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**KWAZULU-NATAL SCHOOL PRINCIPALS'  
PERCEPTIONS OF THE PRACTICAL RELEVANCE OF  
FORMAL EDUCATION MANAGEMENT  
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore school principals' perceptions of the possible effects and benefits of formal university-based education management development programmes (EMDPs) on their practical work in schools. It also aims to inquire into the kinds of challenges that principals in South Africa, specifically in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), are faced with in the post-apartheid era and their perceptions of the extent to which these EMDPs meet or fail to meet their needs and those of their schools.

In this study I move from the basic premise that professional development is critical for all principals and that given the new conditions that exist in SA post-1994, more than ever, the ideal situation would be for all principals to be trained so as to enable them to deal effectively with the changed and constantly changing conditions that prevail in schools.

The study is guided by the following general research question: What are the perceptions of school principals of the benefits of formal EMDPs on their practices in school? The following related questions are also addressed, namely

- i) What are the links between formal EMDPs and the needs of school principals?
- ii) What kinds of challenges do principals in KZN face in the post-apartheid era and what are their perceptions of the extent to which EMDPs have met or failed to meet their needs and those of their schools?

Working in an interpretivist research paradigm within a qualitative research design, the inquiry used document analysis, content analysis of research literature and semi-structured interview methods. Data were analysed using a grounded theory approach in an effort to make sense of the meanings that the participants, mainly the school principals, in this study give to their experiences of EMDPs.

One of the main findings of this study is that some principals demonstrated the ability to reflect on their professional development programmes and to make connections between theory and research and some of the challenges that they encounter. The other main insights of the study include the following:

- a) Regarding their content and context, and according to the participants, EMDPs in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) have major shortcomings in relation to needs assessment and analysis, programmatic aims and objectives, recruitment and selection of candidates, and field-based learning experiences. However, EMDPs are perceived to have been successful in areas such as understanding the environments for which principals need to be developed, the application of leadership and management development content to organisational settings, and in their modes of delivery.
- b) Although a majority of principals recognised the need to change and work within the new democratic environment ushered in by the new socio-political dispensation in SA, a few principals expressed their challenges with engaging in shared leadership and shared decision making in schools.
- c) Pertaining to the perceptions of school principals regarding the value of EMDPs in KZN, the majority of principals felt that although they were still struggling with a number of post-1994 challenges, EMDPs had equipped them, for the most part — albeit inadequately — to deal with the challenges that they face in schools.
- d) School principals highlighted what they saw as two significant aspects (emerging themes) in the professional development of principals:
  - i. Though very critical of training workshops in their current form, school principals in this study saw training workshops as important vehicles for assisting principals to keep abreast of the developments in the leadership and management of their school, as a means for providing opportunities to share and learn from the experiences of others, and as an avenue for collaborative problem solving;
  - ii. A majority of school principals emphasised what they regarded as the important role played by experiences beyond the formal education management development programmes, in the effective running of schools.

Apart from presenting “thick descriptions” of the voices of school principals regarding the effects of the post-1994 changes on their practices and the extent to which EMDPs are perceived to have met principals and school needs, the significance of this study lies in plugging the gap of previous impact analysis studies by, amongst other things, not only focusing on the perceptions of the recipients of the EMDPs, but also focusing on the views of the EMDP providers and the policy makers. This study therefore presents critical insights

which may be invaluable in the future development of EMDPs and in the improvement or modification of existing ones.

## **Key Words**

1. School principals professional development
2. Education management development
3. Leadership development
4. School leadership
5. School management
6. Post-apartheid school challenges
7. School effectiveness

## Declaration

I, John Sibusiso Chalufu, declare that:

**KwaZulu-Natal school principals' perceptions of the practical relevance of formal education management development programmes**

is my own work, that all the sources cited or quoted have been duly acknowledged, and that I have not previously submitted this work for degree purposes at any tertiary education institution.

Signed:.....

Date:.....

J. S. Chalufu

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*This thesis is dedicated to my late parents, Rev. Jacob and Mrs Josephine Chalufu, whose memory has always served as a great source of strength and inspiration in all my endeavours in life. I hope you are proud of the then 1 year old boy that you left in this world when God called you home on that fateful day.*

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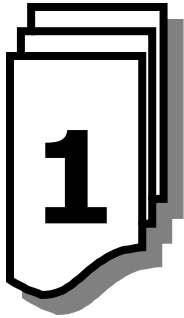
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## ACRONYMS USED IN THE STUDY

BEd (Hons.)	Bachelor of Education Honours degree
COL	Centres of Learning programme
DAS	Developmental Appraisal System
DEA	Department of Educational Administration
DEPLA	Department of Educational Planning, Leadership and Administration
DMs	District Managers
DoE	Department of Education
EMD	Education Management Development
EMDTP	Education Management Development Training Programme
EML	Educational Management and Leadership
HODs	Heads of Departments
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
KZNDEC	KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture
EMDPs	Education Management Development Programmes
MEd	Masters in Education degree
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
SA	South Africa
SASA	South African Schools Act, No 84 of 1996
SEMs	Superintendents of Education
SGBs	School Governing Bodies
SMT	School Management Team
PD	Professional Development
PDE	Provincial Department of Education
UMNC	University of Melmoth North Campus (pseudonym)
UMSC	University of Melmoth South Campus (pseudonym)
UK	United Kingdom
UPS	University of Port Shepstone (pseudonym)
USA	United States of America

# Chapter



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## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

### 1.1 Introduction

There is a large body of research which asserts the importance of school principals in so far as school effectiveness, school improvement and school restructuring efforts are concerned (Dunford *et al.*, 2000; Huber and West, 2002). An international study of practices of school leadership development in fifteen countries posited that “school leadership [is] a key factor for quality of effectiveness of the school” and sees “school leaders as important ‘change agents’ for school improvement” (Huber, 2004: xi). Indeed, there is general consensus amongst scholars about the importance of effective leadership for effective organisations (Sammons *et al.*, 1995; Hallinger and Heck, 1999; Bush, 2002; Hallinger, 2002; Huber, 2004). Oplatka (2009: 129) highlights the key role of school principals in the improvement of public education and the concomitant significance of what he calls effective principal preparation training.

Fullan (2008: 1) contends that powerful changes have bombarded the principalship over the years, thus making the life of school principals quite “onerous.” He further argues that there is no question that the role of school principals “has become more complex and in many ways “undoable” under current conditions” (Fullan, 2008: 3) (quotation marks in the

original). Bush (2008a) is therefore correct when he argues that the preparation and professional development of school leaders cannot be left to chance.

There is general agreement about the crucial role that education management development plays in ensuring effective leadership (Murphy, 1993; Jacobson *et al.*, 1998; Cambron-McCabe, 2003). As Sarason (1996: 381) put it more than a decade ago, writing about educators, “[D]esired school changes will not occur without significant changes in the professional preparation of educators.” Earlier Fullan (1991: 344) had argued that “sustained improvements in schools will not occur without changes in the quality of learning experiences on the part of those who run the school.” In fact, Huber (2004: xvii) goes so far as arguing that there is broad international agreement about the need for school leaders to have the capacities needed to improve teaching, learning and pupils’ development.

## **1.2 Purpose of the study and working assumptions**

The purpose of this study is to explore the possible effects of formal university-based education management development programmes on the practical work of principals. In other words, it aims to look at what principals perceive to be the benefits of EMDPs for their practise in schools. The secondary purpose of this study is to investigate the kinds of challenges that principals in South Africa, specifically in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), are faced with in the post-apartheid era and their perceptions of the extent to which these EMDPs meet or fail to meet their needs and those of their schools.

This study will examine the content of EMDPs together with the experiences and practices of school principals who have gone through or completed these programmes. In other words, this research will attempt to test the practical application of leadership and

management theory to the leadership and management practices of school leaders or principals in South Africa. This will be done with the view to improving and enhancing the value of the EMDPs — to ensure that they are geared towards the needs of principals and ultimately towards improving leadership and management practice in schools.

The importance of this study is underscored by the fact that in South Africa most principals ascend to the position with very little (if any) training<sup>1</sup> or opportunities for professional development. This is in contrast with the situation in a number of developed countries such as the United States of America (USA), Canada and others where in order to become a principal candidates are typically required to take advanced degrees or go through a certification programme, usually in educational administration, or to receive training from leadership academies and leadership centres (Fullan, 1991). According to van der Westhuizen and van Vuuren (2007), South Africa is one of the countries that do not require a compulsory and specific qualification for entry into the principalship. Usually the route to becoming a principal does not necessarily follow from leadership and management preparation or from the attainment of relevant qualifications, but rather culminates from a range of possibilities — such as the promotion from a teaching position to the position of the head of department, to assistant principalship and eventually to the principalship. This, according to Bush and Odura (2006), implies that principals are appointed on the basis of their teaching record rather than their leadership potential.

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<sup>1</sup> In Ontario, Canada, for example, all aspiring school leaders are required to complete the Principal's Qualification Programme before being appointed as principals or deputy principals (Bush, 2002). However, in a study surveying new principals, Bolam *et al.* (2000) found that sixty five percent (65%) had received no formal or structured preparation for the job. Also, it should be noted that there are other developed countries such as New Zealand where appointment to a principalship is not dependent upon any formal educational management qualification (Cardno, 2003).

As highlighted by Onguko and Abdalla (2008: 716), the scenario where principals “are recruited and promoted on the basis of their teaching rather than their leadership and management experience or qualification” is common in many developing countries. But as Sarason (1996: 141) has argued, being a classroom teacher by itself is not a very good preparation for being an effective principal.

In South Africa a number of principals, on assuming the position do on their own accord, and not as a required by legislation, engage in educational leadership/management studies and follow programmes such as the Bachelor of Education (BEd Honours)<sup>2</sup>, Masters in Educational Management/Leadership (MEd)<sup>3</sup>, and recently, the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE: Education Management)<sup>4</sup>. Besides learning on the job through trial and error, for most principals these programmes serve as their only formal professional development and sometimes preparation for these important roles and tasks. What is of concern, though, is that fifteen years since the declaration by a Task Team on Education Management Development<sup>5</sup> commissioned by the national Department of Education, contended that, “Training for leaders and managers... has continued on a ‘hit and miss’

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<sup>2</sup> BEd (Honours) is an education post-graduate degree – usually one-year full-time or two years part-time – that is offered in South African universities, undertaken following a four-year degree or course of study. In the BEd (Honours) programme there is a core curriculum that all students are required to follow before they specialize in their second year of study or in the second part of the programme. Students can specialize in the different areas such as Curriculum Studies; Guidance and Counselling; Foundations of Education; or Educational Leadership/Management.

<sup>3</sup> The Masters (MEd) programme in South African universities is a post-graduate degree normally pursued following an attainment of an Honours degree in education. Different types of Masters in Education are offered: MEd in Curriculum Studies; MEd in Guidance and Counselling; MEd in Foundations of Education; MEd in Sociology of Education; MEd in Educational Leadership/Management; etc. The MEd in Educational Leadership/Management allows students an opportunity to focus on aspects of the programme that deal mainly with the leadership and management of organisations such as schools.

<sup>4</sup> The Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE: Education Management) is a two-year NQF level 6 certificate programme in Education Management. The programme is mainly aimed at practising teachers and school managers who had previously not received any training in the management of schools, who wish to expand their knowledge of effective school management. In order to register for the ACE programme, students have to be in possession of a recognised teacher qualification (Teachers Diploma or Bachelors degree).

<sup>5</sup> For the latest most comprehensive and instructive analysis of the Report of the Task Team on Education Management Development, see Beckmann’s (2009) paper entitled, “Some timely/overdue questions on education management development in South Africa.” Paper read at the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference of the Education Management Association of South Africa (EMASA). Pretoria, 7—9 August 2009.



basis” (Department of Education, 1996: 12), not much seems to have changed (Bush, 2002; More, 2005). Equally disconcerting is the fact that currently there is “no strong central and coordinated leadership of education management development” (Beckmann, 2009: 13) in the country. Clearly, there is a need for a fundamental change not only regarding EMDPs, but also with regards to the broader conceptual framework of EMDPs that guides the practice of principal leadership in schools.

Because of this general lack of a well-coordinated education management development programme for school principals in South Africa, it could be argued that the few available avenues for principal professional development should at least be effective. In other words, there is a need to ensure that the presently available programmes do adequately equip principals with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes for effective leadership and management of schools. This means that these programmes should have a positive effect on principals’ practises so as to improve South African schools. They need to help principals to not only understand change, but also manage it effectively, particularly given the present conditions of a deluge of policy and other changes in the manner that schools ought to be managed. Moreover, it could be argued that the changes in leadership and management practise precipitated by the changed context under which schools presently operate in South Africa require corresponding changes particularly in university-based education management development programmes.

Based on my own experiences working in the broad area of leadership and management development both as a university lecturer and as a training facilitator, I came into this research with a few working assumptions. These assumptions were that:

- i. EMDPs were highly regarded by educators, particularly school principals, as important avenues for professional growth and development;

- ii. school principals would feel that these programmes assisted them in their management and leadership of schools, in other words, that EMDPs had practical relevance for their practises in schools;
- iii. school principals would feel that EMDPs did not fully meet their needs and those of their schools; and
- iv. school principals would feel that there are areas in which EMDPs needed to be improved.

### 1.3 Research questions

The following research question guides this inquiry:

*What are the perceptions of school principals of the benefits of formal education management development programmes on their practices in school?*

As part of the inquiry of this study, the following related questions will also be addressed:

- i) *What are the links between formal education management development programmes (EMDP) and the needs of school principals?*
- ii) *What kinds of challenges do principals in KZN face in the post-apartheid era and what are their perceptions of the extent to which EMDPs have met or failed to meet their needs and those of their schools?*

Furthermore, the following sub-questions will be considered:

- a) What is the nature of EMDPs presently in South Africa, particularly in the province of KwaZulu-Natal?
- b) With what types of environments are EMDPs equipping principals to deal?
- c) With what kinds of challenges do principals have to contend in schools under the new prevailing conditions?
- d) What are the perceptions of school principals of the strengths and limitations of the education management development programmes in terms of meeting their needs?

## 1.4 Background

Studies conducted in the early 1990s on South African education highlighted the shortcomings of the kind of training that was available to school principals during the apartheid period (for instance, Van der Westhuizen and Makhokolo, 1991). Already in the mid-1990s, Tsukudu and Taylor (1995) observed that in many instances school principals ascended to the position without having received training for their roles, often relying on experience and common sense. This lack of training has also been highlighted by other authors (Kitavi, 1995; Thurlow, 1996; Van der Westhuizen and Legotlo, 1996) who have pointed out that in most typical circumstances teachers were promoted to the principalship on the merits of their expertise as educators.

Much has changed since the publication of these studies: from the appointment of a government Task Team on Education Management Development (1996) which, *inter alia*, recommended the establishment of a National Institute for Education Management Development, to recent measures taken by the Department of Education to develop national standards for principal training (Kunene and Prew, 2005). However, notwithstanding these and other developments, much remains to be done. In 1996, Van der Westhuizen and Legotlo reported that management qualifications were not a prerequisite for appointment into the position of the principal. Fifteen years later, this situation has not changed — there is still no requirement for a particular qualification prior to the appointment to the principalship. Even the recently introduced Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE: Education Management) that most educators have pursued, is not a prerequisite for the principalship.

As previously mentioned, a few school leaders and a number of aspiring school leaders have, of their own volition, been engaged in professional management development, one way or another, mainly in the form of BEd (Honours) and MEd in Education Leadership and Management programmes as a way of improving their knowledge — and in the case of aspiring school leaders, as a way of improving their chances of being promoted to the leadership positions in the schools.

The recommendation that a National Institute for Education Management Development should be formed has not come to fruition more than a decade after the Task Team on Education Management Development delivered its report to the Department of Education. If one takes into consideration the critical role that such organisations have played in other countries<sup>6</sup>, then surely such an institute should have long been established in South Africa.

A number of authors have posited that changes to the system of education in South Africa have rendered many serving school principals ineffective in the leadership and management of their schools and under-prepared for their new roles (Bush, 2002; McLennan and Thurlow, 2003; Mestry and Grobler, 2003; Van der Westhuizen *et al.*, 2004). These authors further argue that many of these serving principals lack basic management training prior to and after their entry into the principalship. Clearly the few principals who have received some form of professional development do not seem to be adequately equipped to lead and manage within these changed environments.

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<sup>6</sup> The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) is one of the highly acclaimed centres for the overall training and continuous development of principals in England. Other countries have also invested in such organisations/centres: Singapore has the National Institute of Education, Australia boasts the Australian Principals' Centre, and various centres such as the Centre for School Leadership Development based in North Carolina, are found in the USA.

Van der Westhuizen and Legotlo (1996: 69), writing about the lack of preparation for school principals in South Africa, make an analogy with sports:

Whereas athletes normally have time and opportunity to prepare themselves for success in national and international games, school principals in South Africa have to face the realities of transforming and implementing the new educational policies... with little preparation and no specific guidelines for managing this transformation.

It is against this general background that this study aims to explore the extent to which the available avenues for principal development meet the needs of schools and school principals — according to the perceptions of principals — given the new conditions that exist in the country.

Education management development programmes for principals might play a crucial role in providing both veteran and beginning principals with the necessary skills and knowledge to deal effectively with the new conditions in schools. As Jacobson (1996: 271) has rightly argued, “[I]f schools are to change to meet the[se] challenges... then so too must the preparation of those individuals who will lead them into the new millennium.”

Therefore, the need to broaden, deepen and enrich our understanding of what school principals in South Africa deal with — the formidable challenges with which they have to contend and the extent to which EMDPs meet the schools’ and principals’ needs under these changed conditions — assumes crucial importance. By exploring the perceptions of school principals who have gone through these EMDPs, we can begin to understand how better to design professional development programmes that are suited to the needs of principals, and which help them deal effectively with the conditions that they encounter or are likely to encounter in schools.

## 1.5 Significance of the study

Due to the fact that over the years the principalship has become demanding, more complex, overloaded, unclear, forever-changing and substantially different from what it was previously (Fullan, 1991; Leithwood *et al.*, 1992; Murphy, 1994; Fullan, 2008), there have been calls for education management development programmes for school principals to respond to the changing conditions by effecting fundamental changes in their structures, content and delivery systems. These calls for reform in EMDPs have mainly been precipitated by the overall change movement in education and by the general perception regarding the inability of these programmes to effectively equip school principals with the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes necessary for dealing with the challenges and the ever-changing environments that they have to contend with. As Murphy (1992: 86) argued more than a decade ago, "... preparation programmes as a group are not only failing to address the right things, they are also doing a fairly poor job of accomplishing the things on which they have chosen to work."

In the South African context, the professional development of school managers or what is usually referred to as education management development (EDM), has been seen as critical to broader concerns about transformation in education. Indeed, one of the key ideas that the report of the Task Team on Education Management Development (TTEMED) articulated was the conviction "that education management development is the key to transformation in education" (Department of Education, 1996: 8).

It can be argued that in order to better serve schools and students in a rapidly changing society, today's educational leaders require knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that are different from those imparted by education management development programmes

of the past. It is in that context that a focus on the improvement of programmes aimed at equipping school leaders with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes is not only timely but also long overdue.

Moving from the basic premise that all principals require some form of professional development, a strong argument can be made that programmes which aim to equip principals with a variety of skills for their roles and positions should be able to suit their professional needs and help them improve their practice. In other words, these programmes should provide principals with the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes necessary for the tasks and roles that their positions call for within the changed and constantly changing conditions that prevail in South African schools.

Michelle Young of the UCEA (University Council on Education Administration) (in the Southern Regional Education Board, 2002: 2), maintains that “[U]ntil we have a process for determining whether preparation programmes have the impacts that we hope they do, it’s unlikely that we’ll have adequate information to engage in corrective programme development.” Therefore, one can argue that if we are to improve school principals development programmes, we need to know what the experiences of school leaders are within the changed context of schools in South Africa, and to what extent have EMDPs been able to meet their needs and those of their schools.

It is in that context that a study of this nature could be a precursor and an advocate for the development of programmes that will ensure improvement in the practises of school principals in South Africa, and consequently, South African schools. Its findings may be

invaluable for the future development of EMDPs and the improvement or modification of existing ones.

## 1.6 Conceptual framework

It is universally accepted that the role of the school principal has changed and also become quite challenging, therefore requiring that school principals' knowledge, skills, attitudes and practices "keep pace with an ever-changing and increasing knowledge base..." (New Jersey Department of Education, 2008: 4). Mestry and Singh (2007) argue that principals are faced with situations in which effective school management requires new and improved skills, knowledge and attitudes to cope with the wide range of demands and challenges.

It is within that context that the professional development (PD) of school principals has assumed greater importance. Amongst a variety of factors for stimulating successful leadership practices in schools that have been identified by various studies, are professional development experiences of school leaders (Leithwood, 2005). Writing about the Pacific region of the USA, Matsui (1999) argued that both research and experience dictate that meaningful and focused professional development at the various stages of a school administrator's [principal's] career may well hold the keys to the successful implementation of reforms.

The current study's conceptual framework is located within the broad concept of professional development, which can be defined as a "systematically planned, comprehensive set of ongoing professional growth activities carried out over time to achieve specific ... objectives" (Texarkana Independent School District, n.d.). I am in agreement with Nieuwenhuis' (2010a: 1) argument that professional development could be described as



receiving new theoretical ideas and suggestions and trying them out in practice. According to Steyn (2005), the focus of PD is the continuous updating of professional knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of staff.

There have been various conceptions of PD, but the one that seems to be widespread in the literature is that of PD as a response to particular reforms. Matsui (1999), for instance, looks at PD as key to the successful implementation of standards-based reform while Salazar (2007: 20) sees professional development as critical for school principals to meet the challenges of improving student outcomes and dealing with the pressures brought about by the “increased emphasis on standards-based school accountability.” The need for the professional development of school principals in South Africa is also linked to a need to equip school leaders with the necessary skills, knowledge values and attitudes to deal with the conditions that exist in schools as a result of the changes that have taken place since the dawn of the new era in South Africa in 1994.

Beyond the conception of PD as a response to particular reform initiatives, Sood and Mistry (2010) cite Tomlison (2009) who mentions some of the key reasons for PD that include personal/professional development, recruitment and career development. These authors further indicate that the emerging research evidence seems to suggest that effective PD engenders a sense of a learning community where opportunities for teachers to work with other colleagues help to improve their professional abilities and classroom practice. Steyn (2004) also emphasises the need for professional learning communities in which educators and leaders work together to focus on student learning. As will be seen later, this notion of a learning community has some resonance with the present study as it relates to school principals, with classroom practice being replaced with leadership and management practice.

Professional Development activities are normally seen as encompassing workshops, seminars, conferences and mentoring training programmes. Citing King and Newman (2001) and Richardson (2003), Steyn (2004) argues that unfortunately most PD programmes are brief workshops, conferences or courses that do not allow for follow-up sessions<sup>7</sup>. Although such workshops may be valuable to promote awareness of new practices and provide opportunities for educators to network and share experiences, Steyn (2004) rightly argues that their outcomes are questionable.

Steyn (2004, citing various authors) further argues that educators prefer programmes that are more practical in nature and aim to meet their specific needs. Sood and Mistry (2010) are of the opinion that identifying professional development needs is the first step to the development of staff. Unfortunately it would seem that in most instances where professional development programmes are offered, there has not been an assessment of the professional development needs of the principals regarding their perceptions of the skills needed to facilitate school improvement efforts (Salazar, 2007).

However, it should be noted that the issue of needs assessment/analysis in the professional development of principals, is not unproblematic. Not all needs assessment leads to improvement in the training design. Nieuwenhuis (2010b: 5) argues that the commonly used quantitative training needs assessment (TNA) is not without problems as it may be good on scope but less good at aiding our understanding of training needs. Furthermore, at times the respondents provide wish lists and desired responses of what they believe the training providers want to hear.

Nieuwenhuis (2010a) provides a good example of how an innovative research design combining a traditional TNA questionnaire with reflective journaling, can be used to gain

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<sup>7</sup>There are some exceptions such as the Hawai'i Cohort Leadership programme, which has a training programme which is followed by a year at a school with a veteran principal serving as mentor.

more insights into the training needs of school principals. According to Nieuwenhuis (2010b: 8), the use of such research design could provide a wealth of information that would enrich our understanding of the often hidden aspects which impact on the performance and functioning of the organisation. Indeed, from the principals' journals used in Nieuwenhuis' (2010a) study, the researchers were able to discern some of the critical areas where training was required and therefore to design a training programme geared towards meeting those needs. One could argue that the information that the researchers were able to get from the principals' journals would not have been provided in the traditional TNA questionnaire alone.

In arguing for a rethink of the professional development of school leaders, Kochan, Bredeson and Riehl (2002) cite King (1999) who has argued that the myriad of changes and demands related to the job of the school leader make it imperative that school principals should engage in a continuous cycle of learning. According to Steyn (2004: 221), however, there are a number of structural requirements for effective PD programmes. Because of their poignancy, these requirements warrant highlighting:

- i. Traditional approaches are criticised for not giving educators the time, activities and the content to improve their knowledge and skills; for PD to be effective, programmes need to be longer and to have more content focus, active learning and coherence.
- ii. Quick fixes may not produce the desired results; educators need blocks of time and they should determine the appropriate time for PD.
- iii. Professional development should take place over an extended period of time.
- iv. Collective participation can contribute to a shared professional culture where educators develop shared values and goals; sharing stimulates educators' reflection and broadens their perspective.

An alternative model for PD is proposed by Sood and Mistry (2010). It is based on collaborative action research involving participants in reviewing their own practice as reflective practitioners and is worth exploring and pursuing within the South African context. The importance of reflective practice on the part of school principals cannot be overemphasised<sup>8</sup>. Like Sood and Mistry (2010), Mann (n.d.) argues that principals learn as a result of training, practice, feedback, and, perhaps most importantly, individual reflection and group inquiry into their practice. Sood and Mistry (*Ibid.*) posit that a focus on the vision for collaborative partnership for effective professional development would most likely require additional preparation, training and professional development for school leaders.

Finally, it is my belief that some of the design principles of professional learning for school leaders outlined by the New Jersey Department of Education (2008: 8—9) are worth highlighting in thinking about the professional development of school principals in South Africa:

1. A focus on continuous professional growth to enhance knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performance....
2. School leaders to be lifelong learners who take personal responsibility for their continuing professional development and recognize that this is integral to meeting the larger goal of continuous improvement of teaching and student achievement.
3. An emphasis on professional development as a collaborative process.
4. Sustained professional development.
5. Adaptation to the unique contexts and educational settings of the schools and districts and the needs of the individual school leaders.
6. A process that is appropriate for all school leaders (i.e., new and experienced, principals and superintendents) and encourages adaptations to address unique needs.

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<sup>8</sup> Nieuwenhuis (2010a) cites Argyris (1991: 100) who has rightly argued that managers desiring to be more effective should not only focus on problem solving in the external environment, but they should also look inward and reflect critically on their own behaviour as a contributing factor to organisational problems.

7. Integration of professional development and performance of day-to-day responsibilities with district/school goals and improvement plans.
8. An environment of trust in which school leaders feel comfortable in taking risks, exploring new ideas and implementing innovative practices that enhance their continuing professional growth and promote continual improvement of schools, teaching and learning.
9. An emphasis on accountability throughout the process through periodic peer reviews documentation of the fulfilment of Professional Growth Plans, including professional development goals and intended outcomes.
10. The professional development process should be widely supported at state, district, and school levels with relevant policies, technical assistance, and resources.

In summary, the conceptual framework for this study is depicted in Figure 1 below:

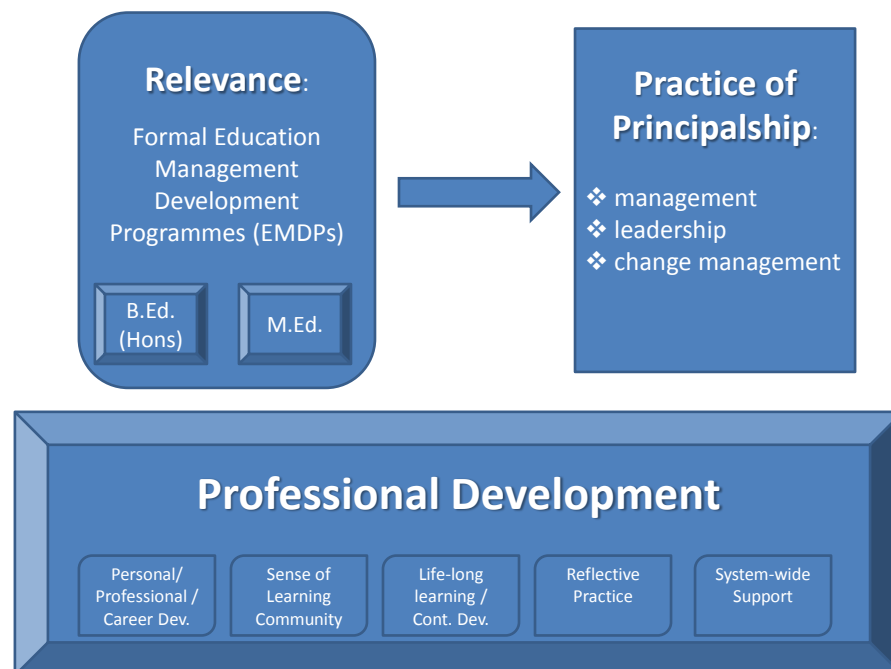


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for the relevance of EMDPs for the practice of principalship

It is my belief that locating the current study within the professional development trajectory provides an appropriate conceptual lens through which the perceptions of school

principals about the relevance of education management development programmes to leadership and management practice in KwaZulu-Natal, can be understood.

## 1.7 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework that underpins this study is drawn from the work of various scholars (Fullan, 1991, 1999, 2001a, 2001b; Sarason, 1996; Rosenholtz, 1989; Jansen, 2001a), whose writings over the years have provided persuasive insights about the complexities and the processes of change in educational institutions such as schools. I use these insights to examine and explain the perception of school principals in relation to the extent to which EMDPs meet (or fail to meet) their needs. Furthermore, these multiple perspectives on change may provide possible explanations for the lack of fit between what EMDPs offer and the needs of schools and school principals.

In considering a theoretical framework about change as it relates to the training of school principals, it is important to take cognisance of what Fullan (1991: 32) postulated more than a decade ago:

Real change... represents a serious personal and collective experience characterized by ambivalence and uncertainty.... The anxieties of uncertainty and the joys of mastery are central to the subjective meaning of educational change, and to success or failure—facts that have not been recognized or appreciated in most attempts at reform.

Fullan (1991: 36) argues that when change efforts are considered, it is also important to take into account those people who will be directly affected by the change — to take their “subjective realities” into consideration — because these subjective realities can be powerful constraints to change. I would argue, therefore, that in designing training programmes that are meant to fundamentally alter the manner in which school principals operate within the

changed South African contexts, the contexts (realities) in which these principals function should be taken into consideration.

One of the most critical arguments that Sarason (1996) has advanced is the importance of understanding the culture of organisations (schools) in order to understand how those organisations may/may not be able to change<sup>9</sup>. Rosenholtz (1989) has posited that school culture is a powerful force in fostering or impeding change in school. And according to Fullan (1991: 145), “the principal is central, especially to changes in the culture of the school.”

In trying to develop insights about how school principals practices may or may not change in the context of EMDPs, it is also important to understand that “...the link between cause and effect is difficult to trace, that changes (planned and otherwise) unfold in non-linear ways, that paradoxes and contradictions abound...” (Fullan, 1999: 4). Writing about the problem of policy implementation and non-change in education, Jansen (2001a: 271) has also argued that the relationship between policy and practice does not follow a simple linear path where “policy moves logically and naturally from intention to realisation.” His argument can be extended to our discussions of the relationship between training programmes and the leadership and management practices of school principals.

Understanding the culture of organisations such as schools is but one part of the solution to the puzzle of educational change. The fact that programmes for the training of those who work in schools (educators and school managers/leaders) are offered by higher education institutions such as universities or schools of education, implies that we also have

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<sup>9</sup> Other scholars such as Sergiovanni (1994) have argued that our conceptions of schools as organisations need to change to that of schools as communities.

to develop an understanding of the culture that prevails in such institutions. As Sarason (1996: 142) has argued,

...one cannot truly understand the culture of the school independent of its relationship... to centers for professional training. These centers, by virtue of being vehicles for the selection and socialization of educational personnel, have an obvious impact on the school culture.

The idea in this study is to go beyond a focus on school principals — to include EMDP providers, in line with the intricate link between schools and centers for professional training to which Sarason refers. Specifically in reference to the training of school principals, Sarason (1996: 5) has argued that,

...the ways in which most principals deal with [challenges in schools] cannot be understood by only studying principals in school, but one must also look to the substance of university training programmes that prepare principals for the realities of the school culture.

Other scholars have also alluded to the importance of understanding university cultures. Monks and Walsh (2001), for instance, have argued that the demands of university context may provide possible explanation as to why some university programmes hardly meet the needs of practitioners such as school principals. These scholars contend that more often than not there is a difficulty in reconciling individual research interests of lecturers and the learning goals of EMDP participants who may not share the same degree of enthusiasm for what the lecturer is currently researching. In some instances, the lecturer's research interest may have very little to do with the concerns of the practitioners, and yet still be imposed on the module content because that is what the lecturer feels s/he is an expert in. In fact, Monks and Walsh (2001) cite Whitley (1995) who has argued that as academics gain more control over skills definition and evaluation, they organise curricula around research-based knowledge rather than practitioner-based categories and techniques. This



results in the classification of problems and phenomena becoming distant from those current in practitioners' daily practice, which may then explain the lack of fit between what EMDPs offer and the needs of school principals.

What is required, according to Cambron-McCabe (2003: 285), is for schools and colleges of education to transform themselves to create new ways of learning that make possible re-conceptualization of leadership preparation and pedagogical practices. Cambron-McCabe (*Ibid.*) proposes the development of what she calls “authentic learning communities” which begin with deep and extended conversation about the behaviours, skills, and structural changes necessary to a faculty learning community. Indeed, fascinating accounts of professors of education's efforts geared towards transforming university-based education management development programmes have been provided by scholars such as Kottkamp and Silverberg (2003). These narratives detail how these professors and their departments or schools have gone about instituting changes in the professional development programmes, while making explicit the roles that they play as drivers of the transformation processes.

One can argue that the lack of a thorough understanding of the “culture [of schools] — its regularities, values, practices, and people” (Sarason, 1996: x), provides part of the explanation for the disjuncture between universities training programmes for principals and school principals and schools needs. Writing about the problems in teacher preparation, Sarason (1996) alludes to this issue (of a disjuncture between the needs of the schools and what the colleges/universities were offering). Referring to an earlier book he and his colleagues had written back in 1962, he argues that:

...until we understood the ways in which school personnel were defining and experiencing problems in their daily work—*not* the way the combatants in

the debate [about bringing about change in the school system] were defining the problem or how as outsiders they were experiencing the schools, if they were experiencing them at all—efforts to change and improve schools would fail. (Sarason, 1996: 43) (emphasis in the original).

According to Sarason (1996: 46), universities are characterised by the fact that change at such institutions is slow. It is, however, “the elitist traditions of the university in blatant and subtle ways [that] inculcate attitudes and conceptions in educators that render them vulnerable to disillusionment and resistant to change.” To explicate how universities perpetuate certain conceptions about schools, Sarason (1996) uses the example of teaching practice whereby student teachers on teaching practice hardly get opportunities to interact with education personnel inside (e.g., school principals) and outside the school (e.g., Superintendent), other than the teachers that they are assigned to. This, according to Sarason (1996: 47), leads to a situation where student teachers “obtain an extraordinarily narrow view of what a school and school system are.”

My reading of Sarason’s (1996: 49) arguments is that any attempt at change that ignores the “attitudes, conceptions and regularities of *all* who are in the [school] setting” is bound to result in failure (emphasis in the original). For education management development programmes this implies that any training programme that does not take into consideration what Sarason calls the “characteristic regularities of the institutional culture” is bound to fail. For instance, efforts by EMDPs to inculcate in school principals the importance of applying democratic leadership principles are not likely to succeed as long as the dominant conception and practice in schools is that of schools as hierarchical organisations as opposed to conceptions of schools as learning communities.

Another aspect that I believe is of critical importance that Sarason (1996: 89) addresses, is the issue of power and power relations in our understanding of change. His argument is that “any... effort at institutional change that is insensitive to the issue of power courts failure.” I would argue that without any transformation in power relations when change efforts are implemented, chances of success are minimal if not non-existent. Indeed in the context of the changes in the manner in which schools operate, heralded by the general changes that have taken place in the country, a major shift in power relations has been necessary. Parents, for example, who previously played a supportive role in schools, became important co-decision makers regarding the governance of schools in South Africa.

It is my belief that the insights from the different authors discussed above, will aid discussions about the principals’ perceptions of the relevance and value of EMDPs on the leadership and management practices. Understanding the complexity of change may, for instance, be critical in explicating non-change, that is, no real change taking place in the desired direction (Fullan, 1991). These multiple perspectives on change, I believe, possess critical explanatory power for the manner in which EMDPs are designed, packaged and presented, and their value for the practices of school principals.

## **1.8 Research methodology**

According to Henning *et al.* (2004: 36) research methodology “refers to the coherent group of methods that complement one another and that have the “goodness of fit” to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question and suit the research purpose.” For Le Grange (2007: 422), methodology is the philosophical framework that guides the research activity, whereas method refers to the techniques for gathering empirical evidence.

The present study employed document analysis, content analysis of research literature and semi-structured interview methods to explore the possible effects of formal university-based education management development programmes — based on principals’ perceptions — on the practical work of principals. The focus was mainly on high school principals<sup>10</sup> who had undergone some form of professional management development from three universities<sup>11</sup> in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, and who had been practising school managers for at least more than two years since the completion of their EMDPs. The instruments that were used as data collection tools were the interview schedule, the document analysis protocol, and the research log.

Three different kinds of interview protocols were designed and administered – one for university lecturing staff (mainly the heads of departments (HODs) and lecturers/professors who teach in the EMDPs) in the Schools of Education in the province; one for key personnel in the provincial Department of Education (PDE) and in the national Department of Education (DoE); and the other for practising school principals.

Important to mention is the fact that although the major focus of the study was with the principals’ perceptions of the possible effects of EMDPs on their practice in schools, in this study I did not merely conduct interviews with school principals but also with lecturers and professors who teach in the EMDPs, and further reviewed and analysed the programmes offered in universities in KZN. This was done in order to also get the perspectives of the providers of education management development programmes and to get some insight into the content of the programmes on offer. Key personnel in the PDE

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<sup>10</sup> Although the focus of the study was mainly on high school principals when the study was initially conceptualized, a total of 6 primary school principals — five of whom were women — were also interviewed particularly since most women in KwaZulu-Natal are principals in primary schools.

<sup>11</sup> Pseudonyms are used in the study for the three universities in KwaZulu-Natal — see Chapter 3 of the study.

and the DoE (one in each department) were also interviewed in order to locate the study within the broader context in which the professional development of school managers takes place in South Africa.

The initial part of the study entailed an analysis of graduate EMDPs offered in the three universities. In other words, I engaged in a thorough review and analysis of what these programmes offer, with the aim of determining the content and context of EMDPs as it relates to the practices of school principals. Following interviews with HODs, another review and analysis of policy documents and reports pertaining to EMDPs in South Africa from the PDE and the DoE — was conducted. This was done in an effort to get a sense of what the latest developments in the area of EMDPs have generally been in the country, particularly since the dawn of the new era. This was pertinent in terms of answering the question of the nature of EMDPs in South Africa and the future directions that they seem likely to follow, especially in the formulation of policy related to these programmes.

The full descriptive analysis of the research design and methodology of the study — focusing on the scope of the research, the data collection plan, the study sample, the data collection techniques, the research instruments, the data analysis strategies, reliability and validity (trustworthiness and dependability) concerns as well as ethical concerns — is presented in Chapter 3 of the study.

## **1.9 Limitations of the study**

This study has a number of limitations. The most obvious one is that it focuses only on the province of KZN, to the exclusion of the other eight provinces in South Africa. One of the major reasons the province of KZN was chosen is that it provides a good opportunity for

this kind of study due to its diversity in the number of education management development programmes offered and the clientele served by institutions in this province.

Given this focus on only one of the provinces, the results of this study need to be treated with caution because they may not be generalisable to the whole country. This, however, does not diminish the importance of the study or its findings which, it can be argued, will have major implications for the future development and design of EMDPs and the improvement or modification of existing ones. In fact, given the notion that most principals in South Africa in general have to contend with the challenges wrought by the new conditions that now exist in schools culminating from the new dispensation, there exists the great possibility that there may be major similarities in the experiences of these school leaders — this notwithstanding some differences in the EMDPs offered in the different provinces, and some of the context- or region-specific issues that principals in the province of KZN may be dealing with. I would go so far as arguing that the major importance of this study may be underscored by the fact that these programmes can be used as a component for principal preparation in South Africa.

Related to the limitations in terms of scope is the issue of the sample of the study. Important to mention is that this has to be understood within the context of a dearth in terms of numbers of principals who have undertaken EMDPs in South Africa in general, and in KZN in particular<sup>12</sup>. Although forty-two (42) school principals were initially interviewed for this inquiry, the data reported in this study is that of thirty one (31) principals. The drop in the number of principals was mainly due to the fact that I discovered

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<sup>12</sup> Specific statistics were not available from the PDE regarding the numbers of principals who have undergone EMDPs in the province.

in the middle of the interviews that the other eleven (11) principals did not fulfil the criteria set out for this study.

The main objective of the research was not a focus in terms of numbers (quantitative analysis) regarding the extent to which the EMDPs meet principals and schools needs, but rather an attempt to gather the perspectives of a sample of school leaders who have undergone professional management development and are now practitioners. Worth mentioning is the fact that these interviews yielded copious data which, once transcribed, numbered two hundred and ninety seven pages of raw data (excluding interviews with key personnel in the universities departments and in the PDE and the DoE).

It should also be mentioned that there were no White school principals who were interviewed for this study. Despite my concerted efforts to include White principals as part of the sample of this study, I was not successful. The inability to include White school principals in my sample should be understood against the backdrop of the student population in the three universities in KZN, which is made up of mainly black (African, “Indian” and “Coloured”) students. Even at a university where I expected to find a substantial number of White school principals who had graduated from the Educational Management programmes, this was not so due to the fact that, among other things, the programmes (especially the Masters) had been in operation for less than 7 years and did not have White students. Therefore locating White principals who had undergone EMDPs became an intractable task.

Another aspect of the limitations of this study is the fact that teachers — who may be regarded as important (possible) participants in so far as their proximity to school

principals regarding their perceptions of the challenges that principals have to contend with — were not interviewed. This is mainly because this study has as its main focus the “voices” of those who have undergone and completed education management development programmes and who are thus in a better position to articulate the challenges that they face *vis-à-vis* the EMDP, and the extent to which these programmes had met or failed to meet their needs. Therefore, one of the design limitations in this study is the reliance on self-referential reports from school principals.

### 1.10 Discussion of key concepts used in the study

The following terms are discussed to clarify the context in which they are used in this study:

*Education management development programmes (EMDPs)* can be regarded as the course of study (or in the language of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), a set of learning experiences) that school leaders like principals undertake — be it a degree or certification programme — as part of some form of professional development for school leaders. These programmes — which are sometimes referred to as educational leadership preparation programmes, educational management development programmes or administrator preparation programmes — are usually offered mainly at universities/colleges in South Africa, at management/leadership training institutes or as part of short courses offered by private providers who are part of the non-governmental organisation sector<sup>13</sup>. In the South African context, the concept of “education management

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<sup>13</sup> It is important to acknowledge the critical role played by a variety of non-governmental organisations such as the Delta Foundation, JET Education Services and the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance (which is a semi-autonomous not-for-profit organisation set up by the Gauteng Department of Education) in the professional development of not only school managers, but also other key role players such as educators and school governors.



development” (EMD) has often been utilised to describe the process by which school leaders receive some kind of professional development or, in the case of veteran school leaders already practising, in-service training (see, for example, the report of the National Task Team on Education Management Development (Department of Education, 1996).

Prior to the introduction of the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE: Education Management) into the higher education landscape in South Africa, those teachers operating at management levels in school (head of departments, deputy principals and principals) could pursue a Further Diploma in Education (FDE: Educational Management). In general, the FDE was a form of in-service training for teachers in possession of a 3-year post secondary school teaching diploma, who wished to upgrade their qualifications in different subject areas and fields of study (e.g., FDE: Science Education, FDE: Language Teaching, FDE: Special Educational Needs, etc.). According to Sayed (2002), the intention behind the FDE qualification was therefore for teacher professional development and qualification upgrading. In the case of the FDE: Educational Management, those teachers who had school subject training but lacked management training — and were either playing management roles or aspiring for management positions — pursued the FDE with a focus on education management. The FDE: Educational Management, subject to certain limitations, was regarded by some institutions (e.g., University of Pretoria) as a progression route into the BEd (Honours) programme (Sayed, 2002).

As indicated earlier in the chapter, in SA there is no formal qualification requirement for the principalship. Given that for most school principals the Bachelor of Education Honours (BEd Honours) and the Masters programme (MEd) in Educational Leadership/Management serve as the only forms of professional development, these programmes could be regarded as examples of EMDPs offered in South African higher

education institutions, particularly universities. These are post-graduate programmes undertaken as a form of further studies beyond the initial degree.

It is important to highlight the fact that the BEd Honours and the Masters qualifications — including the ones whose programmes are focused on the education leadership and management disciplines — do not necessarily have the principalship as their main aim. Moreover, a distinction needs to be made between the Bachelor Honours and Masters qualifications, particularly in relation to their purposes and characteristics, as clearly articulated in the Higher Education Qualification Framework (HEQF) (Department of Education, 2007).

According to the NQF, the purpose of the Bachelor Honours qualification is to deepen the student's expertise in a particular discipline and develop research capacity in the methodology and techniques of that discipline. Furthermore, the Bachelor Honours aims to prepare students for research-based postgraduate study, with an added requirement that students should conduct and report research. Clearly, as envisaged by the HEQF, the Bachelor Honours is not a practice-based professional qualification. However, some BEd Honours (Educational Leadership/Management) programmes offered at institutions of higher learning have tended to include some practical aspects — including a requirement for students to study and provide practical solutions for school-based problems — in their curriculum<sup>14</sup>.

The masters' qualification on the other hand has as its primary purposes the educating and training of researchers and the preparation of graduates for advanced and

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<sup>14</sup> See discussions of the programmes of the University of Port Shepstone, Montclair University North Campus and University of Melmoth North Campus in section 4.7 of the present study.

specialised professional employment (Department of Education, 2007)<sup>15</sup>. Masters graduates are further required to be “able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements using data and information... demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level...” (Department of Education, 2007: 27). It can be argued that in as much as the masters’ qualification is mainly envisaged as a research-based qualification, the HEQF also places some emphasis on the practical application of that (research) knowledge. Again, as with the BEd (Honours) in educational leadership/management, some masters’ programmes in educational leadership and management require students to focus on current practical problems affecting schools, as part of their curriculum.

Although there is a difference between programmes that are aimed at improving the conceptual understanding of participants — mainly driven by theory and research — and those programmes that are aimed at the improvement of practical skills, I would argue that the programmes that my study focuses on tend to have these two aspects in their design and execution.

*BEd (Honours)* is an education degree (usually one-year full-time or two years part-time) offered in South African universities that is undertaken following a four-year degree or course of study. In the BEd (Honours) programme students have an opportunity to specialise in the second part of their programme. They can specialise in the different areas such as Curriculum Studies; Guidance and Counselling; Foundations of Education; or

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<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that this purpose does not apply to the Education Leadership programme offered at some of the higher education institutions where there is a substantial focus on practical work – mainly some site-based focus.

Educational Leadership/Management. It is the BEd (Honours) with an Educational Leadership/Management specialisation that this study is concerned with.

As with the BEd (Honours), the *Masters (MEd)* programmes in South African universities have an Educational Leadership/Management specialisation component which allows students — mostly but not exclusively practising principals — an opportunity to focus on aspects of the programme that deal mainly with the leadership and management of schools. In both the BEd (Honours) and the MEd programmes there is a core curriculum that all students are required to follow before they specialise in their second year of study or in the second part of the programme (in case of full-time students).

*Practising school leaders or school principals* in this study refer to those practitioners or school leaders who are presently involved with the task of leading and managing schools in the post of principals and have been in these positions for at least more than 2 years. As already alluded to, the focus in this study was solely on those practising school leaders who have undergone formal education management development in the form of degree courses such as the BEd (Honours) and/or MEd in Educational Leadership/Management Programmes, mainly because these courses of study have been the major sources of professional development for school principals in SA.

