

**Reflecting on experience in educational leadership development through
mentorship in Mpumalanga**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Musa Absalon Thambekwayo, hereby declare that this thesis; **'Reflecting on experience in educational leadership development through mentorship in Mpumalanga'** is my own original work and that all sources have been accurately indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. This document has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university in order to obtain an academic qualification. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education at the University of Pretoria in the faculty of Education Management and Policy Studies.

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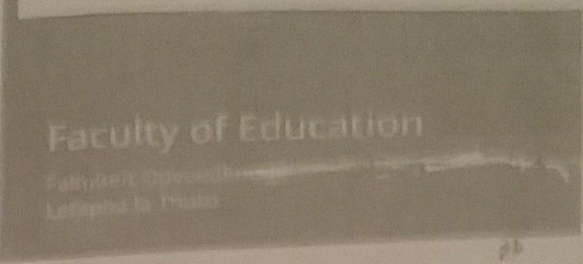
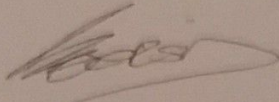
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ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

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ETHICS STATEMENT

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this thesis, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that he/she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's *Code of ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research.*"



DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late parents, Mr. S.J. Thambekwayo and Mrs. N. M. Thambekwayo for raising me and my siblings in the house of the Lord.

Even though they did not have an opportunity to get a decent education, but ensured that we have wings to fly higher.

To my wife, Esther, my children, Andile, Mthobisi and Kgauhelo and my granddaughter, Ursula Mpilo Thambekwayo, I say, this work is yours too.

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The Mpumalanga Department of Education is applauded for its commitment to research projects in the province by granting permission to conduct research in the province. My appreciations goes to the Head of Department (Education) and the Research Unit (MED). My gratitude also goes to the head of the Research Unit, Mr. A. Baloyi for his support to all students applying to do research in the province. His advices and prompt responses in processing applications has had a significant contribution in the studies done within the province.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which the learning experiences of mentors and mentees in their mentoring relationships were reflective of Kolb's experiential learning cycle. The researcher interviewed five mentors and five principals who participated in the mentoring programme as encapsulated in the ACE School Leadership programme at the University of Pretoria. The principals were selected from the Nkangala education district of Mpumalanga province.

Research questions covered the four modes of Kolb's experiential learning cycle: (i) Concrete Experience, (ii) Reflective Observation, (iii) Abstract Conceptualisation, and (iv) Active Experimentation. The participants were required to describe their experiences in the mentoring programme and their anticipated future mentorship practices within their schools. Participants described the reflective processes they engaged in and the skills and knowledge gained, as well as their interpretation of the mentoring phenomenon. The participants' responses were subsequently analysed to determine the extent to which their learning experiences were reflective of the experiential learning cycle as presented by Kolb (1984). The study confirmed the participants' learning as reflective of Kolb's experiential learning cycle.

The outcomes confirmed mentoring as a vital tool for enhancing principals' leadership and management knowledge and skills in order to, in turn, develop their schools as effective learning institutions. The mentoring programme not only contributed towards school improvement, but also gave a huge boost to the principals' personal and professional development. Moreover, the mentors in the programme were instrumental in helping principals to become reflective practitioners as anticipated in the Department of Education's *National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa* (2007).

During this research it was discovered that the programme was not without its challenges, however. Mentor selection was found to contain serious flaws. Moreover, the principals selected for the programme were not fully informed of the reasons for their selection to the programme; the only information they were in possession of in this regard was centred on the academic aspect of the qualification, which meant that this was what they focused on.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Abstract Conceptualization
ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
ACL	Action Centred Learning
AE	Active Experimentation
ACE(SL)	Advanced Certificate in Education (School Leadership)
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CE	Concrete Experience
CPTD	Continued Professional Teacher Development
B.Ed	Bachelor in Education
DOE	Department of Education
ELT	Experiential Learning Theory
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
LSQ	Learning Style Questionnaire
MDE	Mpumalanga Department of Education
M.Tech	Master in Technology Education
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NSNP	National School Nutrition Programme
PhD.	Doctor of Philosophy
PTC	Primary Teacher Certificate
REQV	Relevant Educational Qualification Value
RCL	Representative Council for Learners
RO	Reflective Observation
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
WIL	Work integrated learning



KEY WORDS

**Experiences, Mentoring, Learning, Educational Leadership, Reflection,
Experiential Learning**

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

The history of education in South Africa, prior to 1994, reflects a political scenario that undermined the capability of black South Africans to access quality education. Educational leadership in particular suffered, as parents, teachers and even learners disowned the racially segregated education provided by the previous apartheid government because of its exclusionary nature. Educational leaders (principals) were seen as government agents who were part of the oppressive apartheid education system. Davidoff and Lazarus (2003:xv) remind us about the low morale among teachers, tensions between teachers and administrative staff members, disciplinary problems with students, and the lack of vision and direction that existed during that period. This situation resulted in poor learner academic achievements, poor leadership and management in schools, and the frustrations suffered by educational leaders in the communities in general and in schools in particular. Something had to be done to correct the situation in the schools, starting with educational leaders. The researcher believes that the fates of principals, teachers and learners as partners in learning are interrelated. Accordingly, the knowledge principals gain from on-the-job experiences acquired through mentoring becomes an important aspect of the educational leadership development that is required to change the status quo and contribute to the envisaged changes in education.

With the advent of democracy in 1994, things began to change in the South African political landscape. The leadership of the country at all levels experienced drastic change, with education being one of the most important priority areas. “The mind sets of all stakeholders were realigned towards greater responsibilities for and expectations of education in general and schools in particular with analysts, policymakers and practitioners increasingly recognising the role of school leaders in developing high-performing schools” (Darling-Hammond & Orphanos, 2007:1).

Research has shown that educational leadership is possibly the most important determinant of an effective learning environment. As a result, organisations and government departments view leadership capacity as a source of competitiveness

and invest in its development through specific programmes. School principals are being held accountable for their professional activities, which among others include being the accounting officers in their schools, as well as being responsible for the implementation of policies and the carrying out of other professional duties. Over the past few years there was an enormous number of new policies that have been introduced to address the imbalances of the past, as well as to address social ills and transform impoverished societies through education. Among these policies are those that address school governance, and teacher education, appraisal and development, inclusive education, and support services. However these policy expectations and objectives cannot be achieved without well capacitated and capable workforce in the form of educational leaders. Such a capacitated school leadership is able to influence the school in realising what Fullan (2000:1) term the “collective competency of the school as an entity to bring about effective change”.

Chikoko, Naicker and Mthiyane (2011:317) state that “research on school leadership around the world has shown that the quality of leadership provided in a school has an influence on learner performance and teacher effectiveness”. The *City Press* newspaper, dated 25 October 2015, carried an interesting article titled “Principals and the art of leading”. This article reported on the experiences and frustrations that principals shared with one another during a seminar. One of the principals voiced his frustrations as follows:

How do I make teachers accountable? I have 67 teachers-, who work for me, but none is employed by me, I have had no training for the position of principal, yet I am expected to juggle tasks ranging from admissions issues to dealing with difficult parents, managing staff, sorting out administration and procedures, inculcating discipline, and managing relations with district officials and the community. Where is the support from the department?

Davis, Darling-Hammond, La Pointe and Meyerson (2005:5) argue that “more research work is based on how principals influence school effectiveness, and little less about how to help principals develop the capacity that make a difference in the way schools work and what is being learned by students”.

The scope of this study is limited to educational leadership in the form of school principals and their mentors within the mentoring programme encapsulated in the

Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership qualification (ACE: SL). The focus is on the participants' learning experiences within the programme and how their learning experiences contribute to their leadership practices in the schools, as it is believed that positive learning outputs are closely associated with school effectiveness and efficiency. Ngcobo and Tikly (2008:2) state in this regard that within the tradition of education, 'effectiveness' has often been defined in relation to a quantifiable measure of outcomes such as examination results"

This therefore implies that school principals as drivers of school effectiveness are supposed to take a lead in ensuring optimum learner and staff performance within their schools. An important question to ask is: what is expected from school principals as educational leaders? This quote from the Ontario Leadership Strategy (2011) best describes the envisaged role for school leaders:

School leaders have a primary role in setting the vision and working in partnership with staff, students, parents, and the community to focus on student achievement and well-being. They have to serve as role models and community leaders, leading schools towards excellence through collaborative goal-setting and fostering collaborative learning cultures. They guide improvements in instruction by gathering and analysing data effectively and inspiring staff to seek opportunities for continuous professional growth and development. School leaders oversee school operations and align resources to match priorities, and they partner with parents to help students achieve their best. To succeed in this important and complex role, principals and vice-principals require a network of support ranging from peer support to professional learning opportunities offered through the ministry, school boards, and a principal association.

The Department of Basic Education, noting the significance of the principal's role as captured above, have made capacity building and development their top priority. Msila and Mtshali (2011:2) contend that the inability of schools to perform to the expected standards can be attributed to the neglect that has taken place in terms of professional development for school leaders and managers. This is not only the case here in South Africa but in other countries as well. Walker and Qian (2006:301) posit that new principals claim that once they are appointed, they are neglected unless trouble occurs; thus, many feel abandoned by their employers. Therefore, leadership

development programmes such as mentorship, which seek to address this situation, have been introduced and are being implemented in South Africa.

As previously indicated, this study has as its focal point the mentoring programme that is encapsulated in the Advanced Certificate in Education, School Leadership (ACE:SL), which was introduced by the then Department of Education in 2007. According to the Department of Education-, (2007), the programme “aims at empowering school leaders to lead and manage schools effectively in a time of great change, challenge and opportunity”. The aim and purpose of the programme is also stated as “to provide structured learning opportunities that promote quality education in South African schools through the development of a corps of educational leaders who apply critical understanding, values, knowledge and skills to school leadership and management within the vision of democratic transformation” (Department of Education, 2007).

Educational leadership is a task primarily driven by school principals and their management teams. For them to deliver the expected results, continuous professional or leadership development is imperative. This happens while they are working, which is what Dhliwayo (2008:330) calls Work integrated learning (WIL) and involves learning through productive work experiences.

Seeing that the focal point of this study is the learning experiences of mentors and mentees, it is important to outline the learning principles upon which this programme is based. According to the Department of Education (2007), the learning principles are as follows;

- “Directed and self-directed learning in teams and clusters
- Site-based learning (dependent on the content)
- A variety of learning strategies i.e. lectures, practice and search portfolios among others
- Parallel use of individual and group contexts of learning throughout
- Collaborative learning through interactive group activities e.g. simulations-, and debates
- Problem-focused deliberation and debate in a group context
- Critical reflection on group processes and group effectiveness
- Critical reflection and reporting on personal growth and insights developed

- Research and experimentation”.

Participants in the programme were required “to keep a reflective journal and prepare a portfolio of evidence of their growth and achievements” (Department of Education, 2007). The researcher will use these reflective journals in the methodological section as one of the data gathering techniques and analyse them to reflect on the participants’ recorded learning experiences.

This research project represents the researcher’s quest to reflect on the current understandings of the mentoring phenomenon as an educational leadership initiative within an experiential learning context. It seeks to understand the theoretical implications of participant’s mentoring and experiential learning from a phenomenological approach. Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory describes the process of experiential learning as constituting of four stages, which occur in the form of a cycle. This cycle consists of “concrete experience, which is the basis for observation and reflection”, which is then “organised or assimilated into a theory from which new hypotheses or implications lead to active experimentation” (Hornyak & Page, 2004:466). The mentoring programme that is being investigated in this study was designed with the educational leadership development of school principals in mind.

1.2. Educational Leadership

While there are arguments about leadership being responsible for the difference in learner achievement between schools, and that it is also responsible for school improvement (Bush, 2009:375), state that “there are various discussions about what is required to develop suitable leadership in schools”. Leithwood (2007), in his review of research on educational leadership, opens with the following questions, which are relevant for this study:

What is educational leadership? Why should we care about it? How does it work? What forms might it take? Which leadership practices are useful in most contexts? Which are context-specific? What are the sources of successful leadership?

In the context of this study, educational leadership is defined as a sum total of all the tasks and responsibilities principals are to execute in leading their schools towards the attainment of their academic and social goals. The principal as the leader of education is not only playing this role in the school but also within the community being served by the school.

These questions are central to a number of studies on educational leadership. Like Leithwood (2007), the researcher is of the opinion that one of the keys to improving student learning successfully is insightful and purposeful educational leadership. Such leadership may be developed from many sources, schools and district management, educators, parents, school governing body members and the Department of Basic Education. Although leadership from these sources has an influence on the improvement of learner's achievement, the leadership of principals in particular and school management team members has more influence than leadership from the other sources. It is consequently the leadership of school principals that this study is mainly concerned with. The researcher's conception of educational leadership is that it consists of (1) the awareness of educational values as they exist and upheld within the school community, (2) the ability to guide the community towards the fulfilment of these values as a collective (learning community) and (3) to align all school activities to the community activities thus ensuring school participation in community activities and subsequently, purposeful community participation in all school activities. This definition places school principals at the centre of leadership in community educational programmes and not only school based or classroom centred leadership as can be found in the definition by Cranston, (2013:130).

At the heart of school life are leadership, management and governance tasks. It is these aspects of school life that guarantee that all other aspects are collectively attended to and developed (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2003:36). According to Davidoff and Lazarus (2003), "leaders in the school context have an important role to play in drawing people together and motivating them to take leaps into often risky futures". This is particularly important in an unsteady context of educational change such as that which is currently being experienced in South Africa in general and Mpumalanga province in particular. Fox, Gong and Atttoh (2015:14) posit that "principal leadership is difficult and takes courage, resilience, knowledge and skills

to steer and lead within the several structures and influences that bring continuous pressure”. These authors maintain that pressures include national standards, finances, teacher unions, shared decision making, curriculum decisions, parent needs, staff compliments, learner special needs and learner behaviour.

There are a few questions that need answering in terms of the type of leadership we need in education. How do we identify and/or select educational leaders (principals) for our schools? How do we support them and for how long, and what do we support them on? How are the principals selected for these developmental programmes, that is to say, what criterion is used to select them for developmental programmes? Another question that needs attention is how principals are being appointed to their leadership positions? This study upholds the view that there should be a careful system for selecting educational leaders and that when they have to be developed professionally, their professional needs should be taken into consideration. These issues are also applicable to mentors for principals. Which criterion is used to select mentors to mentor principals? Who selects them? Answers to these questions are necessary as they hold the key to the effectiveness of a mentoring programme, as well as the expected reciprocal learning of both mentors and mentees.

1.3. The purpose of Educational Leadership Development

A number of publications have been written in peer-reviewed articles about educational leadership development for principals so far and there are commonalities among that have been documented in the available literature. Some of these commonalities are that principals contribute to the ultimate academic success of learners, and are responsible for inspiring and enhancing their teachers' abilities (Manna, 2015:15). Young (2015) puts it as follows:

The changing conditions of schools, school populations, and standards-based accountability for student achievement, as well as the expanding knowledge base on effective leadership have created unique new challenges for leadership practice.

The increase in the responsibilities and areas of accountability for principals necessitates on going educational leadership development and support. De Vita,

Colvin, Darling-Hammond and Haycock (2007:5) state that there are no “leader-proof” reforms in education and no effective reforms without good leadership. They add that “underperforming schools are unlikely to succeed until we get serious about preparing and supporting school leaders”.

Because of the additional responsibilities of school leaders in order to ensuring the quality of schools, Huber (2004:669) reports that “school leadership development has recently become one of the central concerns of educational policy makers”. In contextualising the leadership of schools, Sergiovanni (2002) aptly state that “the patch should fit the hole”. He explains the “hole” as representing the challenges leaders face as they seek to improve schools, and the “patch” as the theories and practices leaders use to attend and resolve their challenges. In the context of this study, problems (holes) are identified and classified as among other things, the poor standard of principals’ educational leadership practices as a result of a lack of capacity as educational leaders. The mentorship component of the ACE School Leadership programme being offered to both current school principals and aspiring school leaders represents the patch to the “hole” (problems). Mentorship is a strategy that seeks to address and provide working solutions for the problems identified in the educational leadership context.

One of the aims of leadership development programmes in education is to develop the capacity of participants with skills such as expressing, responding, participating, collaborating, facilitating, observing, intervening, reporting and conceptualising (Pfeiffer & Jones, 1998:26) in order for them to provide effective and efficient educational leadership. The reason leadership development is so important is because it helps leaders to know how to be followers as well, because the ability to follow is part of leading. The knowledge and skills required of principals or educational leaders “include variables that may contribute to a school’s culture and climate, including (i) those that principals can have some direct bearing on, such as principal- teacher relations, trust and shared leadership; (ii) variables over which they may have less influence, such as teacher-to-teacher relations in professional communities, and collective responsibility; and (iii) factors over which the principal has indirect control, such as teachers’ sense of personal efficacy and the quality of instruction” (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008:460). This study views leadership development in education from both a relationship perspective and a situational

perspective, as explained by Guthrie and Thompson (2010:51). Bush and Glover (2007:219) contend that “a key product of professional learning is the enhancement of leadership capability and they connect leadership development to personal and professional learning”. They sum up this contention as follows

The primary criterion for leadership is the ability to learn from experiences in order to enhance capability. If leadership is to be developed in everyone then they have to be helped to process their personal and professional experiences through a value system and in response to others in order to evolve a growing understanding of what it means to be a leader.

In short, the purpose of educational leadership development is to equip principals with knowledge to understand leadership issues, develop leadership skills through practical experiences, “and reflect upon their knowledge and experiences to learn and grow” (Guthrie & Thompson, 2010). It is important that in education leadership development, the focus lies not only professional development--but also on development on a personal level.

1.4. Statement of the Research Problem

In this study the problem being investigated relates to the extent to which the learning experiences of the mentors and their mentees are reflective of Kolbs’ experiential learning theory (1984). The mentorship programme, which was introduced in 2007 by the then Department of Education, has had a number of principals who went through the mentoring programme since its inception. However, up to now this programme has not been examined in the light of experiential learning theory, accordingly reflecting deeply on what is being learnt and how it is learnt.

Chikoko, et al. (2011:318) state as follows in this regard:

There seems to be a dearth of empirical evidence about the kind of leadership learning that can be regarded as effective and even less is written about how leadership learning works, and how leaders learn.

Mentoring as a professional development strategy forms the basis for this study, and it stands to reason that the life experiences of participants within mentorship could contribute significantly to the objectives of this study. The objectives of this study are

to reflect on what is being experienced (“noema”) by participants and how it is being experienced (“noesis”) during the mentoring relationship. The main concern of this study, however is the extent to which the experiences of the mentors and the mentees are reflective of experiential learning theory as espoused by Kolb (1984). Previous research on and reviews of the ACE School Leadership programme (Joubert, n.d., Bush, Duku, Glover, Kiggundu, Kola, Msila et al., (2009) have raised serious concerns, some of which are presented below;

Despite the commendable efforts of the National Education Department to improve the level of leadership and management in South African schools, alarm bells sound over the general performance of the students who have already completed their first year” (Joubert, n. d.).

However, the model of mentoring used in the ACE programme falls short of best international practice. Much of the mentors’ work is with groups rather than individuals and this almost inevitably means that the group sessions are led by mentors (Bush ,et al., 2009)..

Also with regard to the above programme, Bush et al. (2009) state that “it is similar to “specialist coaching” because the mentors are experienced principals but not necessarily in the current contexts relevant to the principals”. McCall (2004:129) looks at the role of educational programmes, of which mentoring in this case is one, and contends that “experience”, not programmes, should be the centrepiece of development. However, this does not mean that programmes are irrelevant. What it does mean is that the value of programme experiences, like that of other kinds of experiences, depends on how potent they are and how they are used.

The problem this study intended to address is to what extent the learning experiences of the mentors and mentees are reflective of the experiential learning theory as espoused by David Kolb (1984). Kolb’s theory advocates that (i) “learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes (what happens after the completion of the course), and (ii) learning is a continuous process grounded in experience”. One of the major problems in education especially in Mpumalanga, if not in South Africa, is the scant research done on experiential learning programmes for educational leaders. Therefore, the way in which, the current mentoring

programme affects the degree to which learning through reflection occurs within the mentoring relationships- requires a close examination.

1.5. Rationale and Motivation

In view of the additional responsibilities that have recently been imposed on principals, school leadership makes great demands. Bush et al. (2009:376) contend that “these demands originate from two contrasting sources-, firstly, pressures originating from accountability, and occur for example where principals are to manage schools with dilapidated buildings, lack of equipment, untrained teachers, lack of basic amenities such as water, power and sanitation, and learners who are often hungry”. This situation is a reality in many of the schools in Mpumalanga and the other rural provinces. Secondly, “pressures occur as a consequence of the devolution of powers from local, regional or national governments to school level”. Educational leaders, both experienced and newly appointed, have a story to tell regarding the way they navigate these challenges. The researcher views the mentoring programme as one of those programmes that offers what Bush et al. (2009:379) call “personalised” or “individualised” learning and that affords mentors and mentees an opportunity to reflect on their learning experiences.

There are a number of reasons why one should be concerned about how educational leaders reflect on their mentoring experiences? as well as why this concern is legitimate and necessary. Firstly, generalising on the acquisition of knowledge during any form of professional or leadership development initiative is insufficient unless it is transformed from experience. Secondly, while it is important to engage in educational leadership development programmes such as mentorship and to acquire knowledge through the transformation of experiences, there is also the need to find out how these experiences are linked to actual job performance. Lastly, it is important to obtain the interpretations or narrations of the participants themselves of what their learning experiences entailed, what was learnt and how it was learnt.

1.6. Research Aims

The study sought to explore and analyse the learning experiences of mentors and mentees in order to discover how they are reflective of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory. In analysing these experiences, the research seeks to generate additional and contextual knowledge on mentoring as an element of or basis for experiential learning in educational leaders. David Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory is perceived as the appropriate theoretical lens for answering the research question. The research also aimed at highlighting the empirical linkages between educational leadership development, mentorship, experiential learning and reflection.

In order to address the research question, literature examining the benefits and impact of mentoring as a leadership development strategy will be reviewed. Secondly, literature on experience and experiential learning will also be reviewed and, in chapter 6 and 7, the way the theory fits aligns with mentoring practices will be discussed. Finally, the way in which reflection was instrumental in facilitating the participants' learning experiences into knowledge will be discussed. This will be made possible through an analysis and an examination of data obtained from the principals' reflective journals in line with the questions included in the semi-structured interviews.

1.7. Contributions of the study to the literature

- This study will reflect on both the mentees' and the mentors' perceptions of mentoring practices in the field of educational leadership.
- The experiences of school principals and their mentors will be benchmarked against Kolb's experiential learning theory (1984).
- The establishment of benchmarks for experiential learning theory within mentoring relationships will assist educational leaders and their mentors to advance leadership practices within mentorship practices in other contexts.
- The results of this study could be used as benchmarks to determine the levels of leadership learning programmes that are effective for educational leaders in Mpumalanga province.

1.8. Research Questions

The study will address the following questions:

Main research question

How are the learning experiences of mentors and mentees reflective of the experiential learning theory as espoused by David Kolb?

Sub-questions

- What were the mentors' and mentees' expectations of their learning (hopes and fears that were experienced) during the mentoring process?
- What new self-understandings, reflections and interpretations were revealed by both previous and new experiences?
- What was the mentors' and mentees' evaluations or views of the mentoring process?
- What would they do differently in their roles should they be exposed to different mentoring contexts?

1.9. Definition of Key Terms

1.9.1. Mentoring

Mentoring constitute of "a personal relationship in which a more experienced (usually older) member or professional serves as a guide, role model, teacher and sponsor to a less experienced (usually younger) graduate student or junior professional" (Johnson, 2002:88). A mentor offers the mentee knowledge, advices, challenges, counsel and support in his or her quest of becoming a full member of a particular profession (Johnson, 2002:88). In the teaching field, this means that mentors with determination and intent will be able to shape learning opportunities for novices that lead to a better understanding of teaching, leading and learning to teach. In the context of this study, mentoring is the process by which school leaders are helped by their mentors towards the acquisition of the knowledge and skills required in the execution of their professional responsibilities as educational leaders.

1.9.2. Mentor

A mentor is defined as a person who helps novice learners to learn, guiding them through principles, and reflecting on the reasons and assumptions for whatever form of practice and the relationship between theory and practice (Wang & Odell, 2002:491). In the field of academics or education, the term “mentor” is often used in the same way as “faculty adviser”. However, the fundamental difference between mentoring and advising is that “mentoring entails more than simply advising; mentoring entails both a personal and a professional relationship” (Handelsman, Pfund, Lauffer & Pribbenow, 2005:40). In the programme investigated in this study, mentors are viewed as helpers and supporters of principals (mentees) to manage their own learning in order to make the most of their potential, develop skills, improve their performance and become the person they wish to be. In this study, mentors were retired, experienced school principals drawn from different provinces and districts in South Africa.

1.9.3. Mentee

The mentee is the one around whom the concept of mentorship evolves, the target for development. “The mentee, who is selected according to certain criteria, will ultimately be responsible for his or her personal and professional development” (Murray & Owens, 1991). In this study, the mentees were school principals, some of whom were newly appointed, while others were experienced, having been in their posts as principals for three years or more.

1.9.4. Mentoring Programme

A mentoring programme is a structured and established programme designed to guide the mentor and mentee towards their development through activities such as coaching, modelling (demonstration), and reflection (Feinman-Nemser, 1998; Little, 1990). The programme referred to in this study is a mentorship programme run by the Department of Basic Education in collaboration with the University of Pretoria. It is a structured programme extending over a period of two years and consists of classroom-based lessons, as well as school-based practical assignments with follow-up visits on site by the mentors.

1.9.5. Mentoring Relationship

At its roots, mentoring is a relationship which may be structured or unstructured and is characterised by the day-to-day functioning of the mentor and the mentee while taking part in a mentoring programme. This relationship may be successful, meaning that the mentor is playing his or her role effectively and that the mentee is benefitting from the relationship. The mentoring relationship focuses on the development of the mentee through the regular intervention of the mentor (Caruso, 1992). A mentoring relationship “develops over a period of time, during which a student’s needs and the nature of the relationship may be changed” (Handelsman et al., 2005:40). These authors (Handelsman et al, 2005) state that the nature of a mentoring relationship change with the stage and the actions of both students and mentors and that each relationship have to be based on a common purpose in order to advance the educational and personal growth of the mentees. Smith (2005:62) states that “such mentoring relationships can be intense, one-to-one form of teaching in which the veteran mentor brings the wannabe young teacher next to and offers a value of caring like that which exists between relatives, although it may, of course, be less intense”.

1.9.6. Educational Leadership

In the perspective of this study, educational leadership refers to the day-to-day responsibilities of the school principal and the school management team (SMT) members. These are the individuals who are in charge of the day-to-day management and leadership of schools. They manage educational programmes and provide leadership to the rest of the staff members. In this study, the terms, “educational leadership” and “school leadership” are used interchangeably. In the literature leadership is defined as “an ability to influence, motivate and direct others in order to attain desired objectives” (Mason & Wetherbee, 2004:187). Moore (2001:18) states the following about leadership:

Contrary to popular thinking, the term “leadership” is a recent addition to the English language. In fact, the word did not come into usage until the late 19th century. Although the words “lead” and “leaders” have a much longer history,

they usually referred only to authority figures. The birth and evolution of leadership revolves around the leader's ability, behaviours, styles or charisma.

School leadership, or educational leadership, therefore refers to any school leader with an ability to influence, motivate and direct staff and learners toward the desired objectives of the institution. This means that leadership plays a vital part in "improving school outcomes by influencing , motivating and developing the potential of principals, improving the school climate, and is therefore necessary in improving the effectiveness of schools" (Cranston, 2013:130). In order to accomplish the objectives envisaged by the institution, educational leadership capacity, knowledge and skills are important areas to invest in for schools to succeed. There is however very little if any effective professional leadership development programmes which may bring about such leadership skills in Mpumalanga province.

1.9.7. Experience and Educational Leadership Development

The term "experience" may be explained as an involvement in an activity or exposure to events or people over a period of time, leading to an increase in knowledge and skills. This definition fits well when an institution is looking to recruit someone to fit into a particular position. In this study, experience is perceived as the sum total of the things that have happened to a person (mentee and mentor) and of his or her past thoughts and feelings; that is, being involved or exposed in or affected by something. Accordingly, the mentoring process is regarded as an event in which the mentors and mentees are involved in and which they are experiencing.

Bush (2008) contends that "the importance of effective leadership and management for the successful functioning of schools is widely recognized in the twenty-first century". Bush points to the emergence of four necessary conditions: "the expanded role of the educational leader, the increasing complexity of school contexts, the moral case for leadership development, and the growing evidence that effective leadership development makes a difference". For that reason, educational leadership may be viewed as a field of study concerned with the function or practice of schools.

1.9.8. Experiential Learning

The phrase “experiential learning” is used to refer to “service-learning, internships and applied projects, as well as less-structured experiences that can be reflected upon and assessed from a learning standpoint” (Washbourn, 1996). All the types of experiential learning use methods of doing work in real-work settings to support learning. In the current study, experiential learning refers to service-learning as encapsulated in the mentoring programme offered to school principals, who are also referred to as “educational leaders”. Experiential learning will also be explained in terms of what participants will be learning from their previous and current encounters in life, also termed “life experiences”.

Experiential learning refers to “a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984) and knowledge is a product from the combination of grasping and transforming experience”. Kolb (1984) views the learning process “as one where people move between the modes of concrete experience (CE) and abstract conceptualisation (AC), and reflective observation (RO) and active experimentation (AE)”. The study used this theory to reflect on the learning experiences of participants during mentoring relationships. In this study, as Kumar, Shenoy and Voralu (2012:403) state that “experiential learning is seen as a practice of making sense from direct experiences”. In the experiential learning process, the learner constructs knowledge, skills and values directly from experience within the contexts he or she finds himself or herself. The study participants acquired these experiences in their schools and communities and through interactions with their mentors and their peers. Their previous experience of leadership, as modelled by their previous leaders and peers in their schools, serves as a very important source of their leadership knowledge.

Sharlanova (2004:36) states that experiential learning as a theory confirms all the main aspects of active learning and has a variety of use including helping participants, in this case mentors and mentees, to realise themselves.

1.9.9. Service-Learning

Service-learning is one way of engaging principals in the learning practice by “having them offer significant service to others, and to connect this service experience with

learners' academic achievement" (Fenzel & Leary, 1997). Jacoby (1996:5) suggests the following broad definition of service-learning;

Service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development.

In the context of the study, service-learning is what transpired when mentors and mentees interacted with one another during what was observed in the schools during the mentor visits. These interactions were aimed at addressing practical problems or challenges by providing practical, on-site solutions. In the process, the mentees (principals) were guided through various strategies to reflect on the learning experiences in the context in which they were working.

1.9.10. Organisation of the thesis

The thesis is prearranged into eight chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and background

This chapter presents the introduction of the study and the background to the problem. The situation in terms of educational leadership in South Africa and the attempts to address it are discussed. In addition, the rationale and motivation for the study, as well as the research aims and the research questions are explained and a brief definition provided of terms or concepts which form the theoretical and conceptual framework for the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review on mentoring and educational leadership development

This chapter presents a review of the literature on educational leadership development through mentorship. Accordingly, mentoring and leadership development are discussed in depth in order to explicate mentoring as a formal and structured programme designed to enhance leadership capabilities of principals.

The chapter also discusses the rationale for mentoring, as well as the theoretical framework and its implications for mentoring. In addition, the link between mentoring

and educational leadership development is highlighted. The factors that influence mentoring relationships and the roles of the mentors and mentees are also examined.

Chapter 3: Literature review on mentoring processes and experiential learning

Chapter 3 continues the literature review, focusing on the processes of mentoring and experiential learning the purpose being to highlight the role of experiential learning in the mentoring process. This is then linked to learning and the role experience plays in the participants' leadership development. The chapter also highlights leadership efficacy levels and the development of participants' self-knowledge. The reason for this discussion is to outline educational leadership development as a continuous learning process which lasts an entire lifetime, "where knowledge and experience build and allow for even more complex learning and growth" (Brungardt, 1997:83).

This chapter also discusses the mentoring processes and experiential learning in detail, thus extending the discussion on mentorship and linking it to learning. Reflection, as the most important activity in the transformation of experiences into knowledge, is discussed here in order to highlight the core purpose of the study. Other aspects covered in this chapter include learning self-identity and learning styles.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

This chapter discusses the research methodology, the research design, the scope of the study, the sampling and the data collection techniques. It also includes the data analysis strategy that was followed and also addresses ethical concerns.

Chapter 5: The learning experiences of mentees and mentors in the mentoring programme

Here, data collected is presented, analysed and discussed in line with the themes that emerged from the data. The chapter presents the learning experiences of the mentees and their mentors in the mentoring programme. The key findings are presented here and this presentation is guided by the themes that emerged during data analysis. The chapter concludes with a depiction of the mentors' profile.

Chapter 6: The apprehension of experience within the mentoring relationships: concrete experiences and abstract conceptualisation

This chapter presents the apprehension dimension of experiential learning and shows how the participants acquired their learning experiences through concrete experience and abstract conceptualisation. This discussion will be studied against the backdrop of the themes and data obtained from the interviews. Additionally, the chapter will present the theoretical implications of the participants' learning experiences.

Chapter 7: Knowledge transformation dimension of experiential learning: reflective observation and active experimentation

This chapter presents the second dimension of experiential learning, namely, the transformation of experience, with both the reflective observation and the active experimentation modes of experiential learning being discussed in relation to the data obtained from the interviews. This chapter covers the "how" part of learning experiences. Finally, the chapter presents the biographical information pertaining to the principal mentors and a summary of their summative reflections.

Chapter 8: Educational leadership development, mentorship and experiential learning: concluding summary

This, the final chapter, presents a summary of the study and highlights its implications. The limitations of the study and possible areas for further research are discussed. Finally, in light of the findings, the researcher makes a number of recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW ON MENTORING AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Introduction

Mentoring is seen as a personal development method that nurtures a person's abilities in order to improve personal behaviour and work-related performance. Deans and Oakley (2007:1) suggest that there has been a remarkable increase in interest and investment in mentoring and argue that once senior managers reach a certain stage in their careers, attending formal training courses becomes less effective. These authors also maintain that a number of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) have found that person-centred support in the course of mentoring has more worth than formal training courses.

In light of the importance of mentorship and experiential learning as the core of this study, the literature study was spread over two chapters, that is, chapters 2 and 3. This was done in a deliberate effort to ensure that the most salient aspects of the literature on mentoring were discussed with more clarity. The other reason was that the researcher's view is that mentoring fits in very well with the other concepts such as experience, learning, educational leadership and development. This chapter (ch 2) presents mentoring and educational leadership development as the key phenomena which complement one another well. Mentoring as a leadership development initiative requires that all parties commit themselves to the process and, as such, this chapter outlines the roles and responsibilities of both mentors and mentees in the mentoring relationship. The theoretical framework of the study and its implications for mentoring and educational leadership are discussed in the next chapter (chapter. 3).

2.2. Rationale for mentoring

The Mpumalanga Education Department is one of the roll-out partners of the mentorship programme for educational leaders (principals) launched by the Department of Education in 2007. This programme is offered in partnership with tertiary education institutions in the country. School principals are selected for participation in the programme by their circuit offices, which are district education

department offices that are situated close to schools and their communities. This programme runs over a two-year period and includes site visits and observations conducted by the mentors. The module which is the focus of this study is called “Mentor School Managers and Manage Mentoring Programmes in Schools”. Principals selected for this research study were allocated mentors by the university whose responsibility it was to assist principals to acquire the knowledge and skills required in managing and providing leadership in their schools. In this study, the mentors were selected by the University of Pretoria, the university that offered the programme. The mentors consisted mainly of retired school principals drawn from both former white-only schools and from historically black-only schools.

Mentoring in the context of this study may be described as the establishment of a personal relationship for the facilitation of personal and professional growth through mentor guidance. The fundamental goal of mentorship is therefore viewed as providing and increasing growth in an individual’s efficacy in his or her work. In educational leadership development, the subject field in which this study is situated, mentoring is conceived as a form of support for educational leaders since it is alleged to stimulate participants towards self-assessment and reflection, so that they become more conscious learners who are able to apply knowledge of their own learning needs and learning styles to their development (Hine, 2008:1).

The study proposes that mentoring should lead to something different from pure role modelling or apprenticeship, and this view is supported by the researcher’s personal experiences as an educator and researcher in the Mpumalanga Provincial Department of Education. In the past, it has often been said that mentoring is a panacea for the leadership challenges in schools and was introduced purely to address the challenges associated with poor performance in the workplace. One interesting feminist critique of mentoring, as described by various authors, is that of Colley (2000:3), who argues that “the presentation of mentoring as hierarchical and/or directive was based on assumptions of paternalism and models of male development”. She further argues that mentoring is presented as a controlling rather than a nurturing process. There would appear that such tendencies also exist within the Mpumalanga Department of Education where mentorship is seen as a corrective measure and as a means of control and not as a developmental process. This study has a duty to either demystify or confirm the myths highlighted by Colley (2000) by

answering the following questions in the context of educational leadership development through mentorship in Mpumalanga: What are we doing and how are we actually doing it? Accordingly, the experiences of both mentors and mentees have the potential to shed light on whether mentorship is controlling or nurturing. .

The value of a mentoring programme to develop educational leadership in the context of Mpumalanga province, in the researcher's view, would have to be reviewed in relation to the contexts within which mentors and mentees are practising it – that is, in the schools where principals are working. A number of research reports on the benefits of mentoring have run the risk of generalising the mentoring results from other contexts (internationally) to the South African educational context. In fact, the purpose of conducting mentoring programmes for principals in South Africa might have a completely different interpretation, purpose and meaning from their application to educational leadership elsewhere. For example, the difference may be found in the purpose and contexts, including the different cultural practices and political set-ups. In terms of constructivism, in addressing the challenges inherent in the representation of context, context is regarded as the social relations and political-cultural dimensions of the community of which the individual forms part.

The researcher identifies himself with Masango's (2011) assertion that one of the consequences of industrialisation is that, at times, the result becomes more important than human beings, and that because of the pressure mentees or principals are under, they have to learn fast. Masango (2011) also exposes the effect of the teachers' strikes in South Africa, and contends that "they (strikes) are also a challenge to mentoring programmes, which then have to come up with a strategic plan of action that will help heal the people who are acting out". In schools where principals are expected to perform, there are a number of issues that have a negative impact on their efforts, strikes being one of them. The researcher contends that the purpose of mentoring is mainly to ensure that school principals deliver in terms of academic results, and is not concerned with the principals' own professional developmental needs and as individuals. It could probably be true that when being considered for participation in the programme, the principals' professional development needs are not directly considered; instead the needs of the district or the provincial education department are prioritised.

Daresh (1995:9) notes that mentoring relationships in education have not been customized to the needs of individual mentees. This view is supported by the fact that the purpose of the principals' selection for this development programme is not clarified even to the participants themselves. They are not volunteers or willing participants; instead they are selected without clear criteria. Should the situation be the other way round, the needs assessments of the principals would have to be done first and participation determined by them. This argument on the role of mentoring in professional education is supported by Chhem, Hibbert and Deven (2009:71), who suggest that mentoring is essentially a voluntary action, working best in "a cross-functional, off-line context" where the objective is the holistic development of an individual.

In view of the above argument, the researcher is of the opinion that the conceptualisation and administration of mentoring programmes in Mpumalanga will have to be aligned to the contexts that mentees and mentors are familiar with. Accordingly, cultural elements and the previous experiences of mentees will have to be considered before the school's academic results and, thus, there will be a deviation from the current practices. The needs of the mentees and the expertise of the mentors will have to be prioritised in order to prevent frustration and early withdrawal from the mentoring programmes.

2.3. Rationale for Educational Leadership Development

"Training and developing principals should focus not only on the basic characteristics of their work and the problems of their daily lives in schools, but also on those leadership abilities that promote effective schools" (Peterson, 1986:153). Educational leadership development is currently one of the policy imperatives in improving schools and ensuring that curriculum delivery in schools is prioritised and that learners achieve academically. Principals are instrumental in ensuring that schools operate effectively and efficiently and that learners achieve academically. In view of this, the mentoring programme was introduced in 2007 by the Department of Education to enhance the leadership knowledge and skills of school principals. Programmes such as mentorship for educational leadership development have the potential to strengthen district and school cultures, modifying educational practices and building collaborative processes (Manna, 2015:15).

Today, educational leadership development involves more than just developing principals who are believed to have certain desirable skills. Educational leadership is approached as a social process that engages everyone. In line with this way of thinking, everyone in an educational institution and in schools is to be considered an educational leader. Therefore, the goal of educational leadership development should be to turn a group of individuals in a particular organisation or work environment into a team. In the educational context, this group of individuals includes teachers and the senior management team, including the principal. In order to truly make a difference in an organisation or business, both the individual leader and collective leadership development need to be taken into consideration when establishing training procedures (Day, 2000).

Leadership has been advocated as a solution to particular personal, social and organisational problems. The Department of Education therefore has a task to correctly identify problems in districts and schools so as to target the causes and not the symptoms. The problem is that currently the problems to be solved have not been well defined. Or perhaps, more accurately, they have been defined according to old and inappropriate paradigms and/or the policies are not being understood correctly.

Key policies exist that form a strong base for educational leadership in the country. The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (2007) comprises of two complementary subsystems, initial Professional Education of Teachers (IPET) and Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD). This framework suggests that the effectiveness of the CPTD system depends substantially on strong leadership and good management in the schools and in the support systems, including district, provincial and national offices.

In recent years there have been an increasing emphasis on school leadership development as a key drive of government educational policies and specialised research both nationally and internationally (Zhang & Brundrett, 2010:154). Education policies in South Africa have been under constant scrutiny and contestation from a number of stakeholders since before the new dispensation and even after 1994. The fundamental questions today are for whom and for what

purposes education policies are implemented. Accordingly, a closer look at the policy on teacher development in South Africa raises the question of whom is such policy intended for. Current practices in teacher development entail that the majority of teachers and principals earmarked for development are from schools in the black community schools, and this raises questions about this policy and other related policies as promoting white supremacy. This perception is supported by the selection of black principals as mentees and white ex-principals as mentors, as such leadership development programmes target black teachers and principals only and the majority of the mentors are white former principals.

Despite these challenges, educational leadership development remains a primary concern worldwide. Davis et al. (2005:2) confirm this assertion and state that “principals play a vital and multifaceted role in setting the direction for the development of schools that are positive and productive workplaces for teachers and vibrant learning environments for children”. Building on the above assertion, today’s educational leaders cannot be stagnant and trapped in the old education and training they received ages ago. Expectations in terms of curriculum management and leadership changes dictate that they too need to stay abreast of developments by acquiring new skills in order to manage the current changes in education.

Fullan (1997) states that the best way to approach change is to improve leadership relationships; that is, the best way to deal with educational change is to improve leadership in education. Knowledgeable, skilful and competent educational leadership is best suited to improving relationships in schools and with various stakeholders. Anderson and Mungal (2015:807) present a fitting description of the situation principals find themselves in daily and state that school leadership is accomplished largely through language which highlights the importance of communication. How do they do this? Anderson and Mungal (2015) contend that educational leaders swim in an ocean of language and texts that consists of policies, conversations, e-mails and the language of the profession. Failure to communicate effectively may result to unsound and unhealthy relationships in schools and, therefore, principals should be well capacitated to communicate issues and changes correctly. Principals are often referred to as agents of change and therefore change starts with them. For the purposes of this study, mentoring is therefore a vital process for successful educational leadership development, with communication

being one of the sought-after skills. An objective and careful study of mentorship will assist the research in answering the questions posed and provide clarity on a number of assumptions we have about it.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Wahlstrom and Louis (2008:460) identify a number of variables that contribute to a school's culture and climate. Two of these variables are discussed in detail here in order to justify the need for educational leadership development and because of their importance for this study.

- *Shared leadership.* Schools in South Africa have extended management structures such as school management teams (SMTs), site committees, and school governing bodies (SGBs). These structures are put in place in order to promote school-based management and leadership. Wahlstrom and Louis (2008:460) suggest that collective leadership has its greatest impact in reducing teacher isolation and increasing dedication to the universal good practice. Educational leaders who share leadership responsibilities probably experience fewer problems regarding consensus on decisions taken and implemented in their schools. Although, in the opinion of the researcher, shared leadership is an effective practice, school principals need to be careful not to carelessly give in to unpopular decisions that might be coming from the staff.
- *Trust:* According to Wahlstrom and Louis (2008:461), a latest study examined changes in trust in work teams and found that “ the perceived ability of colleagues was a strong predictor of trust and that trust was a significant predictor for risk-taking behaviours”. In school settings, according to the study, “trust plays a very important role in the daily interactions between staff and leaders”. Principals do not naturally learn to trust teachers; they have to learn to do so. In the same manner, teachers do not naturally trust principals; they have to be convinced to do so. This trust influences the delegation of tasks to the staff by the principal. Therefore, in the absence of trust, it may difficult to delegate tasks. Experienced educational leaders develop the skills and techniques to build trust among staff members for the efficient running of the school.

In conclusion, to emphasise on the importance of educational leadership, Anderson and Mungal (2015:809) state:

Between two-thirds and three-quarters of the total working time of principals is spent talking. It is likely that much of the remaining time they are dealing with various written texts in some form, and their daily exchanges with colleagues and subordinates, the meetings they attend, their professional development, all help construct who they are as leaders.

Educational leadership is not a simple task and therefore requires on-going professional support. The type of leadership there is directly influences the success of an educational institution; thus, high quality leadership gives birth to high quality learning and achievement.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is experiential learning through reflection within mentoring relationships. This study is grounded in experiential learning theory because of its (theory) relevance to mentorship, which is an essential element of learning from experience in the educational leadership development process. This study therefore aims to reflect on participants' experiences in the leadership development of educational leaders through mentorship. The research seeks to understand how the learning experiences of mentors and mentees are reflective of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory. Learning from experience is a difficult matter; how it happens depends on learners, the tasks and on the learning situation. Boud and Walker (1991:8) contend that even though we know a lot about learning in highly controlled settings where there is task scrutiny, a programme, a coach and support facilities, "we know relatively little about learning in the messy reality of the workplace".

"The developmental value of experience is well documented across a variety of theoretical perspectives and empirical studies. Experiential learning theories, such as those developed by Dewey (1938), Knowles (1980) and, Kolb (1984), propose that learning occurs as individuals engage in challenging experiences and then reflect on the outcomes of those experiences" (DeRue & Wellman, 2009:859). Some of the practical implications of Kolb's cycle for learning are cited by Dennick (2009) as mentoring, reflection and action planning.

2.4.1. Experiential Learning Theory

In its simplest form, experiential learning, according to Lewis and Williams (1994), means:

Learning from experience or learning by doing. Experiential education first immerses learners in an experience and then encourages reflection about the experience to develop new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking.

The theoretical framework in this study is that of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning, which is presented as a sequential cyclical model built and expanded on the centrality of doing as a concrete experience, reflection, abstraction and application of newly acquired knowledge. This theory finds its relevance in this study as it maps a way of how individuals learn in the work place and also in particular when they are being mentored. Mentoring provides a framework for tracking the four modes of the experiential learning cycle espoused by Kolb (1984)

It is obvious that there exist a very important relationship between mentoring and experiential learning as concepts or phenomena. In each of the two phenomena there is a learner (mentee) reflecting on concrete experiences to create new understandings (knowledge) with the help of an educator (mentor), towards a goal of progress or improvement. Kayes (2002:137) argues that "although a number of variants of experiential learning theory have been proposed, Kolb's experiential learning theory continues to be one of the most influential theories of management learning". Hickcox (2010:124) posit that for experiential learning to succeed, as does other educational programmes it needs to be supported from within existing institutional structures. Therefore, mentoring is seen as a new structure for supporting and developing educational leadership in schools. Kolb's theory therefore serves as the basis for this study since it is situated within educational leadership development through mentorship.

A hundred years ago Dewey wrote that "learning from experience requires that we pay attention to the simultaneous dynamics of continuity and interactivity". Continuity refers to the continuing process of learning from experience by means of reflection that considers the recent past, the present and the immediate future as a way to separate what was a meaningful deed from time to time (Yorks & Nicolaidis, 2007:5).

Experiential learning is about the discovery and use of intellectual knowledge through “direct experiences and guided reflection” (Kolb, 1984). Kolb defines experiential learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience”, and further clarifies experiential learning encounters by asserting their constructivist nature. Kolb’s analysis of experiential learning is that learning is called “experiential” for two reasons; the first

... is to tie it clearly to its intellectual origins of the work of Dewey, Lewin and Piaget, secondly is to emphasise the central role that experience plays in the learning process and thus differentiating it from rationalists and other cognitive theories of learning that tend to give primary emphasis to acquisition, manipulation and recall of abstract symbols and from behavioural learning theories that deny any role of consciousness and subjectivity in the learning process.

The characteristics of experiential learning are described by Kolb (1984:25) and are briefly discussed below:

- *“Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes.* The tendency to define learning in terms of outcomes can become a definition of non-learning in the process sense, in that failure to modify ideas and habits as a result of experience is maladaptive.
- *Learning is a continuous process grounded in experience.* Knowledge is continuously derived from and tested out in the experience of the learner. The fact that learning is a continuous process grounded in experience has important educational implications.
- *The process of learning requires the resolution of conflict between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world.* All the experiential learning models suggest the idea that learning is by its very nature a tension and conflict-filled process. New knowledge, skills or attitudes are achieved through confrontation among four modes of experiential learning; that is, concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualisation (AC) and active experimentation (AE).

- *Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world.* Experiential learning is not a molecular educational concept but rather a molar concept describing the central process of human adaptation to the social world and the physical environment. Learning is the major process of being human.
- *Learning involves transactions between the person and the environment.* In terms of experiential learning theory, the transactional relationship between the person and the environment is symbolised in the dual meanings of the term “experience”.
- *Learning is the process of creating knowledge.* To understand learning, we must understand the nature and forms of human knowledge and the processes whereby this knowledge is created”.

McCall Jr. (2010:3) states that it would appear that using experience efficiently in the development of leadership talent is a lot more difficult than it appears to be and suggests that experience – not genetics, not training programmes – is the key source of learning to lead, even though our knowledge of this kind of experience is far from complete. This statement emphasises the important role that experience plays in an individual’s learning and reduces the significance of programmes, genetics or any form of training.

McCauley and Brutus (1998) write that learning from experience requires a complete movement through the entire learning cycle – that is, acquiring an experience, reviewing it, concluding from it, and take action based on the conclusions and that learning is deterred because people are generally better at certain stages of the cycle to the exclusion of the other stages.

From the above discussion we can deduce that the learning of educational leaders (school principals) through a mentoring programme is a process of reflecting on the experiences they have acquired within specific environments. The importance of the environment here takes us back to the discussion around the contexts of mentoring. The environment in which the educational leaders operate has a direct influence on their mentoring and learning. Human beings are situated within environments and as such form part of the environment. People also have an enormous influence on each other and on the environment, and vice versa. This implies that people learn from

their environment and also learn best from their own experiences in their environment (Bandura, 1977).

John Dewey, in his classic book *Experience and education*, first published in 1938, wrote that for learning to happen, an experience must have two key dimensions. The first is continuity, in which the learner needs to be able to connect issues of the new experience to what he or she already knows in a manner that transform this knowledge. The second is interaction, where the learner needs to be interacting with his or her environment, testing out lessons achieved in that environment. Blankstein, Houston and Cole (2009:38) have a better way of explaining this form of learning, stating that “learning is the job”. They provide an example of one of their colleagues in Australia who wrote an article titled “Professional development: A great way to avoid change”, in which it was suggested that there is an overemphasis on workshops, short courses and other programmes, and yet far too little learning from experiential learning. These authors also favour external-to-the-job learning but argue that if it is not in balance and in aligned with learning in the actual work context, it will end up being shallow. The emphasis here is the learning in context or learning in the setting in which you work (Blankstein et al.).

An interesting discussion that is important for this study is that of Kayes (2011:138) on management learning. For the purpose of this study, management learning will be discussed in the context of leadership learning and learning in service, which is the objective of mentorship. Kayes successfully locates Kolb in the literature of management learning and suggests that “one method of organising the diverse set of agendas, theories and assumptions that compose the literature on management learning lies in epistemology: the study of the nature and structure of knowledge and further states that epistemology seeks to identify the way theorists justify learning as a relevant aspect of management by responding to the question, Why is learning important for managers?” He lists and discusses four general, but not equally exclusive, agendas appearing in management learning: (i) action, (ii) cognition, (iv) reflection and (iv) experience. These four agendas form an integral part of the phenomena studied in this research.

For the purposes of this study, I am prioritising these four agendas since they provide a simpler discussion of the four modes of Kolb’s experiential learning cycle.

Action is discussed alongside Kolb's active experimentation, cognition with abstract conceptualisation, reflection with reflective observation, and experience with concrete experience.

- **Action.** This refers to the changes in behaviour taking place in mentors and mentees when solving problems. Learning approaches driven by action seek to improve behaviours that increase effectiveness in achieving goal-directed outcomes. Action approaches optimise learning as a process that allows managers (mentors and mentees) to notice and avoid errors, precisely transferring information, and successfully achieving goals.
- **Cognition.** Cognitive approaches, Kolb states that they emphasise the internal and interpersonal changes that occur within and between managers. Cognitive learning helps managers in developing logical interpretations of their environment.
- **Reflection.** Reflective approaches centre on the process of discovery and questioning that leads to the development of an all-inclusive view of leadership practice. This includes the past, social and cultural implications of leadership. Luneta (2012:370) define reflection as “the process of making informed and logical decisions on educational issues and assessing the results of such a decision”.
- **Experience.** Experiential methods to learning centre on how managers obtain and alter new experiences and how these experiences lead to a greater sense of satisfaction, motivation and development. By involving mentors and mentees in new experiences, experiential methods help managers to develop more holistic views about themselves.

Figure 2.1 below presents Kolb's learning cycle. According to Kolb (1984),” the cycle can begin at any one of the four points and should be approached as a continuous spiral”. The process of learning begins with an individual doing a particular action and then seeing the outcome of that action on the situation. The learner consequently progresses to the second step of understanding the outcome of his/her actions in the particular situation. In the second step, the learner look forward to what would follow from the action if the same action was to be repeated under the same conditions.

Flowing from the second step, the learner would then continue to the third step of understanding the general rule under which the particular instance falls. Generalising in this instance will involve activities over a variety of circumstances to gain experience beyond the particular instance and thus signifying the general principle. Learning in this way has a potential to lead to the formation or strengthening of various suggestions or generalising about what to do in different contexts. Having the understanding of the general principle, the learner moves on to the last step in the cycle “where the general principle is applied in the form of action in new circumstances within the range of generalisation” (Bhat, n.d.:6–7).

- *“Experiencing.* Individual’s experiences are obtained from different situations on a daily basis. Some experiences are positive and some are negative. Educational leaders (mentees) and their teachers (mentors) are exposed to different experiences on a daily basis and in different situations.
- *Reviewing.* A review process occurs in which reflection on these experiences allows learning to take place.
- *Concluding.* This is the abstract conceptualisation process whereby an individual draws conclusion from the knowledge gained from these experiences.
- *Planning.* In this process, active experimentation takes place. Active planning takes place where the individual tries out what has been learnt in different situations. During this process, the application of knowledge is taking place”.

Sharlanova (2004:36) summarises the advantages of Kolb’s theory by stating that “it provides ready directions for application, gives directions for the necessary range of education methods and provides an effective connection between theory and practice. It clearly formulates the importance of students reflecting and the importance of providing feedback in order to stimulate their studying”.

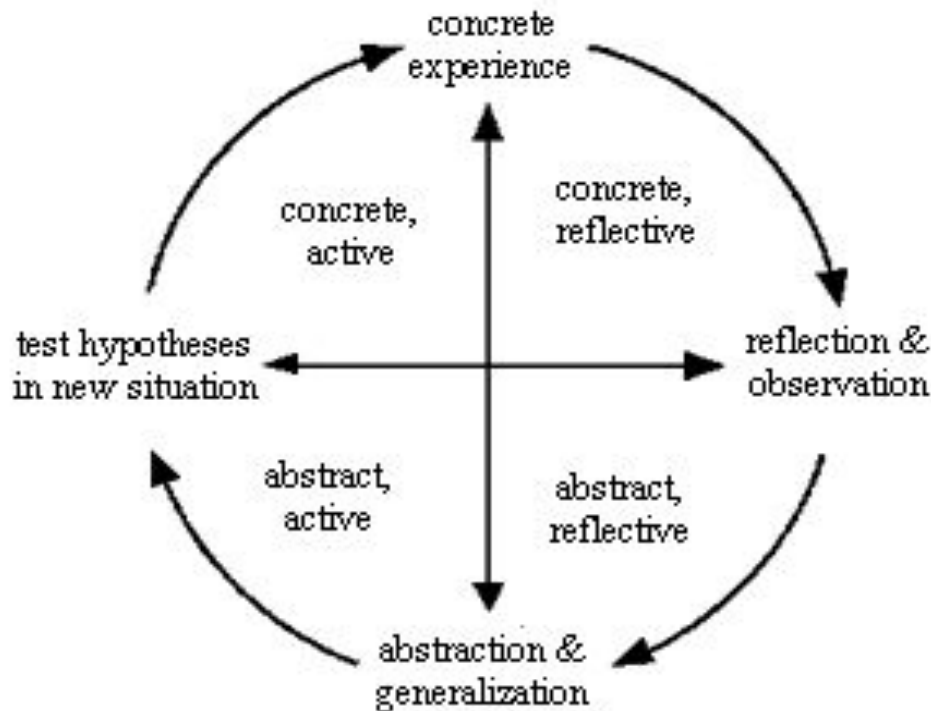


Figure 1: Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

Figure 2.1: Kolb's experiential learning cycle

2.4.2. Implications of experiential learning theory for educational leadership development

The provisos for effectively preparing any leader or school principal depend to a considerable extent on the nature of the job. In recent years, behavioural descriptions have enhanced our understanding of the nature of principals' work. "The characteristics of the work provide a picture of the limitations of formal learning and the challenges of experiential learning for principals" (Peterson, 1986:152).

Educational leadership development should be based in the participants' leadership work contexts or situations. This therefore means that educational leaders should use their own schools as the starting point for their leadership learning. For example, it may not assist principals of problematic schools to be taken to other problem-free schools for mentoring purposes. Thus, the experiences that will be of the greatest use to them are those acquired within their own environments. Leadership development programmes are expected to recognise the local and national contexts within which educational leaders operate. The primary criterion for leadership,

according to Bush and Glover (2004:9), “is the ability to learn from experience in order to enhance capability. If educational leadership is to be developed then principals have to be helped to process their personal and professional experiences through a worthy system and it should respond to others in order to advance a growing understanding of what it means to be an educational leader”.

At each stage of the experiential learning cycle, it is important to determine how the mentors and mentees can optimise their learning. Questions such as what stands in the way (that is to say, obstacles), and what opportunities are there, are very important to ask so as to deduce their learning experiences. Beard (2008), in his critical analysis of experiential learning theory, provides important insights on its influence in management education in the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK). He states that:

In accepting that ELT (Experiential Learning Theory) remains arguably one of the most influential theories of management learning, Kayes (2002) suggests that the concept of experience should be revisited to account more clearly for the relationship between the personal and the social.

2.5. Mentoring

Renton (2009:13) maintains that if we open a discussion on mentoring we can usually come up with someone who has had an enormous influence on our lives; they could be a favourite uncle or grandmother, or a teacher or someone who has used his or her influence and position to help smooth our careers. This statement draws us closer to an understanding of what mentorship is all about and the possibility that we might all have had mentors in our lives in one way or another. She contends that we still have mentors around us but we often have trouble recognising them. Renton (2009) describes the purpose of mentorship as follows:

Developing a person’s skills and knowledge so that their job performance improves, hopefully leading to the achievement of organizational objectives. It targets high performance and improvement at work, although it may also have an impact on an individual’s private life.

Mentoring is a human resources development process that supports learning and knowledge transfer and is commonly used to describe a knowledge transfer and learning process in which an existing staff member or any other knowledgeable person guides newcomers or less experienced people in a task and guides them to develop required professional skills, attitudes and competencies (Hamburg, 2013:219).

A review of the literature on mentoring suggest that there is no single, agreed upon definition of what constitutes a mentor or of what is meant by “mentoring”. Mentoring has become important as a mode of leadership development in many countries, including Australia, England and Wales, Singapore and the USA (Bush & Glover, 2004:16). Hobson (2003) for the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) in the UK, states that “mentoring is generally used to refer to a process whereby a more experienced individual seeks to assist someone less experienced”.

According to Bush and Glover (2004:16), mentoring is often highly successful in promoting the development of practising and aspiring leaders. The ACE mentoring programme is designed along the line of Bush and Glover’s assertions. In view of the fact that members of the SMT are regarded as aspiring principals, this mentoring programme targets both current serving principals and aspiring principals. The focus of this study in relation to the form of mentoring is on developmental mentoring. Accordingly, the development of educational leaders in schools is structured or designed to include mentorship for development purposes. The form of mentoring targeted by this study is formal mentoring.

As mentioned above, the literature differs in terms of definitions and explanations of mentoring. Consequently, a study of the word “mentor” may assist in our understanding of what the process of mentoring entails. Bell and Goldsmith (2013:21) state that “the word “mentor” comes from *The Odyssey*, written by the Greek poet, Homer. As Odysseus is preparing to fight the Trojan War, he realises he is leaving behind his one and only heir, Telemachus. Since Telemachus is at school, and since wars tended to drag on for years, Odysseus recognises that Telemachus needs to be coached on how to “king” while Daddy is off fighting. He hires a trusted family friend named Mentor to be Telemachus’ tutor. Mentor is both wise and sensitive – two important ingredients of world-class mentoring”.

This story is important in identifying the key features of an effective mentoring relationship. First, great leaders strive to leave behind a benefaction of added value. Mentoring in schools should be initiated by the principals themselves so as to prepare leaders for taking over after their departure. Secondly, the mentor should combine the wisdom of experience with sensitivity. Insensitive mentors are unable to build healthy and effective mentoring relationships. Odysseus chose a family friend to do the task. It can be said that the reason for this was that as a family friend, Mentor knew the values and aspirations of Odysseus and was appropriate to impart them to the young Telemachus. Mentors when chosen should be like family friends, faithful in their tasks, and should be able to create a safe context for the growth of their mentees.

2.6. The Mentoring Relationship

According to McKimm, Jollie and Hatter (2007:5), the “mentoring relationship is a special relationship where two people make a real connection with each other. It is also a protected relationship in which learning and experimentation occur through analysis, examination, re-examination and reflection on practice, situations, problems, mistakes and successes (of both the mentors and the mentees) to identify learning opportunities and gaps. It is again about helping the mentee to grow in self-confidence and develop independence, autonomy and maturity”. Hobson, Harris, Buckner-Manley and Smith (2012:69) describe a mentoring relationship as a procedure to help an inexperienced to develop teaching behaviours and strategies. This process involves a nurturing relationship in which a mentor serves as a role model and advisor to a less experienced person, providing them with guidance. Handelsman et al. (2005:41) contend that “the nature of a mentoring relationship varies with the level and activities of both student and mentor and also that each relationship is based on a common goal in order to advance the educational and personal growth of the student. According to them, there is no single formula for good mentoring; mentoring styles and activities are as varied as human relationships and different students will require different amounts and kinds of attention, advice, information and encouragement”. Brungardt (1997:85) makes an interesting point in this regard, suggesting that mentoring relationships have an advantage on the young person and thus change leadership behaviour.

