaders stimulate their followers by encouraging them to be innovative and creative in problem-solving. Thus this study investigates the principals' practice of intellectual stimulation in relation to their ability to be aware of the problems facing the schools and their leadership. Also, the principals' application of intellectual stimulation on their own leadership practice to find possible solutions for the problems they are confronted with and how they encourage others to participate in problem-solving independently.

2.9.1.5 Individual consideration

Leaders who practice individual consideration in their approach to transformational leadership acknowledge the need for the professional growth and development of their followers and provide support in terms of mentoring and coaching (Bass 1985). This study sought to understand how principals identified the individual needs of their staff as a form of develop teachers for professional growth and development by providing mentoring and coaching programmes that are aimed at increasing their teaching capacities that would later impact positively on learner outcomes and ultimately lead to school success.

Figure 2.9.2

Theoretical Framework of Transformational Leadership



(Self-generated: Own source)

2.10 Summary

This chapter focused on the conceptualisation of transformational leadership and functioning schools to enable the researcher and other readers a glimpse of the conceptual clarification of the key variables linked to the topic. In conceptualising transformational leadership, this chapter drew from the works of Burns (1978), Bass (1985), Leithwood (1994) and Kouzes and Posner, (2007).

Some journal articles reviewed for the study have shown the positive impact that transformational leadership has on school improvement and leads to successful schools. The review also indicated the four aspects of transformational leadership: *idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration*.

Also, the review has shown how the aspects of transformational leadership overlap with the core leadership practices used in other studies commissioned by the International Successful School Principalship Project in various developed countries to show the practices of successful principals. The improvement achieved in functioning schools was shown to be greater where the principals practised the key leadership behaviours associated with success such as initiating and developing the school vision in order to set direction, developing and managing people, redesigning organisational structure and managing teaching and learning (Gurr, 2014).

Most importantly, these leadership practices appeared to be popular among leadership studies and related literature. As a result, the reviewed literature helped the researcher to address the research questions as outlined in the first chapter of this study. This chapter provided the review of journal articles related to the topic under investigation. In providing the conceptualisation of the key variables of the topic, specifically transformational leadership and functioning schools, it can be concluded that a large number of these studies examined transformational leadership within variables such as teacher commitment, student achievement and organisational performance mostly from international perspectives especially Western countries. However, there is growing interest in the studies of transformational leadership in East-Asian countries especially and some African countries such as Nigeria.

The discussion of the adoption of transformational leadership theory as a framework in which this study would investigate the role of transformational leadership in functioning schools began by giving the historical developments of the theory, analysing its elements according to Bass' (1985) model of transformational leadership in order to understand the practice and the relationship between these elements.

Furthermore, it is important to note that most previous research has focused on the effect of transformational leadership on variables such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment, teacher commitment and organisational success from a Western perspective. It appeared that there is little research available on transformational leadership in the South African context. Fewer studies have focused on the role of transformational leadership in functioning schools from a South African perspective, especially in the Eastern Cape context.

Hence, this study, through the lens of transformational leadership sought to describe and understand the interdependence of the elements of Bass' transformational leadership and how the principals of the two cases of functioning schools practice them to foster school improvements. Also, the four elements of transformational leadership provide a guide in the data collection process, and a framework for data analysis.

The following chapter looks at the methodology to understand the views and experiences of principals of their own transformational leadership practices to improve and sustain functioning schools in the Eastern Cape

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research process on the role of transformational leadership in well-performing rural secondary schools in the Eastern Cape. It also provides details on methodology, methods, research design, research paradigm, data collection techniques, the data analysis process as well as the sampling process chosen to select participants for the study. The chapter includes the measures taken to address issues of credibility and the trustworthiness of the instrumentation and findings, the limitations of the study and also the consideration of ethical issues to safeguard the interests and rights of the participants regarding their protection from harm and other rights enshrined in the Bill of Rights (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

3.2 Research paradigm and approach of the study

Scotland (2012) defines a research paradigm as “a way of finding how people construct knowledge, according to a set of beliefs and principles followed by an arrangement on what phenomenon are worth researching and possible methods of pursuing such studies.” More specifically, a research paradigm indicates the methodology and its approaches, and the theoretical perspectives that will be engaged to understand the phenomenon under study (Wahyumi, 2012). Hence, it can be said that the research paradigm is the standpoint from which participants perceive, describe and make sense of an experience (Cronje, 2014). In this situation, the researcher has to take a position regarding their perceptions and experiences of the practice of transformational leadership. Thus, the interpretive paradigm was chosen for this qualitative study. Qualitative research is concerned with understanding the world from a subjective experience of individuals (Creswell, 2014). Interpretivist is about understanding that human experience can only be understood from the viewpoint of others (Maree, 2012). The purpose of the study was to investigate the lived experiences, perceptions and behaviours of principals as transformational leaders in well-performing secondary schools. When data was analysed, the interpretive paradigm allowed the researcher to reconstruct the meaning put by participants in order to understand words or phrases they used to explain the phenomenon. The researcher is of the view that there is no solid or outright reality

around us. Instead, reality is consciously constructed by the participants as they interact with their environment on a daily basis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Therefore, the researcher's belief is that knowledge is socially constructed through other people. In this study, reality is how the principals experienced their roles as transformational leaders. Other participants (members of the Senior Management Team) perceived the principals' practice of transformational leadership and not what literature is telling us about it. Following is the discussion of the epistemological and ontological views of the researcher.

3.2.1 Epistemological views of the study

Wahyuni (2012) defines epistemology as "the beliefs on the way to generate, understand and use knowledge that are deemed to be acceptable and valid". Thus, epistemology as part of methodology in research is about the 'how' we come to understand the phenomenon under study (Scotland, 2012). The epistemology that guided this study was the interpretive approach that is, constructing knowledge from the experience of others. Interpretivist research focuses on human interaction to understand and interpret human behaviour and other subjective experiences (Creswell, 2014). Scotland (2012) has acknowledged that what knowledge is and the ways of discovering it are subjective. Hence, the interpretivist approach for this study allowed the researcher to be subjective in the understanding of the behaviours, views, opinions, experiences and perceptions of school principals and members of the Senior Management Team through interactions with the participants. In the process of probing the participants and also to address issues of bias, the researcher tried to be as objective and neutral as possible.

3.2.2 Ontology of the current study

As mentioned above, the epistemological view of this study was positioned on the understanding of the social construction of knowledge, how it was acquired and what constituted reality through the experiences and perspectives of others. More important is that the ontological position of this study shows the researcher's beliefs on the nature of 'reality' in terms of subjectivity rather than objectivity. Thus, the researcher believes that reality is socially constructed (Andrew, 2012) rather than objectively.

Gablin (2014), states that “within the social constructionist strand of postmodernism, the concept of socially constructed reality stresses the ongoing mass building of world views by individuals in dialectical interaction with the society at a time”. It is the researcher’s belief that the principals and their members of the Senior Management Team construct their knowledge through their experiences of the leadership role, not only for themselves, but for the influence their practices have on learner performance.

Thus, it was the researcher’s belief that the two principals and their members of the Senior Management Team understood their responsibilities during their leadership practices when carrying out day-to-day activities. Hence, they held the data required to address the research questions.

3.3 Research Approach

This study employed the qualitative research approach. The previous sections of this chapter describe the ontological and epistemological positions of the researcher indicating the qualitative approach of the study. Creswell (2014) states that, rather than as in the cases of quantitative studies which use experiments in studying phenomena, qualitative research methods are used in research to enable researchers to provide an in-depth rich data derived from people in their natural setting using the one-on-one interviews technique.

In addition, qualitative research methods give participants, especially those perceived as marginalised, a voice and show how they put meaning to their own worlds (Maree, 2015). In addition, the meaning and sense of these phenomena being studied is understood through the experience, beliefs, behaviours and opinion of others (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Hence, the qualitative research method for this study incorporated the case study research design which provided for the use of semi-structured interviews in the collection of data and other ranges of methods in data analysis and reporting linked to it.

3.4 Research Methodology

3.4.1 Research design

Creswell (2013) defines a research design as the structure of any scientific work. In other words, it is a plan that supports the structure of the study, gives direction and systematises the research. It shows how the major components such as epistemology and ontological positions of the researcher are constructed, sampling procedures of participants and settings, data collection and data analysis and how they are integrated to address the research questions (Creswell, 2014). Hence, this study has multiple case studies drawing from the strengths of the case study research design with the intention of using its benefits of using face-to-face interviews to generate data in order to understand how people interpret, construct and make meaning of the experiences of the world around them

3.4.1.2 Case study research design

While Yin (2014) defined a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. This definition has been used by Maree (2011) who states that “case studies are aimed at gaining greater insight and understanding of the dynamics of a specific situation”. Also, Maree (2011) provides an interpretivist perspective of case studies, in that “case studies strive towards a comprehensive understanding of how participants relate and interact with one another in a specific situation and how they make meaning of a phenomenon under study”.

One of the strengths of case study research design is its use of multiple methods of collecting and analysing data in understanding the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2014; Maree, 2015). Also, the multiple perspectives can assist in understanding the different context of the behaviour of the participants during data analysis. In addition, case studies are studied in their real-life context to understand how the case influences and is influenced by its context (Maree, 2011).

Thus, a case study can be defined as a research method that facilitates the investigation of a phenomenon in natural settings and within its real-life context using multiple methods of data collection and from an interpretivist perspective.

These two case studies are intended to draw from the strengths of the case study research design in order to allow participants interpret and construct their experiences.

Based on the intention of the study, semi-structured interviews were used to assess the experiences, perceptions and behaviour of the two school principals and their members of the Senior Management Team of two rural secondary schools about transformational leadership practices. Furthermore, to analyse the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews, coding and themes were used in order to identify patterns.

3.5 Research methods

The concept 'research methods' refers to the process employed by the researcher to conduct research (Creswell, 2014). The process includes, procedures for collecting data, data collection techniques, sampling, sampling criteria, the data analysis process, as well as data analysis presentation. Following is the discussion of the procedures that form part of the research methods.

3.5.1 Sampling

Gentles, Charles, Ploeg and McKibbin (2015) define sampling as “the act, process, or technique of selecting a representative part of the population for the purpose of determining parameters on the characteristics of the whole population.” In this case, the sampling process helped the researcher in selecting central participants and in identifying the additional participants who were helpful in providing the data relevant to the research question. The purpose of the inclusion of the other participants was for them to confirm or disagree with the views of the main participants on the phenomenon (Yin, 2014).

3.5.2 Sampling strategies

It is worth mentioning that literature on research methods shows that there are two main sampling methods used in research (Creswell, 2014), namely probability and non-probability sampling. A probability sample is commonly used in quantitative

studies and the sample for representation of the population is drawn randomly to ensure that each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected as a respondent. On the other hand, non-probability sampling is often used in qualitative studies because it allows the selection of a particular group of people to represent the population (Cohen et al, 2011). Thus, non-probability was chosen as the method of sampling for this study. Within it the researcher identified two sampling strategies and combined them. These were purposive and snowballing as sampling strategies. What follows is a discussion of purposive and snowball sampling strategies.

3.5.3 Purposive sampling

Yin (2014) defines purposive sampling as the selection of participants or source of data to be used based on their anticipated richness and relevance of information on the research question. Given that the purpose of this study was to understand the role of transformational leadership in well-performing secondary schools in the Eastern Cape, the researcher chose the purposive sampling to select a certain group of participants from within the population of school principals of rural secondary schools in the amaThole East region, Eastern Cape who have managed to turn around their schools and improve learner performance or sustain high levels of learner performance. Their inclusion was based on the fact that they were the school leaders who may have contributed to the school improvement strategies carried out when the schools experienced low learner performance. In the case of the second school, the principal may have played a big role in sustaining high levels of learner performance despite the poor socio-economic background of the learners.

3.5.4 Snowball sampling

Cohen et al. (2011) state that “in snowball sampling, researchers identify a small number of individuals who have the characteristics in which they are interested”. Snowball sampling was used to select the additional participants: members of the Senior Management Team. In this study the researcher asked the principals to make recommendations of the members of the Senior Management Teams who would be willing to participate in the study. The purpose of their inclusion was to corroborate or disagree with the views of the main participants on transformational leadership and its impact on improvement and school successes.

3.5.5 Site/setting

The study was conducted in two rural secondary schools in the AmaThole East region, Eastern Cape. The criteria for selecting these schools, apart from the researcher's interest was an analysis of the Annual School Performance Report in National Senior Certificate Examination on Eastern Cape secondary schools available to the public. The analysis revealed that the first school showed evidence of improvement and had moved from being among the schools described as poor performing and was now among the best performing schools in this region. The second school showed resilience and continued to perform well despite serving learners, the majority of whom come from homes greatly affected by poor socio-economic conditions like poverty, unemployment and crime.

3.5.6 Sample size

Studies on research methods and methodology show that qualitative studies prefer to use small though not limiting samples in gathering data for semi-structured interviews, unlike in quantitative studies where large samples are used for generalization of results (Guetterman, 2015). The target sample for this study was small, with two case studies and six participants, though in the end there were five participants. The sixth participant from the second case chose not to participate. The conditions of voluntary participation in research involving human beings allows for the possibility of the withdrawal of participants in the course of the study. Thus, the conditions of participation as part of the ethical requirements were explained at the introduction of the study and during interviews.

The sample also addressed issues of gender representation. The small sample was made up of three males and two females. In the first case, there were two males, one being the principal, and one female. In the second case, the principal was a female and one male. Letters of consent from these participants are attached in the appendix of this study.

In summary, the current study selected non-probability sampling and within it combined purposive and snowballing sampling strategies (Cohen et al., 2011). The two sampling procedures were used to select participants from two rural secondary

schools that have shown evidence of improvement in the past five years and maintained good results in the National Senior Certificate for a long period.

The criteria for the selection of the principals of the two schools were based on their leadership role within the school. Also, the inclusion of the members of the Senior Management Team was because their role in the leadership structure within the schools and the fact that their data could be used to corroborate or disagree with the views of the main participants.

The small sample was influenced by the nature of the study and ended up with five people who consented to participate.

3.6 Data Generation

As mentioned earlier in the discussion of the research design, one of the strengths of the drawing from case study research design is that “it uses multiple sources and techniques in the data gathering process’ (Maree, 2011). Primary data for this study was obtained in the form of semi-structured interviews in the form of face-to-face interviews with participants who shared their views, experiences, thoughts, perceptions and behaviours on the theoretical perspectives of the study with the researcher.

3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

Creswell (2012) defines an interview as “face-to-face conversation between a researcher and a participant involving a transfer of replies to the interviewer”. Semi-structured interviews were used in this research. Unlike structured interviews with a rigid set of questions, in using the semi-structured interviews, the researcher had a set of pre-determined questions with closed, open-ended and follow-up questions. The closed questions allowed participants to give direct answers to specific questions. Open-ended questions expected participants, when giving responses, to feel free to open up and share their own opinions and perspectives without being restricted by the structured questions as was the case with closed questions.

Also, the follow-up questions allowed the researcher to probe for more on the meaning, beliefs and opinions of the participants. As mentioned earlier, one of the

intentions of semi-structured interviews in qualitative studies is its ability to provide an in-depth and rich descriptive of the phenomenon under study from the participants' point of view and perspective. Thus, the researcher avoided using leading questions as this would have posed a challenge to the credibility of the data.

For this study, an interview protocol with separate questions for principals and members of the Senior Management Team was developed within the theoretical framework of transformational leadership that guided this study. The elements of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) that framed these questions were: *idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration*.

3.7 Data Analysis

Maree (2011) describes qualitative data analysis as an ongoing and interactive process. Ngulube (2015) concurs and suggests that “data collection and analysis are interactive and occur in overlapping cycles”. The data collected from the interviews was in the form of the recorded words of the participants, transcribed verbatim into text. The definition by Maree (2011) describing data analysis as a process implies that there is a need for transcribing raw data, organising, sorting, accounting and explaining it (Cohen et al., 2012). In carrying out the data analysis for the current study, the researcher was involved in a range of activities such as familiarisation by transferring recorded raw data from a smart phone and transcribing it by typing word for word and line by line (verbatim) what each participant said. This was done immediately after coming back from the sites. Later on, the collected data was sorted according to the participants, then themes or categories were identified (Ngulube, 2015). The final part of the data analysis in the form of a narrative analysis indicating findings is shown in chapter 4. The last chapter, chapter 5 interprets the findings.