For the purposes of this study, the concepts *school management* and *school leadership* will be used interchangeably although it is clearly understood that a distinction is often drawn between these concepts and in the manner that they are used. School leadership is often used to refer to mission, direction, goals and inspiration; and school management involves designing and carrying out plans, getting things done, and working effectively with people. According to Fullan (1991), Louis and Miles (1990) make the

distinction between leadership and management, however, they emphasize that both are essential. Bush (2008b: 4) also makes the point that leadership and management need to be given equal prominence if schools and colleges are to operate effectively and achieve their objectives.

Also in the literature there is a tendency to use the words *educational managers* and *educational leaders* synonymously. In this study that trend will also be followed, although it is again clearly understood that these terms do not mean the same thing. Again, Fullan (1991) contends that successful principals engage in both functions equally in their leadership and management of schools. As Sergiovanni (1991: 255) has argued, “[L]eadership without management can lead to mere rhetoric and disappointment. Management without leadership rarely results in sustained changes....”

I use these concepts in this study while fully cognisant of the strong argument by Heystek (2007) that the functions that are performed by school principals are managerial as opposed to being leadership functions, and therefore school principals should be labelled as managers (or even administrators) as opposed to leaders. To further strengthen his argument, Heystek (2007: 495) cites the work of Alma Harris (2006) who has argued that a distinction ought to be made between an educational leader and a school leader.

In his discussion of educational leadership and management as a field of study, Ribbins (2007) explores various arguments by influential authors from Asia (India), North America and the United Kingdom. However, he aligns himself with the idea that these concepts (leadership and management) are different but complementary — while not convinced that administration and leadership can be combined.

For ease of reference and for continuing with the international trend, I therefore use the concepts school leader (leadership) and school manager (management) in this study.

*“Coloured”, “Indian”, African and White* are terms used in the study for the different racial groups in line with the racial classifications in the Employment Equity Act, Act 55 of 1998 (Department of Labour, 1998). These racial categories are used purely for the purposes of analysis and clarification of issues, and with the full acknowledgement of the problematic nature of such terms as “Coloured”, “Indian” and African within the new dispensation in SA. This classification is not only inevitable, but also helps in terms of understanding the unique challenges that principals in schools administered by former departments of education have to contend with. These former departments are the ex-House of Assembly (ex-HoA) for Whites, ex-House of Representatives (ex-HoR) for “Coloureds”, ex-House of Delegates (ex-HoD) for “Indians”, ex-Department of Education and Training (ex-DET) for those Africans not under the so-called Homelands or Self-Governing Territories, and ex-KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture (ex-KDEC) for those Africans under the KwaZulu Homeland Government, a Self-Governing — but not independent — Territory at that time. It should be noted, however that by and large schools in SA remain, to a very large extent, segregated — with the exception of multiracial schools made up mainly of African learners who attend former White, “Indian” and “Coloured” schools — despite the dismantling of *de jure* apartheid.

### **1.11 Outline of the study**

This inquiry will be organised into six chapters. As already seen, **Chapter One** lays the foundation for the study by presenting the purpose and working assumptions, the research questions, the background, the significance, the definition of key terms used in the study, and the limitations of the study. Also included in this chapter is a discussion of the

conceptual and the theoretical frameworks that guide or inform the study, and a brief outline of the research methodology employed.

**Chapter Two** is basically a critical review of the literature on education management development programmes' assessment. In this chapter I provide a thorough, in-depth examination of empirical studies that have attempted to evaluate the relevance of education management development programmes (EMDPs) to leadership and management practise in organisations.

**Chapter Three** of this study is a discussion of the research design. It presents the general logic and the strategy used to try and answer each of the five sub-questions posed. An explanation of how the data was collected, a discussion of the sample of the study and how the data was analysed, is presented. The chapter also addresses reliability and validity (trustworthiness and dependability) as well as ethical concerns related to the study.

**Chapter Four** presents the research findings on the content and context of EMDPs in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The chapter focuses on the important aspects of EMDPs such as the recruitment and selection of candidates, the content of these programmes, the place for field-based experiences, and the modes of delivery. There is also a focus in this chapter on the university lecturing staff who are involved in the development of and teaching in these programmes.

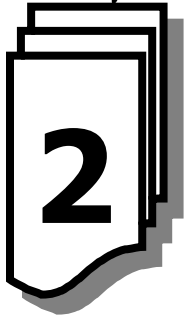
**Chapter Five** presents the research findings from the perspectives of the key participants of this study — the school principals — in respect of their different understandings of the challenges and changes with which they have to deal, and their perceptions about the relevance of EMDPs in KZN. Using “thick descriptions” I present the

key participants' perspectives about the challenges of managing and leading schools in the post-apartheid era, and their perceptions about the extent to which EMDPs have been able or unable to meet their needs and those of their schools.

**Chapter Six** is the theoretical synthesis chapter. In this chapter I recall the key findings presented in Chapters Four and Five and critically analyse these findings against theoretical postulations outlined in the research literature, mainly using theories of educational change and the conceptions of professional development presented in Chapter 1 of the study. The analysis is done with a view to offering possible explanations for the perceptions of EMDP providers and those of school principals *vis-à-vis* EMDPs in KwaZulu-Natal. I also present five key principles about educational change and education management development programmes, which I believe provide important insights about the conditions under which change is possible for these programmes to be effective. The implications of the findings are also discussed and the chapter concludes with a presentation of the recommendations for further research.



# Chapter



# 2

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## LITERATURE REVIEW: THE RESEARCH ON EDUCATION MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

### 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review and assess the research literature on the professional development programmes within an international and the South African context. In this review I focus on studies that were conducted between 1994 and 2009. Although the majority of these studies (ten in total) have been conducted within a South African context, the review also includes studies conducted in Britain, the USA, the Netherlands and New Zealand.

In this chapter I undertake a critical and systematic review of those studies that have attempted to assess the effectiveness of EMDPs in relation to leadership and management practice in — mainly but not exclusively — educational organisations. While searching for empirical studies focused on this area (assessment of EMDPs), I came across a plethora of mainly opinion and/or conceptual studies which put forward what could be termed the “essential/crucial elements” of effective EMDPs or what these authors regard to

be “exemplary training programmes.” I return to this point later to demonstrate the potential problems with these kinds of studies.

Through this review I will demonstrate that the majority of studies that have been conducted with a focus on the assessment of EMDPs exhibit a number of conceptual, methodological and research design shortcomings, while others clearly lack empirical validity. While pointing out these shortcomings I fully indicate how my study differs from these previous studies and addresses these shortfalls in their conceptualisation and research design. In other words, the literature review in this chapter is conducted with a view to providing the theoretical context and the intellectual justification for my study on the leadership and management development of school principals.

I conclude this review by arguing that there is a need for not only research rigour in studies that attempt to review the impact of EMDPs, but also that ameliorating the conceptual, methodological and research design weaknesses would contribute to the knowledge base on the value of these programmes, improve their (programmes) design and therefore leadership and management practices in schools.

## **2.2 ...In the beginning**

Initially when I conceptualised the review of the literature, the idea was to simply investigate what the different experts in the field of educational leadership and management put forward as the most critical or essential components of EMDPs and then juxtapose these claims with what the programmes that I would assess—together with the perceptions of the principals who had undergone EMDPs — contain, in order to judge their effectiveness against those essential components. I then went about searching for studies —

not necessarily empirical in nature — that fell into this categorisation. Needless to say, there were multitudes of such studies, including the classic work by Joseph Murphy (1992) entitled: Preparing tomorrow's school leaders: Alternative designs — which is a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the problems and issues regarding EMDPs, offering both a critique of the past and current programmes in the context of the US, and a vision for how future programmes should be designed.

After careful thought and consideration I abandoned the idea of simply regurgitating expert opinions due to the fact that I found going that route to be conceptually and methodologically deficient. The decision to abandon that line of inquiry was based, *inter alia*, on the fact that these programmes had been designed not only with different sets of objectives in mind, but also for totally different contexts as many of these writings were based in developing country contexts. Moreover, what became apparent during this initial exercise was that these writings were not — for the most part — based on any empirical work, but were merely opinions of the experts.

I then turned my attention to a critical review and assessment of empirically-based studies that have assessed the relevance of EMDPs in relation to leadership and management practices in organisations, particularly but not exclusively, schools. Although these empirically-based studies were instrumental in helping shape my study by alluding to what empirical evidence exists regarding the relationship between effective leadership and management development and effective leadership and management practice, a number of shortcomings were discerned from these studies. These shortcomings are discussed in the review that follows below. However, before embarking on the review of these studies, some comments on “exemplary programmes” or “essential/critical elements” in professional

development programmes — discussions whose preponderance in the literature cannot be ignored — are necessary.

### **2.3 Of “Exemplary Programmes” and “Essential Elements”**

Despite the importance accorded education management development programmes (EMDPs) as important ingredients for effective leadership and management practice, there has been a dearth of empirical work focused on evaluating the relevance of these programmes *vis-à-vis* leadership and management practice. To be sure, most studies, particularly from the “developed world”, place a heavy emphasis on “exemplary” EMDPs for school principals with a view to transferring the (good) elements of these programmes to other (mostly “developing world”) contexts where lessons can be drawn from the design and improvement of leadership and management programmes. Amongst other things, the problem with such an approach is that what may be considered exemplary programmes may depend largely on the perception about what leadership/management is and what the “best” way is to lead/manage; what knowledge and skills do principals need to have in order to lead and manage effectively; what principals need to be able to do; to name but a few. Another critical area where these studies fall short is in their lack of focus on the key participants in leadership and management development programmes — the recipients or those individuals who have undergone professional development programmes.

There have been other studies which have explored in-service courses available to school principals with a view to “compare[ing] the content of these courses with a list of tasks and skills required of principals... identified from a survey of international literature” (Garvin, 1995: vi) (My emphasis). This issue of a “checklist” is similar to the approach of

looking at exemplary programmes or judging EMDPs against what is identified in the literature as the critical/essential components.

Although knowledge about different leadership and management programmes — particularly those adjudged to be “exemplary” — can add value to our knowledge base, what complicates matters about these writings are questions of whether Western theories and practices can be exported to non-Western contexts or cultures without any problems. As Huber (2004: xvii) has argued, “The school leader’s role has to be seen in relationship to the broad cultural and educational contexts in which the school is operating.” So, context does matter. Recently, Miles Bryant (2003) has eloquently shown in the case of Native American communities how many assumptions of most Western leadership thinking can be called into question.

It is for that reason that, rather than simply looking at what the literature says are the critical components in exemplary programmes and then judging current programmes against those indicators, my study transcends this simplified trend. Put differently, given the fact that there are different perceptions of leadership and management, and therefore different perceptions of what will provide appropriate professional development in the most effective manner (Bennett *et al.*, 2003), the present differs from the common and narrow exercise of assessing EMDPs against “essential/critical components” or “exemplary programmes” as perceived by experts.

## 2.4 EMDPs: The empirical studies

There are a number of studies which have, in one way or another assessed the relevance of different leadership and management programmes — not just for principals — in relation to leadership and management practice. Worth noting is that two of the studies included in this review fall outside the field of educational leadership and management — one is in the area of Information and Library Science Education, while the other examines a professional development programme in the health services. These two studies have been included in this review because of the fact that their general orientation and designs were found to be similar to and quite instructive for my current study.

It should also be mentioned that one of the studies in this review is an evaluation of a Distance Education programme. It was included because, like the present study, it also deals with the question of the extent to which the professional development programme (a module in a programme, in this case) met the students' needs and expectations. What follows below is the critical review of these studies.

### 2.4.1 Imants, van Putten and Leijh (1994)

Imants *et al.* (1994: 7) report on a study they conducted in The Netherlands looking at an evaluation of two short-term (five days) school management development programmes, with a particular focus on “the question [of] whether the impact of these programmes on both principals and teachers [could] be demonstrated by changes in the sense of efficacy of these principals and teachers.” In this study the efficacy of the school management professional development programmes is judged against what the providers have put forward as the aims of their programmes — the underlying assumptions and the theoretical underpinnings of the programmes. These postulations are then juxtaposed with

what the principals and teachers who have undergone professional development programmes see as their value in terms of their practices in school. In other words the efficacy of EMDPs is assessed on the basis of the meanings that the participants give to their experiences.

Among the things that are innovative (and rare in a number of studies of this nature) in this study is the fact that it did not only focus on principals' efficacy, but also on the teachers' as well.

Commendable as the above aspects of this study are, there are a number of problematic issues with the Imants *et al.* (1994) study. In terms of its research design, the use of the quantitative approach (questionnaire) limits the extent to which the researchers could probe deeper into the participants' sense of their efficacy. Also, the fact that the summative evaluation on which the findings of this study are based, was done about three months after the professional development programme had been concluded, is problematic. As clearly indicated in the study itself, there was not sufficient time between the programme and the return from the programme to their schools for these principals to make informed comments about the impact of the programmes on their self efficacy.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding all the problematic issues raised above, the findings of this study are still significant, namely that the principals' sense of personal efficacy was affected positively by the school management development programmes; and teachers' personal sense of efficacy did not show any significant change during the period of the evaluation. These findings are significant in the sense that they inform us that the professional development did have a positive effect on school leaders who should have been the intended target of the management professional development programme. There is,

however, a lack of theorising on the part of the researchers as to what could have accounted for the different effects on principals and teachers.

#### **2.4.2 Cardno and Fitzgerald (2005)**

In their study, Cardno and Fitzgerald (2005) conducted research aimed at determining the extent to which the learning that school principals in New Zealand had gone through, had been sustained beyond the formal programme — in other words, once the principals had returned to their schools. Using quantitative research approaches with a 48.5% response rate (33 participants), the study is unique from a number of studies in that it focuses on experienced principals.

One of the strengths of this study is that the components of the professional development programme are explained in detail. Principals reported that the programme had brought about personal and professional changes to them; and there was also evidence from the responses that the learning had been transferred not only to the principals but also to the school setting.

On the other hand, one of the major shortcomings of this study — which is partly related to its quantitative nature — is that although some principals' comments have been included confirming the fact that learning had been transferred to the school setting (including the fact that principals had continued to use notes and readings from the programme), there is no clear indication as to how this transfer had occurred. In other words, principals merely confirm this to be the case without providing any evidence or examples from their professional practice of how this has manifested itself in practice. I would argue that it could be a problem of the quantitative nature of the enquiry in as much



as it could be a product of a lack of research rigour on the part of the researchers. In the main, this calls to question the empirical validity of the study.

#### **2.4.3 Daresh and Male (2000)**

In contrast to the research conducted by Cardno and Fitzgerald (2005), of experienced principals in New Zealand, the study by Daresh and Male (2000) focuses on the experiences of newly appointed British headteachers and American principals. Although the study by Daresh and Male is dissimilar to the present study in terms of the unit of analysis—in their case, newly appointed school leaders, whereas in the case of my study the focus is on experienced principals — the research questions of their study and the interview questions of my study bear some resemblance.

Daresh and Male (2000) focused on the ways in which school management professional development had assisted school leaders in carrying out their roles, and in the case of my study, this is one of the issues that I addressed during the personal interviews with the principals. These researchers' second research question explored the activities or areas of study that the school leaders thought should have been added to their professional development programme to make it more effective. This was another area which became part of the interview protocol in my study. The research conducted by Daresh and Male illustrates the fact mentioned earlier that the review of the literature was instrumental in shaping the direction that my study followed.

#### **2.4.4 Jankelowitz (2005)**

The research by Jankelowitz (2005) on the other hand is unique in that it focuses on organisations and individuals that provide women's leadership development programmes in South Africa. Looking at the aims, content, underlying assumptions of the programmes,

activities undertaken by the organisations that provide development programme, and the challenges they encounter, a questionnaire was sent to 443 organisations that provide women's leadership development programme, with only 26 responses, a response rate of 5.9%. On top of the questionnaire, interviews were conducted with 12 participants who provide leadership development programme for women in different sectors.

Notwithstanding the fact that the research was conducted mainly with the view to providing an overview of the different women's leadership development programmes in South Africa, the study is conceptually and methodologically weak. Furthermore, it is limited in the sense that the focus is only on the providers' sense of what their programmes aim to achieve and how they go about achieving these aims. There is no form of triangulation or independent evaluation of the providers' responses. Moreover, the voices of the recipients of the development programme are conspicuous in their absence. Even with the responses from the providers, the extremely low response rate (5.9%) makes the empirical validity of the study suspect.

As indicated earlier in this chapter, there are studies which have utilised what I call the "checklist approach" in their assessment of the efficacy of EMDPs. These studies have evaluated EMDPs against "lists" of criteria discerned from the international literature (more often than not "international" meaning Western Europe and North America). The major problem with such a checklist approach is that it ignores contextual issues which, as argued before, are of critical importance. As Riley and MacBeath (2003: 174) have rightly argued, "there is no one package for school leadership, no one model to be learned and applied in unrefined forms, for all schools, in all contexts — no all-purpose recipe." What may be the most critical skills for principals in Manchester, England, may not be for principals in Bellville or Khayelitsha, South Africa.

#### 2.4.5 Girvin (1995)

The research work by Girvin (1995) typifies studies which have utilised the “checklist approach.” In this study there is an attempt to solicit the views of school principals regarding the need for professional development. However, this falls short of assessing the effects of professional development on principals’ professional practice. Rather, the study is merely a description of what school principals consider to be their needs for professional development (or further development for those who have already undergone some kind of professional development), and their perceptions of what the content of the professional development should be.

Girvin (1995: 4) does, however, acknowledge the fact that the study focuses only on the content of the courses, as a limitation. He further acknowledges that “an examination of presentation methods and the effects which these courses have on the way principals fulfil their tasks when they return to school”, would have been ideal. Indeed, this is a gap that my study has attempted to close in terms of its design and focus.

For a study which looks into what the needs for the professional development for school principals are, the sample is quite negligible — 18 principals. This small size of the sample is in contrast with the statement made by the author that he chose the questionnaire in preference to the interview “since the ultimate intention [of the study] was to be able to quantify results...” (Girvin, 1995: 27).

Again, as with the other studies that have already been reviewed in this chapter, the study by Girvin possesses conceptual and methodological shortcomings which call into question its empirical validity. However, notwithstanding these and other shortcomings raised about this study, the findings of the research by Girvin (1995) have something significant to offer. Girvin (*Ibid.*) reports that without exception all the principals in the

study had found their professional development useful; that they had been able to apply some aspects of what they had learnt, in their schools; and that they still consulted course notes when faced with a particular problem.

Another tangential finding reported by Girvin is that some of the principals found the experience particularly valuable because it had brought them into contact with other colleagues with whom they had been able to share problems. I return later to this critical issue of principals establishing important networks with their colleagues, in the discussion of the data from my study.

#### **2.4.6 Mestry and Grobler (2003)**

Another study designed along the lines of the research conducted by Girvin (1995) is the study by Mestry and Grobler (2003). This study sought to determine which management competencies were necessary for the development and training of effective principals. As with the research conducted by Girvin (1995), a review of the literature was used in this study “to elucidate principal competence in the South African context” (Mestry and Grobler, 2003: 128). Furthermore, international literature was then used in developing a “prototype” programme that would ensure that principals manage their school effectively.

Similar to the study by Girvin (1995), the research by Mestry and Grobler (2003) also utilised a quantitative approach (questionnaire). Unlike Girvin’s study, Mestry and Grobler’s (*Ibid.*) sample was quite large with a total 992 participants. Beyond the bibliographical information about the participants which is contained in Section A of the questionnaire, we are not told what kind of items the rest of the questionnaire dealt with or aimed to probe. It is not quite clear what one of the research questions really aimed to explore: “What were the perceptions of principals and educators in respect to the

importance of effective management as an aspect of the training and development of effective principals?” (Mestry and Grobler, 2003: 128).

Although Mestry and Grobler do not provide “lists” *per se* in their work, they put forward certain competencies discerned from the literature that they argue principals need to have in order to lead and manage effectively. They even go further and use the Scottish Qualification for Headship Programme’s competencies as an example of competencies that principals should have in order to lead and manage their school effectively. One could argue that these competencies are in a way used to show up the Scottish Qualification for Headship Programme as “exemplary” — a problem already alluded to earlier.

The “most important findings” of the study in respect of principals’ and educators’ perceptions are nothing but trite. For example, we are told that “[F]emales... consider effective management to be very important because it means order, responsibility and accountability” (Mestry and Grobler, 2003: 132). No evidence is provided for such a claim. Furthermore, the findings indicate that “[T]he various racial groups [in South Africa] consider effective management to be essential. For example, the Indians are generally respectful of authority—[because of] their respect for their religious leaders, community leaders and heads of the family”, therefore “they will also respect a principal who manages schools effectively” (Mestry and Grobler, 2003: 132). The rehashing of such stereotypes without any attempt to provide evidence, is quite astonishing. These findings seem to point to the general problem with the conceptualisation and design of this study. It also points to a lack of research rigour.

#### **2.4.7 Jaftha (2003)**

Although its focus was not necessarily school principals, the study by Jaftha (2003) — which is a case study of one of the schools which had participated in a Centres of Learning (COL) programme — was found to be relevant to this review and therefore included (three of the participants are members of the School Management Team (SMT) while the other two are post level one educators).

There seems to be some confusion, however, as to the focus/aims of the study. On the one hand Jaftha posits that the study is looking at how the COL programme had affected management styles and practices in the school. On the other hand, the claim is that the study's aim is to investigate whether a leadership and management development programme changed the participants' perception about management. Is perhaps the assumption from the researcher that these aims are not mutually exclusive? If we accept that these aims are indeed not mutually exclusive, then the problem is that in the study the researcher seem to be vacillating between these two research objectives without any clear idea as to what exactly is the study all about.

In the reporting of the data we are given no idea as to which participants are post-level one educators and which ones are members of the SMT. This makes it difficult to make informed judgements about the impact of the COL programme on the participants, particularly in relation to their positions in the school. In raising these issues, I am cognisant of the fact that leadership encompasses different levels within the school, including teacher leadership, and therefore impact at any level would be just as important.

To further illustrate the general confusion in this study, after having asserted that the purpose of the research is to find out whether the COL project had an impact on the

perceptions of the educators about management, the author then makes a curious statement that: “[T]his research is not about an evaluation of the COL project” (Jaftha, 2003: 74). There is no attempt to qualify this statement.

Methodologically, the study by Jaftha is weak in several respects. A sample of five participants for a study that is aimed at determining the impact of a programme on the practices in the school is by any standards very small. In addition, not all the participants, as alluded to earlier, are involved in the management of the school by virtue of their positions.

The study by Jaftha (2003) falls into the same trap as other similar studies in that it takes postulations from the research literature — which is mainly from Western Europe and North America — and uses these as a framework through which the perceptions of the participants are “pigeon-holed.” In the case of Jaftha’s work four aspects of self-managing schools<sup>16</sup> are used as the parameters through which the participants’ perceptions are then thematized. The impact of the COL project is therefore judged against these critical indicators of self-managing schools.

Notwithstanding all the shortcomings highlighted above, the author postulates that much of the programme did not seem to have had a lasting effect on the culture of the school, but it nevertheless made an impression on the educators’ perception of management. Furthermore, according to Jaftha (2003: 100), while there are clear indications that “the COL project had an impact on the perceptions of educators about management, the changes in perception appear not to have been comprehensive enough to cause a (significant?)

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<sup>16</sup> These aspects are: the importance of a shared vision; participation and collaboration; being a learning organisation; and the need for outside support/the issue of resources. In the analysis of the participants’ perceptions, planning is included because, according to the author, the COL programme has placed much emphasis on planning.

paradigm shift among the teachers of the school.” As with the other studies reviewed in this chapter, there is a lack of theorising as to why the programme did not have a lasting effect on the culture of the school or as to why the changes in perception were not comprehensive enough.

#### **2.4.8 More (2004)**

The study by More (2004) is a unique and innovative study in the area of programme effectiveness evaluation or impact assessment. The study involved an assessment of the impact of an education management development training programme (EMDTP) at the different levels of the education system — namely, national, provincial, district and local levels. To my knowledge, not many studies have attempted such a complex multi-level analysis, and therefore this is commendable.

What further makes this study transcend what other studies in this area (impact analysis) have offered us before, is that it goes beyond a mere focus on the impact of the cascade model of training — which would have been an easy endpoint for most studies. The study also focuses on the question of what the “operational impact” (More, 2004: 1) of the EMDTP at the different levels of the education system is.

More’s (2004) innovative research design uses a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research strategies (questionnaires, focus group free attitude interviews and observations). This research design, I would argue, enriched the study greatly and provided rich data which ensured that the issues of breadth and depth were catered for. What further strengthens this study is that in dealing with the different levels of the education system, the service providers (those who offered the training) were also interviewed with a view to probing “what they understand and identify as the key goals of the EMD training...”



(More, 2004: 24). This aspect (service provider interviews) differentiates the study from a number of studies in the area of the evaluation of training programmes.

Interestingly enough, my own study (the present study) also included in its design interviews with service providers (university lecturing staff who teach in the University Departments that offer EMDPs) with a view to, *inter alia*, determining what these service providers postulate as the objectives (and philosophical underpinnings) of their programmes. Later these objectives were juxtaposed with what the principals who have received some form of professional development perceive as their needs, in order to determine whether there is congruence between the two (namely, the service providers' objectives and the recipients' perceptions of the extent to which these programmes met their needs).

The study by More (2004) is also appealing because of its use of the materials from the training programme's modules, as a basis for the interviews with some of the recipients of the training. In other words, interviews with participants at the district and local levels (Research Training Unit and school) are based on the case studies that were constructed from the EMD training programme. I would argue that this is not only innovative, but also a much more useful way of determining the extent to which the participants in the programme were able to operationalise the different policies that were used in their training.

One of the findings of the study by More (2004) is pertinent for my present study, namely the fact that the organisers of the training did not conduct a baseline study on the training needs of the recipients of the training programme. As More (2004: 76), puts it, "...the phase commencing with the training of District Facilitators for the training of

primary schools Site Managers did not commence with the determination of critical aspects of pre-training needs analysis....”<sup>17</sup> Given that my study is concerned with the perceptions of principals in relation to the extent to which EMDPs meet their needs, this is for me a significant finding. I return to this issue when I present the findings in Chapter Six of my study.

#### **2.4.9 Steyn (2001)**

Although it is in the field of education leadership and management, the study by Steyn (2001) is different from the studies reviewed in this chapter in that it is not focused on a professional development programme *per se*, but rather on a particular module in a professional development programme. The study is focused on the question of the extent to which two aspects — learning materials and the assessment system — have met students’ needs and expectations in a Distance Education module: Personnel Management within a BEd (Honours): Education Management programme. The study further examines students’ perceptions of the module using the concept of quality — defined by the author as the features of products and services which meet or exceed customer needs — as a yardstick.

In this study Steyn (2001) describes a quality assurance process that she put in place while in charge of the Personnel Management module, as a way of addressing the learning needs of the students. Different key role players were invited to participate in focus group interviews aimed to address the needs and the possible key learning areas that the programme needed to address. These role players included a DoE official, two colleagues from other universities, two school principals, an instructional designer, two students enrolled in the programme and other lecturers involved in the BEd (Honours): Education

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<sup>17</sup> The issue of the needs analysis is not unproblematic, as indicated in the Conceptual Framework (section 1.6) of the present study.

Management. This undertaking was quite significant because, I would argue, it answered one of the major criticisms of many professional development programmes, that is, a serious lack of analysis of the needs of the participants prior to the professional development programme being put in place<sup>18</sup>. What made this exercise even more important is that it included a cross section of key role players from different backgrounds, including, perhaps most importantly, students enrolled in the programme. These focus group interviews resulted in the development of the learning objectives, presentation strategy and format and content of assignments.

As with the study by More (2004), the research by Steyn (2001) also used a combination of quantitative and qualitative research approaches in collecting data. Focus groups interviews were conducted with two sizeable samples (sixty four and thirty seven respectively) and yielded rich data. Questionnaires were used for three sets of cohorts of students (students enrolled in 1996, 1998 and 1999). However, the fact that the first questionnaire that the students had to complete (to determine their perceptions of the assignment and assessment system) was a “compulsory assignment” (Steyn, 2001: 35) and students earned credits for submitting the questionnaire/assignment, raises some ethical questions. This means that the students as participants were not afforded the right to decide not to participate in the research or to opt out if they wanted to.

Overall, the findings of this study present a very positive picture regarding the students’ perceptions of the assignment and the assessment system of the Personnel Management module. The action research approach adopted by the researcher—with the improvements made based on the initial student responses — is quite instructive in terms of

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<sup>18</sup> As indicated in this literature review, one of the critical findings in More’s (2004) study was the failure by the training programme organisers to undertake a needs analysis prior to the training.

how to improve the quality of professional development programmes—whether they are distance education programmes or contact education based.

#### **2.4.10 Van der Westhuizen, Mosoge and Van Vuuren (2004)**

The study by van der Westhuizen *et al.* (2004) closely mirrors my present study in terms of its focus — the study examines the perceptions of school principals and district/circuit managers with regards to their satisfaction with the EMD programme of one of the provinces in SA, the Mpumalanga Department of Education. There are differences, however, with my study in terms of the research methodology: van der Westhuizen *et al.*'s (2004) study uses a quantitative research design; the research participants in their study also include district/circuit managers over and above school principals; and their study was commissioned by the provincial Department of Education.

In the research conducted by van der Westhuizen *et al.* (2004) the extent of the effectiveness of the training programme is judged against the stated objectives of the programme. As already noted in the discussion of the research by More (2004), judging effectiveness on the basis of the stated objectives of the programme is of crucial importance since it gives an indication of how far the programme has gone in meeting the needs of the recipients, based on what was postulated as constituting the objectives in the first place.

With regards to the research design, as already noted, the study by van der Westhuizen *et al.* (2004) uses a quantitative research strategy. Although the use of a quantitative strategy is useful in terms of getting a wide range of responses—something quite understandable in this particular case given the large numbers of individuals who had undergone professional development in the Mpumalanga Province, as pointed out

previously, this strategy lends itself to major limitations in professional development programmes evaluation studies. Depth is therefore sacrificed for breadth. For example, it would have been of great interest to know why circuit managers were “satisfied” but not “very satisfied” with regards to the effectiveness of the professional development programme.

#### **2.4.11 Mathibe (2007)**

Although not an evaluation of a leadership and management development programme, the study by Mathibe (2007) is of great interest in that the author investigates school practices that necessitate the professional development of school principals in South Africa’s North West Province. Through the use of purposeful sampling, the study is made up of a large sample of 600 participants. What is commendable is that a cross section of participants within the school community is surveyed: 200 school principals, 200 Heads of Departments (HoDs) and 200 educators — unfortunately we are not told as to what the response rate (questionnaire) was. The focus on HoDs and educators can be regarded as one of the strengths of the study in that, in addition to the school principals, these sectors of the school community would also have critical contributions to make as they work closely with the school principal.

A number of areas for leadership and management development are identified from the results of the survey — such as skilling principals in change management, in ensuring that effective teaching and learning takes place (instructional leadership), in encouraging team work, etc. Despite a focus on other key role players within the school (HoDs and educators), there seems to be too much focus in the study on the role of the principal to the exclusion of the role of, for instance, teacher leadership or the idea of distributed leadership. In general, the study is useful in pointing out those areas for leadership and management

development that are regarded as critical by not only the school principals but also by HoDs and educators.

#### **2.4.12 Prew (2007)**

While Mathibe's study focuses on the role of the school principal in change management, Prew (2007: 450) argues that "...being a transformational leader in the confines of the school in a developing-world context is not adequate to manage change." Successful schools, according to Prew, have realized that they also needed to build a real working relationship with the community and the local education district office. Based on a project that was aimed at turning around dysfunctional schools in Soshanguve — a township outside Pretoria — Prew's study documents how four (4) school principals reacted to innovation (School Development Project) and were either successful or unsuccessful in managing their schools. The project, according to the author, was also intended to mentor and train the management teams of the education district and the school.

In Prew's (2007) study extensive interviews for the baseline survey were conducted with the principals, school governing body members, staff and pupils. Moreover, an intensive triangulation process took place which included amongst others, analyses of school development plans, questionnaire responses, interviews with district office staff, observations, the school profiles and reports.

Prew identified a number of key findings, namely, the importance of the relationship with the local community; the connection between school, community and local economy; and the principals' relationship with the education district office as an essential success factor in school community improvement. Chief amongst Prew's (2007: 457) findings, however, is that "[T]he principals appear to have been the key to the successful take-up of the

[innovation/project] in their school.” Moreover, there seems to be a strong relationship between failing and deteriorating schools and their failure to engage with the project. The findings further indicate that the more effective principals adopted a range of different management styles and also distributed leadership across the school’s stakeholder groups.

#### **2.4.13 Mestry and Singh (2007)**

In a study by Mestry and Singh (2007), the authors explored the extent to which the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) course — which is conceived as a form of continuing professional development by the authors — influenced principals’ leadership style. Through purposive sampling, the study focuses on the experiences of four principals drawn from a target population of ninety four principals. Data were collected through a combination of a qualitative perception survey with individual principals and focus group interviews. The evaluation of the ACE course by the Centre for Education and Policy Development is further used in the understanding of the perceptions of the school principals.

According to these authors, the data from the research revealed that the participants in the course benefited significantly from undertaking the course of study. Mestry and Singh (2007) report that all the principals in this study confirmed that the ACE course had effectively promoted their professional growth and given them a better understanding of their role in school. Furthermore, the principals reported that their changed style of leadership had improved relationships with all role-players in the school. The principals indicated that the discussions with colleagues during cohort sessions had given them new insights into dealing with the staff and parents.

In considering the significance of these findings for our understanding of the effectiveness of professional development programmes for school principals, we should take

caution that the students — who were part of the cohort taught by the university researchers — could have said what they thought the university wanted to hear.

#### **2.4.14 Simkins, Coldwell, Close and Morgan (2009)**

The research by Simkins *et al.* (2009) is distinctive in that it is a study of the impact of three different programmes<sup>19</sup> that are (or at some point were) offered by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in the UK, with a particular focus on the in-school components in each of these programmes. A comprehensive descriptive analysis of the three programmes is provided, highlighting the fact that these programmes focus amongst other things on the assessment of the participants' training and development and in-school work needs and on the participants' reflection on their learning from their in-school work as it progresses.

Methodologically, the study uses a combination of case study interviews (both individual and group) and surveys. One of the major strengths of this study is that a variety of individuals and groups (e.g., participants' superiors, peers, coaches, heads and chairs of governors) who are well-positioned to comment on the impact of the programme and the participants on the school's functioning, are surveyed and interviewed.

While recognising the challenges of tracing the impact of large-scale leadership development programmes, the authors' findings indicate that the in-school work on all three programmes, as well as the programmes in general, was perceived by all parties to have had significant positive effects on the development of individual leaders' personal capacity. Regarding the development of capacity at the organisational level, the findings indicate that the changes in practice that were initiated during the programmes were

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<sup>19</sup> These programmes are Leading from the Middle (LftM), the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) and the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH).



perceived to have become embedded in more than 70 percent of the participants across the three programmes.

The authors conclude by arguing that there are strong indications that the in-school leadership development activities had significant positive outcomes particularly in relation to personal development, impact on school in general, the enhancement of school's capacity for further development and on a range of pupil outcomes. The findings of this study have important implications for leadership and management development programmes.

As indicated in the beginning of the review, not all the empirical studies under review are in the education leadership and management field of study. Two of the studies whose review now follows fall outside this field. They have, however, been included because of their relevance to the present study with respect to being impact assessment studies.

#### **2.4.15 Stilwell (2004)**

The first of these studies is the research by Stilwell (2004) which looks at the perceptions of the post-graduate alumni of Information and Library Science Education (ILSE) programme at one of the universities in South Africa, the then University of Natal. The study by Stilwell (2004) is similar in orientation to the present study. Though focused outside education leadership and management — which is the area of concern of my study — this study is insightful. Its aim was to investigate the extent to which a post graduate programme, the ILSE, was seen by its alumni to have achieved its desired outcomes. The study looked at the extent to which the modules in the ILSE programme had prepared the graduates for their positions as ILSE practitioners.

Among other things, the study is different from a number of similar studies in that it is designed as a form of a needs analysis feedback from the alumni — an aspect that is

conspicuous by its absence in a number of professional development programmes. Furthermore, rather than assessing the effectiveness of the ILSE programme based solely on what the literature postulates — which is a common feature of most studies, including those reviewed in this chapter — in his research Stilwell used the programme outcomes, the research literature, and his own observations as the basis for assessment.

The fact that the research conducted by Stilwell focuses on individuals (alumni) who have gone through the programme and are now practitioners who have to evaluate the extent to which the programme had been useful for their practice, is of critical importance. Again, it is an aspect that is missing from a number of studies which opt to use simplified “checklist approaches.” It is unfortunate that we are not told as to how long it had been since the participants had completed their programme. Nor are we informed as to whether this (the time that has elapsed since programme completion) was one of the considered criteria in the design of the study. This is of importance in terms of the perceptions of the participants about the usefulness of the programme *vis-à-vis* their professional practice. This is an issue that the design of my study takes into consideration.

The study by Stilwell (2004) is among a few of the reviewed studies in this chapter that are methodologically sound. The study sample of 111 participants drawn from 6 of South Africa’s 9 provinces — including 2 participants from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) — is impressive. The major finding of this study is that the ISLE programme had broadly achieved its anticipated outcomes in further preparing the students (alumni) for the workplace.

One issue though that needs to be raised is that notwithstanding the fact that the article on which this research is based was peer-reviewed, it would have been prudent to

make use of an independent evaluator, particularly given the fact that the author was part of the Department that was offering the programme.

#### **2.4.16 Currie (2003)**

The second one of these studies whose focus falls outside education leadership and management, is a study by Currie (2003). This 12-month longitudinal study is an evaluation of the impact of management development on a culture change in the health service sector (hospitals). The use of mixed methods in this study — observation, informal and formal interviews of the individuals who had gone through the programme — yielded rich data.

According to Currie (2003), the programme failed mainly because there were differences in the perceived objectives of management development interventions between the participants and other stakeholders. The three different stakeholder groups<sup>20</sup> did not have a shared understanding of the organisational objectives and therefore of the programme's desired outcomes. Even within the stakeholder groups themselves — apart from the programme facilitator group — there were divergent views. For instance, within the participant stakeholder group there were two groups: one group which felt that the programme needed to be delivered taking the existing culture into account, whilst the other group felt that there was a need for total cultural change to take place.

From this study it is clear that the failure to reconcile the divergent understandings regarding what the programme was supposed to achieve, resulted in its failure. The

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<sup>20</sup> One group being the Chief Executive, the Director of Human Resources, the Organisation Development Manager and other Executive Directors; the other group being the Programme Facilitators; and the third group being the different participants who themselves had differing understandings of the objectives of the programme.

question then becomes: how does one reconcile the disparate understandings that the different stakeholders may have regarding the objectives of a professional development programme in order to avoid the problems encountered by this particular programme that are discussed by Currie in this study. Is it possible, perhaps, in this particular case of this organisation, a hospital, that the solution in terms of effecting a culture change — an agenda that was met with resistance by some of the participants—did not lie with a management development programme, but rather with, say, an organisation development or strategic planning exercise? Perhaps what the study points towards is that professional development programmes need to be well-considered before being instituted and that a training programme may not always be the solution.

The argument advanced by Currie (2003: 168), which seem to be in agreement with my sentiments above, is that “a programme which recognised where the managers were starting from, rather than where other stakeholders wanted them to go”, would have been ideal. He further argues that “rather than using management development to promote overnight cultural change, sensitivity to context” should have been considered.

The study by Currie speaks to the importance of attending to and dealing with different understandings that the different stakeholders may have about the objectives of a professional development programme rather than taking for granted that everyone is on the same page. This issue is related to the importance of undertaking a needs analysis before programmes are put together. This study is quite instructive and insightful in terms of pointing to the possible pitfalls which resulted from what Currie refers to as “a mismatch of objectives.”

## 2.5 Conclusion

What this review has clearly indicated is that some empirical studies that have attempted to assess the effectiveness of EMDPs possess several conceptual and methodological shortcomings while others lack empirical validity. Methodologically the majority of the studies that have been reviewed in this chapter not only contain small sample sizes — which limit their generalization — but a majority make use of only quantitative research approaches. In the studies reviewed, it is clear that through the use of this approach, these studies do not probe deeper in terms of the professional development of recipients' understandings of the effectiveness of the programmes in relation to their practices in organisations.

As indicated in the introduction of this chapter, based on the weaknesses that have been observed in the literature study, the present study was conceptualised and designed in such a way that these weaknesses and limitations were addressed.

To begin with, in so far as the conceptualisation of my study is concerned, I moved away from the common idea of evaluating professional development programmes against particular “checklists” identified from what most authors call a ‘survey of international literature’ (“international” normally referring to the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia and a few European countries, hardly ever Asian or African countries). In my study the perceptions of school principals are probed in relation to the extent to which these principals feel that the EMDPs meet their needs or not, particularly given the contexts in which they work. Furthermore, what the designers of the EMDPs under review put forward as the assumptions and the objectives of their programmes is used as a starting point for my study. In other words, before getting to the perceptions of the recipients —

the school principals in this case — about the relevance (or lack thereof) of the EMDPs *vis-à-vis* the recipients’ needs, it makes sense to start by examining what the service providers or programme designers see as the objectives of their programmes. These objectives and the underlying assumptions in the design of professional development programmes are then juxtaposed with the perceptions of the recipients with regards to the relevance of the programmes.

The inclusion of the service providers’ perceptions of their programmes is one aspect which is normally missing in impact assessment or evaluation studies<sup>21</sup>. However, most studies which do make an attempt to use the objectives of the professional development programmes as the starting point, do so merely through document review and analysis of these programmes’ documents. My study goes beyond this aspect, namely, document review and analysis. In the research design of my study I factored in not only the review and analysis of documents related to the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings behind the development of the different programmes, but also interviews with the university lecturing staff teaching in these programmes.

As indicated in this review, most studies that attempt to assess the impact of professional development programmes tend to get caught up in what More (2004: 62) calls “a familiar trade-off... between breadth and depth.” In other words, they attempt to cover a wide-spectrum of “voices” (breadth) and in the process sacrifice depth — that is, not probing deep enough and therefore fail to provide meaningful and reliable explanations for

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<sup>21</sup> The studies by Van der Westhuizen *et al.* (2004) and More (2004) are the only two studies in this review which deal with the objectives and assumptions of the training programmes. However, in Van der Westhuizen *et al.’s* (2004) study interviews with the service providers were not conducted. Although in the study conducted by Stilwell (2004) the perceptions of the service providers about the objectives and assumptions of their programmes are not addressed, the study used the programme outcomes as the basis for the evaluation of the programme’s effectiveness.

the findings. The study by More (2004) was useful for using a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research approaches, and therefore able to address both the question of breadth and depth. My study has attempted to deal with this aspect of breadth and depth by innovatively employing a qualitative research methodology with a large sample size. In this way, I was able to probe deeper while at the same time being able to cover a wide variety of principals' voices.

Another aspect which was highlighted as a limitation in the studies under review is the amount of time between the programme and the return from the programme to practice. In the case of the research by Imants *et al.* (1994), a period of three months was allowed between the programme and the assessment of the impact of the programme — a limited time frame. In the present study the criteria used in the selection of the sample for the study was that a school principal needed to have been in practice for at least two years and that the professional development programme should have taken place between 1996 and 2002 — 1996 denoting two years following the dawn of a new political dispensation in South Africa.

All these and other shortcomings highlighted in the chapter point to a need for research rigour if studies in this important field of study are to make any significant contribution to our knowledge base and assist in the improvement of EMDPs and therefore leadership and management practices in schools.

Notwithstanding all the shortcomings encountered in the majority of the studies reviewed in this chapter, the general claim in the findings is that — where participants had been asked either in a questionnaire or in interviews — the EMDPs were perceived to be effective and useful in one or more ways.

# Chapter



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## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the possible effects of formal university-based education management development programmes on the practical work of principals. In other words, it aims to look at what principals perceive to be the benefits of EMDPs on their practice in schools. The secondary purpose of this study is to investigate the kinds of challenges that principals in South Africa, specifically in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), are faced with in the post-apartheid era and their perceptions of the extent to which these EMDPs meet or fail to meet their needs and those of their schools.

In this study I work from an *interpretivist research paradigm* which posits that knowledge is constructed not only by observable phenomena, but also by people's subjective beliefs, values, reasons and understandings (Henning *et al.*, 2004; Creswell, 2007). According to Morrison (2002: 18), for interpretivists, "reality is not 'out there' as an amalgam of external phenomena waiting to be uncovered as 'facts', but a construct in which people understand reality in different ways." This means that knowledge is about the way in which people make meaning in their lives. Citing Trauth (2001), Henning *et al.* (2004: 21) contend that the foundational assumptions of interpretivists is that most of our knowledge



is gained, or at least filtered, through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, documents and other artefacts.

Amongst some of the key assumptions of the interpretivist perspective outlined by Nieuwenhuis (2007: 59-60), three are central to the epistemological underpinnings of my study. Firstly, that interpretivism focuses on people's subjective experiences, on how people "construct" the social world by sharing meanings, and how they interact with or relate to each other. Secondly, that interpretivism proposes that there are multiple and not single realities of phenomena, and that these realities can differ across time and place. Thirdly, that researchers' own knowledge and understanding of phenomena constantly influences them (researchers) in terms of the types of questions that they ask and in the way that they conduct their research. According to Nieuwenhuis (2007: 60), the ultimate aim of interpretivist research is to provide insights into the way in which a particular group of people make sense of their situation or phenomena that they encounter.

The present study is located within the *phenomenological research approach*. According to Merriam and Associates (2002: 7), although the phenomenological notions of experience and understanding run through all qualitative research, one could engage in a phenomenological study using its techniques of inquiry that differentiate it from other types of qualitative inquiry. Phenomenological research seeks to understand the meaning of experiences of individuals about a phenomenon. In other words, as Bogdan and Taylor (1975: 14, cited by Morrison, 2002: 18) indicated, 'the phenomenologist attempts to see things from the person's point of view.'

Creswell (2007: 93) argues that the focus of the phenomenological approach "is a concept or phenomena and the "essence" of the lived experiences of persons about the

phenomenon.” Merriam and Associates (2002: 7) cite Patton (1990) who posited that phenomenological research is based on the assumption that there is an essence or essences to shared experience. Furthermore, Merriam (2002: 7) argues that the experiences of different people are bracketed, analysed and compared in order to identify the essences of the phenomenon — such as the essence of being a participant in a particular programme, as is the case in the present study. According to Creswell (2007), participants of the phenomenological study are selected on the basis of having experienced the phenomenon — as is also the case in the present study.

In this chapter I present a description of the research process from the data collection plan and techniques to a discussion of the data analysis strategies. The chapter is organised around eight areas of focus, namely, the scope of the research, the data collection plan, the study sample, the data collection techniques, the research instruments, the data analysis strategies, reliability and validity (or what most researchers refer to as trustworthiness and dependability) concerns and ethical concerns.

### **3.2 The scope of the research**

The study is focused on the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). As indicated in Chapter One of this study (see section 1.8, first paragraph), the rationale behind focusing on this province is that it provides a good opportunity for this kind of study due to its diversity in the number of leadership and management development programmes offered and the clientele served by institutions in this province. The fact that principals from five

former Departments of Education <sup>22</sup> underwent education management development programmes in three different institutions of higher education makes this an appropriate province to study. Moreover, this is the province that I have substantial familiarity with and thus was convenient in terms of posing few problems as possible regarding the identification of relevant documentation, the identification of a pool of principals who have undergone EMDPs, the availability of participants for the study and negotiating and gaining access to research sites. I had worked in the province as a lecturer in one of the universities and as a training consultant for the provincial Department of Education's office-based staff, and therefore had developed important networks and established a good rapport with senior provincial management staff.

The three universities whose management/leadership department programmes are under review are (all pseudonyms): the University of Port Shepstone's Department of \_\_\_\_\_ programmes (excluding the Masters in Business Administration (Educational Management and Leadership (MBA—EML); the University of Melmoth School of \_\_\_\_\_ (North Campus) and the South Campus School of \_\_\_\_\_; and the Montclair University's Department of \_\_\_\_\_: South and North Campuses<sup>23</sup>. It should be mentioned that of all these programmes, the University of Melmoth School of \_\_\_\_\_ has the shortest history as it only started in 1998.

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<sup>22</sup> These former departments are the ex-House of Assembly for Whites, ex-House of Representatives for "Coloureds", ex-House of Delegates for "Indians", ex-Department of Education and Training for those Africans not under the so-called Homelands or Self-Governing Territories, and ex-KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture for those Africans under KwaZulu Homeland Government.

<sup>23</sup> These pseudonyms are used in this study in order to protect the identities of all individuals who were interviewed and the names of the higher education institutions (universities) whose programmes were reviewed.

The data for this research was collected over a period of three years — between 2001 and 2004 — punctuated by starts and stops due to circumstances beyond my control. In 2001 I was mainly engaged in the literature study on the subject of leadership and management development programmes both in South Africa and internationally. Unfortunately I spent a lot of time during that period (2001) focusing on so-called exemplary programmes that had been identified particularly in the North American context as having effected important reforms in their professional development of school leaders<sup>24</sup>.