The mentoring relationship is the core area where mentors' and mentees' experiences are formed. This is where the influence of the learning process is the greatest. Mentors get to know their students better and also get to understand their learning needs and learning styles, as do the mentees in relation to their mentors. Dealing with the diversities among themselves affords them an opportunity to learn experientially, as they are exposed to the different characters displayed by mentors and mentees alike. Handelsman et al. (2005:41) state that "some students will feel comfortable approaching their mentors, others will be shy, intimidated or reluctant to seek help and a good mentor will be approachable and available". In long-term relationships, friendships form naturally; mentees and mentors can gradually become colleagues. Mentor should to be aware of the difference between friendship and favouritism.

2.7. Factors influencing Mentoring Relationships

Mentorship, like any other process where more than one individual is engaged, will undoubtedly be influenced by various factors that will determine its success or failure. The process of leadership development, especially educational leadership, is a complex practice that is likely to be influenced by factors such as emotions, likings and dislikes of individuals, preferences, tolerance, culture, qualities of mentors and mentees and many others. This study looks at those factors that have a positive impact on the mentoring relationships. The most important factor to be discussed is *preparation* by both mentor and mentee. Wong and Premkumar (2007) posit in this regard that "individuals who have never played the role of mentor may assume that having subject expertise and experience is adequate preparation for being a mentor. They contend that mentors who assume the mentor role without preparing themselves are often disappointed and dissatisfied and advise potential mentors to reflect on their motivation for engaging in a mentoring relationship and to assess their own readiness for it". The very same preparation is expected from the mentee. The person to be mentored must be prepared and also have an understanding his or her learning needs. Luneta (2012:371) state that "a good developmental programme must be designed from a needs-analysis obtained from the participants". This preparation will ensure maximum and purposeful learning by the mentee. "The mentee should firstly learn to set learning priorities and become increasingly self-

directed” (Wong & Premkumar, 2007). Secondly, it is important that the mentoring engagement should be a *negotiated process*. This is the phase, according to Wong and Premkumar (2007), where the mentoring partners agree on learning objectives and define the what and how of the relationship. At the end of this phase, the mentoring partners should ideally have collaboratively explored,

- “desired learning outcomes
- criteria for measuring success
- mutual responsibilities
- accountability assurances
- protocols for addressing problems, and
- an action plan for achieving the learning goal”.

Masango (2011) points out that mentoring should be customized to the number of learning needs that can come up from learners’ personal and career life. Additionally, the level of commitment of both mentor and mentee is an important part of the mentoring process. It is therefore important at this stage to discuss the influence of culture especially in the South African context. Masango (2011) suggest that in a South African situation, a number of cultural issues arise when people work together. In view of the fact that, in most instances in the programme observed during this study, mentors were white principals from former model C schools, it is important to them to know the cultural background of their mentees. Masango (2011) provides the following good example of a false assumptions than can result from a lack of cultural understanding and says that “another common complaint of white South African managers is that black African people are often absent from work because they attend the funerals of their relatives”. A comment such as “they forever excuse themselves from work in order to go and bury a relative. I wonder how many are left” signifies a lack of understanding of the African concept of ‘family’, how African families operates as well as the issues involved. In schools, principals have to deal with these dynamics and their understanding of and giving in to such situations may be seen by their mentors as an inability to perform and thus negatively affect the mentoring relationship.

The above discussion brings to mind the aspects necessary for good mentoring practices, which are, according to Handelsman et al. (2005), important for the success of mentoring:

- *Careful listening.* A good mentor is a good listener who does not judge or interpret what students are saying. This includes paying attention to the “subtext” and the undertones of the student’s words including tone, attitude, and body language.
- *Keeping in touch.* The amount of attention that a mentor gives will vary widely. A student who is doing well might require only “check-ins” or brief meetings. Another student might have continuing difficulties and require several formal meetings a week. Mentors must not assume that the only students who need help are those who ask for it.
- *Multiple mentors.* No mentor can know everything a given student might need to learn in order to succeed. Everyone benefits from multiple mentors of diverse talents, ages and personalities. No one benefits when a mentor is too “possessive” of a student.
- *Building networks.* A mentor can be a powerful ally for students by helping them build their network of contacts and potential mentors; advising them to begin with their own mentors, other faculty acquaintances and off-campus people met through jobs, internships or chapter meetings of professional societies. Building a professional network is a lifelong process that can be crucial in finding a satisfying position and career”.

The mentor–mentee matching process is vital if mentoring is to succeed. Bush and Coleman (1995:68) note that “a sound match between mentor and new head is an essential component of a successful mentoring relationship. A carefully planned and executed matching will ensure a successful reciprocal learning process”.

The success of any mentoring relationship is not automatic but relies on a number of important issues. The following factors provided by Deans and Oakley (2007) form the foundation for the next discussion on the roles of mentors and mentees in the mentoring process:

- “commitment and interest of the individuals involved
- sufficient resources and organisational support

- taking a personal holistic approach
- the skills and experiences of mentors
- recognition of cross-cultural issues
- ensuring an enabling external environment
- embedding the process in the organisational context”.

2.8. The Roles and Responsibilities of the Mentor

Lee (2007), citing Jarvis, Holford and Griffin (1998), suggests that experience is the cornerstone of, and motivation for, learning, describing it as “the experience through which individuals become themselves”. Jarvis et al. (1998 in Lee, 2007) argue that this experience may be primary or secondary, genuine or recalled, actual or false

If one examines the following definition, one is able to deduce the role or functions of the mentor in a mentoring relationship:

“A nurturing process, in which a more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter’s professional and/ or personal development. Mentoring functions are carried out within the context of an on-going, caring relationship between the mentor and protégé” (Anderson & Shannon, 1988:40).

The Ontario Mentoring Manual (2011) lists the following very important roles of mentors: Mentors should

- “be reflective, innovative and forward-looking leaders who are focused on student achievement and well-being. As guides, mentors are expected to look forward and backwards, tracking their own progress and failures. Doing this constantly and efficiently, their mentees will have an opportunity to learn a great deal through modelling them.
- be accessible and willing to serve as a continual resource for a minimum of one year and up to two years. Being approachable is one of the important requirements for mentoring to succeed. This means that mentors should be available for the mentees and be of good character and be accessed by their mentees when needed.

- be committed to gaining the specific mentoring skills through high-quality certified training, for example, cognitive coaching, blended coaching and mentor training .It is important for mentors to be learners themselves. They should go all the way and arm themselves enough to be able to be of help to their mentees.
- be a role model for effective school leadership, demonstrating the practices and competencies outlined in the Ontario Leadership Framework
- understand current education system priorities and initiatives. Mentors are supposed to be abreast with recent information at all times.
- have experience working with adult learning styles. Most mentors are assigned to adult learners. In the case of principals and teacher mentoring programmes, mentees are adults and knowledge and skills pertaining to adult education is important.
- be compassionate, supportive individuals who are able to cultivate a learning environment
- support the principles of inclusion, diversity and equity”.

2.9. The Roles and Responsibilities of the Mentee

In as much as a lot is expected from the mentor in ensuring that the mentee benefits from mentoring, the mentee is also expected to contribute towards his or her learning. Here the mentee is expected to adopt a character that is inviting to the mentor and be positive and willing to learn. Mentees as adult learners will be expected to fit the following summary of the findings from Wood and Thompson (1980:376) as follows:

- Adults learn when the goals and objectives are considered realistic and important to them, and are job-related and perceived as being useful.
- Adult learners need to see the results of their efforts and have accurate feedback about progress towards their goals.
- Adults come to the learning situation with a wide range of previous experiences, knowledge, skills, interests and competence.

Robbins, Judge, Odendaal and Roodt (2009), writing on workplace training contend that it normally involves adult learners who are different from childhood learners in these respects: (i) the adult learner is self-directed, (ii) he or she brings with a well-

developed cognitive record that represents many earlier experiences to which new learning will be linked and (iii) he or she is ultimately self-motivated. This, they say, implies that “adult learners will seek out their own learning opportunities to satisfy their own needs and achieve their own objectives”. Adults prefer to learn at their own pace and through their own methods. They will place personal value on the learning and they will only learn what they find useful. They will link new knowledge to their own pace and through their own methods.

Mentors and mentees in this study are perceived in the same fashion by Wood and Thompson (1980) and Fullan (2002) who states that people need to practise in the trenches with expert mentors and coaches.

Kolb (1984) suggests that learning can be viewed as a cycle in which an individual acquire experience by doing an activity. He or she then needs to reflect on the experience and later attempt to understand the experience through examination and conceptualisation. “The responsibility of the mentee is, in the context of a learning plan, to participate with the mentor in a collaborative manner to focus on the expected achievement and to learn both the adaptive and technical aspects of the leadership role, thus building the leadership role (e.g. transition to the role, building leadership practices, and implementing key initiatives)”.

It is obvious that the important role of mentoring is learning. This is clearly indicated by Smith (2002), who outlines the nature, outcomes and expectations of adult groups, as suggested by Malcolm Knowles, and contends that every adult group, of whatever nature, must become a laboratory of democracy, a place where people may have the experience of learning to live cooperatively.

2.10. Benefits and Limitations of Mentoring Relationships

Mentoring is a powerful motivation for the professional learning of new and experienced leaders and learning is the prime objective, process and product of mentoring. Subsequently, the bond that is created is the glue that binds the partnership. Robbins et al. (2009) maintain that many leaders create mentoring relationships and then follow with a question that asks, “Why would a leader want to be a mentor?” They contend that there are personal gains to the leader as well as

gains for the organisation. For example, the mentor–mentee relationship provides the mentor with unlimited access to the attitudes and feelings of junior employees, and mentees can be an excellent early warning sign of existing challenges. Ismail and Arokiasamy (2007:143) suggest that mentees with good mentors may display positive work ethics and that this situation leads to better performance. However, there may be few differences between non-mentees and mentees, with slightly satisfying or dissatisfying mentors that could lead to poor work performance. Dutton (2003:23) contends that “the academic literature has highlighted the benefits of a mentoring relationship for not only the protégé but also for the mentor and the organisation”.

Scott Mullen (in Beatty, 2009), posit that “one of the teachers and school leaders from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development who undertook a Masters in School Leadership with the Monash University of Melbourne during 2005–2008, reported on the benefits of the mentoring he received. He begins by saying that there was no formula for leadership, but only an invitation to embark on a journey, and calls it “a light-bulb moment”. He state that he was offered an opportunity for leading others in the process of change and was taught that during this process there are three different groups that can come out during this journey, the Quitters, the Campers and the Climbers. In the process he was not ready, unskilled and uninformed of the real dangers, but was tasked to lead the three groups towards a pre-determined goal. In his quest for success in leadership he through the growing leadership team he realised that “emotional meaning making” played little or no role in his state of leadership “flow” but the experience of learning to purposefully integrate personal, expert and intellectual meaning into his reflective learning and leadership practices unleashed a voice (Beatty, 2000b). He attributes his learning to his mentor who saw his struggles and arranged for him to go to his first leadership conference, where he learnt that professional development is not something that can be artificially put on, because it is the teacher himself or herself who develops.

The benefits that mentors obtain from mentoring have also been highlighted by Hunt and Michael (1983:478), who suggest that mentors can benefit greatly from positive mentor–mentee relationships and that mentors often get contentment and verification through helping less experienced individuals in their development.

Hobson and Sharp (2005:35-36) note that studies of mentoring report perceived benefits to the mentors' own professional development and improvements in their own performance. Also noted by Sharp and Hobson (p.36) is that where mentor and mentee derive individual benefits from participating in mentoring, their schools may benefit from having more effective principals and improved school management and also from having more confident principals and more assured leadership. Jugmohan's (2008) survey of the ACE programme in KwaZulu-Natal identified, among others, the following benefits: (i) "reduced feelings of isolation and enhanced confidence, (ii) improved communication skills and problem analysis, and (iii) greater awareness of different approaches to leadership".

For this study, the following benefits deserve mentioning:

- *Personal learning.* Personal learning is a result or consequence for both the mentor and the mentee, even though some writers like Higgins and Kram (2001) point to this as a benefit to the mentee only. They identify the following points under personal learning: (i) increased clearness of professional identity (one's exclusive talents and contributions at work); (ii) increased clearness of personal principles, strengths, and weaknesses; and (iii) increased alertness of developmental desires, reactions and patterns of behaviour.
- *Organisational commitment.* Organisational commitment is expected to increase as the mentee gets to understand the need for and the value of mentoring. If the learning is built on the vision and the mission of the organisation, they become the driving force if and the mentee understands and accept that her or his efforts are geared to their realisation.
- *Work or job satisfaction.* If performance increases, opportunities for progress become abundant and the mentor and the mentee are likely to find satisfaction in the jobs they are doing.
- *Career change.* Job satisfaction goes hand in hand with opportunities to grow and growth results in the opening up of career opportunities. They may avail themselves within the

On the other hand, there are also limitations to the mentoring process that have been highlighted in the literature on mentoring by Mathews, Hansen and Williams

(2004). Some of these limitations are: (i) the best teachers may not always be the best mentors; (ii) mentoring expectations may be unrealistically high; (iii) promising beginners do not always receive good mentoring (Carruthers, 1993); (iv) some mentors may impede a beginner's development; and (v) mentors often perpetuate the status quo and encourage cloning.

Adding to the above limitations, Arnold (2006:117) contends that “not everyone can, or should be, a mentor. Simply being a good teacher is not enough, for mentoring is not a straightforward extension of being a school teacher”. He concludes that “different perspectives, abilities, aptitudes, attitudes and skills are necessary”. Hobson and Malderez (2013:4), writing on school-based mentoring for beginner teachers, discovered that mentoring does not guarantee good results all the time and can actually negatively affect beginner teachers' professional learning and growth. They state that some studies suggest, that it can lead to the endorsement and reproduction of conservative norms and practices, which leave mentees unable to strengthen or develop their knowledge and use of different and more challenging methods, such as “progressive and learner-centred approaches”. Other studies, according to Hobson and Malderez (2013), have found that mentoring can have devastating consequences on mentees' health, with studies telling that in some cases the work of mentors has spoilt beginner teachers' self-esteem, caused nervousness and stress, and contributed to mentees' decisions to leave their work

In conclusion, the benefits and limitations of mentoring seem to be dependent on the willingness and readiness of both mentors and mentees. There is a tendency to generalise on the benefits of mentoring especially when one considers the nature of mentoring as a form of providing assistance as a personal and professional partnership (Arnold, 2006:117) and turn a blind eye to the actual process. The attitudes, aptitudes and skills of both mentors and mentees are very important components of the process. The participants in this research as adult learners are also likely to possess different learning and reactionary skills and attitudes towards their learning process. If proper care is not taken during the process, the results of mentoring might be disastrous. Effective mentoring is “intentional; introductions are made, meetings are scheduled, agenda items are crafted and expected outcomes are defined” (Smith, 2005:64).

2.11. Types of Educational Mentoring

The challenge facing educationists and schools is how to develop a mentoring culture which promotes an examination of practice so that new alternatives can be discovered and owned by teachers in a collaborative environment. This requires that there be an appropriate choice of a mentoring model that will put learning at its core. In order to address the need for an approach to mentoring which supports teachers co-constructing their learning, more recent research promotes mentoring as a relationship where partners collaborate as equals to solve problems of practice. The extensively researched mentoring types include mentoring for pre-service or beginning teachers. The other types of mentoring include mentoring for school principals and administrators, mentoring for staff in higher education, mentoring for students and peer mentoring, for example teachers mentoring teachers (Ehrich & Hansford, 2001:8).

This study will discuss the following three types of educational mentoring as described in Wojnowski, Bellamy and Cooke (2003).

2.11.1. Traditional Mentoring

The traditional definition of mentoring is that of an older, wiser person guiding a younger one. This form of mentoring “has been undermined and challenged in an age where experience and accumulated knowledge no longer guarantee relevance in the future” (Parker, Hall & Kram, 2008:489).

2.11.2. Collegial Mentoring

This type of mentoring is sometimes known as peer coaching, consisting of teachers working together towards a specific goal, namely, that of improving their teaching and educational work. “Peers are more likely to identify with the hesitation and lack of certainty in contemporary situations” (Parker et al., 2008:489).

2.11.3. Professional Development Mentoring

According to Guskey (2000), the mentoring for professional development naturally involves pairing an knowledgeable and highly successful educator with a less knowledgeable colleague. Guskey (2000) further states that “professional activities must support the sharing of teacher expertise by preparing and using mentors to provide professional development opportunities”. In order for this type of mentoring

to be effective, professional development activities must address the needs and concerns of the mentees.

Clutterbuck (2005:2) adds that developmental mentoring is defined as offline help by one person to another in making a significant transition in knowledge, work or thinking. In addition, Clutterbuck (2005) contends that developmental mentoring provides an opportunity for reflection on the individual's own strengths, what it is that he or she does well, what it is that does not work and why. An opportunity is also created for reflection on what the mentee's principles and objectives are, so that development is driven in a direction which will present meaning and satisfaction.

The other form of mentoring that deserves mention here is organisational mentoring, as explained by Braimoh (2008:20).

“As organizational hierarchical structures are changing as a result of the dynamism that characterizes any centripetal society, so also are the structures being replaced by flatter and leaner systems operation. Mentors will be seeking to be transformational rather than directional, democratic rather than dictatorial, flexible rather than coercive, and forward looking rather than conservative leaders”.

2.12. Mentoring as an Educational Leadership Development activity

Mentoring is the most effective leadership development tool (Clutterbuck, 2005). In the Initial Professional Education of Teachers (IPET), mentorship is adopted as a strategy in paragraph 39, where it is stated that in obtaining a B.Ed qualification by distance learning, students will have to receive school-based mentoring. Serving teachers are also earmarked for school-based mentoring when upgrading their qualifications. Mentoring is therefore seen as a potential leadership activity which offers teachers an opportunity to be leaders because it supports collaborative learning based on practice by connecting leadership and learning. This is an indication of the relevance and importance of mentorship in the development of teachers as well as educational leaders. Educational leadership development should begin and end with strategies and objectives in mind. In the educational setting, as addressed by this study, mentoring is the strategy and the objective in the production of competent educational leaders capable of steering education to a higher level.

Webber and Robertson (1998) purport that mentoring moves leaders beyond self to a bigger, more critical perspective of their own practice in particular and educational leadership in general. In education, we have the pressure and the need to organise leadership development activities and initiatives into an integrated strategy. Many researchers (Roberts, 2000; Browne-Ferrigno & Allen, 2006) who have studied mentoring agree that mentoring is a developmental initiative and benefits a number of sectors. I have indicated before that mentoring is a reciprocal learning process and a collaborative process between the mentor and the mentee. The process of mentoring allows leaders to gain practical experience of and skills in using reflection in, on and for practice (Robertson, 2005:66). This sentiment is supported by Wang and Odell (2002), who contend that being reflective is an essential quality of good leadership and therefore the experience of mentoring is of great benefit to both the mentor and mentee. Mentoring as a professional development initiative requires that there should be a joint learning plan, which is a decisive element of this collaborative effort.

Mentoring in its current format within the ACE School Leadership programme in my opinion lacks an integrated strategy because of its inability to link policy to practice. Although the current policy envisages a situation where principals will have to conduct mentoring programmes in their schools, currently, after acquiring the ACE qualification, research to produce evidence of schools doing mentorship programmes in practice is scarce.

Yee (1997) state that in the 1980s, the field of school leadership development became a growth industry in North America, Europe, Australia and parts of Asia. Yee (1997) contends that, “common with South Africa, these programmes consisted of attendance at conventions held by the individual’s professional association, enrolment in university graduate courses taken to earn a degree or to gain a salary increment or attending curricular or instructional programmes; however, they were not designed to enable principals to implement multifaceted reforms or slot in, in continuous, school-based improvements”. Fullan (2000) posits that “teachers and principals now operate under a microscope in a way that they have never had to do before”. This new environment, according to Fullan, is difficult, tumultuous, ambiguous, ruthless, uncertain and random. Consequently, it has increased the

demands for better performance and greater answerability. Mentoring is therefore introduced to reduce the gaps created by the previous methods and to help educational leaders to be prepared for these changes. Mentoring for principals can be equated to what McKimm et al. (2007) call “mentoring in management”. They contend that “organisations need to be able to continuously reinvent themselves so as to stay aligned with and responsive to their customers and other stakeholders”. In the educational environment, customers are the learners and stakeholders include communities, parents and business. This is also referred to as “executive” mentoring, which is an intervention designed to support senior executives and other key staff in making the necessary behavioural changes.

Educational leadership has been identified as key in the academic achievements of learners, as well as in the execution of educational tasks by educators. School leadership has a key role to play in improving school outcomes by influencing the willingness and skills of teachers, as well as improving the school climate. Educational leaders are responsible for making and keeping the learning environment and the conditions under which excellent teaching and learning can take place.

Mentoring ensures that educational leaders are always learning. Robertson (2005:56) also states that mentoring allows participants and mentors to co-construct their understandings of pedagogy and subject-specific knowledge to “transform their beliefs into actions that make a difference”. Mentoring is also beneficial as it acts as professional learning in that it aims to “change behaviour and beliefs in a manner that leads to appropriate changes to behaviour and to those changes becoming institutionalised” (p. 58). “The mentor is a teacher, a guide, a sage and, foremost, a person acting to the best of his or her ability in a whole and compassionate way in plain view of the mentee” (Bell & Goldsmith, 2013:5). According to Bell and Goldsmith (2013), mentoring “is about growth – mentors growing with mentees, mentees growing with mentors. The core of a mentoring relationship is more about a mutual search than about imparting wisdom”.

In educational leadership, therefore, development is not only about the educational leader only, but about the educators, learners and the society as well. Educational

leaders are community leaders. When they learn, they teach, in the same way as when mentors learn during their mentoring practice. Mentoring, again as Bell and Goldsmith (2013:7) suggest, “is about teaching through the power of consultation and collaboration rather than constriction and assessment”. The primary goal of mentoring is to create a self-directed learner, with an ability to discover things through, the most effective context of learning partnership (Bell & Goldsmith, 2013:7). In this study, I am, like Bell and Goldsmith (2013), convinced on the collaborative nature of mentoring. I will later discuss mentoring as a reciprocal learning process precisely to highlight the importance of its collaborative learning nature. Mullen (2000:4), writing on the collaborative mentoring model, suggests that it is practitioner-centred, experiential and research-aligned, reflective and empowering, and that it is a chance for professionals to be directly involved in each other’s learning and to offer opinion while developing along an agreed pathway. In this study, I was looking at the existence of this collaboration between the principals and their mentors, as this was an important factor in their educational leadership development. The understanding of this envisaged collaboration could best be enhanced by adopting a philosophical view of educational leadership as explained by Harris, Cavanagh, Reynolds and Giddings (2004) as understanding the professional values, attitudes and resultant behaviours of principals and their mentors as the manifestations of their educational philosophy. They add that this involves knowledge about pedagogy, a willingness to improve the school pedagogy and concern for learner educational outcomes as consequences of deeply held beliefs about schooling, learning and leadership.

To confirm the importance of mentoring in educational leadership development, an international study conducted in the USA in the 1980s on job experiences and management development confirmed that managers saw most of their learning occurring from the challenges encountered in their jobs and from influential people in their work settings (such as bosses, mentors, and role models) (McCauley & Brutus, 1998:4).

In conclusion, I need to emphasise that the essence of mentoring interactions is to breed educational leaders who are resolute on gaining the skills needed to employ the practices and advance the circumstances that contribute to the achievement and

welfare of all learners. In the face of the many demands of the position and their needs, mentoring can speed up learning, decrease separation and increase the confidence and skills of educational leaders.

2.13. Professional Learning for Mentors

Much has been said about mentees in mentoring programmes but little has been mentioned about the professional readiness of the mentors themselves. The question that needs to be addressed is how to ensure that mentors have sufficient knowledge and skills for effective mentoring. Schneider (2008) states that professional learning for mentors must be flexible to meet the individual needs of mentors in their specific contexts. Schneider (2008) believes that mentors need opportunities to articulate their understanding of mentoring and that they need exposure to “educative” mentoring to develop their conception of the role. A number of researchers have paid attention to the skills and characteristics mentors need. Robertson (2005) contends in this regard that any mentoring situation requires the mentor to facilitate “trust, respect and confidentiality” in order for the partnership to be successful.

Feinman-Nemser (1998) advocates for the employment of collaborative learning practices in a mentoring relationship and argues that the developmental level of the mentees needs to be respected so that the learning is specific and relevant. Feinman-Nemser (1998) acknowledges the knowledge, beliefs and autobiographies teachers bring to their practice and aims to assist mentees in the examination of their beliefs about teaching and learning. Mentors require professional learning around classroom observations and how these can be used effectively to give feedback on teacher practice. Mentors also need support for professional learning with regard to the interactive approaches they could employ in a mentoring relationship. Different mentoring situations require different mentoring approaches.

2.14. Mentoring as a Reciprocal Learning process

One of the best highlights of a mentorship programme is that almost everyone that is part of one, whether as a mentee, a mentor or even the one responsible for putting the mentorship programme together, comes out as a better leader at the end.

A study by Eby and Lockwood (2005) found that both mentors and mentees reported significant learning experiences from a formal mentoring programme. The most frequently reported profit for mentees included learning, career planning and psychological support. Mentors confirmed learning about the organisations their mentee came from, developing personal relationships, personal satisfaction and enhanced management skills. This was proof that both mentors and mentees benefit from the mentoring relationships and therefore mentoring is seen as a reciprocal learning process. Robertson (2005:56) states that mentoring allows participants and mentors to co-construct their understandings of pedagogy and subject-specific knowledge to “transform their beliefs into actions that make a difference”. Mentors thus obtain benefits from mentoring programmes which include the pleasure that comes from helping others, the creation of free time for alternate pursuits, as well as organisational recognition or reward, and improved job performance through exposure to new ideas. Hunt and Michael (1983:478) believe that “serving as a mentor provides a rejuvenating life challenge to an adult”, while Wang and Odell argue that the experience of mentorship is of great benefit to both the mentor and mentee.

2.15. Conditions for an Effective Mentoring Programme

Fundamental to the success of a mentoring programme is a common understanding of the expectations each partner has of the relationship. Hobson, Ashby, Malderez and Tomlinson (2009:412) state that “while certain conditions may be more likely to facilitate the achievement of some mentoring aims than others, a number of common findings have emerged from research into factors which impact on the success or otherwise of different kinds of mentoring programmes across a variety of contexts”. The following are the factors identified by Hobson et al. (2009) that may contribute to effective mentoring programmes: “contextual support for mentoring, mentor selection and pairing, mentoring strategies, and mentor preparation”.

2.15.1. Contextual Support for Mentoring

The environment or context within which mentoring takes place contributes to the success of mentoring. In the context of this study, the context is the school to which the educational leaders are attached. Lee and Feng (2007:257) believe that “mentoring is more likely to be successful when it takes place within schools characterised by collegial and learning cultures, and where both mentors and mentees have access to support outside of the mentorship relationship”.

2.15.2. Mentor Selection and Pairing

Incorrect matching of the mentor and mentee can undermine the mentoring process. As confirmed by the educational literature, successful mentoring relationships are more likely to occur when mentors are carefully selected and paired with their mentees. The easiest way to do this can be in terms of similar professional expertise and personality. MacCallum and Baltiman (1999:1) suggest that “unsuccessful pairing or matching can be worse than no mentoring at all”. In view of this other mentoring programmes advocate intentional participation as a way of avoiding unsatisfactory matching outcomes. For example, Douglas (1997:97) suggests that “participation by mentors and mentees should be voluntary and comments that if participation is not perceived as voluntary, the effectiveness of the initiative will be diminished by participant resistance”. Similarly, the researcher believes that mentees should have the privilege of choosing their own mentors.

On this issue of pairing, Playko (1995:91) suggests that “it is important that one does not assume that some of the traditional reasons for matching one person with another (i.e. based on gender, type of school to be served, age differences, etc.) are anything but ironclad assurances that mentors and mentees will enjoy mutually enhancing and positive relationships”.

2.15.3. Mentoring Strategies

Just as in teaching, mentoring is effective where it is done with a purpose in mind in order to be able to address the needs of the mentees. Valencic, Zuljan and Vogrinc (2007:379) state that “mentors need to take account of individual learning styles and

ensure that the strategies employed to support the mentee's learning process are responsive to their concerns and appropriate to their current stage of development”.

2.15.4. Mentor Preparation

The lack of mentor preparation programmes can be a serious shortcoming in respect of mentoring. The acceptance of the mentoring definition stating that it is a process wherein an “experienced” individual helps an “inexperienced” leader can be misleading if left unchecked. This is because it encourages a blind matching of mentors to mentees on the basis of having experience in that particular area of work or responsibilities. In the case of mentoring principals, experienced principals may not necessarily be mentors. The assumption here, as postulated by Playko (1995:91), is that “long-term service in the principalship is all that really counts in terms of what might be passed along to future generations of educational leaders”. The preparation of mentors is a very important aspect to be considered and yet it is the most neglected aspect of mentorship because of the above assumptions. There are significant skills and abilities that must be established by people before allowed to engage in the formation of a future generation of principals (Playko, 1995). Accordingly, mentors need to receive specialised preparation in such areas as human relations skills, instructional leadership skills, and necessary understandings of what mentoring is.

The following are the qualities of great mentoring as stated by Bell and Goldsmith (2013:24):

- *Balance.* A learning partnership is a balanced alliance, grounded in mutual interests, interdependence and respect. Power-seeking mentors tend to mentor with credentials and sovereignty; partnership-driven mentors seek to mentor with authenticity and openness. In a balanced learning partnership, energy is spent early in the relationship on clarifying roles and communicating expectations.
- *Truth.* Partnership communication has one additional quality: it is clean and pure and characterised by the highest level of integrity and honesty.

- *Trust.* Trust begins with experience; experience begins with a leap of faith. A “trust-full” partnership is one in which error is accepted as a necessary step on the path from the novice to master.
- *Abundance.* Great trainers and mentors love learning and are happiest when they are around its occurrence. As the mentor gives, the mentee reciprocates, and abundance begins to characterise the relationship.
- *Passion.* Great mentoring partnerships are filled with passion; they are guided by mentors with deep feelings and a willingness to communicate those feelings. Passionate mentors recognise that effective learning has a vitality about it that is not logical, not rational and not orderly.
- *Courage.* Mentoring takes courage; learning takes courage. Great mentors are allies of courage; they cultivate a partnership of courageousness. They take risks with learning, showing boldness in their efforts, and elicit courage in mentees by the examples they set.
- *Ethics.* Effective mentors must be clean in their learner-dealings, not false, manipulative or greedy. They must be honest and congruent in their communications and actions. They must not steal their learners’ opportunities for struggle or moments of glory. They must honour their learners just as they honour the process of mutual learning. Great partnerships go beyond “greater than” to a realm of unforeseen worth. And worth in a mentoring partnership is laced with the equity of balance, the clarity of truth, the security of trust, the affirmation of abundance, the energy of passion, the boldness of courage and the grounding of ethics”.

Hudson (2004:3) presents the five-factor mentoring model (see Figure 2.2), which is vital to regard for the purposes of this study. This model addressed the key aspects that should be present in any mentoring process:

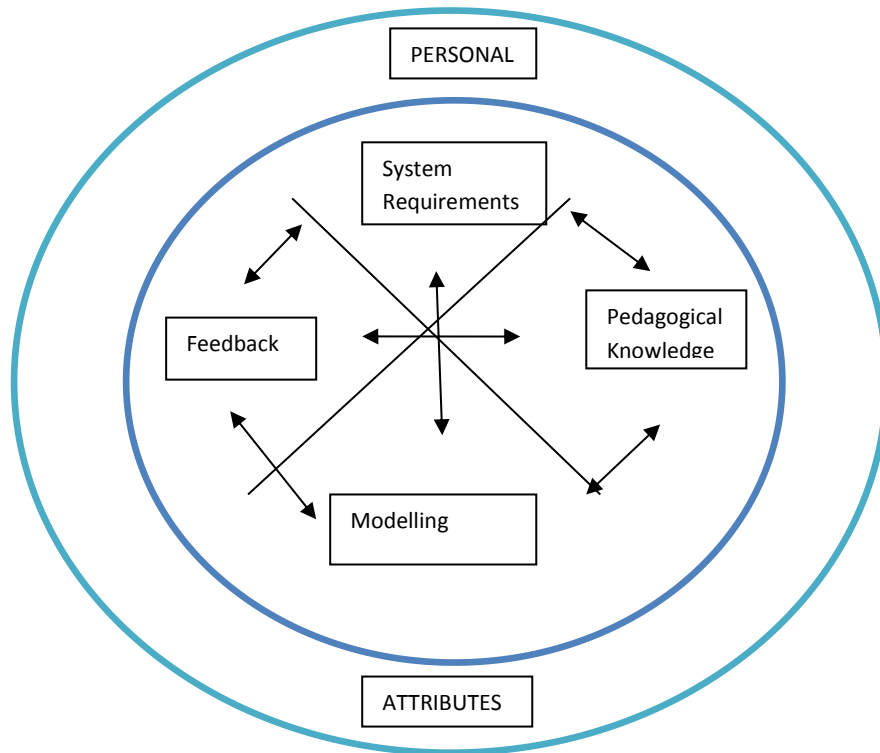


Figure 2.2: The five-factor mentoring model

Adapted from Hudson (2004)

Factor 1. Personal attributes

Mentors need to display a number of personal attributes in order to develop mentees, since their learning takes place within a social context. Mentors need to be supportive and attentive, and to instil a positive attitude in their mentees.

Factor 2. System requirements

When newly appointed principals, for example, start on their job, they will need to understand the requirements of the system they find themselves responsible for. Mentors can offer helpful assistance with mentees' understanding of the key practices associated with system needs. These may include, among others, the aims of the job, policies and processes to be followed while executing leadership and management tasks.

Factor 3. Pedagogical knowledge

Mentors need to have educational knowledge to direct their mentees. In the programme which is the focus of this study, this factor is supported by the selection of mentors. Priority is given to those who have successfully practised and served as principals of schools. They have knowledge of the education systems and are experienced in the leadership of schools.

Factor 4. Modelling

Modelling how things should be done is an easy way of teaching someone the skills of doing the work. This process involves intentional modelling and careful observation by the mentee.

Factor 5. Feedback

Giving feedback to the mentees enables them to reflect on and develop their leadership practices. This factor requires a mentor to be able to articulate expectations, observe actual practice, and provide both oral and written feedback. In the mentoring programme, feedback was given in the form of feedback on assignments and feedback from on-site visits.

In conclusion, mentoring in this study is seen as a process that supports experiential learning in educational leaders. Learning was central to the discussion on mentorship, while experience was discussed as an essential ingredient of effective learning. In addition, knowledge acquisition and knowledge transfer were mentioned as important learning outcomes of the mentorship process. It was also established “that learning can take place in different contexts and for different reasons” (Lee, 2007:2). Owing to the fact that learning results from experience, which some may find easy and others more difficult, the help and guidance mentors provide for mentees facilitates their learning from their experiences. For the provision of high quality leadership experiences for mentees, we need to regard the elements that make these experiences meaningful. Guthrie and Thompson (2010:50) mention three elements that are vital in the process: (i) “formal education in theories and principles of leadership; (ii) practical experience; and (iii) reflection on experiences in the light of formal education”. The mentoring programme studied here incorporates

these three elements. Accordingly, principals are taught the theories and principles of leadership in the other modules included in the ACE (SL) qualification at the University, while practical experience takes place through on-site visits by mentors to the schools, and reflective practice takes place in the reflective journals kept by the mentees as part of their portfolio of evidence. In order to learn and grow, educational leaders have to be aware of leadership theories, develop leadership skills through practical exercises, and mirror upon their knowledge and experiences.

Deans and Oakley (2007:11) provide a useful structure for an ideal mentoring session and contend that mentoring processes involve a series of meetings in which each session involves purposeful discussions driven by approved and specific goals. According to these authors, in between these activities, the person practises the new techniques, methods and working style. “Experiences are afterwards discussed and any issues coming up are mirrored on. The diagram below provides a basic overview of how a session should grow in terms of building a relaxing atmosphere, stimulating the person and working with him or her to develop and reach his or her goals”.

The researcher is of the opinion that the stages presented in this diagram are pre-requisites for any successful mentoring relationship. In addition, they can be successfully implemented in a situation where the mentee has prior knowledge of who the mentor is and is knowledgeable about the personal attributes of the mentor. Another important aspect here is the knowledge and perceptions that the mentee has about the mentorship process itself as these allow the mentee and the mentor to have expectations of their engagements and later to evaluate the progress achieved.

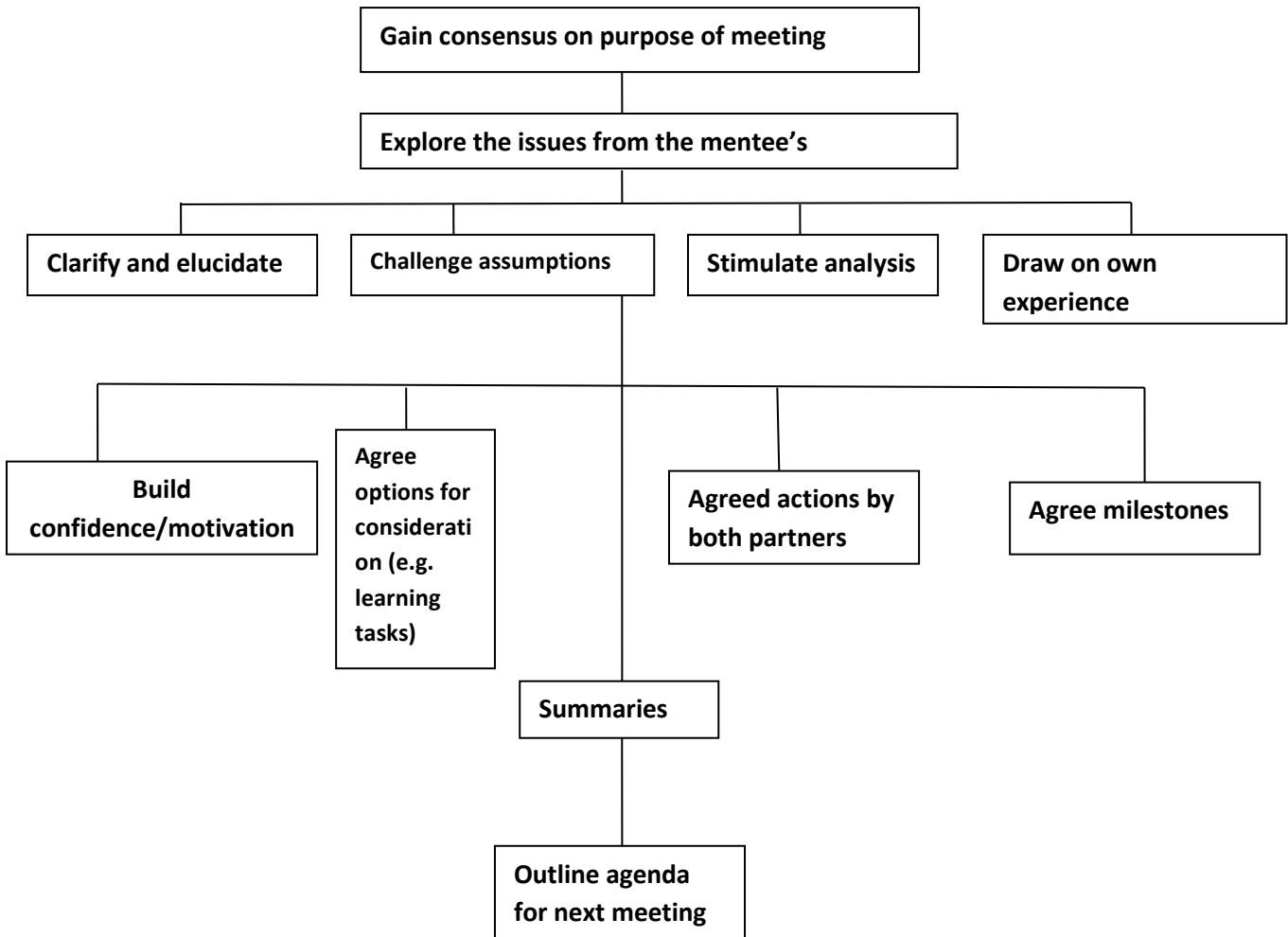


Figure 2.3: An ideal mentoring session

Source: Adapted from Deans and Oakley (2007)

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW ON MENTORING PROCESSES AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

3.1. Introduction

A discussion of mentoring processes is essential in order to bring to light the relationship between and the common practices of mentoring and experiential learning. The aim is to explore this relationship convincingly and to confirm the relevance and the interdependence between mentoring practice and experiential learning. Being a new person in any profession offers a major challenge. It is a shaping period where the knowledge, skills and behaviours acquired during training or any programme of education are applied. School principals as educational leaders might be new in the field of teaching or new in the position as principal, but as they grow, job experiences provide important learning for them (Brungardt, 1997:85). It is therefore important that their knowledge and skills during this period be enhanced, especially through mentoring programmes that are carefully planned and executed. Brungardt (1997), in support of experiential learning, states:

Learning on the job is enhanced by the fact that any workplace generates a certain amount of pressure, and ambitious young people generate inner pressure of their own. Seeking recognition, fearing failure, working against deadlines, experiencing the urgencies of life in the real world, they learn lessons they do not soon forget.

It is therefore appropriate that educational leadership development be understood within the context of mentoring and to understand the experiences of both mentors and principals within the programme.

3.2. The Constructivist Model of Mentoring

Mentors and mentees are individuals with their own 'being' that requires to be understood separately. When the two engage in a mentoring relationship, it could possibly be that each brings into the relationship a different person with his or her personality that needs to be understood differently. The ontological position of this

study is based on the individuality of the participants, mentors and mentees. As a result, each mentor is going to construct his or her understanding of the mentoring relationship, and the same will happen to the mentee. From the different understandings, knowledge and meanings are constructed. Epistemologically, that is where the participants engage with how the knowledge is obtained. “ Learning is contextual, meaning that we do not learn secluded facts and theories in some abstract unearthly land; we learn in association to what else we know, our beliefs, our prejudices and our fears. On reflection, it becomes clear that this point is actually a corollary of the idea that learning is active and social. We cannot divorce our learning from our lives” (Hein, 1991).

Within the constructivist paradigm, the emphasis is on the learner because it is him or her who interacts with the environment and thus develop an understanding of its type and characteristics (Hein,1991). The epistemological and ontological position within which this paradigm rests is discussed in chapter 4 of this study. Mentorship thus serves as a viable environment from which to learn and to construct meaning with regard to the experiences.

Mentoring “is an intense interpersonal relationship where a more senior individual (the mentor) provides guidance and support to a more junior organisational member (the mentee)” (Eby & Lockwood, 2005:442). The use of mentoring has gained increasing prominence in the teaching profession. Huling and Resta (2001:4) confirm this statement by stating that “teacher-mentoring programmes have increased dramatically since the 1980s as a vehicle to support and retain novice teachers”. Wojnowski et al. (2003) also affirm that mentoring “is currently making a significant entrance in many other areas of education”.

Mentoring is a learner-centred and active learning process. During this process, knowledge is created through the transformation of experiences. Social constructivist beliefs of learning presume that knowledge construction is achieved by the interface that takes place within oneself through reflective thought and by the interface that occurs in interactions and collaborations with other people. I have referred to collaboration by educators in some schools where novice educators are being mentored by experienced educators. Collaboration succeeds when both the mentor and the mentee possesses certain sets of skills, virtues and attributes. Good

mentors are identified through their dedication to learning and their autonomous efforts to develop their own solutions. Mullen (2000:4–11) affirms that “collaboration provides an opportunity to strengthen personal and professional skills”. Spencer (1996) also believes that “mentoring is a relationship that gives people the opportunity to share their professional and personal skills and experiences”. Such experiences (Murphy, Mahoney, Chen, Diaz & Yang, 2005:342) include “interactive activities such as small-group discussions, simulation games, project-based work, and collaborative problem-solving activities to solve educational problems”.

“Learning from experience occurs through two developmental environments that allow almost any work situation to serve as an opportunity for growth. Learning from the “people you work with” and the “task itself” provide the situations for leaders to enhance their potential” (Brungardt, 1997:85).

McKimm et al. (2007:1) argue that mentoring is a very intricate incident varying from one situation to another. As a result, they suggest that “it is important that the purpose and intentions of mentoring in a particular context be explicit”. The rationale for this discussion of mentoring as a constructivist model is to align its objectives and processes to those of the experiential learning model as espoused by Kolb (1984). This is possible when we look at what mentoring intends to achieve (learning on-the-job) and the call upon the mentee to build knowledge by trying to bring meaning to new information and to incorporate this knowledge with his or her past experience.

3.3. Formal and Informal Mentoring

“A formal mentoring relationship is one that involves decided appointments, venues and time and may be part of an officially acknowledged program within an organisation. Formal mentoring relationships differ from informal mentoring relationships in a number of ways. First, the relationships are initiated differently” (Wanberg, Kammeyer-Muller & Marchese, 2006:411). Eby and Lockwood (2005) posit that “a formal mentoring is an organisationally initiated effort to match mentors and mentees”. This type of mentor–mentee matching is the same as that which the Department of Education and the tertiary institutions offering the programme are doing. In this programme mentors are allocated to the mentees. The programme as suggested by the Department of Education is such that the principals participating in

the mentorship programme should also implement mentoring programmes in their schools. This is possible if professional educators are willing to offer assistance to their colleagues. For example, it can happen that the principal or a member of the management team will ask an experienced educator to assist a new educator as a mentor. In many schools, especially those that have adopted a culture of success through collaboration, educators have always worked together, helping one another by exchanging ideas on matters related to teaching and learning.

The Treasury Board of Canada (TBC 2001) describes formal mentoring as “a relationship facilitated and supported by the organisation so that more participants may benefit. The informal mentoring relationship is one where the relationship is managed on a casual basis, where there are unlikely to be ground rules”.

In conclusion, formal and informal mentoring can be initiated from within the organisation as well as outside of it. Mentors within the same organisation as the mentees are considered internal mentors and those employed outside the organisation are external mentors. “Internal mentors may be more physically accessible and may be able to buffer and protect mentees” (Ragins, 1997). External mentors, on the other hand, may be better placed to provide long lasting career assistance, and creative career assistance and lateral transitions.

3.4. Learning as a concept

The terms “change”, “learning”, and “adaptation have all been used to refer to the process by which organisations adjust to their environment” (Fiol & Lyles, 1984:805). According to Braimoh (2008:16), “learning is an unending, abstract and invisible process that permeates everyone’s life, whether young or old, rich or poor, educated or illiterate”. He adds that learning is also an epithet of education that goes beyond the classroom walls. The concept of learning in this study is conceived from a constructivism perspective, meaning that learning is a construct. This entails that learners create knowledge for themselves. Each learner individually and socially creates meaning as he or she learns and therefore constructing meaning is in fact a learning process.

This study is concerned with the learning of educational leaders who participated in the mentoring programme with the aim of understanding their interpretation of their learning experiences within the mentoring programme as well as within the context of their work place. As previously stated, learning can take place in different situations and for different reasons. Lee (2007:2) states that “the student’s perceptions of the learning context are a result of the interaction between their previous experiences of learning and the learning context itself”. Andrews and Chilton (2000:560) provide the same analogy in terms of learning and maintain that “students learn from all they interact with and are influenced by the learning environment as a whole rather than specific individuals”. In this study, the fact that learning comes about through a reflective practice from the experiences people go through is central to the core objectives of this research. Hence, Soleil (2014:74) contends that reflection provides an opportunity for learning to pass through many stages on the way to obtain a deep and attentive knowledge.

The type of learning the study concerns itself with is “reflective learning”, which Soleil (2014:78) describes as involving mind, body and spirit, as well as an acknowledgement that “lived experience is integral to the transfer of information into knowledge”. The participants in the study were questioned about how they acquired requiring them to provide information on how their mind, spirit, body and lived experiences were instrumental in the acquisition of this knowledge.

It is important for this study to make a connection between leadership and learning. If, as expected, principals and teachers in schools are to be change agents in their own practice they need support in an environment in which they can be leaders and learners. The challenge for educationists today is how to create and sustain an environment where leadership and learning have a close connection because this is viewed as the future pathway for educational leadership (MacBeath, 2012; MacBeath & Dempster, 2009; MacBeath & Swaffield, 2009). MacBeath and Swaffield’s (2009) conception of leadership for learning is one of activity or action. They maintain that learning for leadership is a distinctive form of educational practice that involves an open conversation, maintaining a focal point on learning, attending to the conditions that support learning, and leadership that is both mutual and answerable.

MacBeath (2012) deepens our understandings of the connection between leadership and learning, likening leadership to an oxygen supply whereby professional learning is made possible through the sharing of expertise to improve student learning. Furthermore, MacBeath (2012) and MacBeath and Swaffield's (2009:49) view is that learning is everyone's responsibility, as is leadership, by recognising that talent and expertise are fluid rather than fixed entities. and each is made visible through behaviour and actions and the environment created for the school community. In this way leadership for learning can be described as principled influential interactions arising from and resulting in valued learning.

In Experiential learning, the assumption is that for learning to take place, experiences have to occur, Dhliwayo (2008:330). Within this study of educational development through mentorship, learning is through productive work.

3.4.1. Principles of (Constructive) Learning

These are a few guiding principles of constructivist learning that should be kept in mind when considering the roles of mentors. Hein (1991:2) outlines a few ideas, all based on the belief that learning consists of individuals' constructed meanings, and indicates how they influence leadership development.

- *“Learning is an active process* in which the learner uses sensory input and constructs meaning out of it. The more traditional formulation of this idea involves the terminology of the “active learner” (Dewey's term), stressing that the learner needs to do something; that learning is not the passive acceptance of knowledge which exists "out there" but that learning involves the learner engaging with the world.
- *People learn to learn as they learn.* Learning consists both of constructing meaning and constructing systems of meaning. For example, if we learn the chronology of dates of a series of historical events, we are simultaneously learning the meaning of a chronology. Each meaning we construct makes us better able to give meaning to other sensations that can fit a similar pattern.
- *The crucial action of constructing meaning is mental.* It happens in the mind. Physical actions and hands-on experience may be necessary for learning,

especially for children, but it is not sufficient; we need to provide activities which engage the mind as well as the hands. (Dewey called this “reflective activity”.)

- *Learning involves language.* The language we use influences learning. On the empirical level, researchers have noted that people talk to themselves as they learn. On a more general level, there is a collection of arguments, presented most forcefully by Vygotsky, that language and learning are inextricably intertwined.
- *Learning is a social activity* Our learning is intimately associated with our connection with other human beings, our teachers, our peers, our family as well as casual acquaintances, including the people before us or next to us at the exhibit. We are more likely to be successful in our efforts to educate if we recognise this principle rather than try to avoid it. Much of traditional education, as Dewey pointed out, is directed towards isolating the learner from all social interaction, and towards seeing education as a one-on-one relationship between the learner and the objective material to be learnt. In contrast, progressive education (to continue to use Dewey's formulation) recognises the social aspect of learning and uses conversation, interaction with others, and the application of knowledge as an integral aspect of learning.
- *Learning is contextual.* We do not learn isolated facts and theories in some abstract ethereal land of the mind separate from the rest of our lives: we learn in relation to what else we know, what we believe, our prejudices and our fears. On reflection, it becomes clear that this point is actually a corollary of the idea that learning is active and social. We cannot divorce our learning from our lives.
- *One needs knowledge to learn.* It is not possible to assimilate new knowledge without having some structure developed from previous knowledge to build on. The more we know, the more we can learn. Therefore, any effort to teach must be connected to the state of the learner and must provide a path into the subject for the learner based on that learner's previous knowledge.
- *It takes time to learn.* Learning is not instantaneous. For significant learning we need to revisit ideas, ponder them, try them out, play with them and use them. This cannot happen in the 5 to 10 minutes usually spent in a gallery (and certainly not in the few seconds usually spent contemplating a single museum object). If you reflect on anything you have learnt you soon realise that it is the

product of repeated exposure and thought. Even, or especially, moments of profound insight, can be traced back to longer periods of preparation.

- *Motivation is a key component in learning.* Not only is it the case that motivation helps learning, it is essential for learning. This idea of motivation is broadly conceived to include an understanding of ways in which the knowledge can be used. Unless we know "the reasons why", we may not be very involved in using the knowledge that may be instilled in us even by the most severe and direct teaching".

3.5. Learning as an aspect of Mentoring

Work place learning (Clutterbuck, 2005:2) has become prominent in workplaces that are characterised by doubt, change and uncertainty. The more tumultuous and difficult conditions become in today's work places, the more work challenges there are, the more people are motivated to give and receive help. People receive much of their learning through associations with other people. This therefore implies that associations are a major source of learning. In the context of this study, mentoring relationships are a source of learning. Clutterbuck (2005) further confirms that the most dominant learning is often provided by the mentor-mentee association, which provides both task learning and socio-emotional learning.

Learning is at the heart of the mentoring process and it is important that both mentor and mentee understand the learning process (McKimm et al., 2007). According to Kolb (1994), learning can be perceived as a cyclical process. He suggests that "an individual gains experience through undertaking an activity. He or she then needs to reflect on the experience and attempt to understand the experience through analysis and conceptualisation. The individual then makes choices based on analysing the implications of alternative options, decides on the next steps to take and undergoes another experience". Learning is thus cyclical and never ending. The process is constantly repeated (McKimm et al., 2007:12).

Hale (2000:223) stresses the value of taking into consideration the learning purpose (knowledge, skills or insights) when selecting the method of development and suggests that "mentoring is less appropriate in terms of skills development because there is a limitation in terms of which skills the mentor can identify". He proposes that

mentoring can be successful in developing knowledge but this will be restricted by the knowledge of the mentor. However, mentoring is viewed as a powerful way of assisting the mentee to gain insights. During mentoring, mentors and mentees are said to be involved in a developmental and learning relationship. Once a new principal arrives at a school, support systems such as mentoring and professional development should exist to help him or her progress as a leader and “available to lend assistance and guidance through challenging times” (Pan, Sun & Chow, 2011:8). In this study, mentoring is conceived as a leadership development initiative for educational leaders, principals and their SMT’s.

Mentoring is a reciprocal learning process in which the mentor and mentee work together towards the realisation of goals collaboratively defined and agreed upon. This study moves from the premise that during a properly constituted mentoring relationship, the mentor and the mentee both benefit from the learning process, and thus their learning becomes a reciprocal process. Fletcher (1998:117) suggests that “mentoring is a relationship with a potential for enabling mentor and mentee to mature and move forward, as the mentee develops teaching skills, the mentor can develop technical and counselling skills, which will enrich his or her professional development”. Msila (2012) notes that in many mentoring situations both the mentor and the mentee become learners during the mentoring process. Essentially mentoring is a process found within the dynamics of a professional and interpersonal relationship between a mentor and a mentee. The relationship can differ in its strength and dynamics (Ehrich, Hansford & Tennent, 2001).

Wong and Premkumar (2007) state that “mentoring is a learning process where helpful, personal and reciprocal relationships are built while focusing on achievement with emotional support being a key element”. Wong and Premkumar (2007) present the following three models that underpin the process of mentoring, namely, (i) “the *apprentice* model, where the mentee observes the mentor and learns; (ii) the *competency* model, where the mentor gives the mentee systematic feedback about performance and progress; and (iii) the *reflective* model, where the mentor helps the mentee become a reflective practitioner”.

It is on the basis of the above that this study reflects on the learning experiences of both mentors and mentees and particularly the level at which they reflect on their

own learning experiences within these relationships. Mentoring is without doubt one of the appropriate learning strategies which can be best conducted within a well-structured reflective practice. How this could be achieved is discussed in the next paragraph.

3.6. Development of Reflective Practice through Mentorship

Daloz (1999) advocates for the concept of development and believes in the mentor's function in guiding the learner on a voyage that is affected by his or her social environment, including family dynamics and social class. Daloz (1999) suggests that there are four important conditions in facilitating development (i) "the presence of the other, (ii) reflective discourse, (iii) a mentoring community and (iv) opportunities for committed action".

Daloz (1999) suggests that mentors can help mentees to develop as reflective practitioners by giving feedback informally throughout their relationship. This, he suggests, should be managed at a specific time when mentor and mentee have time and privacy to discuss the learning experiences and decide on action plans to follow. When the mentors give feedback to the mentees regularly and constructively it can stimulate learning. In the feedback sessions, key stages of the reflective process that can be taken care of, include;

- "an awareness of uncomfortable feelings and thoughts
- critical analysis, including attending to feelings
- development of a new perspective on the situation".

The basics for effective reflection during mentorship that are very important for facilitating the development of reflective practitioners include the following:

- *"Honesty and openness.* Gillings (2000) states that a commitment to self-enquiry and readiness to change practice are important if the individual is to get the most out of the process.
- *Self-awareness.* This is essential in the reflective process and implies that the individual needs to be well informed/apprised of his or her own character, including beliefs and values. Many models of reflective practice include self-awareness and questioning of beliefs, values and attitudes.

- *Willingness to change practice.* This is where new conceptual perspectives are reached in order to inform practice. If the mentee is not willing to change practice he or she will not gain the potential benefits from the process in terms of practice development in addition, advances will not be made and professional practice will not evolve”.

There are many similarities between reflective practice and mentorship, therefore mentees can make effective use of reflective practice as a learning tool within the context of mentoring.

3.7. Experience

According to Dewey (1938), experience refers to “an individual’s interaction with his or her external environment and is generally defined as events that occur in an individual’s life that are perceived by the individual”. Matsuo (2015:5) states that experience may support all learning, but it does not always lead to learning. That is to say, not all people learn in the same way from the same type of experience. An in-depth understanding of learning experientially is the focus of this study and therefore is conceptualised in the next paragraph.

3.8. Experiential Learning

“The primary source of learning to lead, to the extent that leadership can be learned is experience” (McCall, 2004:127).

The best-known theory advocating learning from experience is that of David Kolb (1984). According to McCauley and Brutus (1998:44), two basic beliefs underlie this theory: “people learn from immediate, here-and-now experience, and people learn differently; that is, according to their preferred learning styles”. Kolb proposes four primary learning styles; convergent, divergent, assimilative and accommodative. McCauley and Brutus (1998) also contend that these styles, “can be differentiated in terms of two processes that are central to learning: how experience is grasped (through concrete experience or abstract conceptualisation) and how experience is transformed into knowledge (by active experimentation or reflective observation)”. Kolb’s experiential learning theory posits that all four styles are vital for learning from experience but that personality, education, career choice and current environments

shape individuals so that they tend to rely heavily on one style. “Part of an individual’s development task is to learn to use all the styles in an integrative fashion” (McCauley, & Brutus, 1998).

Experiential learning happens when a conscientious participant “cognitively, affectively and behaviourally processes knowledge, skills and/ or attitudes in a learning situation characterised by a high level of active involvement” (Gentry, 1990:10). In addition, Kolb (1983) says that “extracting lessons from our experiences fosters development further”. Therefore, it is important not only to act, but to “observe” and “reflect” as well. Leadership development is superior when leaders take time to think intensely about their successful and unsuccessful actions (Brungardt, 1997:86).

This study is based on experiential learning as described by Kolb (1984) in his experiential learning theory. This theory explains learning in the following ways:

- *“Learning as a process.* This view is consistent with the way the study is structured and what it seeks to achieve.
- *Learning as a holistic process of adapting to the world that requires the integrated functioning of the total person.* This includes thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving, as well as interactions between the person and the environment.
- *Learning as a continuous process,* where new knowledge, changing existing ideas and perspectives, relearning, and integrating old and new ideas are important aspects of learning”.

Kolb’s (1984) four-stage learning cycle comprises two basic processes that allows learning from experience: (i) “grasping the experience, and (ii) transforming the experience” (Yeeng, Van Dyne & Ang, 2009:513).

Experiential learning, in its simplest form, means learning from experience or learning by doing. Lewis and Williams (1994:5) assert that “during the last decade experiential learning has moved from the periphery of education to the centre and is no longer supplemental to the acquisition of content”. They also contend that experiential approaches are viewed as fundamentals to consequential learning. An

elaborate discussion on the reasons for this paradigm shift is given below and the researcher maintains its relevance to the approach taken by the national Department of Education in its mentorship programme for educational leaders. Lewis and Williams (1994) claim that this shift has occurred owing to the following reasons or events:

- *“Dramatic changes in the conception of learning.* There has been a move away from behaviourist notions of teachers as purveyors of knowledge and learners as passive receivers. Current cognitive, humanistic, social and constructivist learning models stress the importance of meaning formation. Therefore, models of good practice in adult education must use learners’ previous experiences in order to enhance their current and future learning.
- *Unprecedented influx of adult learners in higher education.* Adult learners bring to the learning setting a wealth of prior experience and are eager to draw upon their background and previous learning in the classroom. Responsive teachers are able to capitalise on the prior experience of their students as a catalyst for new learning.
- *Increased demand for flexibility and the capacity to leverage previous knowledge and experience in new different ways.* Today, educators are being held accountable for what learners know and are able to do. The pressure for accountability has caused educators to design competency-based measures of learning and experiential techniques for assessing learner outcomes. Experiential approaches appear to be more effective in developing the skills that employers seek such as communication skills, the ability to work in teams and workplace literacy”.

“Experiential learning exists when a personally responsible participant cognitively, affectively and behaviourally processes knowledge, skills and/or attitudes in a learning situation characterised by a high level of active involvement” (Gentry, 1990:10). The critical components of experiential learning that are vital for the leadership development of mentees are, according to Gentry (1990), the following:

- *“Participative.* The mentee must be involved in the process of learning. In the context of this study, the process is mentoring. Experiential

learning is active rather than passive; that is, rather than listening to the mentors, mentees must do role plays, make decisions or analyse school-based problems.

- *Applied.* Experiences that occurs without guidance and adequate academic preparation may yield little insight into the general processes taking place (Gentry, 1990). Principals of schools who have occupied their positions for a period longer than five years will always claim to be possessing “experience” in their jobs. However, the way the experience is defined is problematic because it is based on the period spent in the position and a claim of knowledge of the job. The problem is what constitutes the experiences beyond the time-frame.
- *Interactive.* Mentoring provides an important opportunity for the mentees and their mentors to interact. Interaction can also be between the mentees themselves as well as between the mentors. The reciprocal nature of mentoring is because of the opportunity to interact. Learning experientially is an interactive process.
- *Whole-person emphasis.* Experiential learning can involve learning on the behavioural and affective dimensions as well as the cognitive dimension.
- *Contact with the environment.* The term “experience” implies a real-world contact. Principals who are being mentored should be given an opportunity to practise the new skills in their own schools. Just as businesses provide internships which involve actual work experience, aspiring principals should also be given an opportunity to be involved in the environment in which they will be working.
- *Structured exercise.* The experience should be structured and monitored. Mentors should ensure that they are on top of the situation in terms of the learning of their mentees. The programme should be such that there are practical exercises, as well as the journal recording of whatever progress or challenges are experienced. If mentors are not on top of the situation, the experiences gained or acquired by the mentees may be meaningless.
- *Evaluation of the experience.* Mentees need to have an opportunity to articulate their thoughts and feelings as to what the experience involves.

