

CHAPTER ONE

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

1.1 Introduction and background

On the 27th of April 2004 South Africa commemorated the first decade of democracy, a decade in which many things, including the education system, had changed radically. As regards education, the new government developed a range of far-reaching acts, policies and guidelines aimed at ensuring that all South Africans, irrespective of race, colour, creed or ability, will have equal access to quality education (RSA, 1995(a); RSA, 1996(b); DoE, 1997; DoE 1998; DoE 2000 and DoE, 2002). Key acts in this regard were the South African Qualifications Authority Act (1995), the South African Schools' Act (Act 84 of 1996), the National Education Policy Act (1996), and the Employment of Educators' Act (1996). Notable policies were those relating to curriculum, admission to public schools, discipline, initiation and school safety, while guidelines aimed at the effective and efficient management of schools included Guidelines to Governing Bodies on the development and adoption of school codes of conduct (Potgieter, Visser, Van der Bank, Mothata and Squelch, (1992:12, 31); Bray, (2006:96-98) and Guidelines for the management and control of drug abuse at school.

A number of strategies were used to ensure the implementation of these acts, policies and guidelines. These included, amongst others, the restructuring of higher education institutions, which resulted in the closing down of teacher training colleges, coupled with the development of new teacher education qualifications, the provision of a range of state-subsidized training programmes, and a code of conduct for teachers; the integration of schools previously separated in terms of racial and/or language groups; the provision of 'free' education to all those who could not afford to pay school fees, and the redeployment of teachers on the basis of teacher/learner ratios.

While the development of Acts and policies started before 1994 in anticipation of a changed political dispensation, implementation happened gradually, with most of the changes only starting to have an impact as from 1998. The decade of educational change that I am focusing on in this study is, therefore, the ten years from 1998 to 2008. In describing these changes and the effect they had on schools and on the principals responsible for managing these schools, I have to ask myself whether the changes so visible in the political, social and economic spheres are reflected in education, specifically in school education. Allied to this question is one about the way educators, especially those in management positions, responded to the changes that had to be implemented in schools. Can policymakers honestly say that the policies they were at such pains to develop have been effectively implemented, that they have transformed schools and will continue to do so? What about school principals? How do they feel about the changes that have happened or should have happened? Have these changes affected them personally and professionally? Have they changed the way in which they used to manage their schools and, if so, is this the result of changes imposed from the top or changes that started at grassroots level? Put differently, how have school principals, given their position as leaders and managers of schools, navigated the changes that should have happened in schools from 1998 to 2008?

Having studied Fullan and Stiegelbauer's (1991) theories about the 'new' meaning of educational change, I realized that change meant different things to different people, that the concept itself had both an 'objective' and a 'subjective' meaning, that people who resist change often do so because they associate it with a 'lowering of standards and that people's understanding of change is often 'false' or lacks clarity. I also realized, from my own experience and from reading about change, that real change is often accompanied by a sense of loss, feelings of anxiety and a struggle for survival (Marris, 1975:78). Marris (1976:78-79) also mooted that, unless people are convinced of the value of change and/or buy into the reasons given for change the chances of their accepting it are slight or non-existent, especially if change is imposed from the outside. When change happens from the inside, that is, if those who have to implement change are also those who initiated it in the first place, there is a much better chance that the change will actually take place in the way it was meant to. In

other words, the need for people to make sense of change in terms of their own experience is crucial to the acceptance and eventual success of change initiatives.

Since the focus of my study is on principals' experience of change I had to determine whether they understood the changes and the reasons for their implementation. I also had to determine whether or not they accepted the changes or not and why. I had to determine whether or not the principals I involved in my study considered the changes they were supposed to implement in their schools as politically rather than educationally motivated and that, since politically motivated changes do not last they could therefore ignore them (Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991:23). Because I know that principals cannot single-handedly implement change, that they need the support and commitment of the entire school community, I had to determine to what extent the principals in my study were able to wear the hat of change agents, to what extent they were willing to 'get their hands dirty' in effecting change, and to what extent they were able to instill hope in the hearts of those whom they had to lead towards a new way of schooling. I realized above all that, unless principals, as school leaders and managers, led the charge in changing their schools, things would simply remain the same (Fullan and Stigelbauer, 1991:25).

1.2 Research problem and rationale

While research on outcomes-based education mushroomed with the adoption and implementation of *Curriculum 2005* (DoE, 1997a), its review and the subsequent amended version of the curriculum - called the *National Curriculum Statement* (DoE, 2000d) - relatively little research has been conducted on the way in which people at the chalk face – principals and classroom teachers – experienced and dealt with all the changes that they had to implement on a daily basis. Consequently, very little is known about the impact of the changes I mentioned earlier on South African educators' personal and professional lives.

My interest is specifically on the impact that educational change has had on the professional lives of school principals. My interest was sparked when I was appointed

acting principal in 1995. Moving from having had to manage change at classroom level to managing it at whole school level was a life changing experience, primarily because I was now compelled to look at things from a totally different perspective. It was during this time, during my attendance of principals' workshops and meetings that I became aware of the impact that change had on other principals. While principals' discourse during the meetings and workshops conveyed a sense of their being supportive of change and determined to make it work, the conversations that happened at teatime and over lunch told a different story. These conversations seemed to suggest that principals felt overwhelmed, not only by the extent of the change but also by the pace at which it was happening.

Mentioned most frequently were changes to the curriculum, the abolition of corporal punishment, the redeployment of teachers, the imperative to involve parents in school matters and the increased accountability of principals for what happens at their schools. That these changes were mentioned most frequently did not mean that principals were in agreement on which changes were positive or negative, easy or difficult to manage – this differed from person to person. Some principals were in favour of curriculum changes, others were not; some expressed the opinion that the banning of corporal punishment was long overdue, others felt that it had changed schools into 'war zones'; some argued that everybody should be entitled to 'free education', others that only the 'previously disadvantaged' were entitled to such a privilege; some argued for English as the only medium of instruction, others for dual or parallel medium, and so on. They did, however, agree that the changes initially caused confusion, and that many educators who had been in the profession for a long time felt incompetent and/or unwanted as a result. Consequently many of them resigned from the teaching profession, either retiring or finding jobs elsewhere. As one of the principals said to me during a tea break, 'No one knew what was happening and there was frustration, stress among everybody and worse, those who did not survive the period left teaching'. Those principals who felt that things in their schools were gradually 'settling down' indicated that this was because 'educators are now informed about what is happening' and because they were 'supporting and encouraging one another to continue with the changes even under difficult circumstances, sharing burdens and solving problems together'.

Having recently ‘discovered’ research, and having read up on educational change and change management, I regarded the existence of such diverse positions on educational change and ways of managing it as fertile ground for research. Until that moment I had thought that my difficulties in managing these same areas were due to my novice status as a principal, but listening to other principals made me wonder whether the reason could be change itself. I therefore decided to embark on research related to educational change in South Africa, with specific reference to the way in which changes during the decade 1998 to 2008 had impacted on principals and on the way they perceived their roles to have changed

1.3 Research purpose

Bearing the research problem and rationale in mind, I decided to focus my exploration on the way in which school principals experience, narrate and attach different meanings to educational changes that have occurred to school education during the period 1998 to 2008. More specifically, my research purpose is to determine whether or not these changes and the ways in which they were implemented and managed have had a beneficial or detrimental effect on school principals’ views of themselves, their schools and education in general.

Informing the direction that I thought my research would take were the following questions:

- What changes have South African school principals had to deal with during the period 1998 to 2008?
- How were the changes fed into schools during the period 1998 to 2008?
- Are school principals of the opinion that their role functions have changed from 1998 to 2008?
- How did the changes initiated by the Department of Education during the 1998 – 2008 period affect education in general?
- How did the changes initiated by the Department of Education during the 1998 – 2008 period affect school education in particular?
- How did the changes initiated by the Department of Education during the 1998 – 2008 period affect school principals?

- How sustainable do principals think the changes to school education are?

1.4 Research questions

Having determined my research purpose and realizing that I could not, within the scope of this study, determine the experiences of all South African school principals, I reworked the questions uppermost in my mind into a single research question that reads as follows:

How does a group of selected school principals in the Gauteng North District of South Africa experience changes to education in this country during the period 1998 to 2008?

So as to focus my thinking I then broke up the main research questions into a number of sub-questions. These, I hoped, would better enable me to present a holistic image of the way in which those school principals selected to participate in my study experienced educational change during the years 1998 to 2008. This process resulted in the following sub-questions:

- Which changes did all South African school principals have to deal with during the period 1998 to 2008?
- How were the changes to school education fed into schools by the Department of Education during the period 1998 to 2008?
- What effect did the changes implemented by the Department of Education during the period 1998 to 2008 have on the schools whose principals selected to participate in my study?
- How did the changes implemented by the Department of Education during the period 1998 to 2008 affect the role of school principals as seen by those principals selected to participate in my study?
- How do the school principals selected as participants in my study experience the changes effected to school education during the period 1998 to 2008?
- What, according to the principals selected to participate in my study, are the chances that the changes made to school education during the period 1998 to 2008 will be sustainable?

The first two questions are meant to generate contextual data with regard to the changes initiated at national level. This context served as a frame of reference within which I could locate and interpret participating principals' purposes to particular changes mentioned by them.

1.5 Research objectives

Informed by my research purpose and directed by my research questions, my objectives were to:

- Describe the changes that all South African school principals had to deal with during the period 1998 to 2008.
- Explain how the changes to school education were fed into all schools by the Department of Education during the period 1998 to 2008.
- Determine and describe the effects that the changes implemented by the Department of Education during the period 1998 to 2008 have on schools whose principals selected to participate in my study.
- Determine and describe how the changes implemented by the Department of Education during the period 1998 to 2008 affected the role of principals as from the point of view of those selected to participate in my study.
- Describe the experiences and feelings of selected school principals regarding the changes effected to school education during the period 1998 to 2008.
- Give an indication of the sustainability of the changes made to school education during the period 1998 to 2008 as perceived by participating principals.

1.6 Working premises

Informed by these and my initial research questions, I used a number of working premises as basis for the selection of my research approach and activities (*see Table 1.1*).



Table 1.1: Research questions, premises and procedures

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION	
How did school principals selected as research participants experience the past decade (1998-2008) of educational change in South Africa?	
SUPPORTING QUESTIONS	WORKING PREMISES
What changes have all South principals had to deal with during a decade of educational change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals have been dealing with changes regarding the new curriculum. • Principals have been dealing with different policies initiated by the Department of Education. • Some principals have been dealing with alternative ways of maintaining discipline in their schools.
How were the changes fed into schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes were fed into schools through the workshops, meetings, departmental circulars, memorandums and policies
How did the school stakeholders implement the changes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school stakeholders implemented changes by way of sharing views on departmental circulars, policies and memorandums. • School stakeholders attended meetings, workshops and trainings initiated by the Education Department
How do school principals selected as research participants view the past ten years in terms of their development and performance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals view themselves as being completely different people from what they were and as performing their work differently to the way they used to.
How did the different changes initiated by the Education Department affect the schools of participating principals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools have completely changed from the way they use to look like in terms of leadership, management and provision of resources.
How did the different changes initiated by the Education Department affect the role of school principals according to research participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The different changes initiated by the Education Department have greatly affected the role of school principals in the way they used to lead and manage schools as well as what the Department of education expects them to do.
How sustainable is educational change in the future of schools according to the participating principals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational change is sustainable provided people in the leadership positions will support and encourage those who are responsible for implementing changes.

1.7 Conceptual framework

Given that my research focuses on principals' experience of educational change, the conceptual framework that I regarded as most appropriate to my purpose was that of education management, with specific reference to the management of educational change.

According to Bacal (2006: 66) as well as Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991:15), educational change is typically aimed at helping schools to 'accomplish their goals more effectively' by adjusting structures, programs and/or practices and/or replacing them with 'better ones'. Following this claim I accepted the notion that, when change is deliberately planned and executed it is because it is necessary and expected to lead to improvement. For this improvement to occur those who are at the receiving end of change must, however, accept its necessity and must do whatever is required to make it happen. Should they regard the change as unnecessary or threatening there is the very real possibility that they will resist it by either ignoring or deliberately undermining it.

Literature on school management (Earley and Weidling, 2004:83; Trewata and Newport, 1976:22) indicates that school management involves 'planning, organizing and controlling an organization of human and material resources essential to the effective and efficient attainment of objectives'. The capacity to do exactly this was particularly crucial in South Africa during the period 1998 to 2008, when most of the changes envisaged prior to 1994 were developed into policies implemented in schools. The effective implementation of curriculum change, for example, depended on principals' ability to coordinate, lead and guide the implementation of new ways of teaching, learning and assessment, all of which are essentially school management tasks. The use of education management as the frame of reference therefore seemed most appropriate to my study.

According to Whitaker (1993:73), a person demonstrates the ability to lead when her/his behaviour 'enables...others to achieve planned goals.' Since school principals are expected not only to manage their schools but also to lead them towards a better future (Davies, 2005:43), they were the ones expected to implement the changes that

occurred in school education in South Africa during the years 1998 to 2008. Since these changes were imposed from the top, where they were deemed necessary, and since principals had little say in the kind of change that was necessary or on the way in which it should be implemented in the schools they managed, it seemed appropriate to discuss principals' experiences in terms of a conceptual framework that would help me understand not only their attitudes towards change in general but also their willingness and ability to manage the implementation of the many changes to school education that were effected during the period 1998 to 2008.

Given that most, if not all, of the changes were preceded by the development of some or other act, policy or guideline document and that the various departments of education trained principals in the implementation of these policies, it was also important to determine the extent to which principals understood and were willing to lead the way towards the transformation of school education through a process of policy implementation. In this regard leadership is crucial to the creation and maintenance of more effective schools, better performance and public accountability. I regarded the use of a conceptual framework that would acknowledge the relationship between effective management and transformational leadership, as is the case in education management, as imperative to the success of my study.

1.8 Theoretical framework

I did not embark on this study with a pre-determined theoretical frame of reference in mind since I had decided to present principals' experiences in the form of grounded narratives that would allow theory to emerge from data 'systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:12). Informed by the notion that my understanding of South African school principals' experiences of change would develop inductively, as I collect, analyze and interpret raw data, rather than at the end of the data collection process, working beyond the confines of a specific predetermined theoretical framework seemed fitting. The purpose of grounded theory is, after all, 'to build a theory that is faithful to the evidence' (Neuman, 2000:146), rather than to a specific theory.

Since I planned to involve principals from across racial, cultural, linguistic and gender

lines - including those who manage primary, secondary, urban and farm schools - I knew that I would at some stage in my research have to compare unlike stories in order to identify differences as well as similarities. Also, since I was going to focus on principals' experiences of change imposed through macro level decision but implemented at micro level, in the schools they managed, the absence of a predetermined theory would give me the opportunity of either reconstructing existing theory and/or formulating evidence-based theory based on my observation of connections between micro-level events and larger social forces (Hammersley, 1992:29).

As it happened, the theoretical propositions that emerged from my analysis of principals' narratives reflect the kind of understanding typically developed by researchers who operate within an interpretivist and/or constructivist theoretical framework. As is the case in these research approaches I learnt to understand the phenomena of change and principals' responses to change through 'mental processes of interpretation...influenced by and interact(*ing*) with social contexts'¹ (Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit, 2004:20). Moreover, the answers to my original research questions regarding principals' experiences of the changes that occurred from 1998 to 2008 reflected the existence of individual principals 'multiple realities' (Merriam, 1994:4) constructed in the social context of change, yet another feature of interpretivist and constructivist theoretical frameworks.

1.9 Knowledge claims

My epistemological claim also reflects constructivist theory since I believe that knowledge is tentative, intangible and dynamic (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000:6), primarily because it is constructed by people, acquired by people and communicated to people as a means of social interaction (Cohen et al 2000: 6; Henning et al, 2004:20). By implication, the knowledge I gained, constructed and shared in the course of my research is not mine alone. Every principal who participated in this venture is a co-constructor of the final research story I present here.

¹ Italics mine.

In terms of my research purpose, namely to study principals' experience of change, I claim, moreover, that experience, including educational experience, is best described narratively (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:19) and that it is in interpreting first person accounts of experience that researchers are best able to understand both the outer and inner worlds of those whom they are studying. Since all people 'live stories and, in the telling of these stories, reaffirm them, modify them and create new ones' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:20), all people are narrators/storytellers 'by nature' (Marshall and Rossman, (1995:86).

My ontological assumption was also verified more than once during the course of my investigation. Not only did my engagement with selected principals confirm my assumption that individuals are always busy constructing and reconstructing their reality (Cohen et al, 2000:5-6) - by interpreting and attaching meaning to what they hear and experience - but also that, because people interpret events, words, situations, et cetera differently, no two people's realities are ever exactly the same (Henning et al (2004:21-22).

1.10 Research paradigm

In view of my research focus and knowledge claims, I decided to conduct my research in a qualitative rather than a quantitative research paradigm. Qualitative research is interpretive, naturalistic and inductive in approach (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Tutty, Rothery and Grinnell, 1996). It allows for the collection and generation of rich, thick descriptions of experience and is flexible yet rigorous in terms of the procedures to be followed in the collection and analysis of research data.

In terms of my research focus, a qualitative approach to research gave me the opportunity of investigating people's 'lived experiences, behaviours, emotions and feelings as well as ...organizational functioning' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:10), enabling me to obtain and present in rich verbal descriptions the complexity (Creswell (1998:15) of the social phenomenon of educational change as principals experience it in their natural settings.

Philosophically, as indicated in my epistemological and ontological claims, I lean towards constructivism; hence I accepted as a premise for my research the notion that individuals interacting with their social worlds construct reality from a variety of perspectives. It is only in the use of qualitative research methods that I was able to understand how and why principals attached the meanings they did to the changes that happened in and around them (Merriam, 1994:6). It was the use of qualitative research methods that enabled me to observe and share the lives principals live, the talk they engage in, the way they behave as well as the things that excite, captivate and distress them. None of this would have been possible if I had approached my research from a more traditional, positivist, and/or quantitative research angle.

1.11 Research methodology

Within the qualitative research paradigm I chose to use a combination of grounded theory and narrative research in the collection and analysis of my data. I wanted selected school principals to tell me their stories of change – to tell me, from their perspectives, what had changed, how it had changed, what effect it had had on them and how they felt about it all. On the one hand principals' narratives would serve as their autobiographies, their attempts to 'articulate how the past is related to the present' (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:68) as far as educational change is concerned. On the other hand these narratives would enable me to move beyond description into the domain of theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998) in that they could provide me with data from which could emerge a new theory on the effect that change has on school principals in general and perhaps a new theory on the way such experiences could best be studied.

'An increasing number of scholars are suggesting that narrative research offers a way for us to hear teachers' voices and begin to understand their culture from the inside' (Cortazzi, (1993:1). Narrative inquiry is the most effective way of describing real life problems and real life stories in naturalistic settings (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998; Punch, 1998; Somekh and Lewin, 2005) because 'one of the clearest channels for learning about the inner world is through verbal accounts and stories presented by individual narrators about their lives and their experienced reality'

(Lieblich et 1998:7). These ‘stories’ are, in fact, ‘overt manifestations of the mind in action...windows to both the content of the mind and its ongoing operations’ Chafe, 1990:16). As such they provide fertile ground for the generation of the kind of theory that is grounded in data ‘from the field’, especially data gathered from the ‘actions, interactions, and social processes of people’ (Cresswell (2007:63).

In order to describe these experiences I had to find out what principals had to say about events that occurred in education during the past ten years. Allowing them to tell me their stories provided me with a key that would help unlock the door to their identities (Lieblich et al, 1998:8). All experience, including educational experience, happens ‘narratively’ and should therefore be studied narratively (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:19). Since principals’ experiences are educational experiences, it follows that such experiences should also be studied narratively. I anticipated that, in talking to me, in conversations and during interview sessions, principals would tell me how they dealt with the educational changes that they have had to manage at their schools during the years 1998 to 2008. I would therefore be privy to their reminiscences of past events, their experiences of current events and their expectations of the future. I anticipated moreover that, listening to the ‘chronicling’ of their lives, from the point where it all started to the point where they currently are, as well as to ‘how it all happened’ and to how they came to be where they currently are, I would be able to determine if and how things had changed for them and whether or not they have made sense of these changes (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:68). Moreover, in terms of the grounded theory that I hoped would emerge from this enterprise, I would be able to formulate one or more theoretical propositions regarding the effect such changes had on their professional lives. These propositions, in turn, could moreover, suggest new ways of studying principals’ experience of change than had hereto been used.

1.12 Research design

Qualitative researchers examine ‘cases’ or ‘phenomena’ as they arise in the natural flow of social life - their naturalistic settings – aiming to present authentic interpretations that are sensitive to specific social-historical contexts’ (Neuman, 2000:122). Because of this, they tend to collect and interpret ‘soft data’ (Neuman,

2000:122) - impressions, words, sentences, photos, pictures and symbols. By implication, the techniques and strategies utilized in the collection and analysis of data should help the researcher to achieve this aim. Because the collection of soft data requires the use of more than one technique, and because the results of inductive data analysis done during the course of the data collection process might suggest the use of alternate or additional techniques, qualitative research designs tend to be tentative and non-linear rather than rigid and prescriptive.

Bearing this in mind, my initial research design served as no more than an indication of the route I had in mind. While I had decided that the social phenomenon I wanted to investigate was the management of educational change in South Africa during the years 1998 to 2008 and that I therefore had to select my participants from the ranks of those responsible for the management of this change, I kept an open mind regarding the methods I would use to collect and analyze data. Given my epistemological and ontological positions I was relatively certain that I had to focus on the stories that school principals had to tell about their experience of change during this period and that the best way to generate these stories was by means of open-ended interviews. I did not, however, exclude the use of other methods at this stage. Consequently, my initial design, presented here, was flexible enough to allow me to change course if and when needed. My cue would be to allow data or research participants to redirect my design to optimize the quality of data collected.

My initial research design therefore represented nothing more than a map of the journey that I was about to embark on. It is not a description of the journey itself. The actual route followed, that is, the research design that emerged from the research process, including specific techniques used for collecting and analyzing data, is reported in Chapter 2, which deals extensively with my research methodology. As will be evident from the rest of my research story, I did not undertake this journey alone. I was accompanied by a number of principals who willingly shared their experiences of educational change during the period 1998 to 2008 with me. By implication they had a role to play in the choices I made regarding data collection and analysis. Given the highly personal nature of each of their individual journeys I had to be especially sensitive to the effect my interview questions would have on them and on the ways in which they would attempt to hide their vulnerabilities, fears, anger

and other disturbing feelings and attitudes. I therefore had to plan the procedures I would use in collecting their stories - the basis of my own research story – with great sensitivity. This sensitivity was even more crucial given my plan to involve principals from different cultural, linguistic and other dispositions than mine in my study because I had to ensure that the ways in which I collected and analyzed data would enable me to accommodate different views and ways of narrating very different realities of the same phenomenon.

1.12.1 Defining data

As indicated earlier, my research was aimed at the collection of selected principals' professional stories of educational change in South Africa from 1998 to 2008. The stories they told me were the stories *they* lived and experienced, told by *them*, from *their* perspective and in *their* words. Since narratives are in fact written or spoken first person accounts (Merriam and Associates, 2002:286) that relate events and actions that are chronologically connected, I was convinced that this was the most effective way of gaining an understanding of their outer and inner worlds (Cortazzi, 1993:2) – in this case, their inner and outer responses to the changes that occurred in school education in South Africa during the years 1998 to 2008. Their stories are my raw data.

1.12.2 Sampling

There is no single method for the selection of research participants in qualitative research but there is relative consensus amongst qualitative researchers that participants should be selected in terms of the contribution that they would be able to make in terms of the research purpose (Grinnell 1993:153; McMillan and Schumacher 2001:169). By implication research participants should be good informants, people with a good understanding of the culture being studied and with the ability to explain what was going on in their lives. The selection of participants in qualitative research is therefore not random but purposeful.

Even though the purpose of qualitative research is not to generalize (Struwig and Stead, 2001:121), I wanted to collect sufficient evidence of similarities and differences in the way the principals in my study dealt with change to be able to identify common trends or patterns that might indicate how changes to school education in South Africa should or should not be handled in future. I therefore had to ensure that participating principals – the narrators of the original stories of change – were people who had first-hand quality experiences of change as and when it happened and that they were able and willing to share these experiences with me.

1.12.3 Data collection

As is common in qualitative research I planned to utilize a number of data collection strategies to collect the stories that I needed in order to write my own research story. Key amongst these was the use of open-ended, in-depth interviews, ‘probably the most common form of data collection in qualitative studies in education’ (Merriam, 1994:70; Tutty et al, 1996:52). I opted for open-ended interviews because they allowed me to engage in semi-structured conversations (Bailey, 1994:176) rather than in an interrogation with selected school principals. Since this kind of social interaction involves dialogue between people, promotes mutual understanding and establishes relationships between the researcher and the research participants, I supplemented the interview schedule that I used as basis for the interviews with in-depth probes of emerging issues.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:443) in-depth interviews help researchers to collect the kind of rich data necessary for a critical understanding of the ways in which individuals ‘conceive of their world’ and explain or make sense of important events in their lives’. In using in-depth, open-ended interviews I hoped to gain an in-depth understanding of principals’ experiences, thoughts and feelings regarding the decade of educational change of which they were a part. I anticipated that, during the interviews, principals, as storytellers, would share their individual professional stories with me in response to the questions I posed to them, thereby allowing my researcher’s voice as well as the unheard voices of school principals to be heard. Making both voices audible is typical of narrative research because the

narratives emerging from the interview constitute social constructs resulting from ‘narrative collaboration’ (Marshall and Rossman, 1995:87).

I also planned to engage in semi-formal conversations Cohen et al (2000, 287-288) with individual participating principals prior to data collection. The purpose of these conversations was to establish a working relationship with and to orient participating principals to the research purpose and procedures. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:443) support the use of semi-formal conversations because they allow for questions and issues to ‘emerge from the immediate context and...in the natural course of events’.

Given the importance of context in qualitative research, especially so in narrative research, I intended also to take careful note of the different naturalistic settings in which each principal lived out his/her professional persona. I planned to make notes on the ways in which people in these contexts interacted with one another and, especially, with the principals whom I would be interviewing. I planned to make notes on the culture and climate of the respective schools as reflected in the condition of school grounds and buildings, anticipating that observations like these would provide me with a different kind of data, data that would give me an insight into the conditions within which participating principals had to effect change. In this sense observation data would support and complement the data provided in the interviews. Also, observation data would enable me to place each principal’s narrative in an authentic milieu when I re-storied it.

Finally, informed by Tutty et al’s, (1996:79) contention that reflection is ‘an activity that must take place in all qualitative research studies, and especially throughout the data gathering process’, I planned to keep a research journal in which I noted everything I observed, everything I heard and everything that came to mind during my observations of and conversations with principals in their naturalistic settings. Following McMillan and Schumacher (2006:327) as well as Patton (2002), I planned to jot down the thoughts, ideas, feelings impressions, and questions that formed in my heart and mind each day as I reflected on the day’s research activities and on the stories I had heard. I was of the opinion that the reflective notes I kept would serve not as a summary but as an attempt to record activities taking place in the field. Also,

I hoped that they would help clarify my thoughts on what I observed and heard, thereby facilitating the process of inductive data analysis. In short, I hoped that, the keeping of a reflective research journal would assist me in what Cortazzi (1993:3) called the process of ‘constructing and reconstructing.’

The use of multiple instruments and techniques for the collection of narrative data reflects Charmaz’s (2003) social constructivist perspective on the generation of grounded theory. Arguing that constructivist grounded theory lies squarely within the interpretivist paradigm, Charmaz (2003) justifies an emphasis on the complexities of diverse local worlds, multiple realities, views and actions. By implication this means that data should be collected from more than one source and, given the interpretivist angle, that the researcher’s views and voice should also be heard.

1.12.4 Data analysis

Realizing that the collection of soft data, especially words and impressions, result in the accumulation of voluminous data, I knew that I would have to structure the data generated by principals’ stories into a manageable format before I even attempted to analyze it (Tutty, et al 1996:161). Because qualitative data analysis is inductive in nature this restructuring would have to take place on a continuous basis, as and when I reflect on individual stories and on my impressions every day.

Having noted the views Strauss and Corbin (1998:37) expressed on the structuring of qualitative data for analytic purposes I realized that I might have to restructure or re-story (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) principals’ original first person accounts into stories with a clear beginning, middle and end, that is, in a new, more manageable, format. Realizing that this might involve a reduction of data and/or a structuring of data into meaningful bits so as to facilitate conceptualization and, since I planned to structure my interviews in such a way that principals’ stories would be descriptions of their professional journeys as principals, I decided to use the metaphor of a journey as the primary organizing principle in my structuring and restructuring of data. This decision was informed by the landscape metaphor that Clandinin and Connelly (2000) used to tell teachers’ stories. In doing so I hoped to do what they had done – to sketch

the ‘ever-changing epistemological and moral world’ in which the principals whose stories I was going to collect work every day.

Because journeys take place over time and space, the use of a journey metaphor would create the opportunity for me to reflect on changing contexts while restructuring the stories in terms of a beginning, middle and end. I assumed, moreover, that the spaces and times I would be able to explore or ‘open up for reflection and examination’ through this metaphor would include those that were ‘secret’ (hidden) and ‘sacred’ (revered/ untouchable) (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: Foreword).

Having restructured the original stories into a ‘journey’ format, I then planned to follow renowned narrative researchers (Bryman, 2001:412-413; Lieblich et al, 1998:13; Punch, 1998:219; Punch 2000:139) by focusing respectively on each story’s content, form and discourse (*see Figure 1.1*). This holistic approach to the analysis of my stories, I assumed, would enable me not only to trace where each principal’s journey had started and what had happened on each one’s journey but also to uncover what motivated each one to embark on and continue with this journey regardless of its trials and tribulations.