This initial literature study was done with the erroneous belief (at that time) that the reform and reconstruction of EMDPs in South Africa needed to draw lessons from mostly North American programmes in order to ensure that they (South African programmes) are of high quality and standards — nothing but a kind of “copy and paste approach.” Fortunately in the latter part of 2001 and up to the middle of 2002, the literature study took on a different direction — more with a focus on empirical studies concerned with the assessment of the effectiveness of EMDPs.

It was also during this period (latter part of 2001 and middle of 2002) that the analysis of mainly policy documents — both provincial and national — was undertaken. Starting from the Report of the Task Team on Education Management Development (Department of Education, 1996), the national Department’s Guides for School Governing

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<sup>24</sup> Amongst others, I studied and wrote about reformed programmes offered at the following institutions: the Department of Administration and Policy Studies at Hofstra University; the Department of Educational Leadership at Miami University; the Prospective Principals’ Program at Stanford University; the Leadership Development Program at the University of Northern Colorado; the Ed.D. Program in Educational Administration at the University of Utah; the Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill; the Leadership Initiative for Tomorrow’s Schools (LIFTS) program at the State University of New York at Buffalo; the University of Alberta’s (Canada) Field Experience Model; the Fordham University’s Visionary Instructional Administrative (VIA 2000) Leadership program – to name but a few.

Bodies (Department of Education, 1999), Guides for School Management Teams (Department of Education, 2000b), and going through to the provincial Department's Policy Framework for Education Management Development (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture, 1998), the School Management Manual (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture, 2000) and the Master Strategic Plan: 2003—2006 (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture, 2002). These documents formed the basis from which to understand the (policy) environment around the professional development of principals in South Africa in general and in KZN in particular. Other documents — such as position papers and keynote addresses by key policy makers in the national Department of Education — were to follow later during the data analysis period, and also proved useful in providing a critical contextual background.

It was during 2003 that the interviews with the different participants were conducted. I began with interviews with the key participants in the national Department of Education and in the provincial Department of Education, followed by interviews with the university lecturing staff of the three universities in KZN, and then the key participants of this study, the school principals.

### **3.3 Data collection plan**

Permission to conduct research in KwaZulu-Natal schools was sought through a letter to the then provincial Chief Executive Officer, Prof. C.R.M. Dlamini in September 2002<sup>25</sup> (Appendix A) , and it was granted on the 23/09/2002 (Appendix B). I then contacted a departmental official in the then Department of Education and Culture who provided me

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<sup>25</sup> At that time I was still registered as a Doctoral student with the State University of New York at Buffalo — that is, prior to transferring my studies to the University of Pretoria.

with the names of all school principals in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, available from the Department's PERSAL database. Although this information gave me a sense of the school principals' profile in KZN, it did not prove to be of much use mainly because the information about the principals' qualifications did not distinguish among the different specialisations that the school principal could have registered for when undergoing the EMD programme. In other words, from the database information there was no clarity as to whether a principal with a BEd (Honours) degree, for example, had attained the BEd (Honours) specialising in Education Management/Leadership or not.

Given the fact that I had previously taught in the BEd (Honours) and MEd programmes in one of the Universities in KZN and therefore had interacted with a number of school principals, I decided to utilise those networks in identifying potential participants who had completed either a BEd (Honours) or MEd in Education Management/Leadership. This proved to be useful because each former student I contacted provided me with a list of about ten or more colleagues that they knew who had undertaken EMDPs not only in the university where I had taught, but also in other universities in the province. I also contacted colleagues at the other two universities (three university campuses) and asked them to provide me with the contact details of all their former students who had undertaken and completed their programmes between 1996 and 2002. The contact details from colleagues in the other universities in the province also proved to be a useful endeavour because it yielded quite a large number of school principals' names who had undertaken and completed leadership and management development programmes in the four universities in KZN.

I went further to contact District Managers (DMs) and Superintendents of Education (SEMs) I had come across during the time when I had worked as a training

consultant in the different districts of the provinces. Given the fact that SEMs and DMs work closely with the school principals, they (SEMs and DMs) were able to provide me with comprehensive lists with all the relevant information, including the current contact details of the school principals. Information from all four sources yielded a total of 238 potential participants for my study.

I then began to contact the potential participants, inquiring about whether they indeed fulfilled the criteria I had set out, namely that they were practising principals who had been in the position for at least more than two years and had undertaken and completed a professional development programme between 1996 and 2002, specialising in Education Management/Leadership. I also inquired from those who fulfilled the criteria about their willingness and availability to participate in the study. After a process which eliminated those who did not fit the profile — due to reasons ranging from those whose contact details had changed and therefore I could not locate, to the fact that they were not practising principals, they had not specialised in Education Management/Leadership or were not available to be interviewed — I ended with a sample of forty-two (42) school principals, a number that was further reduced to thirty-one (31) due to the fact that some principals who were interviewed did not meet the criteria set out for the study.

When the study was initially conceptualised, the plan was to focus only on high school principals based on the rationale that this was a phase I had better familiarity with, and also based on my feeling that the complexities that high school principals deal with lend themselves to the kind of inquiry with which my study was concerned. However, as I continued to contact the different participants, it became clear that few of the principals available to be interviewed were females and that these females were mostly principals of

primary schools. It was then that I took the decision to include principals of primary schools in order to attempt to address this gender imbalance in my study sample.

In the conceptualisation of this study I decided that I was not going to collect data from the key participants — the school principals — only. The idea was that, in order to get a better sense of whether the objectives of the EMD programmes were aligned with what the principals perceived to be their needs, it would make sense to also interview university lecturing staff who teach in and had designed the EMD programmes. The interviewing of university lecturing staff was also done as a way of remedying what I saw as a weakness identified in the research literature dealing with professional development programmes evaluation studies (for a comprehensive discussion of this aspect see Chapter Two).

Furthermore, I decided to also include as part of my data collection, interviews with key personnel in both the provincial Department of Education and in the national Department of Education. These were individuals who were at the centre of the policy development processes regarding education leadership and management development programmes, and could therefore provide critical insights about the state of affairs both provincially and nationally.

### **3.4 Study sample**

From a target population of all school principals in KZN who had undergone and completed leadership and management development through the three universities' graduate programmes (based on the these various data sources mentioned above), and who had at least more than two years management experience as school principals, a sample of forty-



two (42) principals was chosen through a stratified purposeful sampling process. This number was later reduced to thirty-one (31) participants following discoveries after interviews that some interviewees did not qualify in terms of the set criteria.<sup>26</sup> Although principals who did not satisfy the criteria set out at the beginning of the study were interviewed, the data pertaining to their interviews was not included in the study<sup>27</sup>. Eleven of those principals fell into this category.

The sample for the major participants of this study — school principals — was obtained by a process of stratified purposeful sampling. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), the advantage of stratified purposeful sampling is that it increases the likelihood of representativeness, especially if one's sample is not very large. It, according to these authors, virtually ensures that all key characteristics of individuals in the population are included in the same proportions in the sample.

The stratified purposeful sampling procedure — which according to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2009) is a commonly used sampling technique — was used in order to ensure the selection of cases showing combinations of pre-selected variables (years of experience and the period of the attainment of the qualification). According to Fogelman (2002), this type of sampling is often preferred because it is more likely to result in a sample which is representative of the population being studied.

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<sup>26</sup> For example, I only discovered during the interviews that some principals had not received their qualifications from the universities of Kwa-Zulu Natal as set out in the criteria (4 participants); that their BEd (Honours)/Masters was not in Educational Management (2 participants); or that they had not benefited from any formal management training (5 principals). When I made these discoveries in the middle of the interview, I felt that it was only fair to proceed with the interview – especially given the enthusiasm exhibited by the principals to participate in the study — and then not include the data collected in those particular interviews as part of the findings of the study.

<sup>27</sup> Therefore the data presented in this study are based on the thirty-one interviews conducted with school principals.

Once this target population had been established and the sample selected through stratified purposeful sampling, the selected school principals were contacted by telephonic means (and where necessary, followed up by contacts in writing — mainly through the use of faxes) to establish their willingness and availability to participate in this study. Depending on their willingness, availability and on their compliance with the criteria for participation in this study, prior to the commencement of the interviews principals were provided with the Human Subjects Consent to Participate Form (see Appendix E) which they were asked to sign if they had no objections or problems with participating in the interview. Among other things, this form contains a brief description of the study and its purpose.

With regards to the sampling in so far as the university lecturing staff were concerned, this was based purely on their being heads of departments and teaching in these programmes. The extra university lecturing staff member interviews that were conducted were mainly based on these members being responsible for the coordination of the EMDPs and on their willingness and availability to be interviewed.

### **3.5 Data collection techniques**

Document analysis, content analysis of the research literature and interviews were the main techniques used to look into the perceptions of school principals with regards to the practical relevance of education management development programmes in South Africa's province of KwaZulu-Natal. While the general concern in the study is the extent to which education management development programmes in South Africa's KZN meet the schools and principals' needs given the new conditions that exist in the country, the following sub-questions are also given consideration in the study:

- a) What is the nature of EMDPs presently in South Africa, particularly in the province of KwaZulu-Natal?
- b) With what types of environments are EMDPs equipping principals to deal?
- c) With what kinds of challenges do principals have to contend in schools under the new prevailing conditions?
- d) What are the perception of school principals of the strengths and limitations of the education management development programmes in terms of meeting their needs?

With regards to the first sub-question — *what is the nature of EMDPs presently in South Africa, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal?* — it is my belief that before one can attempt to examine the extent to which principal professional development in SA (or specifically in KZN) is geared towards meeting schools and principals needs in dealing with the challenges that exist today, it is imperative to get a general sense of the nature of EMDPs that are being offered presently in the country, particularly in the province of KZN. Among other things, this will help us determine the extent to which there has been a shift (or lack thereof) in terms of the kind of EMDPs being offered presently in juxtaposition to those that were provided during the apartheid era; and to ascertain the extent to which these EMDPs have responded to the changed conditions existing in schools presently. To answer this question, a number of approaches were used, namely, the identification, search and analysis of documents from sources such as the universities' Departments of Education Management and Leadership, provincial and national Departments of Education and from the research literature. Individual interviews with key personnel from these institutions were then conducted to further get answers to this question.

The second sub-question — *with what types of environments are EMDPs equipping principals to deal?* — is related to sub-question 1) in the sense that it explores the direction that EMDPs in KZN are moving towards in terms of the environments for which these programmes are presently equipping principals. The logic behind this question is that

before one can determine the extent to which EMDPs in SA meet the schools and principals' needs, one should get a sense of the types of environments for which these programmes purport to be equipping principals. Over and above doing a content analysis of materials such as syllabi and policy documents from the universities' departments of Education Management and Leadership to attempt to answer this question, individual interviews were conducted with not just heads of departments and (wherever possible) university lecturing staff who teach in these programmes, but also with the principals themselves who had undergone EMDPs. Interviews with principals — which took the form of one-on-one, semi-structured interviews — were important in terms of getting their perceptions of these programmes, which were then juxtaposed with university lecturing staff's perceptions.

The third sub-question — *with what kinds of challenges do principals have to contend in schools under the new prevailing conditions?* — is an attempt to get to the heart of the kind of challenges or vexing problems that principals in SA have to deal with given the new dispensation. Through the review of recent literature that addresses this issue from the South African context, and through principal interviews which offer the perspectives of practitioners in the field, we can begin to gather important insights about the principals' perceptions of the extent to which EMDPs do or do not in fact meet the needs of principals and their schools. In answering this question, university lecturers' perspectives were also solicited in order to get a sense of their perceptions of these issues/problems and the manner in which their programmes purport to respond to these problems or issues.

The fourth sub-question — *what are the perceptions of school principals of the strengths and limitations of EMDPs in terms of meeting their needs?* — is an attempt to identify the limitations of EMDPs and those aspects in these programmes that may be said to assist

principals in dealing with problems identified in the third sub-question, and in responding to the changed conditions that exist in schools presently. This question is of crucial importance in terms of the possible modification or restructuring that may be required of EMDPs. This means that, based on the findings of this study, those aspects identified by principals in the fourth sub-question may be used as a foundation upon which new programmes may be developed. In answering this question, school principals were the major source of information as representatives of “voices from the field.”

Table 1 below, offers the research methodology matrix which aims to show the sources, methods, and the focus of the analysis that was used to provide possible responses to the sub-questions of this study.

**Table 1: The Research Methodology Matrix**

Sub-Questions	Sources	Methods	Focus of the Analysis
1) What is the nature of EMDPs) presently in SA, particularly in the province of KwaZulu-Natal?	University/departmental documents and syllabi	Document search, identification, and analysis	How are EMDPs structured?
	HODs and selected university lecturing staff who teach in EMDPs	One-on-one interviews (semi-structured)	What do the institutions that offer EMDPs see as the objectives of their programmes?
	Policy documents/Reports from the provincial Department of Education (PDE)	Document search, identification, and analysis	What insights can we gather from the research literature?
	Key personnel of the PDE	One-on-one interviews (semi-structured)	Is there any consistency or coherence regarding the structure and delivery of EMDPs across the different institutions that offer EMDPs in South Africa?
	Policy documents/Reports from the national Department of Education (DoE)	Document search, identification, and analysis	Are EMDPs under any regulatory body that provides guidelines for their structure, content and delivery? If so what are these guidelines?
	Key personnel in the DoE	One-on-one interviews (semi-structured)	

			<p>What kinds of instructional approaches are employed in the delivery of EMDPs?</p> <p>What kinds of practical experiences or field-based learning opportunities (e.g., internships), if any, do these programmes provide?</p> <p>What role, if any, do practising or retired school managers play in the professional development of principals?</p> <p>What are the selection and recruitment procedures that are used to attract potential students?</p> <p>Are there any well-articulated standards for entry?</p>
2) With what types of environments are EMDPs equipping principals to deal?	<p>University/departmental documents and syllabi</p> <p>HODs and selected university lecturing staff who teach in EMDPs</p> <p>School principals who have undergone EMDPs</p>	<p>Document search, identification, and analysis</p> <p>One-on-one interviews (semi-structured)</p> <p>One-on-one interviews (semi-structured)</p>	<p>Are there any efforts to link the professional development of principals with the present conditions that exist in schools? What form or shape have these efforts taken?</p> <p>Are EMDPs equipping principals to deal with the current conditions such as diverse student and teacher populations; community and parental participation; shared governance; the implementation of new educational reforms (such as new curriculum initiatives); to manage change and reform efforts effectively etc.?</p>
3) With what kinds of challenges do principals have to contend in schools under the new prevailing conditions?	<p>Review of Literature on South Africa</p> <p>HODs and selected university lecturing staff who teach in EMDPs</p> <p>School principals who have undergone EMDPs</p>	<p>Literature search and review</p> <p>One-on-one interviews (semi-structured)</p> <p>One-on-one interviews (semi-structured)</p>	<p>What do principals perceive to be the most “vexing problems” that they have to deal with in schools?</p> <p>What do the institutions that provide professional development programmes perceive to be the most vexing problems that</p>

			<p>principals have to contend with in schools?</p> <p>In what ways do principals perceive their jobs as having changed since the changes ushered in by the new dispensation in SA?</p> <p>What (coping) strategies have principals developed to deal with these vexing problems?</p>
4) What are the perception of school principals of the strengths and limitations of the EMDPs in terms of meeting their needs?	<p>Review of Literature on South Africa</p> <p>School principals who have undergone EMDPs</p>	<p>Literature search and review</p> <p>One-on-one interviews (semi-structured)</p>	<p>For what aspects of their work do principals feel they have been adequately equipped to deal with the vexing problems that they face?</p> <p>Can principals cite any specific aspects of EMDPs that they feel have adequately equipped them for their roles in schools?</p> <p>Do principals feel that they have been adequately equipped to deal with the changes taking place in schools?</p>

### 3.5.1 Document analysis

As mentioned in Chapter One, the study begins with the content analysis of EMDPs offered in the province of KZN's three universities. In other words, the study commenced with a thorough review and analysis (content analysis) of what these programmes offer with the aim of determining the content and context of EMDPs in KZN. The strengths and weaknesses of these programmes were evaluated against the backdrop of what is postulated in the provincial and national policy documents regarding school leaders' competencies. The fact that these data were collected from three formerly racially and ethnically divided

higher education institutions that were historically meant to cater for the needs of some specific racial and ethnic groups, offers important insights about the content and context of EMDPs in these institutions.

Policy and other documents and reports from both the provincial Department of Education (PDE) and the national Department of Education (DoE)<sup>28</sup> — particularly as these relate to education management development (EMD) in SA — were also gathered and a thorough review and analysis thereof (content analysis) was conducted. It can be argued that these two policy making structures provided important information about the nature of EMD in South Africa and the kind of measures that were being undertaken (if any) to effect changes both nationally and provincially.

### **3.5.2 Interviews**

Miles and Huberman (1994) have argued that in qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection. I would further argue that the interview is therefore the major tool in that endeavour. The bulk of the data for this study is derived from interviews. I developed and used different interview protocols or schedules for participants in this study — for the university lecturing staff, key personnel in the provincial and national Departments and for the major participants of this study, the school principals (see Appendix C). In all three cases, I used semi-structured interviews mainly because, among

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<sup>28</sup> Among others, these included: the DoE's: Report of the Task Team on Education Management Development (1996), Guides for School Governing Bodies (1999) and the Guides for School Management Teams (2000); a conference paper co-written by one of the DoE's senior managers entitled: "South African Qualification for Principals: Reality or dream?"; the PDE's: Policy Framework for Education Management Development (1998), Towards effective school management: Manual 1: Effective school leadership and management (2000), Master strategic plan: 2003 – 2006.



other things, they allow for focused, conversational, two-way communication and probing responses.

With the permission and the consent of the interviewees, the interviews were recorded with an audio tape recorder. I then used the services of an experienced data specialist to transcribe the interviews verbatim. To ensure that the data specialist had transcribed the tapes accordingly, I listened to the tapes while going through the transcriptions. After I was satisfied that the transcription was in fact correctly done, I continued with the data analysis process (“continued” because analysing the data had been an ongoing process from the initial data collection stage).

What follows below is a discussion of the interviews with the different participant groups.

### **3.5.3 Interviews with university lecturing staff**

Following the content analysis of leadership and management development programmes offered by the universities in KZN, interviews with heads of departments (HODs) of the relevant university departments that offer EMDPs, were conducted. As already mentioned, where possible, the actual professors or lecturers who teach in these programmes were also interviewed in order to get first hand information about what their programmes entail and what their objectives are in so far as these programmes are concerned. These took the form of one 90-minute semi-structured interview. In cases where this became necessary, brief follow-up (telephonic) interviews — in order to seek further clarification — were also conducted with two of the HODs. With the permission from the participants, all interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed for analysis. A total of seven participants—3

HODs and 4 university lecturing staff—were interviewed: One HOD (Mr Cebekhulu) and one university lecturing staff (Mr. Bopape) from the University of Port Shepstone; one HOD (Prof. Battersby) and one university lecturing staff (Ms. Jiyane) from the University of Melmoth North Campus; one university lecturing staff (Dr. Kutumile) from the University of Melmoth South Campus; one HOD (Prof. Qwabe) from Montclair University South Campus (who is also the Dean of Faculty), and one university lecturing staff member (Prof. Ndebele) from Montclair University North Campus (who is also the Deputy Dean)<sup>29</sup>. Due to the fact that one of the university lecturing staff members (Dr. Kutumile) was on leave away from SA, an “electronic-mail interview” was conducted where interview questions were sent and received by electronic-mail.

The reason why interviews with the HODs and lecturers/professors who teach in these programmes were deemed crucial is because it can be argued that they (the HODs) are well placed to give the necessary information on what these programmes really offer or purport to offer. This implies inquiring into the actual state of EMDPs by juxtaposing what the programmes profess to offer with what the literature postulates — the desired elements of preparation programmes in educational management (Murphy, 1993) — and what the school principals consider to be of critical importance for their practices in schools. Granted that there may be variations in terms of the desired elements of EMDPs in South Africa at this particular juncture in its historical development, one can strongly argue that what is postulated in the literature may resonate, to a large extent, with what the professional development of school managers in South Africa require. The fact that the views of the programme providers are further juxtaposed with the perceptions of school principals

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<sup>29</sup> All pseudonyms.

allows this study to transcend the common “check list” approach that characterises a large number of studies of this nature.

This inquiry was done with the aim of later ascertaining whether there is a need for overhauling some of the methods or aspects of the curriculum used in the professional development of principals in KZN. As has been mentioned, the data collected from the content analysis of EMDPs and the interviews with the heads of departments and professors were later juxtaposed with the data from interviews with the school principals. This was done in order to determine the extent to which there is congruence (or incongruence) between the university faculty’s perceptions of their programmes on one hand, and practising principals’ perceptions on the other hand, of the benefits of these programmes as related to their practices in schools.

In order to enrich my understanding of the issues I had discovered during interviews with principals and university lecturing staff, I also interviewed one of the well-respected educational commentators and critics in the country, Prof. Jonathan Jansen<sup>30</sup> (real name), who provided some insightful comments and suggestions regarding what he called “three levels of explanation” regarding the findings.

#### **3.5.4 Interviews with key personnel in PDE and DoE**

Following the content analysis of documents and reports from the provincial Department of Education (PDE) and from the national Department of Education (DoE), interviews with key personnel who have responsibility for education management development (EMD), were conducted. These interviews were conducted with the Chief Director of the Education

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<sup>30</sup> It should be mentioned that at this stage I was still registered with the State University of New York at Buffalo (SUNY-Buffalo) as a doctoral student and Prof. Jansen was not my supervisor.

Management Directorate of the PDE, Dr. Dennis McGregor (pseudonym), and with the Director of Education Management and Governance Development and District Development (EMGDDD) Directorate of the DoE, Mr. Bruce Shaw (pseudonym). These are individuals who are directly involved, *inter alia*, with policy development and practice in the professional development of principals.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both Dr. McGregor and Mr. Shaw. Dr. McGregor's interview took 45 minutes while the interview with Mr. Shaw lasted for almost 2 hours (110 minutes). Both these interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed for the analysis of the data. The rationale behind conducting interviews with these key individuals is that since they are at the centre of developments regarding the professional development of principals, they may be said to be well placed to provide the necessary and current information about the state-of-the-art of EMDPs not only in the province, but also nationally.

### **3.5.5 Interviews with school principals**

Individual or one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with school principals. Through a process of stratified purposeful sampling, a total of thirty-one (31) principals were selected — while taking care to control for representation of principals from all the former racially divided departments of education in KZN, and for the rural-urban-suburban divide. These one-on-one interviews with principals — which were tape-recorded and later transcribed for analysis — were between 30 to 45 minutes in duration. There were, however, instances where the interview went beyond the 30- to 45-minute time frame to 60 minutes, particularly with those principals who had quite a lot to say and who saw the

interview as an opportunity to express their frustrations and concerns regarding the challenges they face in the post-apartheid period.

All the interviews were conducted within the school setting — mainly in the principals' offices in cases where the principal had an office — which, I should add, were at times prone to disturbances and constant disruptions — and at times convenient to the principals. Although conducting the interviews within the school setting and (in some instances) during the school time was accompanied by problems particularly in terms of disturbances, it ensured that the principals could easily reflect on issues that confront them while in their natural working settings. In order to allow a high level of comfort, principals who expressed themselves in their mother tongues (mainly in IsiZulu) were encouraged and allowed to do so.

### **3.5.6 Focus group interviews with school principals**

When the study was conceptualised focus group interviews with a selection of school principals, were part of the planned data collection strategies. However, due to the difficulties experienced with trying to gather principals for focus group interviews — precipitated, *inter alia*, by the challenges that principals in KZN were faced with during the period in which I collected the data — it became impossible to conduct these kinds of interviews. Amongst other things, the transition and implementation period under which principals were operating placed numerous demands on principals requiring them to constantly attend the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture's (KZNDEC) workshops, meetings, report to District offices, and so on.

The fact that focus group interviews were eventually not conducted does not make the findings of this study less significant, particularly given the fact that these interviews were envisaged mainly as supplementary to one-on-one interviews. Also, the fact that thirty one principals were interviewed, thus resulting in substantially large amounts of data, assisted in terms of making the impact of not conducting focus group interviews less significant.

### **3.6 Research instruments**

The research instruments for this study entailed three sets of interview schedules and document analysis protocol. The first interview schedule was utilised in order to record the responses of the HODs of the relevant university departments and professors or lecturers who teach in these programmes. The second interview schedule was for senior personnel in the PDE and in the DoE. The third interview schedule was used to record the responses of practising school principals who formed part of the sample of this study. A document analysis protocol was drawn up for use in the analysis of documents from the provincial and national departments of education, and the documents pertaining to professional development programmes offered in the province's universities (focusing on syllabi, course outlines, departmental vision and mission statements, faculty calendars, etc.).

A research log was also used in order to record and document all interactions relating to gaining entry to the sites, finding participants who were willing to participate in the study, and any problems or pertinent issues regarding data collection. Most importantly, it was also used as a self-reflective tool — in other words I recorded my self-reflective processes as a researcher (researcher reflection) as the research evolved, and documented some of the changes (e.g., the change in the use of focus group interviews, the

inclusion of extra questions in the interview schedule for school principals, and so on) necessitated by some unanticipated circumstances in the field or a re-think on my part, which required a change in the direction and focus of the research.

### **3.7 Data analysis strategies**

First and foremost, it should be mentioned that the data from the interviews, the research log, and the policy and other documents, were put through an on-going process of analysis. In other words, the analysis process began as soon as the research commenced and continued throughout the data collection process.

In the case of the interview data, following the first interviews that I conducted with school principals, I went through the audio-tape and my field notes in an effort to analyse aspects of the interviews that needed to be changed and improved upon. Based on this initial analysis, I then began to modify some aspects of the interview schedule.

As recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (1992), the initial step in the analysis of the copious pages of the different data sets (university faculty interviews, two personnel in the two departments of education, and principal interviews) involved going over the data at least thrice. Initially this involved listening to the audio-tapes while reading through the transcripts in order to ensure that the transcripts had fully captured what was said during the interviews, and to begin to make sense of the enormous data.

Following the transcription of all the data from the interviews (from university faculty, the two key personnel in the PDE and the DoE, and from school principals), it was analysed using a grounded theory approach to data analysis. I developed a three-column

matrix where on the first column I placed the different interviews with the participants, indicating the date, setting/place, key research question and the participants' pseudonyms. In the second column I then started 'plotting in' the different possible codes derived from the interviews — a process Strauss and Corbin (1998) refer to as “open coding.” Initially the list of codes was indeed very long, but I was later able to refine/narrow down the list of codes. In the third column I included memos — both personal and theoretical memos, where I reflected on particular codes, and in some instances began to provide possible hunches based on the interview data. From the different codes I had developed, I was able to establish a number of categories. Out of the categories a number of themes began to emerge, which yielded noteworthy insights about the interview data that I had collected.

With specific reference to the data from the interviews with school principals, the common themes were clustered together in order to develop a taxonomy of all common statements regarding the principals' experiences within the changed conditions. Once these statements had been analysed following the establishment of themes, the next step was to focus on the significance of the principals' statements in relation to their practices in school, and to the EMDPs that they had undergone. In other words, the statements were analysed to ascertain the extent to which their professional development allows them to deal with the challenges that the new conditions present. All this was done with the overall aim of ascertaining what meanings principals give to their experiences of EMDPs, and to what extent these meanings can be useful in terms of their juxtaposition with the principals' practices in school?



### **3.8 Reliability and validity (trustworthiness and dependability) concerns**

In qualitative research reliability usually refers to the extent to which the research has “dependability” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 300) and “trustworthiness” (Seale, 1999: 266). Validity on the other hand refers to issues of “quality”, “rigour” and the extent to which a study was conducted as part of “proper research” (Stenbacka, 2001: 551). I use these concepts (reliability and validity) with the full understanding that some researchers have expressed their apprehension about the use of such concepts in qualitative research and have therefore made attempts to coin alternative concepts (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Seale, 1999; Stenbacka, 2001). Merriam (1995) has rightly argued that qualitative research is based on different assumptions regarding reality and therefore requires different conceptualisation of reliability and validity. I, however, take cognisance of what I consider to be a critical assertion by Lincoln and Guba (1985: 316) that: “[S]ince there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former [validity] is sufficient to establish the latter [reliability].” In the present study I have attempted to address mainly validity concerns in line with Lincoln and Guba’s afore-mentioned statement.

Merriam (1995) proposes a variety of approaches in an effort to address reliability and validity concerns in qualitative research. These include triangulation (e.g., use of multiple sources of data), member checks, peer/colleague examination, thick description, multi-site designs, sampling within, and modal comparison. In the present study, a variety of these approaches were utilised.

Data for this study were collected from various sources, i.e., school principals, university lecturers and education (both national and provincial) department officials. This could be regarded as a form of triangulation as these different sources of data assisted in

placing the perception of school principals within proper perspective (the context in which EMDPs are developed and presented and the policy environment underpinning the professional development of school principals).

With regards to peer/colleague examination, prior to conducting the research I asked two professors of education — one of whom is a well-respected academic in the area of education leadership and management, based overseas, and the other, also a well-respected scholar in the broad field of education policy and change, locally (South Africa) based — for feedback regarding my research methodology. I asked these professors to comment particularly about the research questions. On the basis of their comments I then made and incorporated the suggested changes into the study.

Furthermore, after the field work had been completed, I presented a paper on the preliminary findings at the 8<sup>th</sup> International Education Management Association of South Africa (EMASA) Conference held in 2004 in East London, South Africa. This conference presented a perfect stage for me on which to test not only the claims that I was making, but also the soundness of the study. What made the conference presentation even more insightful was that beyond the international and local attendees who provided invaluable feedback, some university lecturing staff (three in total) from the institutions where the data had been collected, were in attendance at the Conference and also provided critical comments. Also present at the Conference were a number of school principals (five in total) who had participated in the study as interviewees, who also commented outside the session in which I had presented the then tentative findings of the study. Again, all this feedback was incorporated into the study.

The “member-checks” technique was also utilised in this study — albeit in a limited fashion. I managed to ask only five principals in the sample of the study to check and comment on the accuracy of the data I had collected. I also asked them to comment on the preliminary findings that I was highlighting. As indicated above, a further 5 principals who attended the conference in which I presented the paper based on the preliminary findings, also got a chance to provide their inputs about the research. Although the total number of principals who were asked to comment on the interpretation of the data is limited (10 out of 31), the views of these principals provided an important validity measure. Given the number of participants (school principals in particular) that I interviewed and the limitations in the resources, I was not able to send the interview data and the preliminary findings to all the participants.

Finally, the use of thick descriptions of the voices of school principals regarding their perceptions of the benefits of education management development programmes for their practice in schools, are presented as one of the strengths of this study.

### **3.9 Ethical concerns**

According to Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005), the general principles invoked in codes of research ethics are that no harm should befall the research subjects and that human subjects should take part freely based on informed consent. In this study ethical concerns were addressed through a variety of ways. At one level, an informed consent form that was designed and administered to all participants prior to their participation in the study clearly stated that there were no risks — actual or potential — that might result from participation in the study. Furthermore, participants were made aware that their participation in the

study was voluntary and that they had a right to withdraw their participation at any stage of the research without any adverse consequences.

At another level, ethical considerations had to do with the anonymity of the participants. Cohen *et al.* (2000: 61-62) posit that the essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity. They further argue that the principal means of ensuring anonymity is not using the names of the participants or any other personal means of identification. In the current study the issue of anonymity was addressed through the use of aliases in the place of the participants' names and the universities in which they work. As alluded to by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992, cited by Cohen, Marion and Morrison, 2000), to further enhance anonymity, the names of the participants and their institutions were linked by code alphabets (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias suggest code numbers), and once the data had been prepared for analysis, the identifying information was separated from the research data.

I am of the belief that I took enough precautions in addressing the ethical concerns and that I did everything in my power to uphold the general principles of research ethics. Even instances where the identifying information was unavoidably difficult to conceal (e.g., the fact that there was only one Chief Director in Provincial Education Management Directorate), I still made every effort to conceal the identity of the individual concerned.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

With the advent of the new dispensation in SA, school managers — particularly principals — have found themselves having to contend with a plethora of different issues and challenges that require different strategies and a different educational management knowledge base. Leadership and management development programmes (EMDPs) are central towards the goal of assisting school principals to deal effectively with these changed conditions in schools.

Through the use of a document analysis and qualitative research design — utilising document analysis and interview methods — the study attempted to explore the extent to which principal professional development in SA meets school and principal needs given the new conditions that exist in the country. By engaging in a thorough review and analysis of documents and literature; eliciting the perspectives of not only principals, but also faculty who teach in EMDPs, and the key personnel in the provincial Department of Education (PDE) and in the national Department of Education (DoE), this study aimed to provide valuable insights which might help in the modification of existing programmes and the development of new ones.

It is hoped that the combination of the research strategies that were employed to gather and analyse the data yielded important insights that can help to stimulate and inform policy debates in SA regarding the professional development of school managers such as principals. In the next chapter, a descriptive analysis of the data emanating from the inquiry is presented.

# Chapter



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## THE CONTENT AND CONTEXT OF EMDPs IN KWAZULU-NATAL: A CONTENT ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and analyse the content and contexts of education management development programmes (EMDPs) that are offered in the province of KwaZulu-Natal's (KZN) three universities.

In terms of the content of the EMDPs, the sub-question that is addressed in this chapter is the following:

- a) *What is the nature of EMDPs in South Africa, particularly in the province of KwaZulu-Natal?*

And in terms of the context of EMDPs, the following sub-question is being addressed:

- b) *With what types of environments are EMDPs equipping principals to deal?*

In an attempt to address these two sub-questions regarding the content and context of EMDPs in KZN, I will focus on, *inter alia*, the way that these programmes are structured, their professed objectives/aims, and the extent to which these programmes pay attention to

some of the critical issues raised in the research literature as being critical for the successful professional development of school managers or principals.

The interviews with the providers were conducted with the respective Heads of the Departments and one university lecturing staff member teaching in the programme or who had been involved in the development of the programme<sup>31</sup>. What is of interest to note is that all the university lecturing staff participants had either studied overseas (mainly in the USA and the UK) or had close links with colleagues at overseas universities<sup>32</sup>. To a large extent, these participants' overseas training and close working relationships with overseas institutions influenced their pedagogical and epistemological orientations and these influences found expression, *inter alia*, in the design of the different education management development programmes that they developed.

In terms of document analysis, the documents that I focused on were mainly Course Outlines, Module Handbooks, Faculty Prospectuses, Faculty Guides, and Templates Guidelines for Internal Approval of Modules at the respective universities, and information available on respective departments of educational management/leadership websites. A number of policy documents and reports from both the provincial and the national Departments of Education (alluded to in Chapter Three) also served as critical sources of data, particularly in terms of providing the contextual background within which the EMDPs are offered in the province of KZN.

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<sup>31</sup> Over and above the interview with the Head of Department of Montclair University, Prof. Qwabe, transcripts of an earlier interview (1998) dealing with similar matters as the concerns of my study, were made available by Prof. Qwabe. Therefore, I also draw on this data in this chapter.

<sup>32</sup> For example, Dr. Kutumile and Mr. Cebekhulu did their post-graduate studies in the USA; Mr. Bopape studied in the UK; Ms. Jiyane and Professors Qwabe, Battersby and Ndebele had close links with universities in the UK.

I should mention at this stage that the programmes that are reviewed in this chapter are programmes offered between the years 1996 and 2002. The significance of beginning with the year 1996 is that it could be argued that two years after the dawn of the new dispensation in South Africa, EMDPs should have been responding to the new imperatives on the ground. It is also worth mentioning that substantial attention is placed on the programme content of EMDPs based on the understanding that it is this discussion of the content of EMDPs that can then be juxtaposed with the views of school managers regarding the effectiveness of these programmes.

Chapter Four begins with an introduction to the chapter — reflecting on the statement of purpose and reiterating the research questions that the chapter attempts to address — and provides a brief discussion of the data collection strategies.

Following the introduction to the Chapter, I then attempt to respond to the questions on the extent to which needs analyses are a feature of EMDPs in KZN; what the providers put forward as the aims and objectives of their programmes (coupled with what the key role-players in the national and provincial departments would like these programmes to focus on); how the candidates are recruited and selected into the programmes; the environments for which EMDPs equip school principals; a bird's eye view of the content of the EMDPs in KZN; the extent to which these programmes have practical applicability to the environments in which principals operate, in other words, the extent of content application in organisational settings; the extent to which participants in EMDPs have opportunities for field-based learning experiences; modes of delivery of EMDPs; and a brief focus on university lecturing staff. Finally, the chapter ends with a synthesis of the revelations



emanating from the data presented in the different themes, detailing the stakeholders' understandings of EMDPs in KZN.

## **4.2 Needs assessment and analysis**

I agree with Gunraj and Rutherford (1999) (citing Ford, 1996 and Foreman, 1996) who have argued that ongoing needs assessment and analysis should be a part of any professional development programme for headteachers or school principals. I agree with the argument despite the pitfall that such analyses might contain, as clearly illustrated by Nieuwenhuis (2010a, 2010b) cited in Chapter 1 of the present study. Steyn (2005) argues that participants in professional development programmes should participate in, amongst others, setting goals, priorities and processes. Salazar (2007) cites Buckley (1985: 30) who argued a few decades ago that “[I]t is very useful to discuss with participants not only ‘what’ they wish to learn during training, but also ‘how’ they would wish to learn it.” It is therefore, for this reason that in reviewing EMDPs offered in KZN universities, I begin by focusing on the following question: To what extent are these programmes based on any form of needs assessment and analysis?

Based on the individual interviews with university lecturing staff, I got a general sense that there was very little in terms of a systematic approach geared towards thoroughly assessing and analysing the needs of principals in such a manner that the programmes that the universities offered were derived from and geared towards addressing the needs and the challenges faced by schools/school principals. In other words, there was a lack of what Huber (2004: 98) calls an “orientation towards the actual needs of the participants.” It seems that for the most part these programmes were put together on the

basis of what the university lecturers/professors saw as necessary and important. As Monks and Walsh (2001: 148) have argued, based on their evaluation of management education programmes in Ireland:

The choice of subjects taught on any management education programme is not necessarily based on any objective assessment of what managers might need to know. It is much more likely to be based on the skills and knowledge available within the business schools in which most postgraduate education takes place.

There were exceptions, though. It should be mentioned that there were indications from some of the university lecturing staff interviewed that they (lecturers/professors) were making an attempt to undertake some kind of needs assessment. Prof. Ndebele, for example, indicated that she had designed the programme at Montclair University South Campus (MUSC),

...based on our *observed needs* and based on our *interaction with principals and schools*... Based on all those factors, our observed needs and based on our interaction with schools, and of course our reading on what is useful in terms of management, leadership and administration, we then design programmes (My emphasis) (Interview with Prof. Ndebele, 20/03/2002).

I would argue that interacting with principals and schools and observing the needs cannot be said to constitute what could be considered a “proper” needs analysis; and this observation and interaction with potential programme recipients cannot be used as a basis for designing programmes aimed at addressing the perceived needs<sup>33</sup>. In fact, I would argue that what Prof. Ndebele indicated falls short of a systematic approach towards addressing an important aspect in designing leadership and management development programmes. What Prof. Ndebele indicated later on in the interview — that she had undertaken a needs

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<sup>33</sup> Refer to the work of Nieuwenhuis (2010a, 2010b) cited in Chapter 1 of the present study, section 1.6 (Conceptual Framework).

analysis exercise in a form of surveys — would, in my mind, come closer towards a systematic approach. As she indicated:

Two years ago I started something that I thought I would do regularly, but I haven't. And that was to conduct surveys with principals bi-annually to determine their needs administratively and to get their suggestions as to the kind of programmes they would like. Then I thought we would marry our experience and observations with that up-to-date indication of perceived needs (Interview with Prof. Ndebele, 20/03/2002).

Unfortunately, according to Prof. Ndebele, she was not able to sustain this process, mainly due to “resource shortages” in the form of time, money and staff. According to her, if the resources were available,

...we would be updating programmes based on emerging needs, perhaps yearly or at least bi-annually (Interview with Prof. Ndebele, 20/03/2002).

On the other hand, Mr. Cebekhulu indicated that the education management and leadership curriculum at the University of Port Shepstone (UPS) post-1994 was informed by the identified needs of school managers, discerned from debates in the media, from the local research literature, and in discussions with departmental officials. As he put it during the interview:

When we designed the curriculum, the shift moving away from practically focusing on the needs of schools was very critical in a sense that it was divided, the curriculum development was divided into categories but the school specific leadership was actually based on a wide range of research on effective schools that had been conducted and we were building on the recommendations of—there was a study conducted by Jonathan [Jansen, one of the most prolific writers and researchers on education issues in South Africa] on effective schools and we were building on the observations and recommendations of that study to respond through curriculum to the imperatives of that time (Interview with Mr. Cebekhulu, 14/01/2003).

Mr. Cebekhulu further indicated that fifty percent of the curriculum was responding to the imperatives of the time:

So, we shaped the modules around constant imperatives of the time (Interview with Mr. Cebekhulu, 14/01/2003).

To further illustrate how the programme at the UPS responded to the imperatives of the time, Mr. Cebekhulu offered the following example:

If this year the focus is on improving on Matric [Grade 12] results by ensuring that we build mentorship programmes and academic development programmes, we would build that component and research into an existing module. So, we shape the module around constant imperatives, so the teacher who graduates or the principal who graduates with a qualification in 1998 is totally different from a principal who graduates with the same qualification from the same department at the same University in 2002 because the focus has been determined by the imperatives of the time (Interview with Mr. Cebekhulu, 14/01/2003).

What is of interest is that although fifty percent of the curriculum at the UPS was designed in response to the postulations of school effectiveness research, at no point were the needs of the principals solicited and used as the basis for the construction of the programme. Even the discussions with the departmental officials that Mr. Cebekhulu referred to were mainly informal in nature and not held with the specific aim of discerning what the needs for school managers were.

In fact, the situation at the University of Port Shepstone and Montclair University's South Campus was not dissimilar to the situation at Montclair University's North Campus (MUNC) in so far as needs assessment and analysis is concerned. Although MUNC's Prof. Qwabe acknowledged that before a programme is designed, there must be what he called a "situation analysis — what exactly do people need to learn, what are their needs" (Interview

with Prof. Qwabe, 19/03/2002), the programme offered by his Department was not based on the needs identified by school principals. As he put it,

The needs are there in a sense because, first of all, the functions of different role functionaries are known. And secondly, you have had at the national level development of certain documents which guide the process of appraisal. And the appraisal system is based on certain task areas which individuals are responsible for. And so the training has to go along those lines (Interview with Prof. Qwabe, 19/03/2002).

Prof. Qwabe further used the example of the Developmental Appraisal System<sup>34</sup> which, according to him, has set tasks that school managers have to perform and indicated that, “those set tasks will serve as a basis for training as a matter of fact” (Interview with Prof. Qwabe, 19/03/2002).

Admirable as the development of needs from the policy guidelines might be, the fact that this process is not based on the needs as identified by the participants/potential participants in the programme — the school principals — is problematic. Important as it may be to develop and design a programme from the policy imperatives, I would argue that a much better approach would be to strike a balance between policy imperatives and the needs expressed by the practitioners (school principals) on the ground.

While acknowledging the importance of needs assessment and analysis in designing education management development programmes, Prof. Battersby of UMSC made what I considered to be an intriguing comment when he indicated that:

University courses should not slavishly follow needs (Interview with Prof. Battersby, 22/03/2002).

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<sup>34</sup> In a nutshell, the Developmental Appraisal System (DAS) is an appraisal system aimed at facilitating the “personal and professional development of educators in order to improve the quality of teaching practice and education management” (ELRC Policy Handbook for Educators, 2003: 260). DAS focuses on the following ongoing processes: reflective practice, self appraisal, peer appraisal, collaboration and interaction with panels (*Ibid.*).

In fact, earlier during the interview Prof. Battersby had clearly indicated that:

We don't do anything in terms of meeting short-term needs of principals (Interview with Prof. Battersby, 22/03/2002).

His argument was that the relevance of what they, as a Department, do is related to the needs of people — attested to by the high number of applications received each year. I would argue that some kind of needs assessment or analysis would be critically important in order to develop and design a professional development or training programme that is at least responding to what the beneficiaries regard as important. Measures undertaken in programmes such as HEADLAMP in the UK — referred to later in the last chapter of this study — provide important lessons and indications of what is possible regarding the assessment and analysis of professional development and training needs.

The lack of a systematic needs assessment and analysis is not peculiar to educational organisations — not that this should be of any comfort in education. In a study of government, private and joint venture organisations conducted in Kuwait (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 1995), it was found that 96 percent of all these organisations had no specific practices or procedures for determining training development and educational needs of their managerial personnel.

### **4.3 Aims and objectives of EMDPs in KZN**

More than a decade ago, Murphy (1992: 84) decried the absence of a collective vision about the purposes informing training experiences for school leaders. Twelve years later, based on the international study of leadership and management development programmes in fifteen countries, Huber (2004: 98) highlighted the importance of clear and explicitly stated

definition of aims, using the core purpose of a school as a focus. This means, amongst other things, that professional development programmes should be driven by a set of assumptions or core values that underpin their contents and modes of delivery. Below I will look at what the different programmes at the different universities in KZN put forward as their major goals or objectives.

According to the Head of the Department and Masters Programme Coordinator at the University of Port Shepstone, Mr. Cebekhulu, the education management and leadership (EML) programme was driven by the question of:

...what does every manager need to know, anyway, whether you are in education or you are in any organisation running any civil organisation, or you're in the private sector (Interview with Mr. Cebekhulu, 14/01/2003).

The aim of the programme, therefore, was to provide school principals with "...the tools, expertise and competencies to be general managers anywhere" (*Ibid*). To that end, Mr. Cebekhulu indicated that the critical areas that the programme focused upon were *strategic planning, human resource management, labour relations, financial management, organisational behaviour and effective schools*. There was also a focus on *school governance*, reflecting the new era of school governing bodies in the education system. The rationale behind the latter focus (school governance) was based on the understanding that,

...if principals were well enlightened with issues of school governance as playing a critical role in governing bodies they'd be able to influence decisions and maybe also provide systemic orientations and capacity building for some of the parents who were not fortunate enough to have an understanding of management systems and governance systems, but are respected and trusted by the parent stakeholder component of a school governance to represent them (Interview with Mr. Cebekhulu, 14/01/2003).

In a nutshell, Mr. Cebekhulu summarised the objectives of the programme that his Department was providing as moving,

...from policy and then policy analysis and interpretation, and then focusing on the imperatives of management, which are very generic in nature, and then zooming into specifics concerning management of schools—managing of education at the level of schools, and then moving into self-development of school managers (Interview with Mr. Cebekhulu, 14/01/2003).

So, clearly the aims of the EML programme at the UPS were quite broad indeed, focusing on a variety of areas of concern and a number of programmatic objectives.

Prof. Ndebele of Montclair University's Department of \_\_\_\_\_, on the other hand, put forward a number of objectives that her Department's programme was designed to achieve:

...to enable participants, students, to engage with theoretical frameworks which may assist them in practice. But also which may assist them in understanding conceptualisation of various components of management. For us, one of the aims is to inform our theory; when we update our programmes, part of the input comes from the classes, from our interaction with the students. To enable them to inform their practice, two, to enable them to deepen their conceptual understanding of theory and even their expertise in theory, and three, to inform our theoretical paradigms through engaging with the practitioners, because that's what they are really, they are practitioners (Interview with Prof. Ndebele, 20/03/2002).

The intersection between theory and practice attendant in Prof Ndebele's understanding of her Department's objectives, is of interest. What can be discerned from her statement is that the Department of \_\_\_\_\_'s programme was aimed at assisting school principals to understand the theoretical aspects of leadership and management/administration in such a manner that this understanding impacts on their practice.



In the transcript of an earlier interview (Dube, 1998: 2—3), Prof. Qwabe, from the same institution (Montclair University), highlighted four broad priority areas for education management development in KZN that his Department was trying to fulfil:

- i) the need to create a participative management culture,
- ii) the need to build capacities of governance structures,
- iii) determining and clarifying roles of managers and training them for management and performance improvement, and
- iv) the need to change focus of people involved in management positions from that of stabilising agents to that of change agents.

Clearly, all of these priority areas were based on the changed conditions prevalent in the country in general, and in the education sector in particular, precipitated by the dawn of the new dispensation in 1994. The need to create a participative management culture, for example, emanates from the pre-1994 conditions that existed in most schools where this culture (participative management culture) was largely non-existent.

A similar point can be made about the principles underlying the development of leadership and management development programme at Montclair University: the principles were based on the changed conditions in the schools and in the country.