All these processes were done in order to get an in depth understanding of the thoughts, views and experiences of the participants who were interviewed. Hopefully their data would assist in addressing the research question. Following is the discussion of the steps followed in the actual analysis of the transcripts. The transcripts are found as part of the appendices of this study.

3.7.1 Coding

Creswell (2012) defines coding as the procedure of fragmenting and classifying text to form an explanation and a comprehensive theme in the data. The purpose of coding is to organise and manage the data obtained from the interviews into chunks (Neal, Neal, Van Dyke & Kornbluh, 2015). In coding data for this study, the researcher started by identifying ideas, patterns and concepts that were related and assigned a code for each segment.

Thereafter, the researcher put meaning and context of the participants' responses into hard-copy data using hand, pen and highlighters. Some of the coded text was relevant to the research question and some was just interesting. At this stage of data analysis, the researcher tried to eliminate issues of researcher's bias and subjectivity by remembering the importance of remaining objective in the data analysis process. The coding process was following by the identification of theme.

3.7.2 Thematic analysis

Braune and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as the "process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data". From each interview transcript, the researcher identified phrases of the text and grouped them according to the aspects of the theoretical framework that guided this study. The theoretical framework of this thematic analysis was based on the elements of transformational leadership: *idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration* (Bass, 1985) discussed earlier at the end of chapter two. The thematic data was categorised into developing concepts, relationships, repetitions and overlaps. These were based on and formed by the versions of the participants in addressing the research question. They are as a result of the meanings and interpretation created by the researcher as an active research instrument in the interviews. They tell the reader everything the participants said during the interviews. The thematic process for this study was done manually by identifying ideas, concepts, views and practices that were expressed by the participants (Creswell, 2014).

Once again, at this stage of data analysis, the researcher kept in mind the issues of subjectivity and bias by being objective in the analysis.

3.8 Credibility of the data

3.8.1 Credibility

Creswell (2000) suggests that “there is a general consensus, however, that qualitative inquirers need to demonstrate that their studies are credible”. Also, credibility assessment is done to determine whether the data collection instruments and findings are valid and reliable (Anney, 2014). Given that in qualitative studies, researchers are active participants and primary instruments for collecting data, issues of bias are likely to crop up especially in the data analysis process (Creswell, 2000). Lincoln and Guba (2011) have identified many techniques used to assess the accuracy of the data collected or findings. Reviews by external people, member checking and triangulation are some of the techniques used to address issues of credibility and trustworthiness for this study (Anney, 2014).

3.8.2 Strategies used to verify credibility and trustworthiness of the data

3.8.2.1 Member-checking

In determining whether what was researched and how it was researched is true, member checking can be a useful strategy. Member checking in research is considered the critical aspect of assessing the credibility of a study (Creswell, 2000). Researchers use member checking by taking the transcripts and interpretations back to the participants (Creswell, 2000). For this study, the researcher verified the participants at the time of the interviews and asked them to confirm the accuracy of their responses. Also, after the recorded interviews were captured and typed into transcripts, copies were sent back to the participants for verification, who acknowledged receipt, but did not confirm any inaccuracies or inconsistencies. As mentioned earlier on, to address subjectivity in data analysis, the researcher needs to remain as objective and neutral as possible. Creswell (2000) suggests that another strategy to establish the credibility of data is to use triangulation.

3.8.2.2 Peer debriefing

Creswell (2000) describes peer review or debriefing as the review of the data and research by someone who is familiar with the research or phenomenon being

explored. In this case the supervisors played the role of reviewer and provided worthwhile feedback to the researcher on an ongoing basis. The feedback from the mentors was helpful, though the researcher did wait for it to begin with the data analysis process. Soon after the capturing of the recorded interviews, the transcripts with raw data were sent to the supervisors for review. Feedback was used to work towards presenting the narrative analysis of the data in the independent data analysis chapter. As with the interpretive paradigm (Cohen et al., 2007) and the position of this study, the data presentation chapter was followed by the report in the last chapter on the interpretation of the findings. Another strategy to assess credibility and the trustworthiness of the findings, an audit trail, is suggested by several of the research methods (Ang &Yunus, 2016).

3.8.2.4 Audit trail

Ang and Yunus (2016) state that an audit trail enables readers to trace through the researcher's logic to determine whether or not the study's findings can be relied upon as a platform for further inquiry. Thus, the audit trail term has its roots in the works of Lincoln, Lynhen and Guba (1985) who suggest that an 'audit trail documents the course of development of the completed analysis. This means that the researcher gives an account of all the decisions taken throughout the research process. For this study, the researcher kept reflections on the development of the research proposal, communication with the university, the research plan and other information relevant to the study. Example of the excerpt from the interviews conducted for this research:

Interview questions with school principals "How would you describe a well-functioning school?

Response of principal of School A:

"a functioning school should be result-oriented, whenever you talk to stakeholders, you talk, 'results'

In summary, the credibility and trustworthiness of the current study were established by using strategies that were suggested in the literature on research methods and

designs (Creswell, 2000; Ang & Yunus, 2016; Cohen et al., 2007). Among the techniques that were employed to ensure credibility for the present study were member checking, , peer review and an audit trail. The member checking strategy was first used at the time of the interview when the researcher did not anticipate a no feedback. The transcripts were sent back to the participants. Also, the researcher sent the transcripts to the supervisors and relied on their comments and guidance. The supervisors' review was an ongoing part of this project. Lastly, an audit trail was done by keeping a journal and documents as a reflection of the development of the whole project from the beginning to the end. These were kept as field notes and electronically for possible review. Finally, the epistemological and ontological aspects of the study helped in the presentation and interpretation of the findings as will be shown in chapters 4 and 5 with implications and recommendations.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Researchers have a duty to comply with the law and rules for carrying out research where people are involved by ensuring that informed consent is obtained from the identified participants as well as permission to access those participants (Creswell, 2013). For this study, the ethical considerations revolved around, firstly, obtaining approval from the Ethics Committee of the University. Secondly, to apply to the Head of Department of Education of the province for permission to conduct research in the Eastern Cape schools and access schools as well as obtaining informed consent from the willing participants.

3.9.1 Obtaining approval from the University Research Committee

The researcher was required by the university to apply for ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the university before any data collection could take place. In this case, this was done and the application was successful as the ethics clearance certificate is among the supporting documents of this study.

3.9.2 Obtaining permission to access schools in the Eastern Cape

Permission to undertake research in Eastern Cape schools had to be sought from the Head of Office of the Provincial Department of Education and was granted. Documentation relating to the permission forms part of the appendices.

3.9.3 Accessing schools and participants

As mentioned earlier, research, especially any that involves human beings as participants, has ethical implications. Access in research is one of the important aspects emphasised in ethics (Creswell, 2013). In simple terms, access involves seeking permission to undertake research with specific participants on a specific site. This study sought permission in writing to access schools and participants from the district directors (letter to this effect included in the supporting documents). The researcher was expected to produce this official letter and show it to the school principals (included in the supporting documents). The research protocol of the Eastern Cape Province stipulates that the researcher needs to present the official letter from the district directors as proof that permission to access schools and participants was sought and granted.

3.9.4 Obtaining informed consent from willing participants

Obtaining informed consent is done to ensure that the researcher respects the rights of the participants to remain anonymous, the confidentiality of the information provided by the participants and the needs and values of the participants (Creswell, 2007). Also, informed consent gives participants the opportunity to agree to take part in the research willingly and voluntarily and be free from any form of obligation (Maree, 2011).

For this study, the researcher, in securing informed consent from the participants, carried out certain procedures. Firstly, the researcher presented a letter of consent that explained the purpose of the study, conditions of participation and their protected rights during and after the study and their role in confirming the accuracy of the interviews. Participants were assured of the protection of their rights to privacy confidentiality, anonymity, dignity as well as safety (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). To ensure the protection of the participants' rights to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, the study used coding in place of the names of the schools and to refer to participants. For instance, School A refers to the first school and School B to the second school. Participants were allocated letters A to E.

The purpose of explaining the conditions for participation while soliciting informed consent was done to ensure that potential participants had a clear understanding

of the purpose and conditions of participating in the study (Creswell, 2014). The process was repeated prior to each interview.

3.10 Limitations

3.10.1 Selecting the site

The size of this sample was relatively small because of its qualitative nature (Cohen et al., 2007). The two schools were selected from the eighty secondary schools forming the AmaThole East region cluster. The initial two schools identified in the research proposal were dropped due to challenges encountered by the researcher linked to bureaucracy. The researcher requested assistance from the district director after explaining the purpose of the study and the proposed criteria of the school suitable to address the research question. Hence, the two schools reported here ended up as samples.

3.10.2 Sample size (participants)

Initially, the study proposed six participants, though at the end there were five. One participant from the second school withdrew her participation at the last moment with the researcher left with no option to look for replacement.

Furthermore, the findings of the two case studies were specific to the schools under investigation. They were not generalised to the entire population of functioning schools in the Eastern Cape Province.

3.10.3 Time factor

The time for field-work, writing and reporting was limited. The field-work was done in June 2018, the month for mid-year examinations in the school calendar. Nonetheless, the first interviews in the number one school were held a day before examinations started at the request of the principal who was very enthusiastic to participate in the study without losing sight of the importance of not interfering with curriculum activities. The second set of interviews in school number two were held a few days after the examinations were written. Once again, the researcher and the principals agreed on the importance of ensuring that the research study did not in any way compromise the curriculum activities of the sampled schools.

3.10.4 Location

The schools are in the AmaThole East region and twenty kilometres apart from each other. Historically, this part of the Eastern Cape is under developed. It is lagging behind in terms of economic development and road infrastructure. Hence, the conditions of the road posed difficulties for the researcher in accessing the schools.

3.11 Summary

This chapter presented an outline of the research methodology, research paradigms, research approach, research design (case study), data collection methods and data analysis. It also detailed the process of selecting participants, the sampling method (purposive sampling), and the credibility and trustworthiness of the data. Finally, the chapter concluded by discussing the ethical considerations of the study on seeking approval from the university Ethics Committee, permission to conduct research in provincial schools, accessing schools and obtaining informed consent from willing participants and presentation of the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2007), the outlining of conditions for participation and the guaranteeing of the protection of the rights of the participants as enshrined in the Bill of Rights (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

The next chapter presents the analysis of the data and its findings.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the details of data related to the study that sought to understand the behaviour, experiences and perceptions of principals of their own role as transformational leaders in two rural secondary schools that were regarded as well-performing in the Eastern Cape. The first section of the chapter is a brief illustration of the demographics of the participants as summarised in table 1. Thereafter, the presentation of the data follows and is structured in terms of the elements of transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985) that formed the basis for the current study as discussed at the end of the literature review of chapter two.

The views, perceptions and experiences of the participants from the semi-structured interviews are presented systematically. The responses of participants are presented in a narrative format and include quotations in italics from the interview transcripts.

4.2. Overview of participant selection

As shown in the previous chapter, and in consideration of the focus of this study - to understand the practices and behaviour of principals as transformational leaders in two well-performing schools - the selection of the participants, more importantly, the two principals, was on the basis that the principal of school A had been in the leadership position for the past five years. Also, the principal as a transformational leader should have demonstrated the ability to move a low-performing school to success or had managed a good school that catered for learners coming from disadvantaged homes and deeply affected by high levels of poor socio-economic conditions like poverty. The details of this sampling procedure were discussed in the previous chapter.

The purposive sampling helped in the selection of the two principals as key participants while snowballing sampling allowed the already identified participants (principals) to assist the researcher in identifying further possible participants who met the criteria for the study. In this case, the principals helped the researcher with the identification of members of the Senior Management Team because of their roles in

the leadership structure within the school and the importance of their data in corroborating the views of the principals on the practice of transformational leadership.

Initially, the study proposed six participants made up of the two principals and included two members of the Senior Management Team from each school recommended by the principals. However, in the end, the researcher was able to collect data from the semi-structured interviews of five participants. One member of the Senior Management Team from school B withdrew unexpectedly and no other participant was approached as the replacement. The conditions for participating in semi-structured interviews as presented to the participants at the beginning of the study indicated the principles of voluntary participation and the right of participants to withdraw their participation at any stage of the study. This ethical consideration was observed in this case by the researcher.

The following section presents the data for the interviews of the five participants and the analysis will be done accordingly.

Participant	School	Position	Highest qualification	Gender	Age	Teaching experience	Leadership experience
A	A	Principal	M+4	Male	47	22	11
B	A	SMT	M+3	Male	55	33	8
C	A	SMT	M+3	Female	51	30	10
D	B	Principal	M+5 (Master's degree)	Female	58	36	4
E	B	Deputy principal	M+4	Male	49	26	4

Table 3: Summary of participants of both schools

4.2.1 Overview of participants

At the time of the interview, the main two participants, Principals A and D were currently serving principals of the two schools, although they were employed at different times as shown by the number of years and experience in these positions. The data shows that participant D, at the time of the research, was in her fourth year as a principal but she reported that working closely with her predecessor as Head of

Department, being Deputy Principal and recently in the acting capacity for the principal position all contributed to her leadership experience.

Other participants for school A, participant B and C, were, at the time of the research members of the Senior Management Team. Participant E was the Deputy Principal of school B, and serving as member of the Senior Management Team.

The average age of all participants was fifty two years with the oldest, participant D of school B, being fifty-eight, and the youngest being forty-seven. The average teaching experience is 29.4 years and 7.4 years' experience in leadership. The principal of school B has the most experience in teaching (36 years), and the principal of school A the lowest (22 years). The most experienced in principal leadership is the principal of school A (11 years) and the least experienced is the principal of school B (4 years).

The selection of the participants showed consideration of gender representation with the principal of school A a male, and the principal of school B being a female. Similar representation was observed in the selection of the other participants. For school A, there were two other participants, one male and one female. The deputy principal, the other participant from school B, was a male. The final selection indicating the gender representation component showed three males and two females.

4.2.2 The context of the two schools within which the participants were selected

4.2.2.1 School A

The principal of School A and the other two participants worked in this small rural public secondary school that operates in the AmaThole East region in the Eastern Cape. According to the principal's data, school A has been in existence since the 1980s. However, document analysis showed that, recently, as part of the rationalisation programme implemented by the Eastern Cape government to eradicate schools perceived to be unviable, this school merged with small neighbouring schools.

In terms of the South African Schools' Act (1996), school A is a section 21 school. It is a quintile two and a no-fee school. According to the National Norms and Standards

for School Funding (1998), school A is not expected to charge learners school fees to get education. Also, the fact that school A is quintile two indicates that the majority of learners the school is serving, if not all, come from poor homes where there are high levels of poverty and unemployment. Also, quintile two schools commonly lack resources, have fewer learners, high teacher turnover and poor leadership.

The learner enrolment in school A at the time of the interview was approximately three hundred learners from grade eight to twelve with forty six learners in grade 12 and twelve teachers including the principal.

The school has semi-adequate infrastructure in terms of classrooms. It has two solid brick classroom blocks and is properly fenced. At the time of the interviews, the classrooms had been damaged by a storm, though teaching and learning continued under these appalling conditions. The school does not have a library, science laboratory or sports facilities, but has running water and electricity. There is no internet facility for teachers or learners. Despite these conditions, there is evidence that, after experiencing low levels of learner performance in the past, the principal and his team have managed to turn the school around.

The document analysis showed that school B ranked among the best performing schools in the AmaThole region and has received recognition for the continuous growth in national assessments as shown by the statistics on percentage scores for the period of interest for this study. For instance, the percentage scores shown in annual reports of school performance reviewed to confirm the reports by participants showed that in 2012 school B achieved 94%, 86% in 2013, 75% was achieved in 2014, 83% in 2015, 79% in 2016 and 95% in 2017. The significance of this statistical report is that it shows a school that, despite its rural context and the description detailed before, is on an upward trajectory in terms of learner performance and is showing signs of a commitment to maintain this trend. The detailed contexts provided for this study are important in order to understand the conditions within which the participants of School A experienced and practiced transformational leadership to turn a low-performing school into one amongst the best performing schools in the AmaThole East region.

4.2.2.2. School B

School B is a medium-to-large size public school that was in the past, a missionary school with seven hundred and fifty (750) learners and ninety to a hundred (90-100) grade 12 learners. It is a section 21 and a quintile 3 school with twenty (20) teachers and a teacher ratio of 38:1. As a result of a change in the demographics of learners attending this school, this school provides education for learners from the surrounding economically disadvantaged communities, with very few learners from better households.