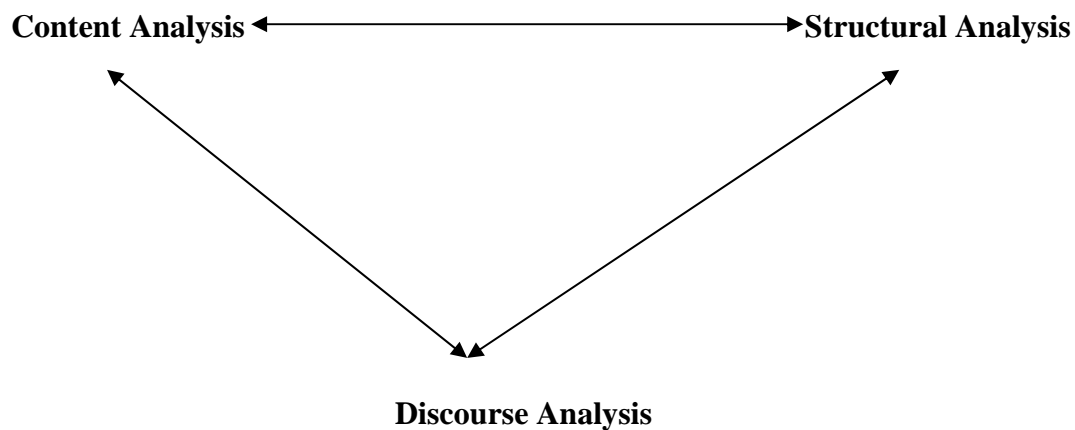


Figure 1.1: Holistic data analysis

(Adapted from McMillan and Schumacher (2006:144))

Because I study was not conducted in terms of a specific theoretical framework (see 1.8), I also made use of the ‘constant comparative method’ (Johnson and Christensen,

2004:383), typical of grounded research, in the analysis of my data. According to Johnson and Christensen (2004:383), this method involves a ‘constant interplay between the researcher, the data and the developing theory’ because in it coding is a staged process that moves from open through axial to selective coding. Combining methods typical of grounded research with methods typical of narrative research would, I enable me to identify tentative theoretical propositions regarding the way in which principals experience change and the way in which such experiences could be investigated/studied.

1.13 Research ethics

Taking note of the warning issued by Pole and Morrison (2003:144) that the use of narratives as research data could result in narrative researchers manipulating the data to suit their own purposes, I was determined to ensure that my research would be conducted in such a way that it satisfied the most stringent of ethical standards.

As a first step, informed by the assumption that the narration of selected principals’ stories could affect their ‘sacred’ status as principals and/or expose their ‘secret’ vulnerabilities if their identities were known, I decided not to use their real names or to name the schools they managed, but rather to use pseudonyms for both. In doing so I was following Kvale (1996:114), who urged for the anonymity of research participants in social research. I informed prospective participants of my intention not to identify them and of the measures I would take to ensure their anonymity when I first approached them to become co-narrators of my research story. This gave them the opportunity of deciding for themselves whether or not they wished to become involved in my study. Moreover, to ensure that they fully understood what the research entailed, why it was being conducted and what effects it might have on them (Tutty et al, 1996:40) before they consented to become part of it, I arranged a pre-research meeting with each of the principals individually to tell them what I wanted to do, why I wanted to do it and how I planned to go about it (Kvale, 1996:112).

To ensure that the processes and procedures I used in collecting and analyzing my data were scientifically as well as ethically sound I applied for ethical clearance from the ethics committee of the institution where I was enrolled for my PhD studies. Since

this committee bases its decision primarily on the research design and on evidence that the researcher has obtained the requisite permission to conduct research from the relevant authorities I had to submit to this committee a comprehensive research proposal accompanied by documentation that would convince them that this had happened. Relevant documents included letters from the relevant education department to conduct research in the schools under their jurisdiction as well as letters from principals consenting to participate in my study.

With a view to ensuring that my own bias would not unduly influence the collection and analysis of the data generated by participating principals I also openly declared my role – as researcher, as narrator, and as a principal – and continuously acknowledged the way in which my own cultural and other orientations and the relationships established between the research participants and me might be colouring my research story.

1.14 Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985:290), warn that the value of any inquiry depends on the extent to which the relationship between its ‘central question’ and findings evokes confidence in the ‘truth’ value of the findings and the credibility of the inquiry as such. This was especially important in my inquiry given the tenuous truth value of stories in general and of ‘cover stories’ (Clandinin and Connelly (2000) in particular. To ensure confidence in the accuracy and truthfulness of my representation of principals’ stories I tape recorded and transcribed all interviews, had each transcription verified by the respective narrating principal (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen, 1993:31), and included the verified transcriptions in my final research story. To encourage confidence in my ethical use of research data, research processes and research techniques, I laid a clear audit trail (Erlandson et al, 1993:35) of what I did, when I did it, how I did it and who were involved in what I did at each stage. This audit trail is presented in Chapter Two of my research story.

With a view to ensuring the credibility of the data collected by means of storytelling, I followed other qualitative researchers (Cohen et al, 2000:108; De Vos, 2002:351-353; Erlandson et al, 1993:28-30; McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:326; Seidemann,

1991:224) in using different sources for data collection purposes, constantly comparing data emerging from these to determine whether or not they revealed the same patterns or uncovered the same themes (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:374). The reason for the utilization of integrated data collection instruments and techniques, which included open-ended interviews, informal conversations, observations and a reflective journal, was to generate a theory that is grounded in data – a theory that would assist in explaining a process, an action or an interaction. The combination of multiple data collection strategies, also known as triangulation, is acceptable in the social constructivist perspective of grounded theory as described by Charmaz (2005), because it is based on the premise that theory develops from the researcher's growing understanding of research participants' experiences as he/she uncovers hidden, embedded networks, situations, relationships and hierarchies of power. This was also one of the premises on which I based my investigation. Triangulation was also used in the analysis of emerging data in that I considered principals' stories from three perspectives - a content, structural and discourse one – and based my conclusions on the holistic stories that emerged from this technique.

1.15 Limitations of the study

Because this study is contextual in nature, focusing as it does on the stories of selected principals in a particular province and district, the findings are not necessarily generalizable to other contexts. This was not its purpose. Rather, its purpose was to present and interpret the stories of a specific group of principals who had first-hand experience of educational change in South Africa during the period 1998 to 2008. It may well be that other principals' stories would be different from those collected during the course of my inquiry. It may, however, also be possible that the stories told in my study reflect other principals' stories. In identifying with these stories such principals might better understand their own journeys. Also, the stories told by the narrators in my study as well as the research story evolving from these might encourage other principals to reflect on their own stories and, in doing so, to better understand their own response to the kind of educational changes that they have to deal with every day. In this way the limitations of this study might be minimized to some extent.

1.16 Significance of the study

As indicated in the introduction and background to this study, very little research has to date been conducted into the ways in which school principals in South Africa experienced the radical and continuous changes that have taken place in education in the period 1998 to 2008. I was of the opinion that principals' stories – stories that are seldom heard from the perspective of the principals themselves – would add to the already existing body of research into principals' experiences of change – i.e. of their perceptions of change as well as of the way these changes have affected them at a personal as well as a professional level - in other parts of the world.

It is my view that hearing the stories of South African principals, principals who have to simultaneously deal with educational, political, social and economic change is important, not only because these stories give a different perspective on educational change management but also because they allow people in other parts of the world to get a peek into the multiple realities of change experienced by a people trying to build a new, humane but globally competitive society on the ruins of one that used to be fragmented, divided and intolerant.

1.17 Research programme

My research report, which reflects the research programme I followed, is presented in five parts, each of which links logically and conceptually with the one preceding and following it (*see Table 1.2 overleaf*).

In **Chapter One**, I present the parameters of my study as envisaged when I started my research journey. Included in this chapter are the background to my inquiry, a brief description of the conceptual framework in which I lodged my study, and a declaration of my theoretical framework, knowledge claims and working premises. Also included are my problem statement, research purpose, research design, and considerations regarding ethics and trustworthiness. Concluding this chapter are my expectations and/or assumptions regarding the significance and limitations of my study.

Chapter Two is devoted to a description of my research methodology. In it I have presented fellow researchers with an audit trail – a detailed description of the processes and procedures I followed in collecting, organizing and interpreting my research data. In the sense that it is a report rather than a plan, Chapter two could be seen as an ex post facto research design.

In **Chapter Three** I present the insights I developed from reading about educational change and change management in general as well as educational change in South Africa in particular.

In **Chapter Four**, I focus on the stories presented by selected school principals as main characters. I also included the restructured narratives as well as the emerging themes.

In **Chapter Five**, I present the research conclusions and recommendations. The research focus, purpose and procedures are also outlined and research findings are presented. The chapter ends with concluding comments and motivated recommendations.



Table 1.2: Research programme

Chapter	One:	Research Parameters
1.1	Introduction and background	
1.2	Research purpose	
1.3	Research questions	
1.4	Research objectives	
1.5	Working Premises	
1.6	Conceptual Framework	
1.7	Theoretical Framework	
1.8	Knowledge Claims	
1.9	Research paradigm	
1.10	Research methodology	
1.11	Research design	
1.12	Research ethics	
1.13	Trustworthiness	
1.14	Limitations of the study	
1.15	Significance of the study	
1.16	Research Programme	
1.17	Concluding comments	

Chapter Two: Research Design and Methodology	
2.1	Introduction and Purpose
2.2	Knowledge Claims
2.3	Research paradigm
2.4	Research Methodology
2.5	Research Design
2.6	Interpreting principals' stories
2.7	Narrative Ethics
2.8	Concluding comments



Chapter Three: Generic stories of Educational Change	
3.1	Introduction and Purpose
3.2	The macro story of educational change.
3.3	South Africa's story of educational change.
3.4	Sacred change stories
3.5	Concluding comments

Chapter Four: Principals' stories of Educational change	
4.1	Introduction and Purpose
4.2	Main characters as narrators
4.3	Narrative Context
4.4	Narrative Content
4.5	Narrative Discourse
4.6	Restructured themes
4.7	Concluding comments



Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations	
5.1	Introduction and Purpose
5.2	Research focus, purpose and procedures
5.3	Research Findings
5.3.1	Educational change in South Africa during the period 1998 to 2008
5.3.2	Feeding change into schools
5.3.3	The effect of educational change on schools
5.3.4	The effect of change on the role of school
5.3.5	Sustainability of change
5.4	Concluding comments



1.18 Concluding Comments

Chapter One provides readers of my research report with the map for my journey into the lives and experiences of school principals in South Africa during a decade of educational change. In using this chapter to map my research journey I sketched the background to my inquiry, indicating what motivated me to embark on it in the first place. I then stated my research purpose and protocol, indicating what contribution I think my research findings could make to the body of research on educational change management and what limitations I imposed on the significance of these findings.

Having declared my initial plan I report on its execution in Chapter Two. Whereas Chapter One represented the map of the journey that I would take, Chapter Two represents the journey itself. It is in Chapter Two that I describe in detail the routes I followed, the people I invited to accompany me, and the assumptions that directed our relationship and collaborative journey. In this sense, Chapter Two presents fellow researchers with an audit trail of my first journey into narrative research.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction and Purpose

In Chapter One I set the parameters for my inquiry by briefly describing the background of my research; by declaring my research purpose, questions, objectives and working premises; by providing a rationale for my research; by presenting my conceptual framework, and by briefly sketching my tentative research plan/design. In the sense that Chapter One stipulates what has been researched and how research was conducted it provides other researchers with a map of my journey with the principals whose professional journeys are recorded and interpreted in this research report. At the same time it helped me focus on the phenomenon that I planned to investigate – South African principals’ experience of a decade of educational change – and enabled me to bring together the research questions, strategy and plan for data collection and analysis (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999:29-30; Marshall and Rossman, 1995:18).

Chapter Two, which deals with research methodology, follows logically on Chapter One in that it provides a detailed description of the route I followed in collecting and interpreting participating principals’ first-hand accounts of educational change. This *ex post facto* description of the amended research design - the processes and procedures used to identify research participants as well as to collect, re-story, interpret and compare the stories they told me, is meant to serve as an audit trail that could serve a dual purpose: it could enable subsequent researchers who wish to replicate the study in different contexts but to the same research purpose with a clear indication of what I did and found, but it could also serve as an indication of the trustworthiness or not of the research process and findings presented in this report.

The audit trail is especially crucial given the fact that I opted to embark on my

research journey without locating it in a specific theoretical framework. Rather, I chose to present my findings in the form of grounded narratives that would either reflect or lend themselves to the emergence of one or more appropriate theoretical frameworks. Unless I therefore clearly mapped the route I took the trustworthiness of my research findings might well be queried. The audit trail enabled me to chart my movement from ‘here’ – my research questions - to ‘there’ – the answers I found to these questions and the conclusions I reached regarding school principals’ experiences of change in South Africa in the period 1998 to 2008 (Mouton, 2001:55; Yin, 1994:18). This research approach seemed most suited to the collection of principals’ professional life stories because of its flexibility and adjustability. Not only did it allow me to encourage participating principals to tell their stories in their own way and in their own time but it created the opportunity for me to listen to them in both an empathetic and a scientific way as they relived their experiences of a decade of educational change in South Africa.

2.2 Knowledge Claims

As indicated in Chapter One, I chose not to locate my inquiry in a specific theoretical framework in advance. Rather, I opted to do grounded research, expecting the emergence of theoretical propositions from the collection and analysis of my data. As the evidence presented in Chapters Four and Five will show, these propositions, presented in Chapter Five, reflect elements typical of interpretivist and constructivist theoretical positions in that they reflect my growing understanding of the social reality of educational change as experienced by selected school principals who had experienced and are still experiencing change first-hand (DeMarrais and Lapan, 2003:6; Henning, et al 2004:13).

In the sense that I, too, have been experiencing educational change first-hand during the past ten years and therefore operate within the confines of the same frame of reference as participating principals, it was not only they who reached a better understanding of the way they interpreted the world around them but also I. Our common frame of reference also enabled me better to understand their interpretations given that, from an interpretivist/constructivist perspective an

authentic understanding of individuals' interpretations of the world around them has to come from the inside not the outside (Cohen, et al, 2000:20). The principals in my story, including myself, are on the inside – we are the ones who have to channel the changes imposed from the outside to those on the inside but, because we are also inside the institutions and the school communities who are at the receiving end of these changes, our views on and experiences of change are essentially those of insiders rather than outsiders.

Epistemologically the interpretive paradigm denies the existence of a hard, objective and tangible knowledge (Cohen et al, 2000:6). This was also abundantly clear from my findings (see narrative evidence in Chapter Four). The narratives of school principals in a decade of educational change, and the theoretical propositions that emerge from these narratives support my epistemological assumption, namely that knowledge is a social construct: something that is constructed by people, acquired by people and communicated to people (Cohen et al, 2000:6; Henning et al, 2004:20). These propositions also dovetail neatly with the interpretivist theoretical framework in that they support its basic premise, which is that because knowledge is constructed by people research participants should therefore not be regarded as passive sources of knowledge but as co-creators of shared meaning and experiences. This premise forms the basis of one of the theoretical propositions that emerged from my collection, recording and sharing of principals' experiences of change (see Chapter Five), with specific reference to the crucial role that reflecting with principals on their personal, unique and subjective experiences of change as presented in a discursive form that makes sense to them could play in researchers' growing understanding of the impact of change on principals individually and collectively.

The grounded theory that emerged from my data (see Chapter Five) also reflects my ontological assumption that people construct meaning not only for purposes of interaction but also to make sense of their own and others' realities. This is evidenced in the stories participating principals shared with me, stories that illustrated their continuous engagement in the construction of multiple realities (Cohen et al, 2000:5-6) as they interpreted events and situations, attaching meaning to them and, in the process, constructing not only cover stories but also

secret and sacred ones (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The results of my inquiry, specifically the theoretical propositions emerging from my data, therefore validates Henning et al's, (2004:21-22) contention that the interpretive framework allows for the discovery of multiple realities, of varied interpretations and ways of experiencing the same event.

2.3 Research Paradigm

As indicated in Chapter One, the reasons I chose to conduct my inquiry in a qualitative rather than a quantitative research paradigm were primarily epistemological and ontological: the key philosophical assumption upon which qualitative research rests, namely that individuals interacting with their social worlds construct reality from a variety of perspectives (Merriam, 1994:6), was also the main premise on which my inquiry rested. Also, because inductive analysis, typical of qualitative research, allows for the construction of such multiple realities, it allowed me to select participants who would reflect such different realities.

As it turned out, qualitative research was also the most appropriate research paradigm within which to try to understand the social phenomenon of educational change (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Tutty et al, 1996) as viewed through the eyes of those personally affected by it because of its inherently interpretive, naturalistic and inductive orientation. In my inquiry I began to understand principals' experiences of change as these emerged from the complex, holistic stories they told about their professional lives, lived experiences, emotions and feelings (Creswell, 1998; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The semi-structured interviews I conducted with principals gave me the opportunity of sharing in their relived stories, vicariously experiencing the strong emotions and feelings they had to deal with during the past ten years of educational change, and recording what captivates and distresses them most.

One of the strengths of qualitative research, so it is claimed, is that it enables researchers to explore the 'hidden' areas of people's lives – their feelings,

attitudes and emotions – by entering their ‘sacred places’ and unraveling their ‘cover stories’ (Lieblich, et al, 1998:15). This, too, was confirmed in my study. The complexity that made the principals in my story human and whole emerged from their stories – my research data (Smit, 2001:69) – and, because qualitative stories are essentially ‘verbal data’, they are perceived as richer and more textured (Miles and Huberman, 1994:10; Tutty et. al. 1996:89) than statistical data, hence my choice of qualitative rather than quantitative research.

Qualitative research also allowed me to conduct in-depth interviews with and observe principals in naturalistic settings (Leedy, 1993:123; Merriam, 1994:7), schools in this case. Importantly, the qualitative research paradigm is currently the only one that allows for the use of literary devices, crucial to the telling of stories, which was the thrust of my study. Moreover, it allowed me to enter the research activity not only as a researcher but also as a participant, a co-constructor of stories, someone who could refer to him/herself in the first rather than in the third person (Creswell, 1998:18; McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:14-15). This was especially important in my case because I, too, am a principal of a school and have had to deal with the changes that occurred in education during the past ten years. Like the principals whose experiences I shared, I, too, am an insider and, because of this, have an insider’s understanding of the emotions, feelings and thoughts fighting one another in our psyches as a result of educational change. My story is, therefore, implicitly interwoven with those of the people whose stories I tell in this study.

2.4 Research methodology

As indicated in Chapter One I opted to use a combination of grounded and narrative research in the collection and analysis of data for my study. Narrative methodology is but one of the many forms in which qualitative research can be conducted. Although there has been a marked increase in narrative research in the recent past, not everyone in the scientific community is convinced that the approach is ‘scientific’ enough to warrant its being referred to as research (Lieblich et al, 1998:1). In particular, critics raise epistemological concerns,

arguing that the humanistic approach that narrative inquirers adopt in the investigation of complex and multi-faceted social phenomena is doubtful.

Criticisms like these are not uncommon in traditional scientific communities where scientific research is still equated with positivism. Consequently, researchers who opt to conduct research in a non-positivist way have to take extraordinary steps to ensure that the strategies they employ are acceptable to the post-positivist research community and that those who are part of that community will regard their research findings as trustworthy. The likelihood of such criticism of my research, aimed as it is at the formulation of theoretical propositions that emerge from narrative research, is even stronger since grounded research has traditionally been part of the positivist tradition, which is much less flexible in terms of the kind of data and procedures that may be used in scientific investigations. In an attempt to ensure that my initial venture into grounded-narrative research will be regarded as credible and trustworthy by other researchers I decided to include in this, my research methodology chapter, understanding/conceptualization of this type of research and its value.

According to Riessman (1993:17), narrative inquiry entails the researching of ‘first person accounts of experience’, that is, accounts of specific events that happened to the teller in the past or accounts of events that are happening in the present. It follows that people’s individual life stories are the focus of narrative inquiry. These stories *are* the narrators’ identities, ‘created, told, revised and related throughout life’ (Lieblich et al, 1998:7). Not only do these life stories reflect narrators’ past lives but they also reflect each narrator’s inner reality while simultaneously shaping and constructing his/her present reality and personality (Lieblich et al, 1998:7). Narrative inquiry is therefore seen as opening ‘a window to the mind’ (Cortazzi, 1993:2) of those who tell their stories, a window that enables those who listen to the stories to understand the inner thoughts and inner world of the storyteller. In the sense that, in my study, these stories provide the research systematically gathered data, the systematic analysis of which would yield one or more theoretical propositions (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:12), they could be regarded as grounded narratives.

Narrative inquirers study the significant moments of people's lives and the ways they sequence events and experiences that occurred in the past. Given that the narrator 'takes the listener into a past time or world and recapitulates what happened then to make a point (Riessman, 1993:3), narrative inquirers also use narratives to get clarity on the 'point' being made'. It follows that temporality is crucial to the presentation and interpretation of narratives in narrative inquiry; hence narrative researchers typically restructure original narratives to reflect temporality. To this purpose they re-story original narratives in such a way that each reflects a clear storyline, i.e. sequencing events in such a way that each narrative has a beginning, a middle and an end (Cortazzi, 1993:85) as well as a logic that makes sense to the narrators and to the readers/listeners (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:55). According to Cortazzi (1993:85) the beginning of a narrative typically describes a state of equilibrium where a character – the original narrator - envisages what is likely to happen next and, on the basis of the anticipated event or action decides what to do about it. The middle part of the narrative tends to describe a state of disequilibrium – the moment of tension - caused by change or conflict with self, others or the environment. The final part is that part of the narrative that follows the unfurling of events, when balance is restored and/or conflicts are resolved.

Given the active role that narrative researchers play in re-storying original stories narrative inquiry is in itself a form of narrative experience. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000:20), the creation of narratives is a responsibility shared by the researcher and the individual research participants who collaborate with each other 'over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus'. In my study the production of stories was therefore not the responsibility of the school principals only. Neither was it solely my responsibility. I asked questions that opened up topics and allowed respondents to construct answers in ways they found 'meaningful' (Riessman, 1993:54). I then re-storied their narratives in temporal terms ensuring that each had a clear beginning, middle and end (Cortazzi, 1993:84). Having read and interpreted their stories, I then created my own story – the story presented here, namely the story of my research journey with participating principals.

2.5 Research Design

According to Blanche and Durrheim (1999:29-30) a research design serves as a 'strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution of research'. Put differently, a research design could be used as a 'roadmap, an overall plan for understanding a systematic exploration of the phenomenon of interest' (Creswell, 2002:58; Marshall and Rossman, 1995:18)

As indicated in 2.4, qualitative research focuses on the collection and interpretation of what could be referred to as 'soft data' - impressions, words, sentences, photos, pictures and symbols (Neuman, 2000:122). The collection and analysis of soft data, according to Neuman (2000:122), require research strategies and techniques that differ from those used by researchers who focus on hard data – numbers. By implication, research designs aimed at the collection and analysis of soft data will differ from research designs aimed the collection and analysis of hard data. More to the point, because qualitative research is usually interpretive or critical in nature, the strategies and tools used for data collection and analysis are those that will enable the researcher to collect rich, verbal or visual data that can be deconstructed and reconstructed again and again, until as much of the meaning as is possible has been extracted from the sources concerned.

Given the need to continuously deconstruct and reconstruct data in qualitative research, qualitative researchers tend to follow a nonlinear research path, applying what Neuman (2000:121) calls 'logic in practice', examining 'cases' or 'phenomena' as they arise in the natural flow of social life - their naturalistic settings – and presenting authentic interpretations that are sensitive to specific social-historical contexts' (Neuman, 2000:122). Because I was doing grounded research, my theoretical propositions had to emerge during the course of data collection and interpretation; hence 'logic in practice' had to be an essential feature of my inquiry. Also, participating principals' stories 'lived and told' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 20) are my data, therefore inductive analysis, another term for 'logic in practice', was inevitable.

Collecting participant stories – the focus of narrative research – is not an exact

science; rather, researchers tend to rely on the informal wisdom generated by previous researchers. This could be a messy process because nothing is fixed: research participants could increase or decrease during the course of the research process; data collection tools could change as cases change and the original, tentative research design could be completely different from the one reflected in the eventual research report (Cortazzi, 1993:86; Neuman, 2000:124). Because my inquiry was not located in a specific theoretical framework, with no dictates regarding research instruments or procedures, my research design had to be equally tentative, as indicated in Chapter One. However, to ensure that the research community at large regards the results of my inquiry as trustworthy, I decided to present a more ‘fixed’ research design after the event, that is, after I had wrapped up my research. This *ex post facto* research design does not tell what I planned to do to collect and analyze information but what I actually did. While the original design sharpened my focus, the *ex post facto* one is meant to establish my credibility as a researcher and confirm the trustworthiness of my research findings. It is in this sense that the design presented in Chapter Two is, in fact, an audit trail of my research journey, a report of what I did.

To this purpose I describe the kind of data that I collected and the reasons behind this. I declare the manner in which I selected principals to participate in my study and provide a rationale for doing so. I present and discuss the strategies and techniques I used to collect, analyze and present the data - principals’ stories, supporting my choices by citing other narrative researchers’ views on narrative data collection and analysis. I declare the role I played in the collection, construction, reconstruction and interpretation of principals’ stories as a means of enhancing the trustworthiness of my eventual conclusions and, finally, I describe the steps I took to ensure that my research was conducted in an ethical and accountable way.

2.5.1 Stories as data

As indicated earlier, people’s individual life stories are the focus of narrative research. In interpreting these stories, the researcher not only recreates the narrator’s life but also reveals the personality and inner world of the narrator

(Cortazzi, 1993:2) to those who read or listen to the story. Should the narrators be representative of a specific culture or group, a collection of their stories could also reflect key features of the outer and inner world of this particular culture. The stories included in my study do all of these: they reveal the personality of each participating principal, give me a glimpse of each one's inner or 'secret' world – the world of their thoughts and emotions – and provide me with a much clearer sense of the culture of principalship.

Since all people 'live stories and, in the telling of these stories, reaffirm them, modify them and create new ones' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:20), all people are narrators, storytellers 'by nature' (Marshall and Rossman, 1995:86). Although the stories in my report are professional stories, they qualify as narratives because they are 'first person accounts', spoken or written, that relate 'an event/action or series of events/actions that are chronologically connected' (Merriam and Associates, 2002: 286). Specifically, they represent stories lived and experienced by school principals during a decade of educational change in South Africa. They were constructed during and reconstructed after the one-on-one interviews that I personally conducted with participating principals and, as such, presented me with descriptions rich in detail and character, enabling me to draw conclusions not only about each individual principal's experience of change but also about commonalities and differences in their collective experience of the past decade of educational change in South Africa.

2.5.2 Sampling: Identifying story-tellers

According to Mason (1996:83) 'sampling and selection are principles and procedures used to identify, choose and gain access to relevant units which will be used for data generation by any method'. According to De Vos (2002:285), participants in qualitative research, or '*key informants*' as he calls them, should be 'respected and knowledgeable people in the setting under study'. Since the success of narrative inquiry depends largely on the quality of the narratives and/or the lived experience of the narrators (Grinnell, 1993:153; McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:169), I had to ensure that my key informants were people

whose perspectives would facilitate insight and understanding of educational change in South Africa during the period 1998 to 2008. I therefore had to ensure that they were not only knowledgeable and experienced but also that they were willing and able to share their knowledge and experience with others (Grinnell, 1993:153; Mason, 1996:83; McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:169). I therefore selected school principals who had first-hand experience of educational change in South Africa over the past ten years and who were willing to provide me with crucial information on change in general, on change in their schools, on their perception of change and their ability to cope with it, and on the effect change had on their personal and professional lives.

Given that qualitative research does not have as purpose the generalization of findings to an entire population but, rather, a greater understanding of people or phenomena in specific contexts (Erlandson et al, 1993:82; Struwig and Stead, 2001:121), I used *purposive* rather than random sampling to choose participants for my study. Selecting participants by means of purposive sampling implies that the researcher chooses people who not only have first-hand experience of the phenomenon being studied but who, having reflected on their experience, have developed a critical understanding of the phenomenon. As a first criterion for selection I therefore considered only those principals who had been appointed in this position after 1994 because that is when the entire education system started changing.

Given the historical contexts in which education was offered in South Africa prior to 1994, and how these contexts changed post-1994, I also had to ensure that I selected a group of principals who would be representative of different cultures, races, language affiliations and different school categories. I therefore included white as well as black, male as well as female principals in my sample. Informing this choice was the assumption that men and women might experience and/or deal with change differently and that the changes to school education might have been experienced very differently by black and white school principals and/or by principals of small and big schools. Some of my participants were, therefore, principals of farm schools, others of peri-urban schools; some headed primary schools, others secondary schools; some were in charge of schools with a single

medium of instruction, others of parallel-medium schools. All of them were, however, considered equally knowledgeable about the decade of change and equally able to relate their experiences, simply because they were recipients as well as agents of change during this period. I therefore assumed that all of them would have developed a critical understanding of the changes that occurred (De Vos, 2002:285) and would be equally willing to share this understanding with me and others.

Unfortunately, and this is one of the limitations of my study, none of the principals selected were representative of Indian or Coloured communities. This was due to the fact that I had to factor cost and time into my sampling procedures, using an element of convenience sampling in my purposive sampling approach. Since I am a principal myself, and my studies were done part-time, within a fixed time period, efficiency was crucial. I therefore limited the area from which I selected participating principals to an area that was easily accessible to me – either in terms of my workplace or in terms of my home, the Gauteng North district, an area with little or no previously coloured or Indian schools. (More detail regarding the sample of schools is provided in Chapter Four.)

2.5.3 Deciding on data collection instruments

Typical of qualitative research, I used a variety of techniques and strategies to collect principals' stories and to obtain information about the contexts in which they worked. Verbal information regarding the principals themselves and their experiences with change were collected by means of conversations and interviews while contextual information was gleaned from my observations of the naturalistic settings in which principals worked.

2.5.3.1 Conversations

In response to the Kvale's (1996:1) question, 'If you want to know how people understand their world and their life, why not talk with them?' I decided to include informal and semi-formal conversations (Cohen et al, 2000: 287-288) as data collection instruments in my study. Given that I myself am a principal and that I therefore attend meetings and workshops arranged for principals by the

various departments of education I had ample opportunity to hear what other principals had to say about their experience with educational change and to engage in informal conversations with them on issues raised. I used my reflective journal (see 2.5.3.4) to jot down my thoughts on the ideas and feelings expressed during these conversations. These notes were extremely valuable when I started formulating questions for interview purposes because they sensitized me to the issues on hand as well as to the personalities and attitudes of the people I intended to include in my study.

I also engaged in semi-structured conversations with each of the principals I selected as research participants prior to the formal data collection process. As anticipated these ‘conversations’, which were aimed at orienting participating principals to my research purpose and procedures (Bailey, 1994; Mc Millan and Schumacher, 2001), helped me establish a comfortable working relationships with them because they knew exactly what to expect. The fact that we agreed on time schedules that suited them as well as me and that we agreed I would not disrupt the school or their routines in any way also helped them relax. Finally, when they realized that I, too, was a principal, they knew that I would understand what they were going through and would, therefore, not misrepresent them.