According to the transcript of the interview conducted by Dube (1998: 3—4), the three principles underlying the development of the programme at Montclair University that Prof. Qwabe outlined were that:

- i) management should be for transformation – an ideological framework that has been adopted nationally,
- ii) management development should be guided by the concept of facilitative teaching and learning – causing the core function of the education system, teaching and learning, to take place effectively,
- iii) management development should be guided by the need to enhance participation in decision making among all people involved in the education enterprise – decision making and participation are of primary importance in training for management.

In terms of principle i), Prof. Qwabe elucidated that:

...unless management [development] has something to do with transformation and changing the *gestalt* [whole shape] of our education enterprise and making it relevant to the democratic culture... then it is not going on the right track (Dube, 1998: 4).

This is an important objective, particularly given the larger transformation project that the country embarked upon following many years of colonialism and apartheid.

With regards to principle ii), Prof. Qwabe mentioned another critical element of professional development programmes, that is,

...unless management has impact on facilitating teaching and learning [in schools], it is not doing the right business (Dube, 1998: 4).

This aspect of training development programmes relates to the role of school principals as instructional leaders in order to ensure that conducive conditions exist for effective teaching and learning. As will be seen below, the Director in the DoE also alluded to the instructional leadership role, with the major difference that for him this role should not be played by the principal alone, but also by the other members of the school management team (SMT). I return to this aspect later.

Pertaining to principle iii), Prof. Qwabe posited that:

Management development is meant to enable people to acquire this understanding that directing the education processes is a corporate responsibility for all people involved, be they parents, be they learners, be they educators, be they education officers, they are all involved in their sphere of competence to cause education to take place, that is, to cause teaching and learning to take place (Dube, 1998: 4).

What Prof. Qwabe was talking about has been referred to by scholars such as Barth (1990), as the notion of “community of leaders.” What is attractive about Prof Qwabe’s postulation is that in this instance he seems to combine the idea of community of leaders — which is

closely linked to the notion of distributed leadership — with instructional leadership. This is indeed an interesting notion in terms of the kind of objectives that training development programmes ought to pursue. In fact, all this raises critical and interesting debates regarding the question of which is the best approach in the development of school principals that leads to effective schools—training them (principals) alone or together with other critical role players (SMT members and SGB members)? I return to this question in the final chapter of this study.

Finally, the Masters programme in the Department of \_\_\_\_\_  
at the University of Melmoth South Campus had the following broad aims:

- i) to enable students to study, critique, and gain insights into topical management, leadership and governance theories in education as to equip them to grow in research and practice in the field, and
  - ii) to locate education management, leadership and governance within current South African policy documents which are relevant to education.
- (Department of \_\_\_\_\_ Prospectus, 2002/2003: 6).

It is of interest to note that the University of Melmoth South Campus programme is the only programme whose objectives include a focus on “research and practice.” Although other education management development programmes reviewed in this study did include research as part of their programmes, UMSC has it as part of its objectives.

In terms of the views of the departmental stakeholders (provincial and national Departments of Education) in relation to the objectives of the leadership and management development programmes, as alluded to earlier, Mr. Bruce Shaw the Director in the national DoE was of the opinion that these programmes ought to focus on school management teams and not necessarily school principals. This is important because it implies that the national Department is moving in the direction of shared leadership or what other scholars have called “distributed leadership” (Spillane *et al.*, 2004; Harris, 2004),

as opposed to the focus on the principal as the only central figure in school leadership and management.

As Mr. Shaw put it:

The principle we are working on is that when you have an individual driving something, [when] they are away, eh, if your whole management is structured around the principal playing the only critical role in the school, the school stops functioning for two days [when the principal is away]. And that's what happens, and teachers go off because if the principal is not there, there's no reason for them to hang around. Certainly there's no reason to teach even if they hang around. So there are major management issues—one of the things is obviously trying to *spread management within the school* so that there's a group of HODs and deputy principal and principal and even the senior teachers who feel that it's their responsibility to play some sort of role in management (My emphasis) (Interview with Mr. Shaw, 8/03/2002).

Mr. Shaw's idea of having leadership and management development programmes focus on the whole school management team as opposed to solely the school principals was shared by Dr. McGregor of the provincial Department of Education (KZNDEC). Dr McGregor took the idea further when he argued that:

We need not only to empower all members of the management team [school management team – SMT], but also to empower SGBs [school governing bodies]. You cannot separate the two, governance and management.... The smooth running of the school is a combined effort (Interview with Dr. McGregor, 12/03/2002).

The general ideas expressed by departmental stakeholders, Mr. Shaw and Dr. McGregor, are supported by researchers such as Gunraj and Rutherford (1999: 144), who have argued that one of the critical factors in relation to the question of what successful headteachers or school principals do, is “the ability to work collaboratively with others to achieve... goals.”

The issue of distributed leadership again featured prominently during one of the conference presentations by a senior official of the national Department of Education who expressed the Department's vision as that of:

...programmes of training with *transformational and instructional leadership* focus for critical management levels in the system, e.g., HODs [Heads of Departments], principals... (my emphasis) (Prew, 2004a).

Clearly, this conceptualisation of school management has major implications in terms of how leadership and management development programmes are constructed, and the kind of objectives that ought to be pursued. Interesting enough, there were some notable areas of convergence, for example, around the issue of EMDPs being designed to pursue a transformational agenda — as articulated by Prof. Qwabe and by Mr. Shaw from the national Department of Education.

Another area where, interestingly, four<sup>35</sup> of the seven providers (university lecturing staff) expressed a similar idea regarding what they saw their education management development programmes as attempting to achieve, was in terms of the need to develop school managers who are reflective practitioners. As one of the university lecturing staff members put it:

Our programme is designed in such a manner that principals are constantly required to think back to their working contexts, in other words, way to reflect critically on their work... (Interview with Mr. Bopape, 21/03/2002).

This sentiment was also echoed by Ms. Jiyane who indicated that all the tasks in their principal development programme,

...call for reflection. We want essays to be applied to practice (Interview with Ms. Jiyane, 20/03/2002).

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<sup>35</sup> These were Mr. Cebekhulu, Prof. Qwabe, Ms. Jiyane and Mr. Bopape.

To conclude this section, although some general aims and objectives can be discerned from the postulations of the different university lecturing staff interviewed for this study, I would argue that almost all of these programmes lacked a clear set of principles which could be regarded as the main drivers for their development and execution.

What is notable is that there are some areas of convergence between what the providers (university lecturing staff) see as critical objectives of their programmes and the departmental officials' thinking (for example, the notion of community of leaders/distributed leadership; and the idea that EMDPs should pursue a transformational agenda).

There were, however, also areas where differences could be discerned, for example, with regards to developing the principal as the main actor in school improvement as opposed to the development of the different stakeholders who are important key players in effecting school development and effective school leadership and management.

#### **4.4 Recruitment and selection of candidates**

One of the critical issues identified by Murphy (1992) more than a decade ago, and recently by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) (2002) in their review of EMDPs in the USA, is the issue of recruitment and selection of candidates for these programmes. According to Murphy (1992), the lack of sound recruitment strategies may be one of the most serious problems in as far as EMDPs are concerned. Murphy (1992: 80) rightly argues that the reason why this is an important aspect is that “training outcomes depend [largely] on the mix of program experiences and *the quality of entering students*” (my emphasis).

Therefore a lack of rigour at entry reflects a lack of clear criteria for training or a clear vision of what candidates and graduates will look like.

As in the programmes reviewed by Murphy and the SREB in the USA, self-selection seems to be the only way of selection in the programmes in the KZN universities and in SA in general. This form of selection is even worse when no interviews are conducted and there are no explicit criteria (except perhaps for the University of Melmoth South Campus (UMSC) programme which required candidates to be practising school managers) for selection. Students are accepted not on the basis of leadership potential or being practising school leaders, but merely on the basis of their interest to register in the programme and add a degree next to their name. Although the University of Melmoth North Campus (UMNC) Masters Guidebook (2002/2003: 9) clearly stated that “[A]dmission is not automatic”, it only went as far as indicating that an acceptable record of academic and or professional work will form the basis for the selection:

Normally this means that you have a First class or good Upper second pass in your Honours level qualification.

In fact, all the programmes under review — except the Masters’ programmes at the UPS and at UMNC — seem to lack a rigorous strategy for the recruitment and selection of candidates. In other words, there is no systematic strategy to attract the most capable candidates, and, as noted earlier, this is important since the quality of the programme depends largely on the quality of the candidates and their (candidates’) level and nature of engagement during seminars.

At UMNC selection interviews were conducted to select the best candidates. Of about a hundred students who applied yearly, only fifteen were accepted. And at UPS,

according to Mr. Cebekhulu, Head of the \_\_\_\_\_ Department, selection interviews were conducted with the potential candidates on the basis of the strength of the candidates' curriculum vitae. Moreover, they were given case studies which they had to analyse and formulate their responses, in order to judge the candidates' academic readiness and analytical skills. However, even though the programme at the UPS had a selection strategy, there was no concerted strategy for the recruitment of candidates with leadership potential — perhaps due to the fact that both the BEd (Honours) and the MEd programmes in educational leadership and management had the highest number of students seeking admission to the programme.

#### **4.5 The environments for which EMDPs equips principals**

One of the questions that I asked the university lecturing staff during individual interviews was what they perceived to be the kind of challenges that principals have to contend with in schools, particularly given the changed conditions in the country. The idea behind this question was to get an indication of whether university lecturing staff who teach in and have designed EMDPs, have a sense of the kind of environments in which their clients operate. Furthermore, the question was asked with a view to ascertaining the extent to which the perceptions of university lecturing staff influenced the design/content of the EMDPs at these institutions in any way. In other words, was the design and development of EMDPs geared towards developing school managers to effectively deal with the challenging environments in which they work?

From the interview data it was clear that the university lecturing staff had a good sense of the environments in which school principals have to operate, and the kind of



challenges with which they have to grapple. This observation can be illustrated by the comments of one of the participants, Prof. Ndebele, who indicated that,

Change management is one of the huge challenges. There are all sorts of stresses as a result of change. Conflict management, and of course stability in education – and remember we’ve introduced so many pieces of legislation, and in some cases we may have gone against some functional theories of change management: we have introduced so many changes within the same time, without enough support and little resources. So, people haven’t quite internalised the changes and they are at the resistance stage and principals are affected because they work through people. (Interview with Prof. Ndebele, 20/03/2002).

Managing change and dealing with resistance to change are indeed some of the vexing challenges with which school managers found themselves having to deal, particularly given the changes brought about by the new dispensation in the country. The changes have also brought with them a certain measure of conflict; so being able to manage conflict effectively is also critical in school managers’ functioning.

On the other hand, in the transcript of an earlier interview (Dube, 1998: 12), Prof. Qwabe moved from the premise that the professional development of school principal needs

...to create that culture of acknowledgement that the new system of education presents challenges to which people have not had adequate experience or exposure.

The acknowledgement that the new conditions existing in schools have rendered many school managers inadequately prepared for the new roles that they are supposed to play is an important starting point in terms of understanding the environments in which school managers or principals have to operate.

In the same interview cited above (Dube, 1998: 2—3), Prof. Qwabe further indicated that for him,

...one of the challenges facing education managers generally is professionalising their activities and taking EMD [Education Management Development] as one of the means of professional development that we need to make a difference. And we can benefit a lot from the insights provided by EMD.... We must make a difference. We must prove that we have been worth the trouble of transformation and change of government, change of service and creation of new structures.

This implies that for Prof. Qwabe, one of the critical areas that the development of school principals needed to address was to equip them with the necessary skills to understand the professional roles that they have to play, and be able to deal with the new conditions existing in the country, brought about by the changes that had taken place post-1994.

As already indicated, according to Mr. Cebekhulu, the programmes at the University of Port Shepstone were also geared towards helping school principals deal with the whole spectra of change, and the curriculum was designed in such a way that it was “responding to the pressures school managers experienced at the time” (Interview with Mr. Cebekhulu, 14/01/2003). In other words, the programme at UPS was designed in a manner that was responding to the imperatives of the time. As will be seen later in this chapter, each group of students that registered at UPS each year was exposed to a different study focus dictated by what was topical and pertinent during that particular year.

One of the critical areas to which all the programmes reviewed in this study paid particular attention, was the development of school managers regarding school governance issues. School governing bodies (SGBs) are a post-1994 phenomenon, brought about by the need to include all the role players — particularly parents and the community — in the

decision making processes of the school (shared decision making). SGBs also came about as a way of democratising school governance and management. Therefore, it became necessary, post-1994, to include school governance aspects in the professional development of school principals. As Mr. Cebekhulu put it during the interview, the idea behind a focus on school governance was based on

...extending the whole management of schools... into stakeholder involvement in decision making. [Therefore this was based on] extending the understanding of policies, the national policies, on school governance (Interview with Mr. Cebekhulu, 14/01/2003).

#### **4.6 Content of EMDPs in KZN**

One of the observations that I made with regards to the contents of the leadership and management development programmes in KZN was that they seem to have been influenced by programmes in the UK and the USA. As indicated earlier in this chapter, all the university lecturing staff interviewed for this study had either studied at overseas institutions or had close working relationships with overseas universities. It is interesting to note, for example, that the Masters degree programme offered at the University of Melmoth, as well as the programme at Montclair University seem to have been heavily influenced by their counterparts in the UK and the USA respectively. As the Coordinator and Head of the Department at UMSC, Prof. Battersby, indicated in terms of designing the MEd programme:

In the early nineties I took stock of what we were doing and it seemed to me to be wanting in many ways.... I got in touch with the people at the Education Management Development Unit in Leicester University [UK]... I entered into an informal relationship which then became more formalized... and we worked together, they worked to help me to restructure our degree... (Interview with Prof. Battersby, 22/03/2002).

According to Prof. Battersby, the MEd programme they developed,

...addressed the main areas of educational management, but paid attention to the emerging context in South Africa as opposed to being dependent almost completely on overseas literature (Interview with Prof. Battersby, 22/03/2002).

However, as will be argued later, a critical look at the prescribed and recommended readings of these universities programmes, tells a different story.

Montclair University Head of the \_\_\_\_\_ Department, Prof. Qwabe, also indicated that in terms of designing the programme,

I actually went to the United Kingdom and studied programmes they [were] offering and came back to design our Masters programme (Interview with Prof. Qwabe, 18/03/2002).

Although Mr. Cebekhulu of the University of Port Shepstone \_\_\_\_\_ Department indicated that he was very sceptical of what he called “benchmarking from overseas”, as already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, he had studied in the USA and the programme in whose designing he played a major role reflected this USA influence. Dr. Kutumile’s Masters in educational administration programme (University of Melmoth North Campus) is also reflective of his training in the USA.

What is worthy of note is that there are remarkable similarities between some of the modules offered at the University of Melmoth South Campus and Montclair University — perhaps owing to the fact that the curriculum designers of both universities (Professors Battersby and Qwabe) had consulted colleges in or studied programmes in the UK.

For instance, the curriculum for the module called “Leadership and Strategic Management” at both departments was identical, covering themes such as “Total Quality

Management’, ‘Development Planning’, ‘Effectiveness, Improvement and Quality’, to mention but a few. The same applies to the module called “Human Resource Management” (referred to as “The Management of Human Resources in Education” at the University of Melmoth South Campus’ Department).

In terms of the literature that is prescribed in these different programmes, most of the prescribed and recommended books and articles in modules offered at the universities in KZN programmes under review were from the USA, UK, Australia, etc., except for a limited number of South African works. For instance, a look at three of the four Masters Core Modules in Education Management offered at the UMSC, demonstrates this. Out of a total of 126 prescribed and recommended books and articles in these modules, only 25 were either written by South African (or African) authors or written from the South African context — this included materials such as educational policies authored by the national Department of Education. To further illustrate the point, in one of the modules — “Leadership and Strategic Management” — all nine readings on the theme ‘Total Quality Management in Education’, emanate from outside of South Africa and Africa, and mainly deal with situations outside SA.

This is not merely a numbers game. It is a much larger issue which has got to do with a lack of inclusion of South African (and African) perspectives in discourses about management/leadership or organisational issues. While this should be understood within a proper context of the infancy of educational management/leadership as a field of study in SA and therefore a dearth of literature written by and for the South African context, this situation sometimes leads to pedagogical approaches that are detached from the conditions

under which school managers in South Africa operate. As McLennan and Thurlow (2003: 12) have postulated,

The school management paradigm [used in SA] is directly influenced by British and American literature on school effectiveness and improving educational quality. This literature is used, with little adaptation, in South African education management courses....

One should hasten to mention, however, that although most of the literature used in these modules emanate from outside SA, it would seem that a deliberate effort is made, in some modules/courses, to contextualise the discourses to relevant South African conditions during the seminar sessions (that is, if the module descriptions are anything to go by). It is, however, not clear as to what the extent this is wide spread in the programmes for developing school managers in KZN.

Although a number of modules reviewed in these programmes covered important and relevant themes/areas/topics, there were some instances where they failed to make a direct link — if the descriptions in the course outlines/booklets are to be trusted — with current South African realities. For instance, although the University of Melmoth South Campus Masters module titled “The Management of Human Resources in Education” examined ‘Appraisal’ as one of its themes and covered a number of critical elements regarding appraisal, there was no reference made to South Africa’s own Developmental Appraisal System (DAS).

Specifically with regards to the modules offered in the EMDPs in these departments, one should indicate that a number of the modules offered were quite comprehensive and covered a wide spectrum of themes that are critical to the understanding of leadership and management issues. For instance, to return to the “Leadership and Strategic Management”

module at the University of Melmoth North Campus, this module covers the following themes:

- ❖ Management in Educational Organizations
- ❖ Theory and Practice in Educational Management
- ❖ Effectiveness, Improvement and Quality
- ❖ Total Quality Management (TQM)
- ❖ Leadership in Educational Management
- ❖ Culture, Structure and Roles
- ❖ Strategic Management
- ❖ Development Planning.

The description of what is covered in each theme is quite comprehensive, giving one an indication that not only has such a course been well researched, but its design and content have also been well thought out.

Another example is the module on the “Discourses in Educational Management and Leadership” at the University of Port Shepstone. This module is also not just well described — including the methodology thereof, namely, the use of case studies — but it also illustrates the wide ranging nature of topics and issues covered in these modules. The following themes are explored in this module:

- ❖ Managing Education in a Social Transition: The Politics of Bureaucracy
- ❖ Dealing with Diversity in the Shadow of Apartheid
- ❖ Explaining the Absence of a Culture of Teaching and Learning: New Approaches
- ❖ Making Teachers Invisible: Class Size and Teacher Rationalisation
- ❖ Implementing Curriculum: Policy and Management Perspectives on C2005 [Curriculum 2005<sup>36</sup>]
- ❖ Appraising Teachers: Dilemmas and Opportunities
- ❖ Financing Education: How the Budget is Determined, and with what Consequences
- ❖ Governing Schools: Research on School Governing Bodies
- ❖ Changing Schools: Innovations in the Field of Practice
- ❖ Assessing Students: The Matriculation Debate.

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<sup>36</sup> Introduced into the South African education system in 1997, Curriculum 2005 was a national curriculum policy which advocated an Outcomes Based Education (OBE) approach to teaching and learning in South African schools. Outcomes in this case refer to “the contextually demonstrated end products of the learning process” (ELRC Handbook for Educators, 2003: 49). In 2002, Curriculum 2005 was replaced by a revised National Curriculum Statement, with the aim of streamlining and strengthening Curriculum 2005, while affirming the commitment to OBE.

What is clearly evident about this (and other) module(s) reviewed in this study, is that it deals directly with the issues that are not only pertinent to the post-apartheid conditions in schools with which educators, including school managers, have to contend, but it is also relevant and topical issues. For instance, concerns regarding Curriculum 2005 and teacher rationalisation and redeployment — to mention just but two examples — are issues which were at the heart of educational discourse between 1998 and 2002.

To a large extent, the module can be said to reflect an attempt to align the curriculum to the perceived needs of principals as they deal with the post-apartheid conditions in their schools. This gives credence to Mr. Cebekhulu's arguments that the curriculum at the University of Port Shepstone's \_\_\_\_\_ Department was responsive to the imperatives of the time.

One of the modules that was offered in all three universities, albeit in different variations, is the module on “Human Resource Management (HRM)” or “Human Resource Management in Education.<sup>37</sup>” It should be noted that pre-1994 EMDPs at these universities did not offer this module in their programmes. This was an area that was not considered critical for educators or school managers. Among other things, the importance of HRM in education is underscored by the fact that it is critical to pay attention to the ‘human side’ of organisational management in order to ensure the effective management of organisations such as schools. As the University of Port Shepstone's \_\_\_\_\_

Department Course Description posits:

Problems besieging and threatening organisations today do not emanate from the world of things, but from the world of humans

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<sup>37</sup> At the University of Melmoth North Campus, HRM is offered as a topic in one of the broad modules in the Masters programme, called “Fundamentals of Educational Administration.”



(Human Resource Management in Education Course Description, UPS  
Department, undated).

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Furthermore, HRM in education, particularly in the context of KZN, is made even more crucial by the problems related to staff selection and filling of posts — problems which have led to major disputes concerning a number of promotion posts. This is also related to the constant refrain regarding the lack of training and the necessary knowledge, skills and expertise on the part of those who conduct interviews for staff selection, particularly at the school level.

Another module of critical importance that was offered in all three universities in KZN is a module on curriculum/pedagogical matters. According to Christopher Mazzeo (cited in the Southern Regional Education Board [SREB], 2002), the job of today's principal is simple to describe. It is to drive the instructional improvement agenda within a school. Mazzeo goes further to mention that “the problem is that many educational leadership programmes around the country [i.e., in the USA] don't prepare school leaders for this specific task — and don't know how to prepare them” (SREB, 2002: 1). Although the extent of the success in the professional development of school managers for their roles as curriculum/instructional leaders is not clear, it is encouraging to note that almost all of the programmes in the KZN universities have included this important aspect in their professional development programmes for school managers.<sup>38</sup> A closer look at these modules indicates that — except for the module offered at Montclair University called “Managing Curriculum” — they have made an attempt to deal with current areas of

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<sup>38</sup> University of Melmoth North Campus Masters programme—which it should be mentioned had a strong research focus—did not have a curriculum/pedagogical focus. There is, however, an MEd that is offered with a specialization in Curriculum Studies and a general BEd (Honours) that offers a module on Curriculum Studies.

concern, particularly in the form of Curriculum 2005, an Outcomes Based Education (OBE) approach introduced by the national Department of Education in 1997.

Of the programmes reviewed in this study, only two offered modules in “Education and Law” — in the University of Port Shepstone Masters programme and in the University of Melmoth North Campus BEd (Honours) programme, a programme not necessarily designed for school managers, but for practising teachers as part of their career development. At Montclair University the module was offered as part of a certificate programme — Educational Leadership Certificate. It is worth noting that although a module called “Education and the Law” was part of the EML programme, it was only offered twice (co-facilitated with an Advocate of the High Court) during the period under review.

It can be argued that Education and Law is quite a critical area, particularly given the legal context under which South African schools have to operate. This legal environment is brought about by the new policies and legislation aimed at correcting the injustices of the past. Most of this legislation, for example, the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), has, among other things, moved schools closer to being self-managing organisations. Therefore, a lack of critical focus on issues of education and law could be viewed as a serious deficiency.

Another area where these programmes were found wanting — particularly by the school principals during the interviews — was a lack of focus on “School Finance” or “Financial Management.” Of the programmes reviewed, the University of Melmoth South Campus was the only university that had a focus on financial management issues, with a

stand-alone, operational Masters level module called “Management of Finance and External Relations.” At the North Campus of University of Melmoth “Financial Resource Management” was offered as part of one of the themes in a broad Masters programme module called “Fundamentals of Educational Administration.” At Montclair University, “Financial Resource Management was offered as part of a module in the Masters programme called “School Governance and Management.” Although the University of Port Shepstone had a BEd (Honours) module called “School Finance”, this module, according to Mr. Cebekhulu the Head of the Department, was never offered at all because no student registered for it. As he put it, “They shied away from it” (Interview with Mr. Cebekhulu, 14/01/2003).

Again, the importance of such a focus on financial management is underscored by the fact that more and more schools in South Africa are called upon to deal with and manage finances efficiently, given the fact that they have been endowed with powers to raise funds through school fees and other means such as fund-raising activities. Moreover, there seem to be a move towards having schools become self-managing, through the adoption of Section 21 status<sup>39</sup> — a theme covered by the “Management of Finance and External Relations” module at the University of Melmoth South Campus.

It is worth mentioning that the issue of self-managing schools is one that the Director at the national Department of Education, Mr. Shaw, was quite passionate about. As he put it,

Something I’m very dedicated to because I wanna see it working, and it is—I find the whole idea of self-managing schools fascinating ... I’m

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<sup>39</sup> Section 21 schools are, according to the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), schools that have been granted full powers and authority to control their finances in areas such as the purchase of textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school, maintenance and improvement of school property, buildings and grounds, payment for services to the school, etc.

pushing in a number of provinces for the schools to start demanding Section 21 [status] (Interview with Mr. Shaw, 8/03/2002).

Relating self-managing schools to the issue of the development of school managers, Mr. Shaw posited that,

...what we are saying then is that the training of principals [should be] predicated by the need to get principals ready for running their own schools as semi-businesses, if you like, but certainly in a way that they are managing a budget of a quarter of a million Rands [R25 000.00] or more (Interview with Mr. Shaw, 8/03/2002).

Although the programmes reviewed in this study dealt with issues regarding the management of change — one of the critical areas in the post-1994 context — one can argue that given the transformation within the education system, conflict would most probably manifest itself in the day-to-day operations of organisations such as schools; and therefore being armed with the necessary tools of managing conflict is not only important but also critical for ensuring the effective running of schools. Furthermore, as will be seen in the next chapter, the fact that a substantial number (58%) of school principals who participated in this study cited conflict management as one of the skills in which they required professional development bears testimony to the critical importance of this area of study.

#### **4.7 Content application in organisational settings**

During the course of its work, the Task Team on Education Management Development (TTEMMD) conducted an Audit of Needs and Resources of the provincial education departments. According to the report of the TTEMMD, “the Audit showed that many managers feel that numerous programmes currently offered are too academic and not sufficiently practical for their needs” (Department of Education, 1996: 24). During

interviews, this notion was echoed by the Director in the provincial Department of Education, Dr. McGregor, who indicated that,

BEd and MEd [qualifications] should be linked with their [principals'] practice – they should not be something devoid from what is happening in schools (Interview with Dr. McGregor, 12/03/2002).

The Director in the national Department of Education, on the other hand, put it much stronger when he argued that,

We need to force Schools [of Education] to build in a practical component into their courses. Then we can have an impact on principals' practices (Interview with Mr. Shaw, 8/03/2002).

It is important to note that some of the university departments had recently begun responding to these concerns in the design and delivery of their programmes. With regard to the programmes reviewed for this study, some programmes such as the Masters programme at the University of Port Shepstone, seem to have made attempts to strike a balance between academic rigours and addressing the practicalities on the ground. For instance, in one of the modules offered in the Masters programme, “Effective Schools: Theory, Research and Practice”, students were not only equipped to engage critically with the theories of school organisation and effectiveness, and with the literature and debates around the politics of the school effectiveness movement, but they were also required to practically engage with the subject through the application of the theoretical knowledge in the study of selected schools. In other words, they were also required to spend some time in these schools studying and problematising those aspects of effectiveness identified in the literature and found in these selected schools. I would argue that this is not only an innovative way of bridging the theory — practice gap, but it is also a way of arming students with the necessary research and analytical skills.

Prof. Ndebele of Montclair University, North Campus (MUNC) indicated that in their professional development of school principals they make every effort to:

...contextualise every module within the policies and the legislation in the country (Interview with Prof. Ndebele, 20/03/2002).

To illustrate the point, she used the following example:

We take for instance issues such as, just to give an example, an issue like human resource development in management. The nature of the course offering in the country would be significantly different from the way they would offer it in another country because we look at policies that have an impact within the South African context. We use not only theory in offering the programme, [but] we bring the experiences of students to start with, which are localized. But also, the various pieces of legislation which relate to human resource development and management within the country, are a part of our literature (Interview with Prof. Ndebele, 20/03/2002).

A good example of the application of knowledge to the practical conditions existing in schools was provided by Mr. Cebekhulu:

...one module was actually Human Resources Management in Education with fifty percent of it, after dealing with the generic principles of human resources management, looking at the process of rationalisation [and redeployment of educators], which was an analysis of all policy documents that have ever come from the [national] Department [of Education] and taking case studies of schools that have been negatively affected by the rationalisation [and redeployment] process and assisting school managers [to] interpret these policies and analyze the case studies and see which were the best alternatives which should have been observed (Interview with Mr. Cebekhulu, 14/01/2003).

The rationalisation and redeployment of educators policy (1995) was one of the most controversial and highly contested policies of the DoE. Focusing on this policy, particularly during the period when schools were grappling with its implementation, constitutes, in my opinion, the best way of applying theoretical content to organisational settings.

The MEd programme at the University of Melmoth North Campus also had an emphasis on the ‘practicality of knowledge.’ For instance, in its ‘Statement of exit level outcomes that students should be able to demonstrate on completion of the programme’, one of the outcomes is to,

...demonstrate an *ability to apply knowledge* and understanding of management/leadership concepts and approaches in *practical situations* (My emphasis) (Template for Internal Approval of Programmes at the University of \_\_\_\_\_, 2003: 2).

This focus is also expressed in the ‘Statement of assessment criteria’:

Students will be assessed on their knowledge and understanding of key concepts in educational management, their *ability to apply* their *knowledge* and understanding in *practical contexts*. They will also be expected to demonstrate a familiarity with major sources within the literature and be able to *apply* this by engaging critically with key issues in management policy and practice, with particular reference to the South African context (My emphasis) (University of \_\_\_\_\_ MEd Course Outline, 2003: 4).

According to Prof. Qwabe of Montclair University South Campus, the nature of their programmes was such that they were able to combine academic development with professional relevance. As he put it,

...we touch on things [school managers] have to learn and things they see and what they experience on a daily basis (Interview with Prof. Qwabe, 18/03/2002).

Later during the interview Prof. Qwabe also referred to the use of case studies as an illustration of the practical application of knowledge:

We actually do a lot of case studies.... Even in the way we ask questions, at times we want the individual to reflect on his or her situation and describe them in relation to what he or she has learnt, drawing illustrations from previous experience. In that way we want to strengthen that relationship between the world of learning and the world of work. We believe very much in the theory of practice and practice theory being based on experience that an individual brings in,

and theory of practice being based on content that an individual is exposed to, in learning. So we emphasize the importance of relating the experiences that an individual has out there and the learning that the individual acquires (Interview with Prof. Qwabe, 18/03/2002).

Still on the subject of the use of case studies, Ms. Jiyane from the UMSC, indicated that,

[in our programmes] there's a lot of case study work which is involved... we want people to see that what we teach is related to what they do. They might say, 'Ah, that's exactly what we are experiencing' and that kind of reinforcement highlights the need for relevance of what a person learns (Interview with Ms. Jiyane, 20/03/2002).

Mr. Cebekhulu of the University of Port Shepstone also made reference to the use of case studies in their programmes, indicating that:

...what we did we were, actually with the case studies, looking at the cases that exist, we were using the press very much, we were looking at controversial cases which we thought would provoke critical think, um, if managers were to be very objective. And then we would make arrangements with those schools, if it was a school, or send a group of students as researchers in that area, make arrangement, and actually make them conduct the analysis inside the school getting perspectives of everybody and they write a report and collect all the materials and they come and present the report in class... (Interview with Mr. Cebekhulu, 14/01/2003).

Most of the modules offered in KZN universities profess a focus not only on practical application of knowledge, but also in relation to the school managers' working context. For example, the University of Melmoth South Campus "Management of Human Resources in Education" module aims to

...enable students to link theory and practice of human resource management to the context of their *own schools/place of work* (My emphasis) (Management of Human Resources in Education Module Study Guide, n.d: 4).



While at the same University's North Campus, the "Managing Educational Change" module has as one of its purposes to:

...examine the nature of educational change and contribution of research and theory ... particularly at the *local level*... (My emphasis) (Template for the Internal Approval of Modules at the University of \_\_\_\_\_, undated, p.1).

And in terms of learning outcomes, students are supposed to:

...apply theoretical perspectives and insights from research to *own contexts*... (My emphasis) (Template for the Internal Approval of Modules at the University of \_\_\_\_\_, undated, p.1).

On the other hand, the module offered at BEd Honours level at Montclair University South Campus, "Educational Management", aims, *inter alia*,

...to enable the students to *apply* this understanding [of the roles, responsibilities and duties of educational managers/leaders] in the practice of managing educational organisations... [and] to stimulate debate and critical analysis on the theories and practice of educational management and leadership, especially in the *context of the South African education system* (My emphasis) (University of \_\_\_\_\_ BEd (Honours) Programme Prospectus, n.d.: 2).

There were, however, cases where the practical application of knowledge was not the central concern. For example, regarding the Masters programme at the University of Melmoth North Campus, Prof. Battersby indicated that:

None of the modules is hands-on, especially for principals, they are academically grounded modules <sup>40</sup> (Interview with Prof. Battersby, 22/03/2002).

However, Prof. Battersby indicated that in writing their dissertations students are required to focus on studies which relate theory to practice, preferably in their organisations.

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<sup>40</sup> It should be noted that Prof. Battersby had earlier in the interview indicated that his Department does offer a hands-on, practical course for school managers in the form of the Further Diploma in Education (FDE), which was later converted into an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE: Education Management).

#### 4.8 Field-based learning experiences

One of the major criticisms that have been levelled against EMDPs relates to their weaknesses with regard to clinical experiences or field-based learning experiences provided to aspiring and practising school managers. This is despite observations by scholars (Griffiths, 1999; McKerrow, 1998; Murphy, 1992) that field-based learning experiences could be the most critical part of leadership development. Furthermore, these learning experiences may serve as introductions to the real world of the principal, and may allow the student to translate theory into practice and to learn by doing (McKerrow, 1998). Clearly, therefore, any professional development programme for school managers that is found lacking in this respect can be said to have serious deficiencies and limitations.

Unfortunately, of all the programmes reviewed in the province of KZN, only one had a field-based learning experience in the form of an internship component — and that was the University of Port Shepstone Masters in Educational Management and Leadership programme.<sup>41</sup> The internship programme seems to have been well thought out and well enunciated on paper, with clear timelines, a contract that the organisation and the student had to enter into, and different reports and an assignment that the student had to present. One can argue that its conceptualisation seems to have responded to some of the criticism of clinical or field-based learning experiences discussed in the literature on leadership and management development programmes.

However, although this internship looked impressive on paper, it would seem that it was not as successful with regard to its effective operationalisation — particularly if one

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<sup>41</sup> Interesting enough, Montclair University did have an internship programme for their Masters in Educational Psychology, but none for Educational Management. This internship programme in MED (Psychology) had the minimum requirements of forty hours per week for twelve months.

considers the number of students who undertook the internship programme (three during the tenure of Mr. Cebekhulu — 1997 to 2000 — which is the only time that it was put into practice). This was mainly due to its voluntary nature, and therefore principals who had graduated from the University of Port Shepstone indicated that they had not benefited from such field-based experiences. I return to the discussion of the field-based learning experiences in the EMDPs in KZN universities, in the theoretical synthesis chapter (Chapter 6).

Needless to say, the fact that only one university programme — and even that was not as successful in its implementation — had a field-based learning experience points to one of the major deficiencies of EMDPs in KZN universities reviewed in this study. This may shed light in terms of other problems and deficiencies discernible in these programmes and which are discussed further in the theoretical synthesis chapter.

#### **4.9 Modes of delivery of EMDPs**

One of the major criticisms of leadership and management development programmes relates to their delivery modes. Writing more than a decade ago, Murphy (1992), pointed to the fundamental problem of part-time study, which he argued, characterises most leadership and management development programmes. Murphy (1992) posited that the delivery system most commonly employed — part time study in the evenings or on weekends — results in students who come to their studies “worn-out, distracted, and harried” (Mann, 1975: 143, cited by Murphy, 1992).

In all the programmes reviewed in this study, classes were conducted mostly in the evenings and on weekends. Moreover, students undertook their studies on a part-time

basis. It should, however, be mentioned that at University of Melmoth students are advised that they will be expected to make arrangements to take leave from their workplace, if necessary. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that in the programme description provided in the University's web pages advice is given that,

While students may register on either a full-time or part-time basis, the intensive nature of the research means that full-time study is advisable. (Available at: <http://www.edu.ac.za/setd/masterof.htm> Accessed on 22 February 2003)

In as much as the reasons behind evening and weekend study are understandable given the fact that most students who have undertaken these programmes are full-time educators who cannot afford to study full-time, it does not gainsay from the problems associated with this kind of study, alluded to by Murphy (1992) more than a decade ago.

One of the positive aspects of EMDPs in KZN is the fact that in all the programmes reviewed for this study, the imparting of knowledge was mainly done through seminar-based sessions. In all the universities whose programmes I reviewed heavy emphasis was placed on the use of case studies as teaching and learning tools.

## **4.10 Emerging themes**

### **4.10.1 A brief focus on university lecturing staff**

Although the issue of university lecturing staff who provide principal development was not one of the issues that I set out to investigate in this study, it became one of the most important aspects regarding the context of EMDPs during interviews with EMDP providers. In this section I would like to focus on two critical issues, namely, human

resources or staffing issues and on the importance of school management experience on the part of those who provide leadership and management development for school principals.

In an international study of training and development programmes in fifteen countries, Huber (2004: 98) highlights the importance of “suitable recruitment of teams of highly qualified trainers with appropriate backgrounds.” Teitel (2006: 503) also emphasises the importance of selecting, training and employing “a diverse set of talented and experienced faculty members and mentors.”

In the case of KwaZulu-Natal university departments of educational management/leadership, human resource or staffing issues seem to be one of the major problems. For example, despite the University of Port Shepstone educational management and leadership programme being one of the heavily subscribed programmes in the Faculty of Education in terms of student enrolments, it only had two full-time university lecturing staff whose specialisation was in this field of leadership and management. The situation at the University of Melmoth South Campus was not dissimilar to the University of Port Shepstone situation — there were also only two full-time university lecturing staff<sup>42</sup>, while the Melmoth University North Campus had only one full-time university lecturing staff whose temporal departure (on a two years’ leave) from the Department resulted in the programme being put on hold and his students being transferred to staff in the South Campus. Montclair University’s \_\_\_\_\_ Department was also not absolved from this problem. As the Head of Department on its South Campus indicated,

...we are limited with respect to staffing. We need experienced people to offer EMD [Education Management Development] ... [and] many of our staff members still have Honours degrees or BEd degrees. They

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<sup>42</sup> One of these individuals, Prof. Battersby, was responsible for teaching all of the core modules for the MED programme – with some assistance by two colleagues in two of these modules.

are not able to offer courses beyond the level of first degree (Interview with Prof. Qwabe, 18/03/2002).

Clearly in such circumstances the development of support strategies in adventures such as team teaching, become almost impossible. All these factors discussed above illustrate the extent to which there seem to be a lack of prioritisation of staffing issues despite high demands in these programmes. It also points to the general shortage of individuals specialised in education leadership and management in the country.

One of the frequently expressed criticisms of the university culture is that university lecturers who teach in programmes for the development of principals do not have (adequate) experience in the management of school. According to Sarason (1996: 141):

...unless a principal has had long experience in teaching and managing children in a classroom, he or she cannot appreciate or understand the goals and problems of a teacher and, therefore, cannot be of much help; in fact, he or she would create more problems than solve.

I would argue that if this holds true for school principals, then the same argument can be advanced with regard to those who provide principal development programmes. That is, that in order for university lecturers to provide the kind of education management development programmes that are suited to the needs of school principals and schools in general, they must have a thorough understanding — by virtue of having spent time managing schools — of the conditions and the complex dynamics under which school principals operate.

Most (but not all) university lecturing staff who provide principal development programmes not only in KZN but in other provinces as well, have *not* benefited from any experience whereby they themselves have managed schools as principals. Granted, they may have the necessary knowledge gleaned from years of conducting research and studying

school systems and (supposedly) the understanding of, for example, what effective schools look like and how schools should be managed effectively and efficiently, but they do not possess the “lived experiences” of what it means to manage a school—let alone what this means under the challenging conditions that presently exist in South Africa. Although all my interviewees had worked in schools in one capacity or another (as teachers/heads of departments/deputy principals), of the seven university lecturing staff participants in this study, only one had been a school principal.

As indicated above, this situation of a lack of management experience is not prevalent only in KZN universities. For instance, at one of the universities where I have worked as a lecturer in one of the largest departments that offered professional development programmes to school principals and other SMT members, out of a staff complement of thirteen full-time members, only two had been school principals; of the two staff members who had been school principals, only one of them had been a principal in the not so distant past. This example, which I would argue is reflective of the situation in a number of Education Management/Leadership Departments in the country, illustrates just how serious the situation is and begins to offer some explanations regarding problems with EMDPs generally in SA.

#### **4.11 Summary of the key findings**

In this section of this Chapter I provide a summary of the key findings pertaining to the content and context of EMDPs in KwaZulu-Natal. The theoretical significance of these findings is provided in the final Chapter of the thesis.

With regards to the *needs assessment and analysis*, there seem to be little that is done in EMDPs in terms of a systematic approach geared towards thoroughly assessing and analyzing the needs of principals in such a manner that the programmes that the universities offer are derived from and geared towards addressing the needs and the challenges faced by schools/school principals. Although some form of needs assessment and analysis — mostly indirect in nature — could be discerned from the different programmes, for the most part, there was a lack of systematic and deliberate strategies for assessing the needs of school principals.

Pertaining to the *aims and objectives of EMDPs* in KZN, although some guiding principles can be inferred from the departmental documents and the assertions of the university lecturing staff, the programmes reviewed in this study did not seem to have clearly enunciated set of principles/assumptions/core values from which they were driven.

In relation to *recruitment and selection of candidates*, all the programmes reviewed in this study — except for the Masters programme at two institutions — seem to lack a rigorous strategy for the recruitment and selection of candidates; self-selection seems to be the only selection ‘method.’ Students are accepted into the programmes not on the basis of leadership potential or because they are practising school managers, but merely on the basis of availability and interest.

From the data emanating from university lecturing staff interviews, it would seem that university lecturing staff at the different institutions in KZN had a good sense of the *environments for which school principals* needed to be *developed to deal with* and the kind of challenges that they (school principals) were grappling with.



In relation to the *content of EMDPs*, these programmes seem to have a large USA/UK influence due mainly to the close working relationships with and the post-graduate training of the designers of the programmes. There was a dearth of South African literature in all the principal development programmes offered in KZN. However, based on the Module or Course Descriptions, it would seem that a deliberate effort is made in some modules to contextualise the discussions around South African concerns.

Regarding *content application in organisational settings*, the data seem to point to the fact that the programmes reviewed in this study placed a critical focus on the practical application of knowledge. This practical application of knowledge found expression in the form of the interrogation of current policies in relation to organisational (school) practice.

Pertaining to *field-based learning experiences*, EMDPs in KZN were found to be weak. Only one programme provided field-based learning experiences for its participants in the form of an internship programme. However, this internship programme was not successful in terms of its operationalisation.

Concerning the *modes of delivery*, similar to their counterparts elsewhere, in all the programmes reviewed in KZN, classes were conducted mostly in the evenings and on weekends. However, one of the positive aspects of EMDPs in KZN with regards to the modes of delivery is the use of seminar-based approaches and the wide use of case studies in the development of school leaders.

*Staffing issues* seem to be one of the major problems in all the programmes in KZN. There were major staff shortages in all the programmes reviewed for this study. Staff shortages seem to point to a general shortage of individuals who are specialised in the field

of education leadership and management/administration generally in KZN. Perhaps the most critical finding with regards to university lecturing staff who provide education management development programmes, is the fact that a majority of them have not benefited from any school management and leadership experience. Although all had worked in schools in one capacity or another, of the seven university lecturing staff participants in this study, only one had been a school principal.

Finally, despite all the criticisms levelled against the EMDPs in KZN universities, it should be mentioned that as a collective, these programmes have made great efforts to improve more especially their contents and align them with the perceived needs on the ground. Generally speaking, one can argue that these programmes seem to have responded to the challenges presented by post-apartheid conditions under which school principals in SA operate. However, as to whether the recipients of these programmes — school principals — share that view, will be explored in the next chapter. In other words, the extent to which school principals feel that these programmes have been successful to adequately respond to schools' and school principals' needs, will be the subject of the next Chapter.

# Chapter



## 5

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### FINDINGS ON SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' CHALLENGES AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THE VALUE OF EMDPs IN THEIR PRACTICES

#### 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present, explain and analyse data in respect of the key participants' (school principals') understandings of the challenges with which they have to contend given the new conditions prevailing in schools post 1994; and the extent to which they feel adequately equipped to deal with these challenges. This purpose is in line with the broader concern of this study which is to determine the links between formal education management development programmes and the needs of school principals.

In this chapter I probe the degree to which school principals perceive the leadership and management development programmes (EMDPs) that they have undergone to be effective or not, together with the reasons behind their perceptions. The sub-questions that are addressed in this chapter are the following:

- i) *With what kinds of challenges do principals have to contend in schools under the new prevailing conditions?*
- ii) *What types of environments are EMDPs equipping principals to deal with?*

- iii) *What are the perceptions of school principals of the strengths and limitations of the education management development programmes in terms of meeting their needs?*

The perspectives of school principals concerning the leadership and management development programmes, are then presented. I begin by looking at the changes that school principals have experienced in their leadership and management of schools in the pre- and post-1994 period in South Africa. This is followed by a discussion of the vexing challenges with which school principals have to contend under the changed conditions that are prevailing in schools. The focusing question that this section of the chapter attempts to address is: *What changes have you observed in the management of your school in terms of the challenges that you dealt with pre-1994 and the challenges that you have to deal with post-1994? To what do you attribute these changes?*

In the next section of the chapter I then explore school principals' perceptions of the relevance of EMDPs in relation to their leadership and management roles as principals of schools. It is in this section of the chapter where I also explore those aspects of EMDPs that school principals felt had equipped them to deal effectively with the post-1994 challenges in their schools.

Following a focus on principals' perceptions regarding the relevance of EMDPs in relation to their roles as school principals, I then explore the question of whether school principals felt adequately equipped to lead and manage schools effectively in the post-1994 conditions that exist in their schools. The above-mentioned question was coupled with a question that sought to determine whether school principals felt adequately equipped to manage change in their schools.

Another aspect that I address in this chapter is the issue of the extent to which EMDPs that are reviewed in this study offered participants practical or field-based learning opportunities. A focus on the practical or field-based learning opportunities was done in the context of what the research literature has postulated in terms of the importance of these experiences in the development of school principals.

Given the different views expressed by school principals regarding the relevance of EMDPs for principals' school practices, I felt it prudent to also get a sense of what school principals considered to be their greatest professional needs. It is in that context that there is a section in the chapter that looks into school principals' greatest professional needs, particularly given the changed conditions in which they have to operate.

During interviews with school principals, two critical themes that were initially not part of the interview schedule for this study, emerged. One was the question of the role of training workshops in the professional development of school principals, and the other was the role of experiences beyond EMDPs concerning principal effectiveness. Due to the importance of these two themes and the fact that they seemed to have been regarded as important by the participants in this study, the school principals — particularly given the extent to which they addressed themselves to these issues — I dedicated two sections in this chapter to these issues.

With regards to the issue of training workshops, school principals made recommendations for the improvement of workshops. Therefore, a section detailing these recommendations is also provided in the chapter. Regarding the latter issue — the role of experiences beyond EMDPs — this became even more critical, particularly in the context of the latest research literature review by Levin (2006). The chapter ends with a summary

of the key findings emanating from the data presented in the different themes detailing school principals' understandings of the challenges and changes that they have to deal with, and their perceptions about the value of EMDPs in KZN.

## **5.2 Participants' (school principals') profile**

As indicated earlier, a total of forty-two (42) principals were interviewed but data reported in this study are based on the thirty-one (31) school principals who made up the sample of this study. Almost all the participants (twenty-five out of thirty-one principals) had Teachers' Diplomas mostly acquired at the erstwhile Teachers' Colleges of Education (Springfield, Indumiso, Mpumalanga, Umbumbulu and Ntuzuma) and at a technikon (ML Sultan Technikon). A few principals (5 out of 31) had Post-Graduate Diplomas in Education (such as the HDE (Higher Education Diploma), the UHDE (University Higher Diploma in Education) and the UED (University Education Diploma)) acquired mostly following a Bachelor's degree qualification. Seven school principals in the current study had doctoral degrees in education management/leadership – two were excluded from the study since one doctoral degree was not acquired in the three universities in KZN and the other was not in educational management/leadership. Over and above their educational qualifications, three principals in the sample also had qualifications outside of education, for example, an Advanced Diploma in Public Administration, a Masters in Public Administration, and a Bachelor of Commerce degree.