The school has three well-maintained blocks of classrooms, but it is clear that this is an old school. Also, the school has running water and electricity, but no library or science laboratory.

The school was recognised as one of the best schools in the AmaThole East region. It achieved 81% in 2012, 74% in 2013, 87% in 2014, 84% in 2015, 86% in 2016 and 98% in 2017. School B has also received external recognition for having learners who performed well in subjects that are viewed as difficult, especially for learners coming from poor backgrounds like those being served by school B. For instance, the school was among the best schools who achieved high levels of performance in subjects written for the National examinations.

As discussed in earlier chapters, the inclusion of school B in the sample was to understand the transformational leadership practices of the principal that influenced teaching and learning, and resulted in continued high levels of learner achievement. This characteristic was significant for the current study because the majority of learners school B serves come from deprived backgrounds as shown by the quintile system of this school.

4.3 Presentation of data

Although the study looked at the lived experiences, practices and perceptions of participants for School A and B on transformational leadership within well-performing schools, the findings showed some differences and similarities in the application of the aspects of transformational leadership theory. The most significant difference between the two schools is that the principal of school A, participant A, had embarked on a school improvement programme in an effort to foster school improvements in order to

turn a low-performing school into a successful school, while the findings showed that school B had no history of underperformance. As a result, school B was included in the study in order to understand the transformational leadership behaviours that influenced the principal, participant D, to sustain high levels of learner achievement despite the school serving learners from poor homes. Both schools have been achieving good results in the National Senior Certificate examinations in the past five years. What follows is a discussion of the findings per research question and per school for the two schools investigated in the study.

4.3.1 Data for School A

As discussed earlier, the main and secondary research questions were developed based on the four elements of the theoretical framework, namely: *idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration* (Bass, 1985). The main research question was:

What role does transformational leadership play in sustaining functioning rural secondary schools in the context of the Eastern Cape?

Themes that emerged from the data linked to the main research question were: (1) *facilitating and encouraging effective and collective problem solving, (2) creating and maintaining a professional school climate by enhancing teaching and learning, and (3) fostering teacher growth and development.*

The following is the discussion of these themes in relation to how they addressed research question one. At this point, the discussion will follow the structure of these themes. Thereafter, to address sub-research question two, three and four, the data will be presented according to the four elements of transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985) guiding this study. This distinction is made to show the difference between themes that related to transformational leadership that emerged in the research and the data linked to the basic framework that guided the research questions related to the strategies.

4.3.1.1 Theme one - Facilitating and encouraging effective and collective problem solving

Participant A, principal of school A, spoke about the biggest challenge that the school faced related to a decline in the learner pass rate in 2008. He reported

attempts he made to motivate others and proposed strategies to overcome poor learner performance.

Participant A reported the negative effect that this significant drop had on him personally and emotionally.

I nearly died, Madam

Bear in mind that I started being the principal in 2007 (previous year). In 2008 (following year), when the new curriculum was introduced, we got 7% from 70% (indicating a dramatic decrease).

It appeared from the data that this experience was a turning point for him personally and threatened his leadership role. The data showed principal A's reflections on the lived experiences that were caused by the sudden drop in learner performance. This experience influenced his own effort and motivated him to consult with other key role players in the school, initiate change programmes for the purpose of turning around a low-performing school into a successful one.

In explicitly exploring the opportunities he had to consider in turning things around, the principal of school A, said,

I think that's where everything started, I had to be creative...I organized the community, that is parents, teachers and learners, and then asked them to give us direction, what exactly do they need? of which they did...everyone started having ownership of the school.

Although participant A did not mention this in the interview, literature reviewed for the current study (Yang, 2014) showed that it was common for schools experiencing low-learner performance in one stage of their existence to have experienced a culture of poor teaching and learning.

The data showed that among the strategies participant A engaged in at the beginning, (a) he personally took a step back, (b) looked at the problem from a subjective point of view (c) acknowledged how this negative experience challenged his own leadership role and (d) thought broadly about the collective approach that would bring about the desired change to achieve improvement.

Exactly what I did...to involve everyone...to move from one situation to another...to inspire everyone around... to motivate everyone.

The above data showed that not only was the principal of school A honest about the state of the learner performance, but he also recognised the critical leadership role that he had to play in making others aware of the problem and he facilitated a culture for collective problem solving.

4.3.1.2 Theme two - Creating and maintaining a professional school climate

The second theme that emerged in relation to the practice of transformational leadership by the principal of school A to bring about improvement was the creating and maintaining of a professional school climate. The data showed how the principal of school A initiated change programmes where parents, teachers and learners were encouraged to participate. In reporting his transformational leadership behaviour related to the creation and maintenance of a professional climate, the principal of school A said:

If as a leader, you have a vision, you are able to influence your subordinates, it means the school can move forward.

I always have a clear programme, share the programme I have in mind with them (referring to parents, teachers and learners).

I involve them in doing the improvement plan, implement the plan, monitor the plan, theirs is to teach (referring to the role of teachers in the improvement plan).

Another practice that was shown in the data indicating the transformational leadership of principal A in creating a professional climate was the principal's exemplary behaviour in actions he expected from his subordinates. The principal explained his intent in his role-modelling behaviour in teaching to influence educators to embark in extra teaching. The principal of school A said,

I would say, I am really influential, the way I influence is not by talking, I do it by doing (referring to his own actions).

If I want something to be done, I do it, knowing that people will follow me. If I want us to have extra classes on Sundays, I just organize learners to come. I do it. I don't say to them, let's do it.

These views were confirmed by another participant from school A, participant B, who said,

The principal himself is setting a good example by working very hard, by conducting extra classes with teachers following him.

In corroborating the principal's views, Participant C, made commented,

Teachers were having extra classes, teachers were having to teach during weekends and after school...

The role-modelling behaviour shown by the principal of school A demonstrated his belief in the principles of leading by example to influence subordinates. Also, principal A showed commitment to teaching as one strategy that could influence learner achievement.

Apart from streamlining, another activity that the principal engaged in as part of cultivating a positive school climate was the motivation of others to commit to the school improvements. These findings showed a direct link between the principal's initiatives and the positive climate that was created to enable the success of the improvement strategies.

The principals' views were corroborated by other participants.

On parent involvement in learning, participant B provided his perspective in terms of his own role on the Senior Management Team, he said,

My role as the SMT member is to call parents and inform them about the performance of the learners, so that, when they are at home, somebody can help them.

On learner engagement and motivation, Participant B reported that,

The principal is always reminding them (referring to learners) about the school logo, that is, they must 'Endeavour to Excel'.

4.3.1.3 Theme three: Re-aligning the curriculum

In the data the views that the principals had with regard to their ability to re-align curriculum are explained. The principal of school A reported how, at the beginning of the change programmes, together with his team, he reviewed the curriculum and left out irrelevant subjects as part of the school curriculum. He encouraged his staff to solve problems independently without expecting his intervention. He said,

We started with something normally called 'streamlining' where certain subjects were removed from the curriculum. Because we were few educators, by then, we were five or six...e started offering only the critical subjects...we had to offer: Mathematics, Physical Science, Accounting, Life Sciences and Agricultural Sciences.

It appeared that in the realignment of the curriculum for improvement purposes, the principal considered what teachers had to offer in terms of their own teaching skills, experience and expertise. Such revelations had the potential to contribute to the professional growth and development of teachers because the allocation of tasks requires principals to take into account the teachers' knowledge of the subject, teaching skills and expertise. Following is the discussion of data related to research question two. The presentation follows the structure of the elements of transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985) that guides this study.

4.3.1.4 Fostering professional growth and development

In the data the views by other participants that the principals had with regard to his ability to foster teacher growth and development are explained. Participant B, the member of the Senior Management Team shared his views about shared leadership roles (distributed leadership).

I assist him in collecting funds, I advise him in matters, concerning the welfare of learners, like sporting activities

These views were corroborated by Participant C, also, a member of the Senior Management Team and said:

In the absence of the school principal, I am here to serve the duties of the principal. Also, if there are problems that need solving in his absence, I intervene.

It is clear from these submissions by the two participants that their responsibilities associated with leadership roles are intended for the development of their leadership capacity and have a potential to impact on their professional growth and development.

4.4. Strategies to turn around a low-performing school into a well performing school implemented by principal A of school A

Data related to sub-research question one revealed strategies that the principal of School A employed to foster school improvement that would later result in increased learner performance. Following is the discussion of these strategies from the theoretical perspectives of Bass' (1985) transformational leadership theory guiding this study.

4.4.1 Idealised influence

The first factor of transformational leadership theory, idealized influence, was practiced by principal A to influence parents, teachers and learners to participate in the decision-making process related to change programmes.

According to the principal of school A, the first meeting of parents, teachers and learners to find a solution to the problem was spearheaded by him exercising his authority to influence others to participate in the efforts to bring about change. In reporting on how influence was exerted on others, principal A said,

When things went down, I had to go to the parents and say...please, come, we have to rebuild the school.

I organised the community that included parents, teachers and students together.

He went further and shared with them (parents, teachers and learners) his recognition of the problem. In doing so, he said "*something is wrong here*" (referring to the significant drop in learner performance).

Thereafter, he challenged them to share ideas on how to turn things around for the best and craft a school vision. On reporting on how the idea of crafting the vision came about, he said,

When we gathered here, we crafted the vision, we crafted the mission, now when we do things, and we do things according to the mission of the school...

According to the principal, the vision was useful for him and his leadership role. In fact, in his opinion, he said,

As a leader, if you have a vision, you are able to influence your subordinates. That makes things easy for me to manage.

However, his report on the school vision was not corroborated by other participants. In considering what was reported by the principal of school A, it can be concluded that the vision was the outcome of a critical thinking process that involved all key role-players in education with the main objective of developing the school vision for school improvement to occur.

4.4.2 Inspirational motivation

To understand how the principal of school A practiced inspirational motivation as the second element of transformational leadership theory, the data on participant A showed that he believed his exemplary behaviour could influence others to commit to the change initiatives. In reporting on his application of inspirational motivation, principal A said,

I am really influential...results oriented. The way I influence is not by talking, I do it by doing...If I want something to be done, I do it, knowing that people (referring to teachers) will follow me. If I want us to have extra classes, on Sunday, I just organize learners to come, I do it, I don't say to them let's do it...

The data showed that the principal of school A was a transformational leader when he led by example, and was the first person to engage in extra teaching classes and the teachers followed him.

In corroborating the principal's viewpoint on inspirational motivation, Participant C commented,

The principal himself sets a good example by working hard, conducting extra classes, now the staff is following him.

In following the principal's behaviour, teachers felt duty-bound and motivated to embrace this new culture of commitment to teaching and learning. The participants' responses indicated the importance of the principal's leadership behaviour and its positive impact on teacher commitment to teaching, thus indirectly influencing classroom learning.

4.4.3 Intellectual stimulation

The third factor of transformational leadership theory is intellectual stimulation. This is linked to the principal's behaviour in offering support to teachers to become problem-solvers. As part of developing his teachers in problem solving, the principal of school A mentioned "encouraging staff to find solutions to problems they encounter independently". In response to the question on how he took care of the intellectual stimulation of his staff, he reported that teachers were personally responsible for dealing with matters that did not require his intervention and said,

I always say to them, they need not... complain...if there is a problem, there must be a solution.

In elaborating what he meant by "if there is a problem, find a solution" principal A provided a scenario where he expected teachers to be problem-solvers. He said,

Look now, the school hasn't got a roof, due to storm, but, we never stopped teaching, the road is bad, more especially when it's raining, they (referring to teachers) never stopped coming to school. Why? (Posing the question to himself and providing the answer at the same time). Because I say to them, if there is a problem, there must be a solution.

This response showed that the principal of school A trusted his teachers' judgement and behaviour. The principal's encouragement of teachers to deal with the problems they were confronted with could contribute to their problem-solving skills.

In addition, participant B alluded to the principal's behaviour that showed trust for his staff. In describing the principal's behaviour and leadership, participant B used the

concept 'free-reign leadership'. Participant B, in describing further how the principal applied this style of leadership said,

Staff are allowed sometimes to decide for certain things. If it's raining, the staff could decide to break at school without having to wait, always, for the direction of the principal.

The view points on free-reign leadership indicated how the principal of school A was flexible in his leadership role as shown by the data reported by the second participant to encourage problem-solving by his subordinates.

4.4.4 Individual consideration

The data showed no reports on individual consideration given by principal A. Rather, the data showed what was contributed by other participants. For instance, participant C shared her own views on the impact of the principal's sharing of leadership roles with them and how that behaviour influenced her personally as a school leader.

Participant C said,

When the principal is not around, I am here to serve the duties of the principal.

She went further and said,

If there is any problem that is encountered here at school in the absence of the principal, I had to intervene in that problem and try by all means to solve it.

According to participant C, the distribution approach to leadership by the principal of school A contributed directly to her own leadership capacity as a member of the Senior Management Team.

Participant A said in his view that the principal considered the professional growth of teachers when teachers were expected to attend workshops offered by the district. On the other hand, according to participant B, new teachers were introduced to subject advisors and other experienced teachers in neighbouring schools.

4.5 Challenges faced by transformational leadership of principal A

The most significant and indirect challenges to the transformational behaviour of principals that principal A experienced and identified were: (a) Low expectations of

learner achievement by the whole school community and (b) Shocking drop in learner performance that threatened the principal's leadership.

Other challenges that are included in the following discussion that were identified by other participants were (c) Learners lacking the basic skills related to literacy to prepare them for secondary education (d) Lack of funding (e) Social ills linked to drug abuse by boys, absenteeism of learners and teenage pregnancy.

Little data indicated challenges related to the application of the four aspects of transformational leadership on which the current study is founded. Following is the discussion of the indirect challenges reported by principal A.

4.5.1 Low expectations of learner achievement by the whole school community

Principal A, in telling the story of his experience of the low expectations of learner performance said,

I started working here in 2002 as HOD...at that time 40% pass rate in this school was really appreciated.

In sharing his experience and explaining his shock related to the plunging of learner performance from 70% to 7% within his first year in the principal position, he said,

The (previous) principal left, I took over, ...then in 2007, we got sixty something percent (he was not sure)...bear in mind that I started being the principal in 2007. In 2008 (one year after he became the principal), when the new curriculum was introduced, we got 7% from 70%.

On expressing his worrying concerns related to the effect of the drop in learner performance, principal A said,

People around here were talking, I was the topic...people around here were talking about me...that was an embarrassment..., I had to do everything to achieve good results.

The above statements and the data showed how principal A identified what he perceived and experienced as a challenge that could have a negative impact on his attempt to bring about school improvements and how he reacted to the challenge.

Following is the discussion of challenges perceived by other participants and believed to have a negative effect on learner achievements.

4.5.2 Learners lacking the basic skills related to literacy to prepare them for secondary education

Apart from what has been shared by the principal of school A as his own experience of the challenges, other challenges were reported by other participants. Participant B, said,

Another challenge is that some learners are not yet ready for high school....the coverage of work in primary school is not enough for them, to the extent that they could not even read and write correct Xhosa (learners could not write in their own home-language).

It seemed from this report that Participant B was of the view that the teaching of the curriculum in the primary school was not effective in preparing learners for secondary education. If his views are considered, the gap between primary and secondary schools could have a negative impact on curriculum instruction and learning outcomes.

4.5.3 Lack of funding

Another challenge that was reported by participant B was in relation to school funding. In his view, he said,

There is the shortage of funds to employ more teachers in School Governing Body posts.

This view implied that there was a need to employ more teachers and the lack of funds made the decision to hire additional teachers impossible.

4.5.4 Social ills linked to drug abuse by boys, absenteeism of learners and teenage pregnancy

As part of the challenges experienced by school leadership, the sub-theme on social ills linked to drug abuse, participant B had this to say.

Another challenge is the usage of drugs by boys.

This finding is significant because school leadership is expected to carry the burden of caring for learners affected by social ills.

4.6 Understanding the successes of transformational leadership

In this theme the study sought to understand the successes of transformational leadership of principals after implementing strategies for improvement. In relation to the key themes that emerged in the data analysis, the highly significant successful transformational leadership behaviours were when the principal's role was instrumental in facilitating and encouraging effective and collective problem solving, creating and maintaining a professional school climate by enhancing teaching and learning, and fostering teacher growth and development. Following is the discussion of the successes of the principals as transformational leaders when they engaged in transformational leadership behaviour such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration.