2.5.3.2 Interviews

Taking note of Merriam’s (1994:70) and Tutty et al’s (1996:52) observation that interviewing is probably the form of data collection most commonly used in qualitative studies in education, I decided to use in-depth, open-ended interviews as my primary data collection instrument. Given my research purpose, namely to gather information on South African school principals’ experiences of educational change during the period 1998 to 2008 so that I could better understand why they respond to and deal with change in the way they do, it seemed appropriate to use open-ended interviews that would generate verbal data, in the form of first-hand accounts, as my primary data collection instrument.

Because I wanted to collect data in the form of stories, that is, in the form of first-hand accounts with a beginning, middle and end (Riessman, 1993:3; Cortazzi,

1993:86) and because interviews allow the respondents as well as the researcher to move back and forth in time, to reconstruct what happened in the past and to predict the future, the use of open-ended interviews (Kvale, 1996:5; McMillan Schumacher, 2001:443) seemed to be a perfect match with my research purpose. Informed by the criteria for interviews discussed in literature on qualitative research, and using the field notes I jotted down in my research journal after informal conversations between other principals and me at workshops and meetings as a basis, I designed an interview schedule (see Annexure F for the complete interview schedule) consisting of ten questions only (*see Table 2.1*).

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE	
1.	How long have you been principal of this school and how do you like being principal here?
2.	Tell me how it happened that you became a school principal? Was it the result of specific training? Did somebody ask you to apply, or what?
3.	How did you find the move from being a teacher to being a principal? Was it difficult to suddenly have to manage grown-ups rather than children, for example?
4.	How, according to you, has the job of principals changed since 1998? Do you regard these changes as positive or negative and why?
5.	How have schools, your school in particular, changed since 1998? What challenges did these changes pose to you as a school principal and how did you manage these challenges?
6.	Do you think these changes had any effect on school community relationships? I'm thinking specifically of relationships between management and staff, staff and learners, parents and the school, etc.
7.	Have things at your school stabilized now or are things still changing and how are you dealing with the current situation?
8.	Thinking back on the way South African education has changed since 1998, do you think the changes led to improved education or not? Please explain, or give reasons for your answer.
9.	Thinking forward, do you think the changes to education in South Africa are sustainable or not? Why/why not?
10.	Is there anything you would like to add or to ask before we conclude the interview?

Table 2.1: Interview Schedule

Because the interviews were open-ended, with the minimum number of pre-determined questions, they allowed me to ask for clarification and/or more detailed explanations by means of in-depth probing questions when required. Consequently, principals' responses became increasingly informal, resulting in interviews that felt and sounded more like purposeful conversations than interviews and yielded much richer data than would probably have been the case if I had prioritized structure over content.

Because the narratives I present in this study were generated by means of interviews, principals and I taking turns talking and listening, the stories are, in fact, the result of a collaborative effort between the researcher and the research participants, with 'both voices...heard' (Marshall and Rossman, 1995:87). According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000:81), this is normal practice in narrative research because narrative inquirers are never 'disembodied recorders of someone else's experiences'; rather, they are 'co-creators of the stories' since they too are in the midst of an experience, 'the experience of the inquiry'. The fact that I not only took notes on what was said but also tape-recorded our conversations with their permission, made it easier for me not to remain a 'disembodied' inquirer but a 'co-creator' of the stories emerging from the interviews.

2.5.3.3 Observations

Since I had to visit schools in order to interview and talk to principals, and since context/milieu is an important aspect of story telling, I also made use of observation as a means of collecting data. A narrative without context would be disembodied and therefore, less meaningful as research data. I jotted down my impressions of the physical and emotional environments in which the respective principals operated in my reflective journal (see below), analyzing and reflecting on them every evening when I left the field. I also jotted down my impressions of the way in which each principal lived out her/his professional persona and my observations on the ways in which they interacted with others in their schools.

Informed by the assumption that non-verbal communication – body language, tone, facial expression and gestures – are often indicators of the 'secret' stories I

wished to uncover, I also jotted down notes on these during my interviews with principals and analyzed these for meaning each evening when I left the field and reflected on the data collected during the course of the day.

2.5.3.4 Reflective Journal

Given the inductive and reflective nature of qualitative research analysis I made a point of jotting down my thoughts, ideas, feelings and impressions as and when they emerged but also at the end of the day when I reflected on what happened and on what was said. While the notes I jotted down during the day served primarily as a record of field activities, my reflection on these activities assisted me in thinking not only about the data but also about the process and the questions I asked during interviews. Often, because of insights gained during my reflections, subsequent interviews included questions not asked in preceding ones. By recording what transpired each day I was able to identify and set aside data not specifically related to my research purpose and/or questions; to identify data of particular relevance; to become aware of instances where principals might have been withholding information, and deciding what I could have done to uncover these 'secrets'.

In doing my daily reflections I increasingly realized that without these reflections my study would have been much poorer in terms of the insights I gained into principals' experiences. In fact, the data I collected might well have ended up being nothing more than unfocused and irrelevant information repeating itself. I realized, moreover, that my daily reflections helped clarify my thoughts on and feelings about the things I observed and heard, thereby facilitating the process of inductive data analysis. In short, as I had hoped when I planned to use a reflective journal, reflecting assisted me in the continuous process of 'constructing and reconstructing' (Cortazzi, 1993:3), which is typical of narrative research. Not only was the use of multiple methods appropriate to the qualitative research paradigm and the collection of narrative data but it also reflected Charmaz's (2006) social-constructivist perspective on grounded research, which argues for the investigation of experiences embedded within hidden networks, situations, and

relationships with a view to making visible hierarchies of power in communication and relationships.

2.5.4 Accessing principals' space

As indicated earlier, I conducted my research in the Gauteng North District where I am also a principal. Even though I had met all these principals before and was myself an employee of the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), I could not just go into schools and interview principals: I had to apply for and obtain written permission from the GDE before I could do that, indicating how I would go about selecting participants (See Annexure A: a copy of application letter to Gauteng Department of Education and Annexure B a copy of the permission letter from Gauteng Department of Education).

Having obtained permission from the GDE I contacted each of the principals telephonically to determine whether or not they would be willing to see me so that I could discuss my planned research with them before they decided whether or not to become involved in it. A 'survey' visit like this is extremely important in educational research because school principals serve as gatekeepers and are, by implication, responsible for the safety of their schools. Consequently I had to go through a process of negotiation with them regarding times, processes and levels of involvement (Berg, 1998:131). Each principal then received a copy of the letter in which the GDE gave me permission to conduct research in their schools (see Annexure B) as well as a letter from me in which I repeated my oral request that they participate in my study (see Annexure C). Each principal then had to commit to the research in writing (see Annexure D).

It took me approximately two months to complete my first round of visits (*see Table 2.2*): some of the principals were not available when I called them while others could not see me at that stage because they were too busy. We also had problems deciding on times because some of them wanted me to meet them during school time, an arrangement that was not feasible for me because I, too, was working. Eventually, however, I met with all of them, obtained their commitment and arranged four meetings with each of them to collect their

‘stories’. I also made arrangements for follow-up visits once I had transcribed the interviews so that they could do a ‘member check’ on the transcription.

Having shared with each principal what the aim of my research was, how data would be collected, under the auspices of which institution I would be doing the research, and having addressed ethical issues such as the tape-recording, transcription and storage of interview tapes, all the principals agreed to participate provided that my visits would not disrupt the schools or the principals’ programmes. I was quite relieved because I had been very nervous about going into schools, especially white schools, because I, too, was still adjusting to the ‘new’ South Africa.

I regarded the first round of school visits as crucial to the development of a relationship with the principals since they would be the ones who would have to construct and share the stories that I would eventually use as basis for my ‘research story’. Not only did it contribute to our establishing a relationship of openness and acceptance, the kind of relationship crucial to the uncovering of ‘cover stories’, but it also helped to settle me down, allaying the fears I had about visiting schools, especially white ones. Having done so I had to acknowledge to myself that many of the assumptions I had had regarding white schools and white principals were unfounded and that their involvement in my research would ensure that my story – the research story – would be richer and more comprehensive than it would have been without them.

During the second visit I engaged in an informal conversation on the way in which education has changed in South Africa over the past ten years. This visit was followed by a third, during which I conducted a semi-structured interview with each of the principals. The fourth visit was simply to hand the interview transcripts to participating principals for member checking. The fifth visit was a courtesy visit, during which I thanked principals for their participation and for the insights they had given me into their person and the naturalistic settings in which they performed their jobs. This was the point at which I disengaged myself from the research field (Berg, 1998:153).



Table 2.2: Data Collection Schedule

Participant	Stage 1: Purpose of visit	Stage 2: Purpose of visit	Stage 3: Purpose of visit	Stage 4: Purpose of visit	Stage 5: Purpose of visit
Kedibone: School A	Date: 25/02/2008 Negotiation with principal to become research participant	Date: 21/04/08 Conversation with school principal	Date: 14 /05/ 2008 Interviews with principal	Date: 02/06/2008 Verification of interview transcripts	Date: 18/07/2008 Disengagement from the research field
Goboima: School B	Date: 26/02/2008 Negotiation with principal to become research participant	Date: 24/04/08 Conversation with school principal	Date: 22/05/2008 Interviews with principal	Date: 05/06/2008 Verification of interview transcripts	Date: 25/07/2008 Disengagement from the research field
Rekopane: School C	Date: 27/02/2008 Negotiation with principal to become research participant	Date: 29/04/08 Conversation with school principal	Date: 29/05/2008 Interviews with principal	Date: 10/06/2008 Verification of interview transcripts	Date: 29/07/2008 Disengagement from the research field
Somisanang: School D	Date: 28/02/2008 Negotiation with principal to become research participant	Date: 05/05/08 Conversation with school principal	Date: 09/06/2008 Interview with principal	Date: 17/06 /2008 Verification of interview transcripts	Date: 04/08/2008 Disengagement from the research field
Kedisaletse: School E	Date: 27/02/2008 Negotiation with principal to become research participant	Date: 08/05/08 Conversation with school principal	Date: 19/06/08 Interviews with principal	Date: 16/07/2008 Verification of interview transcripts	Date: 11/08/2008 Disengagement from the research field

Collecting and recording principals' stories was a five-stage process (*see Table 2.2*). Having obtained ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the University I took the *first step* towards data collection, namely to contact those principals who had agreed to be part of my study with a view to arranging a meeting schedule that would be amenable to them and feasible for me in terms of the deadlines I had to meet.

The *second step* was to engage participating principals in conversations about themselves, educational change and its effect on them during the past decade. The conversations gave me, as researcher and research participant, the opportunity of establishing a relationship of trust with the participating principals because I was also a principal and had also been affected by educational change. A relationship like this is crucial in narrative research because those who tell their stories are expected to share not only their ‘cover stories’ but also the ‘secret’ and ‘sacred’ ones (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), exposing their vulnerability. Unless they feel safe with the person whom they are telling these stories they will do nothing but cover stories.

Because the primary purpose of these conversations was not to collect stories but to lay the ground for doing so, I did not prepare any detailed questions, only a focus – to talk about the way change has affected them and me as a principal. Engaging in these conversations sharpened my focus, sensitized me to the way in which I should approach each of the participating principals during the interviews and gave me a sense of the direction participating principals’ stories might take (Cohen et al, 2000:287-288).

The *third step* was to conduct a one-on-one semi-structured interview with each of the participating principals. Because my aim with the interviews was to collect stories, I structured the interview in terms of what I considered to be significant episodes in the lives of South African principals in general (see Annexure F for a copy of the interview schedule). Given the inductive nature of qualitative data collection and analysis, I transcribed and critically read each tape-recorded interview prior to conducting the next one. In doing so I created the opportunity for me to use insights gained from reading previous interviews as basis in-depth probes in subsequent ones. Consequently, although the basic interview schedule was the same for all participants, no two actual interviews were exactly the same (*see 2.5.3.2*).

The *fourth stage* involved member checking (Cohen, et al, 2000:108), where participating principals had the opportunity of studying the interview transcripts with a view to verifying their accuracy, pointing out errors and/or adding more

information if they wished to do so. None of the participating principals wanted to add anything to what they had initially shared with me. Neither did they make any adjustments to the original transcript except to correct the odd language error.

The *fifth* step of the data collection process did not actually involve data collection. Rather it signaled my disengagement from the research field so as to focus my attention solely on the reconstruction of principals' stories and the construction of my own research story (Berg, 1998:153). My last visit was therefore devoted to thanking them for their participation, informing them what would happen next in my research journey and wishing them the best for the road ahead.

2.6 Interpreting principals' stories

According to Erlandson et al (1993:111), data analysis is a process aimed at 'bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data'. Because qualitative research generates data in the form of words and images, the researcher ends up with voluminous data. This is especially the case in narrative research because the generated data are stories, a collection of stories, to be exact. Because qualitative data is aimed at better understanding some or other social phenomenon (Tutty, et al 1996:161) raw data need to be structured in some or other manageable format before analysis can take place. Often this requires a reduction of data and/or the structuring of data into meaningful bits to facilitate conceptualization (Strauss and Corbin (1998). In the case of narrative research data have to be reduced and structured by means of a process in which the original stories as told by participants have to be re-storied by the researcher into a format that will facilitate interpretation and/or comparison. This is a 'messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative and fascinating process...of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data' (De Vos, 2002: 339).

While data analysis in my study occurred inductively in the sense that I transcribed and did a cursory interpretation of tape-recorded interviews after each interview, the structuring of raw data – the re-storying of principals' original

narratives in this case - was only done once I had left the field and the identification of theoretical propositions only after the re-storying had taken place. More specifically, in my re-storying and interpretation of principals' narratives I used an eclectic holistic approach (*see Figure 1.1*) that reflects a combination of narrative analysis techniques suggested by Bryman (2001:412-413) and Lieblich, et al (1998:13), and Punch (1998:219) and techniques deemed appropriate to grounded theory research.

According to Lieblich et al (1998:13), narrative researchers should, in interpreting/analyzing participants' stories, read the entire story, first focusing on content (the episodes that make up the story) and then on its structure (the sequence of the episodes as narrated by the participant) as a way of determining what the narrator reveals about him/herself and his/her life. Bryman (2001:412), adding to this view, contends that narrative analysis requires the identification of themes in the story as a means of uncovering significant moments in the narrator's life. Punch (1998:219; 2000:155) focusing more on the ways in which narrators use language to tell their stories, argues that the focus should be on the analysis of the metaphors used because 'people use metaphors as a way of making sense of experience and of expressing and conveying its meaning'.

Informed by these narrative researchers' contentions I first restructured the transcribed interviews by removing the questions I asked so that what remained resembled a monologue, or personal story. I retained pauses and descriptions of body language in the re-storied versions because more often than not they reveal the secret story behind the cover story. Following Lieblich et al, (1998), I then read each 'story' a number of times to get a sense of each principal's character and to determine the significant events in his/her professional journey. Having done so, I broke the story up into episodic or thematic vignettes. Where deemed necessary I moved excerpts around, combining them with other parts that seemed to belong to the same vignette. I then did a structural analysis, focusing on the plot - identifying conflicts, climaxes, turning points and denouements (Lieblich, et al, 1998:13 & 88). Having gained a sense of significant episodes and/or turning points in each principal's life, I focused on the language used to tell each story. In doing the discourse analysis I focused specifically on the use of linguistic features

and metaphors Bryman (2001). Finally, I went back to the original re-storied narratives to determine what each narrator revealed about the secret stories hiding behind his/her cover stories.

To my mind these methods, while typical of narrative analysis, reflects the staged coding process that Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) associates with grounded research. According to them data analysis should start with open coding and move through axial coding to selective coding. Open coding, which is aimed at the identification of segments of information that constitute sub-sections/segments, is similar to my having identified significant events in each principal's narration of his/her personal life. Axial coding, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998) involves the identification of central categories, the exploration of causal factors for actions/feelings, etcetera and the delineation of the consequences of these. This stage, I believe, is reflected in my identification of the themes running through each story and in the analysis of the discourse used in the telling of these. The final stage of Strauss and Corbin's analysis, selective coding, involves the researcher writing a 'story line' that connects all these categories and/or formulating propositions or hypotheses. I have done both – written my own 'research story' based on the narratives of participating principals, and formulated a number of theoretical propositions regarding the effect that educational change might have on principals in general (see Chapter 5).

2.7 Narrative Ethics

All research should be ethical but often is not. Because narrative researchers are given the opportunity of 'sharing in the lives and feelings' of the tellers of the stories (Pole and Morrison, 2003:144) they could very easily manipulate or misrepresent the characters and/or their lives. Also, the consequences of the stories told could be negative – affecting people's relations with others and/or the way they are perceived. In my study there is the danger that participating principals' stories could jeopardize their position in the education community, especially if the stories they tell are perceived as critical of the education system and/or those in power. I therefore regarded it as of the utmost importance to

ensure that my stories were as trustworthy as possible and that my sources – the principals and the schools where they worked – would be safe. Consequently I took the necessary steps to ensure that my study satisfied the criteria for ethical research.

2.7.1 The Clearing House

Before I could conduct my research I had to meet the stringent criteria set by the Ethics Committee of the institution where I was registered as a PhD student. In the first instance I had to present and defend my research proposal in front of the Faculty Research Committee. I then had to obtain permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to enter schools and interview principals in their jurisdiction. I also had to obtain the informed consent of those principals whom I planned to involve in my research study. Finally I had to present my research proposal, with all the letters of consent attached, to the University Ethics Committee, which scrutinized it for possible ethical problems. It was only after this committee had given me ethical clearance (see Annexure E) that I commenced with the empirical part of my study.

2.7.2 Protecting my sources

Bless and Smith (1995:102) warn that lack of co-operation can be ‘disastrous’ in a research project but remind researchers that participants have the right to refuse to participate and researchers have to respect this right. No person may be ‘bribed, threatened, deceived or in any way coerced into participation’ (Tutty et al, 1996:40). Instead, they must be presented with all the necessary information regarding the nature and purpose of the study and then have to give – or not give – their voluntary and informed consent. Informed consent, according to Tutty et al (1996:40) is consent given by someone who ‘fully understands what is going to happen in the course of the study, why is it going to happen and what its effects will be on him or her’. By implication, research subjects should be cognizant of the ‘overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design, as well as of any possible risks and benefits from participation in the research project’ (Kvale, 1996:112).

To ensure that the principals who participated in my study were informed, I visited them at their schools before I started collecting data. The purpose of these visits was to provide them with the kind of information they needed in order to make an informed decision regarding their participation or not (see Annexure C). I did not in any way threaten or intimidate them into participating – their participation was entirely voluntary (see their letters of consent attached as Annexure D).

They were also given the assurance that no details that could identify them would be included in the research report. According to Neuman (2000:128) confidentiality implies that, while the researcher knows the names attached to specific data s/he keeps this information hidden from the public. In other words, the identity of participants is not revealed to anyone at any time (Kvale, 1996:114). To ensure the anonymity of principals who participated in my study I used Sepedi pseudonyms that reflected their personalities (*see Chapter Five for details*) but that gave no clue to who they really were. I also assured them that the tape recordings of the interviews I conducted with them would be safely stored and would be destroyed once the research report was completed.

2.7.3 Validating my story

Crucial to establishing the trustworthiness of my research story is a declaration of the role I played during the collection, structuring and interpretation of principals' stories. I therefore declared that my interest in principals' stories was directly related to my being appointed as acting principal and later as principal of a school during the decade of educational change that is the context of my study (Tutty et al, 1996:27). At the time I was curious as to whether other principals experienced the changes in the same way I did. This was the initial motive for my research focus.

My determination to pursue this line of research was strengthened by the 'stories' I heard principals tell one another at principals' meetings and workshops. Listening to the challenges they were facing, I was convinced that this was an area that needed to be researched. I was also convinced that my being a principal

myself would enable me to better understand and respond to the stories that other principals had to tell. I did not, however, at any stage, try to manipulate their stories in any way or to guide them into saying something that I wished to be heard but they were not saying. In this sense I retained my scientific distance from other participants.

2.8 Concluding Comments

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, its purpose was to lay down an audit trail of the research processes that I followed in obtaining permission for my research, identifying research participants, collecting the first-hand accounts of participating principals, restructuring these for analytic purposes, and interpreting them so as to use the insights gained in the construction of my own 'research' story. Included in this audit trail was an explanation the differences and similarities between narrative and grounded research and a justification of my choice to combine the two in my study. In doing so the knowledge claims I made in Chapter One were confirmed.

Chapter Three is also logically linked to Chapter One in that it provides a detailed explanation of the conceptual framework within which my inquiry is lodged. Having done a comprehensive review of literature on educational change and its management I constructed what I believe to be an informed academic argument that forms a frame of reference not only for my analysis of principals' stories of change but also for the identification and discussion of common trends and patterns regarding educational change in South Africa during the decade 1998 to 2008 emerging from the collection of principals' stories that I used as basis for my research report.

CHAPTER THREE

GENERIC STORIES OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

3.1 Introduction and Purpose

As indicated in the title of my research report as well as in the research parameters described in Chapter One, the focus of my study is on the way in which selected school principals experienced the changes that were effected to school education in South Africa during the period 1998 to 2008. In presenting my tentative research design I indicated that I would use participating principals' first-hand accounts of their experiences of change as raw data, that I would reshape these first-hand accounts into a narrative format, and that I would then analyze these narratives – participating principals' 'stories of change' – for emerging themes, answers to my initial research questions and theoretical propositions regarding the impact of educational change on school principals in general.

As also indicated in Chapter 1, the conceptual framework in which my inquiry took place is School Leadership and Management, with specific reference to the management of change and the role that school principals play in this regard. Implied but not explicitly stated is the relationship between my conceptual framework and the use of individuals' narratives of their change experiences. It is the clarification of this relationship that is the focus of Chapter Three. More specifically, this chapter is aimed at answering three questions, namely:

- How is change defined within the framework of educational management and leadership?
- How, according to this framework, should educational change be managed?
- To what extent does the educational change process and the way it was managed in the period 1998 to 2008 reflect the principles and procedures associated with this framework?

With a view to answering these questions, I start this chapter with a brief explanation of educational change and its management as viewed from the perspective of complexity theory. Having done so, I critically discuss the changes that have taken place in education in South Africa since the demise of apartheid. I conclude the chapter by arguing that change theory could serve as a macro story within which or a backdrop against which the generic story of educational change in South Africa and the personal stories of principals' experience of change play themselves out.

3.2 The macro story of educational change

According to Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991:3), people seldom or ever react to change in the same way. Some people embrace it, some resist it, some are confused by it, and some simply ignore it. The reason for these differences, according to Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991:3), becomes clear once one understands that experiences of change can be either objective or subjective. Objectively, change is simply change; subjectively it is something that threatens the status quo, upsets the balance, undermines stability, lowers standards, forces people to move out of their comfort zones, etc. In other words, change is a complex phenomenon that often involves loss, anxiety and struggle (Marris, 1975: 25). Real change typically involves "passing through zones of uncertainty ... the situation of being out at sea, of being lost, of confronting more information than you can handle" (Schön, 1971:12).

3.2.1 Change as a complex phenomenon

Noting the complexity of change in general and the difficulties associated with 'real' or 'deep' change, I looked at educational change through the lens of complexity theory. In terms of this theory, the process of change is uncontrollably complex (Fullan, 1993:19), primarily because of unplanned factors that cannot be ignored, factors that interfere with the dynamics of the change process. This is due not only to the complex nature of schooling systems but also to the changing dynamics of human relations in such systems. Given

these dynamics cause and effect are removed from each other and can therefore not be easily traced (Fullan, 1999:18), creating feelings of uncertainty and inadequacy on the side of those held responsible for implementation. In short, because change is complex it cannot be imposed from the top (Fullan, 1993:24).

The complexity of change is particularly evident in attempts to innovate or transform education. School districts and/or schools are often required to implement a bewildering array of multiple innovations and policies simultaneously. Restructuring reforms are often so multifaceted and complex that solutions for particular settings cannot be known in advance. Also, the long-term future of such organizations is completely unknowable because the links between specific actions and specific outcomes become lost in the detail of what happens (Stacey, 1992), resulting in implementation plans that are unwieldy and cumbersome (Fullan, 1997:43). Consequently change is experienced as a complex and unpredictable process full of uncertainties.

What the theory implies is that change in dynamically complex circumstances is “non-linear” (Stacey, 1992) which means that the process cannot be precisely predicted. The separation between cause and effect means that the results of educational change cannot be exactly predicted. Even though the planned intervention strategies are put in place, they cannot produce the expected outcomes because there are other unplanned factors that keep on interfering. Furthermore, this theory implies that a long period of time elapses before the actual effects of educational change are experienced. Stacey (1992) elaborates, “the long-term future of such organizations is completely unknowable because the links between specific actions and specific outcomes become lost in the detail of what happens.”

A point raised by Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991:71) is that, whilst the complexity of change could create problems during implementation, it is the complexity that may, ironically be the stimulus for significant change, simply because of the increased effort required to make it work. On the other hand, one should not underestimate the fact that the possibility of failure is also higher in cases where people attempt too much, overreaching themselves (Miles and

Huberman, 1984:7) by attempting to implement innovations that are beyond their ability to carry out.

It follows that, since ‘real’, or ‘deep’ change is complex, unpredictable and demanding (Fullan, 2005:x), those responsible for its implementation will either have to confront and deal with change or choose to die a slow death (Quinn, 1996; Quinn, 2000), that is, they have to choose whether to leave the world they are used to, the world they are certain of, to step out of their paradigms, to think and behave differently, or to stay as they are, holding on ‘just a couple or more years’ then ‘this problem will belong to someone else’, thereby choosing to die psychologically, to live a meaningless life (Quinn, 1996:19). Choosing the former, to confront change head on means ‘facing the unknown, walking naked into the land of uncertainty’ (Quinn, 2000: 41), a ‘land’ where people must break their links with the past, where they must unlearn what they know and learn what they don’t know. Deep change is therefore a personal matter, a personal act of faith in which the person involved embarks on the journey in search of new meaning.

Deep change at an organizational, and/or school, level happens in the same way. The organization/school has to be willing to commit itself to breaking with the past, trying out new ways of thinking and doing, forming new kinds of relationships and discarding the ‘myths’ of the past (Fullan, 2005:x; Quinn, 2000:41). Only then will real/deep change take place. According to Quinn (1996:45), ‘we must courageously journey to a strange place where there are a lot of risks and much is at stake, a place where there are problems to require us to think in new ways’. This requires discipline, courage and motivation – all character traits of people and organizations ready and willing to commit themselves to deep change.

3.2.2 Sustaining educational change

The success or failure of educational change at school level depends on what *teachers*, not managers or policy-makers, do and think – it’s as simple and as complex as that (Sarason, 1971:193). Teachers often resist change for the simple

reason that they feel nobody understands their working conditions or appreciates what they do. It is important, therefore, for change agents, whether or not they are government officials or contracted agents, to first understand where and who teachers really are and what teaching and learning are really about if they want their change efforts to succeed.

In this regard, research into education change and teacher attitudes to change indicates that change at classroom level will only occur if the initiators of change acknowledge that educational change – whether its purpose is to innovate, reform or transform (Valdez, 2004:35) – is multidimensional in nature, in other words that it requires training in and use of new materials and/or technologies; the use of new teaching/learning approaches or ways of managing learners and classrooms; changed beliefs about teaching (e.g. pedagogical assumptions and theories underlying particular new policies or programmes), and a trial period during which time teachers get the opportunity of testing out and/or practising new ways of doing things, giving them the opportunity of making inputs that could lead to adjustments in the initial plan.

As regards the sustainability of change Fullan (2005:27) argues that sustainability revolves around leadership, that in order to sustain change the entire system needs to be mobilized in the direction of change, and that leadership at all levels must be the ‘primary engine’ (Fullan, 2005:35). Leaders also have to prevent change burnout, giving them a double reason to address cyclical energizing: not only could burnout, and eventual apathy, affect them but it could have far-reaching consequences for those with whom they work (Loehr and Schwartz, 2003:5).

Indications from literature (Fullan, 2005:x; Jansen, 2002:199) are that, in many instances, promises with regard to change often disappear after few years of implementation. Many a times, policies dealing with educational change, while compelling, have little or no effect on the situations they are meant to change. Regardless of the wonderful ideals they encapsulate and the excellent ideas they propagate to realize these ideals very little appears to change ‘in the daily routines of schools and classrooms’ (Jansen, 2002:199). Even changes that

enthusiastic people because they promise significant change often peter out without having had any effect.

According to Hargreaves, Earl, Moore and Manning (2001:159) the success of change initiatives is often 'eroded or sabotaged by a predictable set of factors'. One of these factors could be that little attention is paid to possible obstacles or to the way they could be avoided or overcome in implementation plans. Policymakers and senior administrators often 'underestimate, overlook or are oblivious to the difficulties of implementation change' (Hargreaves et al, 2001:115), introducing change without providing the means for identifying and confronting situational constraints and without attempting to understand the values, ideas and experiences of those who are at the receiving or implementation ends of change (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991:96), such as teachers and principals at their specific schools.

A second factor could be variations in people's understanding of change and what it is supposed to achieve. Often those who are tasked with implementing or managing change suffer from what Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991:98) calls '*false clarity*' –they think they understand and/or have changed as expected when this is, in fact not the case: they have simply assimilated the superficial trappings of the new practice. Allied to this are those who suffer from 'painful unclarity' (Holbeche, 2006:9) due to change agents, at whatever level, attempting to introduce innovations that are either unclear or do not create opportunities for the development of people's subjective meanings of change.

A third factor that could contribute to the failure of change initiatives is a lack of commitment to change, either from the side of the change agents or from the side of those responsible for its implementation (Holbeche, 2006:12). Successful change, according to Hargreaves et al, (2001:160) can often be ascribed to the efforts of a 'special group of enthusiasts'. When enthusiasm fades, for whatever reason – resignation, promotion, redeployment, etc. - change efforts lose their momentum and eventually stop altogether. That is, unless the original enthusiasts can be replaced by others with a 'similar vision or levels of commitment' (Hargreaves et al, 2001:159; Hargreaves and Fink, 2003).