The perceptions of what is happening reside within the mentee, and accordingly these perceptions must be understood and articulated by the mentees”.

An expanded definition of experiential learning by Chapman, McPhee and Proudman (1995) also lists some characteristics that should be present in order to define an activity as experiential. I have chosen to add the following, which in my opinion adds value to the purpose of the study:

- *“The absence of excessive judgement.* The instructor (mentor) must create a safe space for students (mentees) to work through their own process of self-discovery.
- *The role of reflection.* Students should be able to reflect on their own learning, bringing “the theory to life” and gaining insight into themselves and their interactions with the world.
- *The presence of meaningful relationships.* One part of getting students to see their learning in the context of the whole world is to start by showing the relationships between learner to self, learner to the teacher, and learner to the learning environment”.

3.9. Characteristics of an Experiential Activity or Method

One of the important aspects that should be considered with respect to experiential activities and methods is their nature or the way they are carried out. In mentoring programmes context is important. There are a number of characteristics of experiential learning activities and Chapman et al. (1995:243) have this to say about an experiential learning activity:

Simple participation in a prescribed set of learning experiences does not make something experiential. The experiential methodology is not linear, cyclical, or even patterned. It is a series of working principles, all of which are equally important or must be present to varying degrees at some time during experiential learning. These principles are required no matter what activity the student is engaged in or where the learning takes place

The characteristics of experiential activities or methods include the following:

- *“Mixture of content and process.* There must be a balance between the experiential activities and the underlying content or theory.
- *Absence of excessive judgement.* The instructor must create a safe space for students to work through their own process of self-discovery.
- *Encouraging the big picture perspective.* Experiential activities must allow the students to make connections between the learning they are doing and the world. Activities should build in students the ability to see relationships in complex systems and find a way to work within them.
- *Engagement in purposeful endeavours.* In experiential learning, the learner is a self-teacher, therefore there must be “meaning for the student in the learning”. The learning activities must be personally relevant to the student.
- *The role of reflection.* Students should be able to reflect on their own learning, bringing “the theory to life” and gaining insight into themselves and their interactions with the world.
- *Creating an emotional investment.* Students must be fully immersed in the experience; not merely doing what they feel is required of them. The “process needs to engage the learner to a point where what is being learned and experienced strike a critical, central chord within the learner”.
- *The re-examination of values.* By working within a space that has been made safe for self-exploration, students can begin to analyse and even alter their own values.
- *The presence of meaningful relationships.* One part of getting students to see their learning in the context of the whole world is to start by showing the relationships between learner to self, learner to teacher, and learner to learning environment.
- *Learning outside one’s perceived comfort zones.* “Learning is enhanced when students are given the opportunity to operate outside of their own perceived comfort zone”. This does not just happen with regard to the physical environment, but also to the social environment. This could include, for instance, “being accountable for one’s actions and owning the consequences”.

The following discussion provides implications for the experiential learning theory within a mentoring programme.

3.10. Implications of Experiential Learning Theory for Mentoring

A well-structured mentoring process cannot succeed without hands-on experiential activities. Mentors should not provide solutions to mentees' problems but rather guide them towards finding self-designed solutions.

An elaborate discussion on the effect of cultural aspects and contextual aspects in the discussion of mentorship has been done, showing that there is a strong link or influence between mentoring and experiential learning; therefore, contextual and cultural aspects will affect both mentoring and experiential learning. McCauley and Brutus (1998), in their discussion on managers' learning styles during experiential learning, argue that of the many outside agents that have an effect on these learning styles, cultural background has an important influence. To test this, they cite a research study where 223 managers from twenty countries were assessed using the Learning Style Questionnaire (LSQ) designed by Honey and Mumford (1989) to distinguish between four learning styles: "theorist, pragmatist, activist and reflector". "Three broad cultural categories – East Africa, India, and the United Kingdom (UK) – were represented in the sample of managers participating in the study. The action scores were highest for managers from the UK and lowest for East African managers". The conclusion drawn was that "culture indeed plays an important role in managers' learning styles and it should consequently be considered within the aim and content of managerial development activities".

International literature reporting on the impact of managers' work-related experiences that should be considered here is that of McCauley and Brutus (1998). They focused on (i) "the way managers describe their previous developmental experiences in their careers, (ii) studies looking at the developmental power of managers' current jobs, and (ii) studies that examined the way transitions to new jobs or work roles affect subsequent development". Some of their key findings, which were influential in part because they were based on powerful stories from managers themselves and also relevant to the current study, are reported as follows:

- “The number of job challenges experienced by the managers was an important predictor of advancement into middle management. Although McCauley and Brutus’s (1998) study did not assess the degree to which managers were learning from their jobs, it does suggest that challenging job experiences play a critical role in managerial success. What it means in the context of this study is that educational leaders who experience problems in their schools stand a better chance of learning the most in terms of designing solutions to work-related problems.
- The degree of tacit knowledge about business management was found to be related to managerial success. Although the way in which managers acquire tacit knowledge has not been looked at closely, studies of this phenomenon support the notion that, in order to be successful, managers need to develop increasingly complex levels of expertise.
- On-the-job experiences are the primary source of learning and development for managers. This finding corroborates the findings of several adult development theorists who emphasise the workplace as a setting for continued moral, cognitive and interpersonal development in adulthood”.

3.11. The nature of Leadership Experience

It is important that the questions “What is leadership experience?” and “How does it differ from life experience?” be asked. There has always been a belief that leadership experience was a requirement in the appointment of principals in schools. Most advertisements will have a section emphasising this attribute. This clearly shows that leadership experience should play an important part in foreseeing future leadership development and performance. From a human resource perspective, “leadership experience plays a part in job interview success” (Tay, Ang & Dyne, 2006). In the educational set-up, especially in rural schools, this condition has not been easy to comply with, and yet some of the schools there are doing well. This raises the idea that it is in fact not always clear how and when leadership experience is important in the educational set-up.

As early as 1970, Fiedler concluded from several studies that “there was only a low correlation of .12 between supervisory experience and leadership performance”. Fiedler put forward two explanations to account for this counter-intuitive low

correlation. One was based on method, due to the narrow construct definition of experience. In other words, not all forms of experience that are helpful for foreseeing performance may have been captured. A practical or closer to being practical example could be when considering the prior leadership experience of mentors as school principals, an experience not similar to the current leadership demands faced by current principals, school success is more reliably predicted (Cannella & Rowe, 1995).

The next explanation offered by Fiedler (1970) was theoretical, and claimed that there were contingency factors at play which were not taken into account. In cases where job situations contain a succession situation, leader experience is no longer predictive of performance (Pfeiffer & Davis-Blake, 1986). In his work, Fiedler later provided an interesting twist to the concept of leader experience where he conceptualised experience as a form of over-learned behaviour that takes over higher cognitive processing when cognitive resources are scarce. Fiedler contended that one way to support the development of such over-learned behaviour is through training, in particular training that uses behavioural modelling focusing on learning and replication of required behaviours (Taylor, Russ-Eft & Chan, 2005). This study uses mentorship in the place of training and emphasises the importance of modelling.

3.12. Levels of Leadership Experience

In institutions where educational leadership is practised, it is important to examine the levels by which leadership experience is conceptualised. At the cluster level, leadership experience can be a shared phenomenon with the teachers. In such situations, principals can demonstrate learning by virtue of their membership in a larger collective (Edmondson, 1999). At the individual level, leadership experiences may be regarded as an “ipsative” process where the experiential perspective on adult learning assumes a vital interaction between the actor and the environment (Malinen, 2000).

universal to all levels of conceptualisation is an intra-personal perspective. It is at this level that the transformation of experience to knowledge occurs. In tracing the development of principals within mentorship, this study will look at and report on their learning experiences and development relating to these levels. The ability to transfer

knowledge in leaders has important consequences for leadership development and performance. Leaders need to be able to adapt and frequently learn so as to perform. The implicit assumption is that all forms of leadership experiences ,are in some ways “good experiences”. These experiences are studied in cyclical fashion as seen in Kolb’s experiential learning cycle. In line with the aims of this study, leadership efficacy and learning experiences are important and are discussed below.

3.13. Leadership Efficacy and Leadership Experience

Leadership efficacy is one’s beliefs in one’s abilities to perform as a leader. It is an efficiency belief specific to the field of leadership. According to Bandura (2000), “domain-specific efficacy beliefs such as leadership efficacy can be increased best by enactive mastery, followed by vicarious learning through role models, social persuasion and physiological arousal, of which the most effective is enactive mastery followed by vicarious learning. It is believed that while in these reciprocal relationships, mentors and their mentees will discover their leadership efficacy from their concrete experiences by recalling past enactments of successful experiences as a powerful source of vicarious learning, as a result of the opportunities for reviewing and learning new insights that may contribute to better performance. In mentorship, an opportunity is afforded to mentees to develop and improve self-awareness, an important attribute for leadership experience.

3.14. Leadership Self-Awareness

The leader who is aware of his or her self-concept is conscious of his or her identity as a leader and ensures its development over time. The following are the three domains which serve as the focus for what leaders become aware of, that is, their leader portrait, purpose, and paradigm (Sosik, 2001):

3.14.1. Leader portrait

This is the first component of a leader's self-construct as a leader. This domain is made up of the leader's perceptions of his or her own characteristics and qualities and the behaviours related to enacting leadership, which is composed of leadership attributes manifested through his or her behaviours. The leader's portrait is his or her image of him/herself as a leader, based on self-construal as well as feedback received from other people over time. This aspect answers questions such as who am I as a leader? and what are my strengths as a leader based on self-observation and other's opinions? To be most effective in certain styles of leadership, leaders need to understand their areas of strength and weakness, as perceived by others and from their own self-assessment (Sosik, 2001).

3.14.2. Leader purpose

Each leader has a purpose or motives that guide their leadership behaviour, in addition to their leader portrait and self-image. Depending on what a leader believes the purpose of leadership is and the purpose of their own leadership is, this purpose affects their decisions and behaviours as a leader (Sosik & Dworaskvsky, 1998).

3.14.3. Leadership paradigm

The term "paradigm" refers to the functioning assumptions about leadership, particularly regarding the relational aspect or social roles of leadership. Besides the personal virtues contained in the leader portrait and the motives contained in the leader purpose, the leadership paradigm contains information regarding such questions as, "What assumptions do I have about how effective leadership operates and how quality relationships are built between leaders and followers?" and "What principles currently underlie my actions as a leader?".

In conclusion, in light of the view of mentoring as a workplace learning and development initiative, and educational leaders as adults, it is important to reflect closely on how adults learn. Their learning from experience as leaders who are aware of their leadership efficacy, as well as their leadership self-knowledge coupled with the knowledge of the environment where they are operating, should include a reflection on how they learn and what principles and conditions facilitate their learning effectively. It should be noted that the leaders (principals) and their mentors

in the programme under review in this study are adults. The awareness of leadership potential and responsibilities and what influence it is likely to be characterised among adults. Mentors and mentees in this study were adults and therefore how adults learn was important to discuss.

3.15. Adult Learning

Views on adult learning have changed radically over the past few decades. Adult learning has been seen as “a practice of being freed from the oppression of being illiterate, a means of gaining understanding and skills, a way to satisfy learner needs, and a process of critical self-reflection that can lead to transformation (Cranton, 1994).

This study looked at adult learning in the work context. Besseches (1984, in McCauley & Brutus, 1998:39) points out that “although studies of adult development have sometimes considered the effects of major work events on development, the effects on development of the kinds of jobs an individual holds have for the most part been neglected”. In his work on cognitive development in adults, Besseches (1984 in McCauley & Brutus, 1998:39) clearly emphasised the value of challenges in the work environments for the development of more complex ways of thinking and referred to that as “dialectical thinking”.

Part of being an efficient mentor involves understanding the way adults learn best. Comparing them to children and teens, adults have special needs and wants as learners (Lieb, 1991). This is because adults have amassed a foundation of life experiences and knowledge that may include work based activities, family responsibilities and previous education. Therefore, mentors must sketch out their mentees’ experiences and knowledge relevant to their work, and recount theories and concepts to the participants and identify the value of their experience in learning.

Learning occurs within each individual as a recurrent process throughout their life and learn at different speeds, as a result it is normal for them to be anxious or nervous when faced with a learning situation. Malcolm Knowles, in Smith (2002:1), identified the following outcomes to be produced by adult learning:

- “*Adults should acquire a mature understanding of themselves. They should understand their needs, motivations, interests, capacities and goals. They*

should be able to look at themselves objectively and maturely. They should accept themselves and respect themselves for what they are, while striving earnestly to become better.

- *Educational leaders are helped through the mentorship programme to understand themselves, their strengths and their weaknesses.* This is the part of the self-reflection process that is important in knowing and understanding their own nature and accepting themselves.
- *Adults should develop an attitude of acceptance, love and respect towards others.* This is the attitude on which all human relations depend. Adults must learn to distinguish between people and ideas, and to challenge ideas without threatening people. Ideally, this attitude will go beyond acceptance, love and respect, to empathy and the sincere desire to help others
- *Adults should learn to react to the causes, not the symptoms, of behaviour.* Solutions to problems lie in their causes, not in their symptoms.
- *Adults should develop a dynamic attitude toward life.* They should accept the fact of change and should think of themselves as always changing. They should acquire the habit of looking at every experience as an opportunity to learn and should become skilful in learning from such experiences.
- *Adults should acquire the skills necessary to achieve the potential of their personalities.* Every person has capacities that, if realised, will contribute to the well-being of himself/herself and society. To achieve this potential requires skills of many kinds – vocational, social, recreational, civic, artistic, and the like
- *Adults should understand the essential values in the capital of human experience.* They should be familiar with the heritage of knowledge, the great ideas, the great traditions, of the world in which they live. They should understand and respect the values that bind men together.
- *Adults should understand their society and should be skilful in directing social change.* In a democracy the people participate in making decisions that affect the entire social order. It is imperative, therefore, that every factory worker, every salesman, every politician, every housewife, know enough about government, economics, international affairs and other aspects of the social order to be able to take part in them intelligently”.

The following assumptions about adult learners deserve mention here. These can be distinguished from the assumptions about child learners as presented by Knowles (1980):

- *“Self-concept.* As a person matures his self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being.
- *Experience.* As a person matures, he accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.
- *Readiness to learn.* As a person matures his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the development tasks of his social roles.
- *Orientation to learning.* As a person matures his time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem centeredness.
- *Motivation to learn.* As a person matures the motivation to learn becomes internal”.

In conclusion, I will argue for the case of work-based experience programmes, which are versions of experiential learning, specifically those based on Kolb’s idea of the experiential learning cycle. The researcher suggests that adults, possessing the above characteristics, should be afforded an opportunity to decide on the type of mentor who would contribute a great deal of learning to them. Without their active involvement, the design of work experience programmes has the potential of contribute to negative learning experiences. Their learning styles should be a major determinant in the programmes they will be engaged in and the level of experience of the mentors should not only be based on their work or content experiences, but also on the mentoring methodologies best suited for adult learners. Synergy in this area will enable adult learners to reflect critically on their learning and the learning skills necessary for their effective learning.

3.16. Reflection

Reid (1993) defines reflection as “a process of reviewing an experience of practice in order to describe, analyse, evaluate and so inform learning about practice”. If this process involves describing, analysing and evaluating experiences, it therefore implies that it is a prerequisite for any learning activity. Furthermore, in the programme the study is focusing on, it means mentors and mentees cannot do without reflection. To maximise learning through reflection, mentors and mentees need to find themselves within the experiences and investigate available theories, knowledge and experiences to understand their own experiences in diverse ways. Boyd and Fales (1983:100) claim as follows:

Reflection is the core difference between whether a person repeats the same experience several times becoming highly proficient at one behaviour, or learns from experience in such a way that he or she is cognitively or affectively changed. Critical reflection is thus viewed as transformational learning which can happen either gradually or from a sudden or critical incident and alter the way people see themselves and the world.

Schön (1987), an advocate of the reflective practitioner movement, suggests that “the key to development for teachers lies in their ability to reflect on their own learning”.

Mezirow, in his book *Transformative learning* (1991), suggests that “reflection on experience and particularly critical reflection are central to learning”. He also contends that “transformative learning has become one of the most influential ideas in the field of adult learning and development to emerge in the past twenty years”. Reflection is used at different stages of learning in a variety of types of experiential learning, reflecting-on-action, transformative learning, professional development and others. “People who have practiced reflection have considered and emphasised “how” the process is used and facilitated, rather than the “process” of reflection itself” (Panda, 2004:68–69). Mentoring as a professional and leadership development initiative should be mindful of the fact that reflection is more than a technical or organisational analysis of problems. Reflection should also consider the social, political and cultural considerations in the same way as is expected of mentoring relationships.

According to Wilkinson (1996) reflection is an active process whereby the professional (i.e. the educational leader in the context of this study) can gain an understanding of how historical, social, cultural and personal experiences have contributed to professional knowledge and practice. Soleil (2014:74) states that “reflection allows learning to pass through many stages on the way to acquiring a deep and thoughtful knowing and also that this is where a learner integrates past knowledge with new information”. Soleil (2014) presents a model of reflection that shows that reflective learning involves mind, body and spirit and an acknowledgement that lived experience is integral to the transfer of information into knowledge, a discussion which is central to the purpose of this study.

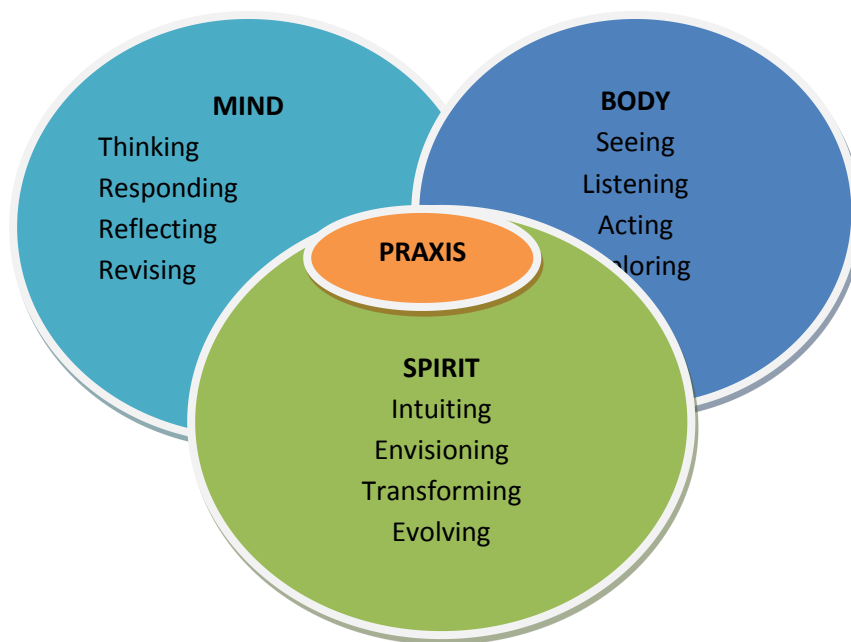


Figure 3.1: Model of reflective learning: Extracted from Soleil (2014) p.78

The model of reflective learning (see Fig. 3.1) and its contents are addressed in the interview questions which sought to discover how the mind, body and spirit were involved in the programme, as well as to discover how the participants felt before selection and after selection for the programme up to what they intend doing after the programme.

3.16.1. Reflective Practice as Experiential Learning

Reflective practice, according to Osterman and Kottkamp (1993), is located within the older tradition of experiential learning, as well as the more recently defined perspective of situated cognition. Reflective practice is not a new concept; Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985, in Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993) stated 28 years ago that it involves the individual and his or her experiences, advancing to a new conceptual viewpoint or understanding. They included the element of learning, as well as involvement of the self, to define reflective practice as a forum of response of the learner to experience (Boud et al. 1985, in Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). Hickcox (2010:128) briefly discusses the four processes involved in experiential learning, emphasising reflection and suggesting that answers to questions posed could best be kept in a journal.

- *“Having a concrete experience.* This experience can be anything that potentially relates to the content of a discipline. Included here are such diverse things as participating in a laboratory experiment, working in a community organisation, and mentoring children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Overall, the experience is received from and framed by the teacher or the organisation.
- *Reflecting on those experiences.* Thinking about the experience. Replaying the entire experience or particular aspects of it back in our mind’s eye. This may involve listening, thinking, speaking, reading, or writing”.

Critical questions:

What events occurred? What was I doing? What were other people doing? How did events relate to each other?

- *Conceptualising the experience.* Here discipline-related ideas, concepts, and principles used to understand the experience. Essentially a personal model of what transpired is developed.

Critical questions:

What concepts and principles in this field help me to understand what happened?
What do my reactions say about my attitudes and values? What emotions was I experiencing?

- *Testing the model or theory: The practical applications of what was learned is considered*

The following section of the discussion will look into the role that reflection can play in the educational leadership development”.

3.16.2. The Process of Reflection

Jordi (2011) captures this process by referring to the work of John Dewey who conceptualized reflection as “a form of critical inquiry into “primary experience ” that is necessary for cognitive “meaning-making” and for testing the validity of assumptions”. Our understanding of primary experience is that of the initial and spontaneous learning which happens on a daily basis and taking place everywhere an individual is. It consists of all what happens in our lives whether planned or unplanned and forms the basis of our learning process. The learning process was conceptualised by David Kolb in the 1970s and 1980s when he developed his famous “learning cycle , which saw reflective observation as being a stage in the human learning process at which we step back to understand and conceptualize our experience”. Kolb’s learning cycle has been adapted into various forms of an “Action Learning Cycle” or the “Action Learning Spiral ” and is widely used in many organizational and community action-learning and participatory research processes” (Jordi, 2011). The reflection process as tabled in the Gibbs’s cycle of reflection involves the six stages below:



Stage	Action
Stage 1. Description of the event	Describe in detail the event you are reflecting on. Include, for example, where you were; who else was there; what you were doing; what was the context of the event; what happened; what was your part in this; what part/s did other people play; what was the result.
Stage 2. Feelings	At this stage try to recall and explore the things that were going on inside your head, i.e. why does this event stick in your mind? Include, for example: How you were feeling when the event started; what were you thinking about at the time; how did it make you feel; how did other people make you feel; how did you feel about the outcome of the event; what do you think about it now?
Stage 3. Evaluation	Try to evaluate or make a judgement about what has happened. Consider what was good about the experience and what was bad about the experience or didn't go so well.
Stage 4. Analysis	Break the event down into its component parts so they can be explored separately. What went well; what did you do well; what did others do well; what went wrong or did not turn out as it should have done; in what way did you or others contribute to this?
Stage 5. Conclusion	You now have a lot of information on which to base your judgement. It is here that you are likely to develop insight into



	<p>your own and other people's behaviour in terms of how they contributed to the outcome of the event. Remember the purpose of reflection is to learn from an experience. During this stage you should ask yourself what you could have done differently.</p>
Stage 6. Action plan	<p>Plan what you would do if you encountered the event again. Would you act differently or would you be likely to do the same? How will this incident affect your future practice? What additional knowledge and skills do you need to develop?</p>

Table 3.1: Gibbs's cycle of reflection as clarified by David Stonehouse (2011)

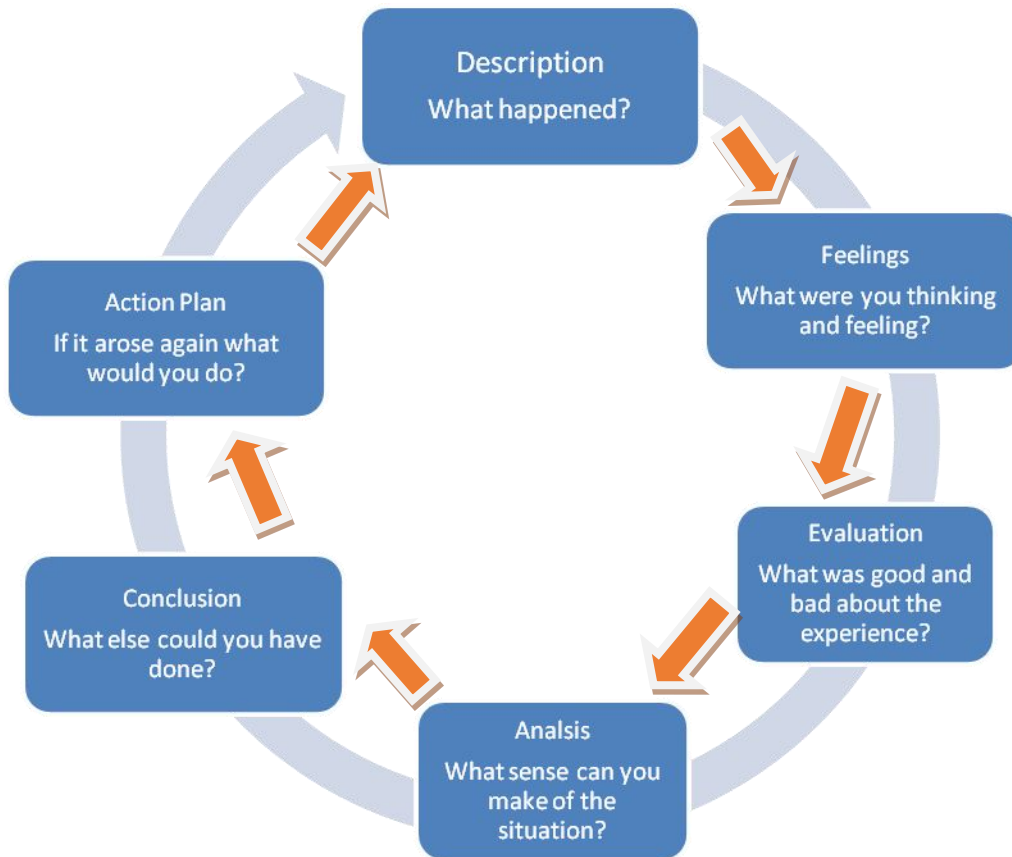


Figure 3.2: Models of reflection: Gibbs's reflective cycle

The reflective process in this study plays an important role by providing the prerequisite for knowledge creation. This process has as its focus the reflective process that principals engaged in during the mentoring process. As previously stated, principals in the programme were expected to keep a reflective journal in which their learning experiences and personal and professional growth were recorded. Boud (2001:9) states that “journal writing can be viewed through many different lenses: as a form of self-expression, a record of events, or a form of therapy”. Journal writing, Boud (2001:9) contends, “is a vehicle for learning that is used in formal courses, professional practice, or any form of informal learning”. The reflective journals that were kept by the principals were scrutinised and the information obtained from them was analysed and compared to interview data.

The data sought from these journals covered by the following areas, as proposed by Boud (2001:9-10)

- “to deepen the quality of learning in the form of critical thinking or developing
- to enable learners to understand their own learning process
- to increase active involvement in learning and personal ownership of learning
- to enhance professional practice or the professional self in practice”.

The journals were required to include a certain amount of self-reflection, which is important for self-directed leadership development. These journals also contained a situational analysis of the principal’s school in the form of a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis. Self-reflection as part of the broader reflective practice is important because it influences and directs learners towards techniques and strategies for improving their leadership development. According to Nesbit (2012:206), leadership development entails the following:

A change, evolution, or growth from a current level of performance to a capacity for more complex and sophisticated performance, gaining insight into the nature of a leader’s development needs, is a key process within the development process. Leadership development requires developing self-awareness of competency strengths and deficits as a primary focus in a leader’s self-development.

Self-reflection, as considered by (Dewey, 1933), is an “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (Nesbit, 2012:210). Kolb’s conclusion relating to reflection is that it is projected to examine one’s past and current experiences in order to function more effectively in the future. Reflective analysis for personal development can be represented by four distinct stages as proposed by Daudelin (1996, in Nesbit, 2012:210):

1. “Reflective thinking begins with efforts to describe the events, people and actions being focused on. This stage seeks to produce a relatively objective account of what happened, as well as descriptions of the actions of the people involved.
2. The next stage is the analysis on the problem. In this stage one questions why things happened as they did and why one acted the way one did.

3. The evaluative hypothesis stage arises from the analysis about how one could better handle the event or act differently. In this stage it would be important to make judgements about the significance of insights in terms of their relevance to performance goals and the leadership of others. At this stage, reflection engages leaders in thinking about how their current and potentially new actions would affect their leadership of others.
4. The fourth stage of reflective analysis is the “planning” stage, which requires the leader to consider “what now” for their development. In this stage, leaders need to judge their willingness to deal with their development evaluations and insights”.

The study’s main emphasis rests on these stages as discussed above. The participants are expected to describe their learning experiences as well as the role played by their mentors and to focus on the events and actions that led to their learning and development as educational leaders. The second stage occurs when participants describe the challenges they encountered before the programme as well as those experienced in the programme itself. The principals are also afforded an opportunity to say how they would do things differently if they were in the position of mentors. To complete the requirements of the last stage, both mentors and principals are offered an opportunity to indicate how they intended doing things going forward. In this stage the willingness and the actual learning of the participants are observed in terms of active experimentation, as discussed by Kolb (1984).

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology of this study. This outline was structured around the research design, data collection and data analysis, population sampling, and the measures used to address ethical issues. In view of the fact that the research process required that there be an engagement at some stage with theoretical perspectives, this chapter begins by discussing the theoretical stance, outlining the ontological and epistemological positions that influenced the approach of the study. The purpose of this chapter was also to outline the process of gathering and analysing data and to establish patterns, consistencies and meanings in the analysis stage, which ultimately resulted in the study findings.

4.2. Theoretical stance

The ontological and epistemological positions of this study and how they influenced the methodology of the research were important as they provided the study's standpoint. Crotty (1998) suggests that the theoretical stance adopted by the researcher, the methodology and the methods used, and the researcher's view of the epistemology are all interrelated. The study followed an interpretative phenomenological approach, which asserts that natural reality and social reality are different and require different kinds of methods. Creswell, Hanson, Plano and Morales (2007:238) states "that researchers should begin their inquiry process with philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), how they know what is known (epistemology), the inclusion of their values (axiology), the nature in which their research emerges (methodology) and their writing structures".

4.3. Ontology

Ontology is the study of being, that is, the nature of existence and what constitutes reality. "Ontology embodies understanding *what is*, while epistemology embodies the understanding of *what it means to know*" (Creswell et al. 2007).

From an ontological position this study was interested in the nature of the social world of the mentors and their mentees as they engaged in the experiential learning process through reflective practices within a mentoring process. The researcher looked at the participants “being” or “what it is” they are and are becoming as they interacted with their mentors. That was why it was important to understand the relationships between the mentors and their mentees. This research aimed at discovering the way the participants’ learning experiences were reflective of Kolb’s experiential learning cycle, and also what their interpretations were of their worlds. It was also important to observe this from the mentors’ point of view, as they were unfamiliar with the environments in which the schools were situated. Therefore, it was important to ascertain what impact their presence had on these schools and, indeed, vice versa, as well as what the mentors became after being immersed in those strange environments.

Bryman (2008) contends that ontology is the way in which people being studied, understand and interpret their social reality which was important in this kind of a study. Since this study was concerned with the social reality from the participants’ perspective, an interpretive ontological approach to reality underpinned the nature of this study and set it out to understand the principals and their mentors’ learning worlds. In so doing, it recognized that the participants’ view of human nature was subjective and a personal experience. An interpretive approach allowed the exploration and understanding of mentorship from the participants’ perspective, in terms of which reality was subjective as it was their meaning of events which was important. Coupled with the methodology for this study, the phenomenological approach allowed this study to find out how participants viewed the phenomenon being experienced from different viewpoints to that of the researcher. In complying with this theoretical stance, the questions asked included responses on how they saw themselves as educational leaders after the mentoring programme. They were also required to give their own interpretations of their learning experiences and what their acquired knowledge meant to them. The main objective of this was to discover who they really were before the programme and what they turned out to be during and after the mentorship programme.

4.4. Epistemology

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), 'Epistemology' is concerned with the nature of knowledge and how it is obtained. It is the theory of how we know what we know. There are a number of beliefs that underlie social research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), the first is a positivist view, where knowledge is something which is acquired, while the second is an interpretive paradigm. This study was rooted on the second one, the interpretive paradigm, which according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), focuses on the subjective experience and personal nature of individual's knowledge. Bryman, (2001) contend that knowledge is something that is personally experienced. Hofer (2000:379) suggests that "epistemological beliefs have been shown to influence comprehension, study strategies and academic performance. Accordingly, the participants' comprehension and study strategies were evaluated in terms of their intentions and expectations from the programme. As these aspects were very important in terms of how they prepared themselves for the learning processes, knowledge of the relevance of their learning experiences from the mentorship programme and how they interpreted them phenomenologically allowed the researcher to understand how they understood their learning and also what was learned and how it was learned.

This section focused on what participants in the mentoring programme have personally experienced and interpreted as knowledge during the mentorship programme. Also of importance for this study was the way this knowledge was acquired and how it could be transferred to others, even in different contexts. The study sought to find out how and what, according to the participants, was learned during the programme. Accordingly, it was important to investigate the adult learning perspective in particular, as adults are perceived as being responsible for and also directing their own learning. This therefore meant that participants played a role in learning whatever they learned and deciding not to learn whatever they chose not to learn. This stance allowed them to describe the phenomenon under study independently of their own perspective and to attach whatever meaning they saw fit.

4.5. Research Design

Cooper and Schindler (1998:130) define a research design as “the plan and structure of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to the research question”. They (Cooper et al., 1998:130) state that this plan “is the overall scheme or programme of the research, outlining what the researcher will do”. This study adopted a qualitative interpretive phenomenological design, the purpose of which was to find out the participants’ understandings, interpretations and experiences of the phenomena, such as mentoring, experiences, learning and reflection. Qualitative research was appropriate in answering questions such as “ what is happening and how” it is happening, as stated by Bratlinger (2005). The interview questions were so structured that they reveal the participants understanding of these phenomenon in their daily lives, and what their interpretations of these phenomenon entailed. The semi-structured interviews allowed for deeper probes and allowed respondents to express themselves without restrictions and this was an advantage in getting to know their thoughts around the mentoring process. The understanding of the phenomenon of mentorship in this study was about the definition or definitions of the phenomenon which participants had prior and after their encounter with mentoring. “Interpretation” of the phenomenon meant to uncover the resultant experiences with the phenomenon and what it meant to them. Mentorship and leadership development could be understood differently by different people in different contexts. The same understanding was to be expected from this study

Mouton (2001:55) also defines a research design as “a plan or blueprint of how one intends conducting the research”. Mouton (2001:55) also points out the difference between a research design and research methodology, which he argues have always been confused by researchers. This is how he differentiates it:

Table 4.1: Difference between research design and research methodology

RESEACH DESIGN	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
“Focuses on the end product: What kind of study is being planned and what kind of result is aimed at?”	“Focuses on the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used”.



<p>“Point of departure = research problem or question”.</p>	<p>“Point of departure = Specific tasks (data collection or sampling) at hand”.</p>
<p>“Focuses on the logic of research: What kind of evidence is required to address the research question adequately?”</p>	<p>“Focuses on the individual (not linear) steps in the research process and the most “objective” (unbiased) procedures to be employed).</p>

Adapted from Mouton (2001)

4.6. Qualitative research

This study adopted and defined qualitative research as “a systematic approach to understanding the qualities or the essential nature of a phenomenon within a particular context” (Brantlinger, Jiminez, Pugach & Richardson, 2005:195). This adoption was appropriate as the study looked at the qualities and the essential nature of mentorship, reflection and experiential learning as phenomena in an educational leadership development initiative of the Mpumalanga Department of Education. Sandelowski (2000:336) provides one of the basic foundations in which this study subscribed, which was that “researchers conducting qualitative studies want to collect as much data as they can that will allow them to capture all the elements of an event”. The study depended largely on every bit of information from the participants and also information from the contexts participants were working, especially the principals. A qualitative research method was appropriate for the study as it accorded the researcher an opportunity to answer the research questions using the interpretations mentors and mentees have ascribed to their learning experiences.

According to Brantlinger *et al.* (2005:196), “qualitative research can be done for a multitude of purposes including the production of descriptive or procedural knowledge; that is, answering questions about “What is happening?” and “Why or how it is happening? and also that qualitative research explores the attitudes, opinions and beliefs of the individuals or participants involved or affected by a particular situation or phenomenon”. It was for these reasons that qualitative research was relevant for this study, which aimed to study the participants’ attitudes, opinions and beliefs regarding the phenomenon being study.

Qualitative research shares the theoretical assumptions of the interpretive paradigm, which is based on the notion that social reality is created and sustained through the subjective experience of people involved in communication (Matveev, 2002). McMillan and Schumacher (1993) suggest the following in this regard:

Qualitative research is based on a naturalistic-phenomenological philosophy that views reality as a multi-layered, interactive and shared social experience interpreted by individuals. Most descriptions and interpretations are portrayed with words rather than numbers.

In this study, the qualitative research method implied the following aspects, as proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998:9):

- *“The need to get out into the field to discover what is really going on.* This prompted the researcher to go personally to the participants in the areas where they were working. This was possible and practicable with the principals who took part in the programme.
- *The relevance of theory grounded in data to the development of a discipline as a basis for social action.* There are many theories that explain how learning takes place. Although learning was one of the phenomena being studied, Kolb’s experiential learning theory was most relevant as it was seen as being more applicable to the mentoring programme involved in this study.
- *The complexity and variability of phenomena and human action and the belief that people are actors who take an active role in responding to problematic situations.* Mentoring, experience, learning and reflection are studied as interdependent phenomena which depend on participants’ actions, as well as their relationships, expectations and interpretations. The theory provides a concrete basis for responses and actions relating to problems (concrete experiences, abstract conceptualisation, reflective observation and active experimentation).
- *The realisation that persons act on the basis of meaning.* The findings of this study depended entirely on the meanings participants attached to the experiences as well as the mentoring programme itself as a leadership development programme.

- *The understanding that meaning is defined and redefined through interaction.* The researcher's interaction with the participants through the semi-structured interviews assisted in the abstraction of relevant information; this indicated what the participants actually meant by their statements and inferences.
- *Sensitivity to the evolving and unfolding nature of events (process), an awareness of the interrelationships among the conditions (structures), action (process) and consequences.* The study attempted to involve the sensual stimuli of the participants' right from the beginning of the programme (selection) and try to determine the feelings that were evoked during that stage, thus continuously attempting to be inductive in a sense throughout the interviews. This was done to link the events to the actual learning as was experienced by the participants".

Mantlana (2006:123), writing about what qualitative researchers see, provides the following explanation that was central to the nature of this research: "The object of the study of the world as defined, experienced or constituted by investigating people."

4.7. Attributes of Qualitative Research

"The key to understanding qualitative research lies in the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world and that meanings reside in social practice, and not just in the heads of individuals" (Dey, 1993:12). "The world, or reality, is not the fixed, single, agreed upon or measurable phenomenon such as it is assumed to be in positivist quantitative research" (Merriam, 2002:3). Merriam further adds that qualitative research is about qualitative phenomena; that is, phenomena recounting to or involving quality or kind. Qualitative research also investigate the attitudes, opinions and values of participants in relation to a phenomenon. These attributes were covered in the interview questions and, when responded to, provided clarity on the research questions about the learning experiences of participants, as well as their interpretations of the experiences and phenomena being studied.

4.8. Advantages of Qualitative Research

In the context of this study, adopting a qualitative methodology was to the advantage of the researcher in answering the research question. This methodology applied semi-structured interview questions in order to ascertain the assumptions and experiences of the participants. This method also assisted in revealing how participants made sense of their lives, what they said they believed, what they did, how they expressed their feelings and the explanations they had for their feelings and knowledge. During the mentoring relationship, mentors and mentees were expected to make sense out of their experiences and in doing so created their own reality. They were then able to share these experiences and realities.

“A qualitative research methodology benefits this study since it is inductive, meaning that it is oriented towards unearthing and process, has high validity, is less concerned with generalisability, and is more concerned with a deeper understanding of the research problem in its unique context” (Tuli, 2010:100). The intention of qualitative research “is to scrutinize a social situation or relations by allowing the researcher to enter the world of others and try to accomplish a holistic rather than a reductionist understanding” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research “focuses on describing and understanding phenomena within their naturally occurring context, aiming at developing an understanding of the meanings imparted by the participants” (Maree, 2007:51). The other important use of a qualitative method is that “description is an integral feature, and such description provides depth and meaning to the outcome of the study”.

4.8.1. Phenomenological Research

The purpose of the phenomenological approach was to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the mentors and the mentees in a situation, in this case, mentoring relationships. This was done by gathering deep information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant observation, and presenting it from the perspective of the research participant (Lester, 1999). Phenomenological research methods are particularly effective in bringing to the forefront the experiences and views of individuals from their own perspectives, and therefore challenging structural or normative beliefs (Lester, 1999).

“Phenomenology offers a qualitative method of inquiry that can be applied to a myriad of experiences. On a grand time scale, phenomenology offers the researcher the ability to examine the different perspectives of participants of lengthy experiences such as those who survived the holocaust” (Bound, 2011:1). However, phenomenology also “offers the researcher the ability to look at the collective experiences of participants as they narrate to a single point in time such as is the case with mentoring”.

Boud, (2011) contend that phenomenology begins with an experience or circumstance and, through the narration of participants of either a shared single incident or shared circumstance, investigates the effects and perceptions of that experience and also that. phenomenologist distinguish “phenomena” (the perceptions or appearances from the point of view of a human) from “noumena” (what things really are) (Boud, 2011:1). Put in simpler terms, “the phenomenological method interprets an experience by listening to the different stories of the participants and investigate the phenomena through the subjective eyes of the participants”. Phenomenology is focused on the subjectivity of reality, continually pointing out the need to understand how humans view themselves and the world around them (Bound, 2012).

All of the phenomena that were studied in this research were a suitable starting point for reflecting on the participants’ learning experiences; that is, mentoring, leadership and experiential learning. In terms of a phenomenological approach, phenomenology, according to Goulding (2005:301), “as both a philosophy and methodology, has been used in organisational and consumer research in order to develop an understanding of complex issues that may not be immediately implicit in surface responses”. As one of the major influences on phenomenological enquiry, Schultz proposed that “individuals approach the life world with a stock of knowledge made up of common-sense constructs and categories that are essentially social in nature” (Goulding, 2005:301). It was also important from an interpretive approach to seek out modalities and fluctuations in any person’s ways of thinking, and Conroy (2003:3) suggests that “the paradigm shift which is vital to exposing a “hermeneutic turn” looks for shifts that move the research from description to interpretation, from epistemology to ontology, from knowing that to knowing how”. This viewpoint was central to the purpose of this

study as it positioned the main research question in terms of a “hermeneutic turn” and exploited the way participants interpreted their experiences and the patterns of their understandings.

In response to the research question, which sought to understand how the mentors’ and mentees’ experiences were reflective of the experiential learning theory as espoused by Kolb, I wish to draw on Conroy’s (2003:3–4) discussion of interpretive phenomenology. Conroy maintains that:

“we are born into a world that existed before us, and implicitly pick up or assume the meanings the world has taken on (Past), interact with the world as tempered by the past and our own experience with the world (Present), and project what we will do and be in the future (Future). Interpretation is an on-going and evolving task. It is an interactive act because persons form an integral part of a communal world, and do not exist as separate entities; the world and the individual co-constitute meanings or understandings (co-constitution). Our meanings are not constructed as individual thinkers without relation to other people; we are always in relation with others. Our understanding and interpretation of the world is co-constituted and synergistic”.

The above assertion fitted well in the learning cycle as detailed by Kolb because of the movement from the past, to the present and the future, as well as the construction of knowledge through reflection. These processes depend on the interaction one has with the world, which forms the basis of all interpretations of events around him or her. Adding an interpretive dimension to phenomenological research enabled it to be used as a basis for practical theory, thus allowing it to inform, support or challenge policy and action (Lester, 1999).

4.9. Scope of the Study

The study was conducted in Mpumalanga province of South Africa. Its scope was limited to the Nkangala Education District. The greater part of this district is rural and consist largely of the former Kwa-Ndebele homeland areas, with a few towns and townships which were previously part of the old Transvaal provincial areas. Owing to the rural nature of the district, few good teachers and principals are keen to take up positions in these schools, a phenomenon common in the other rural districts of

Mpumalanga. This study was limited to the school principals who took part in a mentorship programme introduced by the Department of Basic Education in 2007 and offered in conjunction with the programme offered by the University of Pretoria. The study did not make a distinction between newly appointed and experienced principals but targeted all the principals as per the sampling procedure adopted. The mentors in the study included only those who were selected and appointed by the University of Pretoria – the institution that conducted the programme.

4.10. Population Sampling

Smith (2012) states that the main concern in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is giving full appreciation to each participant's account (case) and, for this reason, samples in IPA studies are usually small, which enabled a detailed and very time-consuming case-by-case analysis. The population sample for this study comprised five principals and/or school leaders who were the mentees and the five mentors who mentored them. The mentors were those who were recruited and assigned to the mentees by the University of Pretoria. The researcher ensured that there was pairing of the mentor and mentee for accurate data collection and matching purposes. The principals (mentees) were selected from different schools in the Nkangala education district in Mpumalanga and had participated in the two-year School Leadership Mentorship programme offered by the Department of Basic Education in partnership with the University of Pretoria. These participants were purposively selected for this research because they had experienced the mentoring programme as either mentors or mentees. Since the research was based in the Mpumalanga province, only those principals employed by the Mpumalanga Department of Education were selected. This sampling strategy was backed up by the fact that the required information could not be obtained from principals and mentors who were not involved in the mentorship programme. Maxwell (2008) justifies the use of purposive sampling, stating "firstly that it can be used to achieve representativeness or typicality of the settings, individuals or activities selected and, secondly, purposeful sampling can be used to capture adequately the heterogeneity in the population". In this study, purposive sampling was used to ensure representativeness. In addition, also in the interests of representativeness, gender representation in the mentors and principals was ensured.

4.11. Data Collection

Data collection, or gathering, was influenced by the main research question, namely, “How were the learning experiences of mentors and mentees reflective of the experiential learning theory as espoused by Kolb (1984)?” This question required that participants to describe their learning experiences during the mentoring relationships. The research also aimed to investigate how and what these experiences were, in line with the four modes of experiential learning as espoused by Kolb. The four modes to be traced were (i) concrete experience, (ii) abstract conceptualisation, (iii) reflective observation and (iv) active experimentation. This was made possible by choosing semi-structured interviews as a way of gathering more information from the participants; the use of semi-structured interviews meant that the participants were not restricted by fixed questions. In addition to the data gathering process, the reflective journals or portfolios were examined to explore the participants’ recorded stories and experiences relating to their development as educational leaders, both as professionals and as individuals. Furthermore, the situations in the schools before and after the mentorship programme were of interest to the study in evaluating the impact of the mentors’ interventions.

During data collection, principals were visited at the schools where they were working. This gave the researcher an opportunity to confirm some of the principals’ responses, especially the question that requires responses on the physical changes in the schools that came about as a result of the programme. The advantage of this was that the physical environment of the school provided more information about the development of the school before interviewing the principal. The fact that the researcher personally collected the data helped to get a sense of the whole situation environmentally, as well as the confidence level of the principals.

4.11.1. Interviews

During the interview process, which was the first step in collecting data, seven principals and seven mentors were interviewed randomly without mentor and mentee matching. The aim was to provide the study with a baseline or pilot study leading to the actual matching of five mentors with their mentees (principals). This strategy enabled the researcher to cover gaps in terms of the type of questions that were expected to provide information required to answer the research question. In this

research study, I present the data obtained from the five principals together with that obtained from their mentors as pairs.

“The interview is a key tool in the armoury of the qualitative researcher; however, conducting interviews is a complex and demanding task” (Coll & Chapman, 2000:5). In order to gain an understanding of the meanings credited to particular experiences in the real world, qualitative researchers utilize data collection methods that are helpful to collecting the verbal data produced by an interview (Coll & Chapman, 2000:5).

Cassell and Symon (2004:11) define a qualitative research interview as “an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena”. This is in line with a phenomenological approach where the stress is on trying to understand the beliefs and knowledge of participants. This method was relevant for this study as it attempted to find the meanings or interpretations interviewees had about the phenomena, which were, experience, reflection, learning and mentoring. This form of interviewing allowed the researcher and participants to engage in a conversation where initial questions are modified in the light of the participants’ responses and the researcher was able to probe interesting and important areas as they arose (Smith, 2007:57). This approach was relevant for this study in investigating the mentors’ and mentees’ relationships as they unfolded during the mentoring process, as well as their learning experiences, because it allowed for open discussions thus establishing a rapport with the respondents.

According to Cassell and Symon (2004:11), “qualitative research interviews generally have the following characteristics: (i) a low degree of structure imposed by the interviewer; (ii) a preponderance of open questions; and (iii) a focus on specific situations and action sequences in the world of the interviewee, rather than abstractions and general opinions”. It was therefore appropriate for this study to gather data in this fashion and to choose semi-structured questions for the interviews. Since the data collection method was qualitative in nature, “it was not based on a formal schedule of questions to be asked word for word in a set order but used an interview guide which allowed for probing questions which elicited greater details from participants” (Cassell & Symon, 2004:11).

The principals were interviewed in their offices at their schools. The environment in all the schools where the interviews took place was conducive to the process as minimal disruptions were experienced in the schools. The principals were encouraged to relax and to be part of the investigation process, as well as to ask questions whenever they felt inclined. The ice-breaking question helped to set the scene for the interviews. Smith (2012) refers to this question as “a warm-up discussion which is necessary to reduce the interviewee’s tension and get him or her ready to discuss more sensitive or personal issues”.

The mentors were given an opportunity to choose where they wanted to be interviewed. This strategy of interviewing participants wherever they choose and felt comfortable was expected to yield positive results in putting them at ease. Every effort was made to make them feel free and relaxed, and to speak their minds about everything relating to the programme. The interviewer ensured that the responses did not deviate from the interview questions by constantly asking probing questions that directed the respondents to the core issues being examined.

4.11.2. Semi-structured Interviews

Coll and Chapman (2000:5) refer to this approach “as the general interview guide or semi-structured interview approach and add that “it is more structured in nature than the informal conversational interview and involves outlining a set of issues that are to be explored before interviewing begins”. They also confirm that “it does not necessarily have a set order to the questions, and the specific wording used varies from participant to participant”.

The phenomena under study investigated from both the mentors’ and mentees’ perspective and thus explored in detail the way participants made sense of their personal and social world (Smith, 2007:53).

4.11.3. Reflective Journals

One of the core modules in the mentoring programme was the ‘development of a portfolio to demonstrate school leadership and management competence’ (DBE, 2007). This module required school principals “as they work through the programme to keep a reflective journal and prepare a portfolio of evidence of growth

and achievements” (DBE, 2007). The analysis of these reflective journals for this study was necessitated by the fact that the programme in which the mentors and principals took part was offered through “a practice-based part-time model” so that principals could work and learn at the same time (DBE,2007). This study was interested in exploring evidence of their growth and achievements as a result of the mentoring activities and experiences. Such evidence related to the learning produced during the execution of their regular school leadership and management functions during mentorship. In these journal, principals were expected to include reflective commentaries and personal and organisational development plans. The researcher regarded the reflective commentaries to be very important since they were viewed as “meaning-making exercises” (Chikoko, Naicker & Mthiyane, 2014:319). The following aspects as they relate to the aims of the study were analysed:

- *Reflexive competence.* A reflection on how mentoring changed personal views, attitudes and the professional development of the principal (mentee).
- *Reflection on the principals’ own development as a leader* both personally and professionally.

The above information from the reflective journals was helpful in confirming or denying the effectiveness of mentorship in the mentees’ learning while working. It also confirmed whether the mentees’ and mentors’ experiences were reflective of Kolb’s experiential learning cycle. These journals on completion of the course were submitted to the university for storage. The researcher obtained them from the University archives for the purposes of analysis and as secondary data collection for the research.

4.11.4. Analysis of the Interview Data

The conversations between the researcher and the participants were audio-recorded in order to capture all the information supplied as well as other aspects that were audible during the interviews. The phenomenological approach adopted for this study made it possible for the researcher to use the IPA in analysing the data obtained during the interviews.

4.11.5. Interpretative Phenomenological Data Analysis

According to Smith and Osborn (2007:53), “the aim of IPA is to explore in detail the way in which participants make sense of their personal and social world, and the main currency for an IPA study is the meanings that particular experiences, events and states hold for participants”. Callary (2015:63), in defining IPA, includes the two concepts that are central to this approach, ‘context and qualitative’. She states in this regard:

“Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is a qualitative approach to understanding participants’ lived experiences in order to describe what a topic is like for them within a specific context”.

“These theoretical underpinnings emanates from phenomenology, which originated with Husserl’s attempts “to create a philosophical science of consciousness, with hermeneutics (the theory of interpretation) and with symbolic interactionism, which posits that the meanings an individual ascribes to events are of central concern but are only accessible through an interpretative process” (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008:4).

Data analysis is also described “as a range of techniques for sorting, organising and indexing qualitative data” (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003:414). This study used the hermeneutical spiral in analysing the interview data. Conroy (2003:14) suggests that “in terms of a hermeneutical spiral interpretation, both the researcher and participant build on their background interpretation as each reflects and interprets what is happening within and across the narrative interview sessions”. The following steps of phenomenological interview data analysis presented by Giorgi (1971) will be used to align the data analysis to the method:

- **Transcription.** The interview tapes were transcribed, noting significant non-verbal and para-linguistic communications. Transcribing the recorded data took weeks and was a process which consumed longer time than was expected.

- **Bracketing.** In this process the recordings were listened to and the transcripts done immediately after each sentence. The data was “approached with openness to whatever meanings that emerged, which is an essential step in following the phenomenological reduction necessary to elicit the units of general meaning”. One of the key features of phenomenological methods is the emphasis on “the need for the researcher to consciously set aside his or her presuppositions about the phenomenon under investigation – a process called “bracketing” (Cassell & Symon, 2004:13). This meant that the researcher had to reflect on presuppositions and remain alert to how they might colour every stage of the research process.
- **“Listening** to the interview for a sense of the whole. The tapes were listened to several times and the transcriptions also read a number of times. During this process the researcher and transcriber, had to manoeuvre between the different languages that the interviewees used, which were not English. Attention had to be paid on the way language was used during the interview and contextualise it to obtain the real meanings (See Annexures).
- **“Delineating units of general meaning.** At this point the interviews had been transcribed and bracketed and the researcher tried to stay as true to the data as possible and had a sense of the whole of the interview as context. Thereafter, went over every word, phrase, sentence and paragraph,” noting significant nonverbal communication in the transcripts in order to elicit the participants’ meanings”.
- **“Delineating units of meaning relevant to the research question.** When the units of general meaning had been noted, the researcher started to address the research questions in terms of the units of general meaning to determine whether what the participants said responded to, and illuminated the research question.
- **“Eliminating redundancies.** Here, the researcher looked over the list of units of relevant meaning and eliminated those listed previously which were clearly redundant.
- **“Clustering units of relevant meaning.** Here the researcher again bracketed the presuppositions and tried once again to stay as true to the phenomenon as possible.

- **“Determining themes from clusters of meaning.** Finally, at this stage, the researcher interrogated all the clusters of meaning to determine whether there was one or more central theme that expressed the essence of these clusters.
- **“Writing a summary for each individual interview.** After all the steps had been completed, the researcher went back to the interview transcriptions and summarised each interview incorporating the themes that were elicited from the data”.

4.11.6. Analysis of Data from Reflective Journals

In this research it was important to study the reflective journals, also referred to as a portfolio of evidence, which were compiled and kept by the principals during the programme. “Portfolios are commonly used to document improvement or proficiency and to showcase particular accomplishments” (Chikoko, Naicker & Mthiyane, 2011:320). Chikoko et al. (2011:320) further state that “these portfolios are a collection of, selection and organisation of work over time that shows evidence of self-reflection and learning on the part of the author”.

A total of eleven reflective journals were requested from the University, including those of the principals from the Nkangala district in Mpumalanga. Of the eleven journals, five belonged to the principals who were interviewed. In analysing the portfolios, I employed a comprehensive approach, commencing with a clear to a more in-depth or hidden questioning of the evidence in the portfolios. The first layer of analysis involved a inspection of the five sampled portfolios in order to determine their exact contents. The next level included connecting the evidence in the portfolio to the interview data in order to establish the extent to which the evidence reflected competence in school leadership and management, as well as the principal’s own development both personally and professionally as a leader. The following aspects of the principals’ leadership competence and personal development will be reported on here:

- self-management
- personal traits
- management and leadership skills
- school context

- community context.

These aspects are consistent with the information required to answer the interview questions which in turn will result in the answering of the research question. The responses to these aspects were in line with the prescripts of the four modes of learning in experiential learning theory.

4.12. Ethical Issues

In formal research it was important to adhere to a strict code of ethics in order to guard the rights of others and to display an appropriate level of respect for the privacy, views and beliefs of participants. The researcher, in complying with this requirement, first obtained permission from the Mpumalanga Department of Education to conduct this research. A copy of the permission from the Provincial Education Department is attached to this thesis as an annexure . Assistance in accessing the mentees was sought from the office of the Nkangala District Office via e-mail. A copy of this correspondence with the District Office is attached here as an annexure. The participants were first requested to participate in this study telephonically and those who agreed to make themselves available were subsequently sent letters explaining the purpose and nature of the research, as well as asking for their consent to participate.

4.12.1. Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research

In order for the research results to be persuasive and acceptable, it was important that the data collection instruments display both validity and reliability. In order to ensure reliability, the researcher first ensured the representativeness of the sample and, despite the use of purposive sampling, a better representation of the targeted population was formed. In order to obtain a better understanding of the issues raised, follow-up questions were asked to also obtain more clarity on issues. As reported earlier, the study used interviews as a form of data collection, therefore the reliability of the questions was considered very important; that is, whether they looked as if they were measuring what they claimed to measure and bias was reduced as much as it was possible (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:150). The researcher ensured

reliability by making sure that interviewees were all asked similar questions. Both mentors and principals were asked questions relevant to their roles.

According to Shenton (2004:63), “the trustworthiness of qualitative research has been questioned, particularly by positivists, because of the concepts used such as validity and reliability”. Shenton (2004:64) states that “many investigators have preferred to use different terminologies to distance themselves from the positivist paradigm and, as a result, Guba proposes the four criteria to be considered when addressing the issue of trustworthiness in qualitative research”. This study opted to use these criteria in ensuring its trustworthiness, they are:

- “credibility (in preference to internal validity)
- transferability (in preference to external validity/generalisability)
- dependability (in preference to reliability)
- confirmability” (in preference to objectivity).

4.13. Credibility

Credibility deals with the question, “How congruent are the findings with reality” Merriam (in Shenton, 2004:64). The following provisions (Shenton, 2004) may be made by researchers to promote confidence that they have accurately recorded the phenomena under scrutiny:

- *“The adoption of well-established research methods”*. The research method adopted for this study was influenced by the type of data required to answer the research question. “This method was a qualitative research method and, as such, the research question was qualitative in nature and it required a narration of events to come to an answer; moreover, no numerical data was required to answer the research question.”
- *“The development of an early familiarity with the culture of participating organisations before the first data collection takes place”*. The researcher in the case of this study is an employee of the Department of Education and was familiar with the nature of the participants’ roles and the ACE (School Leadership Programme), including mentorship. This familiarity was strengthened by the researcher’s previous research work on the mentoring programme.

- *Random sampling of individuals to serve as informants.* This study used purposive sampling because not all principals participated in the mentoring (School Leadership) programme. The researcher was aware that random sampling would have annulled charges of bias in the selection of participants, but purposive sampling was the appropriate strategy for this study (Shenton,2004).
- *Triangulation.* “Triangulation can involve the use of various methods, especially observation, focus groups and individual interviews, which form the major data collection strategies for most qualitative research”. This research used individual interviews as the major data collection strategy. Participants’ responses were followed through in telephonic conversations with the participants after the conclusion of the interviews. Reflective journals of participants, specifically those kept by the principals during the mentoring programme were also used as data collection strategy. Personal visits to the schools during the interviews provided the researcher with an opportunity to do on-site observations.
- *Tactics to help ensure honesty in informants.* The researcher ensured that in complying with the research ethics, all participants were given an option to participate or refuse to participate in the data collection before it was done. Participants were initially informed of their rights with regard to the research telephonically and then again on the day of the interviews, when the same statement was read to them again as well as a copy of the letter of consent . Participants opting to participate were also requested to be frank at the beginning of each session and the researcher ensured that rapport was established with participants both before and during the interviews.
- *Member checks.* “Checks relating to the accuracy of the data may take place on the spot in the course of the data collection dialogues and at the end”. In the case of this study, member checks were done at the end of the data collection dialogue and participants were told that during data analysis they might be contacted telephonically by the researcher to verify some information should it be necessary.
- *Thick description of the phenomenon under scrutiny.* “Detailed description in this area can be an important provision for promoting credibility as it helps to

convey the actual situations that have been investigated and, to an extent, the contexts that surround them”.

- *Examination of previous research findings.* This was done to “assess the degree to which the results were congruent with those of previous studies” (Shenton, 2004).

4.14. Transferability

According to Shenton (2004), transferability is achieved when readers feel as though the story of the research overlaps with their own situation and they intuitively transfer the research to their own action, for instance, someone learning about cruise ship employees’ experience of emotional labour may apply, or transfer, these ideas to their own work situation in a restaurant, theme park, or elsewhere”. Researchers may create reports that invite transferability by gathering direct testimony, providing rich description, and writing accessibly and invitingly. Transferability also relates to evocative storytelling” (Shenton,2004). Most qualitative researchers seek resonance not because they desire to generalise *across* cases, but rather because they aim to generalise *within* them (Shenton, 2004). Transferability in this study was achieved in terms of the general or common leadership experiences principals, both nationally and internationally, are going through. Literature on educational leadership development and principal preparation programmes indicated that the challenges faced by principals were very similar and that the research findings these programmes came up with were not very different. Principal is likely to confirm or identify with the findings of this study.

4.15. Dependability

In qualitative research, the term dependability closely corresponds to the notion of reliability in quantitative research (Golafshani, 2003). In the latter, the term “reliability” means that the results of the study can be replicated in identical conditions. The discussion method used in qualitative research made it difficult to achieve reliability because the researcher’s interpretation played a role in the results, as do the changing views of participants.

Golafshani (2003) argues that the issue of reliability has no effect on the value of qualitative research, and that within Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology, the

engagement of the researcher with the data makes interpretation unique. The researcher's approach was not to generalise the findings to defined populations; rather the intention was to understand the participants' experiences and the diversity of meanings that would enrich our understanding of the phenomena. The findings of this study could be repeated or replicated by any other research conducted under similar conditions, using the same techniques to collect data from the principals who participated in the targeted mentoring programme.