4.6.1 Idealised influence

The first factor of transformational leadership outcomes linked to idealized influence reported to understand the principal's own perception and lived experiences of the success of the strategies identified by principal A are: (a) the collective effort to turn around a low-performing school to one recognized as a good school, (b) the role-modelling behaviour of the principal to inspire and motivate followers.

In reporting on how idealized influence was used to solicit participation, the principal of school A reported how he used his authority as the principal to turn things around and get buy-in from parents, teachers and learners to participate and contribute ideas to bring about the desired change in order to come up with a common sense of purpose. In reporting on the effectiveness of this strategy, principal A said,

I organized the community, that is, the parents, learners and teachers, organized them together, and asked them to give us direction, they started to say 'this is our school' everyone started to have ownership of the school, they started to say, 'this is our school'. If as a leader, you have a vision - you are able to influence your subordinates.

The previous statements showed that principal A employed strategies that were linked to idealized influence. Also, the data showed how the principal identified the need to collaborate with key role players and how his efforts paid off when the interaction between himself as the school leader and others resulted in the development of the school vision.

4.6.2 Inspirational motivation

Another area where the principal of school A showed leadership practices linked to inspirational motivation, though this data overlapped with that of idealized influence, was in role-modelling behaviour. In reporting on his own inspirational motivation behaviour, principal A said,

If I want something to be done, I do it, knowing that teachers will follow me.

He continued

If I want us to have extra classes on Sunday ...I just organize learners to come. I do it...I don't say to teachers let's do it. (to emphasise, he used his mother tongue, Xhosa, and said)...”bazakuba nomona moss, (translated in English, they will be jealous of my actions referring to teachers perceptions of his behaviour of being the first to engage in extra classes without instructing them to do so).

Given this response, it implied that the principal was the first person to engage in the behaviour that was expected from others. The role-modelling behaviour of the principal showed a direct and an indirect influence on the behaviour of others.

Furthermore, the principal's transformational leadership behaviour linked to inspirational motivation was seen when the principal was the first person to hold extra classes. The reports given by other participants showed that the teachers followed the principal, and also engaged in long teaching hours as well as participating in examination preparation programmes (camps).

4.6.3 Intellectual stimulation

The data showed that the principal was successful in the application of intellectual stimulation as indicated by his own role in the fact-finding mission to turn around a low-performing school and the perception of others about the schools performance.

In providing an outline of his role in the change programme, principal A reported

We were almost number last in 2008, when the results came.

It appeared that this experience took a toll on participant A's emotions and had a personal effect. In expressing the effect that this experience had on him, he said,

I nearly died.

At the time of the research the school seemed to have sustained high levels of learner achievement since the turnaround strategy was put in place. It was among the schools recognized for best performance in the district. The strategies employed by the current principal since the previous under-performance seem to have worked and have been appreciated.

4.6.4 Individual consideration

No data was found linking the practice of individual consideration by the principal of school A. However, participant B in response to the question related to individual consideration said,

The lack of data on individual consideration was a concern since enhanced teaching skills of teachers are essential in the implementation of change strategies.

4.7 Successes of school A – outcomes of transformational leadership

According to the principal of school A's reflections, there were significant outcomes due to the transformational leadership strategies. Firstly, he attributed the school improvement to the extra effort that he employed together with his team. In his reflections, participant A began by going back to the first experience of the biggest challenge the school has ever faced and the threat to his own leadership role. The

significant drop in the learner pass rate coincided with his first year in the principal leadership position.

Furthermore, the data showed that to address the challenge, participant A started by collaborating with parents, teachers and learners. Secondly, he inspired and motivated the teachers by setting the example and was the first to engage in extra classes. It appeared from these reflections that the effort that was made to turn things around started to pay off as the learner pass rate gradually increased as shown by the growth rate since 2012.

4.7.1 Understanding the successes of transformational leadership of school A

In this theme the study sought to understand the successes of the transformational leadership of principals after implementing strategies for improvement. In relation to the key themes that emerged in the data analysis, the highly significant successful transformational leadership behaviours were when the principal's role was instrumental in facilitating and encouraging effective and collective problem solving, creating and maintaining a professional school climate by enhancing teaching and learning, and fostering teacher growth and development. Also, following is the discussion of the successes of the principal as a transformational leader when he engaged in transformational leadership behaviours such as: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration.

4.7.1.1 Idealised influence

The first factor of transformational leadership outcomes linked to idealized influence reported to understand the principal's own perception and lived experiences of the success of the strategies identified by the principal are (a) getting buy-in from parents, teachers and learners to develop the school vision and (b) the principal being the first person to engage in extra classes and teachers emulating his behaviour.

The principal of school A, participant A, reported on how he used his authority as the principal to initiate turn-around strategies by calling on parents, teachers and learners to participate in the generation of ideas to develop a school vision and to instil a sense of purpose. In sharing how he ensured the involvement of key role players (parents, teachers and learners), participant A said,

I organized the community, that is, the parents, learners and teachers, organized them together, and asked them to give us direction, they started to say 'this is our school' everyone started to have ownership of the school, they started to say, 'this is our school'. If as a leader, you have a vision - you are able to influence your subordinates.

The previous statements show the practical strategies that were employed by the principal of school A in exerting idealized influence. Also, the data shows how the principal identified the need to collaborate with key role players in education and how his efforts paid off when the interaction between himself as the school leader and others resulted in the development of the school vision.

Another area where the principal of school A showed leadership practices linked to idealized influence that he identified was role-modelling behaviour. He said,

*If I want something to be done, I do it, knowing that teachers will follow me.
If I want us to have extra classes on Sunday ...I just organize learners to come.
I do it...I don't say to teachers let's do it. (To emphasise, he used his mother tongue, Xhosa, and said)...bazakuba nomona moss, (translated in English, they will be jealous referring to teachers).*

This response implied that as the principal he was the first person to engage in teaching and learning. Such behaviour showed that the principal of school A had a direct and an indirect influence on teaching and learning. Also, the above statements show that his role-modelling behaviour influenced his teachers. This was shown by their engaging in long classes on weekdays, weekends and examination camps that prepared the learners for success in examinations.

4.7.1.2 Inspiration and motivation

It is evident in the data that when the principal of school A applied inspirational motivation as a strategy, the findings overlapped with those of idealised influence. For instance, the findings showed that teachers were inspired by the principal's exemplary behaviour seen in his own involvement in teaching and learning when expecting the teachers to do so. This finding was discussed earlier with idealized influence. It is shown in the data that the role-modelling behaviour of the principal of school A was very significant and greatly influenced teacher commitment to school improvement.

4.7.1.3 Intellectual stimulation

As part of developing teachers on problem-solving, the principal of school A mentioned “encouraging staff to find solutions to problems they encounter independently”. In response to the question on how he took care of the intellectual stimulation of his staff, he reported that teachers were personally responsible for dealing with matters that did not require his intervention and said,

I always say to them, they need not... complain...if there is a problem, there must be a solution.

In elaborating on what he meant by “if there is a problem, find a solution” he provided a scenario where he expected teachers to be problem-solvers. He said,

Look now, the school hasn't got a roof, due to a storm, but, we never stopped teaching, the road is bad, more especially when it's raining, they (referring to teachers) never stopped coming to school. Why? (Posing the question to himself and providing the answer at the same time), because I say to them, if there is a problem, there must be a solution.

This response shows that the principal of school A trusted his teachers' judgement and behaviour to solve their own problems.

4.7.1.4 Individual consideration

The fourth aspect of transformational leadership that the principal applied and linked to the previous discussion is individual consideration. Though the findings did not show a report related to this, the delegation of tasks requires that principals take into account the teachers' knowledge of the subject, their teaching skills and expertise.

In reporting, principal of school A said

I believe that we are all professionals here, the reason ...we are here.....we were trained as educators and then appointed.

Another participant told the researcher that as part of professional growth programmes, the principal encouraged them to attend workshops organised by the district. New teachers were introduced to subject advisors and other experienced teachers in other schools. This was reported by this participant as a response to an

interview question on the principal's role in teacher support programmes run within the school.

4.7.2 Increased learner performance in National Senior Certificate examinations

On increased learner achievement and school successes, principal of school A, participant A, believed that the strategies that were employed had a positive impact on the steady increase of learner performance that the school has experienced and is currently experiencing in the National Senior Certificate examinations. He provided the following information to support his observation.

We were almost number last in 2008, when the results came, we moved from being number last to position 2 in 2009.

In 2012 the school achieved 94% and was in third place in the district. In 2013 it dropped, but it achieved 86%. In 2014, the school dropped a bit to 75%. This drop took its toll on participant A's emotions.

In 2015, performance increased to 83%. Lastly, in 2017, it was at 95% and the school was in fourth place out of eighty schools in the AmaThole region. At the time of the research the school seemed to have sustained high levels of learner achievement since the turnaround strategy was put in place. It was among the schools recognized for best performance in the district. The strategies employed by the current principal since the previous under-performance seem to have worked and are appreciated.

4.8 Data from School B

As indicated in the above discussion of findings for School A, the themes that emerged from the findings related to the main research question were: (a) facilitating and encouraging effective and collective problem solving, (b) creating and maintaining a professional school climate by enhancing teaching and learning and (c) fostering a climate for professional growth and development.

Below is the discussion of these themes in relation to school B.

4.8.1 Theme one - Facilitating and encouraging effective and collective problem-solving

As shown earlier in other parts of this chapter, School B has achieved high levels ranging from above 80% and to nearly hitting 100% in 2017, with slight but not significant declines here and there. For instance, in 2013, the school achieved 74%, a decline from the 81% obtained the previous year (2012). However, the performance went up again, because in 2014 the school achieved a score of 87%. According to the principal of school B, participant D, learner performance in 2015 was 85%, 87% in 2016 and 97% in 2017. The significance of this period in relation to the percentage scores is that this upward path has been maintained in the time participant D has been the principal.

In this case, the principal of school B highlighted this high performance and said

We have been performing well above 80%...in 2015, we were, 85%, 2016...7% and 2017 we were 97%.

She shared these achievements with excitement and pride, and she said,

We are escalating, in fact, we are going up (referring to the upward path that the school has been climbing in terms of school scores in National Senior Certificate examinations year-on-year).

In consideration of this consistency of what is shown in the findings related to percentage scores attained by school B in the National Senior Certificate examination and what is reported by participant D, these findings indicate successes of transformational leadership strategies as shown in the findings. Among the activities that the principal engaged in to facilitate collective problem-solving is the involvement of teachers in the planning programmes of the school. In sharing her views on working together with teachers in planning, she said,

When we do the planning, we do the planning together...for whatever duty is put on the table...we share as to who do we think can be able to handle to make sure that the duty is executed to the level best.

On encouraging problem-solving, the principal made this statement,

Whenever a teacher has a problem with a learner, him or her comes and shares the problem with the office. Then they together find a way to solve the problem.

She pointed to the importance of not letting the teachers deal with the problem alone; rather, she held the view that parents should be involved. From what the principal stated in these findings, there is an indication that the principal was able to facilitate involvement and interaction among key stakeholders in problem-solving. It seemed to be the case when the school engaged in the planning activities for each school year and with the support given to teachers in dealing with misbehaving learners.

4.8.2 Theme 2: Creating and maintaining a professional school climate

One of the successes of this school as shown in the findings was the principal's ability to create and maintain a professional school climate. It seemed that the principal of school B had managed to maintain the historical learner achievement successes of the school by encouraging teachers and learners. In her own account, teachers were encouraged to participate in decision-making processes and were influenced to commit themselves to their professional responsibilities. In stating how she created a professional school climate, she said,

I think, if you share a common interest ...then you pull together. I think that is one of the things that is helping me a lot in the achievements that I have made in the past years.

It could be concluded that the principal took the lead in ensuring that the school climate was conducive for everyone within the school to pull together in order to achieve success. The findings showed good relations between the principal, staff and the community.

4.8.3 Theme 3: Fostering teacher growth and development

In indicating the perspectives of the principal of school B on her role in fostering teacher growth and development, the findings showed that the teachers were allowed to participate in the decision-making processes. In mentioning this, the principal pointed this out and said,

When I take decisions, I don't take decisions alone. I call the SMT, we discuss...we go to the teachers so that we share ideas.

These statements were corroborated by the second participant, Participant E, who said,

With the decision-making, we first sit as the SMT... before we go to staff meeting, we sit and try and unpack the agenda that we have...when we go to staff meeting we go with proposals to the staff meeting. That makes them to be part of the decision-making...everybody partakes in as far as the decision-making is concerned.

This finding showed that teachers of school B were not only involved in the decision-making process on matters affecting their duties, but also, on managerial issues. This involvement of teachers in the decision-making process by Senior Management could be an opportunity for professional development.

Also, the data showed that the involvement of teachers in the decision-making process was not the only strategy for professional growth and development, of teachers, Rather, the data analysis showed that there were other strategies that were employed to empower teachers. The study found that the teachers in school B were allowed to participate in empowerment programmes such as subject committees.

When reporting on subject committees, the other participant, participant E, said,

In subject committees, they (teachers) sit down and map up the way they would approach the lesson. Also, teachers were getting assistance from subject advisors who come occasionally to the school.

On professional support offered by subject advisors to teachers, the principal had this to say,

They come here every now and then...for support. Sometimes they call them (referring to teachers) to a central place where they meet and then do some discussions.

The above statements show that teachers were not only empowered by being allowed to participate in subject committees, but they also received professional support from subject advisors as reported by the two participants.

Another participant, in support of teacher involvement in the planning activities for professional growth, participant E, said,

Every teacher in every subject...is made aware of his or her role...what is expected at a particular time.

While participant E was reporting on activities related to the professional development of teachers, he mentioned that, other than the programmes within the school already discussed, some teachers were part of an external programme called JEN which was around the district helping struggling schools. He said,

If I can pick up the JEN programme, now our ...teachers here in this school, are taking part in various centres in the AmaThole East region, they are playing a major role because of their experience. Some of them are taken by the Department of Education to be revolving teachers, they go to the schools where there are slight problems to provide help. By helping somebody, it also helps you.

The above statement showed that teachers from school B who participated in these programmes benefited personally in their own professional growth. In turn, teachers could bring this experience to the school to improve their own teaching strategies that would later on impact positively on learner outcomes.

4.9 Data on the four strategies linked to transformational leadership to ensure school successes – School B

Below is the discussion of other data aligned with the four elements of transformational leadership theory: *idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration* in pursuit of understanding the transformational leadership behaviours of the principal of school B in maintaining an upward growth of learner achievement for the past years, despite the school serving a large number of learners who come from poor homes and are greatly affected by negative socio-economic conditions such as poverty.

4.9.1 Idealised influence

The principal of school B, participant D, explained how idealised influence was practiced to motivate staff and said,

Factors that have contributedin getting the results...my teachers are so committed. I always encourage them (referring to teachers.) How many level 7 do you think you are going to give the school this year?

This data showed that communication and encouragement were used as strategies to influence teachers to commit to school successes.

4.9.2 Inspirational motivation

In addition to the encouragement of teachers and learners, the data showed that the school's outstanding performance in the national examination and its recognition in the district was in itself a motivation and inspiration to the whole school community.

This was shown when the principal said,

We have been performing well above 80%...in 2015 we were 85%, 2016...87% and 2017 we were 97%.

The researcher sensed excitement and pride when Principal D shared these achievements as shown by the following expression,

*We are escalating, in fact, we are going up
I think, if you share a common interest ...then you pull together. I think that is one of the things that is helping me a lot in the achievements that I have made in the past years.*

The evidence of this trend was found in the document analysis of the information relevant to secondary school performance in the National Senior Certificate examinations available in Department of Education publications.

4.9.3 Intellectual stimulation

On the practice of intellectual stimulation, participant D reported that when teachers were viewed as having challenges in teaching a topic within a subject, teachers were encouraged to help each other. With regard to encouraging teachers to work with each

other when faced with difficulties linked to ineffective teaching methods, the principal of school B said,

If two teachers are teaching a common subject, and one is strong in one topic and the other weak in another...they come together...make their own arrangement...the teacher who is strong in one topic, helps the one who is struggling.

The above data showed that participant D embraced peer teaching strategy as a problem-solving technique in assisting teachers who experience difficulties in teaching certain topics.

4.9.4 Individual consideration

Data linked to school B showed that the principal paid significant attention to the growth and development of teachers, though not consciously. On the practice of individual consideration as one strategy linked to transformational leadership, participant D said,

When I take decisions, I do not take decisions alone.