In terms of gender, there were ten (10) females and twenty one (21) males. In terms of race, there were sixteen Africans, fourteen "Indians", only one "Coloured" and no White school principals.

The age of the participants in this study ranged from 32 to 56 years, with most of the interviewees falling in the 35 to 45 years age bracket (the median age of the participants was 44). With regards to years of experience in the principal's position, this ranged from 3 to 16 years — with most principals falling in the 3 to 9 years bracket — and a median of 6 years.

It should be mentioned though, that there were a few “outliers” who fell outside of this range — for example, one principal had been in the position for 16 years, while three had been in the principalship for 11, 12 and 14 years respectively. All the principals in the study had experiences in one or all of the positions in school management (head of department, deputy principal, and principal), and had spent considerable time (ranging between 4 and 23 years) in these positions before becoming principals. Not all the principals in the study had progressively gone through all the steps — for example, some had moved from being an educator to head of department, to principal without having been deputy principal. A number of the principals (twenty-one out of thirty-one) had been in some acting position or another in the school before assuming the position of school principal.

Finally, in as far as the total number of years in the teaching profession is concerned, the participants' years ranged from 6 to 37 years, with a median of 21 and a-half years. In essence, the school principals in the sample of this study were principals who had been in the education profession for a considerable amount of time and who therefore had substantial experience. Despite their vast experiences, they had seen the need to embark upon some professional development in the form of the programmes offered by universities in KZN.

In the next section of this chapter I look at the perspectives of school principals regarding the changes that they have experienced in the pre- and post-1994 conditions that exist in schools. This is done with a view to later determining the extent to which the EMDPs have equipped school principals to deal with these changes effectively.

### **5.3 Changes in the leadership and management of schools pre- and post-1994**

As a precursor to the question of the types of environments with which the school principals were equipped to deal, I asked the participants about how they saw changes in their jobs/roles from the pre-1994 period to the post-1994 era. I first asked the principals whether they had been in the principalship prior to the changes that took place in the country in 1994. A majority of the principals (23 out of 31) had in fact been principals prior to 1994, while others were part of the school management team (SMT) but not necessarily serving as school principals. I then asked those who had been in the principal positions as to:

*What changes have you observed in the management of your school in terms of the challenges that you dealt with pre-1994 and the challenges that you have to deal with post-1994? To what do you attribute these changes?*

Not unexpected, all the principals who had been principals prior to 1994 recognised the fact that the conditions under which they were required to operate were fundamentally different from those in which they operated in the past prior to the dawn of the new dispensation in South Africa. These principals indicated that there were tremendous changes and major challenges. As one principal put it:



...it seems as if the transformation came up with new challenges. Like it became a challenge to principals to become open and transparent, to do everything in consultation, you see, because now they cannot take decisions unilaterally, you have to consult first and ask for involvement of other ideas from other people, which was not there before (Interview, School Principal 7).

And another principal indicated how he sees his job as having changed from what it used to require in the past — transcending management:

Look, I think my job has moved from being a pure manager of the school to a more elaborate one because there has to be a great deal of bridging to be done in terms of parents, in terms of learners themselves – they all come from different cultural backgrounds – I found that I had to do much more than being office based and looking at the curriculum, it had to be, I had to work with human beings and from a human resource point of view it had to be done, it had to be done (Interview, School Principal 3).

It was, however, how the different principals conceptualised and discussed the conditions under which they had worked prior to 1994 and in the post-1994 conditions, that was informative. Principals in this study spoke about the challenges that they have had to deal with, such as having to share their (decision-making) powers with the other stakeholders that they did not have to share power with prior to 1994. To illustrate the point, one school principal referred to the difficulty that some of the principals have had in accepting parents as important role players in the decision making processes of the school:

At the moment there's still a lot of suspicions between principals and parents; parents suddenly have this vast area of legislation that they can come in and believe 'we've taken over the school.' Principals on the other hand are saying 'who the hell are these guys, they used to be fund raisers in the past now they're taking over our turf.' So we've got to shift that thinking, that is one of our challenges... (Interview, School Principal 28).

In fact, I would argue that in essence the challenge of engaging in shared decision making and shared governance is one area that has contributed to problems in schools, mainly because most principals were used to managing schools alone, and with the post-1994

changes, they were forced to engage in shared leadership/shared decision making. This fact was readily acknowledged by one of the principals who pointed out that:

There have been changes, the role of the principal—before principals used to dictate, in the past you couldn’t challenge them. It was only principals’ ideas that were used in school. Right now the changes that are there are that now discussions about issues take place – of course the principal still needs to give direction – but things are discussed and the decisions are taken by consensus so that those decisions are owned by those affected by them. The school is now owned by all who belong to it, whereas before the principal used to say that he owns the school, and his word was final (Interview, School Principal 13).

The above sentiments were supported by another principal who alluded to the challenge for some principals to engage in shared decision making:

The authority of the principal was challenged and the principals themselves were now caught in a dilemma where all of a sudden their authorities are undermined, when they’ve grown up in a situation where the principal had the voice, the authority and all of a sudden he has no authority, he has got to open up, include other people before he can take a decision (Interview, School Principal 30).

Another area that was highlighted by school principals as reflecting the changes that have taken place in education, was the involvement of learners — particularly high school learners — in the decision making processes of the school:

In the past as learners all they could do was go and complain to the principal if they had a problem, now the highest organisation in the school, the school governing body, has learner representative on it that are full decision makers – of course excluding financial matters and legal matters – but they’re full scale decision makers. So now we have to take learners more seriously in schools because they, by law, are entitled to be part of this process on the highest decision making body (Interview, School Principal 16).

There were principals who expressed a certain measure of frustration regarding the new conditions that they found themselves having to deal with – or as one of the principals put it, having to “cope with.” In fact, I detected from the tone of this particular principal’s

expressions some frustration during the interview. I noted these observations on my research log. This particular principal's response went something like this:

Let's put it this way, prior to 1994 the authority of the principal was absolute, the principal, if there was an errant teacher the principal could just rap him on his knuckles and tell him "shut up and get out, do you want to work here, you do it the way we want it done." Likewise with a pupil, if a learner is problematic whether the learner is right or wrong, you could still call him, give him six of the best and "get out from here." *But now with all this democracy that is coming in, he has to be very careful how he talks to the teacher, so he has to cope with unionism on the part of the teacher, he has to cope with all that apathy that comes into our teaching, right, he has to cope with the greater realization of the rights amongst children....so the principal, you know, has to cope with all these changing circumstances*" (My emphasis) (Interview, School Principal 15).

I found it to be of interest that School Principal 15's perceptions of the changes were couched in terms of the language of "coping." The fact that he used the word "cope" four different times in this particular instance, instead of a less emotive word such as to "deal" with, is significant. It captures the general feelings expressed by those school principals in this study who saw the changes as posing major challenges that school principals believed they had to cope with.

Later on in the interview School Principal 15 expressed further frustrations and seemed to intimate that the ways of doing things in the past produced results, whereas today's ways have a tendency of leaving matters unresolved. As he put it:

...when [the principal] goes home in the afternoon there are lot of things that perhaps aren't resolved, like, eh... those days to resolve a thing means calling somebody and scolding the person, but you can't just call anyone and scold a person today (Interview, School Principal 15).

Asked about some of the challenges that he had experienced post-1994, another principal (School Principal 24) also indicated that he found the whole issue of children's rights problematic. This principal suggested that there was a link between an emphasis on

children's rights and the problems of learner discipline that schools were experiencing as a result of the banning of corporal punishment.<sup>43</sup> In fact, he expressed a sense of loss of power due to the changes that have taken places following the new dispensation in SA – an emphasis on children's rights being one of the examples. As he put it:

Then comes—I won't say this is a problem, you know—the whole thing about child[ren's] rights, discipline is suffering as a result of that, it is a problem at this stage as absolute authority of the principal is taken away (Interview, School Principal 24).

Some principals in this study did not hide the fact that they had problems with the new ways of doing things in school. One such principal sounded quite cynical in his views about involving others in the decision making processes (shared decision making):

Well, you see [shared decision making] is evolving because whilst in the past the principal could take the decision on his own, shared decision-making is [now] the order of the day. Whether or not those people on the school management team are capable of making the correct decision is another story. But the fact is you have to take almost every matter that affects the running of the school to the school management team [SMT] and to the staff. Even if it is informing them that this is what's going to happen, this is the way I see it's going to be done (Interview, School Principal 29).

If one considers closely the views of School Principal 29, particularly the last sentence in this cited paragraph above, it is susceptible to numerous interpretations, one of which could be indicative of a contrived kind of shared decision making that he believes in or even, perhaps, practises. In other words, one can argue that this principal engages in shared decision making as a 'window dressing exercise' when in fact he had already made up his mind about "the way... it's going to be done" — in other words, his way. This is just but one way of looking at the utterances of this particular school principal in an effort to

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<sup>43</sup> Interestingly enough, during the interview with this principal he also expressed the notion that teachers had "lost control" due to OBE.

understand how school principals have dealt with the changes brought about by the post-1994 conditions that exist in schools.

Interesting enough, the perceptions of such school principals who tended to see the involvement of other role players in decisions as a challenge are in direct contrast with the views of progressive and transformative principals who exhibited a good understanding of situational leadership – as discussed later in this chapter.

Half of the “Indian” principals (7 out of 14 “Indian” principals) in this study — heading schools that were previously exclusively “Indian” in their composition due to the apartheid system of separate development — whose schools had accepted and enrolled “African” learners, alluded to the challenges of working with learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. One principal explained how the differences in cultures could be easily misconstrued based on what is practised in a culture with which one is familiar:

I should say for this transformation period [principals] should be able to cope with the different cultural groups that we have.... I for example, I didn't know that when we talk to an African child he bends, looks down and in our culture it says when you talk to someone they must look straight. So, now those little... but important things which we should know that we have to treat children differently and we can't just reprimand them if they don't look at you and you think, they bend, that they're not respectful but they are, they're not disrespectful (Interview, School Principal 4).

Another principal echoed the above sentiments. But he began by giving some background as to why he had a lack of understanding of other cultural groups:

I lack working with different cultures, I was always educated in Indian mentality, you went to an Indian University, you went to an Indian College and you came out as an Indian educator, for a particular sector of the community. I was not given any training when this adjustment took place from racism to a multi-racial society (Interview, School Principal 2).

He then went on to cite an example of how his lack of understanding of multiculturalism had manifested itself in practice:

I used to go to a Black kid in my school and he stares me in the eye, when he looks with his head down when I'm questioning him about something I thought he was stubborn yet that was a form of cultural acceptance of loyalty to the questioner, obedience, yet I almost struck the child because I wasn't made [aware] of these various cultural values, you know what I'm saying (Interview, School Principal 2).

This principal indicated that he thought "multiculturalism has to be discussed together with the agenda of equity."

Another principal in this study described how he had in fact assisted his staff members to understand some cultural aspects from the African culture:

Then there's this other thing where, I started actually to advise staff on customs and traditions and what little I know about Zulu customs and things like that. For example, if a child had—we had a child that passed on recently and the kids wanted to go to the house [of the child who passed on] and they had to go and give the *mnikelo* [contributions] and things like that. So I had to organise that. Now my staff would not understand that, so now you've got to educate them, so that in a way is a reform (Interview, School Principal 16).

I should mention that there was one principal in this group of "Indian" principals who indicated that his school did not have any problems with dealing with learners from diverse cultural/racial background because of his school's long history of opening admission to African learners. As he put it:

...the integration of the different pupils.... I think \_\_\_\_\_ [name of the school] was lucky in a sense that we started our integration pre-1994 where we started, I think \_\_\_\_\_ [name of the school] I'm subject to correction, was one of the first schools that started integrating pupils of different race groups in \_\_\_\_\_ [name of the area]. I think we learnt a lot at that particular time to accept different cultures—and I think lots of schools that are facing problems today with the different race groups that they have and how to deal with children, we faced then (Interview, School Principal 12).

Amongst the school principals that I interviewed, there were school principals (13 out of 31), both experienced principals with more than ten years experience in the principalship, and novice principals with less than six years of experience, who displayed a good discernment of the changes that have taken place regarding the job of a school principals, in contrast to the manner in which principals used to operate in the past. I call these “progressive and transformative” school principals. These principals seem to have “transcend[ed] the boundaries of their training and [were] able [to] imaginatively and courageously” deal with the changed conditions in their schools (Sarason, 1996: 5). One such principal in this study argued that:

Before 1994... the principals were quite autocratic and it was, eh, the principal – probably this is not a pleasant thing to say – but was sort of somebody who was just implementing what the Department was formulating, Department formulated, principal implemented... But there has been this great change now that one cannot, it would not, and probably at that time it worked because teachers followed their principals, but I think people have become more critical about education and leaders of course or managers—I mean if you want to be a leader you have to change your attitude and be more democratic and include people in decision making (Interview, School Principal 9).

I would argue that this kind of acknowledgement of the way that school principals used to operate in the past is quite important mainly because in discussions about how school principals ought to lead and manage schools presently, there is a tendency to lose sight of the history of school management in South Africa, and therefore a failure to understand resistance to change within a particular context. The assumption is that all principals changed when the new changes were ushered in, in the country and in the education system. The reality of the situation is that not all school principals who were part of the previous education dispensation have found it easy to make the necessary changes in the manner in which they lead and manage schools – as seen in the previous discussion of this section.



What is notable from the interviews is that the progressive and transformative principals spoke the language of transformational and distributed leadership, and expressed the need for a paradigm shift in the manner that schools ought to be led and managed under the post-apartheid conditions. As one principal who had been in school management for a total of fourteen years and a teacher for thirty years, indicated:

The most important thing [is that] we look at discussion with the SMT [School Management Team], with all role-players. We believe that when a decision is taken in a problem area we need to get all role-players involved simply because for effective answers you need all role-players to buy in and take ownership of a problem and to find solutions. So we start off with parents, educators, learners, discussing what the problems are, how best we should handle the problems, whether it's a small little problem it must be handled. And by that way we are able to disseminate information of the decisions taken to all role-players in the form of letters to parents, in the form of discussions to educators and assembly talks to learners. (Interview, School Principal 3).

To this and the other progressive and transformative principals, involvement of all the stakeholders in the decision making process of managing and leading the school was not an option, but a necessity.

There were other principals in this group of “progressive and transformative” school principals who indicated that they actually cherished the opportunity to engage in shared decision making — opportunities that were missing in the past. In response to the question of whether he had struggled to make a paradigm shift towards shared decision making, one principal responded thus:

No, I did not see it [shared decision making] as a problem because I found that I was denied that opportunity in the past and for the things that I was striving for where we had to be transparent, free, and had to take into account all role players and the decision taken there will be more meaningful and forceful when all are given the opportunity and that was what I was striving for in the past where decisions were taken for the people not by the people (Interview, School Principal 31).



While acknowledging the importance of involving all stakeholders in the decision making processes of the school, some principals also pointed out the importance of the school leader — the principal — to be decisive at times and to actually make the decisions when the need arises. As one principal contended:

...there is this change which I don't know is really happening in all schools but I can talk for my school, I mean, I personally try to be as democratic as possible but I also know there are times where you know, you can't take every single decision to the staff, there are times where as a manager you need to make a decision and that's it. You make the decision, you consider all the factors and you look at what's best for the institution and you make the decision, but one needs to be definitely more democratic. I think more of a situational leader, I think, you know. You look at what the situation at hand [is] and you go, you make progress from there, but you cannot be an autocrat, sit in your office and demand that this is to be done and that is to be done (Interview, School Principal 9).

This idea of situational or contingency leadership was echoed by another principal, albeit from a slightly different angle:

...now we have more of this consultative management that's happening all the time, we are not autocratic, we are moving towards a democratic leading that we do. But at the same time I do believe that sometimes, autocratic decisions have to be taken. I feel a good leader would be one who is autocratic when he needs to be and very democratic most of the time (Interview, School Principal 12).

Although I would argue that there are matters that require a leader to provide leadership in terms of the best course of action or decision that needs to be taken, I would not posit that a good leader is someone who acts autocratically at times. The fact that School Principal 12 argued that a leader may need to be autocratic at times and be democratic most of the time, raises serious questions for me. One question I would pose, for example is: what if that leader was autocratic in relation to critical decisions that affect the majority of the stakeholders in and outside the school and democratic mostly in relation to less important matters or decisions?

The complexities of the role of the principal under the new conditions and the need for the involvement of all stakeholders — including the community — was not lost to this cadre of progressive and transformative principals, as illustrated by the observations of one of the principals:

The principal's role is now very, very complex. He has to have a kind of relationship—he is found at the centre where you've got members of the governing body, the parent component, you've got the teacher component, you got his staff, you've got the pupils, you've got now the community, you've got the management of education outside of your school. Now you've got to juggle [all these aspects] (Interview, School Principal 5).

It is interesting to note that within this cadre of what I prefer to call “progressive and transformative” school principals, there were principals who engaged in creative and innovative ways of dealing with the challenges of the communities surrounding their schools. For instance, in explaining how the role of the principal has changed, one principal indicated that:

Perhaps another thing that has changed about the principal is that they have learnt about how important the community is – to involve the community in the school... (Interview, School Principal 13).

This principal then went on to explain how he had in fact worked with the community to deal with their (community's) challenges:

In this school what I've done—as you can see this portion of the vegetable garden, I've entered into a partnership with the community health workers so as to assist those people in the community who are suffering from TB, HIV/AIDS. These people need to eat fresh foods and vegetables, but they don't have the money to go buy spinach or cabbage. So, what I did was to say the community health workers can plough vegetables in the school and then use these vegetables to feed those people who are needy. In that way, the school is making a contribution to the community. At the same time the learners get something—eating fresh food—at the same time they [the mothers who plough the vegetables] are teaching the learners the importance of using the soil effectively for business. (Interview, School Principal 13).

It is worth noting that out of the thirteen school principals that I call progressive and transformative principals, ten were actively involved in the communities where their schools were located, as part of the community's organisational structures.

There were other school principals in this study who indicated that they had recognised the need to change:

...you need to adapt and change the—your policies and procedures can never be static, they must change (Interview, School Principal 18).

Other principals in this study indicated that they had had to change their mindsets and their general attitude in managing schools during these changed and changing times. As one principal indicated:

I can say that it's my attitude because I have this open mind now that I'm not the one running the school, really, I am not the one, we are running the school. The parents are running the school, the teachers are running the school, the children are running the school. That's my attitude, and with that I find that I have no problem at all. I bring them on board for everything (Interview, School Principal 17).

The fact that some principals espoused the notion of distributed leadership in their approaches to school leadership and management, is indeed interesting, particularly given the fact that other principals found the whole notion of shared leadership/shared decision making to be quite a challenging practice — as discussed earlier in this section.

#### **5.4 Vexing challenges with which school principals have to contend under the changed conditions prevailing in schools**

The question of the kind of vexing challenges with which the principals have to contend in schools under the new prevailing conditions is an attempt to get to the heart of the kind of challenges that principals in KZN have to deal with given the new dispensation. This

question gets closer to the over-arching research question of this study, namely, what are the links between formal education management development programmes and the needs of school principals? In this section of the chapter, the focus is on four recurring themes that school principals in this study highlighted, namely, the challenges of limited resources, school governing bodies (SGBs), policy implementation (particularly Outcomes Based Education) and policy overload.

#### **5.4.1 The challenges of dealing with limited resources**

During the interviews with school principals dealing with the kind of vexing challenges with which they have to deal, one of the most recurring themes was the problem of limited resources, particularly financial resources. Without fail, the principals in this study mentioned resource limitations as their major challenge. Most of the principals in the study (27 out of 31) related the problem of resources to the issue of school fees — the inability of a majority of learners, particularly those who come from poor backgrounds, to pay. This is not unexpected in a country like South Africa where the majority of communities are poverty stricken. As one principal put it:

The socio-economic climate is very depressing so we have a problem with the collection of school fees and that impacts on the resourcing of the school... We have fifty percent of our children who come from townships and squatter camps [informal settlements] as well and it's not easy to demand the fees from them (Interview, School Principal 9).

This was echoed by another school principal who sounded very desperate regarding the issue of financial limitations. As she put it:

Right now we are going through a real financial problem at our school especially in this school because half the children don't pay their fees, okay, and the sum of money we are getting from the [provincial] Department [of Education] is very little and that doesn't even just cover our lights and water for three or four months.... Financially we

are going through a tough, tough period (Interview, School Principal 23).

In one case, the school principal indicated just how dire the conditions were when she indicated that:

...the finance is a major, major problem at our schools because ninety percent of [the learners] cannot afford it [school fees] – how do we manage the school? (Interview, School Principal 12).

She further indicated that:

...at least fifty percent of children that attend the school, parents are unemployed.... parent who come to my office and talk about school fees will tell you, ‘we’re not working so what can we do?’ (Interview, School Principal 12).

Indeed, there were a number of school principals who related the problem of limited resources to the social conditions in the communities served by the schools:

A very large number of my learners come from backgrounds that are extremely poor... very low educational background, there are a lot of broken families, a lot of single-parent families, very low income earners.... and there is a very high level of unemployment in this community, extremely high (Interview, School Principal 15).

...in this school, I will tell you, maybe half the children come from divorced homes, [homes with] single parents, unemployment, and that is also causing our discipline problems, you know (Interview, School Principal 10).

I just want to give you some statistics, this is the township of \_\_\_\_\_ [area] outside Durban, and the community is a poorer one with the following inherent problems, low socio-economic area with learners from informal settlement, high levels of unemployment—approximately seventy percent, single-parent families approximately twenty five percent, of those who earn income the majority earn below R1 500 per month, many have unpaid electricity, water and rate bills leading to disconnections and evictions. The general level of education is low in the community thereby making it difficult for parents to support learners in the school activities (Interview, School Principal 28).

As is evident from the latter two responses, some principals attributed problems in the communities to other problems in their schools, beyond resource shortages. They alluded to the problems of discipline and the problem of lack of support of the learners by the parents. One principal in this study went as far as arguing that the educational levels of the parents were also a major contributory factor. This principal contrasted the conditions in his school with what he considered to be the conditions in former affluent or former model C schools:

Parents' level of education is also very low, so from a support point of view they cannot help us or support us in working with their children, unlike in the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ [affluent areas in KZN] where the parents are lawyers and doctors and accountants, it's the other way around here (Interview, School Principal 22).

Although a majority of the school principals that I interviewed cited the issue of non-payment of school fees as one of their major problems, some principals (13 out of 31) related the problem to the difficulties associated with policy dictates. This is captured in the comments of one of these principals who argued that:

One of the major challenges that one faces is the issue of school fees. As I indicated earlier, the situation is such that most people are unemployed and they have to pay the school fees. You find that the Act, the South African Schools Act says that no learner can be prevented from attending school on the basis of their inability to pay the school fees. But then the parents who pay the school fees put pressure [on the school] that those learners who do not pay need to be expelled because they [the parents who are paying] will also refuse to pay. We have to balance how we are going to deal with those who are paying and those who are not paying, at the same time there is an Act which, you know, as a principal prevents you from expelling the learners. So, that is a problem. It is one of the problems that one is facing and creates a dilemma about how to solve it (Interview, School Principal 13).

Another principal also used the issue of non-payment school fees to illustrate what I consider to be a disjuncture between the policy and the expected practice.

You know, I am very disappointed with the Department [of Education], I think their people up there have forgotten what it is [like] to be down here... the fact that this child has no food at home

and he must attend school, the fact that you [are] saying to me that 'look don't charge this child school fees and you've got to give education and at the end of it you want me to pay my lights and water, and you give me R40 000 for the year and my lights and water are R60 000. How am I supposed to—so I think the Department, I see them as policy makers, they're just making policy, um, I don't think they understand the impact of their policies lower down (Interview, School Principal 31).

According to this principal, the policy coming from the top (national Department of Education) was devoid of reality as experienced by school principals in schools. She implied that the departmental officials had lost sight of how the conditions in the schools are because of having lost touch with the realities on the ground.

#### **5.4.2 The challenges of dealing with school governing bodies**

Another critical area which principals mentioned as posing a major challenge for them working under the post-1994 conditions was their dealings with the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) — a post-1994 phenomenon. Almost all the principals that I interviewed (25 out of 31) mentioned the SGBs as being one of the challenges that they were faced with.

The introduction of SGBs into the South African schools scene — as mandated by legislation, the South African Schools Act (SASA) (Act 84 of 1996) — seems to have been a major cause of disruption in a number of schools in KZN and elsewhere in the country. Schools which had operated mainly either with both management and governance of the school vested in the office of the principal, or those which had operated within the ambit of the undemocratic structures such as School Committees, all of a sudden found themselves having to deal with and recognise democratic structures such as the SGBs. It was, therefore, not unexpected that major problems would result from the introduction of SGBs in schools.

For the most part, the principals complained about the fact that the SGBs were interfering with the work of the school principal and eroding their (principals) power and authority. The succinct comments of one of the school principals echo the views of the majority of school principals in this study:

Governing bodies always want to erode the authority of the principal and that leads to problems (Interview, School Principal 1).

While making it clear that he had experienced problems with the first cohort of SGB members who were inaugurated in 1996, another principal explained the whole problem of interference in relation to SGBs' veto powers:

Look, already this is the second set of governing body members that are serving the school. Now, the first one we had a serious problem with them in the sense that they were interfering a lot. Interfering in the sense that if you want[ed] to push a certain budget for the school, because these people want to be good with the community, they go and overturn you at your decision at a meeting. For instance, you want a school fund of R300 00, they will go and tell parents, 'No, we can run this school for R200 00 school fund from each pupil' (Interview, School Principal 15).<sup>44</sup>

While some principals expressed concerns regarding the perception that SGBs were eroding their (principals) power and authority, others were concerned about the powers or the assumed powers of the SGBs. School principals' sentiments in this regard are encapsulated in the comments of one principal who argued that:

One of my biggest problems with the governing body at the moment would be the powers that they—not all of them [but] some of them—the powers that they seem to be giving themselves, which they don't have, especially when it comes to, for example, the employment or the recommendation of employment of teachers... (Interview, School Principal 27).

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<sup>44</sup> According to this principal, eventually "matters came to a head" and a vote of no confidence was passed forcing the SGB to step down.



Indeed, there had been a number of cases reported in the media in KZN where there were problems regarding the employment of teachers, particularly in relation to the role of SGBs. In fact, one of the principals in this study also alluded to some of the problems that were experienced in the employment of teachers in his school, albeit with a different set of dynamics:

...because there was nobody that was promoted from within the staff, the staff has moved a vote of no confidence in the Governing Body. So, the staff is saying [that] they don't want to work with the Governing Body. So, there is some kind of tension between staff and the Governing Body (Interview, School Principal 15).

Some school principals, as illustrated by the principal cited below, saw the interference as related to the confusion that the SGBs were having in relation to their roles:

Look, we've had our fair share in terms of the school governance where the parents did not know the parameters by which they should work. They took—it was a misunderstanding of the South African Schools Act. You found that there were interferences in terms of the running of the school, the differences between the professional running of the school and the governance of the school (Interview, School Principal 19).

In fact, a number of the principals that I interviewed (22 out of 31) saw the problem as resulting from a lack of role clarification. As one principal put it:

When we started with the governing body, the first lot, they didn't know their boundaries, you know, the professional side and the governance side (Interview, School Principal 17).

Another principal saw the problem of role confusion as necessitating the national Department of Education to provide professional development opportunities not only for the school governors, but also for the school managers and leaders:

We need as managers to be further empowered and supported by the Department [of Education] officials that this is where the school governing bodies stop and this is where a Principal takes off at school.

The professional cannot be mixed up with school governance. And you find all these problems in the [news]papers and it's largely due to people not knowing their roles (Interview, School Principal 2).

This was quite an interesting departure from the usual refrain which focuses exclusively on the SGB members as the ones who are not adequately trained and thus requiring training.

The view of a lack of clarity with regards to management (what some principals referred to as the professional role) and governance roles was also echoed by another principal who argued that the problem with school governance in most schools was that:

...lots of parents are under the impression they are now going to control the schools. We don't have that problem here but in \_\_\_\_\_ [name of the area], I'm talking generally, schools are having lots of problems because of misunderstanding in terms of professional and non-professional aspects.... Professional and non-professional [areas] is where the governing body members actually encroach into the professional sphere of the school... (Interview, School Principal 11).

I must say that I found the use of the language of 'interference' or 'encroachment' by school principals, quite intriguing. The use of these concepts presented a sense of principals feeling some kind of invasion by the SGBs on their territories<sup>45</sup>. Although there seem to be instances where school principals' concerns seem legitimate pertaining to 'interference', for the most part, I got a sense that school principals felt that SGBs were encroaching on areas which in the past were the sole preserve of school principals.

It should be mentioned that there were some school principals whose conception of the role of SGB was quite limited and could in fact be considered problematic. These principals struggled with seeing SGBs as important players in the decision making structures of the school. In fact, they saw SGBs as playing mainly a supportive role without much in terms of

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<sup>45</sup> Earlier in this Chapter I cited school principals who felt that parents were taking over their 'turf.'

influencing critical decisions in the school. An example of these types of principals is one principal who saw SGBs more as fund-raising agencies:

I would say we never had a problem with the working relationship with the governing body, but the Department [of Education] has put them there mainly like for fund raising and what have you (Interview, School Principal 26).

Another example is of a school principal who acknowledged that some principals see SGBs mainly as responsible for keeping teachers on their toes. As he indicated,

As principals we do play a role in a situation whereby we use [SGBs] as monsters to frighten teachers, so that teachers do their work. They [SGBs] end up seeing their role mainly in terms of keeping teachers in check (Interview, School Principal 24).

There seemed to be a general consensus amongst school principals in this study that the major contributory factor to most of their problems with the SGBs was, to a large extent, the lack of skills and the lack of adequate training on the part of the school governors. I would argue that in as much as some principals seemed to welcome and accept the SGBs as a necessary and important part of school governance, most of these principals expressed their frustrations with the SGBs resulting from what they perceived to be a problem of lack of adequate training and proper understanding of their roles. Principals used the fact that the parent component of the SGB — which, by law has to be the majority in the governing body — seemed to be struggling with fulfilling their roles, as evidence for their claims. As one principal argued:

...the Department [of Education] has shifted its responsibility more towards the parents and my parents are struggling with that in terms of not having skills to go about doing [their job]. And in governance, governance involves the formation of policy, handling of funds and everything, so they are really struggling with that mainly because they have not been properly trained (Interview, School Principal 8).

And another principal posited that:

Governing bodies are creating a lot of problems as a result of lack of knowledge and lack of training, they normally interfere in areas where they shouldn't (Interview, School Principal 1).

While acknowledging that inadequate training was a major contributory factor in so far as the problems with SGBs were concerned, other principals saw the problem as the problem of lack of formal education or illiteracy on the part of some SGB members:

Another problem—I'm not sure how this one could be attended to—is the issue of education. If you look at the South African Schools Act, it does not say a particular parent has got to have this level of education for him [or her] to be eligible for membership in the governing body. So, you find that we've got a number of people who are in the governing body but if you look at these laws they are written in English even though they tried to translate them into IsiZulu or into IsiXhosa, people still are not able to read them because they are illiterate. So, in the end you find that you've got quite a number of people in the governing body who are not knowledgeable about the basics of what the governing body is supposed to do (Interview, School Principal 14).

This principal used an example of the role of the SGBs in teacher appointments to illustrate how SGBs' lack of knowledge of how the work of the SGB should be conducted — precipitated by the lack of adequate training — was contributing to the SGBs not fulfilling their mandate:

Let me use an example to illustrate my point. If you are going to employ someone, you usually say to that person 'In your application you must also include two or three referees.' I still have to see one governing body phoning those referees in advance to get more information about the candidate. I've never seen a single governing body doing that. So, that section in the application form where one is supposed to write down two or three referees is a waste of time because governing bodies are not using that. My understanding of how the interview should be conducted is not what is going on there (Interview, School Principal 14).

Within the group of school principals who highlighted the issue of a lack of formal education as constituting a major problem, one principal went on to lament the fact that most of the people who become SGB members in her school are individuals without tertiary level qualifications. This principal implied in her comments that these individuals without tertiary level qualifications may not contribute much to the school's development:

The governing body, maybe in more affluent area, they will do more for the school – I'm not saying that mine doesn't do a lot, I am really indebted to what they do for us in their own way. But the thing is that they themselves haven't had experiences, they haven't got tertiary education. There are a few who have higher education but they don't want to get involved.... So, when we ask for membership for elections, we are getting housewives who have left school in like, say Grade 10, and they've had no experience—we have to do a lot of work with them—lots and lots of workshops with them. Doing these, eh, what you call, new policies with them, duties and responsibilities, lots and lots... (Interview, School Principal 17).

The problem of school governors' illiteracy was also borne out by another school principal who indicated that in her school they had gone beyond the workshops organised by the provincial Department of Education and organised school-based workshops in order to deal particularly with the problem of language:

...our school has organised such workshops because usually, you'll find [that] they do have these workshops but they do not feel comfortable going to those workshops because of the medium of instruction [English] that is being used. So what we did as a school, we're workshopping them ourselves (Interview, School Principal 8).

Related to the problem of a lack of formal education, was another problem raised by school principals in this study, namely, the lack of experiences in the education field. One principal saw this problem as transcending the lack of formal education or the problem of illiteracy. She intimated that the problem with SGBs was made worse by the lack of experiences in education among the school governors:

I would lay the blame with the Department of Education. They were, you know, you cannot have a workshop once a year and say ‘you are now empowered to be a governing body member.’ Okay they—I’m not here talking about education, I’m talking about experience you can have whatever degree in whatever sphere of life, but I’m saying if you don’t have experience in education you’re a novice, you know what I’m saying. So, there should have been more support programmes for them [SGBs] (Interview, School Principal 23).

Another principal supported the view that experiences within (and beyond) the education field were a critical element in ensuring effective and efficient school governors. This principal also linked the issue of the experiences to the importance of the general composition of the SGB:

SGBs didn’t receive enough training but the people I’ve got have been in education and business so they were able to make sound judgments. But again, it all depends on the composition of the—the make-up of the people that you’ve got with you [on the SGB] (Interview, School Principal 6).

Another principal, in line with the argument about the importance of the experiences of the people who are in the governing body, attributed her success with the SGB to the chairperson of the body:

Look, we are fortunate we do have a very good School Governing Body. In fact we have a very dynamic chairperson, he’s in the education system, he’s a, um, HOD at the \_\_\_\_\_ [name of school]. So he’s *au fait* with education. So we both work together, even I talk to him he talks my language, he knows exactly what is happening. (Interview, School Principal 10).

It would seem that a good working relationship between the school principal and the chairperson of the SGB sets a general tone for a positive working relationship between the SGB and the school principal. Other principals in this study also pointed to positive relationships that they enjoyed with the SGB chairpersons. As one of the principals put it:

Fortunately we’ve got a very understanding SGB and wherever there’s a problem we call the chairman, the chairman comes to the school even if the problems—like, today he came because last week I discovered that

we have children who are orphans, who are living by themselves... We have a very cooperative SGB (Interview, School Principal 21).

There were some principals in this study who brought about an interesting element to the discourse regarding the challenges of dealing with SGBs. These principals explained the problems with SGBs from the point of view that some people had joined these bodies for ulterior motives. The views of School Principal 25 — who posited that some school governors had joined the SGB for self-serving reasons—echo the sentiments of school principals in this regard:

...my own view is that in some areas, this thing of [School] Governing Bodies has been hijacked by people who have their own interests. Some of these people are just looking for money – you find that at times there is a power struggle between the principal and the governing body because some governing bodies end up wanting to have a share in school funds. And when the principal tries to intervene, it result[s] in problems. Then with regards to interviews [for teacher appointments], there are allegations — I will say these are allegations because no one has been convicted as yet — that some SGBs have a tendency *yokugwazisa ukuze umuntu athole i-post* [to require bribes in order for one to get a teaching post] (Interview, School Principal 25).

Indeed, the issue of corruption concerning teacher appointment interviews, is an open secret, although there has been a lack of evidence to support the claims due to people not coming forward to report incidents of such corruption.

It should be pointed out that not all the principals who spoke about their relationships with SGBs painted a negative picture — as already illustrated by the responses of School Principal 10 and School Principals 21 above, who attributed their positive experiences to the kind of SGB chairpersons they had. In fact, there were a few principals (6 out of 31) who indicated that they had enjoyed a pleasant relationship with their SGBs. As one principal indicated:

I can say that so far with the governing body our relationship is very good and we seem to get along in a good way and the people we are working with are people who show commitment, they have commitment (Interview, School Principal 7).

During the interview with this principal, I got a sense that he seemed to attribute the positive working relationship that the school or the management of the school was having with the SGB, to the fact that everyone has a good understanding of the roles that their positions require them to play, the extent of their power, and that there's mutual respect. As he put it:

The governing body knows its power. The powers of the governing body start from there and end here. And we as teachers who have been trained that we must respect the governing body members but at the same time they must also respect us. So far everything is smooth in our relationship (Interview, School Principal 7).

He further attributed this positive relationship to the fact that:

...every time when there is a meeting, there's that good interaction between teachers and parents; there is nothing that is hidden, everything is [in the] open. So, if the parents are here they ask questions, and they're being answered satisfactorily (Interview, School Principal 7).

While acknowledging that things were not always smooth sailing, another principal also painted quite a positive picture of his relationship with the SGB:

...at our school my governing body and I we get along as friends, we've developed this camaraderie, this team spirit where we work together. It took a little bit of moulding to get that right, initially it wasn't the way it is now but we pointed it out to them that we are no longer in competition with you, we are now working together for the child (Interview, School Principal 16).

Other principals in this study attributed their positive relationships with the SGB to other factors, such as the principal who argued that the reason that he was not experiencing problems was because of a variety of reasons:



In this school there are no problems that one is encountering because the parent component of the SGB is made up of people who are willing to learn, what can I say, eh, mainly they are dependent on me to teach them about what their responsibilities are, about the Schools Act [the South African Schools Act of 1996]. Everything we do, there is transparency, we do not have problems. Most of them [parent component of the SGB] are people with whom I serve on community structures (Interview, School Principal 13).

As to what extent the cordial relationship with the SGB is as a result of the unequal power due to the ‘dependency’ of the parent component of the SGB on the school principal, begs the question. However, to be fair to this principal other factors could equally be playing a crucial role in ensuring that a good relationship existed in this school—such as working together in the community, as indicated by the principal.

### **5.4.3 The challenges of policy implementation**

Policy implementation was one area that the school principals mentioned as being one of their biggest challenges. Specifically, outcomes based education (OBE) was one of the most common challenges that a majority of principals in this study (28 out of 31) mentioned. The general feeling that school principals had regarding this curriculum reform, OBE, is encapsulated in the comments of one of the principals who indicated that:

The implementing of the OBE is a tremendous task because, you know, we all came from what you call the old school of thought and to implement OBE was at that time a very trying thing because it had to make us begin to move from the conventional curriculum based education now to the outcomes based education. And where the difficulties were further noted is that educators had to teach the content-based education at the higher levels and then come to the lower grades for outcomes based education, at the one end the old school and then the new school, so this shift was problematic structurally (Interview, School Principal 3).

Not all the principals (or even teachers) had bought into this curriculum change, as illustrated by the views of the principal below:

I find that it [OBE] hasn't convinced the educator and myself in particular as a manager that it's here to stay. For example, they didn't have a solution to the problem of Grade 9s, they didn't have a solution for Grades 10, 11 and 12, they had to resort, I think its Standard 8s or 9s, one grade that has to go back to the old system of education... How do you have old and new [systems together] you should have all new completely or nothing. They don't know themselves what the Matric [Grade 12] paper will look like in five years time. So everything is in an uncontrolled state of flux (Interview, School Principal 2).

Clearly, this principal — as was the case with a number of other principal in this study — was extremely frustrated by what he saw as a confusing state of affairs. The fact that he, as a school manager did not believe in the change would make it extremely difficult for his followers in the school — the teachers — to believe or buy into the change. As has been shown by numerous studies looking into the implementation of policy changes (for instance, latest studies of curriculum, evaluation and others changes such as Lucen, 2003; Hariparsad, 2004; Stoffels, 2004, to name but a few), most people (teachers) deal with frustration with change by reverting to what they know best — the traditional way of doing things. One principal in the present study confirmed the general feeling that teachers were not implementing the curriculum changes as required, despite numerous professional development opportunities that they have been exposed to:

No matter what workshop you go to, how much of it, other training that you receive, when you enter the classroom you tend to fall into the same mould like you did things in the past... whether OBE is being done the way it's supposed to be done, I'm not sure (Interview, School Principal 15).

It would seem that one of the major reasons why some school principals were frustrated by this curriculum change (OBE) was because the introduction of OBE disempowered and de-skilled them. The general feeling with the school principals was that the challenge with

OBE lay in the fact that everyone — teachers, parents and school managers — lacked the necessary knowledge. The views of School Principal 11 below seem to capture the essence of what school principals in this study expressed:

OBE is a challenge, lots of challenge... there's a lack of understanding on the part of the parents, also educators, okay, and management (Interview, School Principal 11).

Indeed, a number of principals (24 out of 31) emphasised the need for training, as illustrated by the views of the principal below:

...with the delivery of OBE, the biggest challenge is, um, the training of educators. We felt that there ought to be more training than one day, once-off kind of thing... (Interview, School Principal 6).

In the case of School Principal 6's school, they responded to the need for training by utilising the resources at their disposal:

...we utilised our district facilitator—one of the district facilitator is on our staff, so we utilised his expertise to give us additional training... (Interview, School Principal 6).

Other principals in this study indicated that they had put measures in place to assist parents to understand OBE by offering training workshops. As one of the principals indicated:

Every year, twice a year, we have workshops for the parents... At the beginning of the year we had a workshop, we asked the parents to come in and we gave them, um, in other words we teach them about what OBE is all about so they will know what to expect from their child, so they can supervise their assignments (Interview, School Principal 10).

During the one-on-one interviews with school principals it was interesting to note that there were some principals who still saw their roles as helpless implementers of educational policies, as illustrated by the perceptions of School Principal 2 below:

I'm very amiable to listen to you, however if you have instructions or departmental manuals like this [raising a provincial departmental manual to the air], these are instructions from the department to follow,

there's not much I can do other than follow. I'm an implementer of the policy but not a questioner (Interview, School Principal 2).

However, there were other principals who indicated that they were active players in the interpretation of the policy implementation process. These principals explained how they had used policies in such a manner that they fitted the context in which they were working. For instance, one principal described how they, in his school, had dealt with the challenge of OBE. He explained how they were able to merge OBE with the traditional curriculum in ways that were beneficial to the learners in the school:

We at management level brain-stormed how we were going to deliberate and work amongst ourselves and work at school level to ensure that, um, the OBE meets the requirement of DAS [Developmental Appraisal System], DAS initiatives, but at the same time we felt that it had the shortcomings and we married OBE with our traditional curriculum kind of thing. With hindsight that was a good thing because our Grade 10s now are doing the old style of subjects and we were able, for example, we took the OBE of EMS, Economic and Management Sciences, and broke it up into Accounting and Business Economics and delivered that as a curriculum as part of OBE in Grade 8 and 9. Quite a few schools didn't do the Accounting component, now they say that in Grade 10 how are they going to do Accounting? (Interview, School Principal 6).

This innovative way of fusing the old with the new is in contrast with how other principals were dealing with this particular change — OBE — as illustrated by the views of School Principal 2 (lack of a buy-in) and School Principal 15 (falling back to old ways) above.

#### 5.4.4 The challenges of policy overload

Another challenge that the school principals in this study alluded to, was the issue of policy overload, or as some principals put it, “policy influx”<sup>46</sup> or “innovation overload.” In other words, the feeling that schools were bombarded by a barrage of policies or innovations that they were required to implement. As some principals put it:

...what is happening is [that] there is too much information coming down to the teacher from the Department [of Education], too much information coming down to the principal... (Interview, School Principal 30).

Our feeling is that nationally [national Department of Education] they’re coming up with too many policies, too quickly and I think that’s going to be somewhere along the lines of policy overload that I spoke about (Interview, School Principal 6).

School Principal 6 went on to indicate the frustrations that schools were having whereby,

... before we settle down with one initiative, one policy, that’s put on the back burner, [then] something new comes up (Interview, School Principal 6).

Generally, school principals seemed to be frustrated with the pace of change, as illustrated by the perceptions of School Principal 2:

I feel that the changes have taken place sporadically at such a rapid pace that what was true for today doesn’t hold for tomorrow, I’m very serious... everything is in... an uncontrolled state of flux (Interview, School Principal 2).

Another principal in this study also expressed his concerns with regards to keeping up with the policies coming from the national Department of Education:

One needs to be forever above this growing heap of legislation. Besides SASA—South African Schools Act, we got Employers Act—Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Skills Development Act, you know, all these things. We need to know everything about that because if we don’t [and] something goes wrong here, paw, we catching it (Interview, School Principal 16).

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<sup>46</sup> Interesting enough, this feeling of policy overload was also shared by some of the EMDP providers.

There were some school principals who discussed the challenge of policy overload in relation to the further challenges that they had to deal with, posed by Teachers Unions:

The situation is challenging in terms of the unions. The [Teachers] Unions have brought a lot of challenges to the principal, especially when it comes to the policies of the Department [of Education]. In the end, the principal ends up between a rock and the hard place because the Department [of Education] expects him to implement a certain policy and the unions are questioning and challenging him about that policy (Interview, School Principal 27).

The policies of the Department [of Education] in most cases are not taken kindly by the [Teachers] Unions. Here's the policy of the Department and you're asked to come and implement it and the minute you cascade it to the teachers you are challenged by the Unions, 'that has not been agreed upon.' That's a serious frustration that we are encountering or I'm encountering as the head of this school when I'm being asked by the employer to come and cascade this, which is a resolution of the employer, and I'm met with opposition (Interview, School Principal 19).

School Principal 19 further provided an example to illustrate his point:

If I may take one example, Whole School Evaluation: we have repeatedly been pushed by the Department [of Education] to come and implement Whole School Evaluation and the teachers have said 'No' to Whole School Evaluation. And you can imagine now you look like it's your thing, you're coming to say this and you feel undermined when the teachers say 'No, we're not going to implement that' (Interview, School Principal 19).

Although a number of school principals expressed their frustrations with having to deal with the flood of policies while at the same time being challenged by teachers and the unions, there were some school principals who pointed out that they used different strategies to ensure teacher buy-in and therefore eliminated half the problems pertaining to policy implementation. To take an example of one of the principals in this group, School Principal 9 explained how she deals with departmental policies at her school within the broader context of change management. She began by acknowledging the fact that these policies have a major impact on the educators on the ground, and that her role as school

principal is made difficult by the fact that she has to ensure a “buy-in” from the educators and engage the educators in an effort to help them understand and implement the policies as effectively as possible:

...there’s so many, there’s such a great number of policies that we are implementing and it seems that a lot of it impacts very much on the level ones [post-level one educators], so it’s not easy to just go to them [educators] and say this is DAS [Developmental Appraisal System] or this is Whole School Evaluation and we’re putting it into practice. We’ve had to engage [educators] into accepting and implementing the policies as required by the Department [of Education] (Interview, School Principal 9).

This principal went on to explain how she “sells” the policies to her staff:

...when there’s change I always try to indicate to them that there are the positives, there might be the negatives, but there are the positives, it’s not the easiest job to do to convince people to engage in change but it’s important because without change, I mean, its gonna be static and education is dynamic (Interview, School Principal 9).

Another school principal also explained how they have been able to ensure teacher buy-in in his school due to the manner in which they managed change.

It necessitates some groundwork before you can get the policy implemented, for example, if you believe in the vision of the Department’s policy, you sell that vision firstly to the SMT [School Management Team], the senior management of the school, then if we agree with that vision then we take it down to the teachers, we debate around it and ensure [that] they agree with it, then we implement the policy (Interview, School Principal 31).

Clearly these school principals exhibit signs of having a clear understanding of change management and how to effectively deal and assist those they work with in accepting and dealing with change. It is worth mentioning that both School Principal 9 and School Principal 31 belong to a group of principals that I earlier referred to as “progressive and transformative” school principals.

A number of school principals in this study (17 out of 31) brought a different and interesting dimension to the issue of policy overload, namely, the view that school principals were voiceless when it comes to policy formation. The comments of School Principal 25 capture the sentiments of the school principals in this group. Although he initially spoke about principals' voicelessness from a labour relations point of view, School Principal 25 brought the issue closer to the practicalities of policy implementation:

We don't have a voice, principals don't have a voice anywhere, we're not represented. We don't have a seat on the ELRC [Education Labour Relations Council] because we don't have the numbers in the [Bargaining] Chamber, and we feel that we need to be consulted because any policy that comes down either from national or provincial [Departments], it's gonna be implemented by us, and we can immediately see the, the practicality of it and how it's going to be implemented... this is where we feel a bit marginalised and we're trying to be heard (Interview, School Principal 25).

Another principal also echoed the views of School Principal 25 when he simply argued that:

Let me put it this way, I believe that if you are going to implement change you at least should be involved in the development of that change, in the development of the policies. As principals we are not consulted, yet we are expected to implement the changes (Interview, School Principal 29).