4.16. Confirmability

According to Shenton (2004:72), "the concept of Confirmability is the qualitative investigator's concern that is comparable to objectivity". In this study, the researcher report on the actual experiences and ideas as told by the participants. This step ensured that objectivity was maintained in the reporting of the findings of this research.

4.16.1. Anonymity

The researcher has complied with the ethics conditions regarding the revelation of the names of the participants in the study, their locations and even the names of the institutions they are attached to. Participants were assured of their anonymity, both during and after the research project, in the letter seeking consent to participate, a copy of which was issued to every participant before the commencement of the interviews. In this document, participants were allocated a number from one to five, and the names of the schools have been replaced with pseudonyms.

4.16.2. Informed Consent

"Informed consent is a mechanism for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in a particular research study so they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate" (Mack, Woodsong, McQueen & Guest, 2005:9). The researcher thus prepared letters for all participants seeking their consent to participate in the study. These letters, which were issued two weeks before the interviews and addressed to each participant, contained the following information:

- research topic
- aims of the study
- estimated time the interviews were going to take
- details on voluntary participation and the option to withdraw from the process
- how confidentiality would be protected
- personal details and contact details of the researcher and the study supervisor
- a separate page for the signature and date in case the participant agreed to participate.

CHAPTER 5

THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF MENTEES AND MENTORS IN THE MENTORING PROGRAMME

5.1. Introduction

In this study, qualitative data was analysed using the IPA structure and proved to be an inspiring, difficult and time-consuming activity. The success achieved during this process was as a result of the researcher's total immersion in the data by trying to step into the participants' shoes as far as possible. This was easy since the researcher was a school principal for seventeen years and had knowledge of the challenges that principals face. The analysis of the qualitative data took place sequentially, beginning with an analysis at the individual mentee level for each of the five principals. This was followed by an analysis of the data obtained from the mentors individually. The final analysis paired the mentors' with their mentee's transcripts to trace the impact each mentor had had on their mentees. During this analysis process, the participants' experiences were coded on the basis of the research questions. Coding, according to Patton (2002), "allows the researcher to find patterns in the text and place those pieces of text together in meaningful categories". The following guidelines in Callary (2015) guided the analysis further:

- descriptive experiences
- the way in which participants described their learning experiences, and
- interpretations about the way participants understood the experiences they described.

From the transcriptions, themes emerged and these are discussed in this chapter together with the phenomena being studied, namely, mentoring, learning, experience and reflection.

5.2. Mentoring

In this chapter, presentation of data gathered from the interviews conducted with the mentors and the mentees in the sampled district in Mpumalanga province using semi-structured questions was done. This study comprised qualitative research and

was fundamentally interpretive in nature. Interpretation therefore represents the personal and theoretical understanding of the phenomenon of mentorship by the participants. In this regard, the two main phenomena were mentorship and experiential learning. In terms of these two phenomena, reflective practice was found to be the most important activity required. According to Osterman and Kottkamp (1993:2), “reflective practice is located within the older tradition of experiential learning as well as the more recently defined perspective of situated cognition”.

This study was situated within the context of educational leadership development through mentorship and therefore there was a need to investigate contributions mentorship practice made to the educational leadership development of school principals. There were these two age-old questions that needed to be mentioned here for the purpose of grounding the entire process: “Are leaders born or made?” and “Can leadership be taught or learned?” The contributions of mentorship, as encapsulated in the ACE (SL) programme which was used as a basis for this research, might shed some light on these.

This chapter presents the data as it relates to the process of mentoring as an educational leadership enhancement process, while chapters 6 and 7 presents the relevance of the data in terms of mentorship, reflection and experiential learning.

The purpose of the data gathering was to answer the following research question: “How were the learning experiences of mentors and mentees reflective of the experiential learning theory as espoused by David Kolb?” In an attempt to look for answers to this question, a number of sub-questions were constructed to explore the participants’ experiences, attitudes, opinions, expectations, interpretations and beliefs. These questions were organised such that they provide detailed information in respect to the four modes of learning suggested by Kolb; namely, (i) concrete experience, (ii) reflective observation, (iii) abstract conceptualisation, and (iv) active experimentation.

The data from the interviews was guided by the phenomena under study, namely, mentoring, experience, learning and reflection. The results are presented in terms of the themes that emerged from the responses participants gave as feedback during the interviews. The study used the interpretative phenomenological data analysis method which requires that recorded data be first transcribed (Giorgi, 1971). After

having followed the Interpretative phenomenological analysis process, themes relating to the questions emerged from an inductive analysis of the dataset, which involved reading and re-reading all of the summaries of relevant literature:

1. The selection and recruitment of mentors and principals in the mentoring programme. (*Mentors and principals were not sure why they were selected and recruited*) *All five principals did not have information on how they were selected to the programme. Those who thought they did, were speculating. Three of the mentors were interviewed and the others were hand-picked to replace others.*
2. The knowledge and experiences that mentors brought into the programme. (*Mentoring experiences were drawn from previous roles as principals, and principals were never in a mentoring relationship before this programme*)
3. Learning expectations of participants and their fulfilment within the programme (*No clear expectations, except being assisted by the mentors. Four mentors had expected to learn various things from the principals, except one mentor who had none*)
4. Eye on the face experiences and how they were redressed (*Any programme is expected to have its ups and downs, at inception. Participants were not free to be open about them*).
5. Relationship between mentor and mentee (*All participants confirmed to have had good and constructive relationships during the programme*)
6. Contributions of mentorship towards leadership development (*The understandings and the perceptions of the mentoring programme*)
7. Notable changes in schools after mentorship (*Contributions of the programme to the actual school conditions and environment*)
8. Contribution of mentoring towards professional and personal growth (*Programme's contribution to individual growth and development*)
9. Ability to apply mentorship skills in different situations (*Application of mentorship*)
10. Reflection. (*New look into the past and present and the application of reflective practices*)

5.3. The Recruitment of Mentors and the Selection of Principals for the Mentoring Programme.

Playko (1995:91) states that “the preparation of mentors is a very important aspect to be considered and yet it is the most neglected aspect of mentorship, and also suggest that there are some critical skills and abilities that must be demonstrated by people before being told to assist in the development of a future generation of leaders”. He believes that “mentors need to receive specialised training in such areas as human relations skills, instructional leadership skills, and basic understandings of what mentoring is as a form of instruction”.

In order to understand the phenomenon of mentorship in this programme, it was important to understand how the participants were initially recruited for the programme, both mentors and mentees. This was desirable in order to ascertain the level of mentor and mentee preparedness to engage in the programme. It was expected or assumed that mentors and mentees will be able to facilitate healthy mentoring relationships if they were adequately prepared for the process. The question for the mentors was “*How were you recruited to become a mentor in the ACE (School Leadership) programme?*” The recruitment process is crucial as it seeks to identify the best mentors who will be able to fulfil the tasks as envisaged in the programme. Not every person can be a mentor and not all mentors are good mentors. Ramani, Gruppen and Kachur (2006:404) report that “effective mentors have valuable characteristics, which include being knowledgeable and respected in their field, being responsive and available to their mentees, being interested in the mentoring relationship, being knowledgeable about the mentee’s capabilities and potential, motivating mentees to appropriately challenge themselves and acting as advocates for their mentees”. Ramani et al. (2006:405) contend that mentors are not born but are developed.

Available evidence showed that the mentors in this study were recruited by the university to serve as mentors. One of them indicated that he went through an interview process where his role was explained to him in detail. Ramani et al. (2006:406) give a number of tips for developing effective mentors, including that “mentors need clear expectations of their roles and enhanced listening and feedback skills”. Stead (2005:173) presented a mentoring programme development initiative

that sought to address the shortcomings identified in the ACE (SL) mentoring programme. In this initiative, mentoring was organised in two phases: a “mentoring scheme and a development programme for mentors and mentees to support the scheme”.

- “*The mentoring scheme* focused on promoting mentoring and recruiting mentors and mentees, with the role of the university being to provide support. A series of partnership meetings was set up to develop databases, as well as the procedures for operating the scheme, including targeting, matching and monitoring. Applicants were matched according to a set of criteria including geographical locations and their expressed needs and expectations”.
- “*The development programme*. This was the second phase during which the mentoring programme that would support the scheme and offer skills and knowledge development for the mentors and mentees recruited was agreed on. The programme comprised two main strands of development, including the development of mentors leading to accreditation through a university certificate in mentoring. Each development strand comprised three core elements, namely, mentoring, workshops and action centred learning (ACL)”.

The main characteristics of the above programme can be summed up as follows:

- Meetings with mentors were held separate from those with the mentees “so that the expectations could be flagged for mentors to consider in planning their first mentoring meetings”.
- Residential workshops were held for mentors to introduce them to the “knowledge, skills and processes of mentoring”. The same workshops were held with mentees separately from the mentors to allow them to review the programme.
- Participants were made to understand and define mentoring and the mentoring relationship with relevance to local context, culture and politics, as well as other forms of organisational development provisions.
- There was a focus on critical and reflective thinking skills and processes. This reflection involved identifying challenges and questioning the underlying assumptions on which values and actions may be based.

The above programme addressed the issues of selection and recruitment, mentee needs, mentor skills and knowledge and aligned these with the developmental needs of the mentees. The situation was completely different from what has been observed in the current research study, where the data from the interviews painted a different picture from the above mentioned programme.

Mentor 1 reported that he was called on by the University of Pretoria to assist in the mentoring of principals. This mentor holds a PhD qualification in Education and was an employee of the Department of Education in one of the district offices in Gauteng at the time of the study. He started by mentoring his junior colleagues in the district, especially those who were responsible for the professional development of principals, and on some instances, was given an opportunity to mentor principals as well. He subsequently discovered that his colleagues at the district office did not take the mentoring of principals seriously because their work commitments did not allow them the time to conduct such mentoring. Subsequently, in the ACE (SL) programme he worked with more than ten principals over a period of four years.

Mentor 2 was also recruited to the programme by the University of Pretoria. At the time of the study he had been with the University since 1993 as a part-time lecturer and became one of the mentors when the University started the programme. The mentor also held a senior position in one of the district offices in Gauteng, West Rand, as an acting district director, had also served as a circuit manager and had previous experience with the Department of Education. Over a two-year period, he had worked with six principals in the ACE programme.

Mentor 3 served as a part-time lecturer and applied for a mentoring position in the programme in 2012. He had also held the post of principal for a number of years in township schools and had been a mentor for three years.

Mentor 4 had this to say: “The University phoned me and asked me whether I would be interested and I came to the interview. Prof (X) conducted the interview, and so they explained to me what it was all about, and because I think it’s a brilliant idea ...”
[Mentor 4, Interview Q1. Transcript 4]

Mentor 6 had this to say about his recruitment: “You know, I don’t really know, I did not understand it because it’s like there were some where people who were picked

to be mentors and then some of them did not go. I didn't start with them, I started when the programme had already started, I was called to replace someone ...”
[Mentor 6, Interview Q 1. Transcript 6]

Mentor 5 had worked as a principal in the past and had not been exposed to mentoring before.

The situation with Mentor 6 was not convincing that the official was prepared for the role. Although he or she might have had the skills and the knowledge required for mentoring, it was clear that the University did not have time to develop the person for the role. However, it appears that some mentors were sufficiently prepared for the task. This was demonstrated by mentors 1, 2, and 3, who stated that they were called by the University and were interviewed before being appointed as mentors. Selection for participation in any leadership development programme or any professional development programme is likely to be influenced by a number of factors. We may conclude that the professional experience and training of the selected mentors was one determining factor, as they all came from the Education field having been leaders in their respective schools and district offices.

The principals who formed part of this study were also asked to give their views and interpretation of the selection process for the programme. The question asked in this regard was “What are your views and opinions about the selection of principals for the ACE (SL) programme in your district?” Apart from the fact that they were selected by their circuit offices, the principals did not have any idea how they were chosen. However, they were excited to be included in the programme because they saw it as an opportunity to learn and become better school principals for their schools. Principal 1 was satisfied that only principals had been selected for the programme because she saw it as a way of assisting the principals. Principal 2 also pronounced themselves as satisfied because the principals were a mixed bunch, old and young, female and male, primary school principals and secondary school principals, thus making the group very diverse. This kind of selection holds both advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages is that there are opportunities for young and newly appointed principals to learn from the experiences of older and more experienced principals. Principal 3 commented accordingly as follows:

I think the selection programme is fair. Many teachers and principals benefit from the different skills development initiatives. I think this one is good for principals. [*Principal 3, Interview Q.1, Transcript 9*]

Principal 4 commented as follows regarding her selection into the programme: “I do not know the criteria they used to select us for the course. I think they looked at the performance of the school principal and then chose him or her in order to improve the management of the school.”

The former comment is supported by Principal 1’s comment in this regard:

I was wondering how principals got the opportunity to participate in the programme, but my fears were ... somehow, relieved when my name was selected. I think the district is giving each principal a fair opportunity to improve themselves. [*Principal 1, Interview Q1. Transcript 7*]

These two situations, the recruitment of mentors and the selection of principals for the programme, are problematic as they indicate a lack of proper planning on the part of the Mpumalanga Department of Education and the university offering the programme. The reactions of both the mentors and the principals after their selection to the programme were very similar in the sense that they were all excited and happy to be included in the programme. Examples of this are:

Principal 1: “I was happy, at the same time I was looking forward to gain more skills and knowledge.” [*Principal 1, Interview Q2 , Transcript 7*]

Mentor 1: “I was excited to get another opportunity to do what I love doing.”

Principal 1, however, was doubtful in the beginning because of her work schedule and private studies, but ultimately agreed to be part of the programme. Her feedback went as follows:

I was a bit miserable, thinking about how I was going to take up other studies under the situation, private studies, and this programme, I said to myself, I will not cope. Later I felt I needed to take my chances and that is how I got into the programme. [*Principal 1, Interview Q2, Transcript 7*]

No mentor or principal was forced to participate in the programme. Principal 3 considered that his selection amounted to recognition from the authorities of his abilities in making a difference in the school and he commented thus:

I was excited; you know most of the time being selected among the crowd can be regarded as fortune. I could see that at least there are people who are seeing that there is a contribution that I am making in our community.

[Principal 3, Interview Q2, Transcript 9]

Principal 4's response indicates that the selection was above all else seen in the light of acquiring the ACE (SL) qualification. This meant that some principals regarded their selection as benefitting them in terms of obtaining the qualification rather than learning to lead and manage schools through mentorship. This principal responded as follows:

I was very much excited because before that there were some other principals, my colleagues and other friends, who entered this kind of study and I was left behind. So I was very much excited to be informed that I was also selected this time around. *[Principal 4, Interview Q2, Transcript 10]*

5.4. Knowledge of Mentorship and Experiences brought by participants to the Programme

Selection for the programme, the participants' reactions and their knowledge of mentorship go hand in hand. They had to be aware of the reasons for their selection for the programme and to know what the programme entailed. On the mentors' part, it was important to understand the experiences they brought to the programme. Stead (2005:172) posits that "mentoring can be seen as a holistic and fluid concept that attends to professional, corporate and personal development". However, the researcher argues that mentoring conducted without adequate prior knowledge may not succeed in its purpose for personal, professional and corporate development.

After analysing the feedback from the principals relating to the reasons for their selection to the programme, I discovered that they had never been informed by their districts as to why they had been selected and what the district's expectations of them were. The question that consequently arises is: "Why was it that principals

were not informed about the reasons for and the benefits of their participation in the programme and the fact that mentorship was an important part of the course?” This lack of communication on the part of the Education Department is reflected in the fact that some principals had no idea of what mentorship is, despite the fact that this was a very important programme for them. I also found it confusing that principals with a master’s degree and higher (i.e. an NQF level 9 qualification) were excited about being selected for a qualification such as the Advanced Certificate in Education (i.e. an NQF level 6 qualification). For those with qualifications higher than the ACE, mentoring was more appropriate than the sought-after academic qualification.

For successful mentorship to take place, knowledge about what it is, is important. Roberts (2000:150) points out that “to have a concept of mentoring is to know the meaning of the word “mentoring; to be able to identify or recognise mentoring and be able to think about mentoring”. Mentoring is defined by the Department of Education (2008) as “the process occurring when a senior person (the mentor) in terms of age and experience undertakes to provide information, advice and emotional support for a junior person (the protégé) in a relationship over an extended period of time and marked by substantial emotional commitment by both parties”.

Of the five principals interviewed, only one had knowledge of what mentorship is about while the other four had no idea about mentoring. Of the five mentors interviewed, only four had knowledge of what mentoring is and had had previous experiences with the mentoring process. Some of the principals responded as follows when asked about their knowledge of mentoring and how they learnt about it later:

Principal 1: “Yes, I know about mentoring. I underwent a four-day course on mentoring and coaching at Nelspruit.” [*Principal 1, Interview Q3, Transcript 7*]

Principal 3: “No, I did not know anything.” [*Principal 3, Interview Q3, Transcript 9*]

Principal 2: elaborated a bit further, saying:

I knew a little about mentoring, but when I was at the University of Pretoria, I learned more. Before the programme, mentoring for me was a period of a

minute or five of sharing ideas, but from the programme, I learned that mentoring is on-going. [*Principal 2, Interview Q3, Transcript 8*]

The other mentor had never been involved with mentoring before even though she was a school principal. The observed lack of understanding of what mentoring implies that these principals did not understand the process they were getting into. As a result, it was not possible for them to align the programme to their professional and individual needs. A lack of understanding of what you are getting yourself into as an adult learner defeats one of the principles of andragogy, as mentioned by Knowles (1980, in Wong & Premkumar, 2007:2), which states that “adults learn best when they are involved in planning, implementing and evaluating their own learning”. Mentor 6 put it this way:

I was not expecting to say to them do this ... I was trying to help them, guide them to build on what they have. If we need to change something, then we will do that, but if things they are doing ... I feel are ok, we will leave it there and maybe modify it. I was not like a police, policing them; I was trying to move forward, starting here, moving forward, and seeing that the school becomes a better institution of learning. [*Mentor 6, Interview Q3, Transcript 6*]

From the statement above, two problematic issues arise: first, the mentor seems to be instructing the principals. This comes from the statement “[i]f I feel ok”, and secondly, the mentor’s main concern is the school becoming a better institution of learning.

However, some elements that hint at a certain awareness the mentorship can be deduced from the mentor’s statement. Helping the principals and guiding them to build on their existing knowledge are some of the aspects that are important during the mentoring process. The problem lies with the mentor’s feelings which tend to take centre stage; she indicates that she was trying to move forward to help the school become a better institution of learning. This I feel was not the responsibility of the mentor but of the principal. The principal has to move forward together with the mentor, and together they have to ensure that the principal has the skills and knowledge to turn their schools into better learning institutions. This is line with the view expressed by Ball (2003:3):

If you want to succeed, you must be clear about your aims, you must be committed to success, and you must be ready to learn the new attitudes, skills and knowledge you need.

5.5. Learning Expectations which participants had of the programme

The question was asked: *“What expectations did you have of the mentoring programme before its commencement?”* Varied responses were received. It was assumed or expected that each participant in the programme, be it a mentor or principal, would have at least one or two learning expectations which were directly linked to the mentoring programme. This was important for planning ahead as to how one would deal with challenges arising from the mentoring process. Participants’ levels of anticipation would have allowed them to make an informed evaluation of the programme and its successes or failures in relation to those expectations. These learning expectations were intended to enhance their learning and development, thus meeting their social and career needs. It is important to communicate perceptions and expectations at the beginning of the mentoring relationship because this helps to establishing the goals and boundaries of the relationship. Hodges (2009:33) states that “mentees are quick to recognise poor mentors – such as those who are intimidating, unapproachable and do not keep their promises. They are also quick to lose faith in a mentor who does not meet their expectations”.

Responses obtained from both mentor and mentee participants indicate that the expectations were varied, influenced by the reasons for their participation in the mentoring programme. The mentors expected, among other things, to help principals to develop their schools and to be involved in making a difference in the lives of the principals by taking them to the top. However, the responses from three of the mentors deserve special mention here;

Mentor 1: “... my impression, I saw it as an opportunity to address the shortcomings which I saw whilst I was fully employed ...” [*Mentor 1, Interview Q.5, Transcript 2*]

In contrast, the principal (principal 1) who was mentored by this mentor (mentor 1), responded to the question *“what expectations did you have of the mentoring*

programme” by indicating that she expected the programme to teach her how to implement policies. As she put it: “I expected to know maybe some of the things like policies, especially the usage, the implementation actually of those policies at schools because we have so many policies which are not implemented.”

Principal 1 further stated that she expected a lot from the study and said, “I knew that after this study I will be more empowered so that I can be able to face some of the challenges that I am experiencing as a principal of the school, so, I expected more from the study to assist me in running the institution.” [*Principal 1, Interview Q5, Transcript 7*].

Mentor 6 :“Not much expectations, my hopes were somewhere I do not know ... some of the lecturers it was like they did not know what they were talking about.” [*Mentor 6, Interview Q6, Transcript 6*].

Principal 5: I wish I could be equipped so that when put together with other principals in the community schools that are fully constituted, then I must also excel.” [*Principal 5, Interview Q4, Transcript 11*]

When examining the expectations of mentor 5 and principal 5, one can deduce that the expectations of the principal were not likely to be fulfilled. Nevertheless, these needs are legitimate and it can be viewed as very serious that the mentor did not have any expectations. How was the poor principal going to benefit from that kind of situation?

In response to the question on expectations, both mentors and principals indicated that most principals understood their shortcomings in terms of their practices in their schools. Among the issues they raised were their capacity development in the programme, policy implementation and how to deal with governance issues in their schools. One principal was very excited to discover that the programme would also include computer skills. He also indicated that he had doubts about his leadership capabilities which he expected the programme to assist him on.

All the mentors indicated that they expected to help the principals by imparting their leadership and management skills using their own experience as principals.

Mentor 6: “I was trying to help them, guide them to build on what they have. If we need to change something, then we will do that, but if things that they are doing, I feel they are ok, we will leave it there and maybe modify it. I was not like a police, policing them; I was trying to move forward, seeing the school becoming a better institution of learning ...” *[Mentor 6, Interview Q3, Transcript 6].*

Mentor 4: “My expectations, I didn’t make much, but it was that we were going to help improve principals in their management of schools in order to have better results, effective teaching and learning also in schools, remember we knew already like external factors like SADTU and so on, we came to terms that people were principals because SADTU wanted them to be principals even if they did not have it.” *[Mentor 4, Interview Q5, Transcripts 4]*

Besides helping the principals to improve their leadership and management of their schools, one mentor indicated that his expectations were that he would be empowered to turn theory into practice so that he could pick up something and go back to the district and implement it should such an opportunity present itself in future. Another mentor indicated that, having a background in the privileged environment as a former principal of a former Model C school, he expected to learn more about the environment and practices in disadvantaged schools, and framed it as “to see the other side of the coin”.

Interestingly, some of the principals expected far more than merely being helped to run their schools effectively and efficiently. One indicated that she wanted to be compared to the best performing principals in the district. To highlight the challenges principals are facing in their schools, one of the principals stated that she expected the mentoring programme to assist her in policy formulation, implementation and interpretation, the management of human, physical and financial resources as well as conflict management.

Principal 1 expressed her happiness that she was going to receive help on how to formulate and implement policies, and to learn about filing systems, office organisation, and the management of the human resources as well as how to manage conflict in the school.

The above responses confirm the two main strands of mentoring, according to Stead (2005:172), which are: (i) “the mentor as a career coach and professional helper, with a focus on understanding how the organisation operates at a cultural and political level; (ii) the psychosocial strand which includes role modelling, personal support, increasing support, increasing confidence and self-awareness in the mentee’s ability, and professional identity”.

5.6. The “Eye-on-the-face” Experiences of participants

As indicated above, mentorship has inherent pitfalls and has a certain amount of criticism has been levelled against it. This study therefore further probed whether there were any *“eye-on-the-face” experiences that participants had had and how they were addressed*. The participants responded cautiously to this question appearing to be guarding against revealing the unpleasant experiences. Principal 1 spoke about the fears she initially had because she had been told that the authorities might come at any time to check on her progress. She feared that she might be found not to be doing the right things and be reprimanded. She indicated that she had the theoretical knowledge because she was reading but lacked the practical part of it. Another principal indicated that he had almost dropped out of the programme because of the heavy workload he had at work. He survived this ‘ordeal’ by reminding himself about the embarrassment he was going to experience with his colleagues. He concluded by saying that he sat down with his mentor and sorted out his priorities.

Mentor 6 commented on the relationship she/he had with the mentee principals and some of the things that frustrated her about the programme. However, these issues were not directly linked to the relationship she had with the principals but with the University staff. According to him/her, as mentors they had to mark their mentees’ assignments without being provided with memoranda by the University and sometimes the assessment scores would be changed by the lecturers without giving

concrete reasons. That would put her and the principals on a collision course, and they would end up fighting with the University lecturers. She expressed this as follows:

You cannot expect me to mark and then after marking you reduce my marks; you do not even say anything on the script, how do I explain to the students I have marked. [*Mentor 6, Interview Q 10, Transcript 6*]

The mentor indicated that the lecturers had an attitude that was not appropriate for the development of the principals and their mentors.

Another mentor, a male this time, mentioned an experience similar to mentor 5's experience. He had a problem with the fact that mentors had to become judges in the programme, meaning that they were mentoring and were judges at the same time. They had to mark assignments and assign scores, and according to him that was not the duty of the mentor.

5.7. Mentoring Relationships

Mentoring is a reciprocal learning relationship where mentors and principals have an opportunity to learn from each other. "A mentoring relationship develops over an extended period, during which a student's needs and the nature of the relationship tend to change" (Handelsman et al., 2005). The ACE (SL) programme extended over two years, and during this period, a relationship between the mentors and the mentee principals was created. This relationship between the mentor and the mentee was fundamental to the success or failure of mentoring.

In my engagements with the principals and their mentors, none of them reported poor or negative relationships during the mentorship process. These relationships were described as being characterised by openness, cordial, professional, good, relaxed, healthy and protective. All the participants proudly stated that their relationships were still continuing even after the programme had terminated. Only one relationship was characterised by suspicion in the beginning, but that soon disappeared as the relationship developed. In one instance, the mentor indicated that the principals expected to be spoon-fed, but he stood his ground and did not buy in.

Mentor 3 confirmed that the mentoring relations were good and said;

It was excellent ... excellent ... I am staying in Pretoria and they are staying in Mpumalanga. They used to invite me in some other occasions and then I also invite them to my place when I have some ... just family occasions and ... they will come ... And the relationship was so good. [*Mentor 3, Interview Q7, Transcript 3*].

The principal mentored by mentor 3 commented on the good relationship he had with his mentor. He stated that his mentor was very helpful in clarifying some of the things he did not understand from the University lectures.

Mentor 4 indicated that he and his principals had adopted “respect” as the cornerstone of their relationship. This was done during their first meeting. He said he had to conduct mentorship in a manner that would earn him respect; principals had to do their work at school. He added something that is very important about the mentoring process when he said “*we grew together*”. His relationship with his mentee continues to this day – “Even today as I say, they still phone me, they trust me”. [*Mentor 4, Interview Q.7, Transcript 4*]

The principal (mentee) also confirmed the healthy relationship he had with the mentor. He stated that the mentor had made a mark in his life: “even now I can phone my mentor and speak to him, I may even invite him for tea because he had made a mark in my life.”

The responses from the participants confirm that the personal attributes of mentors and mentees, such as openness, respect and trust, played a very significant role in their mentoring relationships. Although the mentors and the mentees did not know one another prior to the mentoring, and had no choice in their pairing, this did not seem to have a negative effect on their relationships.

5.8. The Contributions of Mentorship towards Leadership Development

Programmes, like mentorship must restructure their work around the redefined role of the principal. “Departments of education must develop and implement a set of

standards that reflect raised expectations for school leaders and that acknowledge the centrality of leadership for student learning in the role of the principal” (Usdan, McCloud & Podmostko, 2000:10).

A lot has been written about mentoring as a leadership development strategy for both new and experienced principals, as well as in other fields outside Education, like in the medical field. The majority of mentors viewed mentoring as a leadership development strategy. These are some of the comments they made in support of this statement:

Mentor 2: [Interview Q8, Transcript 2]

Yes, it is a very important one, and I can tell you now, in the department, it is not there. If the department can pay particular attention to empowering the people in the district so that they can go and mentor, I mean principals, we keep on saying they are accountable and all that, but how can he be accountable if you have not shown him the ropes.

This mentor further elaborated on the need to mentor staff at district offices because, according to him, they do not know what principals are doing. They have not the slightest idea about what principals are going through in schools. They keep on demanding a lot from the principals and yet there is very little professional development and support from the districts.

Principal 4’s comments in relation to this question were very interesting and to the point:

“For your information, I was never inducted as a principal. I started as a principal in 2002 and I was never inducted, but now I am more empowered”.*[Principal 4, Interview Q 9, Transcript 10]*

This principal’s comments are in line with what Van der Westhuizen noted as early as 1990; namely, that although South Africa principals are qualified educators, many of them have not received adequate training to cope with the new challenges they are facing (Chikoko et al., 2014:221). Chikoko et al. (2014:221) elaborate further, stating that the qualification requirement for school principalship is currently extremely minimal, with the minimum requirement being a three-year post-

matriculation qualification. Revisiting the purpose of the programme could assist the study to form an understanding of the actual reasons behind the introduction of the programme:

It seeks to empower/enable these educators to develop the skills, knowledge, and values needed to lead and manage schools effectively and contribute to improving the delivery of education across the school system (DOE, 2007).

Mentoring as a form of leadership development is complex and not without its challenges or criticisms. While the mentoring of leaders “can be viewed as a model based on relational learning that is helpful in co-creating a learning environment, it has been criticised for addressing only selected people rather than building the capacity of the organisation as a whole” (Stead, 2005:172). The programme being studied seems to have made an effort to address Stead’s (2005) concern by ensuring that it develops the principals to, in turn, develop educators in the schools through mentorship. One of the mentors indicated that many of the principals are good leaders but not managers and suggested that to become a leader, you must do many things, including the delegation of duties, which according to him is very important. Delegation of duties by principals was mentioned repeatedly by principals in the study as one of the skills learnt during the programme. The mentor also mentioned that during mentorship he encouraged his principals to form committees in their schools which are led by teachers. This ensures that they too can take the lead in everything. The principal then receives feedbacks from the committees. Steyn (2002: 256) concurs with the above discussion and presents eight pointers for changing schools from “top-down” to “participatory” management:

- “Principals should lead rather than instruct.
- Responsibility should be shared.
- Leadership is about empowering participants.
- The decision-making hierarchy should become flatter.
- Develop instead of delivering expertise.
- Command respect through stature and not status.
- Emphasise effectiveness in the school instead of efficiency.
- Create a culture of learning rather than controlling behaviour”.

Steyn (2002:254) states that “in school-based management, the decision-making process moves to school management and the implementation of participative management requires the delegation of authority from higher to lower levels, for example from heads of departments to educators”. He contends that this “is the first dimension of school-based management, the second being that such management refers to the participation of stakeholders”. Participants in this study alluded to the practice of the two dimensions as mentioned by Steyn (2002).

5.9. Changes noticed at the schools after the Mentorship Programme

In the light of the theory on which this study is built, namely, experiential learning theory, this question, “*Are there any changes that you noticed in the schools you have visited during the programme? Elaborate on the situation before and after the mentoring programme*”, was directed mainly at the mentors as the guides and teachers during the mentoring process. They were expected to visit the schools where the principals were working and observe their practices on the job. It is therefore important that they were given an opportunity to test the active experimentation abilities of their mentees.

Mentor 1 noted that there were changes in some schools. Before the start of the mentoring programme, the principal and the teachers did not sit down together to discuss the school programmes. This caused tension between the principals and the teachers. After the programme they came together, reflected on their current conditions and planned to go ahead together.

Mentor 5: *[Interview Q 15, Transcript 5]*

I sometimes pop into those schools, the first thing I check what is happening at reception, principals’ office etc. There are changes that were not there before, that are there today. The principals’ desks improved tremendously, fewer papers, organised table, and furnished offices. The vision and mission statements and lists of achievements are now displayed at reception area for parents and visitors to read and know more about the school.

Mentor 3: “Yes there are many changes, many changes. Just to mention a few, I told them about the signboards, which were not there before, all the six schools were able to put [up] those.” [*Mentor 3, Interview Q 13, Transcript 3*]

One of the aims of the ACE (SL) programme was “to enable principals to manage their schools as learning organisations and instil values supporting transformation in the South African context” (Department of Education, 2007). The erection of signboards showing the location of and giving directions to the schools can be seen as a transformation process, removing schools from the bushes to where the communities are. A signboard gives direction, showing the whereabouts of the school as well as instilling pride in the school. It also serves as a marketing strategy for the schools. In short, one can conclude that this is a process of putting the schools on the map. The mentor was being innovative in this regard, consciously or unconsciously contributing to the transformation of schools and schooling in the communities in which schools are located. Msila and Mtshali (2011:4) cite Fink’s (2010) seven sets of learning which serve as a useful organiser for redefining leadership. One of these fits this initiative:

Making connections: leaders of learning need to make connections with all the stakeholders. Stakeholders within and outside the school needs to see what is happening within the school. This helps in understanding the school as a holistic organization. The parents, the community, the district office, business should view the school and see the interconnections and interrelationships happening in a school.

Time can be wasted if a visitor or official who is not familiar with the area spends hours looking for the school. So the erection of signboards is seen as a connector – connecting the school with the outside world.

Mentor 4: [Interview Q 14, Transcript 4]

First when I came, not all schools had safety and security measures. You will enter and leave the school as freely as you would want without being noticed or any control measure. We talked a lot about security. The next visit, I was stopped at the gate, I had to sign a register, in all the schools, this happened.

School safety is one of the programmes receiving serious attention by the Department of Education today. Masitsa (2011:163) states that “the South African Constitution and other legislation make provision for the protection of the rights and safety of learners in schools”. In addition, South Africa is a signatory to the Convention of the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, which makes it obligatory for member states “to pass laws and enforce measures to protect the child from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation”. It was interesting to note that mentors had observed the lack of safety and security at the schools they visited. The aim of this programme is to ensure effective and efficient delivery of education in schools and safety is one of the priorities that schools should consider seriously.

Mentor 4 also discussed the new vegetable gardens that he had managed to establish at the schools. The introduction of ground duty timetables which improved the environment inside and outside the school was one of the changes he had helped bring about in the schools. Nutrition is another programme the Department of Education has introduced into schools. This is intended to ensure that learners get good and nutritious food which will help them to learn in class. This was necessitated by the increasing numbers of school children who were going to school on an empty stomach, which did little for either the children’s motivation to learn or education in general. In this instance, the role of the mentor was appropriate in realising that school improvement is a holistic process.

The mentor elaborated on how he spoke to the principals about the way they were monitoring the feeding scheme. The security of the food and how to prepare nutritious meals for the children without spending too much money was a welcome idea and, in addition, was appreciated by the parents and the community.

At the core of experiential learning is doing. Learning by doing involves a direct encounter with the phenomenon of interest. From the above extracts, it is obvious that some of the principals did put into action a number of the lessons and suggestions from their mentors.

Previous research provides strong indications that the quality of mentoring varies significantly. In this study, it would appear that some mentors, for example, did not “provide a safe and supportive environment in which their mentees could learn” (Badenhorst & Badenhorst, 2011:4). When engaging for the first time in a new assignment, it is human nature to experience fear while at the same time hoping for the best. In other words, fear of failure and hopes for survival and success are common experiences.

The principals indicated that at first they were emotionally challenged, but later on in the programme they adjusted. In particular, they referred to the assessments tasks, which required them to spend more time on their books than their actual leadership responsibilities. Some principals were afraid that if mentors visited them at their schools they would find them doing the wrong thing, which might lead to them failing the ACE course.

All the principals interviewed were hopeful that the mentoring programme would enhance their leadership and management capabilities at their schools. They indicated that they were hopeful that they would improve both as individuals and as educational leaders. One burning issue was the lack of time experienced by these principals as they had to manoeuvre between their studies and their actual work. Most principals are subject teachers as well, so more time they spend outside their schools and classrooms, the more pressure that is placed on both them and their colleagues. At times, this came close to ruining their relationships with their mentors and departmental officials.

5.10. The Contributions of Mentoring to the Professional and Personal Growth of the participants

Seeing that this study relied a great deal on the meanings and interpretations of participants’ experiences in the learning process, I had to deduce the interpretations they had in terms of the quality of their learning from the mentorship programme as well as the experiential learning mode within which their practices were structured.

Every mentoring relationship must have experiences and lessons that participants will take from it. The participants confirmed that they had learnt a number of lessons

from the mentoring programme. In as far as demonstrating knowledge of mentoring as one of the outcomes of the programme, it can be said that the mentors had demonstrated what mentorship is all about and how it is done. Although this cannot be generalised to all the partnerships, evidence exists to show some successes in this regard. According to Hodges (2009:32), “mentors act as role models, facilitating learning and supervision that is appropriate to the student’s area of practice”.

The participants’ responses in this respect indicate that both mentors and principals valued the mentorship and benefitted from it. Moreover, the programme afforded them an opportunity to reflect on their past actions:

Principal 3 said that he used to doing everything by himself only to find that at the end of the day he was tired. After doing the course, he realised that he had to delegate some of the work so that he would be able to undertake the monitoring programme.

Experiences always “involve a transaction between the individual and what constitutes his or her environment” (Kraft & Kielsmeier, 1995:12). “Leadership development should include opportunities for leaders to solve a range of problems, first through observing and participating and then by actually leading teams in identifying, implementing and evaluating improvement interventions” (Gray, 2009:29–30).

The following are the responses of the participants in terms of the question “*How would you gauge your experiences in terms of growth in the mentorship process?*”

Mentor 2: “For the past years doing this ... I have grown a lot. My skills as a mentor have been enhanced”.*[Mentor 2, Interview Q 10, Transcript 2]*

The response to this question from the principal (principal 5) who was under the mentorship of the above mentor was as follows: “I have grown as an individual. I have grown to be a better person. Yes, my confidence has grown.”*[Principal 5, Interview Q 8, Transcript 11]*

In relation to governance issues at school, one principal confirmed that in the past he had convened SGB meetings on his own without consulting the chairperson or the secretary of the SGB. During the programme, he learnt that this was not the correct way of handling governance issues at the school. Another principal indicated that he had learnt a lot about leadership itself, including how to handle people and the challenges involved in school leadership, as well as planning, budgeting and record keeping. I noticed that a number of principals indicated that they had challenges in these areas and that the programme had assisted them in dealing with these and a number of similar issues. Some of the areas that principals found most challenging included human relations and parental involvement in school-related matters. However, the mentors assisted the principals with the latter by sharing their experiences on how to convince parents to become involved in school affairs.

The following comment from one of the principals is a clear indication of the lack of leadership competency which was a characteristic of a number of principals;

Principal 1: “What was happening, you will find I will monitor the work but without recording. I did not have a monitoring programme for class-work you know; I will just go to class for a class visit, after informing them two days before; that created problems.” [*Principal 1, Interview Q.9. Transcript 7*]

5.10.1. Participants’ ability to apply Mentorship in different contexts

The purpose of mentoring principals was mainly to improve their leadership skills and help them to transfer such skills to their colleagues. “Research on school principals around the world has shown that the quality of leadership provided in a school has an influence on learner performance and teacher effectiveness” (Day, 2005; Elmore, 2002; Reppa & Lazaridou, 2008).

Learning from experience “occurs through two developmental environments that allow almost any work situation to serve as an opportunity for growth, namely, learning from the “people you work with” and learning from the “task itself” (Brungardt, 1997:85). Participants were required to share their views on the new skills they acquired during their mentoring relationships and to indicate how they found them relevant in different contexts. This is in line with what Brungardt (1997) refers to “as learning from the people you work with and the task itself”. The task

involves applying learnt skills and knowledge in different environments. This is a test of the application of theory in practice, or active experimentation as Kolb calls it.

Participants were confident of their ability to apply their skills in different situations. Out of the five principals, four indicated that they had already begun to mentor new staff members at their schools. In some schools, principals were also engaging educators to mentor one another.

The case of the mentors is a bit different from that of the principals. Even though they were confident of their ability to apply their skills in different contexts, their opportunities to do so depended on the availability of such a task. Most of the mentors in this study were retired principals and were no longer actively involved in the day-to-day leadership development programmes. One mentor had had an opportunity to be involved with student teachers at the University of Pretoria prior to the mentoring programme.

This mentor (mentor 2) had the following to say: “I have been doing mentoring even before the ACE programme. I have done mentoring in many contexts as I said before, and mentoring fits any context.” [*Mentor 2, Interview Q14, Transcript 2*]

With regard to the application of these mentoring principles and skills, one principal indicated that it is important to first have a programme which should be informed by an analysis of the staff and the school needs.

5.10.2. Participants’ Reflection during Mentoring

This question was specifically directed at the principals with the aim to further probe their reflective skills especially with regard to the basis of the rollout of the programme. This was important for the study taking into consideration that individuals learn differently, that is to say, individuals have different learning styles which suit their needs. Although learning styles were not the focus of this study, it was necessary to ask this question so as to illuminate on the importance of taking this aspect into consideration during the mentoring process. This was also seen as an opportunity for the principals to evaluate their mentors.

The principal 1 stated the following about the frequency of school visits:

“Maybe what I can do differently from him, I can visit more often the schools that he did. I will also do follow-ups immediately”.*[Principal 1, Interview Q13, Transcript 7]*

Principal 2 emphasised that checks should take place after the mentoring programme. He said:

“I think what I can do is check even after this programme as to whether my subordinates are still executing what they have been taught, because there is a tendency of people just studying for the sake of the qualification”.*[Principal 2, interview Q13, Transcript 8]*

Principal 3 talked about the group sessions:

“Maybe one different thing that I would do maybe is to set up a programme; like I am saying that on the last day he would call us in one venue. Maybe I would set up a programme that will indicate to everyone what we are going to discuss which aspects were going to be treated on that day”.*[Principal 3, Interview Q 13, Transcript 9]*

In order to analyse the relevance of mentoring for Kolb’s experiential learning theory, I traced his four modes of learning in the data. The reason for this is that, according to Kolb (1984), in experiential learning theory, learning is defined as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience, through reflection”. Kolb and Kolb (2008:5) state that “experiential learning is a process of constructing knowledge that involves a creative tension among the four learning modes that is responsive to contextual demands”. According to Kolb and Kolb (2008), this process “is appearing as a learning cycle or spiral where the learner touches all the bases; – experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting – in a recursive process that is responsive to the learning situation and what is being learnt”.

“I wish I could go back to the system and assist district officials to implement mentoring in a correct fashion. I can use it effectively should I get an opportunity to train mentors in the future”.*[Mentor 2, Interview Q 11, Transcript 2]*

This response is from a mentor who served in the upper echelons of the Department of Education, where his tasks included, among others, the professional development of principals. This kind of a comment serves to show that even though the Department of Education is rolling out professional development programmes, it is not doing enough and, what is being done is not necessarily being done correctly.

At the end of a mentoring programme, it is important to evaluate the impact of that the mentoring relationship has had on both the mentors and the principals. Responses in this regard draw from the mentors' descriptions of their work with their mentees. Accordingly, the mentors talked about what they did to help their mentees as well as their state of being as leaders before the programme. This is a reflection on their lived experiences during their engagement with the principals. From the responses given by both the mentors and their mentee principals, it would seem that the reflection process is one of the most important skills they learnt. Interestingly, it is this aspect that paved the way for mentors and mentees to do things better. The principals claimed that the reflection process assisted them to manage their planning and communication processes with the staff. The first mentor interviewed indicated that most principals in the programme had not practised reflection prior to the programme:

Mentor 2 stated as follows:

“Before the programme many principals did not practise reflection. Reflection gives you an opportunity to look back, what went wrong and what went right”. .
[Mentor 2, Interview Q 12, Transcript 2]

Mentor 5 had this to say:

“There were a few that were very, very good. Before I left, I said to them – I see you in the next few years as deputy principals, as principals, circuit managers, subject advisors, I can tell you. There were a few especially in Mpumalanga, I was so happy to see them progressing”.*[Mentor 5, Interview Q 14, Transcript 5]*

The following serve as an indication that principals did indeed use reflection on the job and confirms the way this process helped them to do things differently:

Principal 1: “It is important because that’s how you get to improve yourself. Without reflection, you think you are on the right track only to find that sometimes you are left behind, so I think it is very important to reflect back, you become more and better at improving yourself a lot”.

. [Principal 1, Interview Q 11, Transcript 7].

Principal 2: “I think I am a perfect leader who can study the future, who can see the now, who can analyse things, who always believe in planning”.

[Principal 2, Interview Q 14, Transcript 8]

This principal went on to indicate that his ability to plan had helped to minimise stressors for him and his colleagues. He referred to the previous period in the school as being very stressful, but things had since changed. He was even able to relax when he was not at school because he knew that the school was running smoothly with his colleagues in charge.

This chapter emphasises the learning experiences of mentees and mentors in the educational leadership mentoring programme. Emphasis is placed on the use of mentors in the programme to support mentee principals over a two-year period with mentor support being seen as being central to the learning process. The mentee principals also played an instrumental role in the process in terms of their own learning and that of their mentors. In chapter 1, the rationale for this study was discussed and it was mentioned that it was important to uncover the “what” and the “how” of the learning experiences involved. Up to this point this chapter has covered the “what” of the learning experiences; the “how” will be covered in chapters 6 and 7. Billet (2001) argue that “opportunities to engage and participate in work and to obtain guidance are key aspects of supporting how and what students learn in their work/practice”. He goes on to suggest that” learning is “cultural transformation; that is, the context in which learning opportunities are afforded is significant, as well as the individual’s willingness to learn”.

In concluding this discussion, a brief summary of the findings from the interview data analysis is presented here followed by a further discussion of some of the aspects that made this programme effective in some instances but ineffective in others. The

chapter concludes by presenting the profiles of the mentors so as to emphasise their contributions to the principals' learning. This discussion is guided by aspects presented in Young (2015:7).

- **Programme focus.** This aspect entails the description of the kind of leaders the programme claims “to capacitate and how that type of leadership is reflected in the various proportions of the programme” (e.g. recruitment, curriculum, practical experiences, and assessment). This study discovered that the ACE (SL) programme did not have clear guidelines on the types of principal it was targeting. This was proven by the fact that principals had no idea who the programme was focusing on except to say that it was meant for principals of schools.

- **Recruitment.** “Which strategies are used to recruit candidates into the programme? What perspectives, priorities and data inform the development of recruitment materials? Who participates and why?” The recruitment of the mentors was problematic since there was no clear indication that all the mentors in the programme were recruited in the same way. There was also no clear indication of the existence of any database from which the districts identified the principals for the participation in the programme.

- **Selection.** “What strategies, information and criteria are used to select candidates for participation in the programme? How are the selection criteria and process aligned to the programme’s goals and approach? Who participates in candidate selection and how? Does the student body reflect the diversity of the area served by the programme?” In probing these question it was found that there was a conspicuous absence of information from participants about their selection into the programme. Participants were also unable to match the programme’s goals to their expectations and developmental needs. The only officials mentioned as having participated in the selection process were the circuit managers. My observations resulting from my involvement in the research around the programme have revealed that black principals are the ones targeted and or selected for the ACE (SL) programme. None of the lists I obtained from the district offices contained names of white principals. This observation raises burning questions around educational leadership practices in South Africa:

- Is educational leadership development a phenomenon that affects black principals in South Africa only?
 - Is there a possibility that white school principals are exonerated from leadership development programmes aimed at improving educational leadership for South African schools?
 - Is South Africa still embracing white supremacy in terms of which mentorship is only good for black school principals and not white school principals?
- **Learning experiences.** “What is the point of view on learning in the programme? What kinds of learning experiences are integrated into the programme?” A number of positive findings were obtained in this area, as participants confirmed that they had learnt a lot from the on-the job learning experiences provided through mentorship. In the programme, mentors facilitated the principals’ learning through group work and individual on-site visits.
- **Knowledge and skills.** “Is the programme anchored to a set of nationally recognised leadership standards? How does the programme integrate research and professional knowledge with leadership practice? In what ways are issues related to leading a diverse and/or low-income student population dealt with?” The principals confirmed that they had acquired a number of relevant leadership and management skills in the programme. However, in my interactions with them they did indicate that they had experienced some difficulties, especially with skills relating to research methods although the research was not entirely about their research practices. The mentors on their part also confirmed having been exposed to different communities in varying socioeconomic and cultural contexts. White mentors felt that they had learnt a lot from their exposure in township schools, which was pleasing to hear. However, the same cannot be said about the black principals in the programme, who did not have an opportunity to learn from their white counterparts since they were not part of this programme. None of the principals were exposed to the different cultural, social and economic conditions of the white mentors, and white principals as mentees were not included in the programme. Could this possibly be because black principals are the only principals who need professional development programmes? Could this be what Gillborn (2005:3), when discussing education policy, refers to as

a “more powerful version of white supremacy, one that is normalised and taken for granted”?

- **Supportive structures.** “What programme structures (e.g. cohorts, mentoring, coaching) are provided to support communities of practice?” In this leadership development programme, the most basic, and the main, support structure was the guidance, observations and peer support offered to mentors and mentee principals. The lecturing staff at the University of Pretoria also provided support in terms of the academic programme. One of the mentors went a step further to build support for the principals in their schools from the staff and the school management team. The Department of Education also provided support in terms of financing the programme.

- **Partnerships.** “What kinds of partnerships inform the programme? How have district personnel influenced and/or informed the programme?” It was established that the partnerships identified in the programme constitute the institution of higher learning (university) and the provincial department of education.

- **Candidate assessment.** “How do we know that our candidates are gaining the intended knowledge, skills, and experience needed, How are candidates’ assessments used to support their growth?” Principals in the programme were required to keep a reflective journal in which they recorded their progress. Their assessment records were also kept in these journals.

The researcher noted the lack of any evaluation or assessment on the part of the Department of Education of the principals after or even during the programme. This exercise is perceived as being important for a number of reasons:

- to increase understanding about the quality of the educational leadership practices the principals have acquired
- to make the mentoring programme accountable to partners and supporters as well as the beneficiaries
- to build credibility regarding the programme both within the Department of Education and the supporting tertiary institutions and convince the authorities that the program is vital and deserves support.

The absence of this kind of assessment by the Department of Education can be discerned in the comments of one mentor who felt that the programme should not have been terminated by the University of Pretoria because he felt principals were benefitting. The mentor said this about the programme:

There was such a lot of progress and I think it was a good programme. They should not have stopped it. They should have continued because it was empowering the principals. I was there with the programme, I have seen it growing and changing things in the schools and the environment in these schools was changing.

5.11. MENTOR PROFILES

MENTOR 1.

1. Biographical information

The mentor is a white male and former school principal . He has been with the Department of Education in Mpumalanga province and then moved to Gauteng. He progressed to the principalship from being a Head of Department which was his first promotion under a very strict principal. He learnt leadership and management of schools under very difficult conditions. He is currently on retirement after serving the in the field of education for over thirty years.

2. Mentoring experience

The mentor has never served as a mentor before this ACE (SL) programme.

3. Previous achievement as a mentor

No previous history as a mentor.

4. Significant contributions to the mentees

The mentor has in some way contributed to the mentee's development using his experience as a principal who served in all the promotional positions up to the principalship.

His major contribution was centred around the aspect of respect which became his foundation in communicating with his mentees. He also confirmed that the principals he mentored have grown and became better managers.

MENTOR 2

1. Biographical information

The mentor is a former school principal and has worked as a district official in the Gauteng Department of Education. He holds a PhD qualification in education. He studied Educational Management, which helped him throughout his career.

2. Mentoring experience

The mentor started mentoring colleagues in the district office informally. Through his involvement in guiding and supporting his colleagues at work, he gained significant experience in mentorship. He was also involved in helping the Teacher Development unit at the district office, a unit responsible for the professional development of principals. In the mentorship programme under study, he worked with more than ten principals over a period of four years.

3. Previous achievement as a mentor

The mentoring of district staff afforded him an opportunity to appreciate mentoring as a developmental process. Among his achievements in the programme was the enhancement of his mentoring skills.

4. Significant contributions to the mentees

He made the principals aware that success comes through hard work. He insisted that evidence was important in everything they did. He also taught them to reflect continuously on their progress. He taught them to prioritise commitments at all times and ensure that important work is never left for the following day. Recording of work in their journal was also emphasised from time to time. The mentor indicated that even though he was no longer in the programme, but he still provided mentoring for the principals he worked with in the programme.

MENTOR 3

1. Biographical information

Mentor 2 is a white male with a number of years in leadership positions. The mentor served as a deputy principal at a school in Pretoria and later served as a school principal at a different school. The mentor joined the Gauteng Education district offices in the West Rand as an acting superintendent after being a principal for ten years. When he retired, he joined the University of Pretoria as a part-time lecturer.

2. Mentoring experience

In 1993, he became involved in a mentoring project in the Mpumalanga province where he was mentoring SMTs. While involved in this project he spent two years mentoring principals.

3. Previous achievement as a mentor

He introduced the principals to what he calls the six pillars, in which respect and trust were emphasised. He has accumulated a lot of mentoring experience, having assisted more than forty principals in his career as a mentor.

4. Significant contributions to the mentees

This mentor helped a number of principals in the programme by establishing a bond between him and the principals. He encouraged them to call him any time when experiencing challenges. He provided the principals with a shoulder to cry on. He even attended staff meetings and talked to the entire staff, giving them information about how to work together in the school. In the programme, the mentor succeeded in building positive relationships with the mentees, in line with Earnshaw (1995) and Morton-Cooper and Palmer (2000), who suggest that “relationships begin with an initial settling-in stage during which they get to know each other. This is followed by a more open and relaxed stage during which friendship and trust develop” .

MENTOR 4

1. Biographical information

Mentor 3 is a black male and a former principal. On retirement he was hired by the University of Pretoria as a part-time lecturer. In 2012 he was appointed as a mentor in the mentoring programme for principals conducted by the University of Pretoria.

2. Mentoring experience

In his part-time lecturing engagement, he mentored student teachers registered with the University of Pretoria. This was a programme not necessarily targeting principals but for student teachers. He was responsible for monitoring their progress in the school where they were placed for practice teaching. This programme, in which he was required to mentor principals, was his first.

3. Previous achievements as a mentor

He enjoyed assisting student teachers and felt good when he saw them improving in their teaching practice. He has seen many teachers graduate into full-time practising teachers after he has mentored them. He confirmed that, on the basis of his mentoring results, he believed that he had done very well with the groups of principals he worked with. His personal learning in the programme had also been phenomenal.

4. Significant contributions to the mentees

He successfully taught the principals responsibility and management skills. One of his principals got the highest marks in the group at the end of the year, and that made him feel that his efforts were not in vain. He advised another of the principals, whose school was the dirtiest especially after lunch, on how to set up a yard cleaning system that later improved the cleanliness of the school. Using this system, he taught the principal how to delegate and also emphasised teamwork at the school.

The mentor successfully helped one of the principals who was an alcoholic. He identified the principal in the programme and at the school during his visits. His interventions resulted to the teacher changing her drinking habits.

MENTOR 5

1 Biographical information

Mentor 4 is a white male. He was a principal for twenty years and thereafter was associated with the Science Department of the University of Pretoria. After retiring, the University of Pretoria roped him in to help in the School Improvement Programme and he later joined the mentoring programme.

1. Mentoring experience

He worked with the University of Pretoria in a number of programmes targeting the improvement of the principals and their SMTs in schools around Hammanskraal and Soshanguve in the Pretoria area. The mentor has also been involved with mentoring for eight years, including in other support programmes such as the AMIGOs. These programmes were conducted in Mpumalanga province in the Kwa-Mhlanga area.

2. Previous achievements as a mentor

He achieved a lot in terms of schools that were performing poorly especially in Science. After his involvement with those schools, he noticed a vast improvement in their performance and the capacity of the principals and their SMTs.

3. Significant contributions to the mentees

He approached University management on the principals' behalf especially with regard to their complaints about the number of days they had to spend at the University, which impacted negatively on their leadership and management tasks in their schools.

One of the mentee principals he mentored got promotion to a senior position in the district office where she was working. The mentor counted this achievement as one of his mentoring highlights. Another female principal was promoted to head a larger school because of her improved skills and knowledge which apparently were noticed by the department of education in her district.

MENTOR 6

1. Biographical information

Mentor 5 is a black female and served as principal for ten years in a number of schools in Gauteng province before retiring. She obtained a qualification in Education Management during her tenure as principal.

2. Mentoring experience

This mentor had never been involved in any mentoring programme prior to this programme. She indicated that she was selected after the preferred candidate had withdrawn from the programme. Apart from her experiences as a principal, she had no mentoring experience.

3. Previous achievements as a mentor

None, apart from the achievements gained from the current engagement in this programme.

4. Significant contributions to the mentees

She managed to establish cordial relationships with the mentees. She stated that she did her best by coming down to their level, thus building trust and confidence in the process. She enjoyed working with the principals in the programme and at the end indicated that she would love to mentor principals in the future now that she has had an opportunity to experience mentorship. She taught principals to be sympathetic to the plight of their learners since their behaviour is a direct influence of the environment in which they live.

CHAPTER 6

THE APPREHENSION OF EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS: CONCRETE EXPERIENCES AND ABSTRACT CONCEPTUALISATION

6.1. Introduction

The learning process often begins with a person carrying out an action and seeing the effects of the action; the second step is to understand the effects of the action. The third is to understand the action, and the last step is to modify the action given a new situation (Kolb, 1984).

The following two chapters, 6 and 7, present the findings obtained from the data with respect to the theoretical framework and the research methodology. These chapters present the findings of the analysed interview transcripts and address the research questions posed in the methodology chapter. In this chapter, the researcher begins by addressing the theoretical framework, as presented by Kolb (1984), according to the themes that emerged during data analysis. In reflecting on the theory, the two modes of learning, concrete experiences and abstract conceptualisation, will be discussed as they emerged directly from the data. The research questions that sought to address the two modes of learning are also discussed in detail towards the end of this chapter.

Since the study opted to follow the qualitative-interpretive phenomenological approach, an interpretative-phenomenological data analysis was key during the data analysis process. The reason for this was that phenomenology enables the researcher to examine the cumulative experience of participants as they relate to their learning experiences with “mentoring”. It was therefore important to bring in the theoretical foundation when discussing the findings, beginning with the apprehension phase of experience as suggested by Kolb (1984) and, subsequently, to present how participants’ experiences and their interpretations thereof unfolded during these phases or modes of learning.

It should be noted that this study was undertaken within the mentoring process that formed part of the ACE (SL) qualification programme and, as such, the roles and experiences of both mentor and mentee took centre stage throughout the research. The background of the study was founded on the need for principals to gain varied tools and knowledge “in order to successfully and effectively face the difficulties, challenges and complexities of their jobs” (Oplakta, 2009). Some of the necessary tools to be used for facing these challenges include “self-awareness, organized thinking, creativity, models for solving intricate problems, new techniques to deal with day-to-day problems, knowledge about the testing and assessment of student learning and staff development and these are the capacities that are most needed for effective leadership” (Oplakta, 2009). In the previous chapter, these tools were confirmed as having been lacking in some principals before engaging in the mentorship programme and were acquired successfully thereafter. In the following discussion, the theoretical framework is discussed with reference to the evidence of how and what was acquired during each of the learning phases or modes.

6.2. Concrete Experience

The discussion that follows is framed by what Restine (1997:261) contends is an appropriate summary of the nature of concrete experiences:

- “I thought that I would learn to be a principal through taking courses and getting an advanced degree. That was not so. Experiences were removed, separate and detached. I learned to be a principal through being a principal”.
- “The experiences that I had in teaching, coaching, and serving on various committees in the schools and the community probably helped me more than any particular part of my preparation programme” (Restine, 1997:262).

David Kolb (1984) defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience and believes that “students must interact physically with the material being studied in order to understand it completely”.

The objectives of this study were to reflect on what was being experienced (“noema”) and how it was being experienced (“noesis”) during the mentoring relationships, and

the extent to which the experiences of the mentors and the mentees were reflective of experiential learning theory as espoused by Kolb (1984). Learning from experience, according to Brungardt (1997:85), “occurs through two developmental environments that allow almost any work situation to serve as an opportunity for growth”. Hence, “learning from the people you work with and “the task itself provides the situations in which leaders may enhance their potential” (Brungardt, 1997:85). In the mentoring programme examined in this study, principals worked closely with their mentors who transferred knowledge and experiences through modelling and advice. In the same situation, principals engaged each other through assignments and peer observation, resulting in their learning both from mentors and from one another. During the process, mentors and mentees embarked on a mentoring journey that explored the mentoring process through their own perspectives and understanding of mentorship. Groenewald (2007:93) posits that “learning from experience happens in everyday life and that experiential learning is a key element in a discourse which has learning from experience as its subject and which constructs this learning in a certain way”.

Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model provides a framework for examining the way the participants’ learning experiences were apprehended or grasped and then transformed. Kolb’s learning cycle starts when the learner personally involves himself or herself in a particular experience. “The learner reflects on this experience from many viewpoints, seeking to find its meaning and out of this reflection the learner draws logical conclusions (abstract conceptualisation) and may add to his or her own conclusions to the theoretical constructs of others”. As a result “these conclusions and constructs guide decisions and actions (active experimentation) that “lead to new concrete experiences” (Svinicki & Dixon, 1987:141).

The study was conducted mainly in township schools in the former Kwa-Ndebele homeland, which now constitutes a large part of the Nkangala Education district. To present a view of the setting where the concrete experiences of the principals and mentors took place, I would like to quote from a study conducted by Badenhorst and Badenhorst (2011:2), which depicts lessons learnt from the quality of mentorship in township schools. They contend that an analysis of the Department of Basic Education’s rating system for schools, which depicts schools as either “dysfunctional”, underperforming” or “functional”, revealed that the majority of

underperforming and dysfunctional schools are situated in township areas and informal settlements. This is worrying, and the Department of Basic Education is trying to redress the situation with programmes such as mentorship. Indeed, some of the schools whose principals were in the programme fitted the description of dysfunctional and/or underperforming. In some of these schools the culture of teaching and learning can be said to be poor at best, if indeed it ever existed. Participant feedback indicated that these principals experience certain challenges which render their schools dysfunctional and that there are no practical policies and strategies for running such schools effectively. However, as the mentors observed, other schools of principals in this programme were more functional and merely needed minor management and leadership adjustments. Moreover, it could be that mentors' concrete experiences with the conditions in these schools shaped and changed their perceptions with regard to what is happening in other communities. The five principals/mentees in this study came from communities characterised by poor parental involvement in their children's education, a lack of financial support from local businesses and poor infrastructure. The situation in the various schools encouraged both mentors and mentees to deepen and strengthen their learning as the abstract became the concrete (Moore, Boyd & Dooley, 2010:40).