In explaining how the decision-making process was done to allow teacher participation, she further explained,

I call the SMT (referring to the members of the Senior Management Team), we discuss ...we don't implement our decisions. We go to teachers so that we share ideas...we do the planning together, ...in whatever duty was put on the table..... we share who we think can be able to handle and make sure the duty is executed to their level best.....when we are in a meeting, we are strategising for the best of the school...teachers are showing interest in the school...by sharing their talents with us.

This data showed that participant D saw value in ensuring that teachers participate in the planning activities related to instructional programmes as a way of increasing the capacity of the teachers.

The principal's views were corroborated by participant E,

Every teacher in every subject is made aware of their role....and what is expected at a particular time. All of us are given those annual teaching plans,

specifying that at a particular time, as a teacher, you must indicate how far you have gone in covering the syllabus...this is as far as the syllabus is concerned.

With the decision-making, we first sit as the SMT (referring to the Senior Management Team), we go to the staff meeting, we sit and try to unpack the agenda we have as proposals, and we go with those proposals to the staff meeting. That makes teachers to feel being part of the decision-making process.

The above data indicates that the principal of school B showed an interest in the professional growth of the teachers by inviting them to be involved and allowing their participation in planning activities as part of the collective rather than as individuals. What participant D reported in the data was an indication that the principal was able to foster professional growth and development as one of the strategies employed by transformational leaders to sustain a good school.

4.10 Strategies to maintain a good school by the principal of school B

It has been stated earlier in other parts of this study that the inclusion of School B was based on its historically high performance in National assessments and its continued upward trajectory in the past five years. The significance of these findings is that these high scores were obtained by school B despite it being in quintile 3, under-resourced and catering for a large number of learners coming from disadvantaged households. At the time of the interviews, principal B gave the scores that were achieved at the time when she became the principal and took over from her predecessor. In reporting on these achievements, she said,

We have been performing well above 80%. In 2015 we were 85%, in 2016 we were 87% and 2017 we were at 97%.

This data showed a school that is on an upward trajectory and a high school performance that is being maintained by the current principal. Based on this background and the data collected from the interviews of the two participants of school B this study sought to understand the various strategies that were employed by the school principal that led to such high achievements and how she applied the four aspects of transformational leadership to sustain such successes. The section that follows presents the findings in relation to idealized influence, inspirational motivation,

intellectual stimulation and individual consideration to investigate the behaviours, practices, experiences and perceptions of the principal's own transformational leadership in sustaining a well-performing school.

4.10.1 Idealised influence

In sustaining these successes, the principal pointed to the high expectations she had of the teachers and the school. Also, she mentioned subject committees and how they execute their roles.

Subject committees call meetings to ensure how things are going with a particular subject and sharing the difficulties that the teachers may be encountering, then consult ...the office....

4.10.2 Inspirational motivation

In reporting on the success of the practice of inspiration motivation, principal D said,

You know what I learnt earlier on, my principals (referring to her predecessors) did not have any classes. They were not teaching at all. They were concentrating on administration only. But I told myself that to be part of the team, to be felt as one of the teammates for my colleagues to feel...I need to have a class, so that when we share our experiences in the class, we share them together.

Also, participant E reported the importance of keeping the morale of the staff high by celebrating each teacher's birthday in groups quarterly. In sharing this, the participant said,

Sometimes if there are birthdays, we take quarterly birthdays, so that we can celebrate those birthdays.

The above statements showed that the principal paid attention to the motivation and the inspiration of teachers.

4.10.3 Intellectual stimulation

The principal of School B reported the process that saw teachers participating in the decision-making process.

I think communicating with teachers is one of the best things I have learnt are beneficial...when I don't take decisions alone...we go to teachers so that we share ideas. I think that is one of the things that is helping me in my leadership.

Her views were corroborated by Participant E, in explaining the involvement of teachers in the problem-solving process, he said,

The way we encourage them to be problem-solvers, you find that sometimes the teachers are having problems in classes. We are giving them platform where they could solve problems first hand without necessarily taking the problem to management.

Also, participant E articulated the structures available to assist teachers with problems.

I always talk to teachers and give them responsibility that you could do this, then you do that, you find them responsible. You will find teachers that you never knew that they wanted to do this until you give that particular teacher that responsibility. The teacher becomes surprised that he has done it.

Apart from the teachers' involvement in the decision-making process reported by the principal, data has shown that teachers were expected to solve petty classroom problems on their own, before soliciting assistance from management.

4.10.4 Individual consideration

The fourth factor of transformational leadership that was investigated was the role of principals and their responsibility for the professional needs of teachers. The most significant finding about individual consideration was in the allocation of tasks and responsibilities to teachers.

The other strategies that were used linked to individual consideration were applied in the planning processes as pointed out by the principal.

When we do the planning- we do the planning together as I told you before. If whatever duty is put on the table, we share as to who we think can be able to handle and make sure that the duty is executed to the level best. Teachers know themselves more than I do...I think I can do it. So, that's the way we do things....that freedom to choose. Because we are strategizing for the best of

the school...by sharing their talents with us. Now every teacher, in every subject is made aware of his or her role, also what is expected at a particular time?

In addition, the second participant, participant E, provided the details of teacher involvement in the planning process of the instructional programme.

We are given those annual teaching plans - actually specify to everybody that, 'you are supposed to be this far in as far as the syllabus is concerned and in as far as the co-curriculum.

From these statements, it is clear that the principal was able to share her best leadership practices that contributed to the professional development of teachers. These views were corroborated by the perceptions and experiences of participant E as shown in the data.

However, this is not the only evidence of the success of transformational leadership at school B – the section below details further factors that contribute to the success of school B.

4.11 Data on challenges faced by the transformational leadership in school B, participant D

4.11.1 Idealised influence

The participants of school B reported no experience or perceptions linked to challenges of transformational leadership practices associated with idealised influence.

4.11.2 Inspirational motivation

The findings have indicated no obstacles that the principal as a transformational leader experienced in her attempts to inspire and motivate teachers to participate in programmes that ensured the sustainability of school successes.

4.11.3 Intellectual stimulation

No challenges were reported by the participants connected to intellectual stimulation.

4.11.4 Individual consideration

There were no findings shown in the interview data that indicated barriers experienced by transformational leadership when implementing strategies to sustain school successes.

It is apparent that the data showed no significant challenges relevant to the four aspects of transformational leadership: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration that were reported by the key participants in school B either by the principal or from the other participant, participant E.

Instead, the principal of school B, reported more challenges on issues that were not under investigation in the current study, than those that posed a challenge to her own transformational leadership.

For instance, she reported poor infrastructure as a challenge that was a threat to the school's successes. Though irrelevant for the current study, it appeared that the poor infrastructure had the potential to put a burden on the principal. On the other hand, the negative impact associated with social ills such as drug abuse and teenage pregnancy was a threat to learning. At the same time, the principal of school B was conscious of societal expectations that principals need to show a caring attitude and consideration for the affected learners.

4.12 Understanding the successes of transformational leadership in a well-performing school

4.12.1 Idealised influence

In sustaining these successes the principal mentioned that:

Factors that have contributed...to getting the results - my teachers are so committed. I always encourage them (referring to teachers) - how many level 7 do you think you are going to give the school this year?

This question to teachers pointed to the high expectations the principal had for the teachers and the school. Also, she mentioned subject committees and how they execute their roles.

Subject committees call meetings to ensure how things are going with a particular subject and sharing the difficulties that the teachers may be encountering, then consult...the office.

4.12.2 Inspirational motivation

In addition to the encouragement of teachers and learners, the findings showed that the historical excellence against all odds, was, in itself, a motivation and an inspiration to all those who were committed to success. The principal practiced role-modelling behaviour when she shared her involvement in teaching, unlike her predecessors. Another participant said,

You know what I learnt earlier on, my principals (referring to her predecessors) did not have any classes. They were not teaching at all. They were concentrating on administration only. But I told myself that to be part of the team, to be felt as one of the teammates, for my colleagues to feel...I need to have a class, so that when we share our experiences in the class, we share them together. Our school is one of the schools who are performing good in the national grade 12 results...especially last year (2017) because last year we did not only get the quantity...also the quality has been a factor there.

Also, this participant reported on the importance of keeping the morale of the staff high by celebrating each teacher's birthday in groups quarterly. In sharing this, the participant said,

Sometimes if there are birthdays, we take quarterly birthdays, so that we can celebrate those birthdays.

The above statements showed that the principal paid attention to the motivation and the inspiration of the teachers.

4.12.3 Intellectual stimulation/professional support

The principal of School B reported the process that saw teachers participating in the decision making process.

I think communicating with teachers is one of the best things I have learnt are beneficial...when I don't take decisions alone...we go to teachers so that we share ideas. I think that is one of the things that is helping me in my leadership

Her views were corroborated by Participant E. In explaining the involvement of teachers in the problem-solving process, he said,

The way we encourage them to be problem-solvers, you find that sometimes the teachers are having problems in classes. We are giving them platform where they could solve problems first hand without necessarily taking the problem to management.

Also, participant E articulated the structures available to assist teachers with problems.

I always talk to teachers and give them responsibility that you could this, then you do that, you find them responsible. You will find teachers that you never knew that they wanted to do this until you give that particular teacher that responsibility. The teacher becomes surprised that he has done it.

Apart from the teachers' involvement in the decision-making process reported by the principal, data has shown that teachers were expected to solve petty classroom problems on their own, before soliciting assistance from management.

4.12.4 Individual consideration/professional development

The fourth factor of transformational leadership that was investigated was the principal's responsibility for the professional needs of the teachers. The most significant finding about individual consideration was in the allocation of tasks and responsibilities to teachers.

The other strategies that were used linked to individual consideration were applied in the planning processes as pointed by the principal.

When we do the planning- we do the planning together as I told you. If whatever duty is put on the table, we share as to who we think can be able to handle and make sure that the duty is executed to the level best. Teachers know themselves more than I do...I think I can do it. So, that's the way we do things...that freedom to choose. Because we are strategizing for the best of the

school...by sharing their talents with us. Now every teacher, in every subject is made aware of his or her role, also what is expected at a particular time?

In addition, the second participant, participant E, provided the details of teacher involvement in the planning process of instructional programmes.

We are given those annual teaching plans - actually specify to everybody that, you are supposed to be this far in as far as the syllabus is concerned and in as far as the co-curriculum.

From these statements, it is clear that participant D, the principal, was able to share her best leadership practices that contributed to the professional development of the teachers. These views were corroborated by the perceptions and experiences of participant E as shown in the data.

However, this is not the only evidence of the success of transformational leadership at school B. The section below details further factors that contribute to the success of school B.

4.13. Understanding the successes of transformational leadership

4.13.1 School and learner recognition for outstanding performance in National Senior Certificate examinations

The most significant finding was that the two participants of School B described the school as a well-performing school. When asked to describe the school, Participant D, said,

I would describe it as a good school.

In confirming these sentiments, participant E, the deputy principal said,

Our school is one of the schools who are performing well in the National grade 12 results...especially last year...we did not only get quantity in as far as the results are concerned, also the quality has been a factor....in most of the subjects...you can see them by looking around (referring to the displays in the principal's office). You find that all those (Awards and accolades)...on the walls...they tell a story.

The principal not only pointed at the awards and accolades displayed in her office, she also provided information on conditions that each accolade represented as she pointed them out and said,

(Pointing at trophies) Those trophies are for different subjects, best in Mathematics, best in Mathematical Literacy, best in English and best in Consumer Studies. Tallest was for Maths Olympiad.....So, our students brought the trophy for the second time...next one to it is for quality results...in our district. The other one for being the best in the cluster. The other one for being best in the district. The other one we got from the cluster- we are the best in the cluster. Then, we had a student who obtained level 7s in all subjects. She got an award from the province...the other one is for that student.

It appeared from this report that, not only was the school performing well academically, but it also excelled in sporting activities as shown by the number of trophies the school received in these extra-mural activities as well as sponsorship from prominent companies in the corporate world. In reporting on the achievements linked to sporting activities, principal of school B said,

'And these are for sport...can you see that one sponsored by ABSA Bank...we also got kit from ABSA, Old Mutual and other companies...they subsidise us with kit (referring to sports clothes).

From the observation point of view, the researcher could see that both participants were filled with joy and pride for leading such a successful school under the conditions detailed earlier on. The number of accolades that were on display in the principal's office was evidence that indeed the principal and the member of the Senior Management Team were justified in describing their school as a 'good school.'

4.14 What did the principals contribute to the successes?

4.14.1 Intensive teaching and learning

Intensive teaching and learning came out significantly in the interview data provided by the two participants from school B. The participants reported that

intensive teaching and learning contributed to the achievement of the high levels of learner performance in the National Senior Certificate examinations. The principal said,

We are running extra classes...morning classes...afternoon classes, we never rest on holidays.

Another participant, participant E, explained the process that is followed to engage in intensive teaching and learning and said,

Firstly, we adopted a strategy, where, especially during the first semester, we introduced morning classes for grade 12 learners. We also introduced afternoon classes.

Among other factors that he thought had contributed to the school successes were the benefits associated with the professional development of teachers. In this regard, participant E said,

With the experienced teachers that we have here...has also played a part...there are programmes running around the district.....JEN programme...our teachers here at school ...are taking part...they are playing a major role because of their experience...they go to these schools where there are slight problems, so that they help in these schools. By helping somebody it also helps you.

It is worth mentioning that at the time of the interviews some teachers were hard at work, though it was holiday time. It seemed that teachers were committed to ensuring that the school achieved success even in the current year as shown by their sacrifice of their holidays. In recognising this sacrifice, the principal had this to say,

All teachers are interested in getting good results. My teachers are going an extra mile. That is what I'm proud of.

The findings have shown that the two participants felt strongly about the impact of an intensive culture of teaching and learning. It seemed that the positive culture of teaching and learning was the greatest contributor to the school successes.

4.15 Summary

This chapter provided detailed findings related to the current study that investigated the role played by transformational leadership in well-performing rural secondary schools in the context of the Eastern Cape. The chapter started by presenting data linked to the demographics of the participants, the context of the schools that were selected for the study followed by a comprehensive outline about the findings using the factors of transformational leadership theory of Bass (1985). The findings were presented according to the research questions as well as in the themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews of all five participants from the selected schools.

The findings presented the strategies that were used by principals in collaboration with members of Senior Management Team and teachers as expected, based on the literature, these strategies impacted positively on school improvements, increased learner achievement for the low-performing schools and sustenance of high levels of achievement for the second school.

For instance, the data showed that the principal of school A, the low-performing school practiced strategies linked to transformational leadership when he consulted the community and involved teachers on crafting strategies aimed at school improvements. . Also, the data showed that these two principals and their teams paid attention to the creation of a positive climate that would enable effective teaching and learning to take place smoothly. In consideration of the data from other participants, it showed efforts by the two principals, in their practice of transformational leadership, that were intended at the professional growth and development of teachers. The data obtained from the participants of the first school showed that members of the Senior Management Team were given an opportunity to lead when they were assigned advisory roles and acted in the capacity of the principal. While the principal of the second school, allowed teachers' participation in the decision-making process concerning their duties and managerial issues. .

The next chapter deals with the overview of the study, discussion of the findings as presented in the previous chapter in relation to the literature review, recommendations that flow from the findings and the conclusion.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The last chapter provides an overview of the findings as presented in the previous chapter. The current research was a semi-structured interview driven qualitative study undertaken to investigate the role played by transformational leadership in well-performing rural secondary schools in the Eastern Cape context. It attempted to understand the challenges that confronted transformational leadership and the level of strategies that transformational leaders employed, their impact on school improvement and their positive significance in school successes.

Also, the study used the theoretical framework of transformational leadership espoused by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985). Bass (1985) indicated that school leaders who practice idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration are likely to succeed in their efforts to foster change and improvement.

Balyer (2012), in explaining the dimensions of transformational leadership that guided the current study, defined *idealised influence* as the leaders' behaviour and the followers impression of the leader. Furthermore, *inspirational motivation* is the way in which leaders motivate and inspire those around them, while *intellectual stimulation* is about the leaders' efforts to stimulate followers to be innovative and creative in approaching problems. Then, *individual consideration* as the fourth aspect of transformational leadership theory is about the leaders' continued efforts to act as mentors and coaches and recognise each individual's professional needs and consider them. Thus, this study sought to assess how the principals of the two rural secondary schools, perceived to be successful schools, practiced the four dimensions of transformational leadership to achieve such successes as seen from the perspective of the principal and the members of the Senior Management Team.