I would argue that the importance of having principals represented on policy formulation structures goes beyond the guidance that they can offer about the practicalities in the implementation process. In fact, if the principals are not convinced about the importance and the need of a particular policy, chances are that they will not be supportive of the measures aimed at that particular policy's successful implementation.



#### 5.4.5 The post-1994 conditions and the challenges of being a female

##### **principal: Some anecdotes**

Although in designing this study special care was taken to control for gender differences, gender was not one of the variables that I specifically planned to focus on when the study was conceptualised. However, there were some incidents that the female school principals shared during the interviews, which were gender specific, and illustrated the challenges of being a female principal. It is for that reason that I therefore include a section that briefly explores these sentiments. In this brief section I share ‘stories’ of three of the ten female school principals in this study, who touched upon gender issues during interviews.

One of the challenges that female school principals shared during interviews was the issue of not being taken seriously by the parent community:

Another challenge that I found was the gender thing—as a female. Like Indian parents didn’t take me seriously, you know, because they come from that patriarchal society. I wasn’t taken seriously (Interview, School Principal 10).

To further illustrate this challenge, another school principal recounted a poignant incident that had happened to her:

I had one incident where there was an accident, a child was hurt. The police came, the ambulance came—he was knocked [down] by a car on the road. The police came and I was sitting on the pavement with this child, I was actually holding him in my lap. The first policeman came, he got out the car and said, ‘Where’s the principal, does your principal’—he’s looking at me—‘does your principal know that there’s been an accident here?’ I said ‘Yes the principal knows and the principal is waiting for you to come’, you know. And when they removed the child he asked, ‘Who’s the principal?’ and there was a mother standing there and she said, ‘This is the principal’ (Interview, School Principal 17).

Another principal alluded to the fact that she experienced problems with the SGB of her school due to the fact that she was considered to be too outspoken — something, according to her, that was not expected from a female:

I consider myself to be very outspoken and I always put my school first and if I felt that something wasn't working for the school I would say it at any time. Personally I think that was not appreciated by the governing body, they probably thought I was a problem [and] I was resisting what everybody else was saying, *etcetera*. And also I think generally when a female sort of opposes, it's not taken too kindly, I could be wrong but I just—initially I felt that, you know, people considered me to be just too outspoken especially being a female (Interview, School Principal 9).

This principal indicated that later on when the SGB understood that she in fact had a concern for the welfare of the school and the learners, their relationship improved and they started to work cooperatively:

...over the years they [the SGB] have grown and I think also with that growth and experience in education they've learnt as well that what I was saying was for the betterment of the school.... Currently we have a very good relationship. I think they know me, and I know them a little bit better and we have now a common goal, we are all working to the betterment of our school and probably that is why we get on very well (Interview, School Principal 9).

I should, however, mention that interestingly enough, one young African female principal (between the ages of 30 and 35) that I interviewed indicated that she did not experience any major challenges with regards to working with her staff, who are mostly African males. She cited the following as a possible reason for her success:

Maybe it's the way, I, maybe it's the way that I handle them. I know Black men want to feel man-ish, you know, so I've never taken that away from them. I respect them as men but when it comes to work, work comes first (Interview, School Principal 8).

I found this insightful as far as gender challenges are concerned. To me, it points to the fact that in order for a woman leader to succeed while in charge of males, she has to know her

place/their (men) place and respect them because of being men, and in that way she would be able to get them to fulfil the organisational goals. Although it seems to be working well for School Principal 8, this situation is in my view problematic as it perpetuates patriarchal norms.

In conclusion, what these few citations from the female principals seem to indicate is that beyond all the challenges that have inundated school principals post-1994 in South Africa, female principals have had to also contend with the challenges of being female school heads.

### **5.5 The value of EMDPs in relation to principalship roles/Aspects of EMDPs that equipped principals to deal with post-1994 challenges**

The broad question with which this study was concerned was the links between formal education management development programmes and the needs of school principals. Coupled with this concern, was the issue of the perceptions of principals in terms of the benefits of formal EMDPs in relation to their practices in schools or the fulfilment of their roles as school principals. During one-on-one interviews, I asked school principals what they had learnt in their EMDPs that had equipped them to deal with the post-1994 challenges. I further asked whether there were any particular or specific aspects of their professional development that they felt had equipped them to deal with the post-1994 challenges effectively.

In this section of the chapter I focus on the responses of the school principals regarding their perceptions of whether the EMDPs had/had not equipped them for the new conditions found in schools following the changes that took place in South Africa in 1994.

In other words, I begin to look into the issue of the relevance of EMDPs *vis-à-vis* school principals' practices under the post-apartheid conditions in schools.

There were a number of principals in the sample of this study who felt that EMDPs had assisted them in terms of their leadership and management of schools (22 out of 31). These principals felt that these education management development programmes had been invaluable in a variety of aspects of their practice. At the very basic level, school principals appreciated the skills they had acquired from the EMDPs, as illustrated by the views of the principals below:

Having done management I'd say I think I'm convinced that I chose the right choice when I registered for the BEd [Honours] and I registered for BEd in [Education] Management that, you know, conflict resolution skills that I'm able to handle such situations, and I'm able to reflect on what I've learnt in my [leadership and management training] (Interview with School Principal 4).

The other thing that comes to mind is that of interpersonal skills, how you relate to your colleagues, how you relate to other people. That's also helping me a lot (Interview with School Principal 25).

School principals also highlighted the fact that this type of professional development had assisted them in terms of acquiring problem solving, conflict and time management skills.

As one principal indicated in regard to conflict:

My training taught me that the important thing is how to manage conflict—conflict will always be there whenever there are people. What is important is its management. So, that does help me and we do manage conflict; and also the fact that in conflict you learn how to understand peoples' characters. Out of conflict you learn something. What can happen is that in a conflict situation I can learn that I can utilise this individual in doing certain things—you learn out of conflict. I can say that my training, in that regard, was practical (Interview with School Principal 13).

So, despite a lack of clear focus on conflict management as a stand alone theme or module highlighted in the previous chapter, there were school principals who had derived important lessons from EMDPs regarding effective management of conflict in schools.

Other principals alluded to what they had learnt in relation to other basic management principles:

Look, what [the training has] done for me, it has made me look at planning, strategic planning how to look ahead rather than waiting for incidence to occur and things to be happening. It has allowed me to plan well ahead, and when one plans well ahead it offers the school or the institution to move smoothly (Interview with School Principal 3).

I learned that to be success, to be a successful leader... you have to plan your things, you must have a vision. One of the things they stress is that a leader must have a vision. But in achieving what you are planning to do, in achieving what you want to do, everything starts with a plan.... then I learnt that everything at the end you must review whether this has been achieved, if it has been achieved what more can we add, if it wasn't achieved then where the problem, where can I point the problem, you see. What changes can I bring out in order to achieve the desired results, you see.... Something I learnt as a leader is that if you are a leader you must be consistent (Interview with School Principal 21).

Actually I can say that my specialisation in Education Management it dealt exactly with the issues that we are confronted with at schools, like decision making, planning, organisational behaviour, you see.... One of the, one of the topics that impressed [me] was the topic on how to make a school effective, how to run a school effectively, what makes a school to be effective, you see (Interview with School Principal 7).

The latter comment corroborates the statements by the EMDP providers — the University Departments' university lecturing staff — that they had indeed focused on issues around school effectiveness.

Another principal also placed some emphasis on the importance of strategic planning:

The other thing [I learnt] is planning, strategic planning; the idea that if you haven't planned you can't be successful. What I do, eh, what I learnt at the same time about planning is that it doesn't mean that once

you've planned there will not be any hiccups, you know. So, what I've learnt is that we sit down and we plan, like as the year begins we decide on the things that need to be done. Continuously we evaluate in our meetings—monthly we have staff meetings—where we evaluate whether our programme is still going well, what needs to be reviewed, and so on (Interview with School Principal 28).

Beyond illustrating his understanding of the importance of strategic planning, this principal also emphasized the importance of constantly monitoring and reviewing the plans. He tied this with the notion of shared decision making and the importance of communication.

We are open to the review of things because you can find that our planning has a problem, we need to be flexible in our planning... However, what is important is that I should not change decisions alone, we need to sit down in a meeting and engage in a review so that everyone can be informed because communication in an organization is very important. People should not merely see things happening without being informed. That would lead to the formation of informal leaders – I learnt that in the programme—which will result in the formation of cliques in the school (Interview with School Principal 28).

Another principal also related the knowledge she had gained from the importance of planning, to the importance of working within a team.

I think one important aspect for me has definitely been the strategic planning which was covered in one of my modules, where I actually had to do an assignment and I chose to base the assignment on my own institution and although I've always been aware of the significance of planning, I think the Ed[ucation] Management course has made me understand that I'm just one person in this whole team and that I need to, you know, just not impose my beliefs on everybody there but to draw from what is in the institution (Interview with School Principal 9).

What the comments of this principal also indicated was that she had learnt the importance of collaborative shared decision making, something that — as alluded to previously — school principals were not accustomed to in the past. Later during the interview, this principal supported her argument by pointing out how she, in fact, deals with dissenting voices in her staff members:

...we have individual thinkers but I encourage that, eh, I don't find that vexing. We often get somebody at a staff meeting who is opposing but I look at it this way that maybe ninety percent of us were looking at it from one point of view and ten percent or that one percent who is giving us that different angle, is actually giving us something to think about. So, personally I think with all the experience one learns that don't take something—I mean if somebody is not agreeing with you, you don't take offence to that but try and make the best of it, possibly try and look at it from that person's angle (Interview with School Principal 9).

It would seem to me that most of the programmes that the school principals underwent at the universities in KZN placed an emphasis on transformational leadership and the importance of involving all the stakeholders in decisions and also ensuring that they buy into the change efforts being introduced in school. This is encapsulated in the responses of the principal below:

Another thing that I learnt—we were learning about the learning organisation—that while as a leader you can take change in a positive way, but if the rest of the people in the organisation have not bought into the change, you will have a problem. I always encourage my colleagues, not that they have to go to universities and colleges, but merely reading a newspaper to be updated, when circulars arrive [from the district office] I always make sure that all the teachers have access to them so that things should not always come through me. What I sometimes do is that I give one of the teachers a circular and ask him to go and prepare and then come and present to the staff. I try to make sure that things coming from the Department [of Education and Culture] receive wide ownership in the school (Interview with School Principal 13).

At another level, school principals indicated that EMDPs had assisted them to deal effectively with the post-apartheid conditions:

I think my training has helped me in many ways to cope with the situation after 1994 (Interview with School Principal 18).

The training I got at the university really empowered me to live up to the challenges of the new dispensation, that really empowered me (Interview with School Principal 19).

If you were to refer to the style of management I would say it was fortunate that I had that training at the University of \_\_\_\_\_ for my Masters degree which prepared us for the new dispensation. So, that kept me going because I was advantaged in the sense that I was current on what is to come because the universities, you would understand that, are also involved in a way in policy making (Interview with School Principal 22).

The latter principal further indicated how the programme he had attended had assisted him in terms of understanding the different leadership styles.

So, we were trained in that way at the University to understand what is going to come, so that placed me at an advantage because this democratic way of leadership, the participatory style of leadership I learnt it from the University and it was a challenging period where you had to move from a system where all the authority centred around the principal and all of a sudden you have got to open up and be inclusive in the decision making (Interview with School Principal 22).

Another principal indicated that the programme he had attended had assisted him to better understand his role as a principal in the post-1994 conditions:

I dare say the training I got really opened my mind about education. And it has, to an extent, helped me in shaping my views on education and what my role as a principal should be in this post-apartheid period.... Maybe it was not as dynamic as it is now, changing as it is now but it has helped me to a great degree (Interview with School Principal 19).

It would seem that generally the principals in this study learnt critical lessons regarding change and change management. Citing a particular module offered at the university where he had studied, one principal illustrated this understanding by arguing that:

There's a module that I did called "Managing Change in Education" which taught us about having a positive attitude towards change and not taking change as a threat to you; when there are new things you must always be prepared to learn new things. I think that is very important – to have a positive attitude towards change, accept it and be a long life learner so as to be able to face and deal with change (Interview with School Principal 13).



One of the aspects that a number of principals in this study (17 out of 31) highlighted about the EMDPs that they had been exposed to was that these programmes provided opportunities for them to share and learn from the experiences of others. In other words, these principals explained what they had gained from EMDPs in terms of the opportunities that the leadership and management development classes presented them to work, share and learn from experiences of principals coming from diverse contexts or backgrounds:

We were given assignments and we had to make presentations, you see. A lot of helpful information came out from different people, from different schools with different backgrounds, like—our class was a class of diversity... so it was a very diverse class. That helped us, you see, it helped you as a manager, you see, to implement those things that you heard these other people are doing. And if you read the literature, when I read the literature I found that some of the things are mentioned even in the literature, these are the things that can make the school to be effective (Interview with School Principal 7).

Other school principals also echoed the fact that they had learnt from the experiences of others in EMDPs:

...there's a wealth of knowledge, experience from other educators and other managers in other institutions... I must say from my studies I've realised [that] there's a rich source of knowledge and experiences there (Interview with School Principal 30).

I think what I learnt a lot in um, in my studies, um, I learnt a lot from the class discussions—in my Masters programme we used to have seminar-type discussions where principals shared experiences based on their schools and other schools in their areas. And out of these discussions I learnt a lot about how other principals were tackling certain problems... (Interview with School Principal 22).

I really appreciated the information that other students used to share in class. Just knowing that other principals were also struggling with issues that we were struggling with, was very comforting. I think I benefited a lot from the discussions, it helped a lot in terms of my own management in my school (Interview with School Principal 23).

One principal in this study said that he now saw his leadership and management development classes as providing opportunities for socialising with other principals, while at the same time being engaged in problem solving:

I'll say BEd [Honours] classes are a very good socialising factor for principals, we hardly get to socialise. I'll tell you why, many a problem are resolved through socialising. The mere fact that I know you, I can talk to you about the problem that is a plus (Interview with School Principal 31).

While it may sound unusual for a principal to perceive of a formal professional development programme as providing an avenue for socialising with other principals, this is understandable given the argument that professional isolation is in fact endemic in the job of a school principal (Buckingham, 2001). Daresh and Male (2000) have also described newly appointed school principals reporting feelings of alienation and isolation. In fact, in a review of an innovative consultation programme for school principals in the USA state of Massachusetts, Kagey and Martin's (1982) findings indicated that the programme appeared to help relieve the isolation of principals while providing them with a means for processing ideas and actions.

Interestingly enough, a few principals in this study (4 out of 31) indicated that they were part of structures in their areas known as Principals' Forum. One of the principals explained how the structure had begun:

...[it was] just an informal forum initially started to cry on each others shoulders at a time of change over when we were all battling, all of us were acting principals and we had this 'what would we do next' kind of thing (Interview with School Principal 6).

I would argue that the importance of such a forum cannot be overemphasized, particularly in the context of the professional isolation experienced by school principals. I would further argue that it is such forums that can go a long way in terms of assisting school principals to

form important networks that would provide a spring board against which they can test ideas and develop better strategies towards improving their schools.

In general, it seems that principals in this study appreciated the opportunities for sharing and learning from others' experiences, as illustrated by the sentiments of this principal:

[the programme] offered me an opportunity at that particular time, especially from a BEd [Honours], to work with colleagues... coming from Zululand together with other educators coming from places like Amanzimtoti. So, I had the White educator and the Black educator together with myself [Indian], and the interaction thereof, you know, made me look at things differently. And that apart from the curriculum itself, the interaction, the personal interaction had given me a wider range of thought (Interview with School Principal 3).

The same principal later indicated that “the interactions made me wiser.” In fact, it seems that the class interactions and opportunities to share and learn from the experiences of others also culminated in the development of networking beyond lecture rooms amongst the school principals. As another principal who had also spoken highly of sharing and learning from others in EMDP classes indicated:

I contact my other colleagues to find out if I'm acting correctly because out of that you make a well informed decision because, as you know, as far as I'm concerned learning is so dynamic and there's not any one individual who knows everything (Interview with School Principal 27).

This idea of seeking assistance from other principals was also echoed by another principal who indicated that:

I do consult those principals who were in my [BEd] Honours class in certain aspects, and I know what their strengths are—for example, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, I know he is good in financial management and he is even a facilitator. So I am able to go to him and consult him on certain things and ask him, 'how do you go about on such and such things' (Interview with School Principal 20).

There were a number of other aspects that school principals mentioned which they attributed to their leadership and management development programmes. For instance, one principal mentioned how she had learnt the importance of reflective practice and how in fact one of the modules had assisted her to become a reflective practitioner:

I think \_\_\_\_\_'s [name of university lecturer] module made me do a lot of introspection, you know, a lot of reflection and made me look at what I'm doing more critically and I think when one does that, one learns. So a lot of introspection, and reflection, you know. Before the word reflection was just a word for me coming from, you know being English. That I must say contributed to the process at university, you know, it has made this very significant impact, I definitely have become a more reflective practitioner (Interview with School Principal 9).

Another principal mentioned how the EMDPs had assisted him to become a critical thinker:

The second thing that my studies have helped me [with] is critical thinking... the very same thing, you know, the critical attitude that you have you'll apply it in other things. So there comes a document from the Department, a circular, "lets do it like this", firstly you'll read the circular, because reading is not something that you are adverse to, secondly there will be things that will strike you as you are reading the circular, you know, the first reading, but look you are a critical man now, the Department is saying you must do it like this but isn't this conflicting with something else (Interview with School Principal 15).

Five other principals mentioned how the EMPDs had helped to develop in them the habit of reading and in fact developed them into life-long learners:

Look, I would say that all my studies have helped me firstly to—I realized or I'm in the habit now, it engendered this habit of reading (Interview with School Principal 15).

[my studies] encouraged me to read and I think the best thing is that I still read, I still find myself going to the library and borrowing books on management (Interview with School Principal 9).

...my interest in educational management keeps me reading all the time and trying to look for new ideas because I find that once I've got a project underway, once one project is out of the way, I'm looking for another project to do (Interview with School Principal 6).

I must give a lot of credit to the Masters programme [in Educational Management] as well and the readings. And again I must say that I continue to read... (Interview with School Principal 1).

I have a whole host of research journals and things like that. Reading is very important to me, and it is something that I developed throughout my Masters degree (Interview with School Principal 22).

Despite all the positive sentiments expressed by a number of principals about how the EMDPs had impacted positively on their school practice, there were principals who were very critical of the education management development programmes offered at the universities for school principals. For instance, one principal who had been a recipient of a BEd (Honours) in Education Management expressed the view that:

I didn't receive training *per se* for this job, I'm saying I received training from a general perspective and I'm applying it here (Interview with School Principal 2).

According to this principal, courses such as the BEd (Honours) were "basically academic qualifications" and were "insufficient" in terms of the practicalities of the job of a school principal. However, the same principal did acknowledge the importance of what he considered to be an academic qualification and how it had assisted him:

I guess it [the BEd (Honours) qualification] was helpful, it widened my horizons about the different models and perspectives in education and the way in which I could harness that and practice it (Interview with School Principal 2).

He nonetheless still maintained that "reality and the real practice of theory, [are] two different things." The notion of EMDPs being theoretical and being mainly academic qualifications not rooted in practice was also expressed by another school principal who argued that:

That [BEd (Honours)] didn't help me. I got more theory... It just gave me the academic knowledge, provided the academic background... (Interview with School Principal 26).

Other principals, however, had a different take on the contrast between theory and practice.

As one principal put it:

I think they [the qualifications] have, they most certainly have helped me because both the Masters degrees in Educational Management and Administration<sup>47</sup>, dealt with theory but dealt with practice as well. And whatever theory we did we then applied to our situation (Interview with School Principal 6).

He went further to indicate how the programme had assisted him in his job as a principal:

I still use some of the materials from there [university]. So, I find that [the training] had given me either directly or indirectly the necessary chance to, um, get into the post and to be effective (Interview with School Principal 6).

Interestingly enough, one of the school principals felt that most of the courses offered in the programme for school principals that he had attended lacked a theoretical basis:

My belief is that there should be theory and practical components, you know, so that you take something, you give them background theory to it that you can apply to, apply it in practice. So, I'll, I would say you need to get these courses where—there must be a theory base and this is what we're not getting... there isn't a theory base from which to work. Provide the necessary theory, if you're talking motivation then talk of Maslow's hierarchy [of needs] and Hapsburg and so forth and so on, and then show them a practical example or a case study... on how it could apply in practice (Interview with School Principal 22).

School Principal 22 then provided a practical example of how he had in fact applied the theory he had learnt in his leadership and management development programme, to a practical situation in his school:

I looked at Maslow's theory of um, motivation and I, in my staff room—I spent one holiday and I got a little kitchenette for them: stove, four plate stove, oven, microwave, fridge, good crockery, cutlery, *etcetera*, and a little kitchen hall for everybody. And when they came back from the holiday they were walking on air for two weeks (Interview with School Principal 22).

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<sup>47</sup> This principal had two Masters' degrees – one from a University in KZN and another from an overseas (UK) university – and constantly made reference to both degrees during the interviews.

Yet another principal, while acknowledging some of the limitations of the theory that he had learnt, provided a very positive take on the value of theory. He further provided examples of how a particular module had assisted him in his work as a principal.

The thing that prepared me most is my BEd Honours [degree] specialising in [Education] Management, it gave me a lot of theory – although with certain practical things when one tries to implement them, this becomes impossible. But the theory that I got, let me say in my [BEd Honours] Management [degree] I majored in School Effectiveness... in the School Effectiveness [module], one of the things, the characteristics of a good school, I learnt that, I know what is a good school. Sometimes one does find that certain things are ideal, but at least one is able to make a distinction—like in School Effectiveness, we were learning about how you can make a school to be self-sustaining, in terms of fund-raising and things like that. These are the things that one is dealing with at the moment. So that course was able to prepare me a lot (Interview with School Principal 31).

Further singing the praises of theory, this principal indicated that, “[T]hat theory that I learnt, at least I try to practise it and I can see that it is working.”

There were school principals in this study who credited the leadership and management development programmes with assisting them to deal with the practical management issues at school. Another school principal (School Principal 13) was able to illustrate the point by explaining what he had learnt from one the modules that he had undertaken:

Another thing that I learnt in the “Management of People in Education” module is that people come with problems from home to work. So what you need to do is that as a principal – while not compromising the work that needs to be done in school – you should show concern when they inform or report to you their problems, you must give support and even give advice, guide a person as to how they could go about dealing with their challenges. At the same time you should not compromise the work that needs to be done in school. Adding to that is that as a principal, the staff development programmes that are put in place in school should be based on the needs of the teachers (Interview with School Principal 13).



Then he went on to indicate how one would apply the knowledge gained from such a module, in practice:

For example, you can find that there are teachers with debt problems, if these debts are affecting their performance in the school, then they need to be addressed. This is because such a teacher's work may have no value to him because when he gets paid all the money goes towards paying off debts. So, he ends up not seeing the importance of coming to work and doing an effective job because he spends the money even before he has received it. So, what I can do as a principal in the school is to organize a workshop on financial management to address that problem so that teachers could learn how does one do a budget, you see, how do you spend money, you understand, because it is their own problem but indirectly it affects their school work performance resulting in work not being done well (Interview with School Principal 13).

Other principals were also able to provide examples of how different modules had been able to assist them in their practices:

For me I have opportunities to practice what I learnt in the [EMDP]. When I joined this school in 1997 we did not have a mission statement, we did not have a vision, we did not have school development plans and so on. Then I said, 'guys, let's sit down and talk about these things.' I said to them, 'you've been to companies where you see in the reception area that they have some mission and vision statements. If we are to run our schools as businesses, we are also expected to have that.' We looked at a number of different organizations' mission and vision statements in order to help us construct ours, so that we can say as a school this is what we want to achieve as an organization. Then we started working on [our mission and vision statements] (Interview with School Principal 14).

Another principal explained how the EMDP had assisted her to effectively engage in the process of delegation and to understand the notion that leadership does not reside only with those holding formal positions, but should be shared throughout the organisation.

I've taken the time off now to get to know the staff much better and if there's some kind of delegation perhaps, you know, I look at so many factors before I actually engage in [delegation] and I find that it's become such a rich worthwhile activity, not just for me but for that staff member because I think one thing and \_\_\_\_\_'s [name of university lecturer] module also taught me very strongly is that there's leaders



not just in management but you have leaders right from level one (Interview with School Principal 21).

When asked about the value of the leadership and management development that he had undergone, one of the principals that I interviewed (School Principal 11) opined that one did not necessarily need a qualification to be an effective school leader. As he put it:

I must say just one thing that you don't need any qualification to be a leader because if you look at the Black schools, lots of principals in the Black schools don't have any qualifications, but they're doing their work, they're leaders in their own right (Interview with School Principal 11).

He went further, in an effort to strengthen his argument, to cite an example about one of the political leaders in South Africa who is said to have minimal formal education:

You look at Jacob Zuma [the current South African President], he's just got Standard one but, but it doesn't mean you have to have an education to be a leader; it's an innate quality that comes from inside (Interview with School Principal 11).

In fact this principal (School Principal 11) emphatically indicated that he believed that:

You don't need education to be a leader in the school. So what I'm saying is education to me is of no importance, you can have the highest amount of education yet you cannot be a leader (Interview with School Principal 11).

Although the views of this principal sound quite extreme, his argument that an individual can be educated and still fail to lead effectively, is worth noting. I should mention that this principal had 24 years experience as an educator — five years of which he had been a school principal. He had moved from post level one educator to school principal, had previously worked in the motor vehicle industry, and had a BEd (Honours) degree in Education Management.

## **5.6 Do school principals feel adequately equipped for the post-1994 conditions in their schools? Do they feel adequately equipped to manage change in their schools?**

Having dealt with the question of whether school principals felt EMDPs were effective or not in relation to their roles post-1994, I then inquired as to whether school principals felt adequately equipped to deal with these post-1994 conditions and to manage change effectively. It should be mentioned that not all of the school principals who indicated that EMDPs had been useful to them in relation to their roles under the changed circumstances in schools, felt that they had been adequately equipped to deal with post-1994 conditions in schools. For instance, despite having indicated that he had learnt quite a number of things from his EMDP courses, School Principal 7 felt that the programme had not adequately equipped him to deal with the post apartheid conditions that existed in his school. Responding to the question of whether he felt adequately equipped to deal with post-1994 conditions, he indicated that:

No, I think, um, it [BEd Honours] did not. It did not, um, because what I noticed with the BEd [Honours] from \_\_\_\_\_ [one of the KZN universities], it was good but it lacked the contemporary materials. The current issues were not added there, you see, like, um, these transformation things, they were not added there (Interview with School Principal 7).

This principal further cited legislation or education law as one area where the programme he had attended was lacking and again, went on to compare the programme he had attended with a programme offered by another university in KZN:

I compared \_\_\_\_\_ [same university mentioned above] and the University of \_\_\_\_\_ [another University] I found that they are lacking somewhere and the \_\_\_\_\_ [the former University] is lacking somewhere... I expected \_\_\_\_\_ to bring in things like new amendments, like legislations, like the school um, school governance, what does the school governance say, the disputes that are there, you see. Like the training people on how to deal with the disputes in a

proper manner like the Labour Relations Act is expecting, you see, look at the interpretation because there you are training leaders, people who are doing BEd [Honours] they are there to be leaders.... On the aspect of legislation, school legislation I felt that \_\_\_\_\_ [name of University] did not do it in a, it was lagging behind on that (Interview with School Principal 7).

Another principal also echoed the sentiments of School Principal 7 in relation to the issue of the recentness of learning materials. However, his focus was more on the use of case studies—current case studies—as teaching and learning tools:

I think they must add something, they must add something which is current, they can do a case study, which is current; maybe they can go out to the Department [of Education] and ask for case studies that have been done. Then from there, they can, um, I think these things will be helpful because they'll be dealing with the current issues, how to deal with conflict in a current situation taking into account the legislation... (Interview with School Principal 27).

It is worth mentioning that School Principal 7 completed an EMDP at the University of Port Shepstone in 1996. Subsequent to that, three years later (1999), the BEd (Honours) programme was restructured under the leadership of Mr. Cebekhulu who, *inter alia*, incorporated current topics and introduced legal aspects into the content of both the BEd (Honours) and the Masters programmes in education leadership and management. So, School Principal 7's comments should be understood within that context.

Another principal in this study indicated that he felt inadequately equipped to deal with changed conditions in school because of a lack of financial management knowledge and skills:

Perhaps one aspect I can mention is the one of financial management. I believe that if you are a principal you do need to have financial management because you are an accounting officer, you have to assist the SGB. I do see that I need financial management so that I can be clear on financial matters so that I can make sure that when we submit the financial statements to the auditors, at least we should send

something that we ourselves can see that we were able to do, that we did manage money correctly (Interview with School Principal 1).

This principal felt that financial management was an area where he required some professional development. There were a few other principals (12 out of 31) in this study who mentioned financial management as one of the areas where they felt they were least developed. Some of the examples of the quotes from these principals are as follows:

In both my BEd [Honours] and Masters degrees in Education Management at the University of \_\_\_\_\_ [name of one of the universities in KZN] I did not receive any training in financial management. In fact, after completing both degrees I felt a bit impoverished in the area of financial management (Interview with School Principal 18).

During my training at University I did not receive [training in] financial management skills, I got [financial management skills] from other workshops I was exposed to, workshops that was, one workshop was organized by NBI [National Business Initiative]... on managing finances and fund-raising (Interview with School Principal 20).

[The training] helped to an extent in terms of, it wasn't in the nitty-gritty of financial management, but overall budgeting and things like that. There was a small aspect in one module somewhere that dealt with financial management, but the practice, the actual practical part of it was more in-house, on-the-job training (Interview with School Principal 9).

What is of interest is that the latter two principals cited above had received financial management skills outside the formal EMDPs — although one of the principals indicated that there was an aspect of financial management in one of the modules he had registered for. The point is, in general, almost half of the principals in this study (12 out of 31) felt that they were inadequately equipped in as far as financial management is concerned — an area which was pointed out by a majority of school principals in this study (19 out of 31) as an area in which present day principals need to be *au fait* in. One of the principals suggested that financial management training should be made compulsory for all principals:

I can suggest that financial management should be compulsory for everyone... some principals do get criminally charged for mismanaging school funds, not because they had an intention to squander the money, but because they don't have the skills to handle money appropriately (Interview with School Principal 13).

The views of School Principal 13 are congruent with the views of the Director in the national Department of Education. During the interview with the Director, Mr. Bruce Shaw, he also cited cases where principals had been criminally charged with the misappropriation of school funds. His argument was that in some instances it was a case of principals not being able to account and keep proper records as opposed to deliberate embezzling of funds. He therefore emphasised the importance of ensuring that school principals are well equipped with financial management skills.

There was another group of school principals — mainly “Indian” principals — who felt that EMDPs had not adequately equipped them to deal with the multicultural contexts that they found themselves working in, post-1994. As discussed earlier in the section on the changes in the leadership and management of schools pre- and post-1994, these principals indicated that there had been major changes in the racial and cultural composition of their student body. They later cited the issue of dealing with these learners from varied racial and cultural backgrounds as one of their vexing challenges.

I lack working with different cultures, I was always educated in Indian mentality, you went to an Indian University, you went to an Indian college and you came out as an Indian educator, for a particular sector of the community. I was not given any training when this adjustment took place from racism to a multi-racial society (Interview, School Principal 2).

You know, the time that we were trained, we were trained with only one group of persons. The subject content when you came out of the institution you went into a compartment, you know. Now it's totally different. The management is totally different because we don't live in compartments anymore, we don't live in isolation anymore (Interview, School Principal 5).

...the multicultural thing is one area where I feel that I am lacking. You see, it is a very, very important issue at school... At our school we have many different race groups even though the school was established for Indians because of House of Delegates. There are other race groups that come to our school who are from the area... I feel that this [multiculturalism] is one area that I was not trained in (Interview with School Principal 10).

Dealing with multicultural situations is another important point which we never had in our BEd [Honours] degree. It was all this one group that you dealt with (Interview with School Principal 12).

It was not only “Indian” school principals who felt that the programmes that they had attended had not adequately equipped them to deal with multicultural contexts. As one Black principal eloquently argued:

I would put myself in a new non-racial dispensation and say that our programme was lacking in the sense that a principal of a Black school would also be stereotyped to marry the practice with an experience in a Black school. A principal of a White school would marry the theory to the experience of a Whites-only school. Had we been afforded an opportunity to visit different areas, one would have benefited in different exposure which would have prepared one for the new dispensation which does not segregate in terms of the races. So, in that score I would say we were programme-deprived because it relied solely on your own experience, which was not necessarily exposing you to the new dispensation, which is non-segregating (Interview with School Principal 19).

There were, however, school principals who felt that they were adequately equipped to deal with the post-1994 conditions (17 out of 31). Some principals indicated that EMDPs had equipped them to manage change or at least to understand what change meant and how to approach and deal with staff during the changing period. In response to the question of whether they felt adequately equipped to deal with the post apartheid conditions, some principals responded thus:

Yea, in a way, you know. I mean, at least we were prepared that change needs to happen over time and really it's happening, we can't force [teachers] to change overnight and once there are changes, you know,

people become sceptical, not knowing what's next [that is] going to happen (Interview with School Principal 8).

*Ja* [Yes] I'm prepared, I'm prepared, but my preparedness as I was saying that change is a constant thing – my preparedness is based on the fact that, as I was talking about a learning organisation, I am prepared that as we try to build a learning organisation, I have to continuously learn. Whilst I have that attitude that I have to constantly learn, it means that I will have information about how to implement any change that comes along (Interview with School Principal 13).

In fact, one principal went as far as citing the particular module where he had learnt about change management in the programme he had attended:

Another module that we did was the one on change, where we were looking at the Management of Change – people like Michael Fullan, I mean, quite a lot of things that we learnt there: what is change, how do people respond to change, and so on. One of the sub-topics that we looked at was the issue of the school as a learning organisation—what do we mean when we say an institution is a learning organisation (Interview with School Principal 14).

Generally, there were principals who felt that they had been empowered and enlightened by having attended education management development programmes:

...what [the programme] has done for me is that it has given me more, it has empowered me to become enlightened so that when I'm looking at any problems peculiar to my school against the background of what I know, I'm better able to respond to the call (Interview with School Principal 14).

Other principals indicated that they felt that they were adequately equipped to deal with the challenges of their positions and in fact, the programmes assisted them to execute their duties with confidence:

After completing the course it gave me a lot of confidence that now I can stand up as a manager (Interview with School Principal 7).

...my degree [BEd (Honours): Education Management], you know, gave me that confidence. You know what I'm saying, it built my self-esteem, and confidence... (Interview with School Principal 10).

I don't think one can say that they're totally prepared for anything because often you get a new challenge, but I'm quite confident in doing my job, I suppose it's again all my experience and also the fact that I've undertaken studies (Interview with School Principal 25).

Related to the aspect of EMDPs providing school principals with confidence to execute their duties effectively, was the ability to deal with matters in schools, which the principals attributed to the programmes they had attended. As these principal indicated:

I think I was well prepared but though one may not say one is perfect. I think I would say overall, for the work that I'm doing or the work that I'm doing up to now, I think I was well prepared. Why I say that is because I feel I am able to handle situations no matter how difficult they may be, I'm still able to handle them. But as I was saying I'm not perfect, you learn all the time, the dynamics change and you also adapt to different situations (Interview with School Principal 20).

As a person I'll say yes. One is always reading all the time so that one would be up to date with information and be up to date with the changes. But I feel that the training that I've done and I'm still doing is helping me a great deal.... What I have done, I would say, it has helped me a lot, it's still helping me a lot. Yes, it has helped a lot, and it still does help a lot (Interview with School Principal 14).

## **5.7 EMDPs and practical experiences/field-based learning opportunities**

During individual interviews with school principals, one of the questions that I asked related to whether their leadership and management development included any practical or field-based learning opportunities in the form of an internship programme or shadowing, for instance. I further asked — if in fact their programme contained a practical element — whether they had found the experiences useful in regard to their own practices as school principal and how.



All the participants in the sample of this study either undertook programmes that did not offer opportunities for practical experiences/field-based learning experiences, or the participants did not utilise those opportunities in cases where the opportunities existed. The major reason for this situation — particularly in the case of EMDPs that did not offer practice-based experiences — was that these programmes had a requirement that individuals registering in the programmes needed to be practising principals. However, as rightly pointed out by one of the principals in this study, the reality was that not all individuals who registered for these programmes were in fact practising principals:

No, there wasn't [a practice-based component]. There was none... they [providers] assumed that because we are in these fields—perhaps a weakness of the BEd [Honours] programme in any institution—it is said that preferably people in management positions must apply. But I'm aware that quite a number of people who are doing BEd [Honours] at the University of \_\_\_\_\_ [name of a university in KZN] or at the University of \_\_\_\_\_ [name of a university in KZN] are not necessarily in management positions. So, we were not doing any practicals because it is assumed that these things, *vele* [as a matter of fact] these things we are doing. But then the mistake part of that is that not really that we are doing them all of us (Interview with School Principal 14).

There were principals who felt that they did not need to undertake any practical experiences during the leadership and management development mainly because they were already practitioners/principals. For instance, one principal who studied at a university that offered an internship component argued that:

When I did MEd [Education Management] there was a module, the internship, but for me it was not of much value because I was already in an acting capacity in my own school. So I actually spoke to one of the lecturers concerning this module and he said, "no, you are already a manager at your school." I mean I was [the] acting principal, so for me there was no need because I was getting, I was doing the job basically except my title was acting principal (Interview with School Principal 9).

It should be mentioned, however, that the same school principal acknowledged the importance of such experiences:

I think it's important because, you know, there are no induction programmes. When I became a principal there was no training for me... I took the initiative to engage in a Masters programme (Interview with School Principal 9).

School Principal 9 went further to suggest that some form of mentorship should be put in place by the provincial Department of Education:

...attaching people to current managers who have proven themselves, I mean, the Department [of Education and Culture] must take the initiative, I think the Department [of Education and Culture] should make the attempt and take the time, and possibly attach up and coming potential leaders to new principals and you would learn a lot (Interview with School Principal 9).

For the most part, practising school principals felt that the fact that they were involved with the leadership and management of their schools at a practical level, made it quite unnecessary for them to undertake field-based learning experiences. As illustrated by this principal (School Principal 18) who had completed both the BEd (Honours) and Masters degrees in Education Management:

At BEd [Honours] level I had already started management, I had already started doing management and in that way then there was an opportunity of marrying the theory I was getting at university to the practice because I had already started implementing the practice of management at school (Interview with School Principal 18).

Another principal also echoed the sentiments of School Principal 18:

With us, fortunately further training in management occurred concurrently with the experience, so one did not really need to go out and actually say, "I'm coming to do the practical training of what I'm learning at the university", it happened concurrently seeing that I was already a principal when I was being trained, further trained in the field of management. So, one had that advantage so that when we were engaged in training we were reflecting with the practical experiences (Interview with School Principal 19).

School Principal 19 did, however, acknowledge that even with the opportunities for practising what was taught in the EMDPs, some kind of internship would have been useful:

I personally would think [internship] is quite necessary, that's where our training was lacking because much as we had that experience, but it would have been ideal or helpful if we were afforded an opportunity of being exposed to other leadership experiences, not necessarily the one where you are practising (Interview with School Principal 19).

The importance of an internship was also echoed by another principal who indicated that:

I think that internship could be of great value, could be of great help, I have never been exposed to a situation like that and I think I would have loved to be exposed to a situation like that (Interview with School Principal 20).

In some of the programmes offered by the universities in KZN, school principals were exposed to some practical experiences in the sense that (according to one of the principals),

...they brought in practitioners like, um, long serving principals and um, inspectors, and so forth and so on, to do some sessions with us (Interview with School Principal 6).

As previously mentioned, that School Principal 6 had two Masters' degrees — one from one of the universities in KZN and the other from a university overseas, in the United Kingdom. In the discussion of the issue of practical experiences in EMDPs, he therefore drew attention to his experiences in the United Kingdom. He compared the fact that there were no practice-based experiences in his South African Masters' degree whilst his overseas qualification had a practical component:

In terms of practical experiences particularly at \_\_\_\_\_ [University] we did shadowing, you know where we spent time at certain schools over a couple of days, and um, that, that was the main one. And we did visits to schools where we would—schools, local educational authorities [LEAs]... to be able to get the answers to some of our questions that were raised in the theory part of it. So, um, going, you know the practice teaching kind of scenario, going to the school and seeing for yourself exactly what was happening. And what was very interesting as well is that we shadowed management in business, you know, we spent, um, a day or two for example with the manager of

\_\_\_\_\_ [big commercial shop in the UK], and, um, that was interesting... (Interview with School Principal 6).

A number of interesting aspects of the practice-based learning experiences discussed by School Principal 6 — such as the opportunity to shadow business managers/leaders — provide food for thought and avenues for debates and discussions regarding EMDPs in South Africa. I return to the issue of practice- or field-based learning experiences in the final chapter of this study.

### **5.8 School principals' greatest professional development needs**

It is to be expected that — given the changes that have taken place in South Africa in general and in the education system in particular — school principals would find themselves faced with some vexing challenges. It is also to be expected that some of these school principals would have some areas where they would feel inadequately equipped to deal with the post-1994 conditions — despite having undergone EMDPs — and therefore in need of some professional assistance. It is in the context of that broader background that one of the questions I asked school principals was what their greatest current professional needs were. I further asked the principals as to how they thought these professional needs could be fulfilled.

One of the aspects that was identified by school principals as their greatest area of need was curriculum management, particularly in the context of the challenges that principals had expressed with regards to curriculum reforms in the form of Outcomes Based Education (OBE). The responses of School Principal 13 reflect the general feelings expressed by school principals in this study:

Another need—perhaps the other thing that is there, even though I don't know how it could be addressed, you find that the changes that take place—like now there's gonna be a [Revised National] Curriculum Statement [from the national Department of Education], you find that in the end, the principals—this thing of OBE—principals have to manage the curriculum in the school. Perhaps that's another thing that one has to ensure that one is ahead, gets a better understanding in terms of what is happening in that regard, so that one is able to manage the curriculum and provide proper guidance, because you can't manage something that you do not know (Interview with School Principal 13).

Other principals expressed similar views about the need to involve principals in the professional development that teachers receive with regards to curriculum reforms that have taken place in education:

There must be more workshops regarding for example, OBE for principals. What our Department is doing taking the teachers and workshopping them is good, but we also need to be there so that when we're checking on their work, we know exactly what's happening. So, more training on OBE for principals (Interview with School Principal 15).

...the need to deal with the current changes in legislation regarding curriculum. I must be familiar with everything that is there so that I can guide the pupils to make informed choices in terms of their careers and options and things like that. That is the thing that I currently need most (Interview with School Principal 29).

The general idea expressed by school principals with regards to curriculum management was that they cannot effectively manage the curriculum unless they have the necessary knowledge and understanding of curriculum matters. As one principal aptly put it:

...you cannot critique the teaching, you cannot improve standards at your school unless you are knowledgeable on curriculum matters and so on (Interview with School Principal 15).

Principals in this study seem to be cognisant of the fact that effective teaching and learning is the core business of schools and that school principals play an important role in ensuring that the core business is achieved. As one principal cogently argued:

It is the primary duty of the principal to ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place in school. If you cannot manage the curriculum then there will be problems. You can be good in other things, but if effective teaching and learning is not getting done—which is the primary objective of the clients, the primary objective for parents to bring kids to school—then there is no reason for the school’s survival if it can’t teach effectively (Interview with School Principal 9).

The fact that principals in this study recognised and highlighted the importance of instructional leadership as a critical area pertaining to the effectiveness of principals in their roles, means that those responsible for developing and designing EMDPs need to take this into consideration when developing and designing these programmes.

Another area of great professional need identified by school principals was around financial management:

[we] should now be given intensive training in budgetary—in running the school as a business (Interview with School Principal 2).

I need more skills with regard to finances, how to raise more money (Interview with School Principal 16).

The [professional] needs that I have, one, is the one on financial management that I mentioned earlier. The way of addressing this need is that next year I will do my Master’s degree, and I will do a module in financial management (Interview with School Principal 13).

School Principal 13’s response also included a reference to the second part of the question which asked school principals to indicate how they thought the need could be fulfilled. As discussed in another case below, it is interesting that School Principal 13 took personal responsibility for the fulfilment of the identified need — namely, undertaking academic studies.

A number of school principals, mainly “Indian” principals, who had identified working with learners from diverse cultural backgrounds as one of their challenges, also expressed the

view that multiculturalism was one of their greatest areas of professional need. As one principal put it, explaining how behaviour from a different cultural background can be easily misinterpreted:

We need training on how to deal with multicultural situations, I think that is very important, and you know, like fortunately I know a little about customs and things like that, *imithetho* [rules]. We need people to come here and teach us these things because I know when a Zulu speaking child comes to my office he puts his head down and he sits. Now the rule in my office is that children don't sit and if you don't look at me you're a bloody liar you know (Interview with School Principal 16).

Almost half of the principals in this study (15 out of 31) identified information and communication technology (ICT), mainly basic computer literacy skills, as one of the areas where they needed professional development. Out of these 15 principals, 10 were African principals heading schools with predominantly African learners and educators.

I'm in dire need of training in the IT [Information Technology]. I think that's where I lack quite seriously (Interview with School Principal 19).

Interestingly enough, this principal saw the possibility of this need being fulfilled at two levels:

The IT [Information Technology] aspect is two fold, its personal initiative where I would have to cough out my own funds and attend personal development courses on IT. The other aspect of it is the [provincial] Department [of Education] itself as an employer empowering us, capacitating us on IT given the fact that we're in an IT era. So I think I would also challenge the Department to consider doing that because if you're IT illiterate these days you're as good as illiterate (Interview with School Principal 19).

The fact that this principal also saw the fulfilment of this need as partly his responsibility, is quite interesting. It implies that some principals realise that in some instances they do have to take responsibility for their own professional growth and development.

It should be mentioned that some of these African principals who identified ICT as one of their areas of professional needs indicated that although they had been through EMDPs, they were in fact, computer illiterate. As one principal put it:

There was what they used to call at the University of \_\_\_\_\_ [name of a university in KZN] computer literacy, but you know, the way that it was done, it was very superficial, very, very superficial because when those tutorials came to an end, I knew nothing about computers. I will not say in fact that it [computer literacy] was anything I gained from my training (Interview with School Principal 20).

Another principal felt strongly that computer literacy should be part of education management development programmes:

That [computer literacy] is another thing that they are supposed to add because they should—in fact add the computer programme in this BE [Honours], um, add it there to the degree. Because if the computer course was there, if the computer module was there today... I wouldn't have to go out there and spend money outside. As it is now I don't know computer, yet I'm in the office—it's a challenge to me that I'm not computer literate. It's a challenge (Interview with School Principal 7).

One of the interesting areas of professional needs identified by one of the school principals was the need to train principals to forecast and plan ahead in line with the developments around them — what this principal called “proactive management.” To illustrate his point, this principal used various pieces of legislation that had been introduced by the national Department of Education, which, according to this principal, seriously impacted on schools mainly because they were not prepared or had not planned ahead to deal with these reforms:

I don't know if there's anything like proactive management, if there was something like that I would say we need to train the principals in being proactive because people have the tendency of maintaining the status quo, because a change always comes with challenges and if you maintain the status quo you have created yourself a safety corner, “This is how things are done in our area”, and once you implement a change it becomes a challenge because you have got to open up the avenues that you don't know.... Why I'm saying that it's because of the experience that we've had here in this school of FET [Further Education and



Training curriculum], and I'll take it concurrently with R and R, Rationalization and Redeployment and couple it with PPN – Post Provisioning Norm – right. These concepts have impacted quite seriously on the schools. R and R – Rationalization and Redeployment of the teachers impacted on the schools because schools had not been proactive in terms of introducing subjects that are in line with FET, FET which is a policy of the Department, in trying to transform the curriculum (Interview with School Principal 19).

In essence, what this principal was referring to was a situation where, for example, there were schools which were offering subjects such as Biblical Studies and no Computer Literacy, which did not proactively work towards assisting Biblical Studies teachers to get trained in subject areas such as Computer Literacy — in line with the national Department of Education's efforts to bring improvements to the curriculum. As he later posited, "Get people to study the situation which is coming and start or begin doing something now, in preparation for that situation." Unfortunately, when asked as to how this need could be fulfilled, School Principal 19 clearly indicated that he did not have an idea as to how this could be done.

There was also one principal in this study whose professional needs were expressed in terms of the issue of support from the provincial Department of Education:

Well, my own needs would be more support from the Education Department, more support, more assistance. More assistance from subject advisory service because we are not experts in all subjects, more subject advice, more academic support programmes. More regular visits by subject advisors because this is a secondary school. And that is lacking tremendously. More support from the Department in respect of resources (Interview with School Principal 1).