Mentor 5 told of how she had been touched by a learner at one of the schools in the district who had come to school wearing worn-out shoes. The learner was wearing his school uniform even though it was of a very poor quality and in poor condition. This experience taught her about the type of a school she was going to be working with for some time, and she also imagined the conditions the teachers were working in, and realised how lucky she had been to be a principal in an urban area. Overwhelmed with sadness at the little boy's state, she offered to buy him new shoes. Accordingly, she reflected on this concrete experience and came up with a solution to address the situation. The fact that she learnt something from the situation confirms Groenewald's contention:

Learning definitely has a social dimension or context. In all social interactions, people continuously learn from and alongside others. The learner is also an important part of the experience and enriches it with his or her personal contribution.

Individuals “differ in how active they are or in how much they enjoy learning from concrete experiences” (Kok-Yee Ng, Dyne & Ang, 2009:515). The learning experiences focused on in this study is focusing are those acquired both in and outside the workplace. Brungardt (1996:86) states that “the key to maximising our leadership potential is to make the most of our experiences, while Kolb (1983) says that “extracting lessons from our experiences further fosters development”.

In order to comprehend this phase of learning as experienced by both mentors and principals, I first had to explore their emotional reactions upon being selected to the programme. In doing so, I was guided by Kolb and Kolb’s (2005:194) six propositions:

- “Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes.
- All learning is relearning. Learning is best facilitated by a process that draws out the students’ beliefs and ideas about a topic so that they can be examined, tested and integrated with new, more refined ideas.
- Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world.
- Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world and not just the result of cognition. Learning involves the integrated functioning of the total person thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving.
- Learning results from synergetic transactions between the person and the environment.
- Learning is a process of creating knowledge”.

Bush (2013:254) states that leadership is often linked to “vision”, that is, the leader’s intentions for the future of the school. Such a vision is based on the concrete experiences the principals have built up over the years in the education field and later drives the intentions and expectations for future leadership development in practice. The present state of the school provides a justification for improvement and is coupled with professional and leadership development.

The researcher’s intention of finding out about the selection criteria for mentees was to discover whether there was a coordinated and informed system that districts or circuits used to select the principals for this programme. This was done because there is the danger that, if such a programme does not draw on the expectations of the principals participating in it, the exercise may be futile. The principals’ awareness

relating to how they were selected varied, but there was a common understanding that these principals' schools were in need of improvement. In short, one can say that this was a Department of Education strategy for addressing the issue of poor school leadership in principals. However, it must be pointed out that in terms of the principals learning something from the selection process, for example who was selected and how and why he or she was selected, this would be important for addressing one of the learning outcomes of the ACE (SL) programme, according to the Department of Education (2008), namely:

“Demonstrate understanding of the significance of mentoring programmes in South Africa in general and schools in particular”.

An understanding of the selection criteria for the programme would serve as an environmental precondition for their learning. Young (2015:5) presents an overview of critiques of educational leadership development programmes and contends that “these programmes are seriously flawed in core programme areas, including (i) the way students are recruited and selected for programmes; (ii) the education they receive once there; (iii) the methods used to assess learning and growth; and (iv) the procedures developed to certify and place graduates in leadership positions”. The findings of this study have substantiated Young’s (2015) views in terms of the selection of principals and the recruitment of mentors. In discovering the basic experiences of the principals prior to the programme, it has been confirmed that they performed leadership and management tasks in their schools and thus had the skills and knowledge related to principalship and its duties.

The principals’ leadership skills did not just happen to be there, but had been learnt in previous situations and engagements. Principals are prone to use the leadership and management approaches they observe in their previous principals and other colleagues in leadership positions. The duties or tasks that they are confronted with in their schools, as well as the school culture, determine their management and

leadership styles and, whether right or wrong, form part of their concrete experiences. Peterson (1985:153) provides an analysis of the principal’s work and contends that “this work occurs in face-to-face, verbal interactions with others, particularly subordinates”. The principal therefore must learn about the part he plays in the work

directly during the activity rather than through the investigation of existing documents. “Often, little concrete information is provided by superiors about organisational goals” (Peterson, 1985).

Mentors for this programme were selected by the University on the basis of their experience both in leading and managing their schools as principals and as district officials. Three of those selected were former school principals and two were former district officials of the education department, who also previously served as principals. All had retired from the Department of Education.

“Experiential approaches to learning focus on the way managers acquire and transform new experiences and how these experiences lead to a greater sense of satisfaction, motivation and development” (Kayes, 2002:138). Kolb’s apprehension stage or dimension “explores the ways in which the individual grasps experience”. “Ways of knowing comprise two polar opposites, ranging from unconscious, intuitive experience to a conscious comprehension of the experience” (Kolb, 1984). There are two modes of learning that are very important in this stage, and which form the core of this chapter; they are (i) *concrete experience* and (ii) *abstract conceptualisation*. In terms of this phase, it was important to explore the participants’ real-life or workplace experiences that were encountered before and during the mentoring process. This concerned something that had happened to them or they had done. It also entailed the adoption of new ideas into practice.

At the time of the research, the five principals interviewed had occupied their positions for more than one year and that alone is an indication that they had come to the programme with some concrete experiences relating to leadership and management in their schools. The general introduction to the ACE (School Leadership) module (DOE, 2007) states in this regard:

It is hoped that the engagement with this programme will benefit you (participants) by providing guidelines, insights and tools that you can use to meet your immediate challenges and needs as school leaders.

It is therefore without doubt that the principals had experienced various challenges in their schools, hence the introduction of this programme. Principal 1, for example,

indicated that when hearing that she had been selected for the programme she was a bit nervous because she knew that she was lacking in a number of things as a leader. Although policies were in place at her school, they were not being implemented because she did not have the capacity to do so, as she had no idea about how to go about formulating and implementing them. Peterson (1985:153) suggests that “the training and development of principals should focus not only on the basic characteristics of their work and the problems of their daily lives in schools, but also on those leadership abilities that promote effective schools”. He also contends that “effective principals have vision, that is, a sense or image of the schools they wish to run”.

The exercise of drafting or formulation school policies in this principal’s case provided a context for learning. The ensuing experience in turn produced the learning; that is, the fact that those policies were not implementable and as result the school could not function properly. She was not confident that she could run the correctly; this did not mean that she did not implement the school policies, but rather that she did so ineffectively. She reiterated that the policies were drawn up wrongly and she did not delegate tasks to her colleagues, an act which saw her doing things alone and in isolation from the rest of the staff. She was also unable to deal effectively with conflicts among the staff. Subsequently, the principal confirmed her learning during the programme and the effects the programme had in relation to her previous leadership practices:

After doing the course, I knew that I had to delegate some of the work and monitor the delegated tasks. At the same time, I am teaching my colleagues including all the educators in the school. I am now giving them responsibilities thus developing them at the same time.

Steyn (2002:254) states that “the new educational policies require educational managers who are able to work in democratic and participative ways to build relationships and ensure the effective delivery of education”. These new policies have culminated in what is called institutional autonomy, also referred to as school-based management or self-management. This system makes many demands on the principal in terms of leadership and management. In the case of the above principal, there is evidence of the application of democratic and participative ways of doing

things in the school and this contributed to the improved interpersonal relationships in the school. These changes in attitude and professionalism are indications of her awareness of her previous mistakes and a willingness to change them to the benefit of the school.

Principal 2 had been very happy to be selected for the programme. He had seen other principals in the district participating in the programme and he had wanted to be selected as well, as he may have perceived the benefits of the programme. He also indicated that, prior to participating in the programme, he had been facing serious challenges at his school. In terms of his expectations he indicated that he expected the programme to help him to address the challenges he was facing. There might have been instances at the school that indicated to him that things were not right and his desire to be part of the programme was actually a “cry for help”. He also mentioned challenges relating to the implementation of the policies of the Department of Basic Education and those at school level. He summed up his concrete experience by stating that “somewhere we were doing things only to find that we were doing them wrongly”. In terms of human relations, he stated that in the past he had assumed that some staff members were arrogant but after he was taught to reflect on himself he realised that he had to change his attitude and the way he dealt with the staff first.

Principal 3 indicated that he had problems with learners taking Mathematics and Physical Sciences who ended up failing dismally in assessments of these subjects. His main problem was that although he was very excited to see the numbers growing in these subjects, the success rates were very low and worrying. He wanted to have a way of remedying the situation. Another problem he experienced was the increasing enrolment at the school. From these situations, he realised that he did not have the skills and the knowledge to control the situation. He pinned his hopes on mentoring for a solution; however, the solution lay not with the mentor, but with his staff, which he did not engage on the matter. Every school is supposed to have a policy to regulate the curriculum it offers. In this case it was obvious that the principal was not aware of any such policy in the school, which also pointed to the absence of curriculum management in the school. He was also worried by the enrolment of 450 learners which had doubled school numbers in the two preceding years. This confirms the absence of an admission policy. It would seem that the school admitted

learners as they arrived at the school without any policy document guiding matters of admission and curriculum choice. Again he expected the mentor to assist, whereas the solution lay with the SGB, which he had not involved. These experiences thus present the environmental conditions for learning, which might have been there before he became principal and thus he inherited them. According to Peterson (1984:153), “effective principals tend to be proactive and take the initiative, they address problems immediately rather than waiting for the problems to develop. The advantage the principal had at that stage was the awareness of these issues; he learnt from them and knew where to find help”. Steyn (2002:256) provides some key changes in the new organisations (schools) in South Africa, one of which is in line with the experience of the principals above, and suggests as follows:

Principals should lead rather than instruct: Principals need to rely on the support of staff. Their status will depend on their ability to lead and motivate their team of educators. Effective principals are able to create an ethos that generates motivated and successful educators and stimulated and inspired learners in an effective setting.

Experience is often synonymous with emotions and their deeper meaning (Kayes, 2002:139). This is supported by the input of one principal who stated that “at first I was perplexed, with a feeling of anxiety”. One female principal stated that when she was informed of her selection for the programme she was “a bit miserable”, as she did not know how she was going to cope with the programme amidst the strenuous conditions she was subjected to at work. After completing the programme, she said, “I don’t regret at all”. It is true that principals today are under a lot of pressure to deliver in their schools. The question is, is the principal the only person to do all these tasks? The answer is a big No! The problem is that many principals find it very difficult to delegate tasks to their subordinates. Such fears are unfortunately justifiable in schools where commitment and cooperation from staff are non-existent.

From the mentor’s perspective, concrete experiences were examined in terms of their previous involvement in mentoring as well as their experiences as school principals and education administrators. All the mentors interviewed confirmed that they have practices as school principals and have amassed a lot of experience in the process. Not all was glossy during their tenures as principals. They have also been

involved in situations that exposed their weaknesses as principals and had to learn from their colleagues and seniors. This opportunity to mentor afforded them an opportunity to share these experiences with the principals (mentees) in the programme. One mentor reflected as follows on the opportunity to mentor: “It was an opportunity to address the shortcomings which I saw whilst I was fully employed.” He further stated that “this will address the shortcomings I have observed as a full-time employee in the department”. This mentor was a principal and moved on to be a district official who worked directly with the school principals. He understood the difficulties associated with the principalship position and had also been exposed to the challenges that go with assisting or developing principals professionally. Being a mentor afforded him an opportunity to learn and do something different. This mentor’s concrete experiences came from the period when he was a principal when he had to contend with strenuous and difficult situations. This helped him to understand what principals are going through in their schools as well as the frustrations and pressures they are subjected to by circuit and district offices. When he was a district official, he had sympathy for principals and other staff in the district office and began mentoring them informally. The unwillingness of the district officials to mentor principals of schools was a big concern for him. He later came to the conclusion that this was because they (district officials) “did not have a clue of what principals are doing in schools”.

Accordingly, I had to build on the concrete experiences of the mentors by investigating their selection for the programme. Zachary (2005:26) states that “in order to raise the bar in a mentoring culture, we need to be sure that the facilitators’ (mentors) experience and expertise meets the needs of participants (mentees), that they meet a required minimum level of mentoring competence and that mastery of the material alone is not sufficient”. It is for these reasons that this study had to measure the level of preparedness of both mentors and mentees. The question posed was “How were you recruited to become a mentor in the programme?” The feedback from the mentors reflected some successes as well as some flaws.

The first mentor to respond said that he was called by the university to mentor the principals. His experience as an employee of the Department of Education and a senior official put him in a good position for the assignment. He mentioned that he was involved in the professional development of principals and also served in the

mentoring position for the employees under his supervision. He substantiated his skills and confidence in mentoring in the following way: “When I got this call, I said, this is what I have been looking for and this is what I have been trying to do. I will create that opportunity and even my coordinators and facilitators, I will be mentoring them every Friday.”

Almost all the mentors interviewed worked with more than five principals in groups. The level of experience they possessed and the knowledge of mentoring they had enabled them to integrate their past and current experiences, current situations and frustrations into the core task at hand. Zachary (2005:26) contends that “mentoring is the quintessential expression of self-directed learning, and its core is individual responsibility, and participants accept ownership and accountability for setting personal learning objectives, developing strategies, finding resources and evaluating learning”.

From the above discussion, individuals’ interactions with others in the context of daily events are indicative of the stage of concrete experiences. The role that other group members played was influential in the participants’ learning experiences. It was important for participants to be unprejudiced and possess the ability to be flexible to changes in the programme and also within their schools. Mentors and mentees at this stage learned by relying on their feelings, both in their individual experiences and those resulting from interactions with others. The participants demonstrated an awareness of the people they interacted with and their emotions, and that “learning occurred as a result of certain experiences and interactions with people” (Dede, 2009:156). In the process of mentorship, mentors organised group sessions where the principals came together for the purposes of sharing their experiences. Mentors also came together before and after the mentoring sessions to share experiences as well, thus providing an opportunity for mentors and mentees to learn from each other’s experiences.

During this learning phase, open mindedness on the part of individuals is important. Principal 2 claimed that he did not have knowledge of what mentorship was all about until he participated in the programme. He did not refuse to participate based on the fact that he did not have any knowledge of the process, but his open mindedness enabled him to get to know about mentorship and how it benefitted him. Later during

the interview, he confirmed that mentoring had helped him to do things differently and his confidence had grown as a result. All the principals in the programme seemed to have a certain amount of knowledge about the benefits of the mentoring programme, which is proof that their learning occurred as a result of certain experiences and interactions with their mentors and other principals in the programme.

Principal 4 had some idea about what the selection process might have been based on, indicating that it might have been informed by the performance of his school. He felt that the intention for the selection might have been aimed at the improvement of his school. He also indicated that he was amazed at his selection for the programme, but also excited to know that he was going to learn more about leadership of schools. This was an indication that the principal had some knowledge of his weaknesses as well as areas of possible improvement as a principal. The expression of excitement at learning new leadership skills was regarded as important as this excitement had a potential to inspire the principal to learn new things. Oplakta (2009) suggests that “life’s transitions are reasons for learning. Moving from one status in life to another requires the learning of new knowledge, new skills, and/ or new attitudes or values”.

Principal 4’s knowledge of mentoring prior to the programme was explained as a process of sharing ideas which could last for a minute up to five minutes. He got to know the real meaning of mentorship when he participated in the programme, where he learnt that mentoring is an on-going process. He consequently showed understanding of the mentoring process, explaining it as a learning process, where the mentor is also a learner, learning in the process of mentoring others.

Principal 5 stated that she wondered about how principals got to be selected for this programme, and was excited to get the opportunity to be part of it. She did not have knowledge of what mentorship was and learnt about it within the programme. Her expectations included her intention to be developed as a recognised leader and principal. Her fears were that as the principal of a school built on private land (commonly known as farm schools), she was not recognised as a principal worthy of being developed. She wished to be recognised, and this programme was going to help her achieve that. She stated that she had knowledge of the situation and environment she was working in, and wanted to learn how to deal with her

challenges. She mentioned administration as a challenge at her school. This was bound to be the case as she was leading a two-teacher school.

6.3. Abstract Conceptualisation

In the above discussion, I presented the beginning of the learning cycle where the participants are personally involved in specific experiences. After the acquisition of these experiences, participants reflected on them with a view to finding meanings. It is out of these reflections that participants drew logical conclusions (abstract conceptualisation).

At this stage of the learning cycle, I trace the way participants used logic and ideas in the place of emotions to understand their challenges and events. This is the stage where participants develop strategies to solve problems based on methodical planning. They “analysed ideas, made systematic plans and took action in relation to the situation based on their own intellectual understanding” (Dede, 2009:156). Kolb (1984) states that “in this stage, students are introduced to new information about cultures, conceptualising ideas, theories and examples which aid in the student’s cognitive learning process”.

From the data it emerged that there was a greater degree of logical thinking as participants began to review their roles within the mentoring process, as well as in their work situations and work responsibilities. This logical thinking revolved around procedures and actions in the creation of environments suitable for teaching and learning in schools. An example of this is the feedback from one of the principals who reported that she expected to be empowered on how to draw policies, which stakeholders to involve in that process and how to implement them. She also indicated that she understood the problems she was experiencing at the school, as well as the events that had led to these problems. She articulated this as follows: “I realised that the policies we made were wrongly made, after learning we learnt how to design policies and I felt confident because I could talk to the policy.” She confirmed that before the programme she did not understand people well, and she took people at levels where she met them, and did not understand their challenges. Her mentor confirmed that in some schools principals were not sitting down and discussing school programmes with the staff and that caused a lot of tension.

At this stage, as previously stated, individuals develop concepts based on systematic planning to solve problems. This was confirmed by one of the principals who responded that he had a new Head of Department in his school and the first thing he did was to sit down with her, share duties with her and thereafter call a staff meeting and explain everything to the staff. He also added that he has begun using what he calls weekly projections that are of great help in his planning.

Interesting feedback from one of the mentors, which elaborated on the development of concepts to solve problems, indicated that even in his community where he holds the position of chairperson of the corporate body, he used some of the mentoring experiences he had acquired, dividing members of the community into clusters and assigning them responsibilities to solve community problems.

Participants' learning experiences were clearly characterised by a greater degree of comprehension and acceptance of the new knowledge as can be identified from their responses. The participants seemed to have an understanding of the events experienced and the problems encountered and how they could be solved. When asked about their learning experiences they indicated that they could see that they were not doing things the right way before and were ready and willing to accept the responsibility to acquire new knowledge and skills by applying the strategies presented and recommended to them by their mentors. In this process they were able to come up with various strategies to solve the problems they had before the programme in a systematic and planned fashion. Accordingly, a significant paradigm shift had taken place in their way of thinking and doing things such as in the involvement of educators in the decision-making processes, delegation of authority and distributed leadership strategies. This was made possible by the fact that they directly observed and participated in the experiential process and also accepted guidance from their mentors. This is how the changes were presented by the principals:

Principal 1: "I learnt that you need to have confidence in other people, train them, show them and let them implement, ja, not always doing things because they will not learn ." [*Principal 1, Interview Q 14, Transcript 7*]

Principal 4: “The programme has contributed to my growth by teaching me to check how I relate to my colleagues.” [*Principal 4, Interview Q 8, Transcript 10*]

Principal 1: “As he was coming to mentor me, he also helped me to put my things in order at the school. What was encouraging is that I managed to move from step A to step B. When he comes to the school, step B is there, and when I say I have moved to step E, he would see that there is evidence that we have moved.” [*Principal 1, Interview Q 8 , Transcript 11*]

The researcher also had to qualify this process of abstract conceptualisation by allowing the principals to comment on the quality of their learning. Responses included aspects such as improved confidence, growth as a leader and as a person, and so on. This indicates the levels of analysis they had in relation to their own learning. This is how participants responded:

Principal 4: “I learnt lot from the programme. I now have more confidence as a principal. The study has assisted me a lot, I am more confident now and I can see that I can move this school to greater heights.” [*Principal 4, Interview Q14, Transcript 10*]

Mentor 4: “I believe that I am a better mentor now because of the interactions I had with the people I worked with. As a person I got personal and professional growth. I have grown in confidence and in knowledge.” [*Mentor 4, Interview Q 10, Transcript 4*]

Principal 2: “I have learnt a lot about leadership itself, how to handle people and challenges, planning, budgeting and many things such as record keeping and financial management.” [*Principal 2, Interview Q 9, Transcript 8*].

Kayes (2002:138) contends that “experiential approaches to learning focus on how managers acquire and transform new experiences and how these experiences lead to greater sense of satisfaction, motivation and development and also that by involving managers in new experiences, experiential approaches help them develop more holistic views of themselves”. The confirmation by both mentors and principals of their learning in the process, as having led to their changing and becoming better

people who understand their roles even in different contexts, is testimony to their conceptualisation of their experiences. In my opinion, this feedback from one of the mentors is in line with the events classified as the abstract conceptualisation of knowledge. On graduation day, this is what the mentor said had happened when interacting with his students (mentees). He said that they had told him that despite the fact that he had made them work hard and they had not appreciated it at the time, they nevertheless confirmed that it made them realise the importance of hard work in knowledge acquisition. He reported it thus: “You made us realise the importance of hard work, and also the other important thing is that you walked along with us, you also worked hard.”

Another aspect found to be relevant in this learning cycle is the self-discovery phase. Principals were assisted in discovering their strengths and weaknesses. at some point during his visits, the mentor alluded to the fact that principals did a number of good things at their schools but were not aware of the value of those things. The example he gave was the information that is displayed on the principal’s office walls. Those walls he said contained a lot of information that was very valuable but principals were unaware of this. He asked some of the principals about the information displayed on their walls without making them aware of the source of the information and a number of them had little or no information at all. The mentor illustrated his point, saying:

The principals will say you were pressing with this portfolio thing and with everything evidence, evidence. At times I did not tell them, and when a principal come in I will say, I saw something very important on your office walls and he or she will not know about it. I said to them they must look and the first place to look is their office walls because they contain a lot of information which serves as evidence, and some principals did not even know about it.

One mentor, who had previously worked as a principal at one of the former Model C schools (schools which were previously reserved for whites only under the apartheid education system), was ecstatic when relating his experiences of working with principals from different racial and cultural groups . He considered his interaction with them to be one of his most important learning experiences. This is how he put it:

I learnt a lot because as you know we come from different backgrounds. I realised that their challenges were more than I experienced as a principal. Their task was not easy since they had more learners coming from broken families unlike children in former model C schools who are more secure and got good homes to go to. Some parents in their schools were not fully involved in school matters. These principals needed more support in terms of ideas and they were willing and prepared to learn despite these situations. This for me was an important learning experience with these principals who had a steeper hill to climb.

There was evidence of the systematic planning that principals have learnt in the mentoring process. One example of this is the principal who indicated that he holds strategic planning meetings with his staff at the start of the academic year. This principal also stated that he outsourced the services of external partners for staff motivation. Some principals indicated that they struggled with planning, delegation, policy implementation and many other tasks. After learning, they reported a vast improvement in these areas. One principal explained himself as an effective and responsible leader with skills in the management of resources such as finance, and human and physical resources. “I am now a results-oriented leader”, he added. This statement was also proven to be true when considering what the principal had done to ensure that it is not only he and his community that are responsible for the provision of quality education; he has also brought on board private companies which have assisted with the training of educators, as well as providing for a Representative Council for Learners (RCL).

The analysis of documents (reflective journals) provided practical evidence to confirm the abstract conceptualisations of both principals and mentors. In terms of foundational competence, one of the principals recorded that prior to the learning opportunity he had lacked information on conducting a SWOT analysis, and was not aware that curriculum management was the key to school success. During the learning opportunity, “I learnt that I must prioritise my tasks, I need to plan weekly, I need to create healthy relationships with the staff and other stakeholders as a leader of the institution.”

Educational leaders who do not conduct SWOT analyses run the risk of failing in their core task, as this exercise helps leaders not only to know their own strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats but also those of the school. The skills adopted during the learning opportunity enabled both principals and their schools to prioritise and plan all activities.

Principal 1's journal entry indicate that when he started with the programme in 2011, he undertook a journey that not only changed his teaching skills but also allowed them him to grow and become a stronger person and a professional. He wrote:

I knew the word "SWOT" but did not know how accurate and important it would be in my life and that of the school. I can honestly say that I have learnt more while working on my assignments. [*Principal 1, Journal,*]

Curriculum management is one of the most important tasks for school principals. In most schools, principals are not even aware that the curriculum is important; on the contrary, it is the life and death of a school. Principal 2's journal entry alluded to the lack of this knowledge. [*Principal 2, Journal,*]

I did not have skills to manage the curriculum and this caused problems where I could not monitor the work teachers were doing because I was not involved. I only allocated subjects to teachers, gave them the time-tables to teach.

Entries from the journal of Principal 3 revealed her learning experiences regarding the new Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). She noted in this regard: "The learning experience was interesting and exciting. The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement outlined to us as students, the changes it is bringing, changes in the learning areas." [*Principal 3, Journal,*]

The journal entries highlight the fact that the principals managed to develop theories on how to solve their problems systematically using the SWOT analysis strategy. They engaged in problem analysis, planning systematically in relation to their situations. Mentors confirmed that before each mentoring sessions they would come together and plan, using their experiences from previous mentoring sessions, and

would discuss common problems and possible solutions. In the past, some of the mentors had been involved in programmes such as the AMIGOs (described as “friend of the school”), a programme conducted in the North West and Gauteng provinces which targeted SMTs and principals. In addition, another mentor had been employed by the University of Pretoria to mentor student teachers registered for the B.Ed programme. The sharing of these experiences helped those who were involved with mentoring for the first time. Principals also got the opportunity to come together for networking sessions, during which they would share their frustrations relating to the programme as well as those relating to their schools.

Such sessions were facilitated by asking the principals to share their views about what, in their opinion, should have been done differently to benefit their learning. The aim was to determine the use of logic and ideas in enhancing their own learning in the programme. In one case in point, principal 3 was not particularly happy that on one occasion the mentor addressed them as a group without having drawn up a programme. He pointed out that he would have loved to receive a programme indicating the contents of the discussion on a particular day. The other four principals did not have ideas on what they thought should have been done differently and were content with the way the mentors facilitated their learning. This, however, raises concerns if we consider that adult learning is self-directed; Smith (2002) states that “adult learners should possess, among other qualities, a self-concept: As a person matures his self-concept moves from being a dependent personality toward a self-directed human being”.

This research focused on how the learning experiences of mentors and mentees were reflective of Kolb’s experiential learning theory. The findings relating to these research questions are presented and guided by the theoretical framework and the methodology chosen for the study. Accordingly, the following research question guided the research process:

What were the mentors’ and mentees’ expectations of their learning (hopes and fears that were experienced) during the mentoring process?

Young and Perrewé (2004:103) contend that “although few studies report on the perceptual outcomes of mentors and mentees, the perceptions of mentoring

participants are quite important”. They further state that “attitudes about mentoring based on general beliefs and past experiences are likely to influence future participation in mentoring. In as much as perceptions are important, the researcher posits that expectations come before perceptions and are therefore equally important”.

Boud and Walker (1991:14) talk about intent, an element that is responsible for learners coming into a particular learning event. Some of the mentors in the programme had previous experiences with mentoring and, as they confirmed during the interviews, they came expecting to help, support and guide the principals to use their own knowledge, as well as their cultural and contextual factors, in resolving whatever challenges they were experiencing. The fact that all the mentors expressed feelings of happiness and excitement when offered the opportunity to mentor principals says a lot about their expectations. One of the mentors expressed his feelings about the selection and said it was an opportunity for him to put theory into practice. Meanwhile another mentor said that it was an opportunity for him to work with people from the other side of his community. This was a white mentor who saw this as an opportunity to learn more about schools in the black communities and their challenges. This comment reveals the longstanding cultural gap that exists between the black and white communities in South Africa. White mentors in this programme came face to face with the township educational set-up for the first time. Hence, they had never experienced the conditions that the black school principals were exposed to.

As was indicated earlier, this research adopted a phenomenological approach and was therefore concerned with the lived experiences of the participants. The next mentor, before mentoring principals, had started by mentoring students who were obtaining teaching qualifications at the University of Pretoria. He indicated that he did not have many expectations of the programme, because he did not know what was going to happen. He indicated that that most of the time he experienced things as they came, and adapted his coaching style as dictated by the situation as it occurred. This situation sounded strange: an experienced mentor not having expectations of the programme, knowing very well that he was going to take on a new form of

responsibility different from his previous ones. It is suspected that the mentor did not have personal learning expectations of the programme.

Another of the mentors main concern prior to the start of the programme was with the content of the lectures as well as their practicability. Later he discovered that the lectures were practical and that principals could easily do them in their schools. This concern suggests that this mentor was unsure about whether the programme, by emphasising practical knowledge and skills content, would suit his mentoring skills and the needs of the principals. The mentors stated his concerns thus:

I was concerned at first about the content of the lectures whether they were practical or not, the contents were of such a nature that the principals and deputies will be able to use or not, whether it was implementable in a school environment or not.

Generally, all the principals were excited to be part of the programme even though some were nervous and doubtful in the beginning. The idea that they were allocated mentors was enough to convince them that they were going to learn from the programme. Among the issues mentioned as forming their expectations were the support they were going to receive in terms of effective leadership and management of schools. This expectation was common to all the principals. This suggests that even though they had been in their position of principal for more than a year or two, they were not confident in terms of their leadership skills. Items that were mentioned more often than others were the formulation and implementation of policies in schools and it would appear that the principals were challenged in that regard. Consequently, they expected mentors to guide them in dealing with this challenge. Dealing with staff and parents was also mentioned as areas in which many of their expectations were based. One of the principals related how she had been doing class visits before the programme:

What was happening in the past was that I would monitor the teacher's work without recording and I will decide to do class visits without a programme and not informing teachers. This brought tensions between me and the staff.

The problems they experienced in their schools before getting into the programme were mostly centred on these issues. One principal mentioned something very

important as part of her expectation in the programme – curriculum management. Principals felt that after the programme they were going to be empowered to deal with their professional challenges.

The data analysis shows that the expectations of the principals were twofold: there were the expectations principals had before entering the programme and there were those that developed during the programme. These latter can be categorised as being academic in nature or relating to their academic progress; that is, achieving their qualifications at the end of the programme. These expectation were ascertained from the information sought regarding their relationships with their mentors. One mentor indicated that the principals under his mentorship saw him as being too demanding especially during the compilation of portfolios. He indicated that he did not want to spoon-feed them, and this might have meant that the principals wanted to be assisted more than mentorship allowed. Evidence of the academic orientation of some of the expectations was voiced by this the mentor as follows: “I said to them, the department is paying for you, it wants you to qualify, and you cannot neglect this and ours is to ensure that you do well in spite of all the demands on your time.”

The statement above gives the impression that the principals were overwhelmed by the assignments as well as their professional duties, and the mentor had to encourage them to strive towards the completion of the course requirements. Despite this, mentors confirmed the good relationship they had with their mentees, and the same was confirmed by the principals. They said the relationships were so good that principals could call the mentors even at night for help. This was confirmed by the mentors. On deeper analysis, it was easy to conclude that the nature of assistance at that time of the night or even over weekends was not related to professional duties but to the assignments that principals were battling with. This was confirmed by the mentor who said:

I am staying in Pretoria and they are staying in Mpumalanga. They used to invite me to some of their occasions and I also invited them to my place when I have family occasions. The relationship was so good especially when we have some assignments to do.

This finding confirms Renton's (2009) assertion that a mentoring relationship can last for a long time, or even in some cases a lifetime. She posits that mentors and their mentees can remain in touch as friends long after the initial mentoring programme has ended. At this point, it tends to become more informal.

The following comment from one of the principals was worrying since it confirmed that the learning expectations were more aligned to academic achievements than leadership experiences.

When the mentor comes to visit us, he would find that we are having problems and he will help us with those problems, and he will find that we have attempted our assignments, maybe we have stuck somewhere, when he arrives, we will tell him our problems and he would clarify those problems.

Although this cry for help seems normal and appropriate, it is not clear in what areas the mentor was providing assistance. Was it help in formulating on strategies to solve the problems relating to the assignments or work-related challenges? This attitude of calling for help from mentors may be seen as one of the negative consequences of mentoring – that is, that mentees rely too much on their mentors and thus deprive themselves of an opportunity to explore alternative solutions on their own.

The study further probed the levels of new self-understandings, reflections and interpretations of participants based on their previous and new experiences, with the aim to illuminate the conceptualisation of the understandings participants had of the learning processes which unfolded during the mentoring programme. Besides the understanding of the learning process, the understanding of the self as mentor and mentee was important during this phase.

The response of one of the mentors, when probing his growth as a mentor, was: "I have gained a lot of experience in the programme and also have grown as a mentor." The mentor's self-perspective indicated a shift from the previous knowledge of himself as a mentor to being a better mentor. The principal who was mentored by this mentor said something similar to that of her mentor: "I have grown as an

individual, I have grown to be a better person. My confidence has grown.” This principal had done some reflection on her previous practices in the school and conceded that she had knowledge on how to go about implementing the policies; however, what had caused her to fail was that she relied on her own knowledge and capabilities and did not involve other staff members at the school. She overlooked the role of stakeholders in implementing decisions. Later, after being guided by the mentor, she began to involve both stakeholders and educators and began to delegate some of her duties even to educators who did not form part of the SMT. Morrissey (2000:7) states that “schools and school systems that are improving directly and explicitly confront the issue of isolation by creating multiple avenues of interaction among educators and promoting inquiry-oriented practices while working toward high standards of student performance”. The shift towards shared practice made her work much easier and enjoyable because she had extra hands. She concluded by indicating that she interpreted that as professional development for her staff.

Mentor 2 said that they used to come together as mentors to discuss their experiences before going to the schools. In the group discussions, he said they were open to each other because they knew each other as principals before being mentors. This was also an opportunity for them to integrate their past experiences as principals into the new experiences as mentors in the programme. Morrissey (2000:3) talks about insufficient attempts in the school improvement efforts resulting from the narrow, piecemeal efforts made in the past. The insufficient efforts, she argues, resulted in teachers working in isolation. The mentors’ practice of coming together was an improvement on what Morrissey (2000) describes, and was an attempt to address problems collaboratively in a productive interaction with colleagues which resulted in new insights and understandings about their practices. The contributions made by the new experiences to the principals were confirmed by all the principals in the programme and are indicated mainly as the experiences that principals took from the programme.

In terms of the mentors’ and mentees’ learning from concrete experiences, it can be deduced that the mentorship programme did indeed achieve some successes. In the programme individual interactions with others occurred in the context of daily events

and these formed part of the entire learning process. Consequently, participants showed some degree of open-mindedness and flexibility in dealing with changes, and they demonstrated an awareness of people's emotions. In some instances, mentors had to individualise their teaching and visits to their mentees. The above discussion confirms the concrete experiences which facilitated further learning in the participants.

The principals and their mentors managed to develop concepts to solve problems. Mentors occasionally came together to discuss problems and solutions before and after mentoring sessions. Likewise, principals also discussed common problems among themselves. They analysed ideas systematically and planned together with their subordinates at their schools. What had been abstract for them before entering the programme subsequently became concrete.

Principals and mentors within the programme demonstrated the ability to engage in initiatives to change the situations they confronted. Mentors were very helpful in this regard, providing skills and strategies for the principals. In addition, the physical environment in some schools changed from what it had been prior to the programme, as the principals themselves changed their approach towards the profession. The mentors were also exposed to conditions they never knew existed thus pointing to experiential learning having taken place.

During these two stages: concrete experience, which is the first stage of the cycle, and abstract conceptualisation which is the third stage of the cycle, the findings have been consistent with the following theoretical aspects:

6.4. Theoretical Implications for participants' Learning Experiences

6.4.1. Concrete experience

Andresen, Boud and Cohen (2000) claim that one way to look at experience is to consider it as an interaction between learners and a social, psychological and material environment or milieu, and that it is learners interacting with this milieu that constitutes experience. What this statement means is that for a person to acquire experience, the individual must be attached to a defined environment and be of

sound mind. In addition, there needs to be a relationship between this person and the environment in which the interaction takes place. When an individual interacts effectively with an environment, the mind, feelings and actions form the basis of the interaction, and the end results are the concrete experiences. This interaction between the environment and humans is characterised by successes and failures, problems and solutions. In this study, principals and mentors were able to identify problematic situations during their mentoring relationships as well as those which existed before these relationships, with some of these problems being identified by the principals in their schools before getting into the programme. In most cases, they had tried to solve the problems on their own. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993:4) propose that “in other situations, the problem emerges from one’s own experience, and in whatever form, problems arise out of a sense of discomfort or a desire to change”. This statement was confirmed by the statements from mentors and mentees alike.

Mentor 2: “I am going to be able to correct the shortcomings I had while I was at the district office.” [*Mentor 2, Interview Q.6. Transcript 2*]

Principal 1. “How am I going to manage this situation, but then I just felt, let me take it ,maybe it is going to assist me.” [*Principal 1, Interview Q,2. Transcripts*]

This is a confirmation that even though the principal was managing and leading the school, there were challenges that resulted in the school not running as smoothly as he would have liked.

The interactions during mentorship with peers and mentors helped principals to come to accept their problems, reflect on them and find ways to resolve them. Some of the problems were experienced during their engagement with their coursework through assignments. Some principals even confirmed having sought help from their mentors at odd hours and over week-ends. Mentors confirmed that they had made themselves available to help. Movement between an experience and reflecting on that experience had also occurred. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993:4) postulate that “regardless of how an awareness of the problem develops, its discovery or recognition motivates individuals to gather information and this moves them further into the reflection cycle”. Principals confirmed this process by way of consulting their

mentors frequently for assistance. It was noted that, at the end of the programme, schools had developed appropriate policies and had begun to involve as many stakeholders as possible in the resolution of problematic issues at their schools. The process was not easy, since participants had to identify even their personal problems which hampered the way they communicated with their subordinates. This was not easy because, very often, problems, including personal problems, are seen as a sign of incompetence or failure on the part of the leader or the school.

6.4.2. Abstract Conceptualisation

Taking into account the problems experienced by the participants and also having reflected on these problems, the next step was to think and act on alternatives to solve the problems. Principals and mentors came to understand what was done and how it was done. One principal, when explaining his understanding of reflection stated that it is a process of looking back at what was done and how it was done. After this reflective process, a search for new ideas and strategies begins. Consultations with peers through visits to other schools were some of those strategies participants mentioned and had implemented. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) state that “the objective at this stage is to develop alternative hypotheses or action research strategies that may address the problem by gathering information that could help develop a more effective conceptual and strategic approach”. In the programme, participants were encouraged to try different ways and strategies for addressing both their problems and their fears in this regard.

One of the principals indicated that she was fearful that, as a manager, she might be found not to be doing the right things at her school. Mentorship removed her fears by instilling in her a sense of confidence. It was discovered that whatever she was doing was correct, but because of a lack of confidence, she found herself confused and as a result confusing the staff because she was not sure of herself or her leadership potential.

Abstract conceptualisation could also be identified from the principals’ journal entries. The following is an example of this process as was recorded by the one of the principals:

Principal 2

Problem area

During the analysis of the overall results of the school over a three-year period, we discovered that the Grade 4 results were the lowest and that Mathematics was the lowest performing subjects. The principal confirmed that something had to be done.

This problem could be attributed to poor curriculum management in the entire school. Curriculum management requires that the purpose of the school, as encapsulated in its vision and mission statements, be revisited. If it does not align itself to curriculum outputs, which are the core business of the school, then something drastic should be done. The fact that the poor performance was identified in Mathematics should not only be seen in the light of Mathematics being the challenging subject; focus should also fall on the quality of the school's language teaching and the quality of the instructions. It was mentioned earlier that the principal is the accounting officer and therefore is teacher number one in the school. His or her tasks include ensuring that both learners and teachers achieve.

Action

This was discussed with the SMT as well as the Mathematics teachers in the school. An action plan was developed by all involved, targeting the improvement of the Mathematic results. A number of causal factors were identified including ineffective teaching strategies. This was followed by planning for a number of actions to take place:

- review and amend policies
- restructure the assessment team
- develop monitoring tools
- monitor learners and teachers' portfolios continuously
- give support to subject educators.

In reflecting to the action items as listed above and described in the principal's reflective journal, I had my personal reservations about the strategies adopted. The first one, the review and amendments of policies, is not in the domain of the principal but that of the SGB. This body is responsible for the governance of the school and,

as such, policies are governance documents. Reviewing them, if it comes as an initiative from the principal or staff, may cause serious problems. This is the domain and territory of the SGB alone.

The restructuring of the assessment team is another problematic issue. The need for this might be due to the identified inefficiencies in terms of assessment processes or strategies. In the interests of staff development, however, which this programme is addressing, my view is that the principal as part of the programme should have known about the need to develop the teachers who were part of the assessment team. Restructuring the team therefore has the potential to strain relationships among the teachers in the school. The last action, support to subject educators, was more appropriate and thus if subject educators are supported, why would it be necessary to restructure the assessment team which consists of the very same subject educators.

6.5. Themes which describe the Phenomenon

In the methodology section it was stated that the study adopted a phenomenological approach as the preferred method. The purpose of a phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena in a situation by the way in which they are perceived by the mentors and the mentees. According to Halldórsdóttir (2000:66), identifying the theme which describes the phenomenon is an answer to the question: what is the meaning of the phenomenon under study? According to this author, this theme is called the “overriding” theme. The overriding theme should tell the reader in a nutshell the meaning of the phenomenon, from the point of view of those who have lived it. The final analytical structure of the phenomenon is a construction of meaning. This was not an easy process; it took the researcher a lot of time to finally get to understand the meaning participants attached to the phenomenon under study. Halldórsdóttir (2000) states that finding an overriding theme which presents the meaning of the phenomenon is an art and the time it takes should not be underestimated – it involves going through the stages of silence, reflection, selection, identification, interpretation, construction and verification again and again. It also requires the researcher’s abstract thought processes, particularly reasoning, intuition and introspection.

The study sought to discover the participants' interpretation of the following phenomena: mentoring, learning experiences and reflection. The following sections discuss the conclusions made in this regard.

6.5.1. Mentoring

For the principals in the programme, mentoring was seen and interpreted along the lines of providing help with the assignments from the university. Principals also saw it as a way of addressing the problems they were experiencing at their schools. The following themes were used to describe mentoring: “assistance to becoming a better leader”, “sharing of ideas”, “an on-going-developmental process”, and “a direction-giving exercise”. Mentors had a slightly better understanding of mentoring because they explained it as a form of career development for the principals. Surprisingly, however, none of the principals interviewed interpreted it along those lines. In short, all principals mistook mentors for problem solvers and not guides. Nevertheless, it was good to note that the mentor–mentee relationships were characterised by trust and extended relationships that extended even beyond the programme. The implications of this are that there are possibilities of extended relationships and life-long learning between mentor and mentee. One of the mentors described mentoring as “showing the ropes” and another defined it as “learning from someone”.

Some of the mentors viewed the process as a power yielding tool. As mentors, they had an opportunity to influence their mentees because of their vast experience.

6.5.2. Learning Experiences

Learning experiences were seen mainly in terms of participation in the programme and included advice on school management strategies, leadership strategies and how to manage school assets. There seems to have been the belief that learning only took place while in the programme. There was very little appreciation or mention of learning experiences outside the programme. One principal stated, for example, that she expected the lectures to teach her about policies, filing systems, office arrangement, management of human resources and much more. Those who mentioned these learning experiences were actually not aware that were important learning experiences, regarding them rather as “failure or incompetency”. What was pleasing to note about these experiences was that they were linked to leadership learning. Principals knew that the learning content was intended to equip them for

their leadership roles. Accordingly, they cited “better and effective school management, good leadership for the school for better results”. Janson (2008:74) posits in relation to this:

Moreover, in addition to guiding behaviors and social perceptions, experience-based knowledge of leadership becomes, over time, inextricably integrated with the development of one’s self-concept as a leader. There is a general agreement among researchers that leadership experiences are a major route in the development of leaders.

6.5.3. Reflection

Although the principals had an idea of what the term “reflection” entails, they lacked reflection skills, especially critical reflection which was very important during their participation in the mentoring programme. However, knowledge of reflection did help them to become aware of their weaknesses and assisted them in opening up to their mentors about them. The common phrase in defining reflection proffered by the principals was that it was an opportunity to go back to what was done and identify the causes of failures and successes. The following descriptions of the process, as understood and interpreted by participants, were recorded, “slow learning”, “looking back”, “self-improvement tool” and “something that gives direction”. The only practice that was not mentioned was “reflecting in practice”. This was because none of the participants contextualised reflection within practice.

Self-reflection was recorded mainly in the reflective journals. Principals indicated how they had improved in terms of self-knowledge and in dealing with their colleagues. Self-knowledge helped them to not only judge others but also to reflect on themselves. They confirmed how important reflection was for their learning.

Simply put, “experiential learning means learning from experience or learning by doing” (Lewis & Williams, 1994:5). The study confirmed the learning of the mentees (principals) and their mentors from their previous experiences which laid firm foundations for their learning from the mentoring experiences. From the data presented, the findings also indicate that the development of principals “should focus not only on the basic characteristics of their work and the problems of their daily lives in schools, leadership abilities which promote effective schools, but also on their personal development needs”. It is believed that increased personal development in

any leader increases the potential of effective learning from concrete experiences. The findings confirm that during the “concrete experience stage, participants gathered information and data about the particular situation or problem to be addressed” (Peterson, 1986:153).

During the abstract conceptualisation stage, principals received valuable help from their mentors in developing models or frameworks for depicting situations and their causal variables. Communication and attitudinal problems were attributed to attitudes. Principals were assisted to change, for example, their attitudes towards members of staff and improve communication channels.

CHAPTER 7

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFORMATION DIMENSION OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: REFLECTIVE OBSERVATION AND ACTIVE EXPERIMENTATION

7.1. Introduction

The transformation dimension is about the conversion of experience through (i) reflective observation and (ii) active experimentation. According to Kolb (1984), in order for learners to be efficient, they have to (i) “perceive information, (ii) reflect on the way it will affect some aspects of their lives, (iii) compare how it fits into their own experiences, and (iv) think about how this information offers new ways for them to act”. Kolb (1984) states that “learning requires more than seeing, hearing, moving or touching”. Participants in the mentoring programme, in line with experiential learning theory, had to integrate what they sensed and thought about with what they felt and how it modified their behaviours.

One of the aims of the Department of Basic Education in introducing the mentoring programme for principals was to develop reflective practitioners. Simply put, it means that principals should become reflective practitioners. Literature makes a distinction between “reflection” and “reflective practice”. According to Leitch and Day (2006:180):

- Reflection is considered as a process or activity that is central to developing practices.
- Reflective practice is what practitioners do or think in action. This includes practices such as “reflection-on-action”, and “reflection-in-action”.

The two terms mentioned above were traced in terms of how they emerged from the data. Data collected for this study points to the centrality of these concepts in the mentoring that took place in this programme.

7.2. Reflective Observation

This is a process of self-analysis, self-questioning and questioning of assumptions. In this learning mode the individuals varied thoughts and ability to evaluate events from different perspectives are emphasised (Dede, 2011:21). It was discovered that

participants used the reflection process when they reviewed their past practices in terms of leadership and management. Mentor 1 indicated that the district officials do not have a clue about what principals are supposed to be doing. He further indicated that this was so because they had not studied management and that was the reason they were running around in circles not knowing what to do about mentoring principals. The feedback from this mentor was classified as reflection-on-practice in the case of district officials regarding mentoring. On reflecting on the next step after this programme he intends going back to the district to work with and empower district officials regarding the mentoring of school principals if such an opportunity presented itself.

Another principal laboured under the impression that teachers at his school were difficult and impossible. This was after finding it difficult to work with them. After reflecting on this situation during mentoring, he realised that the problem lay not with the teachers, but that his attitude towards them. A comparison can be made with one of the principals who indicated that he used to convene SGB meetings by himself without involving the chairperson and the secretary. One principal said she used to plan alone and then expect her staff to implement her plans. This kind of behaviour is a reflection of an inferiority complex and a lack of trust in others. Consequently, these incidents caused problems for these principals. Lessons learnt during the mentoring process, which included delegation, sharing of tasks, involvement of other stakeholders to quote just a few, have helped in liberating them from their assumptions and wrong practices. Immediately after beginning with the reflection process, they realised that leadership and management in schools is not an individual responsibility, but everybody's responsibility. Mentor 2 commented as follows in this regard:

In some schools the principals and teachers were not sitting down to discuss the programmes of the school together. After the programme, they came together, reflected on their current conditions and planned on how to go ahead together.

This was echoed by the principal who was mentored by the mentor cited above: “I also learnt the importance of involving other stakeholders because they own the policies.”

This principal had been experiencing problems with staff who were constantly absent from school. She did not bother to know the reasons behind this behaviour. After reflecting on the learning from this programme and analysing the school and the individuals’ situations, she managed to get to the root causes of their behaviours. This she managed through the guidance she received from her mentor. She started treating her teachers with respect and understanding. She changed from being the tough, “take no non-sense” type of a principal. She began understanding their personal situations and was able to offer guidance and help when required to do so..

Having to work with principals from different socio-cultural and racial backgrounds forced mentors to question themselves and their past knowledge and practices as school principals. One of the mentors who served as a principal at one of the former model C schools commented about the previous government regarding the appointment of principals and said that it did not appoint very experienced, motivated and clever people to become principals. He attributed the failure of schools to this practice. Some mentors came from former model C schools and had little knowledge of the contexts in which their mentees were working. These contexts are characterised by low socio-economic conditions with high levels of poverty and deprivation, child-headed families among others. They also had to reflect deeply on their past experiences and practices so as to align them to the current situations especially with schools in disadvantaged communities.

Kayes (2002:138) states that “reflective approaches to management learning focus on the process of self-discovery and questioning that leads managers to develop a comprehensive view of managerial practice”. This, according to Kayes (2002), “includes the historical, social and cultural implications of management”. Chapter 1 of this study paints a picture of the historical conditions that existed before the dawn of democracy in South Africa. Education was provided along racial lines. Black communities received inferior education when compared to the other racial groups, that is, whites, Asians and coloureds. Socially, many black communities were

residentially confined to poor rural areas, and derived little from the economy of the country as they were afforded poor educational opportunities and the nature of their work was mainly unskilled labour.

This study further examined the transformation of these experiences through questions on reflection in order to ascertain the participant's reflective practices during mentorship. The reason for examining reflection stems from one of the objectives of the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (2007), that of developing "reflective practitioners". One principal in responding to a question on the importance of reflection stated that:

"Reflection is important; it is like self-introspection, about checking yourself as to whether you are still intact. So it is important. I believe that each and every one must at some stage visit him or herself so that he can correct himself or herself in case there are some other wrongs that he/she is doing". [*Principal 4, Interview Q.11, Transcript 10*]

The above statement supports Kolb's (1984) view that reflection represents a key element of a learner's development. He suggests that "students reflect on a concrete experience that they have undertaken. They then use this reflection to draw conclusions and further conceptualise what they have experienced, which they can feed into further concrete experience through experimentation".

According to Boud and Walker (1991:20), "the reflective process needs to be linked to the event which is unfolding, and the more involved learners are with the texture and features of the event, the more creative and effective the experience can be". The events that the study looked into included the school visits by mentors, the development of reflective journals and the SWOT analysis by principals.

The feedback from participants confirmed the benefits of reflection during mentorship and that reflection also provided a link between experience and learning from that experience. Schön (1983) argues that "reflective practice is a key attribute of being a professional".

Schön (1983), advocates the use of the reflection process the in experiential learning activities since it offers the ability to learn while at work. The idea of reflection-on-practice requires individuals to “recreate his or her experiences through remembering events, thoughts and feelings”.

The following feedback from one of the principals indicates the importance of reflective observation:

I can indicate that I have seen how other schools are doing their things. That has assisted me a lot because somewhere, we were doing things not knowing that we were doing the right things.

In support of reflection, one principal explained it as a process of self-visitation, introspection, checking to see whether you are still intact. This principal talked about a situation that almost drove him out of the programme, but with the help of the mentor he was able to reflect on his decision and stayed in it. This turn of events was important in confirming the need for an individual to be patient and objective (Dede, 2011) and learning by watching and listening carefully in order to make up his or her mind. Mentors also afforded the principals with an opportunity to apply their minds when faced with situations and take decisions on the basis of their own thoughts and feelings. One principal commented on decision-making thus: “Sometimes it is difficult to take a decision, but if you are informed and mentored, you will take informed, right decisions at the right time.”

The following mentor’s feedback indicates how he went about mentoring his principals on the issue of taking decisions:

Mentor 3: “Whenever I was mentoring, when I have some aspects to share with them, I would ask them ... what is your view on this is?” [*Mentor 3, Interview Q8, Transcript 3*]

This is a very important aspect of mentoring which deviates from the perceived notion that mentors dictate solutions to mentees. In evaluating his contribution, this mentor stated that the outcomes of what he does with his mentees tell him what type of a mentor he has been, and confirm that he has been a good mentor because even

today the principals call him for advice. This is a sign that the mentoring was good; nevertheless there is the risk of mentees being eternally dependent on the mentor. I feel that there should come a time when the mentees are independent.

The importance of reflection was emphasised by principal 1, who was mentored by mentor 6, when asked about the importance of reflection, she said:

Reflection, I think means going back and checking whether what you were doing is right or not, is the situation improving or not? Since I started with the programme, at the beginning of each term, I conduct a staff meeting where we reflect on the previous term. Educators will come up with problems that they saw during the term and we will come up with solutions on how to improve.
[Principal 1, Interview Q.10, Transcript 7]

The next section presents the principals' biographical details and their summative reflections on the five topics listed below. The purpose of this exercise is to reveal more about the principals and the status of their schools both before and after the leadership development programme conducted through mentoring.

The process of reflection was a central feature in the journals that the principals kept throughout the programme. In line with Boud (2001:9-10), reflection in these journals had the following purpose:

- “to deepen the quality of learning in the form of critical thinking and development
- to enable learners to understand their own learning process
- to increase active involvement in learning and personal ownership of learning
- to enhance professional practice or the professional self in practice”.

The journals were used to record data pertaining to the following topics:

- *Self-management.* Rolfe and Gardner (2006:598) suggest that “reflection is not a technology to produce better outcomes but is essentially about personal growth”. This study contends that self-management is also about self-knowledge and a willingness to improve the view of the self through on-going reflective exercises. The study also holds the view that a principal who is able

to manage him/herself is better equipped to steer the school towards being a self-managing school, a concept recently promoted by the Department of Education.

- *Personal traits.* These are the sum total of those characteristics that go to make up whether a person may be judged as either good or bad. Zaccaro (2007:7) defines these traits as the innate or heritable qualities of the individual. Seeing that the participants in the leadership development programme were principals or leaders of a school, the term “leadership traits” is more appropriate here. Zaccaro (2007) points out that, in the first half of the twentieth century, this trait perspective mentioned here shifted to include all relatively enduring qualities that distinguished leaders from non-leader. Traits such as accuracy in work, knowledge of human nature and moral habits, interpersonal skills, administrative abilities and stable leadership qualities are among the many the reflective exercise aimed to highlight.
- *Managerial skills.* Managerial skills are important for leaders in education, since education is delivered through a number of external and internal programmes that require skilful management. Managerial skills are important for the successful transformation of schools towards self-managing schools as mentioned above. Prew (2007:450) posits that “the very expression ‘self-managing schools’ gave urgency to the argument that school management needed to be rehabilitated and given a more central role in the schooling system”.
- *School context.* In the background of this study in chapter one, a picture of the conditions in many schools as a result of the previous political dispensation was presented. Prew (2007:452) provides a brief summary of this situation:

“Many schools have suffered years of neglect and violence. Most of the areas where these schools are have seen politically inspired violence which has, it is probably fair to say, mutated into violence around drugs and power. Some of the schools as a result of recent history have badly divided student bodies and even staff bodies”.

This study was interested in how principals reflected on these and many issues in their schools and how were they addressing them to improve the practices and contexts of the schools.

- *Community context.* The principals had to reflect on the role of the community in the school, as well as that of the school in the community. The involvement of parents in school programmes is reportedly not good in many township schools. Accordingly, it was asked: What programmes are being implemented to change the situation around? Decision making in schools is not only the responsibility of the SMTs, but also that of the community in the form of SGBs. Prew (2007:454), in a study conducted in four schools in Soshanguve, discovered that “gaining real community involvement in schools is a two-way relationship: it needed to be planned and worked on”.

7.3. The biographical information of the principals (mentees) and their summative reflections

Principal 1

Principal 1 had occupied this position at High-Mountain Primary School for four years at the time of the interviews. The school she leads and manages has an enrolment of 687 learners – 355 male and 332 female learners. There are 22 educators in total – 18 are female and four male. The medium of instruction is English and Northern Sotho (also known as Se-Pedi). The school offers soccer, netball, athletics, dance and cricket, and has a drum majorette group, as extracurricular activities.

The principal’s academic qualifications include a B.Com degree (2002), an Advanced Certificate in Technology Education (2009), an M.Tech Education (2005) and a Primary Teachers Diploma obtained in 1990.

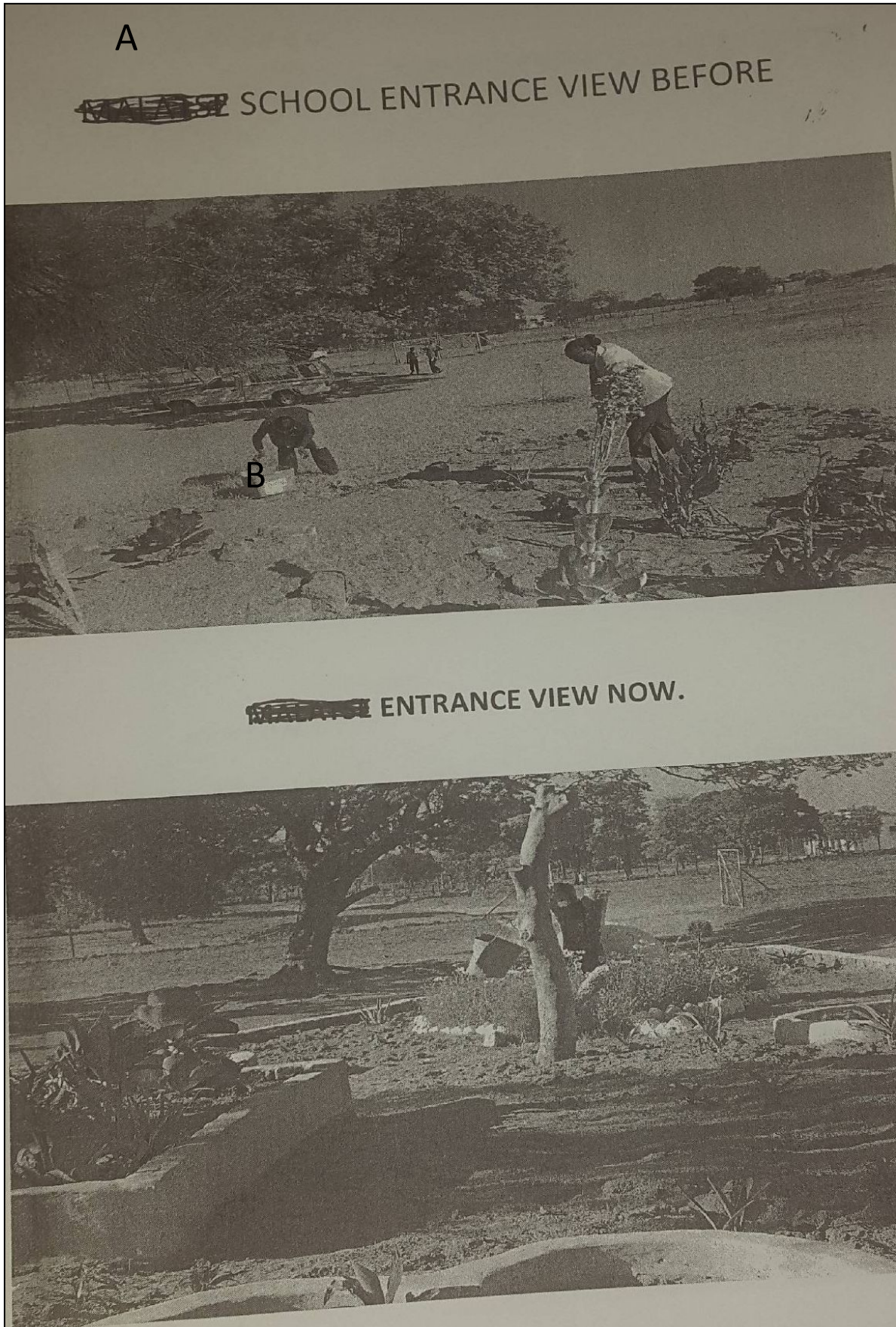
The reflective journal kept by the principal during the mentoring programme contains the following information about the conditions at the school before and after the implementation of the lessons learnt from the mentorship programme.

The first photograph shows the school entrance before the development of the physical environment of the school. It shows few flowers and unpruned trees which obscured the view of the school from the street. The school grounds are bare earth which is exposed to the wind. People could come and go on the school premises without being checked.

The photo titled “A. Entrance View Now: shows that the school entrance is no manned by security personnel and with well-arranged vegetation. Flowers have been planted in rockeries and the entrance leading to the school buildings is paved.

The second page shows two photos of the entrance to the administration block. One photo shows view before and the other the view after renovations had been done. Clearly these renovations were extensive.

PHOTOGRAPH 1



TOP PICTURE (A)

The entrance was simply an open field with no vegetation or paving. There are people already working on the entrance, making it attractive to visitors.

BOTTOM PICTURE (B)

The entrance is neat and clearly visible from the outside. There are flowers and a place is being prepared to plant more flowers.

The principal's records list the areas in which she had improved in terms of skills and knowledge acquired: [*Journal entry*]

- Improved personal and human relations
- Ability to analyse causes and solutions to staff problems
- Policy Formulation and implementation skills
- Management of curriculum
- Mentoring others
- Reflective skills
- Improved managerial skills
- Integrating community into the school programmes

In reflecting on self-management the principal stated that:

I managed my affairs well during the programme personally and professionally. I have been conducting myself well during the entire programme. I complied with all the demands of the programme. At school I have been an example, I performed my duties throughout without any problem. I also meet all what is expected from a responsible manager.

With respect to personal traits she indicated:

I am a person who likes to participate during discussions and that has grown to a higher level during the course. I am an active person in the community and lead many structures which sometimes hinder my academic progress and school work. I am also leading the Curriculum team in the circuit. This programme has contributed tremendously to my personality traits.

With respect to managerial skills she commented:

The programme has assisted me to grow as a manager. Programmes, projects, workshops and the recent strategic plan that we conducted at the school serves as evidence to what I have achieved so far. My managerial skills have earned me the respect at school and in the entire circuit. I have no doubt that the knowledge I have gained so far, for instance in financial matters, educational law, management of facilities, management of teaching and learning will benefit me and the school.

Regarding the school context, the principal stated:

My personal and professional growth says a lot even in the school. I am meeting the expectations of a school leader by supporting the staff and by being always available to the school. I am an answer to all the challenges the school is facing.

Schools operate within communities and are centres of community ideals. The principal stated the following in this regard:

As an active community member and leader of different structures in the community, I strongly believe that I play a major role in the community. This course taught me how to conduct myself and to take care of the learners.