The end of the chapter provides a summary of the study on the role of transformational leadership in two rural well-performing secondary schools in the Eastern Cape.

5.2 Findings of the study

After careful presentation and analysis of the data collected during the semi-structured interviews, the following findings can be inferred:

Finding 1 - Principals have a varied understanding and application of transformational leadership.

Finding 2 - Principals appeared to have experienced a variety of challenges to transformational leadership.

Finding 3 - Principals employed a variety of strategies to overcome the challenges to transformational leadership practices they experienced.

Finding 4 - Though these schools were successful, it seemed that transformational leadership was not the only contributor to the schools' successes.

5.3 Discussion of the findings

The first subsidiary research question was formulated to investigate the strategies that were employed by transformational leaders and how these strategies helped them to foster improvements and sustain well-performing schools in the AmaThole East region, Eastern Cape. The aspects of transformational leadership pertaining to the theoretical perspective of the study will be used to structure the discussion of the findings. As mentioned earlier on in the first chapter of this study, the selection of school B for the study was made because it met the sampling criteria. It was a successful school despite catering for learners deeply affected by poor socio-economic conditions and was recommended by the district officials when the researcher experienced bureaucratic challenges with the initial sampled schools. The findings from the two case studies showed differences and similarities in the practice of the four dimensions of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985). However, the presentation of the findings will be structured in a way that will make the distinction easy for the reader to identify.

Following is the discussion of the different practices of transformational leadership by the two principals. The elements of transformational leadership, *idealised influence*,

inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration will be used to structure the findings for both schools.

5.3.1 Finding 1 - Principals have a varied understanding and application of transformational leadership.

5.3.1.1 Idealised influence - Principal A – School A

Based on the different contexts and sampling criteria of the two case studies, as discussed in earlier chapters and highlighted earlier on, the findings for the two principals showed contrasts and varying application of the aspects of transformational leadership. The findings affirmed Burns (1978) who showed that “the ways transformational leaders and followers succeed in influencing schools are different”. The mentioned finding was interesting if one considers the context of these schools for the overall understanding of how the two principals in the study practiced transformational leadership and its aspects differently to foster change to achieve school improvements and sustain high levels of learner performance respectively.

The findings revealed that to turn a low-performing school into a successful one the principal of school A engaged in four transformational leadership behaviours linked to idealised influence: (a) personally identified the problem facing the school, (b) influenced parents, teachers and learners to ensure a collective effort to solve problems, (c) established support for cooperation, (d) allowed participation and sharing of ideas in the change process.

These findings affirmed what has been shown in other research studies on school turns around (Harris & Jones, 2017) that effective leaders are strategic in that, in setting schoolwide goals, they can inspire a common vision among teachers, learners and the whole school community. It emerged from the interviews that the principal used his leadership role to gather parents, teachers and learners in one place in order to discuss the need for change that later influenced teaching and learning and consequently improved learner achievement. This finding confirmed what was found in the literature (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010) that principals are

responsible for setting the direction and exerting influence on other stakeholders in the decision to create a high functioning environment.

In explaining the importance of the finding and considering the principals' role, it is shown that leadership does not become lesser because of allowing participation of others in decision-making processes. Instead, the principal's decision to encourage collective leadership in the form of team work may have helped in the creating and maintaining of a harmonious climate and high functioning school (Ni, Yan and Pounder, 2018).

On the other hand, the principal of school B was shown to have a different approach in the practice of idealised influence. The principal reported how idealised influence was practiced to instil pride in what teachers do every day when the principal interacted with teachers on a one-on-one basis and showed an interest in their commitment to teaching. Literature that supports the finding on idealised influence has associated it with the leaders' ability to model ethical behaviour, thereby instilling pride in order to earn trust and respect (Kieres & Gutmore, 2014). It could be said that the principal's practice of idealised influence had an impact on the teachers' commitment to and engagement in an extended time of teaching.

5.3.1.2 Inspirational motivation

Another finding related to the practice of transformational leadership that was reported by the principal of school A was inspirational motivation. The principal of school A reported that apart from leading the change through collective leadership, to solicit motivation and commitment, the principal was the first to engage in activities that others were expected to carry out like long hours of teaching. This finding is confirmed by Arokiasamy, Abdullah, Ahmad and Ismail (2016) who claimed that "transformational leaders demonstrate behaviours that allow them to serve as role models for their followers." This finding means that principals who are transformational leaders set an example for the standards that they expect from their teachers and behave in a manner that would influence the behaviour of others for the good of the school. Thus, it was shown in the data that the effect of the exemplary behaviour of the transformational leader encouraged teachers to commit to extended teaching time on weekdays, weekends as well as on holidays. The implication of this finding is that principals who

show inspirational motivation through exemplary behaviour have a great impact on teacher commitment to teaching and learning.

Another participant reported that as a member of the Senior Management Team he was influenced personally by the principal's role modelling behaviour. Principal A shared leadership responsibilities with the members of the Senior Management Team and expected them to make decisions when he was not around. The finding is corroborated by Balyer (2012) who found that principals who demonstrate transformational leadership traits inspire commitment and motivation in teachers. Also, the finding has shown the significance of the principal's showing high levels of leadership and its influence on school improvement.

The principal of school B, in providing an explanation on how the inspirational motivation of teachers played out, reported that teachers were inspired by the fact that they were part of a good school. Also, the principal spoke about how having conversations with teachers motivated them and communicated expectations to ensure that learners achieved higher grades in various subjects written in the National Assessment. The finding confirmed what Bass (1985) referred to as 'the leaders' ability to motivate teachers to increase their performance more than expected. Despite this finding, the principal of school B appeared to have given inspirational motivation moderate attention. It seemed that idealised influence and inspirational motivation were not practiced independently of each other.

5.3.1.3 Intellectual stimulation

Findings on intellectual stimulation by principal A showed that its practice received a higher level of engagement than other aspects of transformational leadership. The significance of the practice of intellectual stimulation was when the transformational leader identified a threat of leading a low-performing school. In initiating strategies required to turn around a low-performing school, the principal reported how engaging in a variety of strategies helped him to critically think about the challenge by taking a step back, exploring different perspectives of solving the problem with the purpose of reconsidering the direction of the school.

Also, the effect of intellectual stimulation was shown when subordinates were encouraged to be proactive when faced with challenges related to their teaching responsibilities. According to Rafferty and Griffin (2006) "the effects of intellectual

stimulation are seen in the increase in followers' abilities to conceptualise, comprehend and analyse problems and in the improved quality of solutions that they generate". The implication of this finding is that principals should be committed to challenging staff to be problem solvers as part of being a transformational leader.

The findings on principal B's practice of intellectual stimulation found that the principal allowed active participation and encouraged the sharing of ideas for a common purpose. For instance, the principal of school B reported that teachers were involved in the decision-making process linked to planning teaching activities and scheduling assessments. Also, the principal provided insights that showed that teachers who had topical difficulties within certain subjects were advised to use peer teaching as one strategy that would help to improve their teaching methods and grasp of the content by learners.

The finding confirmed what was suggested in the literature that the practice of intellectual stimulation is shown when the principal is able to challenge followers to be creative and find new ways of doing their jobs (Balyer, 2012). One way of looking at how the principal of school B practiced intellectual stimulation is that teachers were viewed as important stakeholders within the school and their contribution was valued.

5.3.1.4 Individual consideration

The findings on this aspect of transformational leadership related to individual consideration showed it to be of little significance for Principal A. The finding was consistent with what was found by Suraya and Yunus (2012) that "it may be a difficult task for the principals to pay their concentration and consideration to each and every staff in the school".

However, it is worth noting that though it was shown that principal A put little effort into individual consideration, the report shows that when the improvement programmes were initiated and included the re-planning of curriculum delivery by streamlining teaching subjects, the teaching experience of individual teachers, their expertise and speciality were considered. The indications of the low levels of the practice of individual consideration meant that principal A did not see the professional development of the teachers as a factor that could possibly increase teacher performance and later impact positively on learner achievement.

Moreover, the finding is inconsistent with the work of Kieres and Gutmore, (2014) that individual consideration is when transformational leaders seem to care about their followers by providing them with opportunities to grow personally and professionally. The implication of this finding is that the principal who ignores the professional development of his teachers is missing out on the opportunity to empower teachers with the skills needed for change.

Interestingly, despite the previous discussion on the finding for individual consideration, another participant, a member of the Senior Management Team, reported that the principal allowing their participation in leadership decisions and delegating some leadership roles to them had increased her own personal development and professional growth.

This finding supported what was found in the review of studies on transformational leadership (Eyal & Roth, 2011) that individual consideration includes the leaders' support of subordinates' professional and personal development and the promotion of teachers sense of self-competence, self-efficacy and their motivation.

The above findings on individual consideration were reported by the principal of school A. For the principal of school B, the practice of individual consideration was found to be at a low level compared to idealised influence and inspirational motivation. However, the principal reported that teachers were allowed to attend workshops conducted by the district office and led by subject advisors with the belief that the attendance may add value to their professional growth and increase their teaching capacity. Another participant reported how experienced teachers were taking part in training programmes offered by external bodies, hoping that the experience acquired in these workshops could add value to their own personal development and may be used to improve teaching methods. As mentioned in the discussion, the practice of individual consideration seemed to attract low levels of attention from the two principals. The finding did not confirm what is suggested in the literature (Balyer, 2012)) that individual consideration is the level to which the principal is able to act as a mentor or coach to the subordinates with the hope of increasing their performance. The effect of this finding is that principals should receive training on how to put emphasis on individual consideration to increase teacher productivity that will later influence their motivation and commitment to learner achievement.

5.3.2 Finding 2 - Principals appeared to have experienced a variety of challenges to transformational leadership

The findings have shown that the principal of school A reported challenges that could be linked to transformational leadership. The challenges that the principals reported were more about the school than their own transformational leadership. This finding is apparent in school B. It was noted in the findings that no challenges were reported by the principal of school B related to transformational leadership. As only the principal of school A was shown to have experienced challenges, the following is the discussion of these challenges per school A.

5.3.2.1 Idealized influence

The significant challenge that was reported by the principal of school A and related to idealised influence was the difficulty in comprehending the experience brought about by the effect of poor learner performance both personally and emotionally. It appeared in the findings that the experience of poor learner performance was a threat to the principal's new leadership role. The principal reported how external scrutiny and judgement by people put pressure on the practice of idealised influence to turn things around. Idealised influence required the principal to make a compelling case about the problem to other key stakeholders in education in order to solicit their support. In showing the implications of poor learner performance (OECD, 2012) indicated that "poor learner performance at school has long term consequences for the learner and the society such as dropping out of school". For the principal of school A, it appeared that he recognised that change was not the responsibility of one person and was not easy. This finding was consistent with what was shown in reviewed literature (Bunaiyan and McWilliams, 2018) that in implementing transformational leadership, there are certain fears that come along with adapting and changing. In this case the principal of school A was faced with the mountain of convincing others to support his idea of change.

However, the principal of school B and other participants reported no experience or perceptions linked to challenges of transformational leadership practices associated with idealised influence.

5.3.2.2 Inspirational motivation

The principal of school A reported that when he identified the problem and the threat to his leadership role, he was faced with the difficulty of thinking about the behaviour

he should model for the teachers to follow. This finding was consistent with the suggestions for the behaviour of transformational leaders that principals who are not prepared for change may find it difficult to recognize the type of behaviour that they should model for teachers to commit to change (Bunaiyan and McWilliams 2014). It appeared that transformational leaders should prepare themselves to be the first to behave in a manner that they expected from their followers.

Findings showed that the principal of school B reported no challenges experienced associated with the practice of inspirational motivation as a strategy for transformational leadership.

5.3.2.3 Intellectual stimulation

The principal reported how difficult it was to be creative and innovative about the problem. Also, the principal expressed concerns about having to persuade other people in order to obtain buy-in and trust for the carrying out of the required change. The principal was honest about the fact that fostering change within a school was not the responsibility of one person. Rather, change is as a result of collective effort between leaders and their followers (Hauserman & Stick, 2013). With regard to intellectual stimulation, the findings showed no data and no reports given by participants for school B on the experience or perceptions of barriers related to the application and understanding of this aspect of transformational leadership.

5.3.2.4 Individual consideration

Principal A reported on how he had to understand the weaknesses and strengths of the teachers at the time when school reform programmes were initiated and there were few teachers to work with.

The participants of school B reported no challenges linked to individual consideration.

5.3.3 Finding 3 - Principals employed a variety of strategies to overcome challenges they experienced in transformational leadership practices

Since, there were no reports on challenges for transformational leadership by the principal of school B, the following discussions are on findings related to a variety of strategies to overcome challenges by the principal of school A.

As shown in the above discussions, the principal of school A reported challenges that he experienced or perceived when he was implementing transformational strategies.

5.3.3.1 Idealised influence

According to participant A, when he was faced with the opportunity to reconsider the situation facing his leadership, he reported how he had to collaborate with others to solve the problem. Literature has shown in the conceptualization of transformational leadership how school principals, in their effort to influence teachers and learners encouraged participation in change initiatives (Burns, 1978).

5.3.3.2 Inspirational motivation

The findings showed that Principal A practiced inspirational motivation when he was the first person to engage in the transformational behaviours that he expected from his subordinates. For instance, the findings showed that the principal was the first one to engage in extended teaching time hoping that teachers would be inspired and motivated in order to commit to effective teaching.

The findings affirmed (Burns, 1978) that transformational leaders are “leaders who are able to raise their followers to higher levels of motivation and commitment”. The implication of this finding is that it is important for principals to ensure that their own actions can be emulated by their followers in order to achieve the desired change. Also, it appeared in the findings that the strategy worked because teachers were shown to have been involved in extra teaching activities with learners beyond normal teaching time.

5.3.3.3 Intellectual stimulation

The principal of school A reported that his own creative thinking around the problem and the involvement of others in sharing ideas for the purpose of getting solutions to the challenges brought about the change. These findings are consistent with the study by McCarley et al. (2016) who in their discussion of transformational leadership from a theoretical perspective, in connection with intellectual stimulation, stated that, “intellectual stimulation is characterised by a leader who

encourages teachers to rethink the way things have been done in the past and focus on new behaviours which will ensure successful change". Principal A reported that, within the school, complaining by teachers was discouraged. Rather, the principal encouraged teachers to bring different perspectives when confronted with difficult situations.

5.3.3.4 Individual consideration

Although the findings showed that participant A overlooked individual consideration among the aspects of transformational leadership and paid little attention to it, his report showing that teachers' experiences and expertise were taken into account at the onset of the implementation of the change programme that saw the realignment of teaching subjects could be linked, to a limited degree, to aspirations of individual consideration. Another participant reported that teachers relied on their own professional development plans and the workshops conducted by the district office. Other authors cautioned against the principals' reliance on the workshops and training programmes offered by the district office for the professional development of teachers and themselves (Mestry, 2017).

Therefore, these findings did not support what Bass (1985) asserted in his conceptualization of transformational leadership, that, "in individual consideration, principals provide opportunities to their staff to grow as individuals as well as professionally". These findings could not confirm the importance of individual consideration as shown in transformational leadership studies (Bass, 1985). For instance, a study on transformational leadership by Bass and Avolio (1993), to quote Moolenaar et al. (2010), "transformational leadership, who provide individual consideration demonstrate confidence in individuals' innovative capacities, share the responsibilities and risks with team members when adopting new strategies and recognise individual contribution to the team". The findings showed that the principal of school A did not take personal responsibility for the individual consideration of teachers.

It is worth noting that the above discussion on strategies to overcome challenges of transformational leadership focused on school A because the findings presented

earlier on showed that principal A had reported on the challenges experienced in the practice of the dimensions of transformational leadership.

Following is the discussion of findings pertaining to the principal of school B in relation to strategies employed by the principal of school B to sustain high levels of learner achievement by practicing the four aspects of transformational leadership.

5.4 Strategies employed by the principal of school B to sustain high levels of learner achievement

5.4.1 Idealised influence

As far as the application of idealised influence to sustain high levels of learner achievement, the principal of school B reported different strategies that she perceived to have contributed positively to the school's high levels of learner achievement year-on-year. She mentioned three strategies that were aligned with idealised influence: (a) her encouragement language, (b) interaction with teachers at a personal level and (c) chatting about their plans to achieve high grades for learners.