Indeed, one of the major complaints from schools in South Africa is the lack of support from district officials, particularly Subject Advisors and Institutional Development and Support Officers (IDSOs). A recent doctoral study by Narsee (2006) explored how districts operate in one of the provinces in SA and argued, amongst other things, that a combination of

structural, organisational and resource challenges prohibit districts from providing effective services to schools.

Other areas of professional need expressed by the school principals included the following:

- ❖ School development planning, school improvement and school effectiveness – “I need to come to grips with school development planning at the macro level and micro level. That is the important thing and I think out of it will come everything else” (Interview with School Principal 6)/“for me it would be in the areas of School Development Plans, School Effectiveness, and School Improvement because one leads to another” (Interview with School Principal 14).
- ❖ Learner disciplinary measures – “I think we were, um, I think, I’m sure most principals will tell you, right now I think the greatest need we have is dealing with the discipline of learners” (Interview with School Principal 10).
- ❖ Stress management – “there should be more training for principals regarding how they can manage stress, because I can see lots of principals are leaving because of stress, they get burnout, they just can’t make it” (Interview with School Principal 15).
- ❖ Conflict management/conflict resolution – “there’s a dire need for training in conflict management because the conflict will always remain the order of the day, there will always be conflict and I think management is also about handling conflict” (Interview with School Principal 19)/“although we have had help, we’ve had workshops on [conflict resolution], it doesn’t really gear you up for everyday challenges. I would say like, more training on conflict resolution” (Interview with School Principal 17).
- ❖ Counselling skills – “a principal’s role has changed over the years. Maybe that [counselling] should also be included in the BEd [Honours], you know, for future use as a school counsellor as well. We’re dealing with it, we deal with it every day” (Interview with School Principal 10).
- ❖ Drawing up policies at school – “assist principals with drawing up policies on school and running of school” (Interview with School Principal 11).
- ❖ A focus on understanding departmental policies – “I would like a focus more on the policies of the government because the principals need to understand fully the regulations, the policies, the Acts of the government because their management is dictated to by the Acts of the government and the policies, and the regulations. That’s one area that I would say that needs to be looked into quite seriously because that’s where we as principals face serious challenges” (Interview with School Principal 19).

## 5.9 Emerging themes

### 5.9.1 The role of training workshops

In developing this study the focus was mainly on the formal education management development programmes that the school principals had undergone that are provided by higher education institutions (HEIs) of learning, mainly universities. There was no intention to focus on other types of professional development avenues provided by other providers other than HEIs. Even in the interview schedule the only question that I asked school principals that went beyond formal EMD programmes was whether they had recently attended any short courses, seminars, workshops, etcetera; what the focus of the professional development was; and who programme providers were. In other words, I did not go into any details regarding training workshops — I just wanted to get a sense of what their latest form of professional development had been.

However, during the interviews with the principals, without any probing, they started elaborating on their experiences of training workshops, given the fact that these workshops were used as a major professional development vehicle, particularly in KZN<sup>48</sup>. Indeed, the role of workshops as professional development tools particularly regarding orientating school principals to the policy documents containing new initiatives in the management of schools, seems to be one of the most prominent forms of continuous development for school managers in KZN. These were mainly workshops organized by the provincial Department of Education (KZNDEC) – using a variety of private providers— with the aim of providing school principals with the latest information from the national and provincial Departments of Education. Perhaps most importantly, the workshops were

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<sup>48</sup> Having worked as a training facilitator myself, providing mainly training workshops for school principals, it was brought to my attention by principals that they were getting overwhelmed by the huge number of workshops that they were required to attend.

meant to provide school principals with practical guidance in terms of dealing with the new conditions under which they had to operate. In the main, the workshops took two forms: they were either information-dissemination sessions or skills development sessions meant to impart a variety of leadership and management skills.

It was therefore for the afore-mentioned reasons that in subsequent interviews with principals I began asking them about their experiences of workshops and what they saw as the role of workshops in so far as their (principals) professional development is concerned.

There were a number of school principals (22 out of 31) who highlighted the importance of workshops in so far as the information-dissemination aspect is concerned:

They're relevant because they're workshopping the policy documents that have come down from national Education [Department]. For example, DAS [Developmental Appraisal System], Whole School Evaluation, School Development Plans. So, the workshops are on all the new initiatives that have come down from National to Province and from Province to us (Interview, School Principal 6).

Other principals saw the role of workshops more along the lines of helping principals to keep abreast of the developments and changes regarding the leadership and management of schools:

It's invaluable, it's invaluable. I'm of the firm belief that workshops can keep you abreast, not all of us are studying, not all of us are reading but workshops are an effective way of keeping abreast of changes in your area of practice. It is very important (Interview, School Principal 5).

I attended a lot of departmental workshops, you know with, um, Effective Management, Whole School Evaluation... definitely that helped me become a good manager (Interview, School Principal 12).

In fact, most principals were able to cite a few examples of workshops that they had attended that focused on imparting some knowledge on a variety of areas, as illustrated by the principal's responses below:

They gave us development in Finance, School Management, um, the most recent one I've been to is this Quality Assurance Programme... Norms and Standards of School Funding, right. I went to one on Skills Development and Information Sessions. They are now having a lot of workshops for us, you know to, um, uplift us and upgrade us (Interview, School Principal 10).

Although some principals felt there were some problematic aspects in workshops, they emphasized the importance of workshops particularly in the context of the new conditions in schools.

I would say workshops are very important especially with this new transformation but sometimes when we go we come back disillusioned really. But they give you a lot of material and sometimes we don't have time to go through everything because there is so much [that] just comes and comes... I feel it's very useful and it's important (Interview, School Principal 4).

I attended a workshop and we did something on change and it helped me to understand that if there is a change there is always reluctance [resistance]. So, whenever I approach people, there is a change now, I always know they are going to be reluctant and I know how to deal with it (Interview, School Principal 21).

However, other principals had a good understanding that although workshops were

...an essential part of our development, but ultimately they should be seen as a starting point rather than an end in itself (Interview, School Principal 16).

I would argue that this is an important point that needs to be remembered by the departmental officials responsible for what is referred to in the province as EMD — education management development. There are instances when it seems that the workshops are regarded as the beginning and the end in terms of the development of the capacities of school managers.

There were a number of principals in the study (14 out of 22) who saw training workshops as a means of providing opportunities for sharing and learning from the experiences of others. As one principal put it:

I strongly support the idea of workshops because workshops afford an opportunity of sharing experiences and if you have the right facilitators there's a lot you benefit. The main thing of the workshop is the sharing of the experience because people involved in the workshop have got to speak of their experiences and you benefit out of that. You share your experiences – you may think you know it all, only to find when you're in the workshop that there are people who know better than you do. In the workshops you may think you're doing things the wrong way only to find that you are better off than the other people (Interview, School Principal 19).

Another principal echoed this idea of learning from others by emphasizing the empowering aspect of workshops:

I like going for workshops because you learn from others... Even if you know how to do things but when you go to a workshop and if there is somebody that tells you I did it this way and it was successful, you come back empowered and if you do it that way you also might be successful, so I find workshops empowering (Interview, School Principal 19).

Yet other principals in this group spoke about the idea of workshops providing opportunities for collaborative problem solving and the notion that there is strength in numbers:

I think the workshops that we have attended helped us more and more to understand that “look, many minds are better than one mind.” And faced with the diversity at our schools, um, we need more brains to resolve the diverse problems we are faced with. (Interview, School Principal 24).

...when you're at a workshop where particular strengths are involved, if there is a problem area they're discussing you can see sixty or seventy principals giving their perspectives on that problem, it gives you a very enlightening view. And you say “Ag man, I should have thought of that idea there” and then you, you know, from that, in view of those perspectives you gel and you have one common thinking that comes out. It may not be the best but at least there are variations that you can use. I found that a big plus (Interview, School Principal 31).

To illustrate the role of workshops in facilitating learning from the experiences of others, one principal shared the following example:

...what I've seen in most of the workshops is that most schools are facing a problem in terms of not understanding student population because most of them you find that they've got fifty percent or more of black learners so therefore they encounter problems and [attending workshops] has helped them on how to deal with [the problems] (Interview, School Principal 8).

Indeed in the sample of this study, there were a number of “Indian” schools which enrolled a substantial percentage of African learners (between 25 and 54 percent) but had a 100 percent “Indian” staff complement — 11 out of 14 “Indian” schools in this study. The rest of the “Indian” schools had a few African teachers (between 1 and 4) who were employed mainly to teach the African language, IsiZulu, or who were in SGB posts and not on permanent basis.

Although there were large numbers of principals who saw workshops as one of the best avenues through which principals' professional development could be enhanced, there were also some principals (8 out of 22) who expressed their reservations about this mode of professional development. Amongst the biggest problems expressed by these school principals was the issue of a lack of systematic approach to the delivery of workshops, at times resulting in duplication. This is aptly captured by the example provided by one of the principals in this group. He began by firstly strongly asserting that:

I'm tempted to say that the workshops are a waste of time... (Interview, School Principal 14).

Then he went on to provide an example to illustrate his disquiet about workshops:

Let me give you an example, last year we attended a course on School Development Plans in \_\_\_\_\_ [name of the place] for two days. One principal was complaining there that “but this thing is a repetition”, it's a repetition of—there's a programme that is going on

here in \_\_\_\_\_ [name of the area] that is called Quality Learning Project which is run by \_\_\_\_\_ [name of consultant]. \_\_\_\_\_ [name of consultant] has done School Development Planning for secondary schools and he has been very detailed as far as this programme is concerned (Interview, School Principal 14).

Another principal echoed the above sentiments regarding the issue of repetition:

I would also hasten to say with the workshops in most—in some instances people [SEMs] need to guard against repetition because that is what has frustrated most of us. [For] those who have been in the game for quite some time, it's quite frustrating to be exposed to a workshop that repeats what you have already been exposed to. And that is the problem that we're having with the Department [of Education and Culture] (Interview, School Principal 19).

Amongst other things, the example provided by School Principal 14 illustrates not just problems with workshops themselves, but also the general problem of a lack of coordination amongst different programmes and initiatives provided within a particular circuit or district. Related to that is the issue of an influx of different initiatives, all requiring principals to focus their attention on these initiatives' successful implementation:

...what's happening, you got the Health Department for example, you've got the AIDS drive on one side, you've got DAS [Developmental Appraisal System] on one side, you've got educational management workshops on one side and you've got a whole host of things. So at the end of the day you have to ask yourself where are we, what have I learnt from all this? There is not much time for the educator to assimilate all the information (Interview, School Principal 18).

There were other principals who felt that they were required by the Department of Education and Culture to attend workshops that they were not supposed to be invited to. For instance, referring to a workshop on the 'Functions and Responsibilities of School Governing Bodies' that one principal was required to attend, he clearly indicated that:

...these are some of the things that you really feel it's a waste of time (Interview, School Principal 16).



This principal went on to explain that:

...you call me to a workshop which focuses on the annual budgets and the practical problems, you see, I've been doing this for the past sixteen years now, [yet] I'm expected to attend this workshop (Interview, School Principal 16).

Another principal expressed quite strong views about what he saw as a problem of workshops not being aligned with the realities that principals face on the ground:

A lot of the workshops disappoint me, I must be honest, a lot disappoint me and I'll tell you why. You'll attend a financial workshop, I'm just going to quote an example, and they'll tell you you're not supposed to keep a R100 in your safe, your banking must be done everyday, it must be done during school time, where's the staff to do that? So, we're getting people that will come and give us these ideas of how a school should be run without understanding how schools operate... (Interview, School Principal 12).

There is another element of workshops — particularly the information-dissemination workshops — which was highlighted by a few principals in this study. That is, the fact that most of the individuals who present these types of workshops come to the school without a full mandate from either the national or the provincial Departments of Education, and therefore cannot respond to all the queries, particularly those dealing with matters of a technical nature or those dealing with “grey” areas.

I would say that a lot of these workshops disorientate me because, oh yes, some good things are said, some good ideas are brought across, but in terms of problematic areas I think a lot of loose ends are left which makes me wonder sometimes “why you're wasting my time. I'd rather sit in my school and battle it in my school” (Interview, School Principal 26).

This principal further indicated that:

...a lot of these workshops tend to, we have, we learn a little but it also disorientates us because the people that conduct the workshops don't have the mandate to make change, “we'll take all your suggestions higher up.” I still have to come to a workshop where they say “I've taken forward your suggestions, this is the response from higher up.” I haven't got that even when it comes down to your OBE [Outcomes

Based Education].... We attend all the workshops and we do not get the required result (Interview, School Principal 26).

What the views of this principal seem to indicate is that principals expect their concerns to be communicated to the powers that be and for workshops to also play the part of relaying feedback from the authorities.

It is my contention that the majority of workshops that principals attend are not based on any formal needs identification and analysis processes. This view is supported by my own experiences working in the province of KZN as a training consultant, and working with school principals as a lecturer at one of the universities in the province. However, the school principals in this study also confirmed this view:

The programmes that they [departmental officials] come up with are programmes that have been, um, thought of by somebody else and basically we should have done a needs-analysis, and then prioritize (Interview, School Principal 17).

What they [KZNDEC] do is they just come up with a designed package and “here’s the workshop that you need to attend.” Hardly, they hardly engage in [needs analysis]. They just design a package and bring it over to us without really looking at whether we need that or not (Interview, School Principal 3).

One principal provided a perfect example of a situation where the workshop had no relevance to the participants, and in fact did not address the principals’ needs at all:

...we went to a workshop on Tuesday, Skills Development workshop. Ninety percent of the people there were not interested, they don’t pay a skills development levy, they don’t, you know, they don’t have that kind of thing. I sat there and asked a lot of questions, unfortunately the presenters’ got what’s in the book, I read the book so it didn’t come out with anything new (Interview, School Principal 6).

Some principals related the problem of workshops not based on the needs of the principals to another problem: workshops being organized for the sake of expediency. In other words,

workshops being organized in order to ensure that money is spent before the end of the financial year.

The workshops that are organized by the Department [KZNDEC] in my view, they are not fruitful. I have reasons, one, they stay without providing any workshops and then towards March, the end of the financial year, they come up with a *number* of workshops to spend money, you understand. Number two, their workshops are not based on people's [principals] needs (emphasis by the participant) (Interview, School Principal 13).

Another principal echoed a similar view when she argued that:

I personally see these workshops as useless because they are not based on people's needs, they are merely done. Each and every person [Superintendent of Education Management] wants to claim that he has done workshops—they want to have some kind of delivery, to claim that they have done such a number of workshops, to score points and to indicate that in terms of the money “we didn't under-spend” because they [SEMs] are being accused that they are under-spending (Interview, School Principal 23).

Indeed, under-spending of the allocated budget was one of the major problems in the province of KZN, and in particular in the Department of Education and Culture. So, the principals' views in this respect are not further from the truth. Again, having worked as a training facilitator in the province, I can bear testimony to numerous situations where an deluge of workshops were speedily organized between the months of February and March in order to ensure that money was spent before the end of the financial year.

One principal painted an interesting picture of what he would do to attend to the needs of school principals if he had the opportunity of being an SEM:

...if I were to become an SEM [Superintendent of Education Management] with my principals in the circuit, before I could organize a workshop I would do a needs analysis, and then perhaps I would find out that there are x numbers of principals who need a workshop on financial management. I would target those ten principals and provide them with a workshop on financial management instead of taking

someone who doesn't know why he is attending a workshop on financial management, who does not have any problem [with financial management] (Interview, School Principal 13).

Another problem that was raised by school principals regarding training workshops was the issue of the quality of the presenters or facilitators. As one of the principals in this study argued:

Workshops are important, they bring new dynamics, provided they are well-structured with well-informed and well-trained facilitators (Interview, School Principal 3).

School principals in this study pointed out their experiences of the problems they had encountered with presenters, using examples of workshops they had attended:

I attend workshops, for example, on School Governance; I sit in those workshops sometimes in awe because of the standard and quality of presentation.... Some of the factual information that is being distributed is not right because the Acts are changing all the time; they are presenting old information... so part of the training is also incorrect (Interview, School Principal 16).

This principal indicated that during this particular workshop he actually provided some assistance to the facilitator because of the problematic nature of the presentations:

I called the lady up during the break and said "Let's talk about this, if there's anything you need help on, we'll work on it together", you know (Interview, School Principal 16).

Another principal also shared his experiences:

I personally went to two workshops on DAS [Developmental Appraisal System], I mean, I had read the manual I learnt nothing new. I would have appreciated if [the presenters] had put us in a situation where we were actually appraising; one of us could have role played as the appraisee and all the different roles. In both workshops [the presenters] regurgitated what was in the manual (Interview, School Principal 6).

The worst case scenario was the one highlighted by one of the principals where the presenters normally read from notes, without much interaction with the attendees:

There are a few that engaged in [interaction] but most of them, they call it workshop but it's just a case of notes being printed, sometimes it's just read and I for one get annoyed because I can read myself and, you know, it's time consuming. I could have been given those notes [and] I would have gone home and done the reading myself. I think workshops need to be more practical (Interview, School Principal 9).

What these few quotes indicate is that the quality of the workshop depends to a large extent on the quality of the presenter(s) or facilitator(s). As one principal rightly argued, “[W]orkshops could play an important role if you have the right facilitators” (Interview, School Principal 29).

### **5.9.1.1 Recommendations by school principals for the improvement of training workshops**

Having pointed out the strengths and the weaknesses of training workshops, school principals in this study made a number of constructive recommendations in terms of how the workshops could be improved. These are worth focusing on briefly, particularly given the fact mentioned earlier that training workshops are one of the major vehicles through which the “professional development” of principals takes place in the province of KZN (and to a large extent, in the country). I present these recommendations in point form:

- ❖ Training workshops ought to be on-going and should assist school principals with practical aspects of school leadership and management.
- ❖ Training workshops should deal with “real-life situations, by workshopping actual problems that we encounter on a day to day basis” (Interview with School Principal 1).
- ❖ They have to be well structured and well organized with presenters who are well informed and well trained (“I believe that workshops are important... provided that [they] are well

structured, well organised [and] motivating, with the personnel who are well informed and are also well trained”(Interview with School Principal 3).

- ❖ Training workshops should be well-thought out with presenters who are *au fait* with the legislation: “if there’s too much information coming to the principals and then the presenters tell you that ‘Look, I don’t have a policy document or I don’t know the answer’, then you’ve got a problem and that is what is happening in some cases.”
- ❖ They should be “a catalyst to give you more change” and “open up your thinking” (Interview with School Principal 5).
- ❖ Training workshops should be longer than one or two days: “workshops that principals go to should be a lengthy period, a week because we can’t deal with anything—you take one case study and half the day’s gone” (Interview with School Principal 6).
- ❖ “A lot of practicals need to be put into the theory that we get from workshops (Interview with School Principal 16).
- ❖ The importance of maintaining the right balance between experienced and inexperienced principals – have “some kind of grouping of people with more or less the similar experience so that those who have not been in the game for quite some time [can] come together with those with the same experience, in that way then you can have one or two people as the resource people for those with little or no experience” (Interview with School Principal 19).

### **5.9.2 The role of experiences beyond EMDPs in the effectiveness of school principals**

One of the critical issues that I could not ignore was the extent to which factors outside the leadership and management development programmes could have had an impact on the perceptions of the school principals and, invariably, on their practices in schools. I would argue, for instance, that it is difficult to say for certainty that a particular principal’s effectiveness in his/her school is solely as a result of the EMDP that they would have undergone. It is for that reason that one of the areas that emerged from the interview data became a focus on the role of experiences that school principals have, beyond their education management development programmes.

At one level, there were principals who — although they had received their post-graduate qualifications in the broad area of leadership and management—highlighted and credited qualifications outside the leadership and management discipline for the manner in which they managed and led their schools:

[in my undergraduate] I majored in Fine Arts. I think that was my biggest help because the arts field, I think it broadens your, your mental abilities to look at things differently, creatively. So, I think that is the only part of my, of my training that helps me to be able to observe and to look at things creatively and to find creative measures to resolve, um, problems that we are faced with. I think that background, that artistic background that creative background has helped me to tackle [problems]—“let’s not look at this problem only through blinkers but see how we can look at it from other sides” (Interview with School Principal 12).

Remedial Education helped me to work with people from different backgrounds, that helped me a lot, coping with changes/transformation, you know, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, battling problems. And also understanding peoples’ personalities, problems and all that (Interview with School Principal 11).

Although they recognised the important lesson that they had learnt from the EMDPs, these principals felt that other professional development avenues also made an enormous contribution. Some principals in this study placed a lot of value on what they had learnt from others – such as spouses, parents and former principals:

My husband actually has taught me to respect people, it’s one of the most important things and I think that counts a lot (Interview with School Principal 9).

...my dad also acted as a principal and he was a deputy principal many years ago and I was involved with him very, very heavily, so I learnt a lot from him in terms of what a school should be like so it was a bit of an advantage when it comes to [managing a school] (Interview with School Principal 12).

I benefited from being in a school with a democratic principal when I was still a teacher. I learnt some of the things from him (Interview with School Principal 13).

Other principals credited experiences they had gained from working in and with community structures. In fact, there were a large number of principals (17 out of 31) who fell in this category. Below I cite a few illustrative examples:

I've been a community activist for the last twenty-seven years. I've been actively involved in my communities wherever I have lived.... I've been involved with educational issues, political issues, etcetera. I've been able to relate to the community and whatever experience I had obtained whether it was academic or other incidental forms of learning, have benefited me vastly in relating to my community and assisting in the upliftment and things like that.... even the Masters research has helped me tremendously in my job as a principal, and I have been able to use this in the training that I'm involved in here in \_\_\_\_\_ [name of area] (Interview with School Principal 16).

I think the other factor that helped me a great deal – it was my active involvement in the political, eh, in the community activities, in my community. So, my active involvement in the community structures also helped me a great deal and also my active involvement in the political structures in the community also helped me (Interview with School Principal 19).

Being on the Child Welfare [Community Forum] means to me that there is so much knowledge I get about my community and I apply this knowledge in the management of my school (Interview with School Principal 15).

I'm quite in sync with community leaders, with the people that actually do the work, like the District Forum, the Education Forum in the area, the social workers and things like that (Interview with School Principal 30).

...we were working with the \_\_\_\_\_ [name of area] Educational Crisis Committee. I used to attend their meetings every Monday and that helped me a lot, I gained a lot from them (Interview with School Principal 21).

Within this group of principals who cited experiences outside EMDPs, there was one principal who attributed his effectiveness as a principal to a wide range of experiences he had gathered over the years, including extensive reading and travel. As he put it:

...if you were to ask me what has taught me a lot, I can't really pinpoint one thing but I can say it's a whole host of things, number one: the



people that I meet with, my own experiences in education [and] I've read quite a bit in education... (Interview with School Principal 5).

This principal also attributed his learning to the travelling that he has done:

I've travelled very widely...I've travelled in many parts of the world, even in Africa. I was fortunate that I was in England, I went to few schools, I was in Mauritius I went to a few schools there, I was in Seychelles I went to a Poly-technical school there, I've visited few schools in other parts of the world. I've learnt quite a lot from all these experiences—important lessons that have assisted me in my work (Interview with School Principal 5).

This principal placed so much value on the experiences that he had gathered over the years that he boldly declared that: “nothing can beat experience; to me experience is the best teacher” (Interview with School Principal 5).

Earlier in this chapter I cited an example of a principal (School Principal 6) that I argued was an active player in the policy implementation process in his school. This principal explained how he had used policies in such a manner that they fitted the context in which he was working. He demonstrated how he had been able to deal with the challenge of OBE by merging OBE with the traditional curriculum in ways that were in line with the policy dictates while at the same time beneficial to the learners in the school. What became of interest to me was that this principal attributed his ability to deal effectively with policy implementation (in the manner that he married OBE with the traditional curriculum), to factors beyond the EMDPs. Below I briefly explore the different aspects that School Principal 6 attributed his successes to. In response to my question as to what extent was his ability to do what he had done with OBE implementation a product of the EMDP he had attended, he responded by indicating that:

I don't think it's a product of any training, it's more the product of my reading and attending conferences and workshops outside of those organized by the Department [of Education and Culture]. With the

OBE, I attended the conference, SAPA [South African Principals Association] conference in Port Elizabeth... and they had an expert in OBE, Dr. Bill Spady. We had him there and the Ford Foundation in—so I got onto the internet to get materials from the Ford Foundation in Port Elizabeth, to get material from Spadey's books, and brought all of that in and disseminated it – besides reading it myself, I [also] disseminated it for my staff (Interview with School Principal 6).

School Principal 6 was at pains to indicate that what had been responsible for assisting him in his leadership and management of his school were factors beyond the professional development that he had received in both his BEd (Honours) and Masters programmes:

My formal training didn't allow for that [ability to interpret and respond to policy within one's context]. But the out of school—it's my passion for reading and keeping pace that made it possible (Interview with School Principal 6).

It is interesting to note that this principal, School Principal 6, is the kind of principal who not only demonstrates the qualities identified in the research as being critical in relation to instructional leadership (e.g., being a lead learner), but he also encourages his staff to also engage with the materials that he is exposed to by disseminating these materials to his staff in the school:

I've actually, I've got a whole listing of books.... There is a [sic] hundred books that are out from here at the moment... my staff have access to it, so they come, and you know, pick up a book that they want to, they read it and send it back again. The idea is you've got to keep reading to keep abreast (Interview with School Principal 6).

I should point out that School Principal 6 seemed to be an exception to the rule in many ways in so far as the principals that I interviewed in this study are concerned. For example, when I asked him as to where or how did he come across all the information that he seems to possess, he indicated that:

I read the educators' um, education journals and education newspapers and you pick up something.... I learnt of SAPA [South African Principals Association] in the year 2000, it's been in existence since

1995, didn't know it existed. So it's a matter of finding out about it and, um, the internet and the e-mail have done tremendous things for me. I also subscribe to some overseas journals and magazines that are free (Interview with School Principal 6).

Beyond the extensive reading that seems to be the cornerstone of School Principal 6's experiences, he also indicated another dimension which I believe forms part of his learning processes:

I also do a lot of visits to the ex-Model C schools [so as to not] re-invent the wheel. So if there's something that is there that is good and its working, let's go and have a look at it. And come back and say, 'how can we apply it here.' I [also] go to the ex-HOD schools as well – there's one very good one in \_\_\_\_\_ [name of the area], \_\_\_\_\_ [name of the school], who are doing a lot of good work – to see what they are doing that we could emulate (Interview with School Principal 6).

As indicated at the beginning of this brief profile of School Principal 6, what drew my interest to this principal was not only how he had been able to deal with a difficult policy situation successfully, but mainly the fact that he had argued that what he had been able to do was not necessarily attributable to the professional development programme he had attended. This raises intriguing questions and provides avenues for interesting discussions and debates about leadership and management development programmes.

So, to conclude this sub-section, what does all of this — school principals' experiences outside EMDPs — mean? Most assuredly, the fact that these principals felt compelled to highlight these and other experiences of their lives, without prompting, brings some interesting insights to the fore. Amongst other things, it suggests that EMDPs are not the sole source of school principals' learning experiences — other aspects of their lives are also seen by the principals as playing a crucial role. I return to this aspect in the final chapter of

this study to explore what its implications are for education management development programmes and for future research.

### **5.10 Summary of the key findings**

In this section of this Chapter I provide a summary of the key findings pertaining to the school principals' understandings of the challenges and changes that they have to deal with, and their perceptions about the relevance of EMDPs in KZN. It should be noted that the theoretical significance of these findings is provided in the final Chapter of the thesis.

In relation to the *changes in the leadership and management of schools pre- and post-1994*, there is recognition of the need for democratic decision making and involvement of other stakeholders in decisions; recognition of the fact that the job of a school principal has changed from being a purely management task to requiring leadership acumen; and recognition of the legal requirement to include learners at high school level, in the governance structure of the school (SGB). However, some school principals in this study expressed the challenge of engaging in shared decision making and shared leadership, particularly the difficulties of accepting parents as equal and important partners in so far as decisions relating to the governance school are concerned.

There seem to exist a group of principals that I call “progressive and transformative” principals who do not only display a great understanding of the changes that have taken place since 1994, but who have also recognised the need for a paradigm shift regarding school principalship. These principals do not only speak the language of transformation, but also cite examples of how they engage with the practical side of transformational leadership. However, there are other principals in this study who, despite

EMDPs, seem to be resistant to the changes that the new dispensation in South Africa aims to foster. These principals tended to treat the changes with a high level of cynicism and scepticism.

Regarding the *vexing challenges* with which school principals have to contend *under the changed conditions* prevailing in schools, as it would be expected, one of the most recurring themes that emanated from the interview data was the challenge of limited resources. School principals linked the problem of non-payment of school fees to the socio-economic conditions existing in the communities served by the schools — mainly the problems of unemployment and the disintegration of the family structures.

In relation to *SGBs*, school principals expressed the feeling that SGBs are interfering with their (school principals) work and eroding their power and authority. However, despite all the negative experiences shared by a majority of school principals regarding their interactions with SGBs, there were some principals who shared positive experiences in their dealings with SGBs and mostly attributed these experiences to the calibre and the quality of the leadership of the SGB chairperson. It would seem, therefore, that the SGB chairperson plays a critical role in ensuring a good working relationship between the school principal and the SGB.

With regards to the *challenge of policy overload*, school principals expressed the feeling that they were inundated with a large number of policies that they had to implement. Whereas other school principals perceived themselves as helpless policy implementers, a few school principals in this study saw themselves as active players in the policy implementation process. However, school principals also expressed the view that although they were expected to implement the policies of the Department of Education,

they were voiceless and marginalized in as far as policy formulation processes were concerned.

In relation to challenges related to *female school principals*, these principals indicated that they felt that they were not taken seriously because of their gender. There were, however, female principals who indicated that they did not experience any major gender-based challenges.

Pertaining to the *relevance of EMDPs in relation to principalship roles* and aspects of EMDPs that equipped principals to deal with post-1994 challenges, the majority of principals felt that EMDPs had assisted them in understanding and fulfilling their roles. The principals also highlighted the opportunities that EMDPs had afforded them to share and learn from the experiences of other principals from diverse backgrounds. There were, however, school principals who were very critical of EMDPs, some citing the fact that EMDPs were too theoretical and academic qualifications as opposed to being professional qualifications oriented towards assisting them in their roles as principals.

In relation to the question of *whether school principals feel adequately equipped* for post-1994 conditions, some principals indicated that EMDPs had assisted them in managing and leading schools under the changed conditions in SA, but felt that they were not adequately equipped to deal with post-1994 conditions. There were, however, some school principals who felt that they were adequately equipped to deal with post-1994 conditions because of the programmes that they had attended.

Regarding EMDPs and *practical experiences or field-based learning opportunities*, all school principals in this study indicated that they did not benefit from practice-based experiences; the majority of principals acknowledged the importance of these experiences.

In so far as the school *principals' greatest professional development needs* are concerned, principals expressed a variety of needs, particularly the management of Curriculum 2005, information and communication technology (ICT), and other professional needs ranging from training in school development planning to training in the drawing up of school policies.

In relation to the *role of training workshops*, a majority of school principals in this study highlighted the importance of workshops as an information dissemination vehicle; while others perceived training workshops as critical in terms of keeping them abreast of the developments and changes regarding the leadership and management of schools. Yet, other principals saw training workshops as a means of providing opportunities for sharing and learning from the experiences of others; and also as opportunities for collaborative problem solving. However, there were some school principals who expressed their reservations about training workshops, citing mainly the lack of a systematic approach in the delivery of workshops, and lack of needs analysis as major problems.

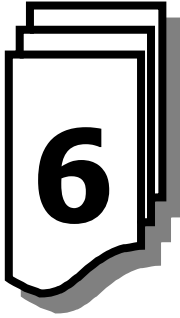
School principals in this study also highlighted the importance of *experiences beyond EMDPs* in the effectiveness of school principals.

To conclude, in this chapter I have presented, explained and analysed data in respect of the school principals' perceptions of the possible effects of formal university-based education management development programmes on their practical work in schools. I have also explored principals' understandings of the challenges with which they have to contend in schools post 1994 and the extent to which they feel adequately equipped to deal with these challenges.

In the next chapter (Chapter 6) I discuss the findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5, with reference to the relevant literature and the postulations presented in the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of this study.



# Chapter



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## BETWEEN THEORY AND RESEARCH: SYNTHESIS, SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

### 6.1 Introduction

In Chapters Four and Five the findings pertaining to the content and the context of education management development programmes (EMDPs) and the school principals' perceptions of the practical relevance of these programmes, were presented. In this Chapter I focus on the theoretical significance of the findings in these chapters. Using an interpretative narrative, I critically analyse the key findings against theoretical postulations outlined in the research literature with a view to offering possible explanations for the perceptions of EMDP providers and those of school principals *vis-à-vis* EMDPs in KwaZulu-Natal.

Emanating from the data in this study, I also present five key principles about educational change and education management development programmes, which I believe provide important insights about the conditions under which change is possible for these programmes to be effective. The second part of the chapter entails a discussion of the

implications of the findings for the future design of professional development programmes for school leaders, and for policy and practice regarding the national strategies of the Department of Education. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the recommendations for future research.

## **6.2 Revisiting Chapter Four: The theoretical significance of the findings**

One of the critical findings of this study is that EMDPs in KZN are, for the most part, not based on systematic *needs assessment and analysis* processes. Those providers who claimed to engage in some needs assessment and analysis in designing their programmes, were in fact only indirectly doing so — and not in any systematic and concerted manner. The significance of this finding relates to Fullan (1991:144)'s argument that,

An understanding of what reality is *from the point of view of people* within the role is an essential starting point for constructing a practical theory of the meaning and results of change attempts (Emphasis in the original).

Notwithstanding Nieuwenhuis' (2010a, 2010b) valid and compelling arguments (presented in Chapter, section 1.6 of this study) problematising training needs assessment, assessing needs is a critical element of professional development programmes such as EMDPs. The problem of a lack of needs assessment and analysis is that EMDP providers are likely to provide school principals with knowledge and understanding as defined by the providers (academics) as opposed to providing the school leaders and managers with skills necessary to solve organisational problems as defined by these school leaders and managers (Monks and Walsh, 2001).

Using the change framework presented in Chapter 1 of this study, I would argue that the problem of a lack of involvement of school principals in the assessment of their needs is that:

The extent to which proposals for change are defined according to only one person's or one group's [e.g., EMDP providers'] reality is the extent to which they will encounter problems in implementation (Fullan, 1999: 36).

Buckner (1997) has rightly argued that no development effort in the provision of systematic on-going professional development for school administrators (school managers) will be successful unless it is part of an overall plan for long-term growth that begins with a needs assessment. However, one cannot be naïve about needs assessment and analysis and neglect the fact that school principals needs are constantly changing as they have to respond to new challenges within their schools (Gunraj and Rutherford, 1999). This is more the case in changing contexts such as the one in which South African school principals presently work. It is therefore critical that ongoing needs assessment and analysis processes are a central part of any professional development programme for school principals (*Ibid.*).

The business literature is rich in research studies that have asserted the importance of focusing on an analysis of the needs of the beneficiaries of professional development programmes (Saffel, 1980; Tagliaferri, 1990; Tustin, 2001; Gupta, 2007 – to name but a few). The field of education is not without instructive lessons. Caldwell *et al.* (2003) report on the different stages in England's National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH), one of which entails candidates attending an assessment centre where they undergo needs assessment and have to produce an action plan for their professional development. An action plan resulting from such a process would, I would argue, achieve a

number of things including acting as a critical tool for continuous professional development in the long term.

Again, if one looks at national initiatives such as the Headteachers' Leadership and Management Programme (HEADLAMP) in the United Kingdom, clearly there are lessons that could be learnt in the development of a national programme for school principals in South Africa, while paying critical attention to contextual factors. One of the interesting aspects of the HEADLAMP scheme is that headteachers or school principals are offered a grant from which 20 percent can be used on the assessment of professional development needs, and the subsequent training programme has to address those needs (Gunraj and Rutherford, 1999).

In the HEADLAMP programme, the training programme has to focus on the needs that have been identified by the school principal "that fall within a range of leadership and management tasks and abilities, set within the broader context of leadership, that is clearly specified by the TTA [Teacher Training Agency]" (Gunraj and Rutherford, 1999: 145). What this implies is that while school principals are given an opportunity to be actively involved in the process of identifying their needs, the training programme is designed in such a manner that it caters for the fulfilment of these needs within the broad set guidelines. In this way, a healthy balance is struck between the needs of school principals and the programmatic (HEADLAMP) objectives.

The problem of a lack of systematic needs assessment and analysis strategy ties with the problem of a lack of policy framework from which EMDPs in KZN (or in the country in general) are operating. At one level, these programmes are not based on any systematic needs assessment and analysis processes; and on the other level, they are not operating

within any national policy framework<sup>49</sup>. This twin problem results in a situation where providers can provide professional development programmes based on what they see as important, without much in the form of a national guiding framework. In the end, some EMDP providers have programmes that are of sub-standard quality.

Notwithstanding the fact that some of the providers in the present study indicated that they were guided by the policy imperatives of the time, this situation (lack of a guiding policy framework) is indeed problematic. One can take comfort, though, from the fact that plans are presently underway and at an advanced stage for the introduction of a national programme (ACE: School Leadership). This programme will eventually be the main prerequisite for any individual planning to be a school principal in South Africa. The pilot study for the implementation of the programme began in 2007, while it was envisaged that the actual programme will be implemented in all provinces in the year 2009.

The ACE: School Leadership programme is seen as part of the development of the South African National Qualification for Principals (SANQP). According to Kunene and Prew (2005), this qualification will be aimed at serving principals, newly appointed principals and future aspirant principals (such as deputy principals and heads of departments). Three of the most inventive aspects of this proposed qualification are worth mentioning:

- The assessment which will be largely through site-based assessment, aimed at testing the candidate's ability to transfer what has been learned into practical action in the school.
- The use of universities in partnership with the NGOs — or employing retired or serving principals as assessors — as primary service delivery agents. This will bring in a strong mentoring aspect.

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<sup>49</sup> Although there have been a number of initiatives emanating from the national Education Ministry — from the Task Team on Education Management Development (1996), the Draft Policy Framework on EMD in 2000 (Department of Education, 2000a) to the South African National Qualification for Principals (2005) — no concrete policy framework has emanated from these initiatives in SA.

- Linking the achievement of a qualification with a proven practical competence.  
(Adapted from Kunene and Prew, 2005: 2).

Needless to say, the implementation of the SANQP will radically change the nature and practice of EMD in South Africa.

The key finding with regards to the *aims and objectives of EMDPs in KZN* is that although some guiding principles can be inferred from the departmental documents and the assertions of the university lecturing staff, the programmes reviewed in this study did not seem to have a clearly enunciated set of principles/assumptions/core values from which they were driven.

More than twenty years ago in a review of in-service education programmes, Fullan indicated that there was a “profound lack of any conceptual basis in the planning and implementing of in-service programs that would ensure their effectiveness” (Fullan, 1979: 3, cited in Fullan, 1991: 316). A few years ago, Huber (2004: 98) highlighted the importance of clear and explicitly stated definition of aims, using the core purpose of school as a focus. This means, amongst other things, that professional development programmes should be driven by a set of assumptions or core values that underpin their contents and modes of delivery. According to Huber (2004), explicitly stating the programmatic aims that school leaders must achieve is critical in the process of developing these leaders. He argues that until recently, programmes were not necessarily developed with explicit goals or objectives—something that EMDPs in KZN seem to be still suffering from.

Other scholars have also emphasized the need for EMDPs to have a clear vision that drives programmatic decisions and provides school leaders with opportunities to link the knowledge base with field-based experiences (Jackson and Kelley, 2002).

The key finding regarding the *recruitment and selection of candidates* is that, except for Masters' programmes at two universities, all programmes reviewed in this study seem to lack a rigorous strategy for the recruitment and selection of candidates; moreover, self-selection seems to be the only selection 'method.' The problem with this kind of selection, as highlighted by Murphy (1992: 80) is that, "training outcomes depend [largely] on the mix of program experiences and *the quality of entering students*" (my emphasis). Furthermore, according to Murphy (1992), a lack of rigour at entry reflects a lack of clear criteria for training or a clear vision of what candidates and graduates will look like.

The emergence of alternative preparation programmes, particularly in the United States of America, has seen a great emphasis being placed on rigorous screening methods in the recruitment of prospective candidates. According to Teitel (2006), screening systems in these programmes are normally based on nominations (as opposed to self selection that characterises traditional training programmes), paper screening, telephonic interviews, role plays and formal presentations, amongst others. Furthermore, these alternative programmes tend to have a vision of the kind of candidate that they would like to have – for instance, according to Teitel (2006), many alternative programmes see their mission as recruiting and developing change agents. In other words, the faculty members see themselves as "working on school reform and social justice agendas through leadership training" (Teitel, 2006: 501).

The key finding with regards to the *environments for which EMDPs equip school principals to deal with*, is that it would seem that, to a large extent, the leadership and management programmes in KZN were geared towards responding to the imperatives of the time (for example, a focus on change management, conflict management, school

governance, and so on). However, data emanating from interviews with school principals reveal a number of major gaps that the school principals perceive EMDPs to have failed to address. I would argue that this could be a problem of a lack of systematic needs assessment and analysis, as already alluded to.

Regarding *the contents of EMDPs in KZN* universities, although the modules offered were comprehensive and covered a wide spectrum of themes that are critical for the understanding of leadership, management and governance issues in education, these programmes were found wanting with regards to certain critical aspects of managing schools in SA — such as education law, financial management, moral and ethical leadership, and so on.

Also, although the programmes made a deliberate effort to focus on post-apartheid conditions with which teachers and school managers have to deal, for the most part they seem to be heavily influenced by USA/UK literature. As argued in Chapter Four, the dearth of South African and African literature in the EMD programmes offered in KZN invariably leads to an absence of South African and African perspectives in leadership and management discourses in these programmes. Although some efforts are made to contextualise the overseas literature, the lack of South African and African viewpoints presents a distorted view of what it means to lead and manage schools effectively. In her inaugural lecture presented a few years ago, Nkomo (2006) also decries what she calls the invisibility of Africa in texts and materials that are used for modules dealing with leadership and management in South Africa.

For me, the fact that in our focus on leadership perspectives from abroad we hardly engage with perspectives from the Asian, East European, South American and African



countries, limits our knowledge and understanding of leadership. As Southworth (2004) has correctly argued, leadership ought to be seen as pluralistic, with a need to fine tune it to the circumstances in which leaders operate.

The importance of context in the field of educational leadership and management has been highlighted by numerous scholars. Recently, Wong (2006); Ribbins and Zhang (2006), presented case studies of China to illustrate the importance contextual influences on educational leadership and management in China. Other scholars have argued that “the school leader’s role has to be seen in relationship to the broad cultural and educational contexts in which the school is operating” (Huber, 2004: xvii). While scholars such as Bryant (2003) have eloquently shown, in the case of Native American communities, how many assumptions of most Western leadership thinking can be called into question within the Native American context.

The key finding in relation to *content application in organisational settings* is that it would seem that all the programmes reviewed in this study placed a critical emphasis on the applicability of knowledge in practical contexts. This practical application of knowledge found expression in the form of the interrogation of current policies in relation to organisational (school) practice. In the international study of practices of school leadership development in fifteen countries, Huber (2004: 90) pointed to the fact that in the programmes that were studied, there was a “shift away from purely practice-driven or from purely theory-driven learning towards practice-with-reflection-oriented learning.” It would seem that providers in KwaZulu-Natal have responded positively to the need for experience-oriented and application-oriented learning in the design and delivery of their programmes. The fact that all the programmes in the present study place a premium on the

use of case studies, for example, points to a positive development indeed in so far as EMDPs are concerned in KZN.

Regarding *field-based learning experiences*, the key finding in this study is that EMDPs in KZN were found wanting due to the fact that — except for only one programme — they did not offer field-based learning experiences for the participants in the form of internship programmes. Even in the case of the exceptional programme, the field-based learning experiences were limited in terms of application due to their optional nature.

Field-based learning experiences are, according to a number of scholars, a critical component in the professional development of school leaders. Jackson and Kelley (2002) have argued that field-based experiences provide core learning experiences in professional development programmes to enable future leaders to observe, participate in and dissect important cognitive processes associated with addressing problems in the leadership and management of schools. Williams *et al.* (2004) contend that educational leadership students need to spend significant time in authentic school contexts working alongside mentor principals in order to be adequately equipped for complex leadership roles. These authors argue that school leadership internships with a strong mentoring component can help to bridge the gap between leadership theory that is presented in academic coursework and practice as it occurs in the field.

Daresh and Barnett (1993) have also emphasised the importance of leadership and management programmes to include more opportunities for clinical approaches to learning as part of the normal ongoing activities of professional development. This, according to these authors, is based on the assumption that a period of ‘learning by doing’ before a person moves into a professional role for the first time, is still a valid one. According to

McKerrow (1998), practical experiences such as internship programmes serve as introductions to the real world of the principalship. She posits that they allow the student to translate theory into practice and to learn by doing.

Leithwood and Steinbach (1995) echo McKerrow's sentiments in suggesting that effective leadership and management development programmes are programmes which provide authentic experiences and foster real-life problem-solving skills in practical settings. According to Teitel (2006), it is important to ensure that principal interns do not just shadow a principal but have real leadership responsibilities for authentic work. Gray (2001) also indicates that interns should not just turn into an extra pair of hands, but should be given opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills. She suggests that the school principal together with the intern (and I would add the University supervisor) should agree on the skills and knowledge that the intern should possess once the internship is completed.

Teitel (2006) further cites an example of an internship programme where interns conclude the programme by sharing their completed school design plans with the communities where they are based, with a view to implementing these plans as part of school or district improvement. Without a doubt, EMDPs in South Africa can derive critical lessons from such programmes.

The key finding concerning the *modes of delivery of EMDPs in KZN* is that similar to their counterparts elsewhere, in all the programmes reviewed in this study, classes were conducted mostly in the evenings and on weekends. This, according to Murphy (1992: 143), results in students who come to their studies "worn-out, distracted, and harried." Furthermore, these students complete their professional development programmes without ever forming a professional relationship with a lecturer/professor or student colleague. I

would argue that the relationship between the students undertaking leadership and management development and lecturers/professors who teach in these programmes need to be one of lecturers/professors as mentors — “...mentors [who] provide [students] with the kind of ongoing support and advice which characterized the traditional apprenticeship in which an individual who aspired to become a professional worked under a qualified practitioner...” (Nicholson, 2003: 11). A close working relationship with student colleagues on the other hand — particularly within a cohort structure — may enhance camaraderie and shared learning, and provide a more collegial and supportive, less fragmented learning experience (Hart and Pounder, 1999).

Another key finding regarding the modes of delivery of EMDPs in KZN is that one of the most positive aspects of EMDPs in KZN is the use of seminar-based approaches and the wide use of case studies in the professional development of school managers. Admirable as these teaching strategies are, I would recommend that other innovative teaching and learning methods that ought to be utilised in the professional development of school leaders and managers should include some of the strategies and methods that were identified by Huber (2004: xiii) and his colleagues in their recent study of fifteen countries, namely:

- ❖ Lectures and plenary sessions,
- ❖ Reflective writing,
- ❖ Group work,
- ❖ Role playing, and
- ❖ Simulation exercises.

New ways of learning include such strategies as:

- ❖ Collegial learning,
- ❖ Learning communities,
- ❖ Problem-based learning, and
- ❖ Internship as well as mentoring (exemplifying learning in the workplace).

Nicholson (2003) has argued that there is a need in leadership and management development programmes for a transition from incremental programmes, wherein students move in a linear fashion through a prescribed sequence of courses, an internship and a final examination, to programmes which are more holistic in nature, combining coursework with field-based experiences and relying on self-assessment.

With regards to *university lecturing staff* issues, beyond the finding relating to staff shortages, one of the most critical findings in the present study was that the large majority of university lecturing staff who provide leadership and management development programmes in KZN have not benefited from management experiences in the capacity of a school principal. This results in a situation where we have individuals offering leadership and management development who have no practical experience of what it means to be a principal – let alone what it means to be a principal under the current challenging contexts in South African schools.

Sarason (1996) has written about the problem of having most of the people engaged in efforts aimed at changing and improving schools who are not indigenous to the schools, but from the university. According to Sarason (1996: 3), many of the acknowledged leaders of change efforts “seemed massively insensitive to the culture of schools.”

Their efforts resulted largely in failure and that was in part due, and sometimes it was totally due, to ignorance about the distinctive, tradition-based axioms, values, and outlook of school personnel (Sarason, 1996: 3).

Could this argument by Sarason provide some insights about the problem of university lecturing staff who provide leadership and management development programmes without having benefited from experiences of being a school principal?

Monks and Walsh (2001), writing about Ireland's postgraduate programmes in business education, have argued that business schools generally comprise of career academics whose major focus is research, mainly for the purposes of attaining promotion through academic journal publications. According to these authors,

Such academics may never have set foot into the world of business and may show very little interest in its activities... their primary allegiance is to their academic discipline (Monks and Walsh, 2001: 149).