A fourth factor that contributes to the sustainability or not of change is what Fullan (2005:37) calls the ‘skillful and balanced management of energy that will keep people going on.’ According to Fullan (2005:37), this is key to sustainability. It is not only Fullan (2005) who raises the argument of skillful and balanced management of energy as the key to sustainability but also Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002:73). They add to Fullan’s explanation by pointing out that ‘pacesetting’ could poison the climate, at great emotional cost, especially if the pace setter puts so much pressure on people to produce results that it provokes unmanageable anxiety. While this kind of pace setting, according to Fullan (2005:37), is good for short-term performance it is ‘fatal for sustainability’.

Neither justification for nor a positive attitude towards educational change is sufficient to sustain change: what it needs is to be nourished (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003:38), not only by the change agents but by all involved – those tasked with the responsibility of making it happen. According to Fullan (2005:31), ‘the main mark of an effective principal is not just his or her impact on the bottom line of student achievement, but also on how many leaders he or she leaves behind who can go even further’. Moreover, those who are at the receiving end need to believe in the value of change itself and need to accept the responsibility for nurturing and sustaining it. With specific reference to educational change this means that not only policy makers, or change agents, or school principals have to nurture change but also classroom teachers, (Holbeche, 2006: 17).

To summarise, the meaning of educational change is closely related to the costs and rewards the change holds in store for those at the receiving end and, unless they have proof of the potential reward of change they are traditionally reluctant to effect changes, (Holbeche, 2006:173). If they are convinced that change will benefit them in the long run they will change, no matter what the cost in terms of time, effort and their personal lives. This is the challenge to school leaders and managers.

3.2.3 Managing change at school level

According to Clarke (2007:35), there are differences between leadership and managerial functions in that leaders innovate, managers administer; leaders initiate, managers copy; leaders develop, managers maintain; leaders focus on people, managers on systems; leaders inspire trust; managers rely on control; leaders have a long-term vision, managers have short-term goals; leaders ask what and why, managers ask how and when; leaders keep an eye on the horizon, managers on the bottom line; leaders challenge the status quo, managers accept it unconditionally; leaders think before they do or obey, managers obey without question; leaders do the right thing, managers do things the right way; leaders create culture, managers operate it.

School principals have to be both – leaders and managers and, because of this it is not surprising that they are often caught in the middle (Holbeche, 2006:25; Mintzberg, 1998:47; Moran and Brightman, 2001:22), being accountable to those with more authority than they - officials at national and provincial departments of education - to ensure that policies are implemented, as well as to those with lesser authority than them - teachers, learners, parents, etc. This is true as regards the ordinary management of schools as well as the extraordinary leading of change at school level. Because of this school principals often have to take the blame for imposing changes that have been imposed on them from above, changes over which they had no say.

Successful change requires inspired leadership and effective management. Leadership implies ‘direction and purpose, while management is about efficiency and effectiveness’ (Beaudan, 2002:42; Clarke, 2007: 1; Graetz, 2000:559; Holbeche, 2006:19; Noonan, 2003:24; Seel, 2000:14). Leadership is a process in which someone – the leader - directs the behavior of others – his/her followers - towards the accomplishments of certain objectives, and involves elements such as influencing people, giving orders, motivating people - as individuals or in groups - managing conflict and communicating with subordinates (Smit and De Cronjé, 1997:278). According to Ubben, Hughes and Norris (2001:13), leadership is an approach aimed at the identification and

solution of problems, a ‘dynamic process that challenges the organizing to higher levels of consciousness and growth.’

Various researchers (Hall, 1988; Kirby and Stringfield, 1989; Lewis and Ecob, 1988; Louis & Miles, 1990; Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, Teddlie, Valdez, 2004; Theron, 2007:8) have reported that principals who succeed in balancing the contradictory demands often associated with educational change typically knew what was going on in their schools and in the world of education outside the school and shared this knowledge with the rest of the staff. These principals chose not to lead change single-handedly but rather to move from one thing to another, easily and readily applying their talents and skills to each new challenge and engaging in discussions with staff that enabled them to influence the content of guidelines drawn up within the school without taking complete control. They influenced the teaching strategies of teachers selectively, and only where they judged it necessary. According to Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, (1999:22), successful principals typically take actions that strengthen the school’s improvement of culture or stimulate and reinforce cultural change if necessary; foster staff development; engage in direct and frequent communication about cultural norms, values and beliefs; share power and responsibility with others, and use symbols to express cultural values.

Real/deep change requires more than simply implementing an innovation or two. It requires a change to the culture and structure of the school. It follows that, unless teachers ‘buy into’ the change, it will not happen. More importantly, unless the principal, as head of the organization, leads changes in the culture of the school nothing will happen. That is, improvement will not happen (Fullan with Stiegelbauer, 1991:169; Fullan, 1999; Hargreaves and Fink, 2003). ‘It is the leadership provided by the head teacher, which is the critical factor in raising standards of pupil achievement, head teachers must have a clear vision of the curriculum, the strength of personality and an interpersonal tact to engage with teachers on raising standards’ (Woodhead, 1994:10-11).

3.3 South Africa's story of educational change

In 1994 the African National Congress won the first democratic elections in South Africa. Their victory meant that everything in South Africa would change, not only politically but also socially, economically, and educationally. Prior to 1994 every decision made with regard to these areas of societal life was based on race. As regards education, educational institutions were separated in terms of race; there were different policies and curricula for the different, racially based schools, and the funding formulae for education were racial in nature. In short, South African society was divided, unequal and racially tense (DoE, 1997).

All of this changed after the 1994 elections. In terms of its new Constitution (RSA, 1996d), all South Africans would be equal: there would no longer be any discrimination based on race, gender or ability (Daudet and Singh, 2001:15). Informed by the vision of a country that is 'prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive...with literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice' (RSA, 1996b), the new government set about erasing everything that smacked of discrimination and inequality. All institutions would have to promote the values of the Constitution – namely, human dignity, non-racialism and non-sexism, the supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law, and universal adult suffrage - and operate in accordance with these. In terms of the Bill of Rights - Section 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996b) – the rights of everyone in the country is equally protected and must, therefore, be respected (Daudet and Singh, 2001:175).

With regard to education, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) established an integrated National Qualifications Framework (NQF) with relevant structures and procedures to ensure that education and training at all levels of the system would be outcomes-based and of an acceptable international standard (Hoadley and Jansen, 2002:29). In future no education

institution would be able to offer any program without its having been cleared by the relevant Quality Assurance Body and registered on the NQF.

The Higher Education landscape also changed. Previous divisions between higher education institutions, made on the basis of race and academic orientation, were eliminated by not only merging white and black institutions but also technically and academically-oriented ones. Teacher training colleges were closed down and/or merged into university Faculties of Education. Technikons were either absorbed by universities or became universities in their own right. All these institutions now had to give account, amongst others, of their admission criteria, program choice, student support strategies and student throughput.

At school level new, national policies, including a new outcomes-based curriculum, was developed and implemented. Learners were now free to attend the school of their choice, irrespective of race or socio-economic status. School education was compulsory for all children up to the age of 15 and no child would be deprived of education because s/he could not afford to pay school fees or because s/he was physically or mentally disabled. The aspiration of learners from other racial groups for 'better' and 'quality' education could well be one of the reasons for huge learner migration into what were previously advantaged schools (Lombard, 2007:43). Teacher allocation would be based on learner numbers and parents would be responsible for school governance (RSA, 1996f).

Ministerial committees, appointed to investigate a range of educational issues, recorded their findings in the form of a White Paper, and invited public and parliamentary comment on the content of these. Key among these was the first White Paper on Education and Training (RSA, 1995a: 21-23), which outlines the proposals for a transformed education system in South Africa and the second White Paper (February, 1996), which dealt with the organization, governance and funding of schools. The second White Paper leaned heavily on the Hunter Report, which highlighted the role of governing bodies, parents, and the community in education, thereby removing the focus from the teacher,

as the person solely responsible for the education of children. Section 29 (1) of the Constitution (RSA, 1996b) stipulates that everyone has the right to education, including adult basic education. And in 1996 the National Education Policy Act (RSA, of 1996e) placed education squarely in the hands of the Minister of Education. In the same year the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996) placed the onus on parents to ensure that their children attend school from age seven to fifteen, or until they reach Grade nine (Beckmann, Foster and Smith, 1997:7), and stipulated the functions and responsibilities of school governing bodies (SGB) and the procedures for their election.

These changes had far-reaching implications for school education. In the first instance legislation and policy documents made it clear that the transformation of education in general, and school education in particular, was aimed at ensuring access and equity by means of redress measures, quality teaching and learning and democratic process (CEPD, 2001:3). Previously ‘advantaged’ (white) schools were compelled to open up their doors to those who were previously ‘disadvantaged’ (black, coloured and Indian children) (Sekete, Shilubane and Moila, 2001: vii). While these schools initially maintained a 51% white majority in their population (Vally and Dalamba, 1999:10), this changed rapidly. Since the majority of black parents wanted their children’s schooling to take place in English, formerly Afrikaans-medium schools had to become either dual- or parallel-medium schools. Fee-paying schools could no longer refuse children access to their schools on the basis of their inability to pay and children who used to be referred to ‘special’ schools – the blind, deaf, mentally and physically handicapped – now had to be included in mainstream education. In addition to this, classes had to be ‘right-sized’ in accordance with a predetermined teacher-learner ratio, with consequent redeployment of teachers to schools where classes were too big (RSA, 1996d; RSA, 1996e).

Apart from these, and the implementation of a brand new approach to teaching and learning, spelt out in the national curriculum – Curriculum 2005 - schools had to promote the values of the Constitution and protect the rights of all learners (Bray, 2000a: 70; RSA, 1996b). By implication no language, religion

or specific cultural traditions could be prioritized and no child or teacher's rights could be violated. This meant that school assemblies could no longer be used for religious purposes, that all languages should be accorded equal respect and that no child should be subjected to corporal punishment (Bray, 2000a: 30; Imbrogno, 2000:127; Squelch, 2000:28-30). By implication all persons in the school had the right to due process and to the protection of their human dignity (RSA, 1996e).

3.3.1 Implementing change at school level

In order to support teachers, principals and parents in the implementation of change, the various departments of education organized in-service training workshops for all concerned, developed new teacher education programs to help teachers upgrade their qualifications, formed partnerships with higher education institutions to assist in the teacher upgrading process and provided funding for teachers to do so. Even so, the change process was fraught with difficulties and, as Jansen (2002:199) points out, little has changed in schools and in classroom practice throughout South Africa 'despite the production of literally thousands of pages of formal policy documents after apartheid'.

It may be that too many changes were introduced at the same time (Strebel, 1998:113) or that, as Jansen (2002) argues, the State lacked the capacity to deliver on their promises. As indicated earlier (see 3.2) change is complex and, as a result, is seldom welcomed if it is perceived as unnecessary or imposed (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991:88). Unless it is approached in an informed and appropriate way the effort and time spent on its implementation are nothing more than a waste of resources. Also different changes require different strategies. Implementing curriculum changes are not the same as involving parents in school governance. Likewise, changing the language policy of schools require very different strategies to those required in the maintenance of learner discipline. Perhaps the 'one size fits all' change strategy – policy development followed by training – adopted by the Department of Education was at fault here.

3.3.1.1 Curriculum change

As regards the implementation of curriculum changes, the various departments of education organized training workshops to orient teachers towards new ways of thinking and to support them in changing the way they used to do things. These were not particularly effective, first of all because trainers and program consultants were frequently ineffective, and/or because consultants inside the district were often unclear about their roles (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991:85).

Teachers tend to view curriculum change as a criticism of their ability and/or expertise as subject specialists and professionals and, therefore, react negatively towards such change. Older, more experienced teachers often remember previous change efforts, claiming that they ‘have seen it all before’, that ‘educational fashions come and go’, that ‘we’ve gone full circle’, and that, ‘if you wait long enough you will end up swimming with the tide again’ (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992:45).

Moreover, if teachers were not consulted about the proposed changes, they experience change as an imposition, an attempt to change who they are and what they do. Since successful change is dependent on the active involvement and commitment of people, there is little hope of successful educational change unless teachers are fully committed to it and have the requisite skills and capacity to implement the changes proposed (Du Plessis, Conley and Du Plessis, (2007:40).

It is important to remember, though, that when people try something new they often suffer ‘implementation dips’ (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992:51), in which things get worse before they get better, only becoming clearer as people grapple with the meaning and skills of change. They may, for example, be intimidated by new technologies or new equipment, falling back on tried and tested methods but, if supported and if willing to experiment, to take risks, they might eventually become as comfortable with the new as they once were

with the old. In other words, change is a process, not an event, and it takes time for people to adjust to it.

3.3.1.2 Parental involvement

In terms of the South African Schools' Act (1996), parents are responsible for school governance, a function that requires the establishment of a school governing body (SGB). The SGB is a statutory body to which parents are elected to serve and represent the parent body of the school. Because parents need to be informed about and involved in school activities (Heystek, 2001:113), it is up to the SGB to 'devise methods for the active involvement of parents in the education of their children' (Du Plessis et. al, 2007:127).

The South African Schools Act (1996) clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of parents and how best they could assist their children's schools. Involving parents is not an option (Stern, 2003:1); it is 'a critical dimension of effective schooling'. 'Involving parents in school means involving the people who have the responsibilities and duties that teachers borrow' (Stern (2003:4). Even so, it does not happen 'spontaneously': principals and teachers are responsible for bringing it about.

Literature on parental involvement in school matters has shown that there are different reasons, why parents find it difficult to support schools. One of the reasons, mooted by Shah (2001:8), is that 'some teachers see the promotion of parents' rights as offensive because their rights appear more important to the government as the pupils' or teachers' rights' while parents, on the other hand, perceive teachers as being more knowledgeable and better placed than they to make decisions about their children's progress and welfare. As a result, they often see their roles as being undervalued.

Both Swap (1993:25) and Squelch (1994: 55) refer to parents who care about their children's education no matter what their educational background and want to assist but do not know how. The onus therefore rests on the SGB, not only to enquire about parents' abilities but also to put strategies in place to

empower them and to provide opportunities for them to become involved in school activities. This will ensure that role stretches further than paying school fees and collecting reports (Mphahlele, 2003). One way of doing this is through meetings, where parents and teachers can discuss children's performance (Monareng, 1995:56), thus ensuring the presence of a consistent engagement between school and community that supports the child's progress (Shah, 2001:13). Another is to determine parents' expertise and to ask for their support in these areas.

Involvement in school activities require a lot of time and commitment and, because both parents often work, they find it difficult to play a significant role in their children's education at this level. On the other hand, many families are extremely poor either because parents are unemployed or ill. Because of this, parents' sole focus is on providing for the basic needs of their families, not on the 'luxury' of their children's learning (Mashile, 1991:42)

Ineffective communication between the school and the parent community could be another impediment to parental involvement in school activities. Schools typically communicate in writing although many parents, especially those in rural areas, are not able to read or write, hence their lack of response to communication from the schools. Also, children do not always convey to their parents what the school wishes them to know (Du Plessis et al, 2007:130). It is therefore, up to the SGB and the management team of the school (SMT) to discuss with parents the best, easiest and most cost-effective communication methods.

3.3.1.3 Corporal punishment

The abolition of corporal punishment as a means of maintaining school discipline (SASA, 1996) is a direct result of the inclusion of a Bill of Rights in the Constitution of South Africa. By implication, schools are required to develop and adopt a disciplinary policy – a Code of Conduct – that spells out the kind of behaviour that learners should and should not engage in and the

steps that the school will take to ensure that all learners abide by the Code, without infringing in any way on learners' human rights.

Even though corporal punishment is now illegal in terms of SASA, school communities are divided about the appropriateness of its abolition. Teachers and parents who are accustomed to the use of corporal punishment as a means of maintaining discipline regard its abolition as an undermining of their authority and status. Others welcome its abolition in support of the Department of Education's contention (2000:7) that 'children exposed to violence in their homes and at school tend to use violence to solve problems, both as children and adults'. Other reasons for its abolition (Department of Education, 2000:7) include claims that:

- The culture of human rights, tolerance and respect cannot be built by applying corporal punishment to learners
- Corporal punishment evokes feelings of aggression or revenge that will lead to anti-social behaviour
- Children worry about being caught, not about being responsible for what they have done
- Some children, who are used to being beaten and no longer feel the pain, boast about it in front of others
- There is no caring relationship between the learners and the teacher who is always applying corporal punishment;
- Children with learning problems develop a negative attitude to school as their self-esteem is being undermined

Conceding that the abolition of corporal punishment has resulted in many teachers experiencing disciplinary problems in their classes, the Department of Education (2000:1) drew a distinction between discipline and punishment and listed various alternatives to corporal punishment in the Guidelines provided to SGBs regarding the development, adoption and implementation of school codes of conduct.

Discipline is aimed at involving learners, ‘helping them to achieve and realize the importance of being organized and well prepared’ (Scalps and Solomon, 1990:40). Discipline is not confrontational or punitive; rather, it is aimed at the development of self-control, self-discipline and respect for self and others. It is therefore constructive and educative. Punishment is the opposite of discipline and includes measures like shouting, beating and sarcasm. Such methods are punitive and in many cases fail to correct the wrong behaviour. It is therefore necessary to implement disciplinary measures that will encourage learners to behave appropriately. In order to maintain classroom discipline learners need to feel safe and accept responsibility for their own behaviour.

Suggestions for maintaining discipline include collaborative formulation of class and school rules, adequate lesson preparation by teachers, and the nurturing of positive relationship between the various members of the school community – parents, learners and school staff. Classroom discipline may be enforced through ground rules. Rules should be developed together with learners. All learners need to understand what the rules mean and adhere to them. The rules must be displayed where everyone will see them. Because it is an agreement with everybody in the class, learners must sign and bind themselves to obey those rules.

What happens in the classroom must happen in the school: ‘classroom and school strategies should be congruent’ (Department of Education, 2000:12). Consistency in applying rules is crucial but should at all times be fair and aimed at establishing relationships of trust with learners. Learners who feel positive about themselves and their ability to succeed will perform better (Department of Education, 2000:13).

3.3.1.4 Principals as change agents and managers

One of the greatest challenges that school principals currently face is the art of weaving both leadership and management together in the execution of their duties in schools. According to Van Heerden (2002:11), ‘too many schools

are over-managed and under-led'. The radical changes that have and are continuing to take place within the education sector in South Africa necessitates the presence of principals who are both – leaders as well as managers.

Traditionally, school principals were regarded as head teachers responsible for executing tasks with limited complexity. However, as a result of continuous change, especially in the education sector, schools have become complex educational institutions and principals have to display new skills and accept new responsibilities – that is, they must match the positions they occupy. By implication, there is an urgent need for them to be trained, academically and professionally, in educational management (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:2).

Because it believes that it is imperative to establish a clear and agreed understanding of what the country's education system expects of those who are entrusted with the leadership and management of its schools (DoE, 2005: 4), it supports principals who are currently in position of leadership and management of schools in the furtherance of their studies and/or self-development by offering departmental workshops and funding tertiary studies. In this way, claims the Department, it is demonstrating its commitment to raising the professional standards for leadership and management in South African schools, something that will benefit education as a whole.

The Department of Education (DoE) regards the 'core purpose of principalship' as the provision of leadership and management in the school because it enables the creation and support of conditions under which high quality teaching and learning can take place and promotes the highest possible standards of learner achievement in any context (DoE, 2005:10). Informed by this notion, DoE has identified six areas of principalship that, together, constitute the job description of principals. These, as stipulated in the Employment of Educators Act (Act 76 of 1998), are:

- **General/Administrative duties** related to the acceptance of responsibility for the professional management of the school, like giving instructions and

guidelines for timetabling, admission and placement of learners; keeping records of school accounts and events; ensuring that information in departmental circulars is conveyed to staff members and/or stored in an accessible manner; regularly inspecting the school premises and equipment to ensure that they are being used properly and that good discipline is being maintained.

- **Personnel management**, which entails the provision of professional leadership in the school through actions like guiding, supervising and offering professional advice on the work and performance of all staff in the school and, where necessary, discussing and writing reports on teaching, support, non-teaching and other staff. It also involves ensuring equitable distribution of workloads among staff and ensuring that all evaluations/forms of assessment conducted in the school are properly and efficiently organized.
- **Teaching**, a duty that requires the principal's teaching a certain percentage of the time and assessing learner performance in accordance with the workload of the relevant post level.
- **Interaction with stakeholders**, by serving on and rendering assistance to the governing body of the school and by participating in community activities.
- **Communication** with school staff and the school governing body to ensure the efficient and smooth running of the school; liaising with the Circuit/ Regional Office, Section concerning the administration, staffing, accounting, purchase of equipment and updating of learner statistics, and cooperating with the governing body regarding specified aspects in the South African Schools Act.
- **Managing the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS)**, designed by the Department of Education to ensure quality public

education for all and to consistently improve the quality of teaching and learning. In accordance with Collective Agreement Number 8 (DoE 2003:3), principals, in managing the IQMS, have to:

- *appraise individual teachers* in a transparent manner with a view to determining their strength and weaknesses and to follow this up through appropriate individual development programs (Developmental Appraisal Program).
- *evaluate individual teachers* (Circular 64/2007, 2007:3-4) for salary progression, grade progression, affirmation of appointments and rewards and incentives in terms of a performance agreement between the principal as supervisor and the relevant teacher (Performance Management)
- *evaluate the overall effectiveness of a school*, including the support provided by the District, school management, infrastructure and learning resources (Whole School Evaluation).

Change involves ‘moving from a present state to a different future one (Schumacher and Sommers, 2001:89). Many changes, at both personal and organizational level, require new knowledge and skills to enable us to adapt successfully to new requirements and circumstances’ (Whitaker, 1993:49). Indications in literature are that principals are responsible for turning around and bringing change to schools: they are the apex of every institution and are responsible for setting the tone and giving direction (Hausman, 2000:39-40; Quaglia and Quay, 2003:27). In order to do this, principals must not simply be leaders but ‘facilitators, balancers, flag bearers, bridgers and inquirers. They recognize that although all these forces and constituencies are resources, the proverbial buck stops with them’ (Ralles and Goldring, 2000:135). In the end the buck stops with the principal: it is s/he who has to see to it that change is effectively implemented (Rust and Freidus, 2001).

School managers were under considerable pressure to implement the unprecedented array of change initiatives that came with the demise of apartheid and that this has resulted in intense emotional fatigue amongst

them. Such ‘emotional fatigue’, according to Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991:165), is typically due to principals not understanding the changes that they are supposed to implement, not being supported by central administration to deal with change but also to their keeping their concerns and fears about change implementation to themselves so that others might not think them ‘stupid’, ‘incompetent’ or ‘subversive’ and not sharing such concerns with teachers either because it is easier to ‘manage’ teachers if one ‘keeps one’s distance’. Consequently, many principals have not lived up to such expectations in recent times (Duignan, 2007:6).

In their execution of leadership and management tasks, principals should work democratically with teachers, parents and learners as well as with other stakeholders (Atkinson, 2000:16; Nadler, 1999:93; Theron, 2007:201). This requires effective two-way communication between the principal and all other parties. Through communicating with one another the entire school community can retain the motivation and inspiration required to make change happen and to sustain it for as long as required (Kruger and Van Deventer 2005:156; Holbeche, 2006:315, Johnson, 2001:32; Nadler, 1991:93; Weideman, 2002:16-18). Feedback and consultation are important elements of effective change in that they ensure clarity and test understanding (Smit and De Cronje, 1997:345; Weller and Weller, 2002:112). The principal should therefore not only talk but also listen, ensuring that the message is tailored properly and that the environment in which it is conveyed is one of trust and receptivity to alternate or new ideas (Smit and De Cronje, 1997:343). The principal should also avoid ‘information overload’ since this could result in a breakdown of communication.

Finally, given the complexity and subjective meaning of change, principals who act as change agents need to expect and be able to resolve conflict, (Mullins, 2005:904; Robbins, 2005:422) It is up to them to ‘find a harmonious balance between conflict and cooperation’ (Martin, 2005:746; Prinsloo, 2001:3) by distinguishing between the person and the problem that causes conflict (Prinsloo, 2001:7). In a situation where teachers

experience difficulty accepting and dealing with educational change, for example, the principal should try to identify and address the cause of the difficulty rather than blaming the person or his/her attitude towards change. Above all, the principal should accept that it is natural to want to win in a conflict situation (Kruger and Van Deventer, 2005:32) and try to create a 'win-win' situation.

Principals could utilize a variety of strategies to resolve conflict, bearing in mind that 'he is dealing with a group of intelligent and reasonable professional people, who will attempt to remain loyal to him (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:319). He should, therefore, strive to get groups or individuals to the point where they admit the validity or basis of one another's viewpoints so that they can discuss the problems frankly and objectively. Such a situation becomes possible when people involved cooperate, and are open and willing and ready to reach a certain level of compromise.

With regard to conflicts resulting from resistance to change, principals should remember that the reason for the resistance might simply be the result of people not knowing how to cope with it (Fullan, 1999, p. xii; Rossow and Warner, 2000:283-284). More often than not 'resistance to change results because most of the working environment are structured and arranged to deal with the work in the way that they have understood it and not with the work arranged in the way they thought of' (Kendall, 1990:23). By affording teachers the opportunity to express their fears, to speak about change and how it will affect them, and to express their frustrations, principals are creating a trusting safe environment more conducive to the acceptance of change. Also, by involving teachers in the change process throughout (Newton and Tarrant, 1992:93; Smit and De Cronje 1997:267; Surowiecki, 2005:29)) principals will be breaking down resistance to change. Honesty is crucial in this regard. No matter how promising and innovative educational change may appear to the principal, he/she has the responsibility of informing, consulting and actively engaging teachers about the impact the change would have on their job

function in its genesis, (Massie and Douglas, 1992:17; Earley and Weidling, 2004:58; Hobson, 2003:15).

Above all, principals should remember that staff members are usually more readily inclined to accept programmes of change if the principal seems to favour these changes and if s/he directs and facilitates the change (Hall and Hord, 2001:149) in supportive ways (Theron, 2007:198; Van der Westhuizen, 1991:648). The role of the principal is to create conditions within the school that will appreciate, cultivate and support change. (Mphahlele, 2003: 23). In the management of curriculum change, for example, principals, in providing initiative and leadership, should be seen to be involved in many curriculum tasks as a major player and decision (Ubben, Hughes and Norris, 2001:116). In this regard Coleman, Graham and Middlewood (2003:66) suggests that principals should have a holistic understanding of the curriculum in its entirety; should accept accountability for the maintenance of consistently high standards; should develop and maintain an appropriate culture for curriculum innovation; should manage the relevant structures required for curriculum innovation; should delegate operational roles to able staff members, while still managing the whole process. In this sense the principal is the key figure in implementation and continuation of change (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991:88).

3.4 Sacred stories of change

Key to an understanding of the ‘re-storied’ principals’ narratives presented in the next chapter is an understanding of the context in which they experience change, in which their stories are played out. It is important, therefore, to spend some time on a discussion of the sacred nature of the educational change story in South Africa.

It was Reid (1987:12) who first applied the phrase, ‘sacred story’ to policy - making and implementation. Following Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000: 3-5) discussion of the way policies are ‘funnelled’ into schools and how school

staff ‘professionalized’ policy material so as to make it part of the communal knowledge environment in which they worked, Reid (1987:16) argued that policy, ‘stripped of its deliberative origins has the abstract epistemological quality of theoretical knowledge stripped of its inquiry origins’. Consequently it simulates the ‘rhetoric of conclusions’ typical of theoretical discourse, that is, ‘theoretical knowledge uprooted from its origins and standing in abstract, objective independence’ (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 9).

According to Spence (1982:36), it is the ‘universality and taken-for-grantedness of the supremacy of theory over practice gives it the quality of a sacred story’. In taking something for granted one implies that it represents that which is or should be, that which is to be adhered to, not criticized. These stories are, moreover, ‘sacred’, according to Spence (1982:37), in their elusiveness – they can seldom be ‘fully and directly told because they live, so to speak, in the arms and legs and bellies of the celebrants’, those in whose consciousness it lies so deep that it cannot be spoken about.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000:8-10) argue that teachers’ professional landscape is embedded in a sacred story, one which they should not interrogate but accept because it has been ‘packaged for them in textbooks, curriculum materials and professional development workshops’, but also in policy documents. School principals, in their capacity as managers and leaders, are required to know, understand and facilitate the implementation of policy directives as a matter of course. This is part of their job. By implication, they are obliged to provide those whom they manage and lead with a ‘policy knowledge and skills package’ – the rhetoric of conclusions – that they themselves received from the policymakers ‘up there’.

Principals therefore find themselves with a moral and professional dilemma. They are expected to ‘preach the gospel’ (Bacal, 2006:13; Mathibe, 2007:533 and Prew, 2007:458) according to this sacred story to the ‘disciples’ at their own schools, regardless of the fact that the language in which policy documents are written – also the language used in policy training workshops – is abstract and unfamiliar to them. Secondly, they have been ‘screened’ from

the subjective reality of the policy because they do not know those persons of flesh and blood who were responsible for the documents with which they are presented. Rather, they meet the change agents, whose only responsibility is to ensure that they have the requisite knowledge and skills to implement the policy. Thirdly, principals are themselves at the receiving rather than the creation end of the scale, not having been involved in the *development* of the policy documents, only in the implementation part (Weller and Weller, 2000:88) Their entry into the arena of educational change is, therefore, an *ex post factum* one –they have had no opportunity to debate either the policy itself or issues related to its but they are morally obliged to ensure its implementation at their schools.

On the one end of an imagined scale principals are expected, even demanded to willingly and ably manage (implement) policy changes in their schools without question or criticism. On the other end of the scale they are expected to lead in change, critically reflecting on what they do, distinguishing between what works and what does not, thereby paving the way forward (Duffy, 1999:30-31; Dunklee, 2000:91). The very different positions represented by these two ends of the imaginary scale typically result in conflict – internal as well as external. Principals might well have to choose between their own values and understandings of their leadership and management role and the expectations of those whom they are representing – the policy makers versus the teachers, learners and parents. According to Cuban (1992:6), ‘competing, highly prized values’ in contexts like these are seldom fully satisfied. Consequently, principals have to operate in an ‘uneasy professional environment’, never sure of their position and/or constantly confronted by the conflicting demands of policy and practice.

In order to cope with this moral dilemma, principals often adopt different personas appropriate to difference spaces and situations, forcing them to ‘split’ their professional ‘existence’ into different parts (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 5; and Cuban, 1992). This is especially true in the South African situation. Given its past history of racial fragmentation, social inequality and

current tensions related to the integration of diverse peoples, cultures, languages and religions, school principals are trapped in this dilemma.