This finding was consistent with what has been suggested in the literature that the principal's influence on teaching and learning was indirect and was second to teaching and learning in its impact on learner outcomes (Hauserman & Stick, 2013).

It appeared in these findings that it was important for the principal of school B to ensure that teachers were encouraged to do their part in meeting the high expectations for learners.

5.4.2 Inspirational motivation

It seemed that the findings in relation to reports by the principal of school B on the application of idealised influence overlapped with those of inspirational motivation. Apart from the identified overlaps, principal B reported how having one-on-one interactions with teachers by instilling pride, talking about high expectations for learners in terms of their grades with teachers helped with what needed to be accomplished.

These findings corroborate the explanation of transformational leadership provided in the literature by Tengi, Mansor and Hashim (2017) that transformational leadership of principals, to achieve intended goals, is demonstrated by their ability to encourage and

involve teachers as well as to stimulate teacher motivation to give full commitment. It seemed that the principal of school B played a reasonable role in enhancing teachers' commitment to the school successes.

5.4.3 Intellectual stimulation

With regards to intellectual stimulation, the principal of school B reported that teachers were encouraged to tackle minor problems independently of the principal's intervention, especially those related to learner disruptions in the classroom. For serious disciplinary problems, teachers were supported by the principal. These findings were consistent with what has been found in research studies on the application of intellectual stimulation. Balyer (2012) found that transformational leaders who practice intellectual stimulation have an important influence on the ability of followers to become problem-solvers.

5.4.4 Individual consideration

It was apparent from the findings that principal B, as opposed to principal A, practiced individual consideration to a higher degree compared to the practice of idealised influence, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation. As a result, the findings related to the practice of this aspect of transformational leadership appeared to be strong. For instance, various behaviours that were shown, have links to individual consideration and could contribute to attempts to increase the capacity of teachers were the principal's ability to (a) involve teachers in the planning of instructional programmes and take into account their personal capacities and talents when allocating tasks, (b) foster peer teaching by encouraging teachers to work together to tackle problems associated with topics within their own subjects (c) provide support to teachers and allow them to attend workshops held at the district office and (d) encourage experienced teachers to participate in training programmes targeting struggling neighbouring schools offered by external bodies. These findings supported what Bass (1985) asserted in relation to individual consideration that a school principal who pays attention to individual consideration behaviour does so by delegating tasks to staff in a way that would develop their capacity and increase their performance (Bass, 1985).

Apart from the already mentioned behaviours, the most significant practice of individual consideration that was reported by Principal B was the involvement of teachers in the planning process especially in the allocation of tasks. The principal shed light on how teachers' talents and their abilities to carry out the tasks were taken into consideration at the planning phase of academic activities.

Another participant reported that the principal allowed experienced teachers to participate in programmes run by external bodies to assist struggling neighbouring schools. Participant E held the view that the experience acquired from these programmes could be attributed to the school's successes. These findings affirmed what was shown in Bass' work on transformational leadership and the practice of individual consideration.

The implication of these findings indicated that there was a link between the strong presence of individual consideration in principal B's behaviour and the school's successes.

5.5 Finding 4 - Though these schools were successful, it seemed, transformational leadership was not the only contributor to the school's successes

5.5.1 Successes of transformational leadership strategies

The third research question sought to understand the successes of transformational leadership after strategies to deal with the challenges and sustain high learner achievement in the two case schools were implemented. It appeared from the findings that the two schools experienced different successes in relation to the outcomes of the strategies they adopted as transformational leaders. The discussion of the findings relevant to each school will follow the same trend as previously.

5.5.2 Emerging themes related to transformational leadership practices

In terms of the findings linked to research question four, it has been shown that both principals were able to perform three activities related to transformational leadership, namely: *(a) creating and maintaining professional school climate, (b) fostering teacher growth and development, (c) facilitating and encouraging*

effective and collective problem-solving. Following is the discussion of these themes pertaining to the activities of the principals as transformational leaders.

5.5.2.1 Creating and maintaining professional school climate

Both principals experienced successes though at different times. Findings have shown that the principal of school A demonstrated his transformational leadership and his ability to create and maintain a professional school climate when he involved parents, teachers and learners in the problem definition and vision-crafting process. These findings affirmed what has been revealed in the literature that principals who engaged in improvement strategies did so by creating safe learning environments and engaging greater parent, teacher and community involvement in these initiatives (Jacobson, 2012).

On the other hand, it appeared that the leadership style of principal B contributed to the positive climate that contributed to the achievement of the school's successes. This finding was supported by Decman, McCarley and Peters (2016) who indicated that "across the nations, quality leadership and positive school climate were critical to the success of every principal, student and the school". The two findings suggested that for principals to achieve the desired change they need to create an environment that promotes collective leadership. Also, it appeared that there is a link between the leadership style of the principal and a positive climate of a successful school. Mestry (2017) asserted that "principals can improve the teaching and learning environment by creating conditions conducive to improving curriculum management." This statement supports the current study as Mestry (2017) shows the centrality of the leadership role of school principals in the building of a culture that is conducive for any improvements to take place that would impact positively on learner outcomes.

5.5.2.2 Fostering teacher growth and development

It was shown in the findings that the two principals did not give the same attention to the professional development of teachers. Although principal A put in very little effort, it could be noted that both principals involved their teachers in problem-solving attempts and the decision-making process when delegating responsibilities. This activity presented an opportunity for the principals to increase their teachers' capacity and to allow them to become leaders in their own right. The finding supported what was discussed in the literature on the professional development of teachers (Decman,

et al., 2014): that principals play a critical role in this sphere by shaping the school environment that supports and motivates staff to engage in on-going learning.

5.5.2.3 Facilitating and encouraging effective and collective problem-solving

The findings show that both principals achieved school improvement and school successes by facilitating and encouraging a collective approach to problem solving. It was clear from the findings that when principal A recognised the challenges that were threatening his leadership role, he worked with others to foster the change processes required to bring about school improvements. This finding affirmed what was noted in research studies that the problem--solving behaviour of principals was shown in their ability to create conditions within which parents, teachers and learners were involved in problem-solving decisions (Friedrich, Griffith and Mumford, 2016). Principal A identified the fact that turning around a low-performing school was not his sole responsibility but was the result of teamwork. The collective approach to school improvement saw a steady increase in learner outcomes in the following years.

5.6 Increased pass rate in National Senior Certificate examinations

Given the reviewed data showing school performance in the National Senior Certificate examinations, following is the table that presents the performance of school A and school B with aggregate percentage scores for the years under study.

Table 5.1: Learner Performance as per National Senior Certificate examination: School A

Years	% of learner pass rate
2007-2008	70% -7%
2012	94%
2013	86%
2014	75%
2015	83%
2016	79%
2017	94%

The above table represents the growth of learner performance in the national examinations for school A since the implementation of the transformational strategies. The shaded area indicates the stage when the school experienced a decline in 2007

from 70% to 7%. Since the implementation of the improvement strategies, the data showed growth in learner pass rate as shown in the table. The data shows an improvement and it appears that if the high performance percentage over the specific years is taken into consideration, the change programmes initiated by principal A paid off. Principal A reported that with the significant achievement, the school received recognition and was among the top ten best-performing schools in the AmaThole East region.

These findings confirmed what was shown by Day, Qing and Sammons (2016) that “schools that improved and sustained their performance as judged by student academic performance outcomes and external inspection results, principals had exercised leadership that was transformational”. Based on this confirmation, it is clear that there is a link between the transformational leadership behaviour of the principal and the performance of the school.

With the already discussed reasons for the sampling of school B in the study, it appeared that principal B had led a school that was always among the best performing schools in the region under different principals. This was the case despite the school serving learners coming from disadvantaged communities. Below is a table showing the good performance of school B that principal B has maintained since the promotion to the principalship position.

Table 5.2: Learner pass rate –school B
Period -2012-2017

Years	% of learner pass rate
2012	81%
2013	74%
2014	87%
2015	84%
2016	86%
2017	98%

5.7 Sustained high pass rates in National Senior Certificate examinations for school B

From the findings and data presented earlier on in chapter 4, it was clear that school B had achieved extraordinary matric results year-on-year in the National Senior Certificate examinations. Principal B was effective in maintaining the continuous good performance of school B, after being appointed to the principalship position in 2015. Principal B reported that the school has received recognition for its academic achievements in a variety of categories as shown by the number of accolades, trophies and awards found displayed in her office. As a result, data analysis has shown that School B was among the best performing schools in the district, region and cluster. The principal showed the researcher the accolades that the school got for performing well in teaching subjects. The most significant accolade was the one the school received for Mathematics in a Mathematics Olympiad held among various schools in the district.

Among the trophies that were on display in the principal's office which indicated the successes of the school and significant was the one received by a learner for being a top achiever not only within the school, but was recognised by the Minister for obtaining level 7s in all subjects written in the Grade 12 examinations.

These findings corroborated what has been found in research studies in relation to transformational leadership. Allen et al. (2015), cites findings revealed by Finnigan & Stewart (2009) who found that, "though it has been noted that transformational leadership skills of the principal have no direct impact on learner achievement (Leithwood et al., 2008), transformational leadership behaviours were most frequently evident in high-performing schools, leading belief that transformational leadership is the most effective form of leadership". Thus, it was noted that the principal was responsible for leading the successes of the school. The outlined achievements showed that the principal's ability to obtain buy-in from teachers to ensure higher grades for learners contributed to these outcomes.

5.8 Practical implications

Given the findings of the differences between the two principals' practice of transformational leadership, this study suggests the offering of training programmes on transformational leadership competencies to principals of low-performing schools.

It is believed that training school principals on transformational leadership is worth the effort, especially to those who wish to embark on transformative initiatives. Anderson (2017) has claimed that “education leaders may benefit from training and development in transformational leadership styles proven to enhance performance in business organisations and education settings”. Most notable, leadership can be acquired through training, knowledge and skills. Hence, the findings for this study should encourage the training and development of transformational leadership in the South African as well as the Eastern Cape context.

Further investigation is required to understand how principals of low-performing schools practice transformational leadership to achieve school improvements and increased learner pass rate in national examinations within the context of Eastern Cape rural secondary schools. A similar recommendation was made by (Quin et al., 2015) that “from literature review it was discovered that there is a limited amount of research that has been conducted on the differences in the leadership practices of school leaders in varying performing organisations”. Thus, they identified the need to investigate the leadership of school principals from high-performing and low-performing schools in order to better understand the practices required to generate positive change and increase academic achievement.

5.9 Limitations

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is that it is a study of limited scope. As a result, it is a small project. Also, it is based on two case studies in the rural settings and social context of the Eastern Cape. In addition, it encompassed a small sample of six participants initially and ended up with five participants. Therefore, its findings are specific and unique to these cases. Meaning, the findings cannot be generalised to other whole population (Creswell, 2013) rural schools of the Eastern Cape. Also, the researcher was active in the data collection which may result in subjectivity and bias in the self-reporting of the findings. As this could not be avoided, though there were preparations put in place to address bias and subjectivity under the topic on credibility.

In addition, the condition of the road infrastructure in rural areas is often very poor and hazardous. Therefore, accessing the schools using these roads posed a challenge.

5.10 Recommendations of the study

Recommendations for the current study are premised on the findings and specific to the context of the two case studies. The findings make certain suggestions for recommendations in terms of the practice of the elements of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) by the two principals. The primary objective of the study was to understand the role of transformational leadership in two rural secondary schools which have performed extraordinarily if the context of the schools is considered in reporting on findings.

Based on the findings, there were differences in the two principals' understanding and application of transformational leadership, though not mutually exclusive when they engaged in behaviours such as idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration, the transformational leadership behaviours espoused by Bass Transformational Leadership Theory (1985), the theoretical framework on which this study is directed. This finding was expected if one considers the context of the two schools and the selection of participants and subsequently the semi-structured interviews that were carried out as part of the data collection methods.

However, the most notable difference that was found was when participant A, the principal of school A, reported that at one stage the school faced the biggest challenge of low learner performance. The practices linked to the elements of transformational leadership turned things around resulting in school improvements and an increased learner pass rate. Participant D, principal of school B which has continued to achieve at high levels used transformational leadership strategies to maintain school successes.

Literature has confirmed that the practice of the elements of transformational leadership is different depending on the school context (Burns, 1978). From a theoretical perspective, literature has shown that the role of a school leader to

effectively implement change processes should be that of a transformational leader (Bass, 1985).

The findings for the first school indicated that the principal spoke about a variety of strategies that were employed to facilitate a turn-around (change-oriented) from a low-performing school to one with an improved learner pass rate. Principals who experience a drop in learner performance should gather as much information about the problem as possible in order to link change strategies. According to Khalip & Noraazian (2016) “in school reform efforts, the leaders become the key players for providing guidance and solutions to improve student’s learning and developing teacher professionalism”. Also, transformational leadership is shown in the literature as the leadership style that is adopted by school leaders to foster change (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

Another finding showed that the two principals were not as enthusiastic in the practice of individual consideration for enhancing the capacity of teachers compared to other transformational behaviours like exerting influence, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation. Instead, the findings showed that the two principals relied on the training provided by the district, though they were not conscious of that reality. Therefore, this study recommends that principals who engage in efforts to turn around low-performing schools should prioritise teacher development programmes to create opportunities that would increase staff competence and improve teaching skills.

These structures within the school tasked with the development of teachers should focus on individual consideration and identify the training needs of teachers, implementing both individual and group professional development programmes (Mestry, 2017).

The above findings were inconsistent with what was shown by the results of (Hauserman & Stick, 2013) that “highly transformational principals worked collaboratively with staff to increase the level of personal and school support and to create a consistent vision. Professional growth was deemed a priority and the principals themselves modelled such activities”.

In summary, the researcher identified the varying findings on the practice of transformational leadership by the two principals. This is not a surprising finding if the

context of the two schools is considered. Also, the findings for this study are not generalizable and are only specific to the two rural secondary schools which formed the small sample. The recommendation for the first principal who faced a challenge of poor learner performance and engaged in efforts to increase learner pass rate is for him to make sure that the positive impact that transformational leadership brought as part of change is maintained.

On the weak practice of individual consideration by transformational leaders, the study recommends that principals who engage in efforts to bring about change that will result in increased learner pass rate, should pay more attention to professional development and prioritise training programmes of teachers in order to enhance their teaching competence to increase learner achievement. However, rather than relying on training and workshop offered by the district officials, principals could give opportunities for leadership roles, where novice teachers are mentored by more experienced teachers. Also, teachers can be encouraged to further their studies. In supporting his own recommendation on the professional development of principals, Mestry (2017) urged principals and School Governing Bodies not to be entirely dependent on the Department of Education for the professional development of principals and staff at their schools. Rather, principals should establish professional learning communities within the school, identify the training needs of teachers and engage them in the process (Mestry, 2017). Principals should be at the centre of ensuring that teachers receive the necessary training after they have indicated a lack of skills in certain areas of their profession which hinders the effective discharge of their responsibilities.

5.11 Suggestion for future studies

Given the recommendations discussed in the previous section, the researcher suggests that future studies be carried out on a larger scale. The findings for the study can be repeated in a different context where future research could focus on using alternative research methods such as the use of observations or a mix of distributed and transformational leadership theories to explore how distributed and transformational leadership in low-performing schools fosters teacher capacity and development to increase learner pass rate in the context of the entire population of the Eastern Cape secondary schools.

5.12 Summary and conclusion of the study

The current study sought to understand the role of transformational leadership in bringing about change firstly in a low-performing school that resulted in school improvements and later increased learner pass rate, and secondly in a school that has managed to sustain high levels of learner achievement despite serving a large number of learners coming from disadvantaged communities.

The problem that was identified by the study was the lack of studies on the successes of rural secondary schools, especially in the Eastern Cape context. The poor performance of the Eastern Cape compared to other provinces in the rest of the country is well-documented. However, little is known about rural secondary schools that have been shown to be performing at acceptable levels as indicated in the Annual Reports on Learner Performance available publicly. The interest of the study was aimed at understanding whether the success of these rural schools could be attributed to the principals' practice of strategies associated with transformational leadership. Given this background, the study focused mainly on understanding the principals' own experiences on the practices of the four elements of transformational leadership, namely, idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration (Bass, 1985). One of the research questions, sub-question two gave direction to the study in relation to transformational leadership strategies employed to initiate change for improvement or, as in the case of school B, to maintain a good school. The outline of the research questions is contained in chapter one.