The world of education leadership and management development is no different. Teitel (2006) cites statistics which indicate that in the university leadership development programmes reviewed by researchers in the USA, only 2% of faculty members had served as superintendents and 6% had served as principals. The findings of the present study also corroborates the above mentioned statistics — out of the seven university lecturing staff interviewed from the three universities in KZN, only one had previously been a school principal.

The issue is not merely the fact that the vast majority of those who provide education leadership and management development have not set foot in the world of the principalship, it is also about the assertions of EMDP critics who have argued along the lines that, “[T]he typical course of study for the principalship has little to do with the job of being a principal” (Levine, 2005: 38).

I would argue that this lack of school management experience on the part of university lecturing staff who offer EMDPs provides part of the explanation regarding the constant complaints by school principals who have undertaken professional development programmes that these programmes are devoid from the realities that they (school

principals) confront on a daily basis. Monks and Walsh (2001: 150) make a similar statement when they argue that career academics:

...organise curricular around research-based knowledge rather than practitioner-based categories and techniques so that the classification of problems and phenomena becomes distant from that current in daily practice.

Indeed, one of the most common refrains from graduates of education management development programmes is the preponderance of theory to the detriment of practical knowledge. In the current study some school principals also complained about the fact that the programmes they had undergone were “too theoretical.” These findings correspond with the results of previous studies conducted by various researchers, recent amongst which are studies by Nicholson (2002), Huber and West (2002), and West *et al.* (2000). In Nicholson’s study (2002: 8), school principals expressed discontent with curricula which they considered “more theoretical than practical.” Huber and West (2002) on the other hand have argued that school leaders seem to have a strong preference for what they describe as ‘practical training’ and that theory is not always valued by practitioners. Based on their research, West *et al.*, (2000) posit that school leaders find it much easier to generalise from their experience and repeat effective behaviours when they have a conceptual framework underpinning the decisions that they are making. According to these scholars, theory and practice need one another and need to be developed in tandem. This view is supported by Bush and Glover (2005: 237) who have further argued that, “A judicious blend of theory, research and participants’ experience... provides the best prospect of successful leadership development in education.”

### 6.3 Revisiting Chapter Five: The theoretical significance of the findings

In Chapter Five of this study the focus was on the degree to which school principals perceive the education management development programmes (EMDPs) that they have undertaken to be effective or not, together with the reasons behind their perceptions.

The key findings in relation to the *changes in the leadership and management of schools pre- and post-1994* are that whereas there has always been general knowledge that major changes have taken place in education, there has been very little empirical evidence detailing how those affected by these changes — particularly from the management and leadership point of view — have conceptualised and dealt with these changes.

The recognition of the various aspects related to the change in the manner that post-1994 South African schools ought to be led and managed is very significant in various ways. Judging by the views of and the examples given by the participants in the study, it seems that a majority of the school principals who have undergone education management development programmes have been able to attain at least more than one of the dimensions that are critical in the implementation of a new programme or policy, as highlighted by Fullan (1991). These dimensions are i) the use of new materials or technology (in the case of school principals this could refer to innovative ideas for change emanating from professional development courses), ii) new approaches (e.g., shared or democratic leadership and governance), and iii) alteration of beliefs (e.g., a paradigm shift which sees parents and the broader community as an intricate part of the school).

However, despite the existence of these principals who have been able to attain some of these dimensions — principals that I referred to as “progressive and transformative” principals, there were also school principals who, despite their exposure to EMDPs, seem to



be unable (and perhaps unwilling) to incorporate into their practices, the changes brought about by the new education dispensation. At times the views of these principals alluded to a sense of nostalgia with the past where the past provided principals with power and authority that they were able to exercise without much questioning or opposition. At other times, these principals' views seemed to point to a general problem of a sense of loss of power and the difficulties of engaging in shared leadership and shared decision making.

The seeming resistance to change should not come as a surprise when one considers Fullan (1991: 38)'s argument that "real change involves changes in conception and role behaviour, which is why it is so difficult to achieve." Other possible explanations about the difficulties on the part of the afore-mentioned school principals to change could also be found in Fullan (1991: xiv)'s postulation that, "It isn't that people resist change as much as they don't know how to cope with it." The need to resist change is compounded by the fact that the professional development that is provided hardly prepares individuals who have to implement change, for the complexities of educational change. As Fullan (1998: 218) later argued, in the training of teachers and principals "...virtually no time, resources, and other supports are built into learning of new roles... *once the change has been initiated*" (emphasis in the original).

Continuous professional development support is one area that is conspicuous by its absence in the development of school principals in South Africa. The training workshops that are provided by the PDE, as has been indicated, are fraught with numerous problems which seem to make them an ineffective tool for continuous professional development of school principals.

According to Fullan (1991), many principals are diffident about their change leadership roles because they do not feel prepared or clear about how to carry it out. The development of understandings of the complexity of change can help principals, for example, to come to terms with the feelings of anxiety that they are likely to experience in having to share power with other stakeholders. They can be assisted to understand that “...all real change involves loss, anxiety, and struggle” (Fullan, 1991: 31) and that failure to recognize this phenomenon as natural and inevitable can mean that important aspects of change are either ignored or totally misinterpreted.

Research on teachers’ classroom practices has indicated that when faced with challenging curriculum or pedagogical reforms that they have to implement, teachers normally resort to the traditional practices—the known and familiar ways of doing things (Stoffels, 2004). With regards to school principals, in their research of school leaders’ practices, Bolman and Deal (1991) found that school principals usually pursued the familiar course even when they were faced with abundant indications that change was required.

Regarding the *vexing challenges with which school principals have to contend*, basically four major challenges were highlighted by the participants in this study, namely the challenges of managing in a context of limited resources, the challenges of dealing with SGBs, the challenges of policy implementation and policy overload, and the challenges encountered by female principals. There were, however, exceptions — in other words, instances where some principals did not experience, for example, SGBs as a challenge, but rather had good working relationships with their SGBs.

Notwithstanding the exceptions, I would argue that when viewed collectively, the above-mentioned challenges had to do with the broad challenge of dealing with change and the changed circumstances that school principals had to operate in, in the new dispensation

in South Africa. To a large extent, the challenges were a manifestation of the dynamics of change.

In his discussions of leadership for change, Fullan (1997) has argued that school principals who are immersed in leadership for change would approach the challenges of change differently. He provides an example of School Councils (equivalent approximately to SGBs) and posits that a leader for change,

...would recognize the emergence of School Councils as part of a systemic shift in the relationship between the communities and schools that is both inevitable and that contains the seeds of a necessary realignment with the family and other social agencies (Fullan, 1997: 130-131).

Armed with this perspective on change, the school principals would be likely to deal with the challenges in more positive and creative ways rather than see them as major stumbling blocks.

At another level, the findings in this study reveal that school principals have encountered major challenges regarding working with SGBs. The lack of skills, resultant from the lack of training of school governors, seems to be the common outcry in all the arguments raised by school principals regarding the challenges of working with SGBs. Previous studies by various scholars and organisations (Bush *et al.*, 2004; Centre for Education Policy Development, 2003; Department of Education Ministerial Review Committee, 2004) have also pointed to the problem of a lack of training or inadequate training in instances where training is provided. What these studies have not adequately addressed though, is the type of training that ought to be provided not only for the SGBs, but particularly for the SGB chairpersons.

If one goes by the views of the school principals in this study, the quality of the leadership of the SGB chairperson goes a long way towards ensuring a smooth relationship

between the school principal and the SGB — which consequently contributes to a smooth running school. It would therefore seem logical that, given the critical leadership role ascribed to the SGB chairperson, a specialised kind of training should be provided to the chairperson of the SGB.

Notwithstanding the findings of previous studies regarding a lack of skills/training of school governors, caution should be exercised in providing this argument as the major explanation for the problems that school principals have expressed regarding their workings with parents in the school governing bodies. Prew (2004b), presents a different and an interesting perspective on the whole issue of a lack of skills on the part of SGBs. He argues that it is easy to say the SGBs lack skills, but could we be defining those skills within a narrow Western perspective? To further reinforce his argument, he uses the following example:

If I run a Spaza shop do I not have financial skills? If I manage my family on less than R1000 a month, surely I have well-honed financial skills, which are very appropriate to the particular needs of our under-resourced schools? (Prew, 2004b: 7).

We should also take note of what scholars such as Michelle Fine (1993) and Seymour Sarason (1995) have posited in their respective works. Writing about her work on parental involvement, Fine (*Ibid.*) has described principals as unwilling to share power with parents, while Sarason (1995) has argued that principals tend to ignore or minimise parental input. It is therefore important not to consider arguments advanced by school principals about the lack of skills on the part of the parents on the SGB, uncritically. It is also important to ensure that these arguments are not used as a pretext for the exclusion of the parental component of the SGBs in school governance matters.

What seems to be the most overarching theme in interviews with school principals in this study regarding SGBs is that the development and sustainability of good working relationships between the principal and the SGB (particularly the parent component of the SGB) is a critical element for effective school management and governance — as Fullan (2001b) has argued, the key to successful change is the improvement in relationships between and amongst all stakeholders. In her study of leading change in schools in difficult circumstances, Harris (2006: 17) came to the conclusion that one of the critical messages about leading change in schools in difficulty was that, “By *investing in the quality of relationships* within the school... all of the principals generated high levels of commitment, energy and effort from those within and outside the school” (my emphasis). This perspective (importance of relationships) also confirms conclusions reached by previous studies focused on SGBs (Heystek, 2006; Masango, 2002; Poo, 2005).

The development of good working relationships with SGBs has an added advantage of galvanising the parents of the learners to support and work closely with the school in which their children are enrolled, for the benefit of both the school and the learners. There is evidence that the involvement of parents in the activities of the school does enhance school success. In their study, Young *et al.* (1999) present various research results which have provided empirical evidence documenting the benefits of parental involvement in relation to increased student achievement, motivation as well as a decrease in drop-out rates. According to these scholars, the school principal plays a critical role in developing and sustaining parent and community involvement in the school, and therefore there is a need to properly equip the principals with the skills and knowledge necessary for the fulfilment of this role, particularly given the fact that there are many different models of parental involvement.

Regarding the question of the *relevance of EMDPs in relation to principalship roles*, one of the critical aspects that was highlighted by school principals was the fact that the EMDPs had provided them with opportunities to share and learn from diverse experiences of other principals. Furthermore, sharing and learning from other's experiences culminated in the development of critical networks that were sustained beyond lecture/seminar rooms.

This finding is significant because, as Fullan (1991) has argued, most professional development programmes which may contain valuable ideas do not provide opportunities or support structures for the implementation of these ideas. As he put it,

If the individual attempts to put the ideas into practice, there is no convenient source of help or sharing when problems are encountered (Fullan, 1991: 316).

Authors writing about professional development models have emphasised the importance of professional development avenues to provide school principals with opportunities to share information among a network of peers (Matsui, 1999) to also provide collegial opportunities to learn which are linked directly to solving authentic problems (Mann, n.d.). In the case of the EMDPs discussed in the current study, school principals utilised the networks they had developed in lectures as support structures for the challenges in their practices. Barnett and Mueller (1989) report on the findings of their study where principals reported both short- and long-term effects of a programme (Peer-Assisted Leadership Programme) whereby principals continued to meet in problem-solving groups beyond the programme. Also, in a study conducted by Garvin (1995), principals reported that they found the experience of being in contact with other colleagues as part of a collaborative learning and problem solving processes, quite valuable.

It does seem, therefore, that one of the benefits that school leaders derive from attending leadership and management development programmes, is the opportunity to share with and learn from the experiences of others — as also highlighted by school principals in the present study. Previous studies (Kagey and Martin, 1982, for example) have also highlighted the fact that school principals tended to underestimate the extent to which professional development programmes they attended helped to provide them with a opportunities for processing ideas and actions, and for sharing and learning from the experiences of others. The implications for EMDPs are immense, one of which is that there is a need to design programmes that provide adequate opportunities for collegial and collaborative learning. This means creating learning experiences that promote and support critical engagement among programme participants (school principals) in the form of presentations, discussions and debates, and the use of small group learning methods such as project teams and peer exchanges.

Even the assessment strategies would require a fundamental change. At one level, it means developing curricular which are aligned with the practical and authentic challenges that are found in schools; at another level it implies assigning programme participants assessment tasks aimed at providing possible solutions to those challenges. Unfortunately, most leadership and management development programmes usually prescribe assignments which are devoid from the practical realities found in schools and, according to Monks and Walsh (2001), expect the participants to complete examinations. These authors argue that what is required is a reflexive approach to assessment which demands value judgement and wisdom — and, I would add, the applicability of the knowledge learned. In fact, I would take these authors' idea further and suggest that the space needs to be created for these value judgements and wisdom to be shared with other principals — say, in a form of

seminar presentations where ideas are interrogated by all school principals and critically evaluated for their intellectual currency and practicability.

It would seem that the use of the cohort programmes in which students go through the programme with the same group of peers, can provide a meaningful laboratory for developing collaborative skills (Lashway, 2002) and assist school principals to share with and learn from the experiences of others. Amongst a variety of the benefits of cohorts that have been highlighted by the research literature, is the development of professional networks (Murphy, 1993; Hill, 1995; Leithwood *et al.*, 1995). I would argue that these professional networks would, amongst other things, go a long way towards dealing with the problem of professional isolation that school principals are said to 'suffer' from. Barnett *et al.* (2000) cite numerous studies which count isolation reduction and the development of a sense of belonging and social bonding, as being some of the factors from the cohort structure which have a positive effect on EMDP participants.

One of the interesting issues that was raised by school principals during interviews was the fact that EMDPs had provided them with opportunities to socialise with other school principals, and therefore break the cycle of professional isolation alluded to above. As with the issue of sharing with and learning from the experiences of others, it would seem to me that one of the implications for leadership and management development programmes is that these programmes have to make a conscious effort to help principals to form critical networks that would go beyond meeting in class or seminar rooms. Instructive lessons can be learnt from programmes such as the Leadership Initiative for Tomorrow's Schools (LIFTS) programme at the State University of New York at Buffalo, which also uses a cohort system in its training of school leaders (Jacobson, 1998; Jacobson *et al.*, 1998).



In relation to the question of whether *school principals feel adequately equipped to deal with the post-1994 conditions and whether they feel adequately equipped to manage change in their schools*, some principals indicated that they felt that they were adequately prepared by EMDP but, a majority of principals felt that they were not adequately prepared. The major areas that were cited by these principals related to the problem of outdated learning materials, the lack of training on legal matters and on financial management, and a difficulty of dealing with multicultural contexts—particularly for the former “Indian” schools.

The possible reason why principals felt that the learning materials were outdated was because they had been through the programme at the University of Port Shepstone prior to its restructuring to accommodate current topics and latest learning materials. I would argue that the possible reason why principals cited legal and financial management training as areas where they felt inadequately prepared could be linked to the general changes in the country post-1994. Scholars such as Jansen (2001b) have argued that the post apartheid state in SA has produced “a flurry” of education policies since the demise of the apartheid system. These policies contain legal requirements that educators, particularly school leaders, have to interpret effectively and implement. Therefore an understanding of this legal environment is not only critical but also necessary for school leaders to function effectively.

Regarding financial management training, the shift towards self-managing schools — particularly the push for schools to attain Section 21 status alluded to in Chapter Four of this study — also necessitates a thorough understanding of how to manage finances effectively and efficiently. It could be argued that it is from this basis (the shift towards self-managing schools) that school principals may have felt that they were inadequately equipped in so far as financial management skills are concerned.

Pertaining to difficulties of working in multicultural contexts — particularly for “Indian” principals, as indicated in Chapter Four — although in almost all of the programmes reviewed in this study there was a tacit acknowledgement of the need for the development of school principals for post-apartheid contexts, there was no clear and deliberate focus on multicultural education. Therefore mainly “Indian” principals indicated that they felt inadequately equipped to function in post-1994 multicultural environments that they found themselves in. This finding confirms the findings of a recent study by Gardiner and Enomoto (2006) which indicated, amongst other things, that multicultural preparation was lacking for the principals who formed the sample of their study.

Beyond the basic concerns raised by mainly “Indian” school principals about understanding children from diverse background (cultural awareness), there is a need to raise critical questions about what multiculturalism means and how it manifest itself in fundamental aspects of teaching and learning in schools. In their recent book, Connerley and Pedersen (2005) interrogate the implications of leading in culturally diverse environments and present the reader with knowledge and skills necessary for effective leadership in such environments. One of the strengths of their book is that it transcends cultural awareness commonly found in discourses about multiculturalism, and provides training on the knowledge and skills for leaders leading in culturally diverse environments.

However, we have to be mindful of the numerous critiques of multicultural education that have been presented by various scholars over the years. Critical theorists such as Nieto (2003: 1) have, for instance, cautioned against the use of multiculturalism “...in simplistic ways that fail to address the tremendous inequities that exist in our schools.”

Nieto (2003: 1) convincingly argues that,

...to adopt a multicultural basal reader is far easier than to guarantee that all children will learn to read; to plan an assembly program of ethnic music is easier than to provide music instruction for all students; and to train teachers in a few behaviors in cultural awareness or curriculum inclusion is easier than to address widespread student disengagement in learning.

According to Nieto (*Ibid.*), although these activities may be valuable in terms of creating cultural awareness, they fail to confront the deep-seated inequalities that exist in schools. What Nieto (2003) alludes to is a need to ensure that multicultural education that is infused into the leadership and management development programmes addresses the fundamental and critical issues pertaining to diversity in schools<sup>50</sup>. For me, what seems to be pertinent in recent discussions of leading in multicultural settings is the connection between affirming diversity and student achievement. Bennett (2001) refers to this type of multicultural leadership as that which enables principals to address diversity within a school setting through affirming cultural pluralism and educational equity.

In connection with whether school principals felt adequately equipped to manage change in their schools, about fifty six percent of the principals in this study expressed the view that EMDPs had indeed assisted them to manage change in their schools effectively. Notwithstanding the problem associated with self-reporting — in other words, the lack of independent confirmation by those who work with the principals, such as teachers, as a way of triangulation — this is a significant finding. I would venture to argue that there is a great possibility that these principals who reported that the EMDPs had assisted them to manage change effectively are likely to be the principals that I refer to in this study as the

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<sup>50</sup> In an earlier compelling critique of multicultural education, Nieto (1995) concludes by arguing, *inter alia*, that educators must be involved in their own re-education and transformation, including challenging their attitudes, knowledge and practices.

“progressive and transformative principals.” And therefore it would come as no surprise that they would express such positive feelings.

The findings regarding *EMDPs and the practical experiences or field-based learning opportunities* have already been extensively dealt with in revisiting the findings of Chapter Four and will therefore not be dealt with in this section.

With regards to *school principals’ greatest professional needs*, principals’ needs ranged from financial management and multicultural training (both of which have already been discussed) to information communication technology/computer literacy and school development planning. The fact that there were principals who had been through EMDPs but still indicated that they were computer illiterate, is a serious indictment on the EMDPs in KZN. However, one can take comfort from the fact that the new Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE: School Leadership) — which is currently in the pilot phase, with plans for its institutionalisation in 2009 — has a special focus on computer skills with a practical module called “Basic Computer Literacy for School Management” which includes the development of information communication technology skills.

One of the greatest areas of need that school principals expressed was also the need for curriculum management development. Tied to this need is the need for “instructional leadership” that principals also expressed. Several recent studies have been conducted within the South African context with an emphasis on the importance of the instructional leadership role of the school principal (Kwinda, 2002; Mamabolo, 2002; Mbatha, 2004; Mthombeni, 2004; Paine, 2002). What is common amongst these studies apart from the fact that they were all conducted as part of higher education qualifications, is the fact that all

placed an emphasis on the instructional role of the principal and its effects on the student academic achievement.

Based on the research that he and his colleagues have conducted, Hopkins (undated) has argued that instructional leadership ought to be focused on two skill clusters, namely, strategies for effective teaching and learning and the conditions that support implementation, in particular staff development and planning. He concludes by positing that if we are serious about raising the levels of student achievement and learning in our schools, then we need leadership styles that promote, celebrate and enhance the importance of teaching and learning and staff development — in other words, we need instructional leadership.

Moving from the basic promise that the purpose of leadership is to improve teaching and learning, Lashway (2002) suggests that EMDPs can develop instructional leaders through case studies and problem-based learning which offer life-like simulations that can hone principals' thinking about complex instructional matters. He goes further to suggest that extended field-based experiences in the form of internships can provide principals with critical experiences in making changes in field settings.

The notion of instructional leadership is not without problems, though, particularly in the context of current thinking about leadership which recognises the importance of teacher leadership (Grant, 2006; Muijs and Harris, 2007) and distributed leadership (Harris *et al.* 2007; Spillane and Sherer, 2004; Spillane *et al.*, 2004) in present-day schools. MacNeill *et al.* (2003) have argued that the effectiveness of schools in educating students is not only dependent on the leadership of the principal but on a multi-level leadership. Citing various authors, MacNeill *et al.* (2003) observe that a more realistic model of instructional

leadership needs to acknowledge that within schools there are multiple layers of instructional leadership, not just that ascribed to principals. Stewart (2006) concurs with this view when he argues that one of the problems with instructional leadership is that in many schools the principal may in fact not be the educational expert, but rather other teachers may possess expertise in critical pedagogical matters.

MacNeill *et al.* (2003), therefore, propose pedagogic leadership as an alternative to instructional leadership. Their argument is that pedagogy concerns enabling the learning and intellectual growth of students in contrast to instruction that treats students as the object of curriculum implementation. According to these authors, among other things, pedagogy recognises the cultural and societal aspects of what is learned and why it is learned — which, for me is quite a powerful conceptual lens through which one can look at schools as critical socialising entities. Without a doubt, this conception of leadership (pedagogic leadership) has major implications about how we ought to develop school leaders for their roles in school.

Pertaining to *the role of training workshops*, the findings related mainly to the criticism that school principals levelled against training workshops and the potential that they saw these training workshops having for the development of principals. Amongst the major concerns expressed by school principals were aspects related to a lack of a systematic approach, a lack of coordination and the brevity of the training period.

The views of school principals regarding problems with training workshops confirm the findings of Fullan's review of in-service education programmes conducted thirty years ago. Citing his 1979 review, Fullan (1991) mentions, amongst others, the reasons for failure which include the fact that training topics are frequently selected by people other than

those for whom the in-service is intended. Related to that is mention that in-service programmes rarely address the individual needs and concerns of the participants. Interesting enough, both reasons expressed by Fullan (1991) also pertain to some of the problems of EMDPs in KZN discussed in the present study.

According to Huber and West (2002), in the development of professional development programmes for school principals internationally, there is a general movement away from unconnected ‘single shot’ training events, towards more carefully planned and altogether more coherent programmes offered over a sustained period of time. These authors argue that the development of school leaders requires deliberately planned and systematically implemented programmes.

The final part of the findings in Chapter Five relates to *the role of experiences beyond EMDPs in the effectiveness of school principals*. From the interviews with school principals, it would seem that the experiences beyond EMDPs are regarded as critical by school principals, in the effective leadership and management of school, given the fact that a number of school principals made several references to these experiences.

Generally in education, there have been many studies which have explored factors that affect student achievement ranging from home and family background, community involvement, to school climate, the teacher and various teaching strategies (Hattie, 2003). These studies have alerted us to the fact that student achievement is not merely determined by the teaching and learning that takes place in the school, but by factors outside the school as well. With regards to organisations and how they are managed and led, according to Levin and Riffel (2000: 179), how people act in organisations is affected by a “multitude of factors both inside and outside the organization, including individual dispositions, training,

roles...” and so on. This means that the extent to which school principals are effective in their management and leadership of schools may be determined by a myriad of factors including but not limited to professional development.

In relation to leadership and management development, one can argue that the relationship between principal development and principal practices is not “clear cut and simple” (Gunraj and Rutherford (1999). It is not always easy to determine which factors have contributed to a principal’s behaviour changes in so far as professional development and factors outside professional development are concerned. As Gunraj and Rutherford (1999: 150) have argued, “All the processes of change involved in becoming a more successful school [principal] are dynamic and take place over a period of time.” Reiterating the arguments of scholars such as Fullan (1999) and Jansen (2001a), Gunraj and Rutherford (1999) further argue that the processes of change involved in becoming a successful school principal are not linear, but rather iterative or repetitious.

There have been several studies which have explored the influences of factors other than the leadership and management development programmes for school principals in so far as their (principals’) effectiveness is concerned (Pashiardis and Ribbins, 2003; Wong and Ng, 2003; Chew *et al.*, 2003). Pashiardis and Ribbins’ study (2003), for instance, looked into the influences of parents, other family members, peer groups, local community and spouses in the ‘making’ of secondary school principals in Cyprus. Coincidentally, school principals in the present study also made mention of the afore-mentioned factors (except for peer groups) as being responsible for shaping them as principals and for being responsible for their effectiveness in managing and leading schools.



The fact that school principals in this study put a lot of emphasis on their experiences outside of EMDPs as having contributed immensely in shaping them as leaders, means that we have to pay attention to these experiences and find ways of incorporating these experiences in the professional development of school principals. In other words, ways need to be found to enhance these experiences in a manner that they make positive contributions towards the development of school principals as effective leaders. How, in practice this is done, should be a matter of ‘deep and extending’ engagement amongst those who offer EMDPs and those who have graduated from EMDPs.

#### **6.4 Key principles about educational change/education management development programmes**

From the data emerging out of this study there are a number of principles that one can extrapolate about educational change in general and education management development programmes in particular. Some of these principles are:

- ☑ that educational change must be built on a sound understanding of client needs in order to ensure that the professional development provided is relevant to the objective;
- ☑ that the content and context of education management development programmes determine the extent to which educational change is likely to be occur or not;
- ☑ that the relevance of an education management development programme is dependent, to a large extent, on the quality of the participants’ experiences, rigorous selection procedures and the quality of the providers;
- ☑ that in order for educational change to occur, those who provide professional development ought to be change agents who possess the necessary experiences in leading and managing schools; and
- ☑ that education management development programmes require a recognition and a commitment to change on the part of the recipients in order for “real” change to occur at the school level.

## 6.5 Recommendations

It would seem from the vast research literature on leadership and management development programmes that the features of programmes that contribute to leadership development include primarily: cohort experiences, programme cohesiveness and dominant themes tied to vision, reflective practice, instructional strategies such as problem-based learning, project-based learning, and internship. In designing leadership and management development programmes in KZN or broadly in South Africa, there is a need to pay attention to these aspects while taking into consideration the South African and African context in which we live in. As Leithwood *et al.* (1999: 4) have eloquently argued, “outstanding leadership is exquisitely sensitive to the context in which it is exercised.”

Related to all these aspects above is the critical issue of needs assessment and analysis. Mechanisms ought to be found for effective identification and analysis of the needs of school principals, followed by designing programmes aimed at fulfilling those needs. As alluded to in this chapter, the process of needs assessment and analysis ought to be a continuous process which is built into the programme structures, with opportunities for constant review.

The selection of candidates into programmes for the development of school principals needs to be reviewed in such a manner that selection is based on leadership potential as opposed to self-selection or merely being available to enrol into a programme — as is currently the case in the majority of the programmes.

There is a need to give serious thought and consideration to the involvement of what Bush and Glover (2005) refer to as “experienced consultant heads” — in other words, experienced heads or school principals with a proven record of success who are used in the

professional development of school principals in consultancy capacity. According to these scholars, school leaders are usually highly experienced educators and therefore it makes sense to draw on their experiences in devising, implementing and assessing leadership programmes. As Fullan (1991: 341) has put it, “We need people who are *equally* at home in universities and schools” (emphasis in the original).

Beyond a need to consider using experienced school principals in the development of school managers and leaders — as suggested by some principals in this study — these experienced school principals can also be used as mentors. A mentorship programme where inexperienced school principals are matched with experienced principals who have a proven record of success as school principals, should be given serious consideration. These mentors should receive adequate training for their mentorship roles.<sup>51</sup>

Leadership and management development programmes need to be designed in such a way that they take into consideration and provide specialised professional development for the different career stages of the diverse participants, namely, aspiring, new, and experienced principals. The ACE: School Leadership programme needs to be made a pre-requisite for aspiring principals and also be used as a pre-service professional development programme. Other programmes or qualifications which cater for the other career stages need to be developed, building on what the BEd (Honours) and Masters’ programmes in educational leadership and management currently offer.

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<sup>51</sup> Lessons should be drawn from the ACE: School Leadership pilot programmes which are using mentorship systems. The research component of the piloted programmes should be used to inform future leadership and management development design and practice.

The role of service providers other than universities needs to be carefully considered and clearly defined, particularly in relation to other service providers such as universities. This is mainly in the context of the envisaged South African National Qualification for Principals which, according to Prew (2004c), will preferably be provided in collaboration with NGOs and other service providers who are able to conduct site-based assessments. This is in line with global trends where more and more the professional development of school managers and leaders is no longer seen as the sole prerogative of HEIs such as universities.

In line with the recommendations of the Task Team on Education Management Development (1996) which, *inter alia*, recommended the establishment of a National Institute for Education Management Development fifteen years ago, measures need to be taken towards the accomplishment of this important goal. If a national institute is such a tall order, then at least provincial institutes ought to be considered. Important lessons can be drawn from institutions such as the National College for School Leadership in the UK or the National Institute of Education in Singapore.

Training workshops need to be well coordinated and their standards of provision frequently evaluated to ensure that the quality of delivery is of high standards. I would recommend that avenues for continuous professional development be made available for school principals. Currently training workshops, to some extent, play this role. Along with the coordination of the training workshops, the continuous development of school leaders and managers could be undertaken under the auspices of the provincial Education Management Development Institutes suggested above.

There were also a number of issues that were highlighted by the participants in this study during the interviews, which I believe policy makers and designers/providers of

EMDPs ought to take note of in their development of these programmes. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, school principals in this study cherished the opportunities to share with and learn from the experiences of others. One of the implications for EMDPs is that they need to be structured in such a manner that they provide adequate opportunities for collegial and collaborative learning. As alluded to, this means creating learning experiences that promote and support critical engagement among programme participants (school leaders) in the form of class presentations, discussions and debates, and the use of small group learning methods such as project teams and peer exchanges.

Assessment strategies also need to be structured in such a manner that they enhance opportunities for school principals to share their experiences in dealing with the challenges of school. This implies, for example, that assignments that are given principals need to reflect the kind of challenges that they deal with in their daily lives and have practical value in their application of theory. I would go so far as suggesting that avenues need to be created whereby school principals can share with each other and with other schools in their district, their assignment tasks, with a view to extrapolating critical lessons for leadership and management practice. Schools of Education could, as added measures, compile the best assignments which have practical value, in an in-house publication that would be accessible to other principals within and outside the programme.

One of the most glaring problems with current EMDPs not only in KZN but in the country in general, is the lack of a policy framework that governs the philosophical underpinning of EMDPs, their nature, content, and delivery systems. Indeed, seven years ago, while outlining plans for redesigning of the education management systems, Prew (2004c: 11) acknowledged that there were “no national standards or structures for the training accreditation or recognition of school managers.” He further went on to indicate

that this was “an omission as education managers are critical to the effective working of the school and district.” Prew (2004c) noted that training of school managers and leaders need to become more formalised and standardized across the country and provided according to nationally agreed upon norms and standards.

Given the importance of the role of the SGB chairperson that was highlighted by school principals in this study, there is a need to explore the provision of training opportunities (short courses, perhaps) where the school principals and the SGB chairpersons are trained side-by-side. In this way both the school principals and the SGB chairpersons would develop a good understanding of each other’s roles and responsibilities, and how they both contribute to effectively running schools. As one of the participants in the current study put it, “The smooth running of the school is a combined effort between governance and management” (Interview with Dr. McGregor, 12/03/2002).

One of the vexing questions regarding the professional development of school principals is concerned with the question of whether leadership and management development ought to focus on school management teams or on individual principals. From the individual interviews with the different stakeholders in Chapter Four, one of the issues that was raised by the Director in the national Department of Education, was that there is a need for professional development which is focused on school management teams as opposed to individual principals of schools. According to Huber (2004: xii), different training programmes that their study of fifteen countries focused on, were experimenting with “the alternative of imparting competences to individual school leaders versus strengthening leadership competences of leadership teams and promoting school development.” I would argue that within the South African context we need to move more

towards the professional development of the whole SMT, in line with the arguments presented by various scholars about the importance of distributed leadership in schools.

The model that is currently used by some of the providers of the ACE: School Leadership pilot programme whereby the school principals are developed together with their SMT members, should be further experimented with in the development of school principals in SA. Again, the findings of the research component of the ACE: School Leadership pilot programme should be used to inform future EMDP design and practice.

The inclusion of a focus on ethical and moral leadership in EMDPs needs to be given a priority in the design and development of EMDPs in SA. This, I would argue, will assist school principals to deal effectively with ethical and moral challenges brought about by the changed conditions in schools.

Given the problem of a lack of principalship experience on the part of those who provide EMDPs generally in SA, I would recommend that there needs to be close working relationships between schools, Schools of Education and school districts. Those relationships should allow for situations where, for example, university lecturers spend their sabbatical leave working in schools and school principals are given opportunities to get exposure to the latest research findings and thinking on how to lead and manage schools effectively. During their time in universities, these school principals could be used as co-facilitators in the EMDPs, sharing their knowledge and skills with EMDP participants.

As a form of continuous professional development, I would argue that EMDP providers ought to work very closely with structures such as Principals Forum or Principals Associations. Where these structures do not exist, school principals who are part

of an EMDP cohort group should be assisted by EMDP providers to form such structures. As argued in Chapter Five of this study, amongst other things, these principals' structures can go a long way towards assisting school principals to form important networks that would provide spring boards against which ideas can be tested and collaborative learning engendered.

## **6.6 Implications for further research**

There is a need for a large scale, national study that would “audit” all the professional development opportunities that are available for school leaders/managers in the country in order to “provide a systematic review of the current practices of school leadership development” (Huber, 2004: xi) in South Africa. Related to such a study is a need for a thorough analysis and comprehensive review of the content of EMDPs not just in KZN, but generally in the country as a whole. This research should tap into the considerable work in the form of the programmatic reviews conducted by the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC), in order to provide us with a complete picture of the state of art regarding leadership and management development in South Africa.

There is a need for research which is focused on principals' effectiveness as perceived by teachers who work with these school principals. In as much as it is important to get “voices from the field” (school principals who have undertaken EMDPs), I would argue that hearing the voices of the school teachers who work with these school principals would contribute immensely to our knowledge and understanding of the relevance of EMDPs to school management practice. These teachers, I would further argue, are well-placed to



provide important insights about the principals' practices following leadership and management development.

Research is also needed to look into the question of which option(s) contributes better to effective schools: the development of school principals alone or with other members of the school community such as school management teams (SMTs). This research is needed in order to inform policy and practice about the ideal framework in the professional development of school leaders and managers.

Finally, there is a need for research which explores the influences of experiences outside EMDPs in so far as principal effectiveness is concerned. The findings of such research should be used to inform the future design and development of EMDPs.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

It should be said that as a collective, leadership and management development programmes in KZN have made major attempts to provide school principals with some form of knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for the leadership and management of schools. As one of the major avenues through which the majority of those school principals who have taken it upon themselves to empower themselves, have had opportunities for leadership and management development, EMDPs have bridged the major gap between some form of professional development and no development at all — a situation where school principals enter the principalship without any formal training whatsoever.

Despite the problems with EMDPs in KZN — such as the seeming disjuncture between what EMDPs offer and school principals' professional needs — there were

numerous instances during interviews where principals expressed their satisfaction with the EMD programmes that they had attended. This is significant because it implies that, although there are some problematic areas in so far as EMDPs in KZN are concerned, in some respects these programmes have been a success in the professional development of school principals.

There are, however, troubling observations about EMDPs as they are currently constructed and delivered in KZN. For instance, despite numerous studies having highlighted the importance of needs assessment and analysis in the professional development of school leaders and managers, EMDPs in KZN seem to be designed and implemented without paying attention to this critical element — the assessment and analysis of the needs of the participants. This aspect is related to the fact that EMDPs in KZN do not seem to be directed by any set of principles, assumptions or core values which drive their operation. This is worsened by a lack of a national policy framework for the professional development of school leaders and managers. The fact that all the programmes reviewed in this study did not have explicit processes for the assessment and analysis of participants' needs (or a set of principles, assumptions and core values) is indeed quite worrying.

Finally, one of this study's contributions to our knowledge is in presenting “thick descriptions” of the voices of school principals regarding how the changes that have taken place in South Africa have affected them as school leaders and managers — particularly in relation to dealing with the various stakeholders in the schools. As previously highlighted in this study, whereas there has always been general knowledge (and even anecdotal evidence) that major changes have taken place in education, there has been very little

empirical evidence detailing how those affected by these changes — particularly from a management point of view — have conceptualised and dealt with these changes.

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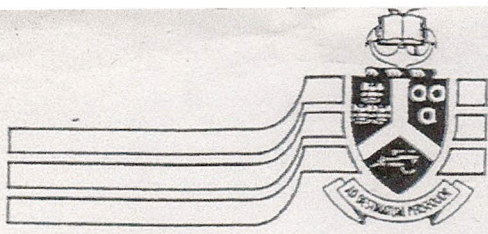
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# APPENDIX A





Universiteit van Pretoria



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

University of Pretoria  
Faculty of Education  
School of Teacher Training  
Groenkloof Campus  
C 204 Aldoel Building  
Pretoria  
0002

Professor C.R.M. Dlamini  
Chief Executive Officer  
KZN Department of Education & Culture  
ULUNDI

Dear Sir

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

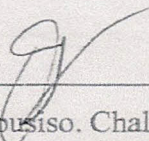
I hereby wish to request permission to conduct research towards doctoral studies. I am a student at the State University of New York at Buffalo (SUNY-Buffalo) in pursuit of a PhD degree in Educational Leadership and Policy and am currently employed at the University of Pretoria as a lecturer.

The purpose of the study is to explore the kind of challenges that school managers in South Africa (particularly principals) face under the new dispensation, and to ascertain the extent to which principal training meets the schools' and principals' needs given the changed conditions that exist in the country. Entitled "The Efficacy of Administrator Preparation Programs", the study further looks into the nature and scope of 'administrator / principal preparation programs' in SA and principals' perspectives on the impact of these programs on their management practices.

Individual interviews of not more than 30 minutes will be conducted with school managers outside of their normal working hours. Information gathered will be treated anonymously and confidentially and will be used for academic purposes only. The results of this research will be shared with the Department of Education & Culture.

For any further information or clarification, feel free to contact me at: 082 959 3640 or via e-mail at: [schalufu@gk.up.ac.za](mailto:schalufu@gk.up.ac.za)

Thanking you in anticipation of your favourable response.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
J. Sibusiso. Chalufu





# APPENDIX B





HEAD OFFICE

INHLOKO HHOVISI

HOOFKANTOOR

Address: 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Ikhehli: Administration Building  
Adres: King Dinizulu Highway

Private Bag: Private Bag X04  
Isikhwama Seposi: Ufundi  
Privaatsak: 3838

Telephone  
Ucingo: 035-8743608  
Telefoon:  
Fax: 035-8743593

Enquiries  
Imibuzo:  
Navrae: PROF C.R.M. DLAMINI

Reference:  
Verwysing:

Date:  
Datum: 23-09-2002

Mr J.S. Chalufu  
University of Pretoria  
Faculty of Education  
School of Teacher Training  
Groen Kloof Campus  
C 204 Aldoel Building  
**PRETORIA**  
0002

Dear Mr Chalufu

## REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

You are granted permission to conduct research subject to the following conditions:

- (i) Interviews with the school managers/official will be conducted outside of their normal working hours such that there is disruption of learning and teaching.
- (ii) Information gathered be treated anonymous confidentiality and will be used for academic purpose only.

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR C.R.M. DLAMINI  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER





# APPENDIX C

## RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

### KWAZULU-NATAL SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE PRACTICAL RELEVANCE OF FORMAL EDUCATION MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES



## INSTRUMENT # 1: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

### 1. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 Name of informant (*Guarantees of anonymity will be offered to the informant as stated in the Informed Consent Form*)
- 1.2 Race
- 1.3 Gender
- 1.4 Age (*or general age bracket, e.g., mid-40s, if the informant is not comfortable with divulging his / her age*)
- 1.5 Former Department of Education of the school (*ex-DET, ex-HOR, ex-HOD, ex-HOA*)
- 1.6 Number of years spent as a full-time teacher
- 1.7 What other positions have you held before, besides being a teacher and a school principal?
- 1.8 Number of years spent in school management (*HoD, Deputy Principal, Principal / Acting positions*)
- 1.9 Number of years in the current position
- 1.10 Number of years in the present school
- 1.11 Total number of years in the teaching profession
- 1.12 Size of the school (*total number of students*)
- 1.13 Percentages of different races of students
- 1.14 Percentages of different races of teachers
- 1.15 Location of the school (*urban, semi-urban, suburban, rural, informal settlement*)

### 2. EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

- 2.1 Highest school qualification
- 2.2 Post-school / Post-Matric qualification (*3-year teacher's diploma, 3-year degree, 4-year teacher's degree*)
- 2.3 Name of the qualification and field of specialisation (*major course(s)*)
- 2.4 Institution where the above qualification was obtained
- 2.5 Post-degree / post-diploma qualification and field of specialisation (*major course(s)*)
- 2.6 Institution where the above qualification (*post-degree / post-diploma*) was obtained



- 2.7 Do you have a Masters degree? If so, in which field of specialisation?
- 2.8 Institution where the above qualification (*Masters degree*) was obtained
- 2.9 Do you have a Doctoral degree? If so, in which field of specialisation?
- 2.10 Institution where the above qualification (*Doctorate degree*) was obtained
- 2.11 Have you attended any short courses / seminars / workshops / certificate programme / conference recently? What was it all about (*area of focus*) and who provided it (*provincial or national Department of Education, private provider, higher education institution*)?

### 3. INFORMATION ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENTS IN WHICH PRINCIPALS OPERATE AND THE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

- 3.1 What are the most vexing / difficult problems or challenges that you have to deal with presently in your position as the school principal? Please give at least two examples to illustrate your point.
- 3.2 Were you a school principal prior to 1990? If so, do you perceive your job as a principal as having changed in the post-apartheid era? In what ways?
- 3.3 If you have been a principal prior to 1990, what changes have you observed in the management of your school in terms of the challenges that you dealt with then (pre-1990) and the challenges that you are dealing with now (post-1994)? What do you attribute these changes to?
- 3.4 Are there any of the new educational reforms that you have problems implementing in your school? If so, what are they and why do you think it is difficult for you to implement them? What kind of training do you think you would need in order to implement these reforms successfully?
- 3.5 Do you feel adequately prepared to deal with the post-apartheid conditions that prevail in your school presently? Do you feel adequately prepared to deal and manage change in your school?
- 3.6 For which aspects of your job as a school principal do you feel least prepared?
- 3.7 What are your greatest professional needs currently? How do you think these professional needs can be fulfilled?
- 3.8 What did you learn in your leadership and management programme that prepared you to deal with the challenges you identified earlier? Are there any aspects of your training that you can cite that you feel prepared you adequately for these challenges? Please provide specific examples of the training programme that you undertook and indicate the manner in which aspects in the programme have assisted you.
- 3.9 What parts of your leadership and management training programme have proven to be the most useful to you on your job as a principal?





- 3.10 In your experiences, were there any efforts in your preparation to link your training to the possible conditions that exist in schools? If so, how? Can you provide examples to illustrate your response?
- 3.11 Did your leadership and management training programme include any practical experiences or field-based learning opportunities (e.g., internship programme, shadowing, etc.)? If so, did you find these practical experiences useful in terms of your own practice as a school principal? How?
- 3.12 What changes, if any, would you make in the leadership and management training programme for school principals?

## INSTRUMENT # 2: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – FACULTY STAFF AND HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS

- 1.1 Highest academic qualifications and institution(s) where obtained? Do you have any professional qualification? Other qualifications?
- 1.2 Prior to becoming a lecturer, what position(s) did you hold (*school teacher / head of department in a school / deputy principal in a school / school principal / district official / provincial department official / other*)? For how long were you in this / these position(s)?
- 1.3 For how long have you been in the current position?
- 1.4 For Heads of Departments: what is your staff complement?
- 1.5 What programme(s) do you offer in so far as the training of school principals is concerned? How are these programmes structured? What kind of courses or modules are school principals required to register for?
- 1.6 Do you have any selection and recruitment procedures that you use to attract potential students? What are the selection criteria that you use in your programme? Are there any clearly articulated standards for entry into the programme?
- 1.7 What do you see as the objectives of your leadership and management training programme? In other words, when school principals complete the programme, what are the critical skills, knowledge and attitudes that you want them to have acquired?
- 1.8 What kind of instructional approaches do you or your department employ in so far as the delivery of your programme is concerned (*seminars / lectures / student presentations / use of portfolios / etc.*)?
- 1.9 Does your programme offer any practical experiences or field-based learning opportunities for the school principals? If so, how are these opportunities structured, what is their duration and where in the programme do they feature? If not, why are these opportunities not provided?
- 1.10 In your programme, are there any efforts to link the training to the possible conditions that exist in schools? If so, how is this done? If not, why is this not done?
- 1.11 Given the changed conditions under which school principals have to operate, to what extent does your programme place emphasis on managing change and reforms?



- 1.12 What role, if any, do experienced, practicing school principals play in the design, construction and delivery of the leadership and management training programme that you offer?
- 1.13 Other than the lecturers who teach in the programme, are there any other experienced individuals who are brought in as guest lecturers in order to facilitate the learning process (*e.g., labour experts, provincial department officials, international experts in different fields*)?
- 1.14 Do you feel that your programme adequately prepares school principals to deal effectively with the conditions that exist in schools in this post-apartheid era?
- 1.15 What changes would you like to see in so far as your leadership and management training programme is concerned? Are there any plans to effect these changes in the short to medium term?

**INSTRUMENT # 3: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL DIRECTORS OF THE EDUCATION MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATES**

- 1.1 For how long have you been in the current position? Prior to this position, what did you do?
- 1.2 What would you say is the Department's (*Provincial / National*) policy for education management development (EMD)?
- 1.3 What is your Directorate's broad strategy for EMD?
- 1.4 Are the leadership and management programmes that are offered by universities (at a national level / provincial level) in any way standardized? If so, how? If not, why? Does it concern you that there is no standardisation (if they are not standardised)? Are there any plans in the near future to ensure standardisation of these programmes?
- 1.5 It's been more than five years since the Task Team on Education Management Development (1996) made a number of recommendations, including the establishment of a National Institute for Education Management Development; what are your views regarding these recommendations and why do you think they have not been implemented more than five years down the line?
- 1.6 What are the major aspects of the leadership and management programmes that you consider to be critical in the training of school principals?
- 1.7 What do you see as the role of universities in the provision of training programmes for school managers?
- 1.8 What do you see as the impact of university-based leadership and management training programmes in the practices of school principals in particular, and the effective management of schools in general?



# APPENDIX D

# APPENDIX E

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

### **Research Project: KwaZulu-Natal school principals' perceptions of the practical relevance of formal education management development programmes**

Dear Participant

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research study. The purpose of the study is to document the kind of challenges that principals in South Africa face in the post-apartheid era, and to determine the extent to which principal training meets the needs of the schools and principals, given the changed conditions that exist in the country.

Your participation in this research project involves being interviewed individually and taking part in focus group interviews (for selected school principals). Individual interviews will be conducted for a period of 30 to 45 minutes, and where necessary, follow-up interviews will also be conducted to seek further clarification or additional information. Focus group interviews of between 30 to 45 minutes each, will be conducted with a group of 4 to 5 individuals (for selected school principals). With your expressed permission, all the interviews will be tape-recorded.

The information you provide during interviews will be treated with utmost confidentiality and your anonymity is fully guaranteed. This means that your name and that of your organisation, including any identifiable features, will not be used in any reports or scholarly publications based on this research, nor will data obtained for this study be made available to outsiders without your further written consent. Results from this research will be used for academic purposes only.

To the best of my knowledge, there are no actual or potential risks – be they physical, psychological, legal, social or otherwise – that might result from your participation in this research project. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the project at any time without adverse consequences to you.

Your signature below indicates that you have been fully informed of the nature of this research, what your participation involves, that you are at least 18 years of age, of sound mind, and agree voluntarily to participate in this study as indicated above.

Participant (Full Names)	Signature	Date
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Researcher (Full Names)	Signature	Date
-------------------------	-----------	------

Yours sincerely,

.....  
 J. Sibusiso Chalufu  
 University of Pretoria  
 Faculty of Education  
 Groenkloof Campus  
 Pretoria  
 0002  
 Telephone: 012 420 5624 (w)  
 Mobile: 082 959 3640  
 Email: [sibusiso.chalufu@up.ac.za](mailto:sibusiso.chalufu@up.ac.za)