Principals who have been stripped of the power they previously had, power based on their race, are morally obliged to support the sacred story of educational change in South Africa in fear of being called racist, and/or at the risk of being retrenched. Those for whom the changed dispensation brought liberations are morally obliged to support the initiatives of those they voted into power even when they are uncomfortable about some of the changes. If they were to criticize the innovations they could be regarded as disloyal to the cause, corrupted by western ideas or undermining the dream of a new South African. While all 'policy stories' could therefore be regarded as sacred, the policy story of educational change in South Africa seems to be more sacred than others because its moral dimension involves more than commitment to educational change – it involves a commitment to the creation of a new society, irrespective of loss and gain.

3.5 Concluding comments

Principals are the last link between the school communities and the Department of Education. Whilst they are seen by the Department of Education as leading professionals and responsible to carry the transformation process forward, they are teachers in schools who also have to go through all the challenges that are experienced in school. This chapter outlined the significant role of principals and the impact they have on schools.

Comparing various theorists' positions on educational change and the way those who have a stake in education deal with change, I argued in this chapter that change theory is also a story, albeit a different kind of story. While researchers such as (Carter, 1997, Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) emphasize the moral and epistemological differences between theoretical and narrative knowledge, I maintain that the theoretical story of educational change and its management is, in fact, the macro story within which the individual stories of

the principals who participated in my inquiry are framed. While acknowledging that theoretical knowledge/language is conceptual, propositional, generic, relational, impersonal and situation-independent whereas narrative knowledge/language is prototypical, personal, contextual, and subjective, I argue that school principals, having being exposed to theoretical knowledge on the management of educational change and having adopted the terminology of educational change theory in thinking and talking about their own experiences of change are, in fact, adding to generic change stories.

It is on the basis of the preceding thesis that I used this chapter to juxtapose the theoretical story of change - as propagated/narrated through the lens of complexity theory – with the official story of educational change in South Africa during the period 1998-2008. In doing so, I suggested that the official story of educational change and the way it should have been managed in South Africa represent what Clandinin and Connelly (2000:8) call a ‘sacred story’, a story that is ‘so pervasive’ that it remains ‘mostly unnoticed and, when named, is hard to define’ because it lies ‘too deep in the consciousness of the people to be directly told’.

The results of my inquiry, which are presented in the next chapter as individual principals’ narratives of change, suggest that the sacred story of educational change in South Africa has been told so often, with such passion and conviction, that it has become an intrinsic part of the consciousness of those who have to live it even if and when it sits uneasy with them.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRINCIPALS' STORIES OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

4.1 Introduction and Purpose

This chapter is aimed at presenting, in narrative form, principals' experiences of educational change in South Africa during the period 1998 to 2008 as told by the five principals who participated in my inquiry. As indicated in Chapter 2, I restructured – or re-storied - the original versions of principals' experiences of change with a view to ensuring that each story had a chronological storyline that enabled me to identify similarities and differences between individual principals' stories. In interpreting the re-storied narratives, I took cognizance of the 'sacred story' of educational change in South Africa that I presented in Chapter 3, since it forms the context within which principals' individual and collective stories were shaped.

Given the qualitative nature of my inquiry, specifically the fact that qualitative data analysis is inductive rather than deductive, the stories presented in this chapter no longer represent raw data in pure form. The vignettes presented here are merely what I regarded as significant excerpts from my restructured versions of principals' first-hand accounts of the way they experienced the educational changes referred to in this study. In this sense the vignettes represent what I regard as significant and are the result of my re-storying of principals' original accounts that emerged from the interview data. The transcribed interviews (Annexure G) represent the raw data in pure form. My restructured narrative version of each of these transcripts represents the first stage of my interpretation of the data, the selection of significant vignettes the second, and the interpretation of these the third. The fourth stage of my data analysis, the results of which are also included in this chapter, is the identification of common themes or patterns in principals' stories. The

answers that these themes provide to my initial research questions are presented in the next chapter.

My approach to the restructuring/re-storying of principals' first-hand accounts of their experiences of educational change is explained in detail in Chapter 2. Suffice it to restate here that I approached the analysis of the eventual narratives in a holistic way. As indicated in Chapter 2, holistic analysis is a three-dimensional process focusing on the *content* (what the narrator tells the listener), *structure* (how the narrator merges the various parts of the story into a cohesive narrative) and the *form* (the words, expressions, figures of speech, etc. that the narrator uses in telling the story) of each story told.

In reading principals' stories I formed a mental image of each character (Lieblich et al, 1998:13) that suggested what it is that drives, exhilarates, upsets and calms down each of them. Informed by this understanding I was then able to infer the reasons for each principal's particular response to change, whether self-initiated or externally imposed. I then double-checked the inferences against the turning points, climaxes and denouements that emerged from the structural analysis (Bryman, 2001: 412) and/or the themes, hidden attitudes and emotions reflected in the way each principal told his/her story – verbally as well as non-verbally (Punch, 1998: 219).

I took cognizance of the *milieu* (physical and emotional) in which each story played itself out as well as of the way in which different *characters* in the story interacted with one another. As regards the protagonist in each story – that is, the principal who is telling it with him/herself as the main character – I speculate on the influence that his/her milieu might have on his/her response to change, indicate what inspired him/her to embark on the journey of principalship, highlight events that I regard as milestones in his/her journey towards principalship, mention obstacles, or stumbling blocks, on the way and draw inferences about the difference between the dream and the reality of principalship – their destination – as experienced by each of them.

Using a journey as metaphor for principals' experiences of change made it easier for me to compare individual parts of the stories with one another (Lieblich et al, 1998:88) and enabled me to link the themes emerging from the stories to my initial research questions.

In terms of this metaphor, principals' reasons for embarking on the journey towards principalship and the steps they took to prepare themselves for the journey represents the *first stage* of the journey. The *second stage* focuses on the journey itself, the obstacles along the way and their eventual destination – being appointed as principals. The *third stage* focuses on the eventual destination, the extent to which it lived up to their expectations, and their views on the way forward.

4.2 Main characters as narrators

4.2.1 Character 1-The principal of School A

The principal in School A was given the pseudonym Kedibone - meaning '*I have seen many events taking place here*'. She was given the name because of challenging events that are taking place in her school. Kedibone is a black, single secondary school principal of medium height with manageable weight. She is in her mid-forties. As a result of the events taking place at her school, she is depressed and this makes her ineffective in her work.

4.2.2 Character 2 – The principal of School B

The principal of School B was given the pseudonym Goboima – meaning '*It is difficult*.' She was given the name because of the difficulties she experiences at her school. She was appointed as a teacher without teaching qualifications. She is a black married primary farm school principal who is in her late forties, short and overweight. She experiences difficulties in her daily work and this makes her to be timid, fearful and depressed in her work. She is an ineffective principal.

4.2.3 Character 3 – The principal of School C

The principal of School C was given the pseudonym Rekopane – meaning ‘*we are united*’ The name has been give to him as a result of the transformation in his school, which includes, amongst others, the introduction of English as an additional language and the admission of black learners at the school. The name suggests that black and white learners and parents are uniting. Rekopane is a white male married secondary school principal who is in his early-fifties. He is tall and well built. He is confident and optimistic and that makes him to be an effective leader and manager.

4.2.4 Character 4: The principal of School D

The principal of School D was given the pseudonym Šomišanang, which means ‘*working together.*’ The name was given to him because of the presence of learners from different racial groups in his school. Though it is a former Afrikaans model C school, learners from other racial groups are learning through the language of Afrikaans. The name appeals to the white teachers and parents to work together with learners and parents from other groups. Šomišanang is a married, white male school principal. He is a tall and overweight person who is in his late fifties. He is a confident person that makes him to be an effective leader and a manager.

4.2.5 Character 5 – The principal of School E

The principal of School E was given the pseudonym Kedisaletse – meaning ‘*I have been left behind to solve them.*’ He was given the name because of the events that were happening at his school where everybody seemed to be moving out and leaving him behind to solve problems of the school. Kedisaletse is a black male primary farm school principal. He is a married person in his early forties, tall and overweight. He sometimes feels depressed because of the situation at his school but his confidence makes him carry out his work well.

4.3 Narrative context

Context, as used in this chapter, refers to the physical and emotional milieu in which each of the participating principals currently carries out his/her managerial and leadership duties, as well as the cultural and/or racial background by which their individual characters were and are still being shaped. Since all their stories – past and present – play out against the broader South African background, (pre- and post- apartheid), context also refers to South Africa and the changes it has gone through, with specific reference to the changes that occurred in education.

In describing individual principal's specific working milieus I took the necessary steps to ensure that the inferences I make regarding their responses to change are informed by contextual data rather than subjective bias on my part. Moreover, it gave me a sense of other factors, apart from the change factor, that could have had an effect on principals' experiences of change and the roles they are playing in this regard.

As indicated in Chapter Two, the empirical part of my investigation was conducted in five Gauteng North District schools. Some schools are situated in a town surrounded by farms and close to the Mpumalanga border. Although it is a relatively small town, its infrastructure is sound: basic services, such as water and electricity, housing, education, libraries and policing, are available to all. The rate of unemployment and illiteracy is, however, relatively high, with those who are employed typically working in the local municipality, on farms, or in government institutions like schools, clinics and police stations in the area. Some, though, work in Pretoria, an urban area approximately 60 km away from town. Schools in the area are in a relatively good condition and are managed by the Gauteng Department of Education. Nearly all schools in the area fall partially under Section 21 and they therefore receive an annual subsidy from the Department of Education.

As also indicated in Chapter Two, I made use of purposive sampling to select principals who were to participate in my study, a choice that enabled me to

choose cases (schools and principals) exhibiting features relevant to my research focus (Silverman, 2000:105). Some of the schools are situated in town; some are in townships and others are on farms. The principals I identified include one white male secondary school principal, one white male primary school principal, one female black primary farm school principal, one male black primary farm school principal, and one female black secondary school principal, all of whom have been heads of institutions for at least 10 years. I specifically selected principals from different racial and gender groups because I wanted to factor these differences into my understanding of the way these influenced their experience of and response to educational change during the period 1998 to 2008.

4.4 Narrative content

The selected principals themselves provided narrative content, that is, the first-hand accounts that provided the data for my ‘research story’. Their stories emerged during my one-on-one interviews with each of them. To enable me to capture everything principals told me, I tape-recorded each interview, with their permission, promising to protect their identities and the identities of their schools, to give them the opportunity of doing a ‘reality check’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1998: 211) reading and, if necessary, amending the tape-recorded transcripts, and undertaking to destroy all the recordings once the study had run its course.

In analyzing the narrative content, I combined holistic and categorical content approaches (Lieblich et al, 1998:13) because I first wanted to get a sense of the professional life stories of the original narrators before I attempted to trace emerging themes and uncover hidden stories, motives, thoughts and emotions. Following Lieblich et al, (1998:62) I read the transcribed interviews conducted with each of the participating principals more than once, highlighting specific incidents and utterances that would help me better to understand the person whose story I was planning to analyze.

I then removed the original interview questions so as to foreground the voice of the original narrator. That done, I re-storied the original narratives by organizing them in terms of a journey – the metaphor I chose as the organizing principle for my research story (see Annexure G for complete restoried versions). I then read the stories again, noting the plots and emerging themes of individual vignettes - the ‘little’ stories that the original narrators used to illustrate a point (Rogan and de Kock, 2005:14) – relating them to the story as a whole. In this way I managed to trace what Polkinhorne (1988:15) termed the ‘progression of the plot’, where the hero – or protagonist - advances towards his/her goal.

Following Van Manen (1988:107), recurring patterns/trends were noted throughout but only grouped as emerging themes in retrospect, once the structural and discourse analyses of each story had been completed. The identification of ‘universal statements’ – themes emerging from principals’ collective stories was done in the same way, by comparing the themes of individual stories with each other.

4.5 Narrative discourse

Various researchers (Lieblich et al, 1998:155) have argued that specific aspects of narrative ‘can yield insight into the emotional experience with which a narrative is charged’. Amongst the aspects they mention are:

- What Lieblich et al (1998:155) call ‘*mental*’ *verbs*, such as *thought*, *understood*, *noticed*, etc., that could be indicative of the extent to which the character is consciously processing the experience being related.
- Ways in which narrators use *denotations of time and place* to create or bridge distance between what is being related and what was in fact experienced, thereby suggesting the extent to which the narrator is able or willing to identify him/herself with the experience concerned.
- Narrators referring to themselves in the *first, second or third person* and their tendency to switch between these, indicating the probability that

narrators are – consciously or unconsciously – creating a split between their speaking and experiencing selves in an attempt to cope with disturbing emotions associated with the event being related and/or with the traumatic nature of the event itself.

- *Repetitions* (of syllables, words, sentences and ideas) and *detailed description of events*, both of which may indicate difficulty in verbalizing the experience and/or in an upsurge of emotions associated with the event.

In analyzing the way in which participating principals communicated their experiences I focused not only on the language they used, but also on voice, tone, facial expressions and body language. To do so, I reread the original transcriptions of the tape-recorded interviews, marking all the episodes that seemed to cause a disturbance to the narrators, those that suggested some kind of disharmony in their stories, and those that were indicative of their reasoning processes. Thereafter I marked the formal linguistic aspects described in the previous paragraph to determine whether or not there were any disjuncture between the content of the narrative and the way in which it was communicated (Lieblich, et al, 1998:156).

4.6 Restructured narratives

Individual stories are presented in similar, but not identical, vein in that some parts are summarized, some presented verbatim, all accompanied by my comments or interpretations, and all concluding with brief concluding comments on my impression of the original narrator's character and the impact that educational change has had on him/her. In commenting on each character's story, I draw distinctions between what I regard as cover stories and secret stories, indicating as far as possible, the relation of each to the sacred story or stories in which they evolve and/or are resolved.

4.6.1 Kedibone's story

Kedibone, a black woman in her mid forties, has been a principal for 11 years, since 1997. The secondary school at which she is principal is situated in a township approximately 15km from town and had a learner enrolment of approximately - 800 to 850 at the time of my inquiry, with some of the learners coming from nearby farms. The school has had a democratically elected governing body since May 2006. Even though the school is subsidized by the Gauteng Department of Education, which allocates funds to the school to pay for services and to maintain the school buildings annually, the school has been experiencing financial difficulties. This is partially due to the fact that the majority of parents are unemployed and some are farm labourers and are unable to pay schools fees with the result that the school was declared a 'no fee' school – exempting parents from paying school fees - in 2007.

Kedibone started her teaching career at Post Level 1, as a classroom teacher. Later she was appointed as deputy principal and eventually as acting principal of a primary school in the largely rural Limpopo Province before she applied for the position of principal at her current school. Kedibone indicated that she had always dreamt of being a principal but that it was while she was acting principal and had the opportunity of attending a number of principal's workshops on school leadership and management that her dream was resuscitated. It was also during this period that she saw the advertisement – for a principal's position at a secondary school in the Gauteng Province – and decided to apply for it. She went for an interview and was subsequently appointed. Nobody urged her to apply – she did it of her own accord, motivated by her dream and the knowledge and experience she had gained as acting principal.

Reflecting on the move from her old school to the new one, Kedibone indicated that it had not been an easy one, mostly because she was not used to working at a secondary school but also because of the responsibilities attached to the position of being a principal and the fact that principals had to account for their actions to all the school stakeholders. The problems Kedibone remembers,

though, are not specifically related to either of these two aspects of principalship. Rather, they indicate problems she had in establishing her authority as a principal. She remembers problems with staff members who resisted her appointment and learners who were bigger and more problematic than those she had been used to at a primary school.

In reminiscing on the problems she experienced when first taking up the position of principal at her current school, Kedibone seemingly triggered memories of similar experiences she had when first taking on management responsibilities in the rural school where she started her teaching career. She ascribed the problems to the fact that teachers at her previous school were loath to accord her the respect that was due to her because of their friendship with the former principal – hence they resisted any changes she wanted to make – and because her position as ‘acting’ principal did not give her the same authority and status that an ‘official’ appointment would have.

Kedibone responds to these problems by pulling rank, ‘issuing instructions as if I am already a permanent principal’, claiming that the problems are not her fault but lie in others’ attitudes towards her, insisting that she enjoys being principal because she likes ‘working with people’, pretending that the problems do not exist. Her description of what ‘working with people’ means, namely ‘giving them direction...guiding...(and) motivating them’ suggests that she likes being in charge of others even though she claims that principalship is not about the ‘promotion’ but about the ‘positive impact’ that she could have on the school and those associated with it.

Kedibone’s inclination to blame external factors for her professional problems is also evident in her reflection on the impact that post-apartheid educational changes have had on the school where she is principal. She specifically mentions changes to the curriculum, resource provision, learner rights, support given by the district office, sport participation, discipline (corporal punishment), learner pregnancy, parental involvement, school fees, transport to and from school, the way in which principals’ role functions have changed, and increased workloads as personal stress factors.

Her tendency to put up a brave face, pretending that everything will be fine in the end, is evident when she starts elaborating on the impact of these changes. Indicating her understanding of the threats that change poses to most people, the benefits that educational change has had for learners, and her conviction that the changes were positive *'because their intention was to change the face of our schools'*, she devotes the rest of her response to a one-sided discussion of the destabilizing effect of these changes, claiming that the tempo at which change took place caused chaos, nervousness, uncertainty, anxiety, frustration and stress, especially on principals, *'who were expected to make sure that everything goes according to plan'*.

The image of Kedibone as a person torn between her loyalty to the cause, maintaining the persona of a capable principal and the struggle she has to keep it all together reflects the conflicts that often exist between a character's sacred, cover and secret stories (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). This intensity of this conflict is especially evident in the way that Kedibone narrates her story, verbally as well as non-verbally.

The stories teachers tell to outsiders are often *'cover stories...in which they portray themselves as characters who are certain, expert people'* Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:15). In so doing, they protect their professional and personal image by creating an imaginary persona who will be perceived as certain, expert and worthy of being respected. This is their way of managing their dilemma.

Kedibone's **cover story** is one of a confident, successful and efficient person, someone who knows what she wants and is willing to do what needs to be done to achieve her goals and/or realize her dreams. In this story she always dreamt of being a principal, not because of the status attached to the position but because she had a vision of herself leading, guiding and directing those who needed it. What is also clear from Kedibone's cover story is a belief in her capability to be principal: her previous principal had appointed her as deputy principal and later recommended her for the position of acting principal and she had been appointed as principal of her current school based

on her application and the subsequent interview. Concluding her cover story is Kedibone's the impression she wishes to create that any difficulties she might have experienced previously – at her previous and current schools – are past, and that the situation she is currently in represents the manifestation of her dream – *'I like being a principal here ...I am happy'*.

Kedibone's **secret story**, the story of her internal struggle to keep her head above water, is reflected in her admission that being a principal is a *'huge responsibility'*, that she *'did not have the full support from all the educators and there was a lot of resistance among some of them: you know, dragging of feet when it comes to carrying out instructions and their duties; submission always late'* and that the problems she had in dealing with high school learners were *serious...because high school learners are also bigger learners*. Kedibone's sudden switch from referring to herself in the first person ('I') to the impersonal third person ('one') in *'one finds himself or herself in serious problems'*, suggests a split between the speaking and experiencing self (Lieblich et al, 1998:156) similar to the split occurring when victims of rape and abuse adopt multiple personalities as a means of protecting the 'real' self. The trauma these experiences caused her is also suggested in the repeated interjection - *'really, really'* - as well as in the way she communicates non-verbally - scratching her head (not wanting to believe it actually happened), folding her arms across her chest (to protect herself from assault), and pausing often (as if to catch her breath).

Having exposed her vulnerability, Kedibone reverts to the creation of an illusion that everybody in her school is working harmoniously together, telling me that learners look to *'us as their parents ... we do it'* (discipline, motivate, guide and lead). Or perhaps this is a technique by means of which she gains some comfort, seeing herself as one of a community of principals, recalling the feeling of togetherness she experienced while attending the principals' workshops during her Limpopo days. Having gathered some strength from the communal reference she reverts to the first person - *'I guess those workshops helped me so much that (I) started to learn many more things about being a principal'*. Implying that being a principal is an important and lonely job that

can be done only by those with courage and determination, Kedibone merges her secret and cover stories with an illustration of her own courage and determination - *'...but you know, even though I was the acting principal - but like I said, it was very difficult – I acted as if I was already the principal...but to me it was a challenge which I knew that I will defeat it one day'*.

It is in Kedibone's reflection on the changes that have taken place in South African school education during the period 1998 to 2008 that the first glimpses of her **sacred story** make their appearance. As indicated earlier, Kedibone first became a principal in the new political dispensation. Since she had previously been a member of that part of South African society that had been oppressed and disadvantaged by apartheid she might feel morally obliged to support any changes to the old system, including the old system of education. In this sense the story of policy change could be equated with a 'sacred' story, a story that should not be questioned because it is 'right'. As a principal, Kedibone's moral obligation to support change is even imperative since, in her own words, principals have to *'make sure that everything goes according to plan. When things go right or wrong they all look at the principal and (pause) as a principal I have to carry every bit and piece of information before I can give to other people'*.

As expected of any loyal disciple Kedibone explicitly mentions positive changes in education.

'Our learners come from the farms where there are no high schools, so they come here. You know, in the past these learners were struggling with transport because most of them had to travel on foot, and some were hiking and were not safe. So, since 1994 there was an improvement for them because the department has organized a free scholar transport to take them to school and back home, and they are encouraged to come to school because they have transport'.

Also

‘And so, at first such parents were exempted from paying school fees for their children because...because most of the parents come from poor home backgrounds where they can hardly afford food at home, so exempting them from paying school fees was a relief to them. As you know most of the children in the past left school because their parents did not have money.’

Her deliberate attempt to be loyal to the doctrine of the sacred story is, however, undermined by her non-verbal communication. While telling me how parents and learners benefited from the exemption of school fees, she avoided looking me in the eye, preferring to tidy up her desk, moving books around, as if she was nervous that she might be caught out telling a lie. To protect herself she once again uses generalization.

‘It was not good because people did not understand. I mean, educators did not understand what was happening at first, especially the new curriculum. The new curriculum was not warmly welcomed because teachers did not see the need to change... The situation was stressful on everybody, especially principals.’

Although Kedibone does not specifically refer to or even identify the sacred (policy) story, her awareness of its existence and of the moral obligation it places on her as a principal is clear from the fact that she once again moves away from using the first person to using the third. The switch is different from the earlier one, though: she now switches from the personal first (‘I’) to the professional third (‘the principal’), implying that what is true for her as a principal is by implication true for all other principals. Indications are that Kedibone uses this generalization ‘that holds true in all cases’ (Lieblich et al, 1998:149) to remind herself that she is not alone in this, that other principals are experiencing the same problems that she is, because she suddenly switches from the impersonal third person referred to as ‘the principal’ to the more personal plural ‘we’, referring to the community of principals of which she is a member. It would seem as if she derives comfort from discussing the effect of change on others rather than on herself. At the same time she reveals much about her

personality and her belief in her own ability to manage changes with which she might not agree.

‘Things were not as we expected them to be...those changes made us to go through tough and difficult times...we were expected as principals to manage and to make those changes to become real...we were nervous, uncertain, anxious and frustrated and I think this is the feeling we have gone through during that period...I mean that corporal punishment was abolished in schools...to many schools it was ...it was a means of maintaining discipline...Yes...it was cruel to punish learners in such an inhuman way but today we longer have learners in our schools who are committed...especially high school learners...Schools have turned into centers of drugs and other forms of crime...learners they give a lot of headache...’

Kedibone provides no evidence to support her generalized contention that corporal punishment had been a means of maintaining order and discipline in other schools prior to its abolition or that its abolition was causing disciplinary problems in schools other than her own. Neither does she provide evidence of other principals being nervous, uncertain, anxious and frustrated, or that they are finding it as difficult as she does to manage changes at school level. Even so the sacred story is there, in the phrase *‘we were expected to’*. Whose expectations were these? When, where and how were they conveyed? Why would principals have to live up to them and what would the consequences be if they did not?

Kedibone also makes use of what Lieblich et al (1998:149) calls ‘qualified generalizations’, that is, generalizations framed in a way that indicates that the person who uses them is aware of their limitations. When talking about curriculum changes, for example, Kedibone uses the word, *‘guess’* to suggest her awareness of the limitations inherent in her generalizations.

‘I guess even up to today the schools don’t have a clear curriculum...that we can say it will be there with in the years to

come...they way things are changing, this brings a lot of uncertainty to schools’.

Having pointed out that *‘the new curriculum was not warmly welcomed’*, that teachers *‘did not see the need to change’*, and that this caused *‘confusion...making the situation to be difficult’*, Kedibone pointed out that new ways of *‘teaching and learning, where learners are participating much, unlike in the past...’* was a move in the right direction. In explicitly balancing her concerns with praise Kedibone once again suggests that she is aware of her moral obligation to believe in and promote the sacred stories created by policy makers and/or change agents. Not only does her use of understatements and the use of abstract and/or euphemistic jargon typical of sacred stories (*learning curve; coming to terms with...*) emphasize her awareness of the existence of such stories but it also helps her cover up her doubts about the value and sustainability of that which it preaches.

‘I cannot say that the situation is stabilized...I guess we are still battling to come to terms with the new curriculum and how to keep discipline in our school... “its only a few of those who don’t do their work, who stay outside their classes and who are continually absent from school.”

Perhaps unbeknown to her, Kedibone’s use of the figurative expression, *‘battling’* calls up images of war and of schools as war zones. The same image is reflected in her reference to schools as *‘centers of drugs and other forms of crime’* and her experience of pregnant Grade 12 girls as a *“time bomb that is ticking...once it explodes...someone is going to get into trouble’*. According to Lieblich et al (1998) the use of figurative language – metaphors, similes, onomatopoeia, etc. – is usually indicative of the state of the narrator’s mind. Based on Kedibone’s choice of metaphors it could safely be inferred that she is close to breaking point – like the time bomb she was referring to she might well be on the point of exploding. Indications are that she feels she has no control over what is happening.

The conflict between her moral obligation to obey the doctrines of the secret story and her anger at her inability to do so is evident in Kedibone's lengthy description of pregnancy amongst Grade 12 girls. Interspersing her seemingly factual descriptions with repetitions rhetorical questions to which she believes there is only one answer, Kedibone describes the situation as 'scary'.

*'Schools don't have midwives **but...but** teachers who are responsible for teaching and not delivering babies...It seems as if they don't want to change... and the other thing is these learners know that they cannot be taken away from school because they are pregnant. According to policy they cannot be sent home...but **this is a time bomb that is ticking** - once it explodes, someone is going to get into trouble...This is affecting the school negatively. They write their final examination. **Do you think they pass?** You know last year only we had at school eight girls who were pregnant and five of them were in grade 12. **What do you call that?** Keeping them here is a scary situation because schools don't have midwives ...teachers are responsible for teaching and not delivering babies, so keeping them during pregnancy period we are actually putting ourselves into **trouble ...very big trouble**'.*

In talking about the increase in learner pregnancy Kedibone seems less concerned about the effect that pregnancy has on the lives of the girls themselves than she is about the effect it will have on the image and reputation of the school.

The same conflict between the content of the sacred story she is trying to live and her secret story of being unable to do so is evident in her use of the sacred words, 'sensitive', 'roles', and the *acronyms* on which policy talk rests (SMT, SGB) is evident in her discussion of the changed role of principals.

'A lot has taken place since 1994, and especially for principals. Their roles have completely changed in that they are accountable to schools: principals no longer own schools like they used to do in the past; they have the SMTs, the

SGBs, teachers and parents to manage and govern schools. Each unit has a role to play, but the role of the principal in this time is very sensitive...'

Elaborating on the nature of this 'sensitivity', she switches to the plural 'we' again, associating herself with the collective body of principals, the one place where, it seems, she feels that she belongs. Here she is not alone or lonely because they all, according to her, share the same experience.

'It was confusing because principals found themselves managing changes in curriculum, many policies which were passed in schools: things were not as we expected them to be because those changes made us to go through tough and difficult times. The situation was stressful on everybody, especially principals, who were expected to make sure that everything goes according to plan. "When things go right or wrong they all look at the principal and (pause) as a principal I have to carry every bit and piece of information before I can give to other people.'

One gets the sense that, in reflecting on the current state of discipline in her school, Kedibone feels things have gone out of control.

'Learners give a lot of headache: no home-works are done and they are no longer prepared to work, study - and even the simplest things, like coming to school in time - they bunk classes and stay in toilets during teaching time.'

Even her non-verbal communication – looking out the window instead of at me while talking about the problems she has with learner discipline and coughing nervously every now and again - suggests that she cannot face what is happening, that she would probably like to escape but cannot. Distancing herself from the problem, Kedibone once again reverts to using the first person plural.

'We have the learners' code of conduct that is ...is also helping us but it is not 100% effective as there are still those learners who don't want to cooperate. We have the SGB that is trying to support the school, but the problem is with parents: they do not avail themselves in those activities such as parents meetings, calling them to discuss their children performance in class, for collecting the learners' report cards; they don't do it, and the learners who are problematic are those whose parents never come to school to attend the meetings. We need the support of parents, and not all parents do help us to maintain discipline of the learners...Learners who are problematic are those whose parents never come to school or to attend meetings. Teachers are pulling very hard to get to those parents and there is always a gap, communication, between such parents, and the school has got no results. These parents no longer care: they have shifted everything to be carried by teachers.'

Shaking her head to and fro while she says this, perhaps trying to convince herself and me of the truth of what she is saying, Kedibone ironically does exactly what she blames the parents for, shifting the responsibility for learner behavior squarely onto someone else's shoulders, the shoulders of the parents in this case, thereby relieving teachers, the school and the principal, herself, from accountability for poor discipline.

Kedibone's evaluation of the changes that have occurred in school education during the ten years from 1998 to 2008 is ambivalent.