A review of literature on transformational leadership is presented in chapter two. The purpose of reviewing literature for the current study was to identify previous work by other authors relevant to the topic under investigation. The reviewed literature showed the definition of transformational leadership, the methodology used by other researchers to examine transformational leadership practices that led to change and what was found by these studies,

The review showed that transformational leadership is defined according to the work of Burns (1978) and that it is the ability of the leader to take followers to higher levels of motivation and morality. School leaders, who adopt transformational leadership to engage in change activities for improvement, can do so by motivating and inspiring followers to be more involved in the change process (Bass, 1985).

The central finding that was shown by these reviews was the absence of literature for transformational leadership from a South African perspective, specifically, the Eastern Cape. The majority of studies on transformational leadership were done from a Western perspective, though there is a growing interest in East Asian countries like China and Malaysia. The spotting of this problem contributed to the pursuit of the current study in the South African context and to bring attention to the Eastern Cape. The main focus is the lack of understanding as to whether the successes of the two rural secondary schools could be attributed to the two principals' practice of the four strategies of transformational leadership.

The last section of chapter two provided a detailed discussion of Bass' (1985) Transformational Leadership which provided the theoretical perspective that helped the researcher with the framework to interview the participants to understand the role of transformational leadership and its impact on school improvements and on sustaining a good school.

The qualitative research methodology and within it the constructivist, interpretive paradigm as well as semi-structured interviews were used as methods to collect primary data on the views of the principals and other participants of their own role of transformational leadership in functioning schools within the context of the Eastern Cape from the theoretical perspectives of Bass' (1985) Transformational Leadership theory. Secondary data included document analysis and a literature review. Creswell (2000) recommended the use of these techniques for data collection in qualitative studies.

Purposive and snowballing sampling were used in the selection of participants. Principals were identified as participants automatically because of their leadership role within the school. Members of the Senior Management Team participated because education policies have shown that school leadership is not solely the responsibility of the principal, but collective leadership (South African Schools Act, 1996). Also, the researcher believed that the principals' views could be corroborated by the members of the Senior Management as they are expected to work as a team within the school. These discussions are outlined in chapter three. Also, chapter three provides discussions on the case study research design, sampling procedure, data collection

techniques, credibility and trustworthiness issues related to data, and ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter four presents the findings of the study based on the interviews of the principals and members of the Senior Management Team on their views and practice of the four elements of transformational leadership in changing a low-performing school into a well-performing school.

The significant findings indicated that the principals of the two schools had a varied understanding and application of transformational leadership to achieve the intended outcomes. The improvement strategies employed by the first principal to turn around a low-performing school showed a connection between transformational leadership and the significant improvement in learner achievement. The findings related to the practice of transformational leadership by the second principal showed a strong presence of idealised influence and inspirational leadership with moderate intellectual stimulation and low levels of individual consideration.

Other themes that emerged in the study that could be associated with the practice of transformational leadership and its successes were: (a) creating and maintaining a professional climate (b) fostering teacher growth and development (c) facilitating and encouraging effective collective problem-solving.

Research showed that transformational leadership for turning around a low-performing school engaged in the following behaviours: obtaining buy-in from parents, teachers and learners, exemplary behaviour, encouraging individual problem-solving, communication of the high expectations for learners and promoting shared leadership.

The last part of this study, chapter five, provided the discussions of the findings presented in the previous chapter, recommendations related to the findings and suggestions for future research.

In conclusion, the researcher affirms the findings that to foster school improvements and sustain well-performing schools, the practice of transformational leadership by the school principal is crucial. These findings are not unique to the South African context or Eastern Cape schools, but are applicable even internationally. The transformational strategies implemented by the first principal, who was faced with poor learner

performance, were shown to be linked to his transformational behaviour. Findings from Dixit et al. (2011) showed that principals who are in charge of school improvement see a significant difference as a result of implementing strategies associated with transformational leadership.

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Annexure A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW

This interview is being conducted as a part of the requirement for the awarding of the degree MEd Education Leadership in the completion of the research project entitled *“The role of transformational leadership in well performing schools in the Eastern Cape.”*

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study is to investigate and understand the role played by principals’ transformational leadership in fostering school improvements and sustaining high learner performance in rural secondary schools in the Eastern Cape. The purpose is to understand how school principals practice transformational leadership in collaboration with SMT members and teachers to impact positively on learner performance.

SOURCES OF DATA TO BE COLLECTED

Data will be collected by conducting semi-structured individual interviews with six participants made up of the two principals of the selected schools and their four members of Senior Management Team, two members for each school.

ASSURANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

All participants are assured that their identity as well as their responses will be regarded as completely confidential at all times and will not be made available to any unauthorized user. This will be ensured by using codes and pseudonyms instead of real names and identities. The participation of individuals in this study is completely voluntary. Should any participants wish to discontinue their participation during the course of the research project, he or she will be free to do so at any stage, up to and including after the completion of the actual interview. These conditions will be explained at the beginning of each individual interview and before the participant consents to participation in writing.

Precautions will be taken to ensure that no participant will be harmed in any way by this research or their participation therein. No participant will be named or identified in any way – should the researcher wish to quote from an interview transcript, pseudonyms will be allocated to that particular participant and coding as mentioned earlier.

Every participant will be given an opportunity to verify the transcription of the discussion/ his or her interview. The purpose is to ensure the credibility of the data collected from the interviews.

This individual interview should last between thirty and forty five minutes. Please note that the discussion will be recorded and then transcribed. Every participant will be given the opportunity to validate the transcription as an accurate reflection of the discussion and of their individual part therein.

Starting the conversations

Purpose of the following questions: Wanting to know about the principal's knowledge, skills, roles, emotions and experience and how they relate to the position.

TO THE PRINCIPALS

Demographic questions:

Educational background

1. Can you share with me the greater context of your educational background?

Position within the school

2. What position are you currently occupying within the school?

Leadership experience

3. How long have you been the principal at this school?

Role as a leader

4. How would you describe your role as a leader in this school?

Personality questions

5. How best would your family describe you?

Emotions

6. How do you feel about performance in your school?

TRANSITION

School performance

7. (Transition)...As there are increasing pressures on schools and principals to improve and sustain high levels of learner performance, please, tell me, how has your school performed in the National Senior Certificate results in the past five years?

Role in the school success

8. What has been your role in such achievement?

Values

9. What are the most important things that to you describe a functioning school?

Role as a leader

10. What do you see as your role in ensuring that your school is functioning for the best?

View on leadership

11. In your view, how does the leadership style help in sustaining a functioning school?

Experience

12. What is your own understanding of transformational leadership?

Vision

13. Talk to me, how do you give a direction to your staff as to where the school should be going?

Communicating the vision

14. How do you get them commit to the functioning of the school?

Challenges and ways of overcoming them

15. If you find that it is difficult for your staff members to commit to the school vision, what is your approach to such challenges?

Role modelling and idealised influence

16. How do you show your staff that you expect high performance for your school?

Inspiration and motivation

17. Explain to me, how you keep your staff excited and in high spirits for the good of the school?

Challenges and strategies to overcome such challenges

18. In particular, talk to me about how you dealt with this scenario, “a teacher is struggling with learner performance in his or her subject, and this could pose a challenge to the whole functioning of the school?”

Intellectual stimulation

19. Take me through the process, how do you let your team become problem-solvers?

Individual consideration

20. How have you stretched your team to achieve higher than expected in their performance?

Reflections on transformational leadership behaviour

21. From a comprehensive point of view, what do you think makes you lead the way

To the three members of the Senior Management Teams (SMT)

Role in school leadership

a. Tell me about your role within the leadership structure of the school?

School Challenges – research q2

b. In your own experience, take me through a process where your school faced challenges.

Strategies to overcome such challenges - Sub-research question 2

c. Explain to me how these challenges were dealt with.

Views

d. Explain to me why do you think that those approaches worked?

Lived experience on leadership role of the principal

e. If the principal was involved you in those approaches process, what was his or her role?

Beliefs

f. What is your own belief about collective leadership?

Opinion

g. If, in your own opinion, your school is a functioning school, what do you see fits such a description?

Idealised influence

h. Tell me about how your school principal influence colleagues and staff to commit to the school's vision?

Inspiration and motivation

i. What else is done to keep staff motivated and excited about their work?

Opinion

j. What leadership style do you think leads to the cooperation of staff in a school?

Opinion

k. Why do you understand about transformational leadership?

Lived experience

l. In your own experience, how do you view transformational leadership within the school?

Shared vision

m. What actions are taken to ensure that teachers have a clear understanding of what is expected of them?

Intellectual stimulation

n. Describe for me a scenario, where teachers are encouraged to be problem-solvers?

Coaching and mentoring

o. What specific aspects of teacher's support have your school currently embarked on?

Individual consideration

p. Tell me about the role played by the principal to ensure the professional needs of teachers are attended to.

Reflections on transformational leadership experience

q. From a comprehensive point of view, for you, what has been the most significant experiences of transformational leadership within your school that has sustained the functionality of the school? [Open-ended]

Annexure B

LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH PROJECT

18 May 2018

The District Director
BUTTERWORTH

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN BUTTERWORTH DISTRICT: SCHOOL A (known to the Department) and SCHOOL B (known to the Department)

I am currently enrolled for a Master's degree in Education Leadership at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies (EMPS). Part of the requirements for the awarding of this degree is the successful completion of a significant research project in the field of education.

The title of my approved research study is ***“The role of transformational leadership in well performing schools in the Eastern Cape”***. This study is concerned with the investigation of the role played by principals' transformational leadership in fostering improvements and sustaining high learner performance in rural secondary schools. In order to complete this study, I am required to conduct fieldwork. In the case of my specific study, this will involve conducting individual semi-structured interviews with the principals of two high-performing schools in your district, as well as with four members of the School Management Team (SMT) of those schools with the exclusion of teachers and learners.

Principals, members of the SMT and teachers will each be required to give informed consent for their individual participation in the study, and will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without fear of penalty or reprisal. The identity of schools and individual participants will be treated confidentially, and at no time either during the

data collection phase or during the dissemination of the findings of the study will personal or identification details of schools or individuals be made public.

I undertake to ensure that participation in my study in no way interferes with or disrupts the daily functioning of the schools or the individual participants. It is also important to note that no learners or teachers will be involved in the study.

At the end of the research study, you will be provided with a copy of the research report containing both the findings of the study and recommendations at the behest of the university. This research study presents a unique opportunity for your district to get involved in the process of research aimed at understanding the principals' practice of transformational leadership in turning around low performing schools and sustaining such successes as a means of contributing positive perceptions about the Eastern Cape rural schools.

I therefore respectfully request permission to gain access, for the purposes of the study as outlined above, to such high-performing schools in the district of which you are the director. For your information, a copy of my approved research proposal is attached to this request. Please also feel free to contact either myself, supervisor, Professor Sehoole and my co-supervisor, Dr Eberlein, for further information.

I look forward to your response to this request.

Yours sincerely

Miss N Mhaga
nomondemhaga@webmail.co.za

Prof MT Sehoole
Dean: Faculty of Education
Supervisor
chika.sehoole@up.ac.za

Dr E Eberlein
Co-supervisor
eric.eberlein@up.ac.za

Annexure C

18 May 2018

The Principal
XXXSenior Secondary School
BUTTERWORTH

Dear Sir/Madam

LETTER FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

I am currently enrolled for a Master's degree in Education Leadership at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies (EMPS). Part of the requirements for the awarding of this degree is the successful completion of a significant research project in the field of education.

The title of my approved research study is ***“The role of transformational leadership in well performing schools in the Eastern Cape”***. This study is concerned with the investigation of the role played by principals' transformational leadership in fostering improvements and sustaining high learner performance in rural secondary schools. In order to complete this study, I am required to conduct field work. In the case of my specific study, this will involve conducting individual semi-structured interviews with the principal of a well performing school in Butterworth, AmaThole East region, Eastern Cape, as well as with your two members of the School Management Team.

The scope and responsibility of your school's participation, should you choose to allow your school to participate, would be limited to allowing yourself, two members of the SMT to participate in a thirty to forty five minutes individual interview, the schedule of questions for which I have attached hereto.

Please understand that the decision for your school to participate is entirely voluntary and that, once you have indicated your willingness to participate. Permission for your school's participation has been sourced and secured from the Eastern Cape Department of Education as well as from the District director. I further undertake to ensure that your school's participation in my study will in no way interfere with or

disrupt the daily operations of the school or the individual participants. It is also important to note that no teachers or learners will be involved in the study.

Please also be assured that the information obtained during the research study will be treated confidentiality, with not even the Department of Education having access to the raw data obtained from the interviews. At no time will either you as an individual or your school be mentioned by name or indeed be allowed to be identified by any manner or means whatsoever in the research report. You will also be free to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. At the end of the research study you will be provided with a copy of the research report containing both the findings of the study and recommendations at the behest of the university.

This research study presents a unique opportunity for you and your members of the Senior Management Team to get involved in the process of research aimed at identifying effective transformational leadership practices that have contributed positively to school successes especially in the context of the Eastern Cape. If you decide to participate in this research study, kindly indicate this by completing the consent form at the end of this letter.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours in service of education,

Miss N Mhaga
MEd student
nomondemhaga@webmail.co.za

Prof MT Sehoole
Supervisor
chika.sehoole@up.ac.za

E Eberlein
Co-supervisor
eric.eberlein@up.ac.za

LETTER of INFORMED CONSENT

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT ENTITLED
The role of transformational leadership in well performing schools in rural
Eastern Cape'**

I, _____, the principal of

hereby voluntarily and willingly agree to the participation of my school in the above-mentioned study introduced and explained to me by Miss Nomonde Mhaga, currently a student enrolled for an MEd Education Leadership degree at the University of Pretoria.

I further declare that I understand, as they were explained to me by the researcher, the aim, scope, purpose, possible consequences and benefits and methods of collecting information proposed by the researcher, as well as the means by which the researcher will attempt to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the information she collects.

Full name

Date

Annexure D

18 May 2018

Informed consent – Individual participants

Dear participant

LETTER FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

I am currently enrolled for a Master's degree in Education Leadership at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies (EMPS). Part of the requirements for the awarding of this degree is the successful completion of a significant research project in the field of education.

The title of my approved research study is ***“The role of transformational leadership in well performing schools in the Eastern Cape”***. This study is concerned with the investigation of the role played by principals' practice of transformational leadership in fostering school improvements and sustaining high learner performance in rural secondary schools. In order to complete this study, I am required to conduct fieldwork. In the case of my specific study, this will involve conducting individual semi-structured interviews with the principals of two high-performing schools in the Eastern Cape, as well as with four members of the School Management Team (SMT) in exclusion of teachers and learners.

The scope and responsibility of your participation, should you choose to do so, would be limited to participating in a thirty to forty five minutes individual interview, the schedule of questions for which I have attached hereto.

Please understand that the decision for you to participate is entirely voluntary and that, once you have indicated your willingness to participate, permission for your participation will also be sourced and secured from the Eastern Cape Department of Education.

Please also be assured that the information obtained during the research study will be treated confidentiality, with not even the Department of Education having access to the raw data obtained from the interviews. At no time will either you as an individual or your school be

mentioned by name or indeed be allowed to be identified by any manner or means whatsoever in the research report. You will also be free to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. At the end of the research study you will be provided with a copy of the research report containing both the findings of the study and recommendations.

This research study presents a unique opportunity for you to get involved in the process of research aimed at understanding transformational leadership practices of principals of schools previously low-performing and have managed to turn themselves around as a means of contributing to positive perceptions of the Eastern Cape schools. If you decide to participate in this research study, kindly indicate this by completing the consent form at the end of this letter.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours in service of education,

Miss N Mhaga
MEd student
nomondemhaga@webmail.co.za
Cell number:0738951083

Prof MT Sehoole
Dean: Faculty of Education
chika.sehoole@up.ac.za

Dr E Eberlein
Co-supervisor
eric.eberlein@up.ac.za

LETTER of INFORMED CONSENT

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT ENTITLED
'The role of transformational leadership in well performing schools in the
Eastern Cape'**

I, _____, hereby voluntarily and willingly agree to participate as an individual in the above-mentioned study introduced and explained to me by Miss Nomonde Mhaga, currently a student enrolled for an MEd Education Leadership degree at the University of Pretoria.

I further declare that I understand, as they were explained to me by the researcher, the aim, scope, purpose, possible consequences and benefits and methods of collecting information proposed by the researcher, as well as the means by which the researcher will attempt to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the information he collects.

Full name