Principal 2

African Minority Primary School is a public school in the Nkangala Education district and is headed by a male principal, assisted by a staff of 14 educators of which eight are female and six are male. Enrolment is 510 learners, 305 of which are female and 205 male. The school offers classes from Grade 1 to Grade 6. The principal, who was young and relatively inexperienced, had been at the school as principal for four years at the time of the interview and was doing his best to lead it.

The principal holds the following qualifications:

- BA (Honours)
- Junior Secondary Teachers' Certificate

Skills and knowledge acquired by the principal in the programme:

- Improved skills in handling staff members and their issues
- School improvement strategies including establishing committees
- Improved confidence
- Reflective skills
- Improved personality traits that have assisted in improving human relations in the school
- Delegation skills and sound curriculum management skills

In reflecting on self-management before entering the programme and after, he stated as follows:

Before entering the programme, my workload did not provide me with enough time to perform all my duties as expected. I could not manage time and was also not productive. I did not realise that my staff needed to be developed. After the programme, I realised how important the course was to my work.

With respect to personal traits the principal concluded that he has developed sound personality traits that ensured sound relationships with his staff and parents. In response to the question on his expectations of the programme, he indicated that he wanted to be empowered in his leadership role as he was facing challenges in this regard. This is the principal who had indicated previously that he perceived some teachers at the school as arrogant and difficult. After the programme, he confessed that things began to change and that he was much happier.

With respect to managerial skills, the principal recorded his experiences in the journal as follows: “When I became principal in 2010, I did not have practical knowledge for management and leadership.” He claimed to only know the theories. He delegated tasks to his staff without ascertaining their proficiency levels, believing that he could share his responsibilities with them, but found that much of the work was performed poorly and had to be re-done.

Reflecting on the school context, he maintained there were signs of improvement in terms of involvement and participation in curriculum issues. The principal stated briefly:

Curriculum is now well managed in the school and educators receive all the support they require. Policies that suit the schools background and environment have been developed. They have also developed programmes and tools to monitor and supervise progress. All sub-committees perform their duties well and those duties are properly allocated. Continuous reporting and feedback is done and everyone is constantly informed on all activities and changes. *[Journal entry]*

One of the leadership traits which is a must-have for leaders is the ability to adapt to different contexts. Zaccaro (2007:9) states that “effective leaders have an expansive behavioural repertoire and can effectively apply the appropriate responses to different situations”. The principals’ reflection on the community context revealed that the school’s SGB is now involved and decisions are a collective effort. Stakeholders are happy and satisfied with his leadership and management style. Learners’ academic performance has improved from 30% pass rate to 89% and the school is aiming for a 100% pass rate from all learners during the current academic year (2014).

The situation at this school is proof that community involvement in school activities is vital for the success of its programmes. This school and others like it where development and progress has been experienced have the challenge of sustaining these effective relationships. These can be fragile and can be ruined by minor deviations from the normal procedures.

Principal 3

Freedom Kids Primary School, situated in the Nkangala Education district has been designated a no-fee schools the Mpumalanga Department of Education. The principal is a young male in his early forties. He holds the following qualifications:

- Further Diploma in Education
- Policy Development and Management Course
- Secondary Teachers’ Diploma
- Coaching Development Programme

The school has a complement of 11 educators of which 10 are female; he is the only male on the staff. The school has two non-educator staff members and two general workers. The total learner enrolment is 417 learners, 200 boys and 217 girls.

The principal recorded acquiring the following knowledge and skills from the programme:

- Effective and responsible leadership
- Management of resources, including human, physical and financial
- Knowledge on how to assist and work with the SGB
- Conducting effective meetings with reflective sessions
- Improved self-management
- The four managerial tasks, different types of group and how effectively they could be managed
- Improved school culture.

Many principals' careers are put on hold by a lack of self-management. Some literature refers to this aspect as personal management. Reflective practice is a basis for self-management since it allows the principal to constantly "find" himself or herself in relation to practice and context. Leaders are expected to reflect continuously on themselves and their practice. The principal recorded having improved tremendously in terms of this aspect (self-management), as well as time-keeping, and also stated having a well-developed sense of self. *[Journal entry]*

Personal traits were among the items that mentors mentioned having received guidance on. One mentor even indicated to one of the mentees that their attitude could be the reason that their staff did not cooperate with them. Subsequently, the principal's reflection on their attitude towards staff members resulted to changes in their leadership styles and indicated the development of positive attitudes towards leadership and principalship in particular.

The principal's journal entries were not, however, detailed in terms of the personal traits that he identified as helping him to run the school. This principal was the only male figure in the school, with the rest of the staff being female and this required a particular set of personal attributes. Zaccaro (2007:7) suggests that leader traits included accuracy in work, knowledge of human nature, and moral habits. For this principal, an understanding of female behaviour both individually and in groups, would be worthy of consideration.

Reflecting on his managerial skills, he sang the praises of the mentoring programme for helping him acquire the knowledge and skills useful in managing his school. He stated having learnt the following:

- The four management tasks and their effective application
- The different types of groups and how they could be managed effectively, including the management of conflict among individuals and groups
- Different methods of motivation
- The types of delegation.

Reflecting on the context of the school and its activities the principal recorded as follows:

The school culture has improved and the school is now focusing on the important areas like vision and mission statement, curriculum support and instructional support. Each teacher knows what his/her job-description entails and know the school development plan. The school has been able to identify the Human Resources problems it had.

In a community context, the principal's reflection indicated that before his participation in the programme, the school lacked the support of the community. This, according to the principal, was a serious threat which began under the previous principal's management. AS he understood it, the previous principal was reserved and had not involved other people in the affairs of the school.

Principal 4

Principal 4 is male and is responsible for a staff of 13 educators – eight males and five females. The school had a total of 516 learners – 210 male and 306 female. The school includes Grades 7 to 12. The pass percentages in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) have fluctuated over the previous years.

The principal's qualifications include:

- Secondary Teachers' Diploma
- BA
- B.Ed.

According to the principal, he acquired the following knowledge and skills during the programme:

- Vast knowledge on what leadership is all about
- How to handle challenges from staff members professionally and efficiently
- Recording of events and diarising
- How to delegate responsibilities to junior staff
- How to capacitate educators about their rights and the rights of learners
- How to administer corrective punishment to learners
- Reflective skills
- Management of attendance, adherence to the code of conduct
- Active in community programmes like in the Lekgotla where school issues are also shared.

A study on successful principals conducted by Prew in 2007, revealed that “successful principals, who were open, confident and inclusive, were effective at working with the surrounding communities based on the community's understanding of its own needs and nature”. This author mentions that the skills “acquired by the principal are a step in the right direction in terms of his desire to integrate the school into the entire community”.

Self-management is driven by reflection, in particular self-reflection. Failure to take stock of one's strengths and weaknesses leads to self-deception and resistance to

change. Self-management is not possible without knowledge of these strengths and weaknesses and a willingness to address them. Reflecting on self-management, the principal stated that:

I now attend school at 6.30am everyday including Saturdays. I can now do all the duties assigned to me on time without hassles as was before. I can now also provide learners with feedback and remedial exercises on time.

Personal traits in this respect are seen within the dimension of leadership traits. They begin as personal traits, but as leaders of education, the programme sought to develop leadership skills and knowledge in the principals. This principal reflected on this aspect as follows: “The school has changed me for a better person, and now has principles and rules that I have set them myself without stress.”

This principal’s journal entries posed a problem for the researcher in two areas. The first was that the principal indicated that he was changed by the school, and the second was that he has drawn up rules and principles for himself. However, the entries do not indicate that the principal took time to reflect seriously on this.

Reflecting on his managerial skills, the principal noted as follows:

I have acquired a number of managerial skills through the programme, among others, management of late coming, staff absenteeism, bunking of classes by educators and learners as well as the locking of gates during lunch. This is in accordance to the school policy as well as the learner’s code of conduct and the discipline amongst boys and girls through the help of parents and the South African Police Service (SAPS). *[Journal entry]*

Within the school context, the principal’s reflection was summarised as follows:

The school has become a better place for learners and educators. The challenges we faced as a school have taught me a lesson of running the school in all aspects and difficulties. After completing the programme, I would surely become a better manager, leader and an educator of high values and standards.

With regard to the community context, the reflection of the principal was not clear and only reflected his attendance of community meetings attending to the issues of the community. There was no clear indication as to how the Lekgotla (tribal authority representative structure) was involved in the programmes of the school. The principal's involvement in the structure could be seen as ordinary participation and not necessarily for the purposes of dealing with the issues affecting education and the school. The principal summarised this as follows: "I am able to take part in all community events around the area by attending traditional meetings (Lekgotla) once per quarter to report on school challenges and progress."

Principal 5

This mentee is the principal of an ordinary public primary school with a learner enrolment of 482, 236 boys and 256 girls. The staff complement is 15 educators, 13 female educators and one male educator. The school also has an administrative clerk and two general workers. The school has been declared a no-fee school by the Mpumalanga Provincial Department of Education. Most of the learners walk to school, while those living further away use taxis and buses. The same applies to the educators. The school benefits from the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP), a programme that provides learners with meals.

The principal is female and holds a number of academic and professional qualifications:

- Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC)
- Primary Teachers Diploma (PTD)
- BA degree
- B.Ed.(Honours) degree

Her journal entries summarised the knowledge and skills she acquired from the programme as follows:

- How to prepare evidence of work done and to keep documents
- How to delegate responsibility at school and make follow ups
- How to draw up a programme for monitoring learners' and educators' work

- Drawing up timetables
- Reflective skills

The principal's summative reflection on self-management indicates that she prioritised her health over the self-management relevant to leadership of the school. Managing one's health is not necessarily a bad habit, but the reflection demonstrated the lack of a concise understanding of this skill. The principal learnt to take care of herself by avoiding stressful situations arising from her work and participating in activities that benefit her health positively.

Reflecting on personal traits, the principal stated as follows:

At the beginning, before this programme, I did not know how to develop myself personally and professionally. I was willing to learn new ways of working and approaching new things. I wanted to know innovative ways to improve what I do in my school.

The above entry in the principal's journal indicates that she lacked self-knowledge; it was therefore impossible to move forward without knowing herself as a person and a professional. It is important to note how the programme assisted her to address her weaknesses and to become the leader she wanted to be.

After participating in the programme, she stated that the knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes she developed had enhanced her personal and professional development. She summarised her gains in this way:

I have knowledge that I must take care of myself, live life to the fullest. I must do exercises to relax my mind, body and spirit to stay active. I have knowledge on how to create a pleasant atmosphere by participating in all the group activities done at school. I am now treating educators and learners in a trustworthy and respectful manner.

Managerial skills were among the expectations mentioned by the participants at the beginning of the interviews and this principal reflected this before participating in the programme.

She did not know how to manage the curriculum effectively, how to develop policies, or how to develop an inspirational mission and a vision for the school. In the programme she was assisted in this regard and subsequently began conducting staff meetings where she addressed the educators about new ways to change weaknesses into strengths. She is now ensuring that educators start teaching on time and that they maintain good classroom discipline. She also from time to time conducts classroom visits to observe the quality of teaching and to offer support. In the process educators have been capacitated in identifying problematic areas, setting up of reasonable targets, as well as implementing new strategies to improve teaching and learning. She concludes by stating:

I am able to apply critical understanding, values, knowledge and skills to my leadership and management so as to lead and manage my school effectively and contribute towards the improvement of education across the school system.

The school context as a centre of educational activities was the most important aspect of reflection. In alluding to this, the principal stated:

Curriculum delivery has improved in the school as opposed to what it was before. The school has developed a school improvement programme or plan which helps in the focused areas of the school whole development. Policies have been developed such as the HIV/AIDS policy, procurement policy, the assessment policy and many others which are vital in the smooth running of the school.

With regard to the community context, the principal's summative reflection stated that she had acquired additional skills in communicating with the parents of the learners as well as members of the community. She had begun to involve herself in the community structures where she was able to share her ideas and those of other community members and stakeholders. She now assists the community using her marketing skills. She also stated that she has learnt to improve teaching and learning in her school by applying economies of scale which allow for the maximum utilisation

of school resources so as to determine and address the needs of the school community.

7.4. Active Experimentation

“Active experimentation involves a practical focus on impacting the environment and getting things done and is anxious about whether one’s enhanced understanding fits reality” (Kolb, 1984). In this phase, the research sought to determine how principals change their surroundings by engaging in initiatives that attempt to change the situation. The principals confirmed that they had already drawn up plans and programmes for mentoring colleagues with special attention being paid to newly appointed staff.

In addition, the mentors suggested that a number of leadership and management changes be effected in schools. These include changes to interpersonal and human relations, management style, physical improvement of school surroundings and a number of innovations. Mentors and principals confirmed that a lot has been done by the principals in their schools. Some of this was recommended by mentors and some was initiated by the principals and their staff members. The fact that most of the schools of the principals involved in this course have subsequently improved is an indication of the active experimentation process. The feedback obtained in this regard was a response to a question that required evidence of changes in the schools after participating in the mentoring programme.

One of the questions posed to the principals was: “Do you regard the skills you have acquired in this programme relevant in other contexts, if so, which contexts do you have in mind?” Principal 5 confirmed that she was confident that her newly acquired skills would even benefit the principal of her neighbouring school who never had an opportunity to participate in this programme or any similar development programme. She undertook to share her skills with that principal. She also confirmed the relevance of these skills even in other fields outside the school, such as in industry and community based structures.

Principal , in his response to the question, said: “Say I am moved to another school bigger than this, or another district or province, I will use the skills I have learnt here.

First, I will analyse the situation, know the expertise of different individuals in that milieu and tell them the importance of mentorship, mentoring one another.” *[Principal 2, Interview Q.17 Transcript 8]*

This principal seemed to have understood and benefited from mentorship and had knowledge of what he was going to do practically after the programme. In this learning phase, Dede (2009) argues that “individuals involve themselves in things that they can do practically, rather than simply observe, hence, they learn by doing or experiencing”. Principal 2 laid out the steps that he would follow in the implementation of his skills:

Asking teachers to reveal their skills, teach them how to mentor each other within the confines of discipline, mention all that we can do and make a priority list, look at challenging areas and move towards improving the entire situation in the school.*[Principal 2, Interview Q.17, Transcript 8]*

At this stage it is important to link the participants’ responses to the learning outcomes of the module. Three of them are crucial at this stage:

1. “Manage the establishment, monitoring and evaluation of a mentoring and coaching programme
2. Understand and be able to apply relevant content knowledge in mentoring
3. Understand the role of a school mentoring programme as part of the school’s overall development plan”.

Mentee principals in this programme had to reflect on how they would establish the mentoring programmes in schools especially when there are newly appointed staff.

The response from Principal 1 was that she already has a programme to mentor teachers at her school. First, she would conduct research on the different aspects pertaining to the professional needs of the teachers. She would also use the knowledge and skills acquired from the programme.

Principal 2 said that he was currently mentoring teachers at his school. Now he planned to sit down with the teachers and to capacitate them through a mentorship

programme. He indicated that they had appointed a new head of department and he took it upon himself to induct and mentor the new incumbent.

Principal 3 put it this way:

“In the second week after the re-opening of schools next year, the whole staff including the auxiliary staff, we are getting to a team-building workshop conducted by Top-Up Africa. They are also training the executive of the RCL. The programme has taught me that team-building is very important in any situation”. [*Principal 3, Interview Q .18, Transcript 9*]

Mentors had to comment on the changes they had noticed in the schools. In addressing this matter they had to respond to the question as to whether they had noticed any changes in the schools they had visited during the programme.

Mentor 2, referred to the planning processes that he observed as one of the changes that had been successfully implemented by the principals. “After the programme, they came together, reflected on their current conditions and planned to go ahead together.” [*Mentor 2, Interview Q.13, Transcript 2*]

Principal 1 (under the mentorship of mentor 1) indicated that she had already begun implementing changes at the school and mentoring all the members of staff, sharing with them her experiences of the programme. She also stated that she had a programme aimed at conducting research to determine the needs of the staff.

Principal 2 stated that he had held an award function just before the interviews, where he was praised by the educators and the SGB members for the manner in which he had implemented positive changes in the school. The mentor (mentor 2) who was assigned to this principal echoed these sentiments, stating “there were many changes that have taken place in these schools, delegation of *work*, checking of progress made in the school and many others”.

Mentor 2 added:

During and after, yes, I sometimes pop into those schools; the first thing I check what is happening at reception, principal’s office, I was so happy to see those

schools progressing. The Department of Education and the University had the same goal in mind when offering the programme to the principals namely helping them to develop their potential. *[Mentor 2, Q.13, Transcript 2]*

Mentors wanted to see principals practising what they have learnt and thereby improving their skills. Smith and Rosser (2007) contend that “in experiential learning programmes, we want students to be curious about the world around them and to anticipate the next question, to read critically with an eye to practice”.

The data was verified by analysing the entries in the reflective journals kept by the principals during the programme. These journals contained the principals’ curriculum vitae, indicating their competencies, skills and educational qualifications before and after the mentorship programme. They also contained photos of the school environment showing the situation before and after the principal and the school had effected changes.

The aim of this process was to track the professional and personal developments of the principals and the way these developments had brought about change in their schools. For ethical reasons, the schools and the principals were allocated pseudonyms and codes.

In the interviews, both mentors and principals indicated that the physical appearance of the schools had changed as a result of mentorship.

After looking at the improvements that were effected in the physical environment of African Minority School, I decided to look at the criteria for a baseline assessment of this school in order to track the changes. The mentor had the following comments on the evidence of school leadership and general management at this school:

- “There is a clear leadership in the school although there are signs of unnecessary tensions in some of the phases. However, there are educators who are dedicated and committed.”
- “The management of staff affairs is superb. The only part which needs to be improved is the empowerment of the staff and orientation programmes.”

- “The curriculum is managed though there are some areas that the school needs improvement like classroom observations and supporting of the staff and commitment in some of the teachers.”
- “There are no proper systems in place to monitor the administrative clerk in the controlling of funds. The budget plan is also not followed as planned.”

An analysis of these comments indicates strong areas of strengths and weaknesses. The researcher had to check the interview transcripts and compare the changes that the principal is indicating in relation to the above comments. The transcripts revealed the following reflections by the principal:

The study has assisted me a lot in as far as building confidence is concerned, as a leader of this institution, I am more confident ... I can see that I can move this institution to greater heights.

Before, I was just working ... just working ... and then I learnt that as a leader you must have a plan for the week. [*Journal entry*]

In returning to his expectations of the programme, the principal stated that he expected to learn many things from the programme that would empower him to face the challenges he was experiencing as a principal. These expectations were based on the experiences of more practical challenges he had before the programme. Engaging in this type of experiential learning was risky for him as he feared that he might be exposed as incapable. Experiential learning provided the principals with an opportunity to share experiences that were be subjected to examination by the whole group during the contact sessions. “More traditional approaches in management development tend to ensure that the impact on any emotional reaction is kept to the minimum” (McKay, 2012:395).

After analysing the data from the interviews and that from the reflective journals, it was important to adequately address the research questions. The questions below addressed what Kolb (1984) calls the “transformation phase” of the experiential learning cycle. After the acquisition of knowledge and skills in the programme, how are these experiences then transformed into action? The reflective observation phase which was discussed earlier looked at how mentors and mentees reviewed what they did and attempted to do, as well as discovering skills such as listening,

paying attention, applying ideas and sharing them with others. The third question here was meant to obtain the participants' views or interpretations of the mentoring programme as a whole. Their evaluation was deemed important for this study seeing that it was interpretive and phenomenological in nature. Sandberg's (2005:43) argument on the justification of the "knowledge produced within interpretive approaches" states as follows:

The person and the world are inextricably related through lived experience of the world, the world is never a world in itself; it is always an experienced world, that is, a world that is always related to a conscious subject.

The study attempted to highlight the argument that the knowledge obtained from the data may not be justified as objective knowledge until such time as it is interpreted by the person experiencing it. Sandberg (2005) presents the following analogy and uses an object to support his argument:

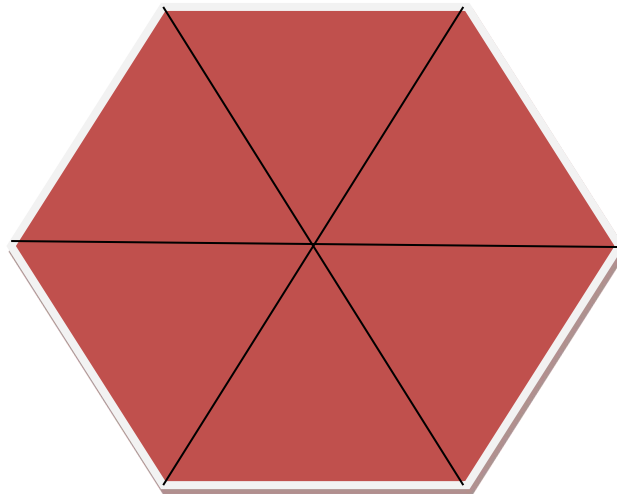


Figure 7.1: Adapted from Sandberg (2005:49)

7.4.1. Perception and Knowledge Creation

According to Sandberg (2005), the above object "may present itself as an umbrella". However, if one look at the object a little longer, the picture may be perceived differently from the umbrella. Another person may associate it with something else other than the obvious view. Participants in the mentoring programme in the same

way had different perceptions and interpretations of the phenomena being studied. Their learning experiences resulted in different forms of knowledge.

Boonstra and De Caluwe (2007:12) state that “if the world is seen as an objective and true reality, then developing knowledge is based on objective observation and analysis of the relationship between the various aspects and variables and that the world is quantifiable and denoted by laws”. This, they say, is known as “a positivist interpretation of knowledge”. They also state that “if the world is seen as subjective, then the method of developing knowledge is based on understanding the ways people give shape to their world”. What Sandberg (2005), Boonstra and De Caluwe are trying to drive home are the truths about one’s subjective judgements on what knowledge is and what it constitutes and also what it means to them. This means that we experience life and work situations as complex, dynamic and unpredictable, and in them we are constantly searching for meaning and creating realities. The following discussion highlights these aspects from the participants’ experiences:

People search for understanding of what is going on, starting from their subjective experiences and observations. The point of departure is a subjective and interpretative vision with the basic premise that people are capable of changing their reality (Boonstra & De Caluwe, 2007:13)

Mentee principals and their mentors were required to provide their own evaluation of the entire mentoring programme. This was intended to discover the meanings each participant constructed during and after this programme.

Literature on mentoring has described it “as a model for leadership development”. (Stead, 2005) and Dean and Shanley (2006) confirm that development occurs more often on the job than in the classroom (experiential learning). The two processes have been explored in detail in the study. Like every programme or process, evaluation is important. Accordingly, questions for the interviews were prepared to extract the required information. These questions enquired into the programme’s appropriateness for professional development, the quality of mentorship, relevance of skills in different contexts and the application of these skills to newly appointed staff at school.

The views shared by mentors regarding the appropriateness of mentorship as a leadership development strategy were positive as all agreed that mentorship is indeed a leadership development strategy. One of the mentors had strong views on the Department of Education's seriousness about mentorship. His views were that even though mentorship is such an important tool for the development of principals, there are weaknesses in the system, as district officials do not have knowledge of mentoring and even about what principals are expected to do in schools. He argued that officials in the Department of Education do not take principals under their wing. The demands they are placing on principals are such that they disregard the seriousness of the position. He also said that the reasons for this may include the fact that some of them did not study management. He suggested that if the Department of Education could pay attention to the skilling of departmental officials as well so that they could manage mentoring programmes in their districts, that could speed up the leadership development in the provinces and districts.

Another mentor agreed on mentorship as a leadership development initiative and concluded that many of the principals are good leaders, but not managers. Mentorship then helps to fill that void. It was also mentioned that mentorship allowed mentors not to dictate to their mentees, but to assist them in formulating solutions to their problems independently with the support of the mentor. The mentors even though to a limited extent acted as role models to their mentees. The principals observed the behaviour of their mentors and emulated them. The mentors generally exercised patience, used their listening skills effectively, and this in turn was copied by the principals when dealing with one another and their staff members.

When mentors were asked to comment on the impact of their mentoring contributions to their mentees, mentors informed the interviewer that principals did not engage in reflective practices either as individuals or as a staff at the schools. Reflection is regarded as a very important exercise that every educational leader should undertake. It is a process of judging yourself as a leader, where one takes time to look back at what has been achieved and not been achieved. Looking for reasons for the failures and taking stock of those strategies that led to success. Another mentor raised a further positive dimension of progress. He stated that the

group he worked with was effective and progressed very well. He even told the principals that in his mind, he saw some of them in higher positions in the near future. This is a positive observation in terms of another definition of mentorship, which Stead (2005:172) describes “as being a holistic and fluid concept that attends to professional, corporate and personal development”. This indicates that the principals were able to learn from their experiences of which the ultimate goal was to gain an understanding of their development and how their development could be replicated on the job. However, this research is mindful of what Lambrecht, Hopkins, Finch and Curtis (1997:10) state, namely, that “not all on-the-job experiences are equal in terms of their potential effectiveness for leadership development”.

Another valuable experience was that of a mentor whose group began panicking at the beginning of the mentoring process. Gradually, however, the situation improved as they got more used to him and his style of mentoring. In this group one of the women was an alcoholic, who came to classes intermittently often under the influence of alcohol. At times, she would even drink in class. Later the mentor approached her. He related in this regard: “We talked nicely and, ultimately, I could see that she had changed. I was happy to see that I was able to help.” This situation highlights some of the results of a successful mentoring relationship. The principal’s behaviour indicated that she had a personal problem, which apparently had a negative effect on her leadership potential. The intervention of the mentor in this case was psychosocial and professional and even personal. In the interviews there was general agreement that the principals did not seem promising before the programme, but as the programme progressed, the principals changed and became more knowledgeable and more skilled than before.

In terms of mentorship quality, the mentors described it as being of high quality. One mentor commented: “The quality of the programme was high, good because it created long-time friends.” Reference was made to the modules that constituted the programme, including one that dealt with Education Law. One mentor described it as being very important because principals were overwhelmed by legal issues which were well beyond their comprehension and it was easy for them to find themselves in conflict with the law. Another important section was the one on finances. One mentor

regarded financial management in schools as a thorny issue and principals were struggling to handle finances properly.

There were also some career-related achievements associated with the programme. One of the programme participants reported having been promoted to a senior position in one of the district offices in Mpumalanga.

The focus shifted to the principals as learners in the process. In the following discussion, emphasis is on how the principals used reflection to transform their experiences into knowledge and how they interpreted their engagement in the mentoring processes. “The most common understanding of experiential learning is based on reflection” (Fenwick, 2001:9). Firstly, it was important to ascertain the mentees’ understanding of the process of reflection and its importance. One of the principals responded to the following question: “What do you know about reflection and why was it important or not important?” as follows: “When we normally have our weekly or monthly plans, it helps you to keep on track of what was planned.” The principal knew what reflection is for, but the problem was time constraints. She only conducted reflection when planning activities of the week or month.

The ability to apply learnt knowledge and skills is a very important attribute in learning from experience. Mentors and mentee principals had to confirm their confidence levels in the application of the acquired knowledge and skills through their application in different contexts.

One of the participating principal’s responses regarding this aspect was around the frequency of visits to the schools. She cited the follow-up visits as being very important in mentorship practices. This principal was confident of her skills in conducting mentoring programmes even in situations that differed from education. There are already plans in her school to conduct mentorship with the current staff and also newly appointed staff. In view of her plans for future mentoring sessions, she intends conducting research on the staff’s developmental needs and using her experience of mentoring to mentor others. Another principal commented that a programme should be drawn up before any meeting held with mentees. He was referring to the group sessions that were organised by the mentor to which all the

principals were invited. In the case of his mentor, there was apparently no programme and they came to those sessions not knowing what was going to be done. This may also have frustrated the other principals. This principal confirmed that he was offering a professional development programme for his staff as well as motivational sessions. He confirmed that in the second week after schools reopened, the whole staff would attend a staff development workshop. The learner representatives would also form part of these workshops, which concentrate on leadership development. He was confident that he would be capable of conducting mentorship anywhere where he was expected to.

The importance of follow-ups was also stressed by another principal, who indicated that he felt it was important to check whether his subordinates were executing what they had been taught in practice. He stressed the importance of this and argued that there was a tendency for people to study merely for the sake of studying in order to get a qualification. He also strongly believed that he was ready to and capable of applying mentorship principles even in other contexts. He also emphasised the need to have a plan for mentoring others especially newly appointed staff. The migration of educators from one area to another means that schools often have to appoint new teachers. In this regard, one of the other principals stressed the importance of giving direction to new educators, and even making use of the services of less experienced educators in the process.

One of the principals talked about the induction policy. She first heard about it at the University of Pretoria during the programme. Subsequently, she was expected to develop on but did not know where to start. She was later told that it is used to regulate the integration of new staff into the school and thus was able to make sense of it. After developing such a policy at her school, she found it user-friendly and has been using it ever since.

In the case of the mentors, this question prompted their responses in terms of applying their newly acquired skills in different contexts and the way they were going to use them to the benefit of other mentors.

Mentors were confident that they have learnt some new skills from the principals they had worked with. One said the new skills had enhanced his experience, because he had been mentoring in the ACE programme for some time. He concluded by saying that “mentoring skills fits any context”. His contribution to the other mentors would be to try and stop “judging” as a mentor. He argued strongly against the practice of mentors taking on the role of judge; judging the work of their mentees. He gave the example of another programme in which he was a mentor. In that programme, there were mentors and there were also assessors. A similar concern was raised by another mentor, who was frustrated by the lecturers who reduced students’ marks without informing her. She felt that, as mentors, they were undermined by the lecturers in the programme. It would thus seem that their misunderstandings originated from the practice of judging the students’ work and progress. Another of the mentors added that mentoring is very effective in the communities within which one lives and work, as well as in industry.

Both mentors and principals alike felt that planning should take centre stage before a mentoring programme. This was summed up by one of the mentors, who said that having a plan is a simple place to start. According to him, a plan will help one to identify people’s needs and the appropriate application of these skills. He also stressed the need to induct newly appointed staff.

The findings revealed that principals and mentors viewed mentorship as a model for leadership development. Principals confirmed having learnt from their experiences in the programme. They had learnt from the behaviour and conduct of their mentors and mentors in turn had acquired additional mentoring skills. The programme itself was highly praised by the principals for assisting them in changing their schools as well as changing them as individuals. They had developed a new outlook on the profession itself and their colleagues and subordinates. Their confidence had increased and they were ready to roll out mentoring programmes in their schools. This was seen as encouraging for newly appointed educators in schools, as they would benefit from the induction policies and mentoring programmes.

With the mentors’ evaluation, a number of issues came to the fore, ranging from their practices in terms of being simultaneously mentors and judges and being looked

down on by the lecturers in the programme (mentioned by at least two of the mentors). One of the two mentors who provided a critical evaluation of the programme stated a disturbing experience within the programme. She observed that throughout the programme, black mentors were considered to be there as tokens rather than being considered as equals to their white counterparts. She also suggested what the study indicated earlier, that mentors were supposed to have been orientated before they started with the programme. However, although there were some issues of concern, the mentors also stated that they placed high value on the programme and wished it was never stopped.

The findings confirmed the level at which principals transformed their experiences during their mentoring experience. The findings confirm that principals are in some way displaying some of the characteristics that Mednick (2003:3) describes as the five interconnected areas found in the changed roles of principals:

1. *“Sharing real decision-making power with staff and faculty.* The principal shares authority by providing meaningful opportunities for teachers to participate in significant decision-making”. The principals in this study reported having begun to involve staff in the decision-making processes. They confirmed that in the past, prior to the mentoring programme, they did most of the work on their own without the involvement of educators and other stakeholders such as the SGB.
2. *“Providing support for effective functioning in teams.* The principal ensures that teachers have the skills and understanding required to participate effectively in teams. These skills include defining a purpose, setting measurable goals, creating norms for operating, setting agendas and assigning tasks”. The principals in this study confirmed that they had already started mentoring educators in their schools. Through these initiatives, they are imparting skills in order to improve teaching and learning in schools.
3. *“Being an instructional leader who prompts others to continuously learn and improve their practice.* As an instructional leader, the principal often visits classrooms to work with teachers and students or attends academic team meetings to assist the development of effective teaching and learning strategies. In this role, the principal also obtains instructional resources and professional development opportunities that improve learning, teaching and assessment

practices”. One of the principals interviewed talked about the difficulties she had before in monitoring the work of the educators as well as conducting class visits. After the programme, she reported that she learnt how to develop a programme that is well understood and accepted by the staff for conducting class visits that monitor the implementation of the curriculum in the school.

4. *“Developing collaborative accountability.* The principal works with the leadership team to hold individuals and teams accountable for reaching their goals”. One of the mentors interviewed reported that he suggested that the principals establish structures and committees to assist them. Aspects such as extracurricular activities and policy drafting sessions require that there should be structures or committees set up to undertake them.
5. *“Managing and monitoring the change process to make sure it is always going forward.* The principal and the leadership team ensure that all members of the school community clearly understand all parts of the change process and are committed to the vision”. Principals confirmed that they have started involving members of the community in the affairs of their schools. One principal stated that he also attends the Lekgotla, which is a community forum where community issues are discussed with the elders and/or the local tribal authority.

7.5. Experiential Learning and Educational Leadership Development

Experiential learning has been defined in this study both as a concept and as a theory underpinning the essence of the research. The term “leadership” has taken centre stage in this study since the principals who are being mentored are leaders in the sphere of education. According to Mason and Wetherbee (2004:187), “leadership is the ability to influence, motivate and direct others in order to attain desired objectives”. They add that “defining leadership seems straightforward, but explaining how leaders lead and, more importantly, what skills they use to lead, is a much more complicated and complex issue”. The feedback from the principals and their mentors have shed some light on this which supports the above statements by Mason and Wetherbee (2004). The study managed to build on the assumption that leaders can be developed – this is one of the most fiercely debated topics in the literature on leadership. Mentorship and experiential learning contributed to leadership development in principals by developing the leadership skills that are assumed to be essential for them in leading their schools.

The study chose as its participants educational leaders and their mentors in order to explore their roles in the principals' leadership development. The description "educational leaders" also embraces the mentors as a result of their role as ex-school leaders and also their role in developing the principals. Principals' development as leaders is known to have a direct influence on the learning processes in their schools. Mitgang (2012:3) states that "it is the principal, more than anyone else, who is positioned to ensure that excellent teaching and learning is part of every classroom". Mitgang (2012:4) also contends that "leadership only succeeds if the leader brings other people along into the same vision, and they are all able to work together and trust one another. In the study, participants often mentioned the issue of delegating tasks and responsibilities, sharing the formulation of policies, visions and missions at their schools". It was also noted that in instances where such actions were not implemented, problems and difficulties with running the school were reported. Leadership development, in the case of this work, would seem to be a process where, as Smith and Rosser (2007:2) put it, "social capital" is developed.. These authors maintain that this "can be done by building networked relationships among individuals that improve and supply exchange in creating organisational value".

One of the comments made by one of the mentors to the mentees indicated that this mentor had a positive role in the development of the principals' leadership. He urged principals not to depend on the knowledge gained from this programme, but encouraged them to register with tertiary institutions to do management studies. He emphasised that this could boost their confidence. This advice echoes that of Oplakta (2009:130) who states: "Principals, like other employees, are assumed to experience their career differently throughout their career cycle." Thus, it can be concluded that additional learning efforts through other programmes may be beneficial for the principals.

Leadership development through experience and from experience can be a difficult exercise if done incorrectly. Leaders who have not acquired experience may not have a need for learning since there may be no base for that learning. The earlier discussion on intent and expectations mentees should have before undertaking any

form of learning forms the basis for learning from experience. The form of leadership development studied here is that which has as focus, the “personal” aspect of learning. Emphasis is on the person, who is a learner, in this case the principals and the mentors. That is the reason the study wanted to ascertain the learning expectations both before the programme and within the programme. It set aside the expectations of the institutions offering the programme and concentrated on the personal expectations. The question about the knowledge and experience they brought into the programme was aimed at abstracting their experiences, which were the base for their further learning. Boud and Walker (1991) claim that “learners might be asked to focus on what they expect to get out of an event, how it relates to their previous experiences, what they are looking forward to in it, what they fear might arise and what skills they bring that are going to help them”. It does not therefore make sense to have learners in a programme who do not have expectations of it, as they may not learn something that bears relevance to their concrete experiences.

The second most important condition for learning from experience is the context. In the case of educational leaders’ development initiatives, the contexts in which they learn experientially are of critical importance. Most leadership development and professional development programmes are conducted in classrooms at universities and colleges. The most common form of leadership development in education is the workshop, which is conducted at certain venues for groups of participants. However, the four walls in which such workshops are conducted may be completely different from the settings where leaders spend most of their working time. Relevant leadership learning sessions are those taking place within the contexts where their daily activities happen – at schools. The leadership learning process should happen within the cultural set-up. Participants in the mentoring programme had to attend university lectures where the theory of school leadership and management was taught. After these lectures principals had to apply the knowledge learnt in their schools practically. Townsend and MacBeath (2011:4) report that “there is strong evidence to suggest that leaders in one situation may not necessarily be effective leaders in other situations, as no single style of management is necessarily appropriate for all schools and certain principals’ behaviours have different effects in different organisational settings”.

What did not come out clearly as something that to be considered during the mentoring programme was the way each principal learnt in terms of the learning styles. Kolb (1984) discusses learning styles and argues that learners learn differently and that it is important to consider each individual's learning style. Boud and Walker (1991), on the other hand, posit that "there should be sufficient preparation during experiential learning to ensure that learners are able to remain conscious of their goals and act effectively when they are confronted with personal challenges to themselves and to their assumptions".

7.6. Theoretical Implications for participants' Learning Experiences

- **Reflective Practice**

The study focused on how principals as professional leaders reflected on their personal behaviour within their professional contexts. These behavioural practices were studied as they occurred before their participation in the programme and whilst in the programme. This behaviour was accompanied by actions that were influenced by ideas, feeling and actions (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). This process (reflection) acts like an adhesive in between the four learning modes in that every learning mode is reflected upon. Reflection is a requirement at the start and finish of every learning process and without it there would be no knowledge creation. Reflection is used at different stages of learning in various models of experiential learning, reflection-on-action, transformative learning, professional development and others (Mezirow, 1991).

- **Active Experimentation**

At this stage, the study had to look at the participants' ability to implement whatever they had learnt in the programme. In this way, principals got an opportunity to test their newly acquired skills and knowledge practically. Osterman and Kottkamp,(1993) state that "this form of experimenting produces new concrete experience and the learning process begins again". The questions asked sought to determine the level at which the participants applied what they had learnt. In addition, their application of leadership knowledge and skills as both mentors and as educational leaders were tested. The study sought to discover their skills in mentoring colleagues and new staff at their schools. Participants confirmed to had learnt many skills in the programme and their leadership potential had been enhanced.

The application of their knowledge and skills in different situations and contexts was also confirmed. Some participants confirmed that they had already begun practising the mentorship skills they had learnt in their schools. The skills and experiences that principals had undergone in the programme undoubtedly transformed them into transformational leaders. Scandura and Williams (2002:3) point out that “the transformational leadership and mentoring approaches contain similar concepts and affect outcomes such as career mobility, performance, commitment and satisfaction”. They further state that “the inclusion of mentoring research into of leadership studies has a potential to provide a more complete explanation of the relationship between transformational leaders and their subordinates”. This was proven to be correct by the entries in the reflective journals kept by the principals, as well as the reports of the mentors which were also found in those journals. In the main, mentors confirmed that the situation in the schools has changed and the leadership at their protégé’s schools has succeeded in bringing about those changes.

One of the mentors stated that one of the principals he had mentored had been absorbed by the district office, which was an indication of “successful career mobility” as mentioned by Scandura and Williams (2002). The research deliberately paired mentorship and experiential learning in order to emphasise mentoring as a transformational process, which Scandura and Williams (2002) contend “is a process in which the commitment of the mentor to the mentee’s development results in extra-organisational investment”. The truth of this statement was proven by the study, as was explained by the mentor/mentee relationships discussed earlier. Principals confirmed their readiness to take up a mentorship role in their schools and that makes them transformational leaders committed to the transformation of their personnel. This approach of studying mentorship and leadership development is in agreement with what Scandura and Williams (2002), who state that “incorporating mentoring research into studies of leadership might provide a more complete explanation of the relationship between transformational leaders and subordinates”.

7.7. Mentors' and Mentees' Conceptualisation of the Mentoring Phenomenon

This study had as one of its objectives to discover how the participants understood the mentoring phenomenon. Literature provides a number of definitions of the mentoring process, as well as the roles of the mentors and the mentees in bringing about effective learning. The establishment of healthy and effective relationships was also discussed earlier in this study. The data collected points to the lack of prior knowledge and experience of the mentoring phenomenon by a number of mentees in the programme; however, it was also pointed out that, as the programme progressed, mentees began to understand the process better. Most of the mentees understood the process as a helping process and, as such, it was linked to the contribution it would make to the improvement of schools and the quality of their leadership. This understanding was not incorrect; however, there were instances that suggest that more help was sought and obtained during the completion of assignments. The findings of this study suggest that more hours were spent on assignments than on on-site learning. There would appear to be greater acceptance of mentorship when it is linked to the academic component of the programme; however, this indicates a slight deviation from the objectives of the programme.

Mentors had a much better understanding of the mentorship process, even though not all of them were adequately prepared to do it effectively and efficiently. Their understanding of mentorship also encompassed helping principals to be effective leaders by enhancing their skills and knowledge. They did this through role modelling, thus serving as teachers, sponsors, confidants and more (Little, 1990:298–299). There also seems to be an understanding by mentees that mentoring is a formalised process, since theirs was a formal process, and, since they could not link it to other contexts when they were asked to, that it can only be linked to education. Mentors also had an understanding that there are informal mentoring processes; this was confirmed by one of the mentors who stated that he was doing it within his community.

One other finding that had a negative impact on the mentors' understanding of mentorship was the view that their previous experience as principals was enough to guarantee them an opportunity to mentor. None of them mentioned the need for

training to become mentors, with the exception of one female mentor who complained that she had not been briefed on what to do. Little (1990:308) contends that specialised training for mentors has become an increasingly common and prominent component of role development, and also that structured training and support appear more likely where mentoring is linked to state or district policy goals. Mentorship should not be simply understood as a part-time job opportunity for retired principals who have nothing to do. This kind of attitude has the potential of demoting mentorship to merely a learning process such as coaching. Coaching and mentoring are often incorrectly used interchangeably, as meaning the same thing, when in fact they do not. Accordingly, it can happen that organised mentorship ends up yielding results aimed for during coaching. Renshaw (2008:3) explains coaching as “an enabling process aimed at enhancing learning and development with the intention of improving performance in a specific aspect of practice and has a short-term focus with an emphasis on immediate micro issues (e.g. How can I improve my performance in this particular area? How can I strengthen my workshop practice? What are the most appropriate ways of making my team work together more effectively?)”.

7.8. Participants’ conceptualisation of experience

From the data, it emerged that principals and their mentors had sufficient understanding of what experiences entailed. Their previous and current encounters in life and within the educational set-ups formed a greater part of what they termed “experiences”. Mentors used their experiences as school principals as well as those acquired as mentors. Principals were knowledgeable about their current challenges and the way in which they succeeded in resolving them or had failed to do so. This formed the greater part of their concrete experiences as discussed earlier. Principals are teachers who were once under the leadership of other principals, from whom they learnt how to lead a school as an institution. The context within which they learnt whatever leadership skills, good or bad, played a prominent role in influencing their future leadership practices. They even learnt from observing their previous colleagues from other schools

Everything the principals mentioned as being part of their experiences was experienced before they occupied their new posts as principals and after they had

assumed their new responsibilities as principals from colleagues and their previous principals. The only problem that was common among these principals was that they did not realise how important these experiences were, as they formed their baseline for learning. What they did not know and were unable to do was to transform these experiences into meaningful knowledge. Dewey (1933, in Stevens & Cooper, 2009:2) states that “an experience is an interaction between the individual and the environment and contains continuity – a continuous flow of knowledge from previous experiences”.

7.9. Participants’ Conceptualisation of Reflection

Stevens and Cooper (2009), citing Dewey, state that “reflection gives an individual an increased power of control, it emancipates us from merely impulsive and merely routine activity, it converts action that is merely appetitive, blind and impulsive into intelligent action”.

There was understanding by the participants of what the reflective process entails, and they could explain the process of reflection correctly. They were assisted by the process of keeping a reflective journal as one of the course requirements. One of the principals explained it as a process of going back to what you did earlier and checking whether what you did was right or not. This findings points to a lack of purposeful reflective practice by the principals. One of those missing processes identified was critical reflection, which Densten and Gray (2001) define “as involving a commitment to questioning assumptions and taken-for-granted practices embodied in both theory and professional practice”. These authors suggest that “the ability to reflect bears directly to how efficiently individuals can learn from their personal experiences, and therefore reflection provides a significant way for leaders to gain authentic understanding”.

The entries in their reflective journals did not contain information about reflection on theoretical and professional practices, only on the reflection they applied to their own practices and those of the entire school. This does not mean that reflection was not done, but critical reflection was lacking in the process. Critical reflection, according to Densten and Gray (2001), “is characterised by a deeper, more intense and more probing form of reflection”. Since the principals and their mentors were involved in a

process of leadership development, they were required “to question the power that they used in leadership situations to achieve the required results” (Densten & Gray, 2001). Accordingly, I expected them to also question the programme itself in order to have a thorough understanding of the processes within the programme and how it was contributing to their leadership learning. One of the objectives of the ACE (SL) programme is “developing reflective practitioners”. What this entails is that principals should be developed towards becoming reflective principals, reflecting not only on their professional practice, but also on themselves as leaders and individuals. Chikoko et al. (2014:222) cite the former Minister of Education, Ms Naledi Pandor, who spelt out the vision of this ACE (SL) qualification as follows:

“We regard this as a critical contribution to building a new pool of capable education leaders for our schools”.

It can therefore be assumed that if this is a critical contribution, it must then produce critical reflective practitioners. Principals and their mentors in the programme were however confident of their reflective skills and confirmed that they had managed to normalise volatile situations in their schools using reflective skills. The work of John Dewey, the father of the 20th century progressive movement in education, is particularly helpful in defining and describing the relationships among experience, reflection and learning. According to Dewey, “for students to learn, especially the knowledge within their respective disciplines, reflection and field experiences are essential”. In this study, an interest was developed around the field experiences of both mentors and principals. Unfortunately, the findings revealed that less time was spent on on-site visits by mentors. Some principals alluded to this issue and said that they wished mentors had spent more time on site.

7.10. Participants Conceptualisation of Learning

Understanding how people learn is something that has simultaneously propelled and detained education scholarship. Learning is equated to a change in behaviour (Hansen, 2000:23). This study conceptualised learning within experience and thus the experiential learning theory was chosen as its framework. Experience plays a key role in a person’s learning process and therefore it was expected that participants would link their experiences with learning. The findings of this study shows that the learning process assisted the principals towards one of the results of effective learning, namely, “transformation learning”. Principals confirmed that, after

the programme, they saw themselves as transformational leaders. Accordingly, this study focused not only on the principals' learning, but also on that of the mentors. Mentors indicated that this programme was an opportunity for them to learn from their mentees as well. This was an indication that they understood their learning as a reciprocal process.

Learning was therefore understood as the acquisition of skills and knowledge in order to solve professional and individual or personal problems. Such learning can also be obtained from peers. In this programme, the principals learnt from one another and the mentors learnt from one another. Kolb and Kolb (2008:304) talk about learning self-identity as a person's beliefs about him/herself and the views he/she have about his/her ability to learn. This aspect is important because people who consider themselves as learners are those who have confidence in their direct personal experiences and their capability to learn from them. Narrations from the participants about their experiences and their learning from them indicated that the participants were aware of their potential to learn. Their views about learning enabled them to trust their direct experiences and thus transform them into meaningful knowledge. The fact that one participant mentioned that he had never received any form of induction since taking over as principal at his new school is testimony to an awareness of the need to learn something that would assist him to perform effectively in his job. None of the participants ever doubted their experiences, despite not being inducted before starting work; both mentors and mentees alike trusted their experiences and had confidence in the learning process as stated by Kolb and Kolb (2008).

Mason and Wetherbee (2004), in discussing "Learning to be a leader", contend that "important leadership development takes place in the workplace and elsewhere, with the learning experienced by principals and their mentors being proof of this". The principals learnt leadership skills and acquired knowledge within their workplaces hence this was experiential. Mason and Wetherbee (2004:195) cite the research done by Mc Call, who found that "for a majority of leaders, job assignments were a major influence on leadership development, as leaders coped with job variety and with new tasks and unfamiliar situations". In the mentorship programme, principals were given assignments that were job specific. It was these assignments and some practical tasks that added value to their leadership learning. As indicated earlier in

this section, the ability to learn is important in leadership development, especially in educational institutions because the people you lead are learned people. The acquisition of leadership skills is a complex exercise, which incorporates motivation, personal orientation and skills.

In conclusion, the apprehension and transformation of experience, as confirmed in this study, are summed up by Davies and Leon (2011) as follows:

One begins with an open mind and a willingness to question reality, personal values, time-honoured traditions and deeply held assumptions about what works in schools, definitions of good leadership, and how people and organisations learn. Second, one seeks out and analyses multiple sources of data about his/her organization and important organizational performance outcomes, with a particular focus on identifying performance deficits and gaps. Third, one searches for empirically supported information about what works and what doesn't work within the profession at large. Fourth, over time one then applies new ideas, knowledge, or skills to real-world situations until they become routine, thereby replacing old and outmoded practices.

Through this process, gaps between organizational goals, purposes, processes, and outcomes are revealed, followed by the development and implementation of corrective action plans and ultimately, new models of delivery.

In the reflective stage, participants were engaged in analysing the characteristics of the situations they encountered in their schools as well as those encountered during the mentoring programme. The objective of the analysis process was to uncover how key variables produced the phenomena or the causes of the problems (Peterson, 1986). The reflective journals kept by the principals contain evidence of the effectiveness of this stage, where principals were taken through the process of identifying their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis). Even though the interview transcripts point to a lack of knowledge on the nature of the reflection process, all the principals' journals point to the effectiveness of this practice in this process.



In the final stage, active experimentation, participants displayed a high level of confidence in applying the expounding models or solutions in actual contexts. Some principals confirmed that they had already started applying the solutions or the plans developed in the previous stages. Moreover, in the schools where the participants are leaders, mentoring of both incumbent and newly appointed educators has begun.

CHAPTER 8

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, MENTORSHIP AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: CONCLUDING SUMMARY

8.1. Introduction

This chapter draws together the findings of the research on educational leadership development through mentorship by making suitable linkages to relevant literature. These research findings contribute to a more thoughtful process of mentorship as a leadership development strategy. This research highlights the importance of the participants' learning experiences as well as their meaning making as it relates to these experiences and the mentoring phenomenon. The purpose of this study was to investigate how the learning experiences of mentors and principals (mentees) were reflective of Kolb's (1984) "experiential learning theory". Participants in this study comprised five school principals and their mentors who participated in a mentoring programme. The study took place in the Nkangala district of the Mpumalanga Department of Education.

This study provides insights into the effectiveness of experiential learning in the mentorship programme and how the participants experienced and interpreted their experiences of the mentoring phenomenon. Specifically, the results suggest that participants (principals) and their mentors appreciated the opportunity to participate and that their engagement in this programme did indeed provide learning opportunities and experiences.

This research was necessary to investigate and reflect on the educational leadership development programme currently presented by the Department of Basic Education in partnership with tertiary institutions in South Africa. The study confined itself to the group of principals who participated in the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) programme offered by the University of Pretoria. This programme includes a strong mentorship component.

In chapter one, the background to educational leadership was presented, in particular with regard to black schools, and reference was made to the racial segregation that affected educational leadership in black schools during the

apartheid era. Poor leadership and management were prevalent in schools and this resulted in poor learner achievements. The advent of democracy in 1994 brought with it a paradigm shift in education; subsequently a mentorship programme for school principals was introduced to enhance their leadership potential. The belief was that if school principals were developed and given the necessary skills to lead and manage schools, there would be a better chance of learners benefitting from the curriculum. The mentoring component of the programme ensured that principals had mentors to guide and support them as they increased their understanding and skills pertaining to the leadership of schools. It was this mentorship programme that became the focus of this study.

One of the advantages of the mentorship programme was that it allowed principals to learn while on the job. The study therefore adopted experiential learning theory, as espoused by Kolb, in order to analyse the learning experiences of both mentors and mentees in this programme. The discussions presented in the previous chapters pointed to mentoring as a professional development strategy; hence, the objective of this study was to reflect on what is being experienced (“noema”) and how it is being experienced (“noesis”). The main research question was as follows: “How are the learning experiences of mentors and mentees reflective of the experiential learning theory as espoused by David Kolb (1984)? Experiential learning “is a learner dependent learning and a teaching philosophy, which emphasises the use of experience as a important source of learning” (Tirmidzi, 2000:1). Yeo and Marquardt (2015:81) posit that “members of organisations are expected to learn continuously but many are often not aware of how learning actually occurs”. Experiential learning theory thus provided a basis for understanding what was learnt and how it was learnt during the mentorship programme.

The researcher in this study explored the approaches the leadership development programmes in this mentorship programme have taken. Firstly, the manner in which participants were identified and selected for the programme, and secondly, what form of support was given during the programme and for how long, were investigated. This study argues that a careful system should be used to select participants, both mentors and mentees. After careful selection, priority should be given to their developmental needs. Therefore, mentors should undergo at least some form of

preparation so that they have a clear understanding of the goals and objectives of the programme.

This study therefore proposes in the first instance that, the importance of acquiring leadership learning experiences lies in how the mentors and mentees are influenced by reflection to produce better leadership outcomes. Secondly, while it is important to engage in educational leadership development programmes, such as the ACE (SL) through mentorship, and acquire experiences, we need to find out how these experiences are linked to actual performance on the job. The experiential learning cycle thus provides a mechanism for systematically examining the relevant experience, integrating it with theory, forming generalisations and planning future actions. Our understanding of mentoring, experience, learning and context is important for framing an integrative perspective of educational leadership development. Voluntary participation by principal mentees and a careful selection and orientation process for mentors will, the researcher contends, be useful in helping individuals intentionally control their transformation of experience and, by extension, connect and make sense of their experiences.

8.2. Summary

This study was qualitative in nature and was located within an interpretive phenomenological research paradigm. The purpose of the research was to ascertain the participants' understandings, interpretations and experiences with the phenomena under study, namely, mentoring, experiences and learning, since they formed an integral part of their mentorship relationships in the programme. A phenomenological approach was deemed to be an adequate tool for analysing the way the phenomena were perceived by the actors in the situations in which they found themselves. Information in the form of the participants' perceptions was gathered during inductive, semi-structured interviews with the principals and their mentors who had participated in the mentorship programme.

The study reflected on the experiences of the participants within their mentoring relationships. These learning experiences matched the learning expectations participants had had prior to the commencement of the programme. The study also outlined the way experiences were acquired and how they were ultimately

transformed into knowledge, which was vital to their leadership practices. The experiential learning cycle as proposed by Kolb (1984) became a tool used by the researcher to investigate what the participants learnt and how it was learnt. The results confirmed that mentorship can be used successfully to support experiential learning during educational leadership development programmes. Since the participants were all adults, their learning was categorised as “adult learning” where the learner is viewed as being responsible for his or her own learning and has an ability to direct it. In “andragogy” (adult learning), a mentor is “an appropriate and significant. Evidence from the findings points out that self-discovered learning makes a significant contribution to behavioural changes. Participants frequently pointed to the process of change that happened within themselves and their schools. Increased confidence, the ability to reflect on action and the ability to mentor others are just some of the benefits that the participants gained from the mentoring programme. These gains would not have been possible without the sound mentoring relationships that existed between the mentors and their mentees. Mentorship in this study may be classified as a developmental relationship wherein the mentees respected the roles played by their mentors and perceived the mentors themselves as experienced, successful and good role models. While the mentor was recognised as being a critical player in the success of the programme, factors that limited the effectiveness of the mentor were also identified, including the choice of mentees and preparation. The study also confirmed that one of the major determinants of the principals’ learning was the quality of the mentorship, which, in this case, successfully complemented the principals’ knowledge, values and skills levels as well as their developmental maturity.

Since the research was an interpretive phenomenological study, it had as its purpose to investigate mentorship, experience and reflection as phenomena and how these were perceived and experienced by the participants within their own context. This approach was central to understanding how participants interpreted and understood these phenomena both before and after the programme. It was noted that some of the principals (mentees) did not have a clear understanding of what mentoring was all about; instead the understanding and interpretation they had of the phenomenon was in terms of assistance offered in completing assignments. Through the help and guidance of their mentors, they later came to understand what mentoring entailed. It

was during the on-site visits by the mentors that the principals began to understand mentorship as guidance and help aimed at on-the-job performance. They started seeing the value and the need for mentorship as a process of learning from someone on the job. The principals subsequently confirmed having begun to practise mentorship in their schools, even before the end of the programme.

Mentors, on the other hand, understood what the process was all about, but some questioned some of the practices dictated to them by the university, regarding them as not being effective in mentoring. The use of mentors as evaluators of their mentees was criticised by one mentor, who supported his statement by stating that mentors should not be judges. A female mentor, who was frustrated with the process of having to award marks to principals' assignments, stated that university lecturers were bringing them into conflict with their mentees by reducing assignment marks without consulting them. Their ability to criticise the university staff practices during the roll out of mentorship indicates their understanding of the mentoring principles that guided them. Participants also showed a deep understanding of the various concrete experiences they came across in their professional practice and attached meaning and value to them. They also acknowledged them as essential building blocks in their learning. Wojnar and Swanson, (2007:173) sum up interpretive phenomenology as being "concerned with the interpretation of structures of experience and how things are understood by people who live through these experiences".

The mentees responded with an elementary understanding of what is meant by reflection, showing understanding of what happens during the process of reflection and stating that it is a process of reviewing the successes and failures that have been experienced and the reasons for them. In learning from experience, reflection was confirmed as being a very important process and Kolb and Kolb (2008:309) state that "when a concrete experience is enriched by reflection, given meaning by thinking and transformed by action, the new experience created becomes richer, broader and deeper".

The findings of this study confirm what McCall (2010:3) refers to as sure bets about experience:

- *“Leadership is learnt from experience.* McCall (2010:3) provides evidence supporting this statement from a study on twins done at the University of Minnesota, which looked at all manner of personality and other traits, consistently finding that 30 to 50% of the variance can be attributed to heredity. The remaining 70% can be attributed to the result of experience”.
- *“Certain experiences matter more than others.* Study after study report that successful leaders describe similar experiences that shaped their development. These experiences can be classified roughly as early work experiences, short-term assignments, major line assignments, other people, hardships of various kinds, and some miscellaneous events like training programmes. He also adds that experience should consist of 70% challenging assignments, 20% other people including good or bad mentors and bosses, and 10% programmes”.
- *“These experiences are powerful because of the challenges they present.* What makes experiences challenging constitutes the unexpected, high stakes, complexity, pressure, novelty, and so on”.
- *“Different types of experience teach different lessons.* More to the point, if one can identify the challenges that make a given experience powerful, then it follows logically that what one might learn is how to handle those challenges. The leadership challenge, and therefore what must be learnt, is how to take advantage of that energy and move forward when there is no roadmap to follow. In a turnaround, the challenges include diagnosing at a deep level what is broken”.
- *“Jobs and assignments can be made more developmental.* When the elements that make experience powerful are known, experiences can be developmentally enhanced by adding those elements to them. High calibre learning experiences require complementing challenge by providing feedback on learning progress”.
- *“People can get many of the experiences they need in spite of the obstacles.* Whether an immediate supervisor or some succession planning process makes the call, getting people into the experiences they need is a matter of

knowing their needs and forms of experiences, having the experience available, and being willing to put developmental moves ahead of other priorities. Ultimately, matching developmental needs to developmental opportunities is a matter of intentionality”.

- *“Learning takes place over time and is dynamic with all manner of twists and turns. Unlike the linear accumulation of knowledge and ability one might hope for, the path to mastery is filled with serendipity, accidents, dead-ends, and do-overs”.*

The following discussion sums up the thematic analysis discussed in detail in the previous chapters.

8.2.1. The Selection of principals and the Recruitment of Mentors into the programme

The principals were generally receptive to their selection for the programme, with all the principals and mentors interviewed indicating that they were excited to be in the programme. However, they did not understand exactly how and why they had been selected, except to the extent to be able to comment generally that the purpose was to help them to improve leadership and management in their schools. The mentors were recruited by the University of Pretoria, and their leadership and management experiences as principals and district officials was enough to warrant their selection. Knowledge and previous mentoring experience was not a priority as it was discovered that only two of the five mentors had mentored before this programme. There were, however, serious shortcomings noted in the selection processes, both on the part of the Department of Education and the University. For example, no clear processes for selection were in place apart from the fact that mentors were identified in terms of their roles as experienced former principals of schools. The principals, on the other hand, did not have a clue as to the reasons for their selection. The document detailing the purpose and objectives of the programme is not clear on the selection of principals except to mention the type of principals envisaged by the programme after its completion. The selection of more primary school principals as compared to previous programmes may be viewed as a step in the right direction in the long term. Currently, the Department of Education is facing serious challenges in

secondary schools in terms of learner performance in the Senior Certificate examinations.

The study also made a few disturbing findings concerning the selection of principals and the recruitment of mentors. It was noted that only black school principals participated in the programme provided by the Nkangala education district, meaning that no white school principal participated, either from township schools or the former white schools. On the other hand, both black and white mentors were included in the programme. This practice suggests that white principals do not need mentoring and that their schools are not part of the continuing professional development of educators in this country. One explanation for this practice may be the re-emergence of white supremacy in education. The assumption may thus be made from this is that only black school principals are experiencing leadership and management problems in education. This is a fallacy, however, as there is evidence to show that white principals are also facing management and leadership problems (e.g. Glen Vista School among others). Logic therefore tells us that they are eligible for selection on the basis of their skin colour. It could be that these same white principals might be found to be mentoring black principals in the future. When this ACE (SL) programme was launched, the former Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor spelt out the vision of this qualification as follows:

We regard this as a critical contribution to building a new pool of capable education leaders for our schools (Republic of South Africa, 2007:11).

Therefore, the question that arises here is: Is this new pool of education leaders to be drawn only from black school leaders?

It was also found that, prior to starting the programme, it is important to inform the principals about the reasons behind their selection and the criteria used by the circuits or district office to select them. This would be helpful in assisting them to identify their learning needs as expected by the employer and to have an opportunity to craft their own expectations.

Mentor training was also found to be important as it would play a critical role in sharpening their skills both theoretically and practically. It was also discovered that while some mentors, three to be exact, were interviewed by the university before the

programme the remaining two were not. Moreover, none of the mentors received any form of mentor training before assuming their tasks. Yeo and Marquardt (2015) state in this regard that orientation helps individuals to control both the transformation of their experience and the making sense of their experience. This is possible if there is intent in both mentors and principal mentees. The key lies in their selection for and recruitment into the programme.