*'**It is true** that schools have changed greatly because...we can see what is happening around **us**, and these changes, even though **we** see them being good - on the other hand, some of the changes, they brought **chaos** in our schools... Some things have changed in our schools for the better and some changes were the worst. **I** thought that **we** in schools...we will sort of move in the direction that **we** will have stability but...it is still difficult and confusing...there is no stability, because **we** are still **battling** with changes that keep on coming.'*

Again, the intensity of Kedibone's emotional state is reflected in the images of war and chaos that permeate her discourse and the way in which she protects herself against injury by identifying herself with other principals, suggesting that the problems she experiences are common to them all and therefore no fault can be ascribed to her, hence the use of the 1st person plural ('we') rather than the 1st person singular ('I'). The one time she uses 'I' in this vignette is when she takes it upon herself to act not only as the spokesperson of all principals but also as spokesperson of all educators - '*I thought that we...*'

In juxtaposing her acknowledgement that the sacred story - '*schools have changed*' - is true with her disillusionment at the effect of the change, Kedibone is in effect confessing that she has lost faith in the sacred story. Instead of stability change has created 'chaos'; instead of peace, teachers are at war, 'battling' it out in the trenches, so to speak. The final image of Kedibone, regardless of her insistence that she will '*defeat*' (another war image) her obstacles, is one of a woman who has all but given up. She sees no light at the end of the tunnel. What she sees is a continuance of change, of poor relationships, of stress and despair when all she wants is for things to '*settle down*', allowing her to catch her breath, regain her composure and feel better about herself and the way she does her job. It is *she*, not the obstacles in her way that has been defeated.

4.6.2 Goboima's story

Goboima had been principal of the same school for the past 16 years when I interviewed her. She remembered very well that she had started teaching with no more than a matriculation - school leaving - certificate and that she had become principal because she happened to be at the right place at the right time. According to her, she had been informed of a vacancy at a farm school, she had grabbed the opportunity, offered the farm manager her services as a teacher, and was summarily appointed. There had been no interviews, no selection panel and no formal procedures associated with her selection. Somebody she had offered her services as a teacher at another school had told her about a vacancy at a farm school and, that is how she came to be a

principal. Three years later, when the then principal left, the farm manager made her the principal.

The school where Goboima is principal, a relatively small primary school with 200 to 230 learners, is twenty-two kilometers outside town on a farm. Learners come from the nearby farms and far distant farms, some of them using transport subsidized by the Department of Education. Of all the schools included in my inquiry it is the only one still categorized as a Section 20 school. The three functions i.e. payment of services (electricity and water, Telkom and photocopying), maintenance of buildings and purchasing the LTSM is in the hands of the District Office. The school sends its requisitions to the District Office for the materials they need.

In terms of Goboima's *cover story* she used to be happy '*here*', at this particular school, because she enjoyed the environment, the people and her initial job as a teacher, and '*things were simple then*'. However, since she became the principal things have become so '*hectic*' that she is now suffering from '*high blood pressure*'. The way Goboima tells the story she is all alone - she has no administrative assistant to help her with office work, no deputy principal to support her with school management and she has a full teaching load – teaching multi-grade classes. Her sense of loneliness is reflected in the vignette that follows, specifically in her repeated use of 'me' and 'no' – '*me, me alone and no HODs, no deputy - me with teachers*' – and in her closing statement, '*That is too huge for me because I am alone.*'

'The work of principals - there is too much paper work, and no time for teaching. It's like we keep on writing reports and most of the things are moving so fast...changes regarding the work of principals has changed so much because, as a principal, in the first place I must see to it that I develop myself because I come from a background where I started with matric certificate, and again I must see that work is done – it's me, me alone and no HODs, no deputy - me with teachers. I am an administrator, you see, to see that work in management - I mean in the office - is done properly, like managing the finances of the school, and to ensure that there

are systems in the school that needs to be managed...That is too huge for me because I am alone.'

In changing from being a teacher to being a principal Goboima also encountered problems with the rest of the staff members. Although the former principal had on occasion delegated some of his duties to her, she was not alone. Having been appointed as principal changed the situation – now she had to monitor, reprimand and accept responsibility for the work of the educators that she was supposed to manage. Eleven years later this does not seem to have changed because Goboima admits that she is still having problems with teachers who *'don't want to do the work...when they are supposed to submit their work is not there.'* Sometimes she *sits down with them and talks to them* but more often than not she *asks one of the colleagues to do so instead*. As if realizing that her 'confession' might label her as incompetent, she later 'recants', claiming that 'God' has given her *'a wonderful staff that wants the school to be developed, a staff that wants learners to be educated, to be given quality education.'*

While she is not satisfied with the extent to which parents are involved in school activities, she believes that they do care about their children's education because they come to school *'when there are problems'* or when there is a *'parents' meeting'*. Comparing parents' concern for their children with that of teachers for the learners in their care, Goboima takes great pains to point out that teachers give learners

'medication and when they are injured we treat their sores and then bandage them, and when they are extremely injured we take them to the doctor. And then, during the day they eat: like, in the morning they eat breakfast –porridge - and then during the break they eat full meal ...and then, most of the time, we buy them some fruits and then some time we give them some fruits.'

While Goboima insists that she *'likes'* being a principal, that the work is *'manageable'*, and that even learners are well-behaved because *'they are not from the townships'* the content and language of the vignette suggest that the

opposite might be true, that Goboima is so overwhelmed by the responsibility of being a principal and by the scope of a principal's work that she can no longer hide her *secret story*: she openly admits '*I don't cope*' and ascribes her vulnerable state of health – '*...even now I have high blood pressure*' – to the stressful situation she finds herself in, even though she tries to be '*calm with people because if I don't...then I become stressed.*'

'Hey, I do like being a principal here because the school around here is different: learners are different and the staff is different, and the environment also, is also different. But my problem is the work. The work is difficult - the situation is hectic. Coming to the staff, the learners it is OK. It is manageable, that's why I like being a principal. There is too much work and I am called to be an educator 100%, and of which I teach more than 18 Learning areas - from Grade 4 to Grade 7, and then in Grade 6 and 7 I am teaching Maths, and in Grade 4 and 5 I am teaching all the Learning areas besides Natural Science...And then on the other hand I am supposed to be the manager 100%, and when coming to the manager 100% it's very much difficult for me...sometimes I am supposed to leave my class and to go the office and to attend on issues in the office. It's very difficult...very, very difficult - I don't cope, and even now I have high blood pressure.'

Goboima's sense of being overburdened is reflected in the hyperbolic claim that she has to teach '*more than eighteen learning areas*': there are only eight learning areas in the curriculum statement but because she has to teach the same learning areas to different grades she experiences it as eighteen different learning areas. Her fatigue and sense of desperation are also indicated in repetitive words and phrases like '*100%*', '*supposed to...*', '*very difficult...very, very difficult*' as well as by the relatively long pause between the last two phrases. Adding to her stress are the many changes that have been effected to school education during the past decade – changes which, according to Goboima, are '*coming every day*'. She admits that they fill her with fear and anxiety even though most of the changes are beneficial to the school and the learners.

The use of a percentage – ‘100%’ – to describe the scope of her administrative duties could suggest that the responsibility of principalship rests heavily on her shoulders while her repeated use of the phrase ‘*supposed to*’ could be indicative of her awareness of that there is a *sacred story* – the story of educational transformation – and that its disciples have been charged to behave in specific ways. They must set the tone, they must act as role models – supporting change, adhering to its principles (lifelong learning, for example), its jargon, etc. Unconscious transgressions, like referring to herself as a manager rather than as an administrator - ‘*I am an administrator, you see, to see that work in management - I mean in the office...*’ are immediately corrected, suggesting that she is fully aware of what is expected of her in terms of policy, the sacred story of educational change.

Having just confessed that she cannot cope, Goboima, as if realizing that this might be interpreted as disloyalty to the sacred story does a complete turnaround. Referring to the fact that she was one of the principals who were selected by the Department of Education to attend free training in management and leadership at a tertiary institution, she emphasizes the opportunities that this has created for her. Even so she implies throughout that her studies have placed an additional strain on her ability to cope with ‘*the huge work I face every day, and the limited time...encouraging me to go on...there are challenges...*’

‘For me the changes are positive because I like to learn. They are positive changes, which give me a challenge, but I like to learn. The huge work I face - every day - and the limited time I have, makes me to grow, and today I am a strong person because of the situation I am undergoing. Because one of the changes I experienced as a principal is that of principals being developed by registering them with Matthew Goniwe School of leadership. I am one of them, and one thing that I am gaining is that I am learning a lot about the leadership and management of the school. I am being developed and through the interaction I have with other principals. That is encouraging me to go on. So I think to me it was a positive change, although there are challenges, but I am developing myself on how to handle the difficulties here and challenges I come across.’

Like Kedibone, Goboima also seems to gain courage from her membership of the ‘principals’ club’. Not only does she appreciate the ‘interaction’ with other principals who study with her but she also assumes that, because she is one of them, the problems she experiences are also experienced by them. Indications that this is the case can be found in her use of generalization, a technique which, according to Lieblich et al, (1998:19) serves to deflect attention from the speaker/narrator to the issue. Hiding behind her assumption that all principals experience the same problems, she argues that the *‘work of principals, there is too much paper work, and no time for teaching. It’s like we keep on writing reports and most of the things are moving fast...’*

Two other words that Goboima uses throughout her narrative, words that describe the experience of the protagonist in the secret rather than the cover story, are the words *‘hectic’* and *‘really’*. She uses the former – *‘hectic’* – to refer to the tempo at which transformation is supposed to happen at school level, the tempo at which she has to carry out her duties, and the pressure being put on her to obtain the qualifications required for principalship. The latter – *‘really’* – serves a dual purpose. On the one hand she uses it to emphasize what she is saying, as in *‘at first it was really difficult.’* On the other hand she uses it as a shield not to go into detail when reflecting on her difficulties, as illustrated in *‘Really, when coming to my health...’* In both instances the word is indicative of an emotional charge.

Goboima’s story seems to suggest that she is skeptical about the sustainability of the changes that have been effected to school education given the continuous changes made to innovations, especially as regards curriculum.

‘I don’t think this system especially with regard to the curriculum will last for a long time...for example we were changed from the old curriculum to OBE and it did not last, and then we moved to C2005 and it also did not last and then the RNCS and now we are talking of the NCS... they (the curricula) are different, very different because learners are doing whatever they want: they are free to think for themselves, they are exposed more to technology than before and we teach them the skills, knowledge

and our lessons also include teaching them to have positive attitude. So the new curriculum offers learners opportunities to learn but the problem is that new things keep on coming and to say that changes will last - I don't think so.'

While pointing out the 'supposed' benefits of the new curriculum – according to the sacred story – Goboima reveals her suspicions that this story might be flawed.

'Because what they are expecting us as educators, I don't think that they are sure what do they want from us because things in the curriculum keep on...keep on changing: if you tell yourself that you are OK something new comes again and only to find that we don't know what to do, especially when it comes to these paper work. There is a lot of paper work - sometimes you don't even know what you write and what you didn't write.'

We are left with an image of Goboima as a woman who is willing to sacrifice herself for the cause. Given her 'high blood pressure', her realization that she cannot cope, her conviction that the new education system, especially the new curriculum, is temporary, and her sense that she is not sufficiently rewarded for her services, coupled with her desperate cry for 'somebody out there' to 'save', ...*farm schools*' it would seem as if Goboima is on the point of hoisting the white flag of retreat and/or defeat. This is evident from the words with which she concludes her story.

'What I want to add - I just hope that one day someone can come and rescue us, especially we as farm schools, because it is very much painful for us. Like me as the - I am the principal, 100% principal and 100% educator - and the salary that I earn at the end of the month... I don't know whether they pay me as a manager or as an educator. It is very much hectic for me, and the learning areas I teach - some of them I know but others I don't even don't know them, but I still have to teach those learners because that is my work. The experience I have as a principal about the

change... somewhere it was a good experience but somewhere on the other hand it is a bad experience - and this makes me to be confused...'

4.6.3 Rekopane's story

Rekopane's story is the story of a middle-aged white, Afrikaans-speaking male who is principal of a parallel-medium racially integrated secondary school in a peri-urban area in the Gauteng Province. He was appointed as principal of the school in 1994, the year in which the new government took over. The school had previously been a Model C Afrikaans-medium school but this changed in 2005 when the school governing body, which has accepted full responsibility for school governance, introduced a Grade 8 English class for those learners who wanted to learn through the medium of English. While the learner composition has changed since then the staff composition seems to have remained largely the same, with all teachers still being white. The school has a strong and stable governing body that was democratically elected in 2006.

In telling his story Rekopane specifically highlights his route towards principalship and the steps he took to become not only a *good* principal but also the *kind of* principal that external circumstances seem to dictate one should be. In telling this story Rekopane reveals not only the dilemmas he found himself in as an individual - his catharsis - but also the dilemma in which the community of which he is a member – the Afrikaans community - had to deal with as a result of political, social and educational changes in post-apartheid South Africa. In reflecting on the adjustments he had to make to ensure that he and his school became part of a broader, more inclusive South African society, Rekopane gives us, the readers, some idea of the ways in which the school community in which he plays a leadership role had to review and adjust their thoughts, attitudes and ways of doing in order to ensure their own survival.

Rekopane has been a principal for fourteen years, that is, from 1994. He had however, taken a conscious decision to become a principal 4 years earlier,

when he was still a deputy principal at another school in a more rural area – ‘in the Western Transvaal’ – a position he had held for three and a half years already.

‘And of course I also have the mindset that I would like to grow in my post, and you know in my career, by doing that you have to apply for a post as a principal. Then I applied at the time for the principal’s post and I went through the interview and I was then at the time selected as the candidate to be appointed as the principal of school.’

One of the reasons why he decided to set himself the goal of becoming a principal was the notion that each promotion would automatically result in ‘more money, to pay for more equipments and to pay for a better house, something I didn’t have’. Having made up his mind that he would become a principal, Rekopane did what he thought was necessary to achieve his ultimate goal.

‘I decided that if I want to become a principal of a school - of a secondary school - regardless of the size of the school, if I want to become a principal, I have to further my studies and I can only further my studies by having a background. And by then I was already in possession of my HED - Higher Education Diploma of 4 years - and I have already after hours - part-time - I have studied for my BA degree, and I realized that I will...I will pursue the need of management and leadership for this is what the principal needs, to go into management and leadership...’

Rekopane’s commitment to his goal is indicated by the fact that he studied part-time, while he was teaching, of his own accord. The programme for which he enrolled (an Honours degree in Educational Management and Leadership) once he had obtained the basic academic (Bachelor of Arts) and professional (Higher Education Diploma) qualifications was directly linked to his ultimate goal of principalship and his conviction that, if he did not ‘have the background of leadership and management here it would be very difficult

to go into a high school to become the principal to try and manage that school.’ It is clear, however, that Rekopane is of the opinion that effective principalship requires not only knowledge gained from academic and/or professional studies but also expertise, something that, he argues, can only be acquired on the job, through mentoring – ‘I have to ask the principal of the school to help me with the management activity because... at the time...I didn’t know how to do that’ - and what he calls ‘career pathing.’

‘I didn’t become the deputy principal immediately: I was first an HOD and if you become an HOD - and I was an HOD for five years - and if you become an HOD that is a big job, totally different from the educator’s job, but when you are an HOD you already have some of the management activities in a school that will be cascaded down to you by the management of the school. So I was already dealing with some of the staff on a management level and I then became the deputy principal - it was not that big job of managing the staff and even when I became a principal it was not that difficult.’

The need to combine academic studies with on-the-job training under the guidance of a mentor is a reoccurring theme in Rekopane’s story. In fact, he concludes his narrative by expressing his concern about the training of school principals. On the one hand he is concerned that *‘the whites, the predominantly white people...are ignorant with regard to furthering their studies...because we need managers, both white and black to lead, yes to lead the schools.’* On the other hand he is concerned that government initiatives aimed at supporting principals in better managing their schools is focusing solely on developing their understanding of the theoretical foundations of leadership and management and not on the acquisition of practical expertise and mentorship.

‘The majority of the black educators in our sector is now trying their utmost best to achieve a better qualification...and that is a good thing. My concern is that they all get better qualifications but they don’t know how to manage their schools; they don’t know how to cope with the normal activities within their schools...I think...the District office... should take

some five or six of the principals who are really achieving in their school and bring them together and let them draft a document of management activities within a school, of how to run a school - I am talking of practical hands-on business – and let them get principals, let them involve principals who are not doing well in their schools with those who are doing well. So, if you are part of my school, I will go to your school. I will tell you what you have to do at your school and I will make a follow-up on a particular basis. So I will be like your buddy, looking after you, so as to do the management activities within the school, and I think that can bring a lot of impact in our schools. So now the government of the day think that if people can go through the ACE programme, getting the B.Ed Honours, and getting M.Ed, that is fine and the principals will be knowledgeable, which is not true. That is only academic knowledge and that will not help them with the knowledge and the know-how, when they actually need to manage their schools.’

It is in this part of his story that discrepancies between Rekopane’s *cover story* and *secret story* start emerging. In terms of the cover story Rekopane is coping pretty well with being a principal – ‘*It’s not too difficult*’ – primarily because the way in which he executes his principalship duties is informed by academic knowledge as well as on-the-job-experience. His recommendation that these should be combined in the development of principals and that a mentoring/buddy system might prove beneficial sounds like an informed opinion, one with a sound theoretical basis. Further on, though, he switches from this *objective* position in which he discusses how ‘*principals*’ could assist other ‘principals’ to a *subjective* one in which he identifies *himself* as one of those principals whose schools are being run well.

‘I think it is in that way that they may get some of us who are knowledgeable with some management activities and get...and get and form a buddy system and then to meet and work with those schools, work with other principals and do follow-ups and to check on their work - “Did you do this? Did you check this? Why do you do that, and how do you do that? How do you need my help, how did the management plan work?’

What did you do here?” Then I can see that this will benefit and uplift schools and the whole system of education will be better.’

Given the history of racial inequality in South Africa and the power of the *sacred story* of South Africa’s transformation, a transformation in which all South Africans are now equal members of a new ‘rainbow nation’, the switch to the first person – ‘*some of us who are knowledgeable*’, and ‘*How do you need my help?*’ – could suggest that there is another, secret, layer to Rekopane’s story. It could well be that, in his *secret story* the knowledgeable ones are all white and those without knowledge tend to be black and that, because of this, white principals should ‘check’ on black principals under the guise of mentorship. Alternatively, it could be a desperate cry for acknowledgement from Rekopane’s side – acknowledgement that white principals are also valued and/or regarded as part of the community of principals and that they are willing and able to share this expertise with those who need it, and acknowledgement that these (white) principals gained the requisite knowledge and expertise through their own efforts, without the help currently given to black principals and educators.

The accuracy of these inferences is not as important as the emergence of a secret story. Confirmation of the existence of this secret story, which often reflects Rekopane’s hidden attitude to the sacred story of change, can be found in Rekopane’s telling of the changes that had to be effected, in terms of the sacred story of change, in the school where he is principal. Rekopane specifically mentions changes to the nature and composition of schools, changes in principals’ role functions and changes in relationships – relations between principals and staff members as well as between schools, parents and departments of education. Three changes that occurred in his school in particular and that seemed to test the strength of school community relationships were the redeployment strategy – ‘*right-sizing*’ – which resulted in bigger class sizes; the change from a white, single-*medium* (Afrikaans) school into a racially integrated parallel-medium school, increasing classroom teachers’ workloads, undermining their self-confidence and causing strained relationships across the school

community spectrum; and the *privatization* of hostels, which resulted in the loss of workers.

As Rekopane tells his story he had little time to get used to being a principal rather than a deputy principal and classroom educators since he became principal in 1994, because it was at that point where everything in South Africa changed. Not only did he have to adjust himself to his new position as principal but he also had to do the cloak of change agent in an environment not necessarily conducive to change.

'It was a challenge ...that needed a lot of capability on my side...It was a change in my attitude as well that was necessary...So it has been in the beginning a tough job but now after a couple of years that I have the principal I know the road, I know how to deal with some of the activities...Of course it was negative initially because we have been school principals for a long time in education and all of a sudden the whole scenario changing away that now you as the principal you become the accounting officer with everything that happens within your school: budget, programmes, management plans, extra-mural activities, LTSM. Everything that happens you will be accountable, for everything that happens you will be accountable for that, and that brought a new type of environment where the principal must provide, and all of a sudden the principal must be the accountable manager of all activities and he must account that to the District Office and must also account that to the province - to the Provincial office - that what he is doing in the school also in order to get the results, to get better results within the District.'

In terms of his cover story Rekopane did everything in his power to ensure the survival of his school and of the things the school community valued. In fact, he claims that it is because of the values on which the school is based that the school manages to have such good matriculation results: *'We stand for order; we stand for respect; we stand for good academic achievement.'* Claiming a change in his own attitude towards other cultures, Rekopane narrates his attempts to negotiate the gradual *'phasing in'* of parallel-medium instruction and

the gradual phasing out of subsidized hostels with the provincial department of education as well as his attempts to motivate parents and staff to accept the challenges associated with a changing school composition. In this regard he mentions that he sent staff members on training courses, that he resolved conflicts as and when they occurred, and that he set the tone by acting as a role model to all concerned, *'walking the talk'*, so to speak. He suggests that it is due to his efforts that *'things have actually stabilized'* and that all concerned have come *'on board'*.

Maintaining stability and balance, Rekopane's story suggests, was particularly difficult because of the tempo at which change was expected to take place. His discourse is scattered with the phrase *'all of a sudden'*, a phrase that suggests the existence of perception that the imposition of unrealistic deadlines was aimed at the destabilization of schools, hence the need for Rekopane to *'negotiate'* the *'gradual'* phasing in of certain changes. Rekopane indicates, for example, that *'all of a sudden' principals were 'bombarded with new activities', that 'all of a sudden' principals 'were accountable' and had to 'sit down' with their staff to 'determine within this environment how can we cope, how can we survive the situation' because the 'whole scenario was changing away.'* He uses the same phrase when talking about the introduction of parallel-medium instruction and the privatization of hostels, with resultant job losses, changing it for the word, *'immediately'*, when describing the effect of teacher redeployment (*'right-sizing'*) on the school.

It is narrating events that created a sense of disequilibrium in the school community that Rekopane's understanding of and attitude to the sacred story of educational change make their appearance. Words and phrases like *'bombarded', 'negotiate', 'cope', 'survive', 'totally new dispensation', 'took away', 'this is killing us'*, accompanied by repetitive phrases (*'that was a real, real big change'*) and references to *'lawsuits'* create an image of a community being attacked from the inside as well as the outside. Hostel staff *'lost their jobs'*, teachers' *'work load went up, so that put a lot of strain on them and then put them through a lot of stress'* and they were *'not happy.'*

Even when negotiations seemed successful the party in power often reneged on its part of the ‘deal’, changing it without regard for the consequences. The result was that the reigning atmosphere in the school was one of suspicion, distrust and perhaps even a sense of being abused.

‘It took us more than a year to...introduce the additional language of tuition to the school...where all the stakeholders were involved – parents, the unions, the educators themselves, the learners, the community, even the education department...but we went through that...when they made a final decision that they would include an additional language of instruction, English as parallel to Afrikaans, we thought, that OK, we made a deal with the MEC, we made a deal with him, OK that we will introduce one group per year, and we will only start by the Grade 8 learners, because you must realize that this is the only Afrikaans school in the whole area so I have to look at Afrikaans learners as well to accommodate them first and then English learners...it was very difficult...because all of a sudden we had to give educators subjects because all of them were trained in Afrikaans at Afrikaans institutions, they have been teaching Afrikaans for many years and all of a sudden we would expect them to teach also in the medium of English, so they would not be capable – some of them saw it as a threat...the educators said OK but who is going to benefit by this , only the school, only the principal, or only the governing body because we are doing all the work – this is killing us. You must realize that at that time we said we only take one group but the MEC asked we have to take two groups of learners. That brought a lot of mistrust within the management from the educators.’

The division between school management and staff, between the school and the department of education, between parents and between learners is clear from Rekopane’s use of ‘we’ and ‘they’ in this vignette. It is also indicated throughout his narrative in the way he describes the changes that have taken place separating cause from effect by means of ‘but’ and literally tallying the changes on his fingers one by one, as if to emphasize the way in which the ‘old’ was being eroded and the ‘new’ piled up. His description of the initial reactions

of different groups of people to the change also reflected his awareness of the existence of opposite camps in the school community.

Rekopane's description of initial relations between white and black learners is a clear illustration of the tensions that reigned during the change over.

'You must understand that this was a predominantly white Afrikaans school and for English learners to come into the school and they were black learners...The rest of the learners were worried that what are these learners, black, doing in our school. This is our school, this is our terrain, and this is our territory...The white learners couldn't speak to the black learners and the black learners moreover were very afraid and I think you can imagine them coming to an environment where there are 700 white students all of a sudden and you are one of the 70 learners and in total foreign environment and you have to cope...the learners were still having that activity that they are blacks, they know nothing and we are whites we know everything.'

'Initially the relationship was very tough because you know what is happening with learners might also come from the house...the parents also have a mindset, that they are black and they know nothing; they are the crooks, they are the skelms, they stay in the township! Now they come to take our school and vice versa, black learners thinking the whites, they have been privileged for many years. Look at them, look at their place, their arrogance!'

According to Rekopane, the same tension was evident in the relationship between white and black parents until he told them, *'We can call each other names and do as we wish but I am telling you now, we are staying together whether we like it or not! We are living together now.'* This, he claims, changed everything. *'Now the parents are granting each other the opportunity to have a debate during parents' evenings – that black parents have a say and white parents stand and some of them support each other in the same meeting and some of them would say, "I don't like what you say." And some are totally*

arrogant vice versa – white and black parents – and we would just say, “This is not your time. This is the platform for everybody.” Because of the change in parents’ attitudes, so goes Rekopane’s story, children have also begun to accept one another.

‘Everybody realized that we are all students: we are white and we make mistakes and they also make mistakes; we do things right and they do things right and it change the whole attitude. Now, I do still see that there are still learners who don’t like the other group but it comes from them and it has been like that for many, many years and we just take it like that, like we don’t have to like each other, and now black and white learners are playing together, joking together and they are part of it.’

Indicating that he cannot *‘see us going back to the past’*, Rekopane attempts to end his story on an objective but hopeful note, claiming that the only things that should still be addressed are the Reading and Mathematics levels in schools, the decreasing number of educators, and the quality of school managers. He leaves us with the image of a man who tries to convince himself of his ability to change not only himself but also those who have been placed in his charge. In fact, his narrative seems to suggest that he believes that he and those around him has changed in accordance with the expectations of the sacred story. Whether this is an example of what Fullan (1991) calls ‘false clarity’ cannot be stated with certainty. What is clear is that Rekopane is trying his utmost to satisfy the criteria against which the success of school and its principal are assessed in the ‘new’ South Africa.

4.6.4 Šomišanang’s story

Šomišanang has been a principal for eleven years. He was appointed as principal of a small white Afrikaans-speaking primary school in January 1998. Although the school has a multi-racial learner composition – black, Indian, Taiwanese, Pakistani, white – it uses only Afrikaans as medium of instruction.

Before Šomišanang became principal of this school he had been a classroom teacher, a Head of Department (HOD), and a deputy principal. He decided to apply for the position of a principal when he realized that he had ‘*gained a lot of experience*’ during his time as Head of Department and as deputy principal, and that it was this ‘*experience and the knowledge of my work*’ that convinced him that he should apply.

This is the official version of Šomišanang’s ambition – his *cover story*. The real version, that is, his *secret story*, is that he initially had dreams of becoming a ‘*superintendent - the inspector in those years* –’ and had worked very hard to achieve this goal but, because of the changed educational dispensation, he had to settle for the position of principal. In terms of Šomišanang’s cover story, he is happy being a principal, not harbouring any bitter feelings about the fact that he had to compromise on his dream.

‘I enjoy it, it is a great satisfaction. I worked to achieve my goal. It was a great strive of my self-study - when I started as an educator I had to study and I had to climb the ranks and I climbed the ranks very fast, so I was an educator for five years and I became an HOD for three years. I was a deputy principal as well as a principal – acting - and then the principal, and that’s how it went.’

Even so there are indications that Šomišanang uses this cover story as a means of hiding his true feelings. It would seem, from his own narration, as if he was quite ambitious when he started off in the teaching profession and that his ambition was obvious to those with whom he worked. Reflecting on those days, Šomišanang tells how the principal of the school where he started his teaching career nurtured his ambition.

‘Where I started teaching I had lots of responsibilities that I carried, responsibilities which I saw as opportunities. For instance, I was only a teacher and the principal came to me and he said that I should manage, be the HOD of the Educational Guidance Department, and I had to manage the stock register of the school, and later I had to manage the terrain of the school. Those were the responsibilities of the HOD but I think that

early as an educator I had gained opportunities that I think they took me up and with each rank movement.'

In acknowledging that his taking on the principal's duties was an 'opportunity', Šomišanang is, by implication, admitting that he saw these as stepping stones towards realizing his ambition of becoming a superintendent, a dream that must already have been dormant in his mind at that time. His introduction of an army as metaphor for describing his journey towards principalship suggest that Šomišanang suspected from the start that it was not training but cunning, resilience and courage that were needed to satisfy/realize his ambition.

'One day the principal was not in school and now I took the responsibilities on me, but that really an unhappy one to other educators. I did not see any teacher in class that day and it was raining, and I wondered where are they and neither anyone was in class, and I saw them sitting in the staff-room. And as I stepped in there and said, 'But are you not supposed to be in your class with children even when it is raining?' And they said, 'Oh, but why are you here?' And so I turned and left and immediately I said, 'I am and when the cat leaves I am not supposed to do as I want.'

Although the principal's favouritism and his colleagues' jealousy made him feel like an outsider he was willing to sacrifice social interaction for status and position. There are also indications of arrogance and/or a sense of Šomišanang's regarding himself as superior to his colleagues in his assertion that he was '*the only person with responsibilities*' and that it was this superiority that facilitate his 'fast' movement through the 'ranks'. It is obvious that he knew how to play the game from the start.

'I had to do my (duty) because when I looked at them - the HOD and the other people - the way they were doing, and I had to live by example and do my work because I came from outside and through my work I gained

the responsibilities and successes regarding my work. Though it was not easy but that helped me a lot.'

Šomišanang is convinced that his success can be attributed to his belief in himself and his abilities, his *'hard work'*, his *'dedication'*, his *'willingness to learn'* from his former principal, and to the *'hand of the Lord that gave me the opportunity.'*

Unlike Rekopane, who valued academic studies as well as work experience, Šomišanang's believes that the experience he gained as he *'climbed the ranks'* was sufficient for the job of a school principal.

'I was never trained. I gained my knowledge through work...I already had the responsibilities that got me through to the deputy principal post, and so the movement from one level to the next, like I went through, it was full of challenges - each level had its own challenge - but I think my hardworking and dedication to the work assisted me to move smoothly even though, as I said, every level had its challenge. And what is important is that those challenges had to be managed. I had no difficulty. I always thought it as a challenge, a big challenge, but I was just positive that I will make it at the end.'

In repeating that his journey was challenging, that it was *'a big challenge'* but that that he was convinced that he would *'make it at the end'*, Šomišanang admits that his journey towards principalship was a conscious one and that he kept the ultimate goal in mind throughout.

The picture Šomišanang paints of the school where he is principal is nearly utopian in character.

'The educators here are working, the children are working, as well as the parents are working, and it is about the education of the school. In other words, without work cannot continue: everybody has to work so that the

learners have to be educated, and that is what is happening here at school. All of us are working, and we work as a team - to achieve our goals.'

He acknowledges, though, that it was not like that when he was first appointed.

'It wasn't great. I did have problems. I did have that. I was very young and most of the educators in our staff were older than myself, and I cannot say it was easier - some even had more years of experience than myself. So to manage the grown-ups, some are not that easy to take your instructions. But lucky enough, experiencing the management of the educators when I was the HOD - even though it was a departmental level, I worked mostly with the educators in my department - and I think that is where I established my foot on the ground. So my movement from the HOD to the deputy also added some more responsibilities of working with people on a higher level. I think as I was climbing the ladder, that was my preparation for becoming a principal, and today I just manage challenges on a daily basis.'

Šomišanang now uses a different but related metaphor to describe his journey. He no longer 'moves through the ranks'; rather he 'climbs the rungs of the ladder.'. This could suggest that Šomišanang felt somewhat unsteady when he eventually took up the position of principal, as if he might fall off unless he kept his 'foot on the ground'. Although he has not openly acknowledged it in his cover story, it would seem as if Šomišanang's self-confidence was being steadily eroded. There is little evidence of his earlier sense of superiority.

'It was never like that before: there were always strictly guidelines, bound by the core guidelines; and the educators are more free to add to the curriculum and more free to use technologies; to use various methods and methodologies; to add and to teach learners specific responsibilities from various levels, in class - in curriculum site - and sports, and the admin site, and the whole school - everyone is involved.'

Instead of being in a position of status and power, principals now have to delegate and supervise.

'I think that from the beginning the principal number one has to manage, that is the HODs and the deputy principal. I had to accommodate them and give them certain jobs, and I had to ensure that they do their jobs as given to them, and they have to delegate their challenge down to their departments, and they have to manage their departments and I think that is a great challenge because they have to do their meetings, and they have to tell educators, 'Do this and do that'. I think that is what we're doing, and because they're dealing with new things it is a challenge for them, but they have to cope.'

He specifically mentions changes to the curriculum, the change from being a white school to being a multi-cultural one (including Taiwanese, Pakistani and black learners), changes to the role functions of principals, and the extra workload placed on teachers who had to provide extra tuition to non-Afrikaans speakers in order for them to become proficient in the language. While claiming that things at his school are now *'stable'*, Šomišanang indicates that there are still areas where things have not settled down, in curriculum, for example. *'There are always new things coming up...there are always things to be learnt by the educators.'*

It would seem that little is left of the man who was willing to take on an entire staff to do things in a different way: all he does now is to *'manage challenges on a daily basis.'* He mentions that, in the new dispensation, one can make mistakes because one is allowed to rectify them afterwards. Together, these 'confessions' convey a sense of defeat, an acknowledgement that things are not the way he expected them to be: *'The challenges that we face today were not there in the past: work was at least easier to carry because we were guided.'* In terms of his cover story, he has changed for the better. He has become a people person, a team player, someone who is always there for his staff, helping them, supporting them, evaluating them, *'and so, through my motivation and encouragement they...they are able to work against all the*

challenges that they face. I am able to integrate with the educators...and, because we work as team, it always becomes easier for all of us.'

In relating the role he played in transforming the school, Šomišanang indicates that he is aware of the existence of the sacred story of educational change and that he knows what is expected of him as principal in this regard. He duly praises the provision of learner transport, exemption of school fees and the opportunities for previously disadvantaged schools to become part of the mainstream education system. He describes how he went about counseling black parents who wanted to enroll their children in an Afrikaans-medium school about the difficulties they might experience, giving them six months' time to reconsider their decision he elaborates on how accommodating the school is regarding different religions and eating habits of learners. He describes the effort he makes to ensure effective communication between the school and the parents by providing newsletters in Afrikaans *and* English. It is due to his support and motivation, so he seems to imply, that the school community has accepted the changes imposed on them and that, by and large, they have come to experience change as positive.

While Šomišanang acknowledges that it remains difficult to teach a child '*who was not exposed to the language before*' he maintains that educators at his school '*are prepared to help these children*'. He also admits that initially there were problems with racial integration, reflecting on how strange it was at first to see black and white learners wearing the same uniform, something he described as '*rare and funny*'. He also remembers fights between learners of different racial groups, referring to them as '*cultural*' fights, claiming that these have disappeared and that any fights that may still occur are the normal kind that happens on school grounds everywhere. Everything, according to Šomišanang, is now as it should be.

'Now children don't even see the difference anymore, and the parents don't see the difference: the black learners they go with the white learners home to do the projects and they stay with them and do the projects, and they are very fond of doing that and there are many projects they do

together. The parents' participation at school is satisfactory. Our parents are not only involved in extra-mural activities but also in the SGB and black parents have a nominee, and they spell out that we nominate black parents who will represent them in the SGB, and we do have a nominee who is also a black parent in the SGB... we have an annual tour to Cape Town... and they go. And if there is an excursion to the mines they all pay and they all go. And if we play rugby, we have got black parents and children playing in rugby team, and so if there is a netball... those play netball, and that's it.'

Claiming that he regards the changes that have happened to school education as positive, Šomišanang ends his story with the words, *'There is no chance that things can go back as they were before. We are moving forward, and therefore what has changed has to be protected and sustained.'* Even so, we are left with an image of a character in whom ambition and passion have died, someone who is simply marking time, someone without the hope of becoming more than he is. In short, Somisanang's story is the story of a life hoped but not lived.

4.6.5 Kedisaletse's story

Kedisaletse had been principal of the small farm school where he is currently employed since the year 2000, for the past eight years, thus. The staff composition – teaching staff and ground staff - is black and all learners are black. The Department of Education provides subsidized transport for learners between the school and the farms on which they live.

Kedisaletse's journey towards principalship was slightly unusual: he started off as a classroom teacher, then became a Head of Department and then, skipping the position of Deputy Principal, became a principal. Reflecting on his career path, Kedisaletse thought that being fast-tracked from Head of Department to principal had probably not been to his advantage.

‘I think if I have moved and became a deputy before becoming a principal, I would have learnt more things that would later help me more, some things I was not aware of I became aware when I became the principal... Before that I thought by the time I was a principal, that if I had followed the channels of moving upwards – educator, HOD, deputy and principal – I would have benefited a lot, but unfortunately I just moved from the educators’ post to an HOD and then the principal. That was very challenging because I had to manage, and to administer the school, and unfortunately I was on the other hand learning some of the things pertaining to the work of the principal.’

At the time, though, he was of the opinion that his on-the-job training, coupled with the attendance of a range of training workshops organized by the Department of Education had sufficiently equipped him for the position of principal.

‘I felt that with the skills I accumulated whilst I was a teacher because I was then involved in the administrative activities. In the afternoons I had time to go through the activities of the school and I think that is where I gained good knowledge. As a result I became well knowledgeable with the administrative and leadership work and when the post was advertised I took my chances. I then applied for the post and fortunately I was interviewed and I was recommended for appointment. I attended some training, run by the department of education and... facilitated by the facilitators or by the NGO’s... related to the curriculum, some to the management, and others were related to remedial education and others were tackling drugs and First Aid.’

His description of the training offered at departmental workshops suggests that the focus of the training was on curriculum and inclusion rather than on management. It is, therefore, not surprising that Kedisaletse found the position of principal ‘challenging’.

'It was challenging in the sense that being the newly appointed principal – and then we did not have the admin assistant – and I had to do the whole work of being an administrator as well as a principal and I was in class then. Finally, I had to organize everything to run the school. I had the problem of finances and I had to organize the sponsors and do all these things.'

Also, because farms schools are typically very small – currently there are 70 learners enrolled in Kedisaletse's school - he had to carry a full teaching load in addition to managing the school.

'Furthermore, I am the only person responsible for the school: there is no HOD, no deputy principal and no SMT, and even no admin assistant, and no one except the two educators in class. I just request the advice from the educators.'

In addition to the problems he experienced in terms of juggling all the things he had to do, Kedisaletse did not find it easy to establish himself as leader, manager and/or authority figure amongst staff members.

'It was really difficult, because the other challenge that the grown-ups had is that others were older than me and having the experience that was longer than my experience, therefore it was really difficult because sometimes the other people think that the older people must lead and the younger people must follow. Some of them, I did use their experience but, unfortunately, I had one lady who was acting in this post before I was appointed, and it was really a challenge when I was appointed because she was not happy with everything that I do - the ideas, the suggestions I brought to the educators - she was challenging the decisions and used to be very, very difficult, instead of being a helping hand. But others they do really help and are supportive to the work of the school in many ways.'

A few years after he had been appointed *'parents from the farms relocated to the informal settlement and those movements in fact affected our school*

negatively because as learners' numbers dropped the education department declared one educator to be in excess'. This meant that those educators remaining at school, including him, had to share the workload of the educator who had left.

'I had to reschedule my work - I mean the work at school, teaching and other activities of the school - because I was then spending more time in class teaching the learners because the work that was done by the educator who left the school...had to be shared amongst those remaining in school. And that alone made us to work harder than before because I had to teach all Learning Areas from Grade 4 to Grade 7, and for the principal to do that, and also on the other hand to check and control work in the admin, it was too heavier.

And now currently we are three educators left at the school with 70 learners and again - last year - one educator was declared in excess again. She was sent to another school but she...refused and then they have promised to take her to another school when the school reopens in July for the third term...Yes, when the school reopens in July...and which means only two educators will be left at school to teach Grade R to Grade 7 learners and that alone is not going to be right. Really there is nothing good that is going right in the school...and the management of the school has alone been seriously affected.'

Even though Kedisaletse became a principal after 1994, he seems to understand that the job description of principals has changed. He indicates that before 1994 principals used to apply an autocratic style of leadership but *'after 1994 the situation in schools was different: they had to change, and change is very difficult for other people, because now the issue of management has to become transparent.'*

Kedisaletse claims that he supports this change in leadership style because of its inclusive nature: it allows him as principal to consult with and get advice from teachers in his school who might be more knowledgeable or experienced

than he is and to create opportunities for educators in his school the opportunity to share ideas and voice their opinions:

'They are able to have a say in the allocation of funds and to utilize them properly and to decide about the materials, yes, to decide which Learner and Teacher Support Materials to buy and how those funds will be used.'

Moreover, he has a very good relationship with the parent community because he knows them by name and has their full support in matters pertaining to their children's education.

'And now the parents are playing their role, they are assisting the school because they have been given the opportunity to be in charge of the school governance...which now really it makes them to be involved in the education of their children's education. We have the SGB that is representing the parents and the SGB reports back to the parents about the proceedings of the school and they ultimately work together for the benefit of their children's education.'

Parental commitment to education and the healthy relationships between the adult members of the school community are reflected in the relationship between teachers and learners, who *'have the opportunity for anything that they don't understand - they are free to come to the educators and get some clarity.'*

On the one hand Kedisaletse is positive about the changes effected to the school curriculum because, so he claims, it prepares learners for the labour market.

'Now the curriculum that they learn in class is different and, unlike in the past when learners were taught some things that will not help them - teaching them about what happened in the 16th and 17th century, you know things that will not really help them - and benefit from the new curriculum (which) teaches learners and prepare them for work, yes, for the market

because they learn about their immediate environment - what they see, their country and their provinces, their immediate leaders and everything that is not far from them.'

On the other hand he has serious concerns about the effectiveness of the curriculum and the ability of teachers to implement it in their classrooms.

'I think we are still struggling because the new curriculum has been introduced and which came forth but we were not well trained and had to apply that particular curriculum by moving from the old curriculum to the new system. It was really, really, really challenging, and in fact now most educators are not acquainted with the new terms, the new style of teaching and other things are left behind, so the issue of the new curriculum has resulted in learners not being able to read and write and construct sentences properly because there are certain old aspects that have been left out and the emphasis in the new curriculum is group work and practical application.

We are trying. We are doing our utmost best, even though we are facing many challenges because we don't get the same and good explanations how to deal with curriculum issues in class because even the facilitators themselves are not experts of the curriculum.'

While acknowledging that *'things are not stabilized'* Kedisaletse seems unperturbed by the ever-changing education system. His philosophy is that *'change is a continuous process, because now and then you have to review some of the things and change them where it is necessary, especially in terms of policies, because our curriculum seem to be having some loophole, and that may be the reason why the new training has started again - in order to revise the curriculum, and so the current curriculum we have has to be revised...to change some of the aspects regarding what we have been teaching the learners.'*

He is, however, ambivalent about the value and sustainability of some of the changes that have been effected to education.

‘In some instances good improvements happened but in some instances change brought frustration, especially in terms of maybe the topics that are taught to the learners changes are very good, but in terms of the arrangement, especially the paper work - because it gives frustration and as educators we are doing more paper work than teaching the learners - and if these can be reviewed and maybe the files can be reduced so that more time can be given to classroom teaching and we concentrate more on teaching the learners, I think that can be good.’

Kedisaletse is adamant that those responsible for change should practice what they preach, especially with regard to consultation. Noting the exclusion of classroom teachers from decisions that had an impact on the way they execute their duties, he argues for greater involvement of classroom teachers in change processes.

‘I think that maybe as the South Africans, and now that the government is ours, they need to start to listen to the people at grassroots level and they must not immediately introduce things without making a thorough research whether that will succeed. Whatever is to be introduced must first be piloted - it must be a pilot before the whole country can experience it, and then they must assess, evaluate it before any decision could be taken then I think we can get the good results in our schools. Changes could be sustainable if maybe our department could listen to the people in the ground level, that is the educators, because they are the ones who are exposed to the classroom challenges and have to be knowledgeable about the learners. People on the ground are the ones facing the situation. I think the issue of top down is no longer working because people at the top don’t know anything about the classroom situation and it should be the bottom-up strategy that should be applied because educators can come with good ideas about changing our schools. With changing our

curriculum the instructions given to the educators cannot be carried successfully because they come from somewhere.'

Kedisaletse, unlike the other narrators, does not seem to be covering up his fears, uncertainties, and sense that things are not as he expected them to be. He openly states that he was not suitably equipped to become a principal because he bypassed the position of deputy principal something that, in retrospect, was a mistake. He admits that he finds principalship difficult, even now, when he has acquired the skills that principals should have. What makes it difficult for him, so he tells us, is that fact that he has to juggle his principalship duties with his teaching duties.

It is in elaborating on the reason for this 'juggling act' that his secret fear, his secret sense of failure, comes strongly to the fore. While he, as the protagonist in his *cover story*, has battled on bravely, overcoming his personal inadequacies, creating healthy relationships with the staff and parents, and supporting the changes propagated in the sacred story of educational change in South Africa, he has failed in safeguarding his school against the effects of change. This is *his secret story*, the real story of his inadequacy. His cover story is that '*change is a continuous process, because now and then you have to review some of the things and change them where it is necessary, especially in terms of policies...*' His secret story is that change is destroying his school: it is depriving him of educators, it is overburdening those educators that remain and it is drowning them in paper work. The use of the intensifier 'again', in the clause, '*one educator was declared in excess again*', the inclusion of 'means' and 'only' as additional intensifiers in '*which means only two educators will be left at school to teach Grade R to Grade 7 learners*', and his judgment that '*that alone is not going to be right*', all serve as reflections of an emotional state of being vanquished, hence his conclusion that '*Really there is nothing good that is going right in the school.*'

Kedisaletse attempts to create the impression that he supports the doctrines of the sacred story, specifically the involvement of parents in decision-making

and the introduction of a more ‘relevant’ and ‘useful’ curriculum that prepares children for the labour market.

‘The topics that are taught to the learners changes are very good...and prepare them for work, yes, for the market because they learn about their immediate environment - what they see, their country and their provinces, their immediate leaders and everything that is not far from them...they have the opportunity for anything that they don’t understand - they are free to come to the educators and get some clarity.’

With regard to parental involvement in school matters he proclaims that parents are now *‘able to have a say in the allocation of funds and to utilize them properly and to decide about the materials, yes, to decide which Learner and Teacher Support Materials to buy and how those funds will be used.’* In the context of the rest of his story it is possible, thought, that his support of parental involvement, especially in the financial side of school management, is just another safety net for him, because the possibility of his being accused of mismanagement of funds has been removed: *‘before the principal was...accused of running the school by himself, and maybe the principal will be accused of manipulating the funds...’* Further evidence that his relationship with parents is one of his ‘sacred spaces’, a place where he feels safe and protected, apart from his previous comment that that they are on first name terms, is his claim that the parents are *‘protective’* of him, *‘just as they protect their children’*.

This said, Kedisaletse’s declared support for the changes that occurred in education is undermined by his criticism of the Department of Education’s redeployment strategy, the training provided to educators, the emphasis that is placed on ‘paper work’ and ‘files’, the lack of consultation from the side of the Department, the indecisiveness regarding the most appropriate curriculum, and the decrease in learners’ reading and mathematical competence. This criticism is also reflected in his repeated use of the intensifier, **‘really’**, supposedly to emphasize what he says but actually reflecting his increasing frustration with the system. Examples include: **‘Really** there is nothing good that going right in

the school’; ‘It was *really* challenging...*very...very, very difficult...*’; ‘Jaa...it was *really* difficult...because the other challenge that the grown-ups had is that others were older than me and having the experience ...that was longer than my experience...’; ‘Unfortunately I had one lady who was acting in this post before I was...eehh...appointed and it was *really* a challenge when I was appointed because she was not happy with everything I do...’, and ‘It was *really, really, really* challenging and in fact now most educators are not acquainted with the new terms, the new style of teaching and other things...’

My overall impression of Kedisaletse’s story is that it is a story of loss and compromise. Having started off with the dream of becoming a principal, he ended up managing a small school that did not assist in his professional development - before 1994 ‘*the principal was a real principal*’; since then, ‘*it seems that being a principal is to delegate tasks to relevant people who specialize in those tasks*’. Also contrary to the expectations created by his speedy movement through the ranks, he is principal of a very small farm school, one that is at risk of being closed down. Having lost his dream and the hope of realizing it, Kedisaletse has no dreams left; rather he simply focuses on ‘*getting through each day*’.

4.7 Emerging themes

Indications from principals’ individual stories are that there are a number of similarities as well as a number of differences in their individual experiences of change, in the ways they respond to change and in the impact that change has had on their personal and professional lives.

The *first* similarity in principals’ narratives is that all the principals, with the exception of Goboima and Šomišanang, had always *dreamt* of becoming principals one day and had taken deliberate steps to make their dreams come true - either by using on-the-job opportunities – like accepting additional responsibilities – as a means of career-pathing, or by furthering their studies part-time or through opportunities created by the Department of Education. In the case of Goboima and Šomišanang, the former had not aspired to being a

principal, simply to obtain a position as teacher in a pleasant, rural, environment. Principalship happened by default, because the opportunity presented itself. In the case of Šomišanang, principalship was a negation of his initial dream - he had to ‘settle’ for it because, in terms of his perspective, external circumstances – changes in the political dispensation in the country – had blocked his promotion opportunities. What he had really wanted to be was a school inspector.

The *second* similarity, with the exception of Goboima and Kedisaletse, is in the *route* they followed to become principals: all of them started off as classroom teachers, moved on to being Heads of Department, then deputy principals and then principals. Goboima has only a matriculation certificate while Kedisaletse moved from being a Head of Department to being a principal. Goboima has had the opportunity, created by the Department of Education, to further her studies – in school management and leadership – at tertiary level, irrespective of the fact that she has only a school-leaving certificate. Kedisaletse on the other hand, while acknowledging that not having been a deputy principal made it more difficult to cope with the responsibilities of principalship at first, creates the impression that he is now on par with other principals, because he learnt by doing. The only principal who feels very strongly about the need to combine academic and on-the-job training is Rekopane, who is also of the opinion that ‘effective’ principals should be paired with ‘ineffective’ ones in a kind of ‘buddy system’ to ensure that everybody has an equal chance of improving themselves and their schools. Perhaps this will enable him to prove his claim that he has changed, that he is not racist because his ‘buddy’ is black.

The *third* similarity emerging from principals’ narratives is their sense of *disequilibrium* - being thrown off balance – resulting from the changes effected to South African education during the period 1998 to 2008. All of them refer to the tempo at which change took place, the confusion or lack of understanding amongst teachers regarding the way in which change was supposed to be effected and/or the reasons why things had to change. All the principals also felt that they were caught in the middle, having to represent the

views of the Department of Education as well as the views of the teachers whom they were supposed to manage. As a result they bore the brunt of teacher negativity and often felt very alone.

The reasons principals offered for their own anger and frustration and for teacher negativity, confusion and loneliness are not, however, the same. In the case of white principals, conflict was often the result of forced changes to the racial learner composition of the school, the need to change from being a single- to a parallel or dual medium school, and their sense of being betrayed by the Department of Education for which they work in terms of promises not being kept and/or support not rendered. In the case of black principals negativity and confusion, as reported in their stories, was more commonly due to the abolition of corporal punishment, an emphasis on learner rights rather than on learner responsibilities, and a sense of disillusionment because the outcomes of change do not meet the expectations they had of a new dispensation.

A key indicator of principals' emotional trauma, caused by this constant state of disequilibrium, caused principals is reflected in the war imagery that the majority of them use in describing their feelings about change. They use words and phrases like '*rank*' (to describe their movement through the system); 'it's going to *kill* us ' (to describe the stress cause by additional work), 'it's *time-bomb* waiting to *explode*' (to describe the prevalence of Grade 12 pregnant girls), etc.

The *fourth* similarity in principals' stories is their sense of being overwhelmed with the *pace* at which change is taking place. Coupled with this is the fact that change just keeps on happening – there seems to be no time to catch their breath, to find their centre, to restore their balance. This is especially the case with curriculum change – just when they think they know what is expected of them in terms of curriculum change, it changes again and they just become more and more confused and uncertain of what is expected of them.

The *fifth* similarity in the stories told by principals is that all of them had both a *cover story* and a *secret story* to tell. In terms of their cover stories they supported the changes that have occurred in education during the period 1998 to 2008 but the reasons they provided for their support were often different. Principals at black and farm schools mentioned subsidized transport to and from schools, exemption of school fees and feeding schemes, and parental involvement in school governance as examples of change for the better. Principals of formerly white schools now turned multi-cultural focused on the positive spin-offs associated with the integration of different cultures, religions and races in schools and the fact that people who were previously in opposing camps were now getting to know and respect one another.

The *sixth* similarity in principals' stories is that all the principals feel that they have to demonstrate their *loyalty to the sacred story* of educational change in South Africa by portraying an image of themselves as being in charge, of being able to cope, not only with educational change, but also with their sense of not being able to live up to the expectations that others, their employers in particular, have of them. Once again the reasons for their 'split existence' also differ. Indications are that white principals express their support for the sacred story of educational change in South Africa as a means of ensuring their own, their school's and their cultural community's survival while black principals seem to feel that criticism of the system and/or the changes that occurred during the past ten years would be a betrayal of the liberation struggle of which the new dispensation is the outcome. To criticize the changes would be to admit that the liberation struggle had been either a waste of time or a lie. They are therefore morally obliged to emphasize the positive elements of change – that is, the social upliftment aspects – and ignore all else.

The *seventh*, and final, similarity in principals' stories is that all of them seem to gather the strength to continue with their jobs from the same *sacred space*, the only place where they felt 'safe', amongst other principals – at principals' meetings and workshops – because there they could be themselves: they did not have to pretend that everything at their school was wonderful; they could admit their confusion, their sense of inadequacy and their disillusionment with

the system and/or specific changes, without fear of retribution. In this sense the community of principals became their ‘sacred space’, a space they were not willing to share with anyone else.

Apart from the differences already indicated, the major difference between principals of previously white schools and those of black schools seem to be in the effect that the changes to education have had on their sense of self – their *self-esteem* – and their honesty about this aspect of change. While black principals, on the other hand, while not necessarily doing so consciously, confess that they need others – parents, staff members, district officials, other principals, etc. – to help them survive, indication are that white principals are more inclined to view themselves as being in control of the situation, claiming that it is due to their efforts that racial integration and changes to medium of instruction have taken place relatively smoothly. Unwilling or unable to admit to feelings of inadequacy, they focus on how they have got to where they are due to their own efforts. Informed by their supposed self-esteem – warranted or not – they cry out for their ‘achievements and ‘expertise’ to be acknowledged by those in power or another. While black principals, on the other hand, while not necessarily doing so consciously, confess that they need others – parents, staff members, district officials, other principals, etc. – to help them survive.

4.8 Concluding comments

In recording and interpreting the stories that participating principals told me, I shared their feelings of disillusionment, frustration, disequilibrium, fear, desperation, hope, split loyalties, courage and a sense of duty, a duty that forces them to go on, to keep on trying despite all odds. I noticed that, with the odd exception, their appointment as principals represented the realization of dreams they nurtured from the day they decided to become teachers that they managed to manifest these dreams by believing in themselves and their abilities and by taking specific measures to ensure their movement through the ranks. Even so, regardless of their determination and self-confidence, all the

principals initially experienced the usual difficulties associated with promotion. Most of them are also still struggling to restore their own and their schools' sense of balance, a balance disrupted by the scope and tempo of educational change in South Africa during the past ten years (1998 to 2008).

I discovered that, in an attempt to create positive images of themselves as competent and able managers and leaders in an ever-changing environment, narrating principals made up cover stories in which they were positive about change, capable of managing it and convinced of its value and sustainability. In covering up their secret stories, where they felt insecure, incompetent and disloyal, they either blamed external factors – other people and the effect of change, for example – or made use of generalization, claiming that their feelings and experiences were common to all principals. Finally, all principals, no matter how discouraged or disillusioned they felt, affirmed their belief in the sacred story of educational change in South Africa and indicated their commitment to *'the greater cause'*, the creation of a better future for all. In gathering courage for their journey into the future and their survival of the present, all the principals, irrespective of race, colour, language or gender, 'retire' to the same sacred space – the community of principals – where they are allowed to express their uncertainties, confess to their insecurities and simply be themselves.

Using these findings and the insights I gained from them as basis, I attempt to draw all the loose ends of my inquiry together in Chapter 5, using what I learnt not only to answer my original research questions but also to formulate my theoretical position – by means of a number of propositions – on the impact that educational change has school principals' professional lives and on the way in which their experiences of change could be investigated by other researchers. To this purpose I briefly summarize the focus, purpose and questions that directed my inquiry and indicate what actions I took to ensure that the results of my research would be regarded as trustworthy (valid and reliable I positivist terms).

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction and Purpose

As indicated in Chapters One and Three, South Africa, a young, democratic country has changed extensively on the political front since 1994, with equally radical and comprehensive changes occurring in education since the implementation of changed policies since 1998. While there is ample evidence of political and socio-economic change, one may well ask if the same can be said about education. Have ten years of democracy improved school education? What impact have new policies initiated by the Department of Education during the past ten years had on school management and leadership? How do principals feel about these changes and how do they respond to them?

I have attempted, by following Clandinin and Connelly's metaphor of a landscape (2000: xvi) in this research report to sketch the ever-changing epistemological and moral world in which South African school principals live and work. In doing so, I intended to contribute to existing insights regarding the way school principals in general, and South African school principals in particular, experienced change in the period 1998 to 2008. In conducting this inquiry I believe that I have uncovered new insights regarding the effect that the expectations of those in power have on principals' estimation of their own ability and/or on their attempts to effectively and efficiently manage the transformation of school education in South Africa.

In narrating and analyzing the stories of selected South African principals across racial, social and cultural divides, I believe that I have managed to paint a richly textured landscape that reflects not only the current lives of the selected principals but also the personal, communal, political and professional influences of their different histories on the way they have dealt with and still

deal with the role they have to play as agents of education transformation. In recording and analyzing their stories, I believe that I have managed to ‘open up for reflection and examination’ (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: xvi) not only their ‘secret’ and ‘sacred’ spaces inhabited by school principals who have to deal with change on a daily basis, but have also managed to identify some categories – the ‘conduit’ and its ‘rhetoric of conclusions’ (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: xxv) that researchers could use to penetrate the social veneer of educational change and its management at school level.

Following Clandinin and Connelly (2000), I moot that, in order to survive professionally, school principals are forced to live a ‘split existence’. Some of the reasons for this ‘split’ is that principals are expected, by those in power, to implement the changes in their schools while those they manage – teachers and other members of the school community – expect principals to represent them and their ideas to those in charge of the system as a whole. In reflecting on the patterns/themes emerging from principals’ stories, I consider the extent to which principals are supported in satisfying these often conflicting demands and to what extent they are able to play the role of moral agents, (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) tasked with motivating and inspiring those in their care while also performing their duties as ‘forced laborers in the factories of educational reformers’ (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

In presenting the findings of my inquiry I do not claim to be an authority in this field and/or to have the answer to all the problems and frustrations experienced by school principals as a result of educational change. Principals participating in my study did not include all principals or even all the members of the management team at the schools where I conducted my research. Moreover, data were collected from principals in one district of the Gauteng Province only hence the opinions of principals from other districts in the province remain unheard.

5.2 Research focus, purpose and procedures

As indicated in Chapter One (see § 1.2) my interest in principals' experiences of educational change during the period 1998 to 2008 was sparked by two things – my own appointment as acting principal in 1995 and the resultant contact I had with other principals at principals' workshops and meetings. The main focus of my inquiry was on principals' experience of the changes that occurred in South African education since 1998. I wanted to explore the way in which school principals experience, narrate and attach different meanings to the changes that have occurred to school education during the period 1998 to 2008. More specifically, my exploration of principals' experiences was aimed at determining whether or not the changes that have taken place and the ways in which they were fed into schools had a beneficial or detrimental effect on school principals' views of themselves, their schools and education in general.

To help me retain my focus throughout my inquiry I reformulated my research purpose as a single research question, namely:

How did a group of selected school principals in the Gauteng North District in SA experience changes to education during the period 1998 to 2008?