.Adding to those limitations, Arnold (2006:117) contends that “not everyone can or should be a mentor. Simply being a good teacher is not enough, for mentoring is not a straightforward extension of being a school teacher”. He concludes that “different perspectives, abilities, aptitudes, attitudes and skills are necessary for this”. Hobson and Malderez (2013:4), in addressing school-based mentoring for beginner teachers, discovered that “mentoring does not always bring about positive outcomes, and can actually stunt beginner teachers’ professional learning and growth”.

8.2.2. Previous Knowledge and Experiences with Mentorship

The principals and mentors had to provide information regarding the knowledge and experiences of mentoring they had before joining the programme. The aim of this question was to extract the participants’ concrete knowledge about the mentoring phenomenon and to draw from their experiences and understandings of the process. Mentors’ knowledge and experiences of the mentoring process were an important basis for them to form an understanding of their roles.

One of the five principals had previous knowledge of mentoring as she had been engaged in a mentorship programme that had lasted for four days. The duration itself is an indication that this was not a mentorship programme, but should rather be classified as a coaching programme. For the other four principals, this was their first experience with mentorship. Four of the five mentors confirmed having been involved a mentoring process previously, while the other mentor had never acted as a mentor prior to this assignment. Those mentors who did have experience of mentoring brought their experiences in the programme, serving as helpers and guides for the principals/mentees. One mentor indicated that he began by stating that one of the most important attributes necessary for the success of any mentoring relationship as “respect”. He stressed to the principals that he was committed to

respecting them and as such he expected them to respect him in return, hence a mutual respect. The other mentors intimated that they understood that their role was not to instruct the principals, but to offer advice and guidance.

It was also noted that the mentors were instrumental in supporting the principals psychosocially, as well as with their careers. It was reported that one of the principals who was part of the group mentored was subsequently appointed at one of the district offices on a higher post level.

8.2.3. The Expectations of the participants

“The other important element which learners bring to the situation is intent. Intent is a personal determination which provides a particular orientation within a given situation that is, a reason why learners come to a particular learning event” (Boud & Walker, 1991:15).

According to Clay and Wade (2001), being a mentor involves acting as a role model, as well as facilitating learning and supervision that is appropriate to the students' area of practice. The researcher anticipated that the participants' expectations, especially those of the school principals, would be derived from their personal development plans as tabled in their Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) documents, a system that is only applicable to school-based educators. The IQMS document is used in evaluating the performance of educators employed in terms of the Educator's Employment Act of 1998. The expectations mentioned by the principals centred on being “helped to run the school efficiently” and personal and professional development. The mentors, on their part, mentioned that they expected to help the principals to improve their schools. These expectations did not address the specific personal and professional developmental expectations as they are too general.

8.2.4. Participants' Perceptions and Interpretations of Mentorship Relationships

In chapter 2, the factors influencing mentoring relationships were discussed. In that discussion factors such as emotions, individuals' likes, dislikes and preferences, tolerance, culture and many more were mentioned as important determinants of mentoring relationships. The success of any partnership between individuals

depends on the nature of the relationship upon which that partnership is built. Therefore, building an effective relationship between the mentor and the mentee is recognised as being essential (Kerka, 1998:3). Malone (2001), commenting on the challenges inherent in forming mentor–protégé relationships, states that artificially constructed mentor–protégé relationships can create difficulties and, in addition, that researchers have recognised that not everyone makes a suitable mentor. Principals interviewed stated that they had good relationships with their mentors, characterised by understanding, tolerance and mentor and mentee qualities of trust, mutual understanding and respect, and the mentors echoed these sentiments. It was confirmed that these relationships lasted even after the mentoring programme ended. Such mentoring relationships can thus be classified as “positive mentoring”. Hamlin and Sage (2011:754), in a discussion on positive mentoring, draw on the thinking of Pegg (1999) to argue for effective mentoring relationships “to be developed and that mentors need to adopt a “pulling” and “pushing” style”. This they summarised as follows:

Offering a sanctuary and a safe place where the mentees feels able to share their agenda, interests and goals ... offering support by listening ... asking the right questions ... helping the mentee arrive at their own answers to their problems ... offering stimulation, creative ideas, challenges, knowledge, mental models, tools and techniques, leading-edge thinking, and wisdom.

8.2.5. Participants’ views of Mentorship as a Leadership Development Strategy

Given the challenging history of apartheid education in South Africa, which in the run-up to the end of apartheid was characterised by school boycotts, under-resourcing and poor training of teachers, a large number of schools ceased to function. This led to the accumulation of leadership and management problems in schools, many of which were situated in black townships (Christie & Lingard, 2001:8–9). The ACE (SL) programme can therefore be seen as “an attempt at restoring effective teaching and learning in schools by enhancing the leadership capacity of principals”. The question asked to obtain participants’ views on mentorship as a leadership development strategy aimed at getting the participants’ interpretations of mentorship and ascertaining whether they perceived it as a leadership development strategy or not. Comments from the participants indicated

that did indeed regard mentorship as encapsulated within the programme as a leadership development strategy. Some participants alluded to the absence of a principal preparation programme and/or institution in South Africa, as they perceived this to be an important tool that the Department of Education should consider seriously in future. One of the advantages of mentorship cited by the participants was that mentorship took place while they were working and thus many of the suggestions were implemented practically on-site.

8.2.6. Experiences and Lessons learnt from Mentorship

The intention of this probe was to gain as much information as possible about the experiences and lessons obtained from mentorship. In the previous chapters, emphasis was placed on the fact that these learning experiences were acquired while the principals were on the job, that is, experientially. In such a situation, principals were placed in different challenging situations with problems to solve and choices to make. These situations motivated the principals to learn, offered opportunities to acquire new information and knowledge and to practise skills and apply knowledge, and encourage new insights through reflection on previous actions (Lambrecht et al., 1997:10). The following experiences were identified from the participants' inputs:

- *Increased opportunities for new positions and increased responsibilities.* The qualification that principals were to obtain on completion of the programme was seen as an added advantage in the academic world. There is no doubt that the certificate added hopes in terms of promotion and thus an increase in their responsibilities. The programme was structured such that principals, in turn, managed mentoring programmes in their schools, thus also taught them mentoring skills.
- *Handling of personnel problems such as conflict.* This was one of the challenges that principals mentioned and wanted to learn the skills for handling such issues. They confirmed having been capacitated on this and that they were consequently better equipped to deal with this and related issues. Mentors confirmed that the principal mentees they worked with had had challenges in terms of the relationships with the teachers in their schools. The first important lesson they had to teach their mentees was

“the establishment of a stable philosophy of self and others as a major requirement for schools and communities” (Fox et al., 2015). Principals were assisted through the “knowledge of responsibility toward the self, toward the followers and toward stakeholders”. The principals’ relationship with their teachers “assumes greater importance than the technical aspects of administration and management and must focus more on collaboration, commitment, trust and common purpose” (Fox et al., 2015).

- *Being mentored.* Almost all the principals had never been exposed to mentorship before. This opportunity taught them that in the case of confusion, problems and uncertainties, one can rely on a senior, more experienced person such as a mentor. They also learnt how mentors handled their problems by not giving or prescribing solutions, but engaging them in formulating solutions on their own, using the background knowledge of their contexts.
- *The challenge of new tasks or problems.* The opportunities that participants were exposed to in terms of the assignments and practical situations in their schools and those of their colleagues enabled them to take on new challenges. Some principals even confirmed that they were no longer afraid to tackle new challenges because they had gained new skills and approaches for dealing with challenges.
- *Encouragement and confidence building.* One principal remarked that she now saw herself as a well-equipped principal who had gained high levels of confidence. All the principals confirmed having improved confidence levels.

8.2.6.1. *Lessons learnt on Leadership Practices*

In line with the suggestion of Crevani, Lindgren and Packendorff (2010:77) that “an empirical study of leadership should be based on a process ontology, focused on leadership practices as constructed in interactions, and embedded in a cultural context where societal notions of “leadership” are both taken for granted and under reconstruction”, I examined the way principals constructed and understood the notion of educational leadership within mentorship”. The following concepts were used to locate the lessons learnt by principals within the mentorship relationships.

- *Administrative/management knowledge and skills.* Principals alluded to having acquired skills in terms of policy formulation and implementation, financial management, curriculum management and human and physical resources management. They stated that they saw themselves as better leaders than they had been prior to the programme. They had managed to develop school-based policies to assist them with the day-to-day management of the school. They had outsourced leadership responsibilities by delegating some tasks to their staff members as a means of capacity building. In the past, planning had been one of the skills that was lacking from the principals, with things being done haphazardly and causing a great deal of tension among management and staff. One of the principals stated in this regard that, subsequent to the programme:

I am a perfect leader now who can study the future, who can see the now, who can analyse things, who always believe in planning, know when you plan, you minimise stressors that might occur because you know how to overcome in certain situations.

Another principal who benefitted from the relationship with the mentor in terms of planning mentioned the issue of “weekly projections”:

There is something I learnt there, the issue of weekly projections. Before I was just working and then I was taught that as a leader you must have a plan for the week.

- *Team building.* The principals stated that they were already designing and planning team building sessions with their staff. One principal stated that after each mentoring session, he would call a staff meeting and share the information with the staff as well. One principal had teamed up with a private service provider, which was assisting the school with team-building sessions especially at the beginning of the academic year.
- *Communication.* One mentor mentioned in his feedback that the problem in many schools was that principals were not communicating with their staff. Another principal also alluded to the fact that at times he regarded some of his teachers as being difficult and hard to work with. After the mentoring programme, however,

changes seem to have taken place in these schools as the principals were able to listen to their staff members, as well as issue instructions in an appropriate and clear manner unlike in the past.

- *Formulation and Implementation of policies.* This was mentioned by all the principals as the one of the most challenging tasks experienced in their schools. The South African Schools Act, No. 84 of 1996, gives powers to SGBs to formulate policies in schools. Some schools, however, find this very difficult owing to the capacity of these governance structures, and principals are often left to operate without policies, which they find very difficult. It then becomes their responsibility to ensure that there are frameworks regulating the day-to-day activities in their schools. In the programme, principals and mentors confirmed having engaged in these processes and, consequently, more information and skills were transferred to the principals regarding these processes during the programme. The most important strategy in this regard was the involvement of stakeholders, including parents in the drafting of policies. In some schools, principals confirmed having struggled to keep parents fully involved in the affairs of the school. However, since the programme things have changed. The principals' reflective journals provide evidence of the policies being used and the fact that their standard is of good and they are implementable. Moreover, parents and the SGBs are now actively involved in the affairs of the schools. The pictures included in the journals are testament to the projects parents and SGBs are engaged in, ranging from school renovations to the construction of new classrooms.

- *Curriculum management.* *The problem with many schools not performing at the expected standard academically was found to be due to the ineffective management of the curriculum.* SMTs did not prioritise the management of the curriculum and thus there were no assessment programmes in place. One mentor stated that many principals are good leaders but not managers. Management of the curriculum is important and is the responsibility of all teachers as well as management and other stakeholders. Subject choices were correctly managed in schools, as was evident from the concerns of one principal who had a high enrolment of learners in Mathematics despite the fact that his school was poor in the teaching of Mathematics.

- *Curriculum delivery.* One of the mentors went even further to observe the actual classroom teaching that was taking place in one of the schools and he

discovered that teachers paid more attention to the above average and gifted learners in the class and less to those who were learning slowly. Most teachers were not using teaching aids, while those who did bring them to class were unable to use them effectively. In some instances, teachers were unable to differentiate between teaching and lecturing and did not consider the levels of the learners' cognitive development. He later discussed these observations with the principals in his group to make them aware of such issues, as they are part of their leadership and management tasks. This is how he put his observations:

They concentrate more on the learners who are gifted and seem to ignore those who are not putting up their hands and so on. One thing I realised is that teaching aids are not used. I also told them that when you teach learners, you should not lecture.

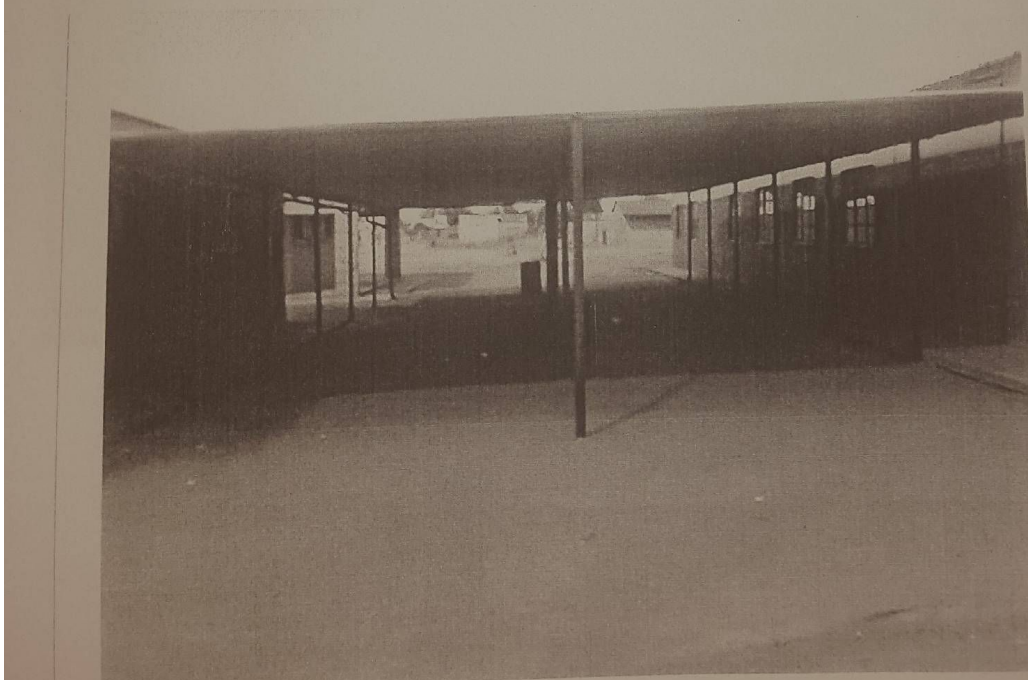
Trust and respect are among the most important aspects that mentee principals and their mentors emphasised as part of their learning content. "Trust is a vital element within leadership contexts and has an important relationship to several positive outcomes. including job performance, organisational commitment, satisfaction as well as organisational citizenship behaviours; altruism, civic virtue, conscientiousness, courtesy and sportsmanship" (Fox et al., 2015:9–10). In some schools there was a high degree of mistrust among the teachers and the principals and this affected the level of delegation of responsibilities and tasks. As a consequence, principals felt frustrated and overburdened with work. With the development of respect and trust, the situations in many of these schools changed for the best.

A ROOF OF OUR SCHOOL PAINTED BY THE PARENTS
AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN JULY 2011
DURING 67 MINUTES OF NELSON MANDELA.



C

ASSEMBLY AREAS SHELTER CONSTRUCTED BY
THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY (SGB)



D

Photo C and D: The newly built assembly area built from SGB funds (This structure serves as a school hall) Abstracted from the mentee (principal) journal.

8.2.6.2. *Experiences in terms of Personal Growth*

Kraft (1995:12) assumes that “amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference; namely, the organic connection between education and personal experience, or some kind of empirical and experimental philosophy”. Education is also about personal growth. Personal growth happens after personal identification; a process explained by Fox et al. (2015:7) as “a process whereby an individual’s belief about a person becomes self-referential or self-defining”. The mentoring relationship afforded both mentees and mentors an opportunity to know themselves and to re-define themselves within the mentoring contexts. The cyclical nature of the experiential learning is testament to the cyclical personal growth that individuals go through throughout the life cycle. As individuals grow, they go through different stages of emotional and personal experiences, from concrete to abstract, which through reflective practices, shape the growth process. The following aspects were found to have influenced the personal growth of principals in the study:

- *Sensitivity* One female principal told the researcher during the interview that she was very harsh to the teachers who were frequently absent from school. Some educators cited personal problems that were not relevant and genuine in her view. She said that after the mentoring programme she began to understand the problems her educators were experiencing outside the school. This enabled her to be more sensitive to their issues and she subsequently learnt to offer advice where possible. She said:

I also now understand people better than before. I know now that I must learn how to speak to people; I have got that pastoral care and even trying to organise people who have knowledge to help them.

- *Interpersonal skills.* The principal who found educators difficult and hard to work with stated that he was advised by his mentor to do an introspection of himself because the educators’ attitude could be caused by his attitude towards the educators. He accordingly did so and the situation improved.

The mentors and mentees’ confidence about themselves, their opinions and their ability to learn, are “the key aspects of a person’s meta-cognitive knowledge” (Kolb & Kolb, 2008:304). “Learning requires mindful attention, effort and “time on task”, and

people who see themselves as learners are those who trust their straight personal experiences and their ability to learn from them”. Kolb and Kolb’s (2008) statement indicates the level of personal growth that takes place in an individual during the learning process. This is a process where the learning self-identity is developed and contributes towards personal growth. In order to develop this trait, “learning self-identity”, Kolb and Kolb (2008) provide the following attributes:

(1) Trust the process of learning from experience

- *“Trust your experience.* Place experience at the centre of your learning process, making it the central point of your choices and decisions. This does not mean that you should not learn from experts or the experiences of others, but the key is to own your choices and validate them in your experiences”. This is one aspect in which principals were lacking in the beginning. They did not trust their previous experiences as valid and forming part of their knowledge. One example is that of the principals who struggled to produce evidence of work done when the mentor requested it. Mentor 1 confirmed that the principals were indeed doing their work, but did not take the work as valid evidence of their learning. He referred them to their office walls on which valuable documents were pasted such as timetables, duty rosters, subject allocation and so on. He discovered that the principals did not take these documents as seriously as they should as part of their learning experiences.
- *“Trust the learning process.* Avoid an excessive focus on the outcomes of immediate performance and focus instead on the long-term recursive process of learning by tracking your performance progress over time”. Principal 5 was more concerned about what the university officials would discover when coming to her school and she said:

My fear was that maybe what I was doing was going to be rejected by the university official because they told us that the course is a practical one and they may come to our schools to monitor. [*Principal 5, Interview Q.11, Transcript 11*]

This principal focused mainly on the immediate outcome of the learning process. Her main concern as she put it was the time allocated to the programme, which in her words was too little for all the work she had to do.

(2) Redefine your relationship to failure

- *“Control emotional responses to learn from failure.* Failure, losses, and mistakes provoke inevitable emotional responses. It is important to learn to control emotional reactions that block learning and feed into a fixed identity”. One of the principals was able to indicate his ability to learn from failure, stating that he did not involve stakeholders and SGBs as frequently as possible in the affairs of the school. His willingness to improve the situation in the school through a change of attitude enabled him to do things the right way.
- *“Risk losing.* Winning is not everything and too great a focus on it can block learning”. Mentor 4’s response when learning of his selection as a mentor was characterised by doubt. He said:

My first reaction was, will I be capable to do it ... because it is not a task you can take lightly, you are working with experienced people who have knowledge, good qualifications. My first reaction was will I be able to teach them something? Both mentees and mentors in the programme had to risk their experiences and dignity in the process. At the end, they jointly benefitted from their mentoring relationships.

[Mentor 4, Interview Q.4, Transcript,4]

8.2.7. Changes at the schools after the Programme

Lambrecht et al. (1997:10) contend that “not all on-the-job experiences are equal in their potential effectiveness for leadership development”. The purpose of the educational leadership development in the context of the mentorship programme was to enable principals to effect or implement changes in their schools for improved teaching and learning. At this stage it became important for the researcher to check the effects of the principals’ learning experiences as they were implementing in their schools. Kayes (2002:138), in his review of management learning focusing on Kolb’s experiential learning theory, suggests “four general, but not mutually exclusive,

agendas which appear in management learning: (i) action, (ii) cognition, (iii) reflection, and (iv) experience”. In this section, the first one, action, is most appropriate and will be discussed briefly.

“Action approaches to management learning emphasise the behavioural changes that take place in managers when solving organisational problems” (Kayes, 2002). The principals indicated that they faced numerous problems at their schools, ranging from a lack of resources, curriculum delivery challenges, human resource related problems and many more. There were also problems which were observed by the mentors when visiting schools. These included issues such as a lack of security or school safety, management of the feeding scheme, office arrangements, incident recording and so on. Mentors played their roles by giving advice to the principals on how to improve the conditions in the schools. In some of the schools, the mentor suggested that the schools should look into supplementing the vegetables supplied through the National Schools Nutrition Programme (NSNP) by establishing school gardens. Such an innovation would ensure that the learners would receive fresh vegetables from their school’s vegetable gardens.

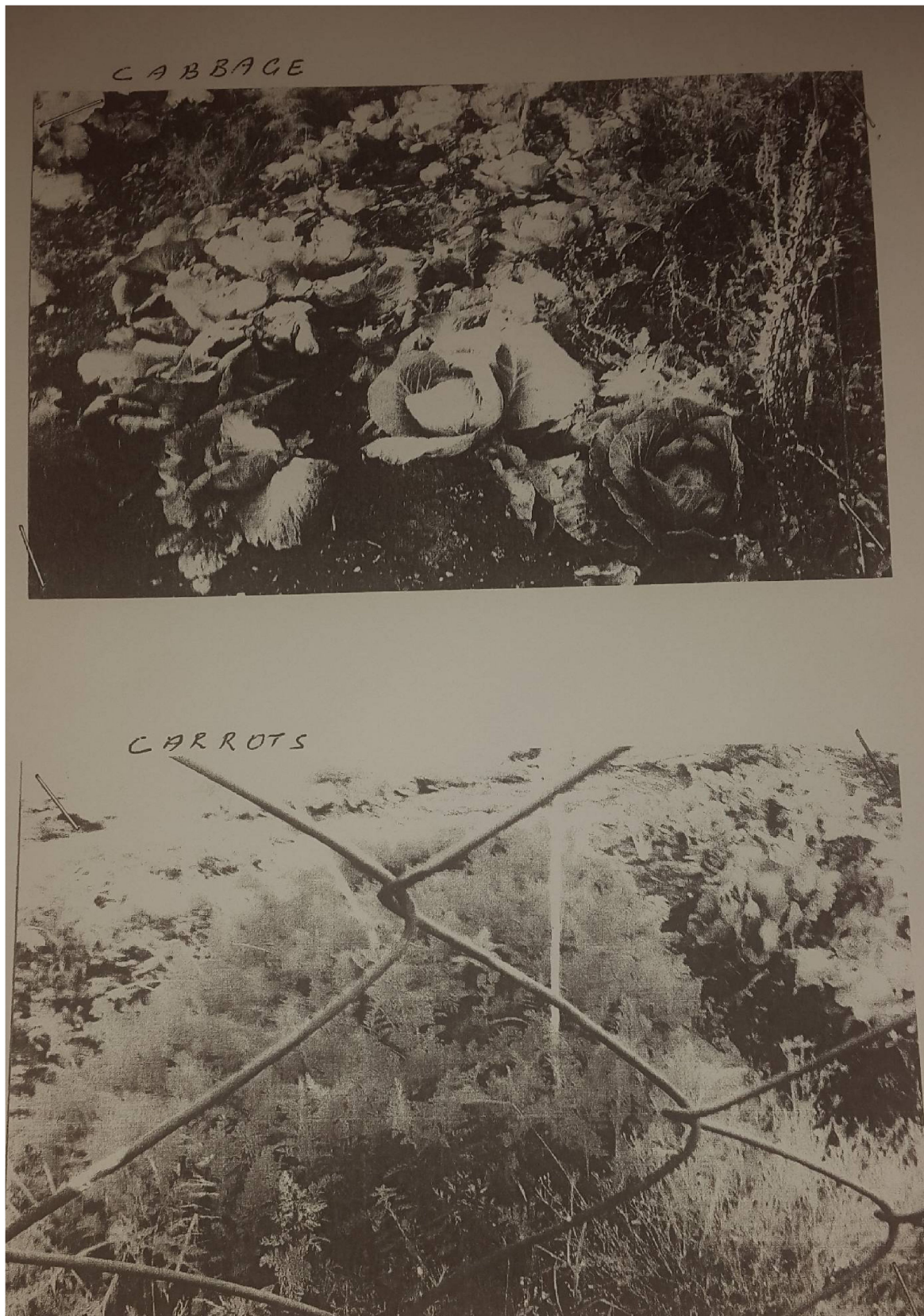


Photo E: Vegetables produced at the school

Schools that experienced problems with planning suddenly were, after mentoring, they were able to involve stakeholders in planning the activities of the schools and

principals started delegating responsibilities to staff members. This indicated that they had begun to trust their subordinates more than they had done before. The reflective portfolios of some principals contained photos of their schools before and after their participation in the programme. These showed vast improvements in terms of the physical appearance of the schools

In one case, the principal was worried by the increasing enrolment which had doubled since he started implementing changes in the school. The principal was not aware that the school's curriculum was a problem. There were so many subjects that the school offered and he was advised to trim it down and the school's enrolment was then controllable. In the journal of one of the principals, there was a letter written by the SGB stating the good working relationships they have with the principal, also tabling the improvements that he has brought to the school and to the community. The schools embraced the socialisation process of educational leaders, educators and the communities, thus becoming social spaces that involved everybody.; "learned the values, norms, and required behaviours that permit them to participate as members of the institution by relinquishing attitudes, values, and behaviours that do not fit" (Peterson, 1986:152).

8.2.8. Application of Skills and Knowledge in different contexts

Although the acquisition of knowledge and skills during the programme was one of the focus areas of the research, more important was the application of these skills and knowledge in real-life situations. The objectives of the ACE (SL) programme, among others include the ability to mentor others in different contexts. This is also one of the requirements of Kolb's experiential learning theory and is conceptualised within the active experimentation mode of this theory. Dede (2011:22) states that "at this stage of the learning cycle, it is important for the individual to affect his surroundings and engage in certain initiatives or attempt to change a situation".

Participants, particularly the mentors, confirmed their abilities in applying their skills and knowledge in different contexts including the communities within which they live. One of the mentors stated that he is engaged in a mentoring role in the community he lives in, establishing committees responsible for the welfare of the community. Another mentor indicated that he is still mentoring school principals on a voluntary basis. The leadership skills which are developed as a mentor get transferred to other

areas are significant at this stage. Developing stronger communication skills by working with a mentee allows the mentor to deliver better and more effective presentations at the workplace. While the mentors were assisting the mentees, they had the chance to reflect on and articulate their own expertise and experience.

School principals confirmed that they had already begun with mentoring sessions in their schools. They also said that they have learnt the principles of mentoring which would guide them to mentor successfully themselves, even outside their schools. By working with a mentor, the principals (mentees) got an opportunity to see how people in mentoring positions desire to be, in the way they speak, act, teach, listen, and in addition, which skills they needed for effective leadership. More importantly, mentees acquired hands-on knowledge into what to say to their subordinates, what to do, how to act, what to avoid, and more things that they needed to know in order to rise in the ranks of the department of education. A third benefit was also identified, namely, the direct knowledge-transfer between a mentor and a mentee. All these benefits were reported by both mentors and mentees during the interviews.

8.2.9. How participants Reflected on their Learning Experiences

Central to the theory of experiential learning is the idea that “the creation of knowledge and meaning occurs through active engagement in ideas and experiences in the external world and through internal reflection on the qualities of these experiences and ideas” (Kolb, 1984). During the ACE (SL) programme, the principals were required to keep reflection records that detailed the knowledge gained during and after the programme. This began with recording the SWOT analysis of their institutions and of themselves as leaders. Among the strengths recorded were the availability of qualified staff members, and the fact that they were hard working with a desire to change the achievements of their learners. The principals themselves were dedicated and committed leaders who did everything in their ability to improve education in their schools. Weaknesses recorded included the inability to lead curriculum delivery processes and the unavailability of relevant resources to enhance their skills. There was also mention of opportunities, including the mentoring opportunity extended to the principals and the educators to assist with knowledge and skills to address existing challenges. Threats included the fluctuation in the availability of teaching personnel. This threat was a result of the number of

educators leaving the province mainly to go to urban provinces like Gauteng, as well as educators resigning from the profession.

Reflections that were conducted after the programme identified personal and professional changes in the principals which ultimately influenced changes in the schools. The schools are reported to have become better places for teaching and learning and have also improved in terms of the relationships that exist between staff members and the principals. The involvement of stakeholders has increased in comparison to the period before the programme and this is attributed to the improved relations between the principals and stakeholders. Increased understanding of roles and responsibilities particularly between principals and SGBs has contributed to the improved relationships. It has also been confirmed that the increased knowledge and skills required to lead and manage the curriculum in particular and the schools in general have improved. Human relationships have also improved and there is better understanding and acceptance of individual educator challenges.

8.3. Personal Reflection

This study offered me an opportunity to realise one of the goals I set for myself after completing the research for my master's degree. That research sought to investigate whether or not mentorship is a form of social learning for school principals. That study indeed confirmed mentoring as a form of social learning. In that study, many of the participating principals emphasised the role played by peer learning experiences in their success as principals, as well as the role played by observation both of their mentors and of others. At the time, I experienced a problem with the concept of "experience", which was constantly referred to by the principals. In terms of their observations, experience meant a period of engagement or employment and service in a position of principalship. It did not, they maintained, refer to the life events from which they had learnt.

During this research, I had an opportunity to reflect on the years spent as a school principal, and during the interviews I had an opportunity to relate to their stories. I identified with their experiences as principals, and with the challenges they faced during their period in office. There were periods of frustration and uncertainty that they had to go through alone, without any guidance or help from the educational

authorities. My journey throughout this work was influenced by the conditions under which educational leaders and their mentors laboured during the mentoring programme after mentorship had been identified as the best strategy to guide principals. What were the mentors expected to assist their mentees with, and what and how were the mentees expected to learn? Most importantly was whether the principals were expecting to learn anything from the mentors. Bush (2009:379) defines mentoring “as a process where one person provides individual support and challenge to another professional”. The conceptualisation and understanding of the concept was very important for me. I expected principals to firstly understand this concept and its implications. However, the understanding I obtained from the study is that principals did not understand mentorship completely. The only understanding they had was that mentors were allocated to take them through their assignments. Success in completing these assignments reassured them that they were progressing with their studies. Little attention was paid to progress made with the actual on-the-job learning and school improvement.

Participants in the study had sufficient knowledge on what educational leadership development is all about and they recognised and confirmed mentoring as a leadership development strategy. During this study I was able to reflect on an individual level as to what actually was the purpose of the mentorship programme, as the programme design seemed to place more emphasis on the acquisition of an academic qualification rather than practical leadership development. Bush (2009:382) poses similar questions when examining the impact of leadership development:

- (1) “Should leadership development be content-led or based around processes?”
- (2) Should leadership learning be predominantly campus-based or field-based?”

From the principals’ responses it became clear that mentors made few on-site visits compared to the number of campus visits that principals had to undertake during the two-year programme.

Although I have been convinced that mentorship is an appropriate strategy for leadership development in education, my argument is that in its current format, with the challenges experienced in appointing principals in schools, mentorship is likely to fail. This is because of the inappropriate and corruption-riddled system of appointments that is prevalent throughout the education system. One of the mentors

commented about principals who know nothing about school leadership and management being appointed and, as a way of making up for the blunder, are recommended for mentorship. That is why there was no understanding by principal mentees about their selection for the programme. My understanding and reflection on mentorship is based on the senior and/or more experienced person guiding and supporting the inexperienced and/or newly appointed principal, thus socialising him or her into the new role.

I believe that an experienced or more senior person (mentor) should be assisting the mentee with both the theoretical perspective and the practical perspective of the job. This, as I have observed, is not happening as anticipated. The reasons for this inefficiency could be that mentors are drawn from retired personnel. The fact that they were school principals and even successful ones during their tenure is not enough to guarantee success. A practical example from the research relates to the problems mentees articulated regarding the formulation and implementation of policies in schools. Policies are not static documents and/or approaches to processes in schools. They come and go with time. Mentors, I argue, might be good at interpreting and implementing policies formulated during their time of practice, but may not add value in guiding and supporting mentees in the implementation of policies formulated after their term of office. They may only be able to interpret these to a lesser contextual extent and may not be able to assist in the implementation process. That is where I see a gap between theory and practice. In support of this argument, Mitgang (2012:6) states that:

All too often, training has failed to keep pace with the evolving role of principals. This is especially true and most of the 500-plus university-based programs where the majority of school leaders are trained. Among the common flaws critics cite: curricular that fail to take into account the needs of districts and diverse student bodies; weak connections between theory and practice; faculty with little or no experience as school leaders.

Kolb's (1984) theory on experiential learning was a valuable tool for my reflection on the experiences of participants in the programme. I was enabled to understand the importance of every event one goes through as a form of learning and that it becomes knowledge only after it has been transformed through reflection. I also

realised that principals missed a great opportunity to learn more from the programme because of their inability to reflect and to use their reflective journals or portfolios effectively. Bush (2009:381) defines a portfolio as “the structured documentary history of a carefully selected set of coached or mentored accomplishments, substantiated by samples of student work, and fully realised only through reflective writing, deliberation and serious conversation”. My reflection on mentorship and experiential learning convinced me of the interdependence of these two concepts in support of learning and skills acquisition. I have also realised that there are leadership skills that cannot be taught but that have to be learnt experientially. That is the reason I recommend that mentors should spend more time with their mentees in the schools where everything is happening. In that way mentors will be immersed in the actual situations like their mentees and, as such, will be responsible for creating an environment where mentees can learn through hands-on experience.

The reflective journals kept by mentee principals in the programme were based on the course content and did not provide opportunities for reflecting on critical incidents. Bringle and Hatcher (1999:117) state that “a critical incident journal allows students to focus on a specific event that occurred at the service site. Students then respond to prompts designed to explore their thoughts, reactions, future action and information from the course that might be relevant to the incident”. This was proven when participants could not elaborate on the eye-on-the face experiences and how they addressed them. One of the conclusions I arrived at suggests that even though reflection was part of their learning experiences, the challenge was that it was not aimed at their abstract and concrete experiences in the workplace.

8.4. Significance of this study

The study was significant in its ability to contribute to the body of knowledge by confirming that mentorship can be a useful leadership development tool for school principals, both newly appointed and experienced. The study confirmed that the learning experiences of the participants in the mentoring programme were relevant and appropriate even in contexts other than education. As can be deduced from the findings, mentoring has made an important difference in leadership and staff development for principals and teachers. As was noted, the participants did not have knowledge of what mentoring was actually all about and what it meant for their

individual and professional development. The participants got to know and appreciate that all life experiences contribute to their learning. Before the programme reflection was known to them merely as an abstract concept but after the programme they could relate positively to the practice.

The range of experiences of mentoring within the principals' mentoring programme highlights various issues and considerations. The first is that a careful selection and recruitment of participants for a mentorship programme can increase the benefits envisaged in the improvement of educational leaders. Principals learnt about mentorship for the first time during the mentoring process and, it is suggested, should they have had prior knowledge of what the programme was all about, their learning experiences would have been increased. The principals' learning experiences obtained through mentoring resulted in increased mentoring sessions for teachers by principals within their schools. This is viewed as one of the successes in terms of the objectives of the programme. Again, the knowledge displayed by the principals about their leadership roles emanating from their interaction with their colleagues and mentors increased their confidence levels. This is confirmed by Deans and Oakley (2007) who argue that "mentoring is being used increasingly in leadership development especially because it can develop confidence and self-belief".

Open-ended responses supported the findings of this study about the importance of preparation for mentors and mentees, and the quality and the appropriateness of mentor selection and pairing. The study contributes in multiple ways to the field of teacher development initiatives in Mpumalanga province. These results may also be used to inform provincial and district leaders who are responsible for educator development on the effective and efficient implementation of mentoring programmes in schools.

The mentors gained valuable experience with regard to various aspects and principles of mentoring. This study has revealed the value mentors from previously advantaged communities obtained in getting to mentor principals from former disadvantaged communities. This allowed these mentors to be exposed to challenges that they had never been exposed to previously. These experiences also made them aware of the need to appreciate the efforts that these principals were

making to improve their practice. The study has also emphasised the importance of mentoring newly appointed personnel in education, both educators and principals alike. Therefore, the value and quality of this study is that it provides more insight into the professional and personal development of mentors and principals within mentoring relationships. Furthermore, the study highlights some weaknesses of the programme especially in the upholding of white supremacy within the ACE (SL) programme and cautions against the danger of the programme being seen as being designed for black principals only.

In conclusion, the study confirmed mentorship as a leadership development initiative to enhance the participants' leadership skills. It has also confirmed the experiential learning relevance of mentorship for educational leadership development.

The significance of this study towards practice is that if recommendations could be implemented, the preparation of mentors for mentoring could provide successful mentoring practices in educational leadership. Their recruitment plays a vital role in the educational leadership of school principals in South Africa.

8.5. Limitations of the study

There are some aspects of the study that may have in some way narrowed the findings. One of those was the cohort of principals chosen for the programme by the Nkangala education district office. This group consisted of 99% primary school principals. This may have had a negative effect on the representation of principals that this study initially targeted, bearing in mind that the findings and conclusions of this study are based on descriptive data obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants. Five principals and five mentors were selected from the many in the district. This was deemed appropriate as the design adopted by the study was that of phenomenology.

The fact that the study concentrated on a few principals in the Nkangala district of Mpumalanga, the findings cannot be generalised to the entire district and or province. The intention of this study was not, however, to make generalisations to a larger population of principals and mentors, but rather to relate the results to the contexts within which they were generated. Again, the research did not deal with the

participants' learning styles as presented by Kolb's (1984) theory because doing so would have complicated the study, which relied on a mentoring programme that did not consider participants' learning styles.

With regard to the nature of the research, it should be noted that it did not set out to specifically explore educational leadership and therefore should not be regarded as a purely "educational leadership" study; rather leadership was studied as a phenomenon within mentorship as part of a development programme for principals.

8.6. Recommendations

The recruitment of mentors is a very important process especially in educational leadership development programmes. The fact that in the past a person was a school principal is not sufficient to guarantee a successful mentoring relationship. It is a fact that not all principals and former principals have been mentored during their tenure as principals, and therefore they cannot be assumed to have the skills and knowledge needed to help other principals in their careers. Even those who were mentored may not necessarily have acquired enough knowledge and skills of mentorship. From the data obtained, it was discovered that two of the mentors were not adequately informed about what they were expected to do within the mentoring programme. Accordingly, if we are serious about mentorship, prospective mentors need to be prepared for their roles through rigorous training programmes. Mentors do not necessarily have to be retired principals only; practising principals could also be prepared for this task. Indeed, practising principals may be more appropriate for this role since they are immersed in current leadership practices and thus may be better suited to convey current trends and policies in education to their mentees. Such mentors would be better positioned to assist their colleagues in their practice and in becoming more relevant in the process. The current tradition in mentor recruitment comes with context-specific challenges as some mentors left the profession many years ago and thus did not add value to the current situations faced by principals in schools.

The selection of principals for the programme could be accompanied by a careful needs analysis of each principal and the school itself. Taking principals into a developmental programme on the basis that he or she has been left out of the

previous selection serves no purpose. Data provided insights on the lack of self-management by the principals in the programme. The reflective journals also revealed a lack of this aspect and only recordings of academic related tasks were recorded. Self-reflection exercises were not found. There was also no evidence of information relating to personal traits, management and leadership skills. The manner in which principals are identified into the programme could be merely interpreted as a process of compliance by the districts and circuit offices. It is therefore important that each principal selected for such a programme should be knowledgeable about the reasons for the selection. In addition, they should be fully informed in terms of what the programme is all about and what is expected of them both before and after the programme so that they are able to locate themselves and develop their own expectations of the programme. The separation of the academic qualification from the practical component of the programme should be given further attention because, in the current programme, principals tend to focus on the completion of assignments, which will enable them to complete the academic programme while paying lip service to practical component in order to please the mentors and the lecturers. The study ascertained that only the academic component of the programme is evaluated and there is no follow-up on the overall progress the school is making after the acquisition of the qualification. The research proposes a separation of the acquisition of the academic qualification from the mentorship. Mentorship could be undertaken after identification and selection on the basis of the needs of the participants. The mentoring could be done in the first year and in the second year, the academic component of the programme could be set in. In this instance the principals would have been mentored efficiently and their schools would be running and the academic qualification entry would be determined by the success of mentorship.

Furthermore, it was observed that not enough attention was paid to the individual principal's progress during the programme. The reason for this was that the programme was structured so that it allowed group mentoring, and schools were visited not as often as some principals would have liked. This clearly indicates that although the programme comprised an experiential format, it was not evaluated nor was it confirmed as having resulted in far-reaching transformation in the schools.

It is again recommended that a series of leadership scenarios based on on-site training be developed at district and circuit levels to further enhance the skills and knowledge acquired by the principals during the mentoring programme. It is also recommended that during these scenarios, mentor development be incorporated to develop a pool of mentors within the districts or circuits.

In conclusion, the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (2007) is designed “to equip the teaching profession to meet the needs of a democratic South Africa in the 21st century”, and does not have to only target principals and teachers from the previously disadvantaged communities. The current practices in the field of teacher development indicate that principals from white schools are better off and do not require leadership development. Instead, the current trends assume that retired white principals are the ones that are capable of mentoring black principals. This could easily be interpreted as an act of white supremacy on the part of policy. Ball (2006:18) states that “many contemporary problems or crises in education are, in themselves, the surface manifestations of deeper historical, structural and ideological contradictions in education policy”. The problems that have been noted in this study could be attributed wholly to what Ball (2006) is highlighting here. The study recommends that all principals should be prepared for the demands of 21st century education irrespective of their race, since there is a great need in the country to develop principals and leaders who are transformational to attain racial equity. This view is based on the belief that educational leadership skills need to run deeper than is currently the case. Principals who are racial equity leaders become a key leverage point in impacting the racial tensions experienced in schools accommodating different racial groups.

8.7. Possible further studies

The study investigated learning from experiences of both mentors and mentees in a mentoring relationship within the (ACE) school leadership development programme. The learning experiences were examined in relation to how reflective they were of the experiential learning theory as espoused by Kolb (1984). This empirical investigation was important as it resulted in the alignment of mentoring with this

theory. The following suggestions for future studies are presented below in the order of priority:

Firstly, there is a need to investigate the requisite processes when selecting principals for mentorship programmes. Universities should also investigate the recruitment of mentors for mentorship programmes involving school principals. During this study, there seemed to be no clear programmes for preparing either mentors or principals for participation in the programme. The danger associated with a lack of such programmes is that participants may not be adequately prepared for the envisaged programme expectations. It is also recommended that participants should have experiences in order to learn from them, thus careful selection and appointment should occur before participation. A study looking at these processes in the universities offering such programmes and the Department of Education, which is responsible for the selection of principals/mentees into the programme is necessary to understand how these processes are unfolding.

Secondly, there is an urgent need to evaluate the impact of principal mentorship programmes on site, especially after the acquisition of the qualification at the end of the second and final year. Such a study would provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of mentorship programmes conducted in schools, as well as the effectiveness of the mentored principals in leading and managing their schools after such programmes. It is recommended that such a study be longitudinal in nature, extending over a two-year period and concentrating on the impact mentoring has on teachers and the overall effectiveness of the school.

Lastly, a study to look into the reasons and interpretations thereof for the exclusion of white principals from the ACE (SL) and mentoring programme in Mpumalanga. A mixed methods study would have the potential to elicit the numbers of white principals who took part in the programme offered by the University of Pretoria before the programme was discontinued.

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**ANNEXURES
(A)**

**The Head of Department
Mpumalanga Department of Education
Private Bag X 11341
Nelspruit
1200**

**Date: 07 July 2014
P.O. Box 18912
Actonville
BENONI
1506**

Dear Madam

**REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITHIN THE MPUMALANGA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

I am a PhD student at the University of Pretoria, Department of Education Management, Law and Policy Studies. I will be conducting a research study on **‘Educational Leadership Development: Reflecting on Experience in Educational Leadership development through Mentorship in Mpumalanga**. The purpose of the study is to explore the mentors and mentees’ experiences and understanding of mentorship as a leadership development initiative in the Mpumalanga Department of Education.

The permission I am applying for is to conduct interviews with principals who have participated in the ACE School Leadership mentoring programme as mentees under the mentorship of the University of Pretoria. The interviews will take 45 - 60 minutes at a venue and time that will suit the mentees in order to get their views and perspectives on the topic for the research. The interviews will not interfere with the professional activities of the mentees. These officials are selected because they are or were part of the latter mentioned programme which aspires towards improved leadership practices in their institutions. This makes them appropriate to provide useful information on the meaning and their understanding of experiential learning through mentorship

I am hoping that the findings of the study will assist education managers, policy makers, researchers, academics and government officials to gain a better understanding of the notion of experiential learning through mentorship in the province. The benefits of gaining an understanding of experiential learning and mentoring will assist the mentors, the mentees and the department of education in implementing successful mentoring programmes in schools for the benefit of newly recruited and existing educators.

The research will be conducted in accordance with the University of Pretoria's ethical guidelines with regard to issues of confidentiality and anonymity. This letter therefore seeks permission to conduct interviews and the reviewing of documents such as the mentees' reflective journals.

I am looking forward to a positive response.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Musa Absalon Thambekwayo,
Signature.....

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(B)

**APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FOR MR. M.A. THAMBEKWAYO:
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATION: (PhD DEGREE)**



education
DEPARTMENT: EDUCATION
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

Private Bag X 11341
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Government Boulevard
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Building 5
Mpumalanga Province
Republic of South Africa

Litiko leTomfundo Umyango weFundo Departement van Onderwys Umyango wezeMfundo
Enquiries: H.A. Baloyi (013) 766 5476

P.O. BOX 18912
Actonville
Benoni
1506

RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: MR. M.A. THAMBEKWAYO

Your application to conduct research was received on the on the 02 May 2014. The title of your study is: "*Reflecting on experience in educational leadership development through mentorship in Mpumalanga.*" The aims, objectives, the questions and the overall design of your study give an impression that the outcomes of the study especially your findings and recommendations will help improve the way our schools are managed through mentorship. Your request is approved subject to you observing the content of the departmental research manual which is attached. You are required to discuss with the principals of the sampled schools regarding the approach to your observation and data collection as no disruption of tuition will be allowed. You are also requested to adhere to your University's research ethics as spelt out in your research ethics document.

In terms of the attached manual (2.2. bullet number 4 & 6) data or any research activity can only be conducted after school hours as per appointment. You are also requested to share your findings with the department so that we may consider implementing your findings if that will be in the best interest of department.

For more information kindly liaise with the department's research unit @ 013 766 5476 or a.baloyi@education.mpu.gov.za. The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give you the necessary support you may need.

Sisonke Sifundzisa Sive


MPUMALANGA
A Pioneering Spirit

Handwritten signature



**APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FOR MR. M.A. THAMBEKWAYO:
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATION: (PhD DEGREE)**

APPROVED/~~NOT APPROVED~~:

MRS MOC MHLABANE
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

9. 5. 14
DATE

Sisonke Sifundzisa Sive





**UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA**
Faculty of Education

(C)

CONSENT FORMS FOR MENTORS

I, Mr/ Dr. /Ms _____ hereby agree to voluntarily participate in the research entitled **“Reflecting on Experience in the educational leadership development through mentorship in Mpumalanga”**.

I have read and fully understand the content of this consent letter and I hereby give my consent to participate in this study.

Name of participant

Signature of participantDate.....



**UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA**
Faculty of Education

(D)

CONSENT FORMS FOR MENTEES

I, Mr/ Dr. /Ms _____ hereby agree to voluntarily participate in the research titled **“Reflecting on Experience in the educational leadership development through mentorship in Mpumalanga”**.

I have read and fully understand the content of this consent letter and I hereby give my consent to participate in this study.

Name of participant

Signature of participantDate.....

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

(E)

QUESTIONS FOR MENTEES (PRINCIPALS AND SMT'S)

INTRODUCTIONS:

“Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to interview you on this topic. Before we continue, I need to make you aware of a few important issues which forms part of my ethical responsibilities as prescribed by the University”

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this interview is purely on a voluntary basis. This means you are in no way obligated to participate and that you may withdraw your participation at any moment should you no longer wish to continue.

Confidentiality: The information you are going to share with me will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your name and the name of your school/ institution will be treated with strict confidentiality and no mention will be made in the research results and in any related document/s.

AIMS OF THE RESEARCH EXPLAINED:

WHAT ARE THE MENTORS AND MENTEE'S EXPECTATIONS, HOPES AND FEARS OF LEARNING, EXPERIENCED DURING THE MENTORING PROCESS? (CONCRETE EXPERIENCES).

- What are your views and or opinions about the selection of principals into the ACE School Leadership Programme in your district?
- How did you react when you learnt that you were selected to participate in the mentorship component of this programme?
- What do you know about mentoring and how did you get to know about it?
- What expectations did you have of the mentoring programme before it's commencement?
- In terms of learning, what did you expect to learn in the mentoring programme and how?

WHAT ARE THE PARTICIPANTS FEELINGS WITH THE MENTORING PROCESS? (REFLECTIVE OBSERVATION)

- Who was your mentor?
- Can you comment on your relationship and experiences with your mentor?
- What experiences and lessons do you take from the mentorship?
- What did you learn as a leader from the mentorship programme?
- How often did you use your reflective journal and what did you use it for?
- What do you know about reflection and why was it important or not important during the programme?
- Can you comment on any “eye on the face experiences” you had in this programme and how these were redressed?
- In terms of the mentorship and the learning you acquired, what can you say about its quality, and how do you see yourself as an educational leader after the programme?

- How would you gauge your experiences in terms of growth in the mentorship process?
- In what way would your learning experiences in this mentorship programme be of benefit to your colleagues?
- Do you think that would introduce the concept of mentoring to your colleagues, and if so how would you do it?

HOW ARE MENTORS AND MENTEES GOING TO ADOPT THE MENTORING PRINCIPLES FOR OTHER CONTEXTS?

- Do you regard the skills you have acquired in this programme relevant in other contexts, if so, which contexts do you have in mind?
- How do you plan to apply these skills and experiences in those contexts?
- How relevant do you find the mentorship principles and experiences to the situations and contexts of newly appointed staff?
- How would you use them to the benefit of these staff members?

END OF INTERVIEW:

Thanking the participant for taking part. Inform him/her of any possible follow up sessions should they be necessary.

Taking any questions the participant might have.

QUESTIONS FOR MENTORS

INTRODUCTIONS

“Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to interview you on this topic. Before we continue, I need to make you aware of a few important issues which forms part of my ethical responsibilities as prescribed by the University”

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this interview is purely on a voluntary basis. This means you are in no way obligated to participate and that you may withdraw your participation at any moment should you no longer wish to continue.

Confidentiality: The information you are going to share with me will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your name and the name of your school/ institution will be treated with strict confidentiality and no mention will be made in the research results and in any related document/s.

AIMS OF THE RESEARCH EXPLAINED

WHAT ARE THE MENTORS AND MENTEE’S EXPECTATIONS, HOPES AND FEARS OF LEARNING, EXPERIENCED DURING THE MENTORING PROCESS? (CONCRETE EXPERIENCES).

- How did you get recruited to become a mentor in this ACE SL programme?
- How long were you a mentor and how many students/ mentees did you work with?
- What knowledge and experience did you bring into the mentoring programme?
- What was your first reaction when you were selected for this programme, and why?



WHAT ARE THE PARTICIPANTS FEELINGS WITH THE MENTORING PROCESS? (REFLECTIVE OBSERVATION)

- You indicated that that you dealt with a group ofprincipals as mentees, how can you describe the relationship you had with the principals?
- Mentoring is also viewed as a leadership development strategy; can you share your views on this?
- What expectations did you have before the commencement of the programme? Were these expectations fulfilled or not? Please elaborate.

WHAT ARE THE MENTORS AND MENTEES EVALUATION OF THE MENTORING PROCESS?

- In terms of the mentorship and the learning you acquired, what can you say about its quality, and how do you see yourself as a mentor after the programme?

WHAT NEW SELF UNDERSTANDINGS, REFLECTIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS WERE REVEALED BY THE PREVIOUS AND NEW EXPERIENCES? (ACTIVE EXPERIMENTATION)

- How would you gauge your experiences in terms of growth in the mentorship process?
- In what way would your learning experiences in this mentorship programme be of benefit to your colleagues?
- Do you think that would introduce the concept of mentoring to your colleagues, and if so how would you do it?

WHAT NEW SELF UNDERSTANDINGS, REFLECTIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS WERE REVEALED BY THE PREVIOUS AND NEW EXPERIENCES?

- What conclusion did you come to regarding the leadership development of your mentees during and after the mentoring programme?
- Are there any changes that you have noted in the schools you have visited during the programme? Elaborate on the situation before and after the mentoring programme.

HOW ARE MENTORS AND MENTEES GOING TO ADOPT THE MENTORING PRINCIPLES FOR OTHER CONTEXTS?

- Do you regard the skills you have acquired in this programme relevant in other contexts, if so, which contexts do you have in mind?
- How do you plan to apply these skills and experiences in those contexts?
- How relevant do you find the mentorship principles and experiences to the situations and contexts of newly appointed staff?
- How would you use them to [© University of Pretoria](https://www.up.ac.za/)?

END OF INTERVIEW:

Thanking the participant for taking part. Inform him/her of any possible follow up sessions should they be necessary.

Taking any questions the participant might have.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

(F)

AUGUST 2014 TO MARCH 2015

REFLECTING ON EXPERIENCE IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MENTORSHIP IN MPUMALANGA.

TRANSCRIPT: 1

MENTOR[1]

M. Q1: How did you get recruited to become a mentor in this ACE SL programme?

P: I think the first thing was ehh... you wasn't sure what was.... because Dr. XXXX only phoned us and said he wants some mentors to help the principals to develop their schools to help with the matric results.. to improving... So he wasn't sure what was supposed to do, and.... I think he were a little bit afraid and especially that I have never been in a rural school with matrices and to know what's the standard and what are they supposed to do, so it was a little bit scary but and also how would these principals receive you.. do they see you as a threat or do they see you as friend and I think that's the most important thing to have this communication so that they can know you that I am not here as a threat and I am here as a circuit manager or in the olden days an inspector or try to teach you something....like in the olden days and that I am only here to see and to help.

M. Q.2: How long were you a mentor and how many students did you work with?

P: I have not been a mentor before. This was my first experience. I had about 6 principals that I mentored.

M. Q.3: What knowledge and experience did you bring into the mentoring programme?

P: I think the thing is... me and Mr. XXXX discussed it ,and.... We .we said that we hope that this will not be another course to keep these principals just busy, but to teach them something so that they could use it, but also for the rest of their lives ,

especially the finance part of this course so that the principals could know how to work with money and how to keep the school and himself and the school governing body safe, because that is the real problem, money disappears very very quickly, keep your hand out of the till...

M. Q.4: What was your first reaction when you were selected for this programme and why?

P: I was really not sure if I was going to succeed in doing it. I was of course excited about it.

M. Q.5: What expectations did you have of the programme before its commencement?

Oh yes... oh yes... I think the thing is one of the sad parts of education is... you don't know your next door neighbour... you don't know his problems, you only saw your problems, and visiting schools I got a new impression of what's the problem in other schools and working together you start develop a plan to solve this problems, and if you are open minded and I have experienced that with all my principals... you can clearly see at the end of the year the previous year matric results and that year matric results and there was no school that there wasn't an improvement of the matric results".

M. Q.6: What did you expect to learn from the programme as a mentor?

P: A lot... lot's of expectations ...on what I was going to learn from this. One thought maybe... will learn how to work with Black principals. What they know... I may not know... and many things.

M. Q.7: How can you describe the relationship you had with the principals?

P: I think when you first meet them.. at the first contact session..and it's funny ehh.... when you start and you see them for the first time..eh.. its actually unknowingly and you evaluating each other and you think I would d like to work with this one, this guys face or this lady's face I can feel there is something we are not gonna work together, but after a few minutes when you work with a question and you work with ehh.... the guidelines, your attitude change and you can feel, I, will be open to you and you must be open to me, and after an hour and a half ,two hours

you feel I have achieved something and when you visit the schools, I think the first thing the principal thought is ehh... what will he think of my school... this is not a new school, this is an old school, this is a school in a rural areas, this is actually way out of the normal...and then working with an hour or an hour and a half, then you say you know what... I had the same problem at my school.. I had the same problem with my staff then there is ... then you develop this kind of personal feeling and personal touch of. You know what... I think at the end of two years.. we will be friends and that I enjoyed the most.. after two years , I know....they phone me sometimes 2 or 3 times a year and say Piet, how are you, how are things at your house, are you still on pension, do you still enjoying? and then you feel great.. (after the programme) and they also said... when you get Bushbuckridge, visiting Swadini, please you must get to my school.. and then you start with the second group, I also visited the first 6 principals, I see what the feeling was there... It's nice to be here... and look... they still going on and they still use this programme () that's correct"

M. Q. 8: Mentoring is also viewed as a leadership development strategy; can you share your views on this?

P: I think the problem is ... when and , I am speaking of the old Schools was that when principals was... when a teacher was appointed as a principal...there was this programme for I think it was two or three more weeks where a principal was to go to Pretoria or somewhere and they were taught what to do and what not to do as a principal. When I started as a principal... there wasn't this mentorship and I struggled, I could save myself a lot and lots of years if I had this programme, this mentoring programme or the programme that the education department had, so it's actually very sad not having a mentor before you start, I made use of Mr XXXXX before I start, I phoned him many times a day and said XXXXX, what must I do now? It's a pity.. you must have that someone to help you, you know you think you know as a deputy principal what to do but from school A to school B, there's a huge difference and if you think you can do it, you are already on the wrong track and that's when you make mistakes.

M.Q. 9: In terms of the mentorship and the learning you acquired, what can you say about its quality, and how do you see yourself as a mentor after the programme?

P: A. I think the most important thing is that when you start with this programme, as I said you are most uncertain with yourself ehh is , how to handle a colleague that is already a principal and you think ehh he knows exactly what to do, but when working exactly with the principal, you get this feeling of actually, maybe I know something about teaching maybe I know something about how to manage a school, but how to work with colleague and inspiring and helping but so that he don't feel, know what he's got an attitude that he knows everything, and I learnt this from each and every principal I have learnt something and I learnt watching what she or he is doing in the school and take this with me and actually at a certain extent I took this with me to another principal at a model c school and said you know what, I want to help you. I have learnt this in my third year as a mentor, I think if you can do this it will help you a lot solving problems in your school. And I think this is the most important thing to let the school principal feel he is still the principal of the school and I am not here to instruct you, actually we both try to solve a problem (to help).

M. Q.10: How would you gauge your experiences in terms of growth in the mentorship process?

P: When we start with this programme and we lecture was YYY, and the first word she used was, ladies and gentlemen remember, after each and every contact session, after every school visit, you must.... reflect. It's funny in the old model c schools we've never had the word reflection, getting back home I had to use a dictionary to get to know the meaning of what is actually reflection, 'cause I don't know exactly what to do. After the fourth contact session, then I realized how important reflection is. And it's not only reflection after contact session after the school visit, but you as mentor and school principal must daily sit down, make time and reflect about this course, but reflect about your role as a principal and reflect on what do I want for my school and for my staff members, so without reflection, I think especially this course should have been a failure but also I think sometimes principal are so busy, they running around and they don't know exactly what's going for what. I learnt this from this mentorship is that you must reflect daily and you must do good planning, without planning and reflection, that's why some schools are a disaster. So must reflect and then you must plan.

M.Q.11: In what way would your learning experiences in this mentorship programme be of benefit to your colleagues?

P: I have already and still share my experiences with my friends and other mentors. The things I learned in the past... I tell them to new students and colleagues as well. Ja!...

M.Q.12: What conclusion did you come to regarding the leadership development of your mentees during and after the mentoring programme?

P: As I said, I must... this, actually, I must say this, if they can give this course to deputy principals, not principals because it is a bit too late, if they can give this course to deputy princi.... (agh..) to deputy principals, I said listen, you must go through this study files and get yourself involved in it, If I had this course as a deputy and I should have start as a principal, I would save myself many lots and lots of trouble, I would have saved myself lots of wasting time trying to plan, not knowing how to plan so at the end this course would help me to be a better principal and the main thing is , teach me how to work with staff members because it is sometimes difficult for a principal, you've got this males staff members and female staff members, you've got this person with this attitude towards education and this lady ehh... that is a breadwinner. You must know every member of you staff and the most important thing is, if you know them and they know you, it will be much easier to have results in your school, and the last thing is treat them with respect.

M.Q.13: Are there any changes that you have noted in the schools you have visited during the programme?

P: Oh yes, yes for sure....some principals became better and better managers. Their schools improved in everything... the results... you know. The relations among the staff improved.

M: How was the situation in those schools before?

P: Well... some schools really looked bad.... And some very bad... I must say. Resources that were there were never managed, bad toilets, classrooms et cetera... but later...things changed.

M.Q.14: Do you regard the skills you have acquired in this programme relevant in other contexts, If so which contexts do you have in mind?

P: Yes..... for certain. I think the main thing is, ehh.... As I... said reflection is so important, you must start with reflection and said alright, what am I suppose to do, how am I supposed to do it and how, and where, what results do I want to have at the end of the day, it is so important to you to know what you want to do. Context... such as communities, industries... everywhere where there are people... I can use them.

M.Q.15: How do you plan to apply these skills and experiences in those contexts?

P: I think the most important thing is that starting with the principals, is that they must feel at ease and they must feel safe, meaning that they must know if they ask you a question or they want information from you or want information from them, everything will be safe and secure. I think that is the most important thing. Another thing is that ..ehhh,.. ehh.... You must treat them with respect. I think I have seen it, there was mentors that after the first assignment... they had ... one or two mentors they had this attitude of Listen I have marked your assignment, I don't know how did you manage to be a principal. I think that was a failure from the word goes, have respek, you can advice, but never instruct. I think that is the most important thing, that is why with my principals there was a relationship between us".

M.Q.16: How relevant do you find the mentorship principles and experiences to the situation and contexts of newly appointed staff?

P: Every school that received new staff.... must induct him/her through mentoring. I t is scary to start at a new school with different people, environment and still not get inducted. That is why teachers do mistakes because they are left alone.

M.Q.17: How would you use them to benefit other mentors?

P: Well I will not have that opportunity now...as the programme was stopped.

MENTOR[2]

TRANSCRIPT: 2

M. Q.1: How did you get recruited to become a mentor in the ACE SL programme?

DM: Ehh.... I was called by the University to mentor the principals. I started being a mentor when I was working for the department you see... and although I was higher up there with other people under me dealing with principals, I was always given an opportunity to deal with principals and mentor them. I was always trying to create those opportunities. And I will sit with my coordinators listen to them what are they doing to mentor and also with them they were always chasing, something deadlines and what have you- with no time to mentor the principals, so I had to make time to try and show them what the importance. When I got these I said.. man this is what I have been looking for and this is what I have been trying to do so, to me it was an opportunity which I have been looking for, I was very very excited.

M.Q.2: How long were you a mentor and how many students/mentees did you work with?

DM: I have been mentoring different people in different positions when I was with the department of education. In this programme I have worked with more than ten principals from different places for a period of four years.

M.Q.3: What knowledge and experience did you bring into the mentoring programme?

Hmmm..... let me say... ehhh... first through my studies and that is what I said earlier on , I would try and create space for me to mentor although I was up there far removed from the principals, I will create that and even my coordinators and facilitators, I will every Friday, I will be mentoring them... you see. JA.