With a view to locating and collecting the data I needed to answer this question I split the main question up into the following subsidiary questions:

- Which changes did all South African school principals have to deal with during the period 1998 to 2008?
- How were the changes to school education fed into schools by the Department of Education during the period 1998 to 2008?
- What effect did the changes implemented by the Department of Education during the period 1998 to 2008 have on the schools whose principals were selected to participate in my study?
- How did the changes implemented by the Department of Education during the period 1998 to 2008 affect the role of school principals as seen by those principals selected to participate in my study?

- How do the school principals selected as participants in my study experience the changes effected to school education during the period 1998 to 2008?
- What according to the principals selected to participate in my study are the chances that the changes made to school education during the period 1998 to 2008 will be sustainable?

In collecting and analyzing data that would help me answer these questions I adopted a grounded narrative approach, following in the footsteps of Charmaz (2006) as far as grounded research was concerned and in the footsteps of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) Lieblich et al (1998) and Punch, (1998) with regard to narrative research. I selected knowledgeable informants – school principals, in my case - conducted one-on-one interviews with them, ‘storied’ and ‘restoried’ interview data into cohesive first-hand accounts, selected significant vignettes from these stories, holistically interpreted them, identified and discussed emerging themes and, finally, related the outcomes of my inquiry to my original research purpose, questions and objectives.

In attempting to validate the outcomes of my research I attempted, not to prove what quantitative researchers call reliability and validity, but to inspire confidence in the *confirmability*, *credibility*, *dependability* and *trustworthiness* of research results as well as the procedures followed in producing these (Cohen et al, 2000; De Vos, 2002; Erlandson et al, 1993; Lincoln and Guba, 1998; McMillan and Schumacher, 2006; Seidemann, 1991). In attempting to enhance these aspects of my inquiry, I used a combination of strategies, each with a very particular purpose.

- To ensure the credibility of my inquiry I spent a *prolonged period* – seven months, to be exact – engaging with participating principals at various levels and observing their different responses to particular aspects of change. During this period I visited each school more than once (see Chapter 2) in order to collect contextual data. This enabled me to check the accuracy of inferences I made from data against observational evidence (Erlandson et al, 1993:31), a technique that minimized the possibility of

subjective bias on my side. To add further confidence to the trustworthiness of the data collected I used member checking, asking participating principals to verify the accuracy of transcripts I made of their tape-recorded interviews (Erlandson, et al, 1993).

- In order to further eliminate bias in the collection of data I made use of *triangulation*, using different sources and looking at situations from different perspectives (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006). Data sources included schools, principals, policy documents and literature on educational change and its management. To ensure that I would not forget anything I saw or heard I kept rigorous notes of my observations and tape-recorded interviews. I also kept a reflective journal in which I noted my thoughts and feelings after each data collection episode (see Chapter 2 for detail on data collection procedures and instruments).
- I also used *triangulation* as a means of confirming recurring patterns/themes by interpreting principals' stories from three perspectives, namely their content, structure and discourse (see Chapter 2 for detail) – a process that reflected Strauss and Corbin's (1998) staged coding process - thereby incorporating multiple theoretical perspectives in both the planning and interpretation stages of my inquiry (De Vos et al, 2002:342).
- Following Lincoln and Guba (1998:44), I considered the possibility that other researchers might find the same answers I did if they were to replicate my research design. I therefore laid down a detailed audit trail of the techniques I used in collecting and interpreting participating principals' stories. This trail is described in detail in Chapter Two.
- I confirmed the outcomes of my inquiry/research by comparing my daily reflections on data collection episodes and the data collected during these episodes with my field notes and the transcriptions of interviews (Millan and Schumacher, 2006; Patton, 2002).

5.3 Research findings

As I indicated in Chapter Four, the stories that participating principals told me about their experiences of change reflected disillusionment, frustration, disequilibrium, fear, desperation, hope, split loyalties, courage and a sense of duty that forces them to go on, to keep on trying despite all odds. With the odd exception, their appointment as principals represented the realization of participating principals' dreams, typically ascribed to their own strategic efforts. Without exception these principals initially experienced difficulties typically associated with promotion and are still struggling to restore their own and their schools' sense of balance by coming to grips with the pace and scope of educational change in the country. In trying to retain their self-esteem narrating principals made up cover stories in which they were positive about change, capable of managing it and convinced of its value and sustainability. In covering up their secret stories, where they felt insecure, incompetent and disloyal, they either blamed external factors – other people and the effect of change, for example – or made use of generalization, claiming that their feelings and experiences were common to all principals. Finally, all principals, no matter how discouraged or disillusioned they felt, affirmed their commitment to 'the cause', that is, their belief in the sacred story of change, and gathered the courage to continue on their journey of principalship from the same sacred space – the community of principals.

In order to determine the extent to which these research findings enabled me to answer my initial research questions, reiterated in 5.2, I devote this section of Chapter Five to a discussion of these findings as they relate to the research questions and my original research purpose and focus. In doing so, I also merge insights gained from my review of literature on educational change and my analysis of educational policy in the new South Africa with the insights gained from my inquiry.

5.3.1 Educational change in South Africa during the period 1998 to 2008

Post-apartheid educational change in South Africa has been nothing but radical, affecting the system as a whole as well as the people working in the system (DoE, 1997; Taylor, 1999:94). Systemically the entire education landscape has changed. Educational decisions are now a joint rather than an individual responsibility, taken by a Committee of Education Ministers that represents national as well as provincial interests (RSA, 1996e; RSA, 1996f). The establishment of a national qualifications framework (NQF), maintained and monitored by the South African Qualifications Authority, ensures the integrity of the education system, integrating education and training, monitoring standard and quality and establishing an accessible database of these at national level (SAQA, 1997). Teacher education is no longer a provincial matter but a national one, and all teachers are now required to have at least an initial degree conferred by an accredited higher education institution (RSA, 1996d).

Schools are no longer separated along racial and provincial lines: no learner may be refused access to any public school on the basis of ability, race, language, religion or gender; all learners are to be instructed in terms of a single, national curriculum (NCS); the teacher/learner ratio is nationally determined, based on enrolment figures and no learner's human rights may be undermined in any way, not by means of corporal punishment (DoE, (2000), not by being subjected to illegal searches or being suspended or expelled from school without regard to due process. Schools are no longer 'owned' by school principals: parents have been charged with school governance (Christie, 1999:180), principals with school management and learners' voices have to be heard through their representatives on school governing bodies and learner councils (DoE, (1998). In short, South African schools have, on paper, become inclusive and democratic: they are safe places conducive to effective teaching and learning (Prinsloo, 2005:5), places where the value of the Constitution are

promoted and the rights of individuals protected, places where everybody is harmoniously working together towards a better future for all.

In practice, though, as implied in the stories of the principals who participated in my study, things are not always as rosy as they seem – reality often differs from the ideal, and practice is often very different from policy. The discourse participating principals used in telling their stories does not reflect an image of schools as ‘safe’ places where everybody works harmoniously together towards a shared ideal. Rather, their use of battle imagery suggests that they are still grappling with change, trying to get to grips with it while simultaneously trying to convince other members of the school community of its value and eventual benefits. This disjuncture is reflected in literature on educational management which shows that, although principals are, systemically speaking, regarded as middle managers, they are generally tasked to act as change agents at school level even when they lack ‘practical clarity’ or feel ill-equipped to do what this entails (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991:152; Holbeche, 2006:25).

Key among the changes contributing to principals’ sense of being on a battlefield is curriculum change. Whilst principals narrated their experiences regarding curriculum change from different perspectives, they all felt overwhelmed by the scope of the change and by the fact that the curriculum has not changed once during this period but twice – first from a provincially-based content-oriented curriculum to a national outcomes-based one called Curriculum 2005 and then to a more streamlined outcomes-based version referred to as the National Curriculum Statement. Given that the Department of Education expects school principals to manage the implementation of the national curriculum at school level, it is the principals who have to bear the brunt of teachers’ antagonism towards what they regard as an undermining of their professional competence (Heystek, 2007: 491-494; Ubben, Hughes and Norris, 2001: 116).

Teachers, especially the older, more experienced ones, were unwilling to abandon tried and tested methods for new ones, either because they were afraid of change or because they were not convinced that their ways were

inappropriate and/or inadequate (Dunklee, 2000:143, 87; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992:48). Also, as a result of curriculum change, there was an increase in what principals termed '*paper work*'. Educators are now required to keep a multitude of files and records, continuously assessing learner progress and performance and having less and less time for teaching and lesson preparation. Aggravating the situation, according to principals' stories, were teachers' perceptions that their expertise was not valued by those in power because they, the teachers, were not consulted on curriculum changes even though they are the ones with practical curriculum expertise. Consequently they regarded curriculum change as a top-down imposition rather than as a necessary innovation.

A different, but related, change was the determination of *class size*, or appropriate teacher/learner ratios, typically based on school enrolments (Christie, 1999:179). Schools where class size had been relatively small in the past – mostly white schools – experienced the increase in class size and the redeployment of staff members as traumatic. To add to their trauma, teachers in previously Afrikaans-medium schools now had to accept double teaching loads, teaching the same subjects or learning areas in Afrikaans as well as English. Not only did this make them feel incompetent, because they were not as fluent in English as in Afrikaans, but often the promises made by various education departments concerning additional staff allocations and/or the gradual phasing in of dual and parallel-medium were not honoured. This, according to the principals, increased teacher negativity towards curriculum change and made its effective implementation more difficult.

A third change that had to be managed at school level was the way in which discipline was to be maintained. In the past just about every school in South Africa depended on *corporal punishment* as a means of 'disciplining' learners. Given the imperative to protect learners' individual rights as stipulated in the Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996 (d)), corporal punishment was declared illegal in education legislation, (DoE, 2000; Imbrogno, 2000:134). Instead, School Governing Bodies were mandated, (DoE, 1998b) to adopt codes of conduct for the schools they governed, having consulted with all stakeholders, including

learners, on what should be regarded as acceptable behaviour and on what sanctions to impose on those who behaved unacceptably (Squelch, 2000:24-28). While not all the principals criticized the abolition of corporal punishment or mentioned it as one of the challenges experienced in their schools, others placed the blame for learners' ill discipline squarely on its abolition.

5.3.2 Feeding change into schools

Informing all change was a whole battery of new policies (RSA, 1995 (e) – White Paper on Education and Training; RSA, 1996 (c) – Employment of Educators' Act; RSA, 1996 (a) – National Educational Policy Act; RSA, 1996f – South African Schools Act; SAQA, 1996 (b) that spelt out what had to change and how this had to happen. To ensure that all those responsible for the implementation of change at school level were cognizant with the policies, the national Department of Education, using donor and government funding, organized multiple workshops aimed at training teachers as well as education officials at national, provincial and district/regional levels. Principals, though not initially required to attend curriculum workshops, were later also roped in. They were also trained, at principals' workshops and various management-related tertiary programs, to manage change at their schools.

Indications in literature (Earley and Weidling, 2004:161) dealing with the curriculum change (see § 3.3.1.1) are that training, or re-skilling, is crucial to the successful implementation and management of curriculum change but that this does not mean there will be no 'implementation dips' (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991:91). Things tend to get worse before they get better given the complexity of educational change. However, Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) warn, if these 'dips' are not properly managed, the whole system may well collapse. Principals' stories suggest indications of temporary and, in some cases, continuing, and systemic collapse. Their stories tell of teachers who were ill prepared for the implementation of outcomes-based education, notwithstanding the training provided by the Department of Education and the piloting of new programs prior to implementation. The reason, according to

the principals, was that many of the trainers were themselves unfamiliar with the new curriculum and/or unable to convey their understanding to teachers in ways that inspired confidence. Consequently education standards, instead of increasing, have dropped, specifically in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

5.3.3 The effect of educational change on schools

Principals' stories indicate that schools have been completely changed from the way they used to be but in different ways. Schools previously falling under the Department of Education and Training, i.e. black schools, have benefited from the changes in terms of resource allocation, infra-structure, buildings and other physical facilities, feeding schemes, exemption from school fees, 'right-sizing' (amended teacher/learner ratios) and the provision of subsidized learner transport. Formerly white schools, apart from having to deal with bigger class sizes, have also had to open up their schools to other races and, in the case of formerly Afrikaans-medium schools, to use more than one language as medium of instruction. It is the latter – medium of instruction – that has caused teachers and principals most stress since teachers felt incompetent to teach in English and principals had to 'force' them to accept double teaching loads because dual- and/or parallel medium was not considered a factor in the determination of teacher/learner ratios. Racial integration, although initially fraught with conflict and tension, seems to have been less of a problem, with principals' stories indicating that learners and parents have accepted one another and that teachers no longer seem to notice the skin colour of the children they are teaching.

While things seem to be settling down in urban and peri-urban schools this does not seem to be the case in farm schools. These schools, irrespective of their former status as black or white schools, while benefiting from feeding schemes, resource allocation and other positive elements of change, seem to have been negatively affected by the determination of teacher/learner ratios based on learner enrolment numbers. Given their typically small numbers, most farm schools have between 2 and 4 staff members, principal included,

who have to teach the whole curriculum to all classes. The only way to do this is for them to combine different grades and for the principal to carry a full teaching load in addition to his/her administrative duties. Consequently these schools do not qualify for administrative staff and find it difficult to attend training workshops since attendance would imply more work for even fewer staff.

The maintenance of discipline in schools also seems to have become problematic. Some of the reasons given for this are the emphasis that is placed on group work in the new curriculum, the emphasis that is placed on learners' human rights and the abolition of corporal punishment. While formerly white schools pride themselves on their ability to maintain discipline, citing this as one of the reasons why black parents want to enroll their children in formerly white schools, former DET (Department of Education and Training) schools seem to struggle to do so. One of the principals' stories in particular, emphasized the relationship between learners' lack of commitment to their schoolwork and the fact that they no longer 'fear' punishment. The same principal also linked the increase in learner pregnancy to the emphasis on learners' rights, which protect them from being suspended or expelled from school when they get pregnant.

As regards the extent to which parents are involved in school activities, a crucial feature of the new education dispensation, all principals indicated that the existence of functionally operational school governing bodies (SGB) in their schools. Indications in principals' stories are that some of them welcome this, because it places some of the responsibilities associated with the running of successful schools, especially financial decisions, on someone else's shoulders; other principals seem secretly to resent this, since instead of 'owning' the school, they now have to consult and negotiate with parents and other stakeholders prior to taking decisions and/or actions concerning what they regard as 'theirs'.

With regard to the involvement of parents not sitting on the SGB, indications are that parental involvement in formerly white schools are high, with the

‘new’ (black) parents becoming increasingly active in parents meetings and extra-mural activities. In formerly black schools this does not seem to be happening as readily because, as principals tell it, many of the parents are not cognizant of the role they are supposed to play in their children’s school education, are not ‘educated’ and/or ‘literate’ enough to feel that they have something to contribute, have work commitments that prevent them from getting involved, or are simply ‘not interested’.

Despite principals’ claims that things have changed, there are indications that this might not be the whole truth. Jansen (2002:199-215), for example, claims that ‘despite the production of literally thousand of pages of formal policy documents after apartheid, there is...little change in schools and classroom practice throughout South Africa’. Could it be that policy implementation did not neatly follow the route of policy planning, that there is a gap between policy and practice?

Indications from literature (MacLaughlin, 1997:182-183) are that there are two broad responses to this question as it relates to educational change in South Africa during the period 1998 to 2008. The first response is that too many changes are often introduced at the same time (Rossow and Warner, 2000:273-274). This is also evident from my study. Not only did schools have to deal with curriculum change – twice! – but they also had to deal with continuous and systemic assessments, racial integration, teacher redeployment, retraining, human rights, the abolition of corporal punishment, the mainstreaming of ‘special needs’ children, parental involvement in school affairs, and so on.

The second response is that principals are not always able to manage the changes as they are expected to (Holbeche, 2006:25). In the midst of all the changes, they are expected to remain calm and balanced, effective and motivated, a leader as well as a manager, forgetting that they were also caught unawares by the changes, that they, too, harbour secret fears and hopes, and that they may not be able to act as ‘buffer’ between those in authority and those they have to lead and ‘manage’ (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991:144).

It would seem, therefore, that while some of the changes initiated by the Department of Education seemed to lead to school improvement some had the opposite effect and, instead of being welcomed, were rejected and/or secretly undermined by those who were expected to support them.

5.3.4 The effect of change on the role of school principals

Although literature (Beaudan, 2002:261-262; Holbeche, 2006:21, 257-258) on the position of principals in schools (see § 3.3.1.4) indicate that they are central figures in respect of changes related to school culture and climate, effective change is not always the result of their efforts, however the key role they play in this regard (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991:145). As Ubben and Hughes (1992:1) point out, ‘leadership doesn’t occur in a vacuum and certain managerial functions need to be adequately attended to for an orderly and productive learning environment’ to emerge and be maintained. It would seem as if the Department of Education in South Africa assumed that principals would perform these functions without any problem, thereby making them key agents for change on behalf of the Department itself. It was, so the Department seemed to assume, up to principals to encourage, motivate and support teachers to implement curriculum changes; take control of the school finance activities; manage staff; ensure the safety of the learners; see to it that all systems required for the implementation and sustainability of change are operational, and act as accounting officers that saw to it that their schools had the requisite resources for effecting mandated changes. Other people would then, so it was assumed, look to them for guidance. In short, the Department of Education assumed that principals would be at the cutting edge of change in that they knew, understood and supported the changes initiated at national level.

Principals’ stories, presented and interpreted in this study showed that principals were aware of these expectations and, in many cases, pretended to live up to them. In their ‘secret’ places, though, they often admitted that this

was not the case that things were not working as they should. They then either blamed others or themselves for their ‘failure’ to implement change as they were expected to. Regardless of where they placed the blame their ‘failure’ undermined their self-esteem and their confidence in their own ability. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991:144), in empathy with principals’ dilemma, argue that ‘it is time to go beyond the empty phrase that the principal is the gatekeeper of change’ since often, as is evident in the stories I collected during my inquiry, principals ‘find themselves in a job which is quite different to that which they originally chose’. In order to effectively lead and manage change, principals need to be more than its ‘facilitators, balancers, flag bearers, bridgers and inquirers’ realizing that ‘although all these forces and constituencies are resources, the proverbial buck stops with them’ (Rallis and Goldring, 2000:135). My study suggests that not all principals can do this.

Indications from literature (Burke and Cooper, 2006:50; Dunklee, 2000:88) on school management and leadership (see § 3.2.3) are that educational change does not just ‘happen’ in a school; it needs somebody who will drive it (Earley and Weidling, 2004:55), someone who will act as a catalyst, allowing people to disagree with what is ‘preached’ about change, and to have a say shaping the way that the school should handle change and/or the direction the school should take in dealing with it (Sergiovanni, 1991:269).

Many principals do not know exactly what they should do (Duignan, 2007:6), something also evidenced in the stories told during the course of this inquiry. Allowing them only to enter the change management process towards the end, rather than involving them from the start, ‘expecting them to be leaders in the implementation of changes that they had no hand in developing and may not understand’ (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991:152) is a recipe for trouble. Should this be the case, these writers argue, and ‘given the other demands on the role, it is no wonder that most principals do not approach their change responsibilities with enthusiasm’.

5.3.5 Participating principals' experiences of educational change

As indicated in Chapter Four, principals' experiences were both similar and different. What was clear from the narration of their experiences, though, is that principals found the changes and the responsibilities they had to accept as change managers difficult. They found changes to their role functions – their job descriptions – especially challenging. This was most evident in the accounts of farm school principals who not only had to accept responsibility for school management and administration but also for classroom instruction and learner assessment. The fact that they had to manage continuous changes to the curriculum, to staff deployment, to learner composition, to parent involvement and to medium of instruction did nothing but aggravate the position they found themselves in. They felt alone and overwhelmed by it all hence their attempts to either keep their heads above water or to pretend that they were doing fine.

Changes to their status as principals, as they perceived it, also had an impact on their self-esteem and their willingness to support specific changes. Whereas some of the principals welcomed the move towards transparency and participatory management of schools, others longed for the days when principals were 'in charge' of their schools. Some understood the need for principals to be held accountable for what happened in their schools; others regarded it as an extra burden, one that they accepted reluctantly. What is very clear from principals' stories is that they have gone beyond the point of no return. They are determined to keep their positions, to survive and, in some instances, even to help others survive. Their stories seem to indicate that what they do wish, though, is acknowledgement for their efforts and for their loyalty to the cause, acknowledgement that will only mean something if it comes from above as well as from below.

5.3.6 Sustainability of change

Indications from literature (Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman and White, 2003:42; Rossow and Warner, 2000:273) on educational change (see § 3.2.2) are that, in many cases, change is temporary. The reasons given for this are many. Sometimes, it is argued, possible obstacles to change are not considered in the planning stages because ‘policymakers and senior administrators often underestimate, overlook or are oblivious to the difficulties of implementation change’ (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore and Manning, 2001:115). At other times, those who have to implement and manage change are unable to ‘navigate the waves of change’ because change policy makers introduce changes without providing the means to ‘identify and confront...situational constraints and without attempting to understand the values, ideas and experiences’ of those who are tasked with the implementation of these changes (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991:96; Samuelson, 1999:22).

When I started with my research, I assumed that educational change is sustainable because of the good things that have happened in schools and because of the progress schools have made in many areas since change was first introduced. It emerged from this study that not all participants in this study would agree with me. Those who had their doubts about the sustainability of changes that have already been effected raised concerns about curriculum implementation and teacher allocation. Even those who claimed that the changes were sustainable did so because they realized that things could never go back to the way they were. As a result, they were of the opinion that change therefore had to be sustained by default. This, these principals claimed, would only happen, however, if those in power practiced what they preached in respect of grassroots involvement, that is, if they consulted those at the chalk face – the teachers who knew what worked and what did not.

Embracing educational change and the motivation to explore how well change works in our schools is not enough. According to Hargreaves and Fink (2003), ‘to sustain means to nourish’. If change is, therefore, to be sustained, it needs

to be nourished, cared for, given the support it needs to flourish and grow (Campbell, 1991; Spillane, Haverlson and Drummond, 2001:26; Hargreaves (2003). Its sustenance or not is the joint responsibility of all those whose lives are affected by it, but especially by those who act as pacesetters, leading the charge, so to speak (Fullan, 2005:35; Loehr and Schwartz, 2003:5). The findings of this study seem to suggest that, while all the principals involved in the study claim that they have accepted this responsibility some of them are simply saying this to cover up their own inadequacies while others are saying it to score points. Indications are that even those who claim to support it do so because they feel they have no other choice, not necessarily because they believe it is the best thing to do.

5.4 Concluding comments

In presenting my research findings and in using them to answer my initial research questions, I discovered that I was looking at principals' experiences through the lens of those theorists who work in an interpretive theoretical paradigm. In interpreting principals' stories of change I gained new insights into the social and professional realities of participating principals' existence. Viewing principals' experiences through their eyes and narrating it in their words, gave me an empathetic but critical understanding of different perspectives on and experiences of educational change (DeMarais & Lapan, 2003; Henning et al, 2004:13) in the South African context during the period 1998 to 2008.

What emerged from my growing understanding of the way selected school principals experienced educational change in South Africa during the period 1998 to 2008 is that the way in which educational change has taken place during the decade 1998 to 2008 has upset the balance of those school principals who participated in this study, forcing them to live a 'split existence' in which, although they feel alone and overwhelmed by all the changes, they pretend that they are doing fine simply keep their heads above water, to retain their self-esteem and/or to keep their jobs. To this purpose they

use ‘cover’ stories to hide their ‘secrets’ – secret feelings of failure, inadequacy, disillusionment and despair. While my study was too contextual to generalize, indications from literature (see Chapter Three) are that these feelings may well be typical of all principals who are required to manage and lead change imposed from above. My theoretical propositions regarding the effect of imposed educational change which has to be managed and led by school principals who had little or no say in what and how things should change is that it causes such disequilibrium in their personal and professional image of themselves that they are forced to go underground, sharing their deepest fears and feelings only with those who are in the crucible with them, i.e. other principals. To all others they tell a cover story of their own success at managing the change. I also propose that, should the imposed change be ‘marketed’ by those in power as something superior, untouchable, the only way to go, principals are even more inclined to pretend – not only that they succeed but that they believe in the ‘sacredness’ of this story irrespective of the destruction that it is wreaking in their lives. I offer the following reasons for this theoretical proposition:

- In balancing the expectations of those in power with those of the school community, principals become like slaves – not allowed to express their opinions, merely to serve, to be obedient to the wishes of others even if this means negating their own.
- Principals’ ‘split personalities’ is reflected in their use of cover stories and secret stories that hide their real feelings about the sacred story. This was especially in the case of black principals, who seem to believe that criticisms of the system and/ or of the changes that occurred during the past ten years would be a betrayal of the liberation struggle of which the new dispensation is the outcome. Criticizing the changes would be to admit that the liberation struggle had been either a waste of time or a lie. They therefore feel morally obliged to emphasize the positive elements of change – that is the social upliftment aspects and ignore all else. In the case of white principals

they do so, one could surmise, because they do not want to be accused of racism and/or feelings of superiority.

Furthermore, as regards future research into school principals' experiences of educational change, I would, based on the findings of my own study, contend that it is inadequate to focus simply on principals' current experiences of educational change without linking these to their past experiences. What researchers should do is to investigate the whole of a principal's professional life experience, from his/her first dream of becoming a principal, through the trials and tribulations s/he experienced along the way, noting the way in which these changed and/or developed them, up to each one's current experiences. I propose, therefore, that the use of a journey metaphor rather than an events management approach, researchers might well obtain a much deeper and nuanced understanding of what it is like to be a principal in times of radical, ongoing educational change imposed from above.

In sharing the results of my research with the broader research community I trust that I have made a contribution to current understandings of the way in which a particular group of South African school principals experienced and dealt with educational changes during the period in question. In opening up the 'secret and sacred spaces' inhabited by these principals I suggest many other principals might identify with the characters in my research study. Should other researchers replicate my study it is quite possible that similar patterns and themes might emerge, creating the opportunity for generalization. In this sense I, too, would have made a contribution to the creation of new knowledge on educational change and its management at school level.

The outcomes of my inquiry convinced me that the unique position that school principals occupy in schools means that they do influence the direction change takes in schools, for better or for worse. Learner performance, teacher success in curriculum delivery, parental involvement in school matters, and the improvement or not of schools, are directly proportional to the quality of leadership and management of the principal and his team. The extent to which the needs of the school are addressed will depend on the principal's ability to

motivate the school community to work together towards a better future. The ability of principals to do this will, in turn, depend on the extent to which the various departments of education support school principals in the unique work they are doing.

5.5 Motivated recommendations

Informed by the outcomes and conclusions of this inquiry I would like to offer a few suggestions on the management of future change efforts in the Gauteng North District in particular and, perhaps, South Africa in general.

- In the first instance I would recommend that those who believe that educational change is necessary should consult with those who will have to implement the changes at school level concerning the changes envisaged and the ways to implement them. Not only will this convey a real commitment to power-sharing on the part of those who are in control but it would convey to school principals that they are regarded as valued partners in the education enterprise rather than as ‘indentured slaves’. Principals would then have a sense of ‘ownership’ of the changes suggested, making them more responsible for the successful implementation of such changes than is currently the case.
- In the second instance I would suggest that school principals, having been given the responsibility of leading and managing change at school level, be given ongoing support for their endeavours in this regard rather than be thrown in at the deep end. This could easily be done by means of ongoing workshops where they are allowed to voice their concerns without the fear that they will be accused of incompetence and/or disloyalty to the cause. In this sense the workshops could serve as a forum for the discussion and clarification of new roles, processes and procedures rather than as an information session only. Principals, as heads of institutions, are the last link between the Education Department and the school communities. It is

therefore crucial that understand and be committed to carrying the mandate of the Education Department to those involved with their respective schools.

- Regarding the maintenance of school discipline I would suggest that more effort be put into supporting schools regarding the development and implementation of alternatives to corporal punishment. Legislation banning corporal punishment was passed to all school to implement it. Despite this, many schools are still struggling with the maintenance of discipline. Legislation on the ban of corporal punishment has to be continually emphasized during staff gatherings in order to conscientize educators to the implications of not adhering to it. This can only be successfully done once schools have developed appropriate alternative measures to corporal punishment.

- Regarding the negative effects of the new curriculum on learners' reading, writing and counting skills I would recommend that these be attended to as a matter of urgency. Schools have been adversely affected due to the fact that there are still learners who attend school daily but are facing challenges of reading, writing and counting. Whilst it is acknowledged that the Education Department has taken the matter seriously and workshops have been conducted to address the gap, there is a need that continuous follow-ups are done in schools to check the implementation of the strategies and the progress done since the workshops were conducted. The challenge should be treated as priority and therefore speedy measures have to be in place as the final results of the Grade 12 classes are negatively affected.

- Concerning the specific situation of farm schools, I would recommend that alternative measures should be considered for ensuring that staff allocation is sufficient to ensure quality teaching, learning and school management. Learners attending farm schools are also South African

learners and have to be given the same treatment in as far as curriculum delivery is concerned as any South African learner. The type of education that is offered to farm school learners seems to be greatly compromised by multi-grade teaching and learning which these learners found themselves facing daily. Even though the Education Department has started acting on the matter by closing down some of the farm schools and incorporating learners into the nearby schools, the process seems to be moving at the speed of a snail. The reason is that whilst long and bureaucratic procedures and red tape are being followed to close down the farm schools, in the process the lives of many learners are being adversely affected. There is therefore a need that the issues of farm schools receive attention and be treated as a measure of urgency before causing any further damage than the one already caused.

- Concerning the management of learner pregnancy, I note that certain schools are still grappling with the challenge relating to learner pregnancy. Legislation regarding learner pregnancy has to be made known to all stakeholders for implementation. If ever our schools need to defeat the fight against teenage pregnancy, the school must wage the fight. Schools need to have a nurse and a social worker who will provide guidelines on healthy living and organize gatherings with female educators and girl learners on how best they can assist the girl learners from falling in to the danger of teenage pregnancy. Many of our learners become the victims because of peer pressure and lack of knowledge regarding the issue.

- As regards recommendations for further research, I believe that this research study has added value in terms of the development of a critical understanding of principals' experiences of and role in educational change in South Africa. I also believe that this research study cannot be concluded because it is not an end in itself; rather, it offers multiple opportunities for replication, which could result in the generalization of my research findings to other contexts and situation.



- Finally, given the limitations of the study (see Chapter One), the outcomes of my research also suggest a need to complement the findings of this inquiry by research that focuses on other aspects of change. One aspect that comes to mind is a focus on principals' understanding of and ability to manage school finances. Another is their understanding of and willingness to implement changes related to the creation of inclusive schools.