M.Q.4: What was your first reaction when you were selected for this programme and why?

DM: I was excited of course,....to get another opportunity to do what I love doing, now at another level.

M.Q.5: What expectations did you have of the programme before it's commencement?

DM: Hmmmm.... When they invited me (yes) before I can start... ehhhh.... My impressions, I saw it as an opportunity to address the shortcomings which I saw whilst I was fully employed... remember, I said the principals and the guys in my section were always pressurized for time and never had time for development. People in the district don't have time to develop the principals, principals don't have time to develop their teachers, you know, so..... to me when I got this, this will address this shortcoming I have observed as a full time employed person in the department.

M.Q.6: What did you expect to learn from the programme as a mentor

DM: Hmm... my expectations was that eh hh... now, here I am , unlike when I was in the district where on my own I was trying this. My expectations were that here I am going to be empowered to.... turn theory into practice. I am going to learn to empower the principals and I am also going to see the shortcomings which I had whilst I was in the district.... With that knowledge I will be able to share with my people because I kept contact. In fact I have been her for 6 years, the first 3 years I was till with the dept and I saw it as an opportunity that I am gonna pick up something here- and go back to the district and implement, to me it was an opportunity to learn as well.

M.Q.7: How can you describe the relationship you had with the principals?

DM: Eh h.... I would say, you know with mine, eh hh , they saw me as being too demanding, infact they even said it, even on the graduation day when I was taking photo's with them , they said " ja... you made us work. (laughing) but they said, we like you for that, because by so doing we realized the importance of eh... working hard, not just expecting to that knowledge, information and everything will just come to us you know, you made us realize the importance of hard work and also the other important thing is that you , you walk along with us, you also worked hard, with the portfolios, I will be able to say, we have done this , so where is the evidence, where are you going to get the evidence? Then they will be struggling, but I will say... I have visited your offices, on the walls there, I saw something is , and they will say, what is it... and I will say In your office there is, is this, that , that, so isn't that the evidence (laughing).... They will say you were pressing with this portfolio thing with everything, evidence , evidence... at times, I don't even tell them, when a person

comes I say Hi I don't know what to put, I say No.. it is because you did not think. Try to look., your first place is the wall, check or else ask the other people. I said I know it is there. So we had that relationship where I just did not spoon feed, I said they must go out there, ehhhh the other thing that made them feel that eh, this person is not sympathetic, is because of the demand of their job at school and I didn't want that to come as an excuse, you see... said yes , I understand there is a job you've got to do, your department has got deadlines and all that, I said that department is paying for you, it wants you to qualify, and you can't neglect this and ours is to ensure that you do well in spite of all the demands on your time and what have you...

M.Q.8: Mentoring is also viewed as a leadership development strategy; can you share your views on this?

DM: Yes,..yes....yes...yes... you know an important one, and something that I can tell you in the department, it's not, it's not there, there, if it is there, it is not understood to be properly implemented, you see, that is why I keep eh..... I meet the guys, I meet the people, I told them that you know five years when I am gone, you will still be running in circles, because you are not doing the right thing .You don't take principals under your armpit and say let us go together, you see... and say look people who we call good principals, this is what they do, you see. Take them and say at times, about this, consult so and so you know and find how he does and all that and also the other thing, even some of the people in the district, they don't have a clue of what principals are supposed to do and all that. They have not studied management and so when you say they' ve got to mentor, sheeek! you are putting them into trouble, so really mentoring if the dept can pay particular attention to empowering the people in the district and then ...so that they can go and mentor. I mean principals get apply, we keep on saying you are accountable and all that, but how can he be accountable if you have not shown him the ropes, you see. This guy is appointed, he is down there, it's for him to sink or swim, that i's it. To me, mentoring is key. You see.

M.Q.9: In terms of the mentorship and the learning you acquired, what can you say about it's quality, and how do you see yourself as a mentor after the programme?

DM: The programme enhanced and created an opportunity for learning for me in saying was I doing the right thing and what have you, so it,..you know.. even now, though I am no longer with them I am still busy with... I am there, Ja, ja they call me and two weeks ago in church, one lady called me and told me that she is promoted as principals and she said to me please January, come and help me, I am new, I do not know anything. I said we must talk just after the exams to prepare for next year. I am willing to do that just for you, you see... The quality of the programme was high... good because it created long time friends and colleagues.

M.Q.10: How would you gauge your experiences in terms of growth in the mentorship process?

DM: No doubt, I have gained a lot of experience in the programme and also have grown as a mentor. For the past years doing this.... I have grown a lot. My skills have been enhanced by the programme.

M.Q.11: In what way would your learning experiences in this mentorship programme be of benefit to your colleagues?

DM: I wish I could go back to the system and assist district officials to implement mentoring in a correct fashion. I can use it effectively should I get the opportunity to train the mentors in the future.

M.Q.12: What conclusion did you come to regarding the leadership development of your mentees during and after the programme?

DM: Before the programme many principals did not practice reflection. You know, with reflection, it gives you an opportunity to look back, you see. To look back on what went right, what went wrong and why did it go wrong, you know to do some corrective eh... action, you see, I have seen this practically, people in schools and in the department will go through their emotions and all that we are concerned about is to complete the thing and move on, We don't have the time to sit back and say, what we have done did we do it correctly, what was the aim, did we achieve the aim and all that, you know eh... there's no time for that as a result, people they just go through emotions and they achieve nothing, they are surprised when things go wrong, you know, yesterday we were talking with this guy who was putting this thing, was telling me about somebody who was complaining saying this principal is

useless, but then look what is happening and the I said no.. look, it is the principal to check, to say man what do you think, or to look at or check whether the principal has learnt something, giving feed back to say look, this is what I have learn and when I look at this and compare how I use to do things I say this is where I use to do mistakes. You know reflection to me, is slow learning, you can't go through a task and then at the end just trying to stop and look back how am I faring , to judge yourself and all that, and also as a principal you also assign teachers, hod's with the tasks and all that, you need to also sit down with them and say, let us reflect, what went right and what went wrong, why did we succeed here and not there, look this is one part that is missing in schools. That part is really missing. I have ehh., I have been with XXX leadership development, I was also doing mentoring there also and...this is what I came across, I asked the principal, how are things going Sir ... this people are tough man, Ohh... they are tough just quote one incident.. ehh, then he mentions it, from there then I say, did you sit with them and just reflect and say how is the going guys, or did you just understand me clearly, they should feel that you are next to them, they mustn't be afraid to make mistakes. So when you sit at the end, How did we fare and then someone will say Hey, we did it better that last time because you sit not in judgment, but you sit just to share, but also as I said earlier on, everybody..... there is not time for reflection time, its so important. I have had a number of people in Katlehong who I took them through this, you see, people who had some difficulties with the staff. You see you say let us try and do this, let us do that ... and they were shocked educators that have been positive and said ja, we have been able to sit with meneer and looked back.. where we had difficulties, why we could not do this correctly, succeed and so..on.

M.Q.13: Are there any changes that you have noted in the schools you have visited during the programme? Elaborate on the situation before and after the mentoring programme.

DM: like I indicated earlier....in some schools the principal and teachers were not sitting down and discussing the programmes of the school together. This caused tensions between the principals and the teachers. After the programme, they came together, reflected on their current conditions and planned to go ahead together. During and after, yes, I sometimes pop into those schools; the first thing I check what is happening at reception, principal's office, I was so happy to see those schools

progressing. The Department of Education and the University had the same goal in mind when offering the programme to the principals namely helping them to develop their potential

M.Q.14: Do you regard the skills you have acquired in this programme relevant in other contexts, if so, which contexts do you have in mind?

DM: Well, the skills have been an enhancement in my case. This is because I have been doing it even before the ACE SL programme. I have done mentoring in many contexts as I said before... but I can say mentoring fits in any context.

M.Q.15: How do you plan to apply these skills and experiences in those contexts?

Mhh.. say for example this particular one, I need,,I am trying to check how...how her knowledge of management you see, I told you some of even before I meet the other staff I need to know (baseline assessment) ja..ja.. if you are to give leadership, you must be strong here because what will happen if you are to find that in your staff there is somebody who is doing masters in management and that person starts correcting you... you lose confidence, you avoid calling meetings, If you are aware that academically you are not there in management get yourself registering, I will be there to help you. J a but at the end you need to arm yourself, don't depend on me , you need to empower yourself through study and all that.

M.Q.16: How relevant do you find the mentorship principles and experiences to the situations and contexts of newly appointed staff?

DM: Very relevant of course. I f a principal with experience needs mentoring, how much more relevant is mentoring for a newly appointed staff. It's a basic need.

M.Q.17: How would you use them to the benefit of other mentors?

In the ACE programme? (yes) You see.. the problem with the ACE programme at UP, when you mentor.... You cannot be a judge, you see. We were mentoring and we were judges. We had to get assignments, assign scores and what have you, no... no... that is not the job of the mentor. You know you confuse the mentor and even the mentees. Get somebody else, let this one be concerned about developing, somebody must evaluate how the development is going, you see... somebody else.

There is a conflict of interest there. You know that part, jah ... you know, I know that there are financial constraints, but to be honest it was not supposed to be. You see, you see... at XXX, there are trainers, and the.....there are others who are doing the assessment.

.....

MENTOR [3]

TRANSCRIPT: 3

Greetings to the participant and going through the ethical issues and purpose of the study.

M. Q.1: How did you get recruited to become a mentor?

MO: Hmm.. actually, I worked as a person, I was actually hired by the University of Pretoria as a part time lecture and then again and later made an application that I should assist as a mentor in the ACE programme. I got that.. if I may recall very well, it was in... eh hh 2012, yes, 2012. I think that is how I was able to get into this job.

M. Q.2: How long were you a mentor and how many students/ mentees did you work with?

MO: I have been a mentor for three years... now... students, there are many students..... That I have gone through, eh hopefully per month I usually visit plus minus five students and per year..,it will definitely be more... it depends on the programme that have been given to me, usually the university supply me with a list of students whom I have to mentor and ... the number of...of students that I do monthly differs, especially that whenever I am given the list, I go according to the list.

M. Q.3: What knowledge and experience did you bring into the mentoring programme?

MO: Haah... I think that I have been contributing greatly on students in particular to.. to.. be able to motivate students and in most cases when student teachers are teaching.. they concentrate more on learners who are gifted and seems to ignore those who are not raising up hands and so on. So.. one other thing, I realized that teaching aids are not used, sometimes a student will bring teaching aids in a

classroom but be unable to use them appropriately... and as such I told them that learners when you teaches especially in a primary school, you should not lecture. There is a difference when you teach in a primary school levels, you should understand the levels of teaching and learners generally at lower levels want that it should be excited whenever you are doing things. They should feel great and they understand better and the classroom situation is also important, the climate, in classroom climate must be better they must create a good rapport as you are teaching. So I think that has also contributed greatly in learners understanding better and even student teachers being able to offering better lessons than before.... And one other thing at a university generally they want that I visit a school, coach a student in 10- 15 minutes getting into a class with him or her, but I think it benefit A student works better if I assisted him or her for 2-3 days and then inform him or her and when I come after three or four days, generally such students perform better than those that I have just seen them once.

M. Q.4: What was your first reaction when you were selected for this programme, and why?

MO: Ohh... my reaction was just that I wanted to help other people, especially sharing my experiences with other people, so I was excited when I was given this type of a job and I am doing it for the love of it and not that I must get money, so...that is why I was excited and I am happy for such a job.

M. Q.5: What expectations did you have of the programme before its commencement?

MO: Ehhh...I didn't have much expectations because I did n't know what was going to happen. So I most of the time..... I just experienced things as they come. I should do my coaching this way or this way. I did not have much of any expectations per se.

M. Q.6: What did you expect to learn from the programme as a mentor?

MO: Jah I expected to learn good management, other types of their experiences, we share them.....whenever I come to a school as a mentor, usually I am learning... I learned a lot from them... not that they only learnt from me and as such, I use..cause I have been a head of.... a principal for almost 19 years, so I was

sharing all my experiences with them, whenever I visited them... I.... also love to get them conscious about time management in particular, they were not,...most of the people that I visited seem not to mind about keeping the right time doing... being very happy with actually working for money but for the pleasure of it... I usually tell them that whenever you come to work...your school must be your home, everything, cleanliness is important, how you treat students, how you treat the teachers is also important.

M. Q.7: How can you describe the relationship you had with the principals?

MO: It was excellent...excellent and whenever ...I'm staying in Pretoria and they are staying in Mpumalanga... they use to invite me in some other occasions and then I also invite them to my place when I have some.. just family occasions and they do come and...and...the relationship was so good especially when we have some assignments to do,, I even went to an extra mile.... Just have to travel somewhere in Mpumalanga, try to meet them... try to help them.. so they were excellent in doing their assignments... that is why one of our students., one of the six managed to get the highest percentage in the whole university.. and I was also proud of that because they bore fruits of what I have done, all my efforts I could see them.(Probe: did this relationship led to them being motivated to excel in their studies and school management?) Exactly. Exactly'

M.Q.8: Mentoring is also viewed as a leadership development strategy, can you share your views on this?

MO: Jah.. generally whenever I was mentoring when I have some aspects to share with a teacher or a principal, I was not trying to tell them that you should do this. Generally sit down and ask what is your view on this... what is your view on this? In one school I remember,..ehh.. the school was ehh... very much untidy, especially after break, you find that there is littering all over and so on. Then I told her the principal that because you have three blocks here, you can delegate one of the teachers or heads of department to monitor this, not herself... you see. The importance of delegation... ja when you delegate people you just check what they have done rather than you doing it ...and then we did it with that lady and when I came back again after break the place was clean and then I also told them that your school seem not to be known, it is unknown, you should advertise it, you should put

the signs....signs .. that the school is that direction. So that the people must know where the school is, for instance when I came for visits the school I got lost... I have been there several times... but because there is no directions.. that was a problem and indeed ..almost all of them put signs that shows directions.. the school is that side and I was happy with them, that was one of the finest times that I spent with them. (Probe: this delegation, did you view it as part of a leadership development strategy,..ehmm .. for principals in that they also get to engage SMT members and also teachers to take a leadership role in the maintenance of the school) I was stressing team work that when you work as a group you are likely to be successful because when you work as an individual you won't make it because you cannot run the school as an individual. When... you see the school must run like a machine even if you are not there as a principal, the head of department should take over, things must run ..smooth running, not that the principal is not there the school, things are not going to be properly done, team work is what I have emphasized and I think I have been successful.

M.Q.9: In terms of the mentorship and the learning you acquired, what can you say about its quality, and how do you see yourself as a mentor after the programme?

MO: Yes, sometimes you may not know yourself whether you are good and so on, but the outcomes of what you are doing will tell you what type of a person are you. I think that I have been very good in mentoring and especially when I see what the outcomes, so whenever I talked to a principal whatever they do, they phone me that I can help them whenever I can... that time my mentoring was excellent been very good and productive to them and I have assisted them in many things.

M.Q.10: How would you gauge you're your experiences in terms of growth in the mentorship process?

MO: Jahh.. I think if I was not a mentor I don't think I would have grown up this way cause as I have just mentioned in the interview I was learning.. whenever I get to a school I was learning, I am not there to teach, I am also a learner, then personally.. I 've grown up and I think it has assisted me in part of working as a mentor.

M.Q.11: In what way would your learning experiences in this mentorship programme be of benefit to your colleagues?

MO: In that way you see, I can introduce it individuals and I can also make some means of bringing people together, 10- 20 and so on. We will book a school... tell them of my experience and generally when you tell people of your experiences.... Because I know it's a very good job. That is why I said in all the sectors of my life when I was working, mentorship was the best time of my life and I can easily, even make some means, organize people in various schools and get a venue where I can even talk to ten twenty people, even more and tell them the benefits of mentoring and actually how you can be able to help other people to improve in particular management skills.

M.Q.12: What conclusion did you come to regarding the leadership development of your mentees during and after the mentoring programme?

MO: Ehh.. during the mentoring programme, ehh they did not understand the direction, they were panicking as if things will not go well, understand, ja but as we... I usually visited them once per quarter... means four times a year and then I stayed with them for seven days or so and I visited one school in... before I leave the place when I was in Mpumalanga, I usually called them together, we have a meeting generally, yes.. just to summarize all what happened and I could see that they were really improving ehh in one of my experiences, I .. among the six principals that I mentored, there was an old lady there, unfortunately she used to take strong drinks and so on. I said lady, that is not a proper way of doing things, but when I started to get her history, back there, I understand that she was even taken to a rehabilitation , but she was doing well, but she used to drink a little bit of a tot, as we were seated there at the back she would take something. I said no lady, especially this is what you are doing at school and what kind of a leader are you going to be or are you? So try to refrain from that. We talked nicely and ultimately I could see that she has changed. I was happy to see that I was able to help her.

M.Q13: Are there any changes that you have noted in the schools you have visited during the programme? Elaborate on the situation before and after the mentoring programme?

MO: Yes, there are many changes, I must tell you. Many changes. Just to mention a few. I told them about the sign boards, all the six schools were able to put those. I told them about just check their records... sometimes... they don't want too much of writing these people, they will say no, please check them. Even if you do not check them as a principal, delegate, the head of department will check what is going on. So there were many changes, I am of it you know, very much proud.

M.Q.14: Do you regard the skills you have acquired in this programme relevant in other contexts, if so, which contexts do you have in mind?

MO: Ehh.. you see because I am talking of, I... mentored the principals as well as students... I wonder which one suits the question? (both of them..) Can you repeat the question again... (Question repeated)

The skills are applicable to both.. for instance when we talk of respect in the case of principals, it is similar with that one of the students. When you talk of eh... motivating, because the principals themselves must motivate their team, must motivate the staff .The staff must be able to motivate the students, so when for instance, they are almost applicable to both, whether it is a student... so these skills are... they can be applied to both and they do work (Probing with an industrial example).

Yes it is a different environment from education, and it will work, you see... if I talk for instance of trust and respect, trust in the education field is the same as you must trust in the job whenever. I is almost the same. Respect is the same, we cannot say because it is the education environment it must be done this way, when it comes to industries it must be done this way, No...it is almost universal.

M.Q.15: How do you plan to apply these skills and experiences in those contexts?

Well....the simple process to follow is to have a plan. A plan will help you to identify the needs of the people and then the application of these skills will be appropriate.

M.Q.16: How relevant do you find the mentorship principles and experiences to the situations and contexts of newly appointed staff?

MO: Ohh.....you see, the newly appointed staff generally, they need to be coached, you must induct them, most of them as far as my experience, I could see young ones who are still new in the field, they need to be inducted because these nitty greeties, they just take them for granted especially if, even with a high qualification, he will lecture in the primary school level instead of using play as a way of teaching and then they need to be coached, maybe the principal himself must call this person and try to get the person, let us say the head of department in a particular field, that teacher must be..... And then be advised given... you see some of the things seem to be very simple... you will think that the student may know so the code of conduct and all that, they should be told about that. He should know about the motto of the school, what aim are they... the vision and the mission of the school, they should know those things. If we take for granted that the student knows all those things in most cases they won't be able to work as a team to reach the envisaged goal.

M.Q.17: How would you use them to the benefit of other mentors?

MO: Jahhyou see that way, I would only talk about my experience when I was mentoring other people and I would say now it works this way for me and they will also check if they do what I have been doing if it works for them.

Thanking the participant and informing him about possible follow-ups questions. The participant was also given an opportunity to ask questions if any.

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MENTOR[4]

TRANSCRIPT: 4

Greetings to the participant and going through the ethical issues and purpose of the study.

M.Q.1: How did you get recruited to become a mentor in this ACE SL programme?

FJ: Ok... I was....errr... the university, phoned me and asked me whether I would be interested, and I come for the interview err.... XXXX conducted the interview,

and so they explained to me what it is all about, and because I think it's a brilliant idea and I think as I said to you....this is the future of education in South Africa, and I think I will make myself available.

M.Q.2: How long were you a mentor and how many students/mentees did you work with?

FJ: I started, for eight years, the last two years they did not have the programme. They did not call us the mentors, they called us the Amigos, the group preferred it. The work stayed the same but its 8 years now, the first year I had five schools eh, second group was five as well. We took them for 2 years, the ACE diploma eh... and the 3rd group was six, six in a group schools, six principals. The last was eh the group that attended the school improvement plan, the SIP, we did the same work, mentorship, they called us AMIGO's. They preferred the word AMIGO's, they were 8 schools. The first group was in Mpumalanga, Kwa Mhlanga, the second group was in Limpopo, Groblersdal, surroundings and the third group was Kwa Mhlanga as well. The SIP programme we did there as well as AMIGOS or mentors, that was six schools in Soshanguve and Garankua, Gauteng schools. (Probing: what does this AMIGO's mean) Friend of the school.

M.Q.3: What knowledge and experience did you bring into the mentoring programme?

FJ: I think your experience as principal as the years in education, the different years in education and I think your experience as principal that now you evaluate that experience in a later stage with... I think when you are young you are a different teacher when after thirty five years, you see things different and I think from that point of view I can bring experience and knowledge and with experience all the situations that can happen in the school we made our mistakes and we can say... ok...I made this....you share with them and they come with answers which you have done... and so on. I think that the big thing is experience and knowledge.

M.Q.4: What was your first reaction when you were selected for this programme, and why?

FJ: I think, my first reaction is, will I be capable of doing it... because it is not a task you can take lightly, you are going to work with experienced people, eh... who

got knowledge, who got good qualifications, who have to live up to it. I think my first reaction was, will I be able to learn them something, will I be able to teach them, will they be able to learn something, will I be able to teach them something, but after the first session, you feel at home because the people you are working with is the people ehh...you have been working with your whole life, we are educators, we speak the same language and then you come to a conclusion that yes I can give them something...

M.Q.5: What expectations did you have of the programme before its commencement?

FJ: I think....err.. the expectations I had was to... the content of the lecturers were practical... the content were of such a nature that the principals can use it.. the deputy principal... you can implement it in a school and it will help you. Err so that is how I feel about were the content of the whole programme....of the ACE programme. My expectations, I didn't make much, but it was that we were going to help improve principals in their management of schools in order to have better results, effective teaching and learning also in schools, remember we knew already like external factors like SADTU and so on, we came to terms that people were principals because SADTU wanted them to be principals even if they did not have it."

M.Q.6: What did you expect to learn from the programme as a mentor?

FJ: Yes... I learned a lot... because you know we come from different , from different backgrounds.... We all do education but we come from different backgrounds and I realized that they problems...agg... I don't want to say there's problems, but challenges...it was difficult... it wasn't easy because the learners come from homes that even does n't exist, even with the old model c schools we got learners from... you know where mos... they were more secure and they got homes to go to, the parents... not always but helped with their home-works, support the learner, but they got a big challenge because the parental involvement are in some places not even exist and that is where they had to support them with ideas and see how can you get parents involved, how can you get suitable persons on the SGB. And I think... but I learned from them.... I learned that they've got a steeper hill to climb than I was used to.

M.Q.7. How can you describe the relationship you had with the principals?

FJ: With these principals? I think in the beginning..err one of them said you know Johannes, he said you know Freddy, our first meeting... 'respect has to be earned' I think that was the guideline through all these years, you have.... They have...goes two ways... I have to conduct the mentorship in such a way that they respect me... they have to do their work and conduct their work at their schools in the way that I respect them. And I think.. ther's quite a lot of common grounds, education... if we talk of education we talk the same language and I think we grew to each other. You know, they go through hard times, they will phone me and say this assignment... I have trouble with the assignment, they came to my house and we discuss it... and we discuss it in a collonay., or cup of coffie, but there was quite action between us. So we grew... we grew as the two years goes we grew together. Even today as I say they still phone me, they trust me, but I've said to me, you know I can give you ideas but as I say I can't do it for you, and your circumstances, you circumstances.(Probing question) Yes, but they must be good...I had a few principals, especially the younger ones, you know when you are a principal for two years.... You know everything, errr but as soon as they know that I am there to help, they can do as.....they don't have to.... I am no from the department to enforce. I think that is an idea and I think they adapt the contents what I tell them to their own style of principalship or whatever, but we grew together, as the years go, we grew together.

M.Q.8: Mentoring is also viewed as a leadership development strategy, can you share your views on this?

FJ: Yes it is, you develop the leader you listen to the problems, listens to what the principal is supposed to do and how to conduct a situation, how to look at your conduct in a situation, that you don't.... if there was a part or section of the educational law that if you do as the law says.. you don't go beyond that, then you don't have trouble and that develop the leadership skills because you got something that helps him to do that..... and errrrr...you ..in your group... you see that one is quite and then you ask a question or you lead him to speak to the group.... So the same... I think if you are a teacher or educator you if you get into a group you are still a teacher... you look at an individual and try and get them to conduct, and one of my..errr... Bettie... in Kwa Mhlanga, she is in the time I was there she became a

district manager.... There a district, what do you call it? I know she got promotion, Ana got from deputy to errr she became a principal, so I felt good, she came to me and we sat around the table and we discussed the interview. So you see, you develop leadership in a group... and now he is in Kwa Mhlanga and got err somewhere.....he got a yard at the school... he got somewhere 70-75 and his got... got a principal of a larger school, so I think I develop the leadership in a big way.

M.Q. 9: In terms of the mentorship and the learning you acquired, what can you say about its quality, and how do you see yourself as a mentor after the programme?

FJ: It was of high quality and I see myself as an improved mentor and can still do it in the future in any context.

M.Q.10: How would you gauge your experiences in terms of growth in the mentoring process?

FJ: I believe that I am a better mentor now because of the interactions I have had with the people I have worked with. As a person I got personal and professional growth. I have grown in confidence and in knowledge.

M.Q.11: In what way would your learning experiences in this mentorship programme be of benefit to you colleagues?

FJ: Ja we came together quite often, we had our meetings here and we shared our difficulties and the problems... and the problems relating to the ACE course because one of the problems we discussed was the workload of the principal and the deputy principal and all these assignments and we mentors said to the lectures sometimes, scale down... they can't handle all these, they are not on a study leave, they are at work. As mentors we shared.. if we work something out we shared. Sometimes as mentors a few of us will come to my house and discuss especially before the school visits. What are we going to do at the schools, not wasting the principals' time, not wasting the deputy principal's time. So we tried to...apart from what the university did as mentors tried to prepare ourselves for these visits. We shared ideas and we will phone from one school... when you visit and say... Freddie I've got this situation, what do you suggest? We relied on each other and we tried to set an example for the principals because we found that they work as an island,

everyone has his island. All these schools... I got them to come together in one school and share, share what you are doing, share with each other, even if your challenges, you got a solution and the solution is your neighbour. That happened quite often with the schools, I tried often to do it with this programme in Soshanguve and Garankuwa. There we had secondary schools and I tried to get them involve the primary schools, the feeding schools because for this programs they got the secondary schools starts at a primary school. So we learnt this from each other.

M.Q. 12: How would you gauge you're your experiences in terms of growth in the mentorship process?

FJ: As a person, I think you get personal growth and you get professional growth. The two always goes together...errr... you...you ... ontwikkel, develop quite a large or huge respect for these people.... For what I was doing, they are doing... not always under easy circumstances but they keep on, they are there everyday and they difficult challenges make you grow as a person... and the way you handle these challenges, you begin to get professional growth there and the way you handle these. And I think it comes through all the lectures and the knowledge give you power and if you know more than one next to you, you grow in confidence, you grow in knowledge and there is personal growth and there is professional growth.

M.Q.13: What conclusion did you come to regarding the leadership development of your mentees during and after the mentoring programme?

FJ: Well I think they know more, ja they are more relaxed doing more and more relaxed giving... the leader leading errr the staff because they know where they are going to. You can see after two years, there is personal and professional growth and the way they do their work. And during our visits.... We... especially the first and second visits, I get the whole SMT just for five minutes, and you get them, try and get them behind the principal. You say your principal is busy studying, he's doing good work there, he is an example to you all, get behind him and help him... listen what he says when he comes from the university and you even... I know one St Pauls when.... He used to give 7 minutes to speak to his grade 12's errr he said to me... you know what, they want to get to university, I just want to show them someone who comes from the university. He said to me I want to see you in

university next year. Motivate.... Keep on motivating this people. Don't tell them what they can't do, tell them what they can do.

M.Q.14: Are there any changes that you have noted in the schools you have visited during the programme? Elaborate on the situation before and after the mentoring programme?

FJ: Few things, first of all, most of them, I had to lecture of safety and security. First when I came, not all the schools, some had it and some didn't. You can go in and you see the principal, eh... and we talked about security, during the year, they stopped me at the gate, I had to sign a book. This is the first thing that was changed in a lot of schools. The grounds, they... every school that I have been to, they started with the gardens... they've got a feeding scheme. Most of the schools from the second year buy from the school, the ingredient for the feeding scheme. I had them inspect the feeding scheme, they have meetings with the feeding scheme people and see that it is a safe place, eh... the principal's offices, I would slowly... you know I don't like to say.... This is a mess here.. you know.. it was for me it was not like a professional principal's office. And then we will slowly talk about... I know that Johannes, I am taking him for an example as well, I had five things... sought, shift... sustain...the thing the Japanese did, and he applied it to his school. He started at home... he phoned me and said he went to his children and said we want the five... and they started doing it. He started with his office and I said to him... don't say anything about the classes not being neat, start with your office and he threw everything out and all what he took back was what he need. Small things like that make a difference and then it goes to the school, to the classrooms because the principal set an example. I will do things... under neatness.... About the school grounds but then I will say to them now you start around the school grounds and it will go to the community. I must say there is one school.... They start in the community. You can't believe what the difference they made because I said to them... I said it many a times.... The change in this.... Country of ours will start in the classroom and nowhere else and the teachers, educators will start that change and I think we underestimate this ACE diploma and mentorship around it... provide you get the correct...some are not... some are still .. I say you do- that is not mentoring.

M.Q. 15: Do you regard the skills you have acquired in this programme relevant in other contexts, if so, which contexts do you have in mind?

FJ: Yes I think it is not about the work, it's about how you do it, how do you go about doing the work. I don't have to know grade 12 Maths to mentor a grade 12 teacher. He must do the work, I can.... I think.... I don't want to talk politics... but if we had for Eskom, if they keep these...they don't want there... but say to each one... I am going to give you four years to teach them to do what you are doing, because that is mentoring, that is learning from someone else's experience, it's a...you can have the knowledge of the world, but if you don't have experience you cannot do the work. You had to be introduced to.....you have to have someone who's got the experience where you can learn from. Not do as he says but learn from how he conducted it. I think mentorship can go...it does n't matter, you don't have to do it in education only.

M.Q.16: How do you plan to apply those skills and experiences in those contexts?

FJ: It is important first... to analyze the context and understand it better. Thereafter it will inform you of what approaches to apply.

M.Q. 17: How relevant do you find the mentorship principles and experiences to the situations and contexts of newly appointed staff?

FJ: I think it is very very important to have newly appointed staff.. induction programme...errr and there again.. you allocate a mentor to...even if a new principal comes to the school, educators who have been to the school for more than ten years... should get the opportunity to induct the principal. Every new one that steps into the grounds of the school must get the induction programme helping them to know how we are doing things, how the community operates, how... because community is different from where I stay ehh... we are different communities and different backgrounds for the school. I think it is important the mentoring process and to ...errr... identify mentors to be in you staff and you go through the principles of mentorship with them and a new teacher and learners as well... and that teacher should go to this one and not to the principal because the principal is someone in authority and you don't want to look bad in the eyes of the principal. You don't want

to ask him how to do this because he is going to think I am not able to teach but I got a mentor identified by the principal.

M.Q.18: How would you use them to the benefit of other mentors?

FJ: You must identify potential, experienced mentors... to guide them and have a mentoring policy at the school because it's not everyone who is Even with us in the ACE group, there was one of us.. I feel... and I think nobody will say it, but I think you have to be, you have to know people, you have to understand people, you have to be a people's person because mentoring is something else. Mentoring... like AMIGO you are a friend of that one, you are going to get into trouble if you continue with that one, you have to that as well but in a way nothing is going to happen. The principal will most probably give him a first warning, written warning while a mentor will guide.

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MENTOR[5]

TRANSCRIPT : 5

M.Q.1: How did you get recruited to become a mentor in this ACE SL programme?

J: Since 1993 I have been one of the temporal lectures who started with the ACE course at UP. I was called into the programme by the University when it started the programme when I was superintended of education in the West Rand.

M.Q.2: How long were you a mentor and how many students/mentees did you work with?

J: 6 principals for two years

M.Q.3: What knowledge and experience did you bring into the mentoring programme?

J: One of the pillars I used in the programme was trust. When you want to help somebody, you must trust that person. It doesn't matter if that person is coloured or Indian, white or whatever. There is another thing, male or female. Another one is respect.

M.Q.4: What was your first reaction when you were selected for this programme, and why?

J: I was very happy and thankful because I think I can make a difference.

M.Q.5: What expectations did you have of the programme before its commencement?

J: I always said... that was one of the mistakes that the previous government did, they haven't appointed very experienced, motivated, clever people to become principals, HOD's and deputies.

M.Q.6: What did you expect to learn from the programme as a mentor?

J: That stage when I started I was on pension already, I felt.. well I was going to learn a lot of things here... that I will tell the other principals I worked with... because every term we had meetings, I am still invited to those schools etc in my region. They always ask me what are you doing Sir? No I am helping there etc... and what are you doing... yes they are interested to improve. I learnt that principals need support, they need guidance.

M.Q.7: How can you describe the relationship you had with the principals?

J: I tried my best, it doesn't matter whether they are autocratic or democratic or whatsoever. I tried that there must be a bond between them and myself. I know when I was a principal, a principal is always standing like that. The others deputies and HOD's are there. I tried to instill in them a feeling of being free. If they have a problem, they must call me even if it is ten o'clock in the evening. They will call me even at twelve o'clock at night and I got happy and never angry. There was a natural openness; they felt they had someone to stand next to them, that is me.

M.Q.8: Mentoring is also viewed as a leadership development strategy, can you share your views on this?

J: Because a lot of principals are good leaders but not managers. Now to become a leader, you must do a lot of things, not sit on your chair, read your newspaper. Delegation of duties is important. Let us arrange a sport day. Mr so and so you coordinate the event. Try to establish the committee. Encourage teachers to

take a lead in everything and the principal must receive feedback. The manager, delegate with trust. Use deputies if they are good managers.

M.Q.10: In terms of the mentorship and the learning you acquired, what can you say about its quality, and how do you see yourself as a mentor after the programme?

J: You know, I am still doing these things where I am staying. For example in the complex, I was a chairman of the body corporate. We adults want to do things but someone else must take the lead. I divide residents in the complex where I stay and allocate mentors or liason persons if they have problems. Try and solve problems and I will only guide you. At the bowling club where I am chairperson, the same thing there, I also delegate and assign tasks to them and I only support them. Now things are going because of trust, respect and delegation.

M.Q. 11: How would you gauge you're your experiences in terms of growth in the mentorship process?

J: What we use to do as mentors before we go to the schools, we came together and discuss our experiences, problems etc. Everyone was very open because we knew each other as principals. You are not too old to learn something. We learned a lot from each other.

M.Q.14: What conclusion did you come to regarding the leadership development of your mentees during and after the mentoring programme?

J: There was a few that was very, very good. Before I left I said to them I see you in the next few years as deputy principal, as principal etc, circuit manager, subject advisor, I can tell you. Go ahead improve your qualifications. There were a few especially in Mpumalanga, those schools were busy here (UP) some had started with their Bed's, I was so happy to see them. I was so happy to see some of them progressing.

M.Q.15: Are there any changes that you have noted in the schools you have visited during the programme? Elaborate on the situation before and after the mentoring programme?

J: During and after yes.... I sometimes pop into those schools, the first thing I check what is happening at reception, principals' office etc. There are changes that were not there before, that are there today. The principals' desks improved tremendously, less papers, organized table, furnished office. Vision, mission statement and list of achievements displayed at the reception area for parents and visitors to read and know more about the school.

M.Q.16: Do you regard the skills you have acquired in this programme relevant in other contexts, if so, which contexts do you have in mind?

J: Yes... everywhere and even in community structures, industries... everywhere.

Q. 18: How relevant do you find the mentorship principles and experiences to the situations and contexts of newly appointed staff?

J: That is very important. You must immediately after a new teacher starts there, an HOD or senior teacher must be allocated to assist. To introduce him and show him around and also tell him how things are done in the school. Helping with administrative things before the person starts etc.

M.Q.19: How would you use them to the benefit of other mentors?

J: I want to do things, I want to communicate to people. I will assist in the manner I did mentoring such as listening to people. That is how you will help people, even mentors, like we did during our meetings before we went to visit schools.

.....
MENTOR [6]

TRANSCRIPT: 6

M.Q.1: How did you get recruited to become a mentor in this ACE SL programme?

MG: You know.. I ..., I don't really, I did not understand it because it's like there was some where people who were picked to be mentors and then some of them did

not go. I did not start with them, I started while the programme had already started, I was called to replace someone.

M.Q.2: How long were you a mentor and how many students/mentees did you work with?

MG: I had about 10 principals that I worked with.

M.Q.3: What knowledge and experience did you bring into the mentoring programme?

MG: You know,, I ... don't know how to put it. I was n't expecting to say to them, this do this, I was trying to help them, guide them to build on what they have. If we need to change something, then we will do that, but if things that they are doing, I feel they are ok, we will leave it there and maybe modify it. I wasn't like a police, policing them, I was trying to move forward, starting here, moving forward, seeing the school becoming a better institution of learning. (Probing) and the experiences that they have because their experiences will always be different.

M.Q.4: What was your first reaction when you were selected for this programme, and why?

MG: Well.. I did not know whether to be happy or not. But I relied on my experience as a principal and though....well... it will not be difficult to do the job.

M.Q.5: What expectations did you have of the programme before its commencement?

MG: Like I am saying, I did not start with them, I started while they... I think a month or so. (probing) Ok, the first thing that came to mind, I thought they selected me because I am a former principal and then they want me to help impart some of the knowledge that I ve gained throughout the ten years while I was a principal, so that we can be able to take whatever that that needs to be taken forward and share our experiences cause our experiences despite the fact that we working for the same

department are not the same, we are working in different environments with different challenges.

M.Q.6: What did you expect to learn from the programme as a mentor?

MG: Not much expectations as I was called unprepared into the programme. My hopes was... somewhere I don't know... some of the lecturers it was like they did n't know what they were talking about, like I am saying it was like it a remote control, they are there, it's like pressing, they've never experience this situation in which the students find themselves, because if you have experienced it, you'll talk from a different level, from them because they are like looking from outside there, not inside.

M.Q.7: How can you describe the relationship you had with the principals?

MG: We had a very cordial relationship, because like I'm saying, I am taking them as professionals because by not or trying to be above them, it sort of frustrating because they cannot even come closer to you, to tell their problems cause like I'm saying, every school is going to be different and every school have its own different challenges that needs to be addressed in a different way. So I would always listen to them and then after that, if there is something that I need to advice on I would say.... How about changing this and doing it this way, and the other thing that I have seen, besides the studying, the principals are given such a lot of work not to be able to attend to their managing duties, like for instance, one of the principals he was teaching Geography, he ended up being stressed and he was sick, this people who are in district offices and wherever, when become sick, they look at you as if you are a failure and that is not the case. There is a lot of stress at the school. This one will come to you and say, I want it this way, the other one, the very same thing, but the other one would want it differently and then you have to cope, this side you have to teach, this side you have manage. If they can get rid of this thing of principals who are teaching and become real managers, they would be able to move forward because it's like they are just overworked. The work is just overwhelming (probing) ja, they were trying, they were implementing, most of the things they did implement and I was impressed. It's just that it was too much.

M.Q.8: Mentoring is also viewed as a leadership development strategy, can you share your views on this?

MG: I think it is.... I think it is, that is why when I started I said It was a good programme, that is why I am disappointed because it is like it stopped.

M.Q.10: In terms of the mentorship and the learning you acquired, what can you say about its quality, and how do you see yourself as a mentor after the programme?

MG: You know, I also did my education management while I was a principal. I also experienced a lot of difficulties. I think if maybe the principals were not involved in the direct teaching in classes where they have to sit and mark and do all that, this thing would be very good because he will be able to concentrate on the reading and testing what is reading in the school, but at the same time he is working, he has to submit marks, he has to run the school, has to see to all the paperwork that the department wants and it becomes just too much, but, I think it was a worthwhile thing because that is why I used to fight with the lecturers, you mark they don't give you a memorandum and yet it's like they want to get something that they want at the end of the day my argument was, I 'm teaching those students, I am with them most of the time, and I think I am in a better position to judge them because I have seen them growing from where I started with them up to the end. There was such a lot of progress and I think, that's a good programme, they should n't have stopped it. They should have continued because it was empowering the principals. You will find that they will sit with you and say, you know what Mom, such and such a thing we did not understand it that way. I was happy to be part of the programme, but the only thing that was disturbing was that the lecturers were like saying, we know better than you, you know, though they were not saying it, they had some attitude, that is why I'm saying you cannot expect me to mark and then after marking, you reduce my marks, you don't even saying anything on the script, what do I explain to the students because I have marked and then like I am saying, I have a better different perspective like from the one that they are having cause they like sort of like remote control, I was in there. Seen it growing and changing things in the school environment... was good.

M.Q. 11: How would you gauge your experiences in terms of growth in the mentorship process?

MG: For instance like there were people who were called like us, you know who never even briefed on what to do. They need to structure their things so in such a way that when they start, they should not call someone because someone recommended him, they should maybe ask you to come into their offices or something like that where they talk to you personally and talk about what you can offer, what are they expecting or they give you their expectations and you talk about your experiences, and if it will fit into their expectations, then you would say it's ok, but if it doesn't then you end up being frustrated at times because they want this and they are very rigid about it, they don't want to change. Somebody use to say they are like concrete, there is nothing you can do about that and with that attitude that you talking about of the white mentors, they thought they are better than any other person. It was frustrating and like i... there were black mentors there, it's like they were more of tokens than equals to some of those white guys. You find a person who has been in the programme for more than ten years, then what do you say to a person like that one, its like me going to a school and saying to a principal you are not doing what you are supposed to do, you know. Mentors were actually supposed to be oriented before they started.

M.Q.14: What conclusion did you come to regarding the leadership development of your mentees during and after the mentoring programme?

MG: The principals were happy and so excited to be part of the programme. As we continued with mentoring I could see the changes in each principal. I believe that they benefitted a lot from mentoring.

M.Q.15: Are there any changes that you have noted in the schools you have visited during the programme? Elaborate on the situation before and after the mentoring programme?

MG: I think it did, it did, even going to these different schools meeting with these different students that I was mentoring they have their own perspectives, you look at

what they are doing and it was n't that they were wrong. They were doing it because they thought that was right and some of them its they were good, they had it, you know they had their fingers on the pulse, they could do it ja, the thing that overwhelm them is the lot of work that they had to do because I had two of my students who really became sick.

M.Q.16: Do you regard the skills you have acquired in this programme relevant in other contexts, if so, which contexts do you have in mind?

MG: You know I always say, not only one strategy works, it depends on the kind of environment that you will find yourself. Giving an example in Ehlanzeni, its more of a rural environment where things are very normal in quotes, almost normal, here you have these wild children, it's going to, it cannot be the same. It requires different skills and approaches.

Q. 18: How relevant do you find the mentorship principles and experiences to the situations and contexts of newly appointed staff?

MG: All teachers and newly appointed teachers deserve this opportunity. You see... mentoring can be applied anywhere, where there are people who need professional development.

M.Q.19: How would you use them to the benefit of other mentors?

MG: I think it will be different in the sense that I had an experience, because when you have an experience, it's like a building block. You don't start from zero, you start somewhere and then you go forward.

REFLECTING ON EXPERIENCE IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MENTORSHIP IN MPUMALANGA.

TRANSCRIPT: 7

PRINCIPAL [1]

M.Q.1: What are your views and or opinions about the selection of principals into the ACE SL programme in your district?

MM: I was wondering how principals got the opportunity to participate in the programme, but my fears were.....somehow, relieved when my name was selected. I think the district is giving each principal a fair opportunity to improve themselves.

M.Q.2: How did you react when you learnt that you were selected to participate in the mentorship programme?

MM: (Laughing) to be honest Meneer, when the circuit manager called me that day, I was in town, eishhh... I was a bit miserable... to say...but how am I going to take up studies under the situation I am working, I won't cope and then he said to me, mom.. unfortunately I have to select two people from the circuit and I have already selected you and Mr QQQQ. So go and think about it, I will come back to you tomorrow. You won't believe me, I went out of the shop straight to the car, drove home, thinking ukuthi, do I really have to take up a course, how am I going to manage this situation, but then I just felt, let me take it, maybe it is going to assist me and definitely it was a lot on my shoulders, but at the end, I don't regret... not all. "I was happy, at the same time I was looking forward to gain more skills and knowledge."

M.Q.3: What do you know about mentoring and how did you get to know about it?

"Yes, I know about mentoring. I underwent a four-day course on mentoring and coaching at Nelspruit."

MM: M.Q.4: What expectations did you have of the mentoring programme before it's commencement?

MM: Ehh... to me, I wished ukuthi.. it could equip me to be a leader that could be recognized, because as I 'm saying in the farm school, you are only four, you are overloaded... you don't know, if I have to be compared with other principals ehhh... how am I going to feel, how will I be able to.... give what they want.. you see, that's what I had in mind to say.. you know I... wish I could be equipped so that when put

together with other principals in community schools where they are fully constituted, then I must also excel.

M.Q.5: In terms of learning, what did you expect to learn from the mentoring programme?

MM: I expected to learn many things... like how to deal with the situation that I am in... as I indicated that I am in a farm school, teaching many grades.... Administration work this side and how then to deal with my studies. All these needed learning. I knew that after this study I will be more empowered so that I can be able to face some of the challenges that I am experiencing as a principal of the school, so, I expected more from the study to assist me in running the institution.”

M.Q.6: Who was your mentor?

MM: Mr YYYY

M.Q.7: Can you comment on your relationship and experiences with your mentor?

MM: Ohh...eish... that was a great time I had with the mentor. Our mentor was a patient somebody, a person who wanted people to learn and to see people reaching the highest level. He was that type of a person. You know, he used to visit us at school and he would make sure that even the staff members are taking the course serious because at first he did introduce to them why he will be visiting our school and it helped a lot because even if there were documents that they also had to do because you find that sometimes they will give us some case studies and then do educators will have to also. They could understand ukuthi, it has a positive impact to the school, and it's not that they are helping me per se in my assignments but it is also for them to be developed as well.

M.Q.8: What experiences and lessons did you take from the mentorship?

MM: As he was coming to mentor me, he also helped me to put my things in order at school because definitely if you have written the assignment, you cannot end there, there must be proof that I have done that and when he come.....whatever that I claim has improved in the school, I have to make sure that it is there. I cannot lie and say we did not have a vegetable garden, but he comes, there is still no

vegetable garden but I claim we have developed one, but we did have this policy, but he comes to the school, there is no evidence that the policy is there... what was encouraging is that whatever I had to say, you know... I have managed to move from step A to step B. When he comes to the school step B is there, and when I say I have moved to step E, he will see that there is evidence that we have moved. That was a good part about it.

M.Q.9: What did you learn as a leader from the mentorship programme?

MM: The delegation part?... no..no...no... it was not only the delegation part, also the documentation...ja..., like as a leader you have to monitor educators work. What was happening you find that I will monitor the work but without recording. I don't have a programme of monitoring, I don't have a programme to monitor class works, if I feel that at least this week I can a chance to do a class visit, then I will just go and do class visit, inform them like two days before,.....you know what on Wednesday I am deciding to do I class visit, but there is no programme, why, because I was a full time class teacher, but because they told us that even if you are in class the whole day, but because I use to monitor the files during lunch or after school, so it was said, mention in your management time-table to say I am teaching from this time to this time and then during breaks from this time to this time I will be monitoring this grade on this date. From this time to this time after school I will be checking files for the foundation phase or the intermediate phase and that helped me to be organized before. They knew before time ukuthi come next month on this date we will be monitored, come this date we will have a class visit. You know the programme that we had to design, ja, they assisted my management to be in order.

M.Q.10: How often did you use your reflective journal and what did you use it for?

MM: It depends on the circumstances but, most of the things that I have learnt, because I am putting them into practice, so most of them are just at my finger tips. I...I.. don't struggle much. To such an extent, if a colleague come to school needing help, I am able to assist without going to my files referring. Reflection, I think means going back and checking whether what you were doing is right or not, is the situation improving or not? Since I started with the programme, at the beginning of each term, I conduct a staff meeting where we reflect on the previous term. Educators will come

up with problems that they saw during the term and we will come up with solutions on how to improve.

M.Q.11: What do you know about reflection and why was it important or not important during the programme?

MM: It is important because that's how you get to improve yourself. Without reflection, you think you are on the right track only to find that sometimes you are left behind, so I think it is very important to reflect back, you become more and better at improving yourself a lot.

M.Q.12: Can you comment on any “eye on the face experiences” you had in this programme and how these were addressed?

MM: Ohhh.... (cough)..laugh...pause....I don't know whether it will seem as self-praise but honestly I feel that I am somewhere, ja.....lot of improvement. You know I,.. I don't fear to get visits anytime. You remember we used to fear... departmental car entering the school gate, then you are worried that I wonder if they are going to find men in order, but now I don't have that fear any longer because I know my things are in order, I told myself that whoever come to the school they rather say... you know we appreciate it you have done it, if you just correct there and there but not come and tell me that we din” find this, we didn't find this, no. They must just come to correct, you've done it just correct that. Ja....

M.Q.13: What in your opinion do you think should have been done differently to benefit your learning?

MM: I think everything went well and no opinion on what the programme should have looked like. I learned a lot there. Maybe what I can do differently from him, I can visit more often the schools that he did. I will also do follow-ups immediately.

M.Q.14: In terms of mentorship and the learning you acquired, what can you say about its quality, and how do you see yourself as an educational leader after the programme?

MM: Ehh... are we considering the course as a whole. But I think I will base my answers on the programme. Being a leader in a farm school with challenges, I was a

principal without an administrator, and being a full time class teacher teaching grade 3 in the foundation phase, the challenges I had is that I didn't have an administrator so I had to be a full time class teacher and be able to manage administrative duties on my own such that I had to knock off at 5 sometimes or six o'clock, bearing in mind the area where I was, surrounded by mielie farms. The only school with only two houses next to it, but due to the strain I had, I had to persevere under those circumstances. Now what I liked about the course is that it assisted me a lot to be organized and to be able to manage the constraints under which I was working, How.... the documentation that I had to work with, the management part of it, I ... learnt that most of the things I used to on my own without involving educators because I should think I am a workaholic person, a person who believe that in order to get things right I have to do them personally, so that was killing me a lot. You find that I had to delegate some of the things but at the end of the day, I end up doing them myself because I don't want to go and repeat something that somebody has done wrong but through this course, I learnt that you need to have confidence in other people, train them show them and let them implement, ja not always doing things because they won't learn. Wena you keep on doing doing bona, they won't learn, they ve got their mistakes.

You don't do up to this far. So this course taught me to involve them and make sure that I make a follow up so that I can see what are their shortcomings and develop them and from there I realized that some of my workload was minimized because I had to plan and make sure that I am organized and I had to manage my time in order to suit the style I must be able to be in class.....

One other thing.. with us we were not used to 'abo 'outreach, visits from the head office. You find that once, twice a year we get visits and is not that they will be developing in everything such an extent, I remember in 2009, I invited outreach to come to our school. The circuit manager said.. ahhh... what is it that is so bad that needs you to invite them? I said but Meneer, these people are going to the schools that are fully staffed thina we don't get those visits, to such an extent the day they come to the school, you might find that there is a lot that I have been missing out on, but due to this course, I managed to be in par with most schools that were visited because you find that people from the province, they will come and they admire to say Mom.. we are surprised, you are claiming that you got so many things to do and

having only two hands, but all things we wanted from you we managed to get them.. but I would be surprised... how is it possible, but I realized that this course made me to be A lot.

M.Q.15: In what way would your learning experiences in this mentorship programme be of benefit to your colleagues?

MM: They are already benefitting from the improvements that are happening in the school and my improved leadership.

M.Q.16: Do you think that you would introduce the concept of mentoring to your colleagues, and if so, how would you do it?

MM: Actually, I've started mentoring them whilst I was being mentored and I have seen a great improvement with my teachers, where I realized how valuable this was is where we are now, because the level where the educators are now, they are able to assist the educators where we are now. Instead of me going back starting afresh, assisting teachers, they are assisting me now by.....those people there. That's where now I realized now that this course.....because, you could not sit with information, you had to impart it to the colleagues and to my surprise one of the educators left about two years back and now he moved to Gauteng and I understanding that he took an HOD post and he used to come to me and say... some of the things when you told us to do them, we could feel that ja... this is a blow, she is bringing a lot onto our shoulders but now I am happy because I am somewhere because of you.

M.Q.17: Do you regard the skills you have acquired in this programme relevant in other contexts, if so, which contexts do you have in mind?

MM: Hmm (Rephrase)...Definitely, I won't have a problem yes, I won't have a problem. You know there are so many challenges outside there, like I am from a small school with four educators, but where we are now, we are nine. Like I am saying, I don't feel any stress. The principal there never underwent the course that I am doing and there is a lot that I came up with that is good, benefit them and I am saying this proudly because we had a visit by an official from the province Dr. ZZZ, and when she arrives at the school she requested for my, she actually wanted a Life Orientation teacher from any grade. Fortunately enough I am teaching grade 4 to 7

and for the first time this year. I have been teaching in the foundation phase all these years, so I am teaching grade 4 to 7 life orientation, EMS grade 7. She had requested for a file and then I gave her my file, it was a grade 6 file and there were books for my grade 5 and 6, I first took out the books and gave them to her, she looked at them, she went through the file and then I moved out, I left her with the file, when I came back she said ja.. you nearly gave me a heart attack. How mom why?... you know when you put the file in front of me, eish.... You know, I was just happy just to see the file, before opening it , it made me smile, but when I opened the file, now I got something different. So what was happening, the first lesson plans were the ones done by the educator who was in charge before I took over. So the lesson plans were half, half. So when I started, my lesson plans are typed, so as she went on with the file, now she comes across these typed lesson plans, orderly. She said, you know, I nearly collapsed, but when I moved on with the file, I said, man this is what I was looking for, so she said, me and you are going to work together, I can sense you are a hard working person. So she was demanding school documents from the principal so then because I am an SMT member, cause it's like I am the deputy now, so I will say, I've got them but they are there under MMMM primary and we are NNNNN. Mom, I am happy you have done them, but I want them from this school. She wanted the movement register, I've got it, they don't have it this side,. She wanted the leave register, I've got it, they don't have it that side, the school improvement plan, I've got it, they got mistakes this side it doesn't have due dates, I've got due dates. She said Mom, I am happy, I can see you've got them, but my problem is they are under MMMM Primary, I want them under NNNNN. So I am putting you in charge, you will assist. That is why I can say it proudly that I have gained. If a doctor can come and say, you must be there... then it means, I have gained a lot. I must say that.

M.Q.18: How would you use mentoring in the situation of newly appointed staff?

MM: Ehh... mentioning that, when I arrived at the university of Pretoria, they wanted us to develop an induction policy. I ran around asking for help how to design that policy...much to my surprise, no one knew about it, even the Whites. They said Mom, an induction policy, when a new person comes to the school just induct that person, show the person whatever that is going on. They said but we need to design

an induction policy, they said we will be seeing that for the first time. You don't believe, I had to sit down collect books, check what is that that should be in that policy. I designed the induction policy and I found it user friendly because you know exactly when a new teacher arrives at the school, where to start to mentor that educator, when to induct that that educator...

So that policy helped me a lot.

PRINCIPAL [2]

TRANSCRIPT: 8

INTRODUCTIONS

M.Q.1: What are your views and opinions about the selection of principals into the ACE School Leadership programme in your district?

JB: I don't know the criteria they use to select us for the course. I think they look at the performance of the school principal and then choose him or her in order to improve the management of the school.

M.Q.2: How did you react when you first learned that you were selected to participate in the mentorship programme?

JB: At first, I was amazed and say... why me? But finally, I become happy because I am going to learn a lot from mentorship and leadership ...with the university of Pretoria. My mentor was AAAAA, a former principal in one of the Pretoria schools, Hmmm....

M.Q.3: What do you know about mentoring and how did you get to know about it?

JB: I knew a little bit about mentoring, but when I was in the university of Pretoria, I learnt more, because Imentoring.. was a period of a minute or five minute sharing of ideas, but from the information I gained from the university and my mentor AAAAA, I learnt to know that mentorship is on- going and that ehhe... you may be mentored, meanwhile mentoring, you are being mentored yourself, because from the mentee, you gain a lot...you gain a lot... and then build your computer of knowledge.

M.Q.4: What expectations did you have of the mentoring programme before its commencement?

JB: Had ... at first I was perplexed, with a feeling ofand anxiety ...(could you repeat the question so that I become relevant sir)Rephrasing..... “Ja..., at first when I read the programme of the university, I saw that there was computer and by then I did not even know even how to open a computer, how to store or retrieve information...then I become happy and say, this is relevant for me because there is something new that I am learning, I had some doubts in leadership, because I am a principal, I am a leader... so I said the university will assist in answering the problems that I am having as far as leadership. Sometimes it is difficult to take a decision, but if you are an informed and mentored, you will take an informed, right decision at the right time and then this will assist you. *(So operating a computer is one of those things that you learnt from the programme?)* Yes...yes. *(I think there is also financial management which is part of the programme)* yes, before, this course of mentorship I use to just decide, today we buy this, eh... where to buy it, but from the university they taught us that we must have a budget, we must have a requisition, we must have authorization and we must have claim forms so that one becomes accountable, like they say, the principal is a chief accounting officer as far as finances are concerned. That information, I mentored staff members here, directly or indirectly because I was now employing the information that I have learnt. Like to tell you now, we've got requisition forms, we've got eh...authorization forms and each committee make its own requisition according to the budget and they know how much do they have, so they don't request what they did not budgeted for. That's why, I experienced a very difficulty this year when making a budget. People were suggesting a lot of things meanwhile we don't have..... but they took part in making a priority list that suits them so it will be easy to manage funds next year.

M.Q.5: In terms of learning, what did you expect to learn in the mentoring programme and how?

Like I mentioned before, at first, every new situation brings anxiety, insecurity, but I gained to understand that people are working at the university are friendly, they are advising, they have a wide knowledge and they can treat us well because I was accommodated, I was at home. Even now, I can phone my mentor, my lecturers if I

experience some problems. I think they are my mentors for life...for life, even after passing, I consult. The relationship is still there. When I look at our toilet, I remember one of our lecturer who said he will visit our school just to check our toilets. So that made me aware that our toilets should always be hygienic and clean so thatbecause of the experience they have gained, they have seen that toilets are problem, and even on the TV if you remember well, around Limpopo it as a problem because the pit toilets, some of them....(Probbing)...hmmm...one learner drowned in one of the pit toilets.

M.Q.6: Who was your mentor?

JB: Mr AAAAAA

M.Q.7: Can you comment on your relationship and experiences with your mentor?

JB: Ehh... he said it is important Mr QQQQ, because you are a leader to record so that you can refer in future and remember what was your decision on this, what did you say, you see... and he also said to me in that I remember and it always assisting me, diarizing information, each and every day, when I arrive at school, the first thing, I open the diary and look at the things that are supposed to be done so that I can reschedule some and attend to some because even if you have a diary, sometimes you must make a priority list. Senior official may call you then you have to delegate the duties that you were supposed to do and to reschedule some of the duties. That is very important because you are always on target when doing things and you stay focused (*so generally, how was the relationship with your mentor?*) I t is still a positive relationship even now. Even now I can phone my mentor and speak to him...ehhh.... I may even invite him for tea because he had made a mark in my life.

M.Q.8: What experiences and lessons do you take from the mentorship?

JB: As a young principal, I have gained a lot of experience even from my mentor's character. The way he showed me how to handle challenges has made a lot of changes in my life.

M.Q.9: What did you learn as a leader from the mentorship programme?

JB: I have learned a lot about leadership itself, how to handle people and challenges, planning, budgeting and many things such as record keeping as well. Ja... from this programme... there is a lot that I've learnt, among others, I cannot remember them all among others, communication skills, I also mentioned recording and diarizing is important I've learnt financial management, I've learnt the characteristics of a good leader and I am trying to use them and I have learnt a lot of laws and a lot of case studies and how they were solved. Like before, teacher, allowing teacher to chase away learners in class for a misconduct or a misunderstanding that might happen, but after learning through the university, I learnt that they have the right to education. If punished, they must be punished accordingly after lesson through maybe, detentions, parents should be informed and a learner must be informed, he must know why is being detained, why is he being punished, sometimes they appreciate. , Like somebody now is apologizing, there is letter on my table (showing the letter) even though the English is not perfect, (reading the letter) so such things is very important and shows positive improvement.

M.Q.10: How often did you use your reflective journal and what did you use it for?

JB: Maybe through terminology, I cannot eh... understand you well when you say reflective journal. Because I have got a lot of documents that I use in my planning, Like I've got schedules of meetings, schedules of tests, schedule of eh... Can you explain a reflective journal? (*Others are also calling it a portfolio*) Oh... I was just opening up portfolios of teachers trying to make an allocation, so..so but this question.... I do not understand it... (Clarification) No I have a portfolio of evidence but, it is personal and it is at home now, I cannot....ehh...remember it clearly, because you came at the time of the exams, I did not look at a portfolio so that I satisfy you. The information you get is what I can remember, what I don't remember, we will make another appointment probably soon.

M.Q.11: What do you know about reflection and why was it important or not important during the programme?

JB: Ja... reflection it gives you a direction to know what you are able to do, what is the challenge.....and how to overcome that challenge, what is the prior knowledge as far as that, what do you think could assist ,etcetera, and the sources that you used to learn. We were reflecting on new knowledge gained and what we knew before and how we perceive the thing before and now because we have knowledge, how do we perceive it.

M.Q.12: Can you comment on any “eye on the face experiences” you had in this programme and how these were redressed?

JB: None that I can remember, sir.

M.Q.13: What in your opinion do you think should have been done differently to benefit your learning?

JB: No.... because it was my first time in the programme... I think everything was done correctly...yes..., I think what I can do is check even after this programme as to whether my subordinates are still executing what they have been taught, because there is a tendency of people just studying for the sake of the qualification.

M.Q.14: In terms of the mentorship and the learning you acquired, what can you say about it’s quality, and how do you see yourself as an educational leader after the programme?

JB: Eh... I think I am a perfect leader who can study the future, who can see the now, who can analyze things, who always believe in planning, know when you plan, you minimize stressors that might occur because you know how to overcome in certain situations, so the challenge is not so much, like now, I’ve got books here which have arrived, so I am planning who is going to distribute it, how, when and how will they acknowledge that they have received this stock so when the day comes, I only remind the one that I have delegated, please do the task and then we agree to do it in this fashion and this fashion. This will really assist me. Even if I am absent I can phone and say, open the school diary, look at this date and you will see who is supposed to do what and advise them to do as planned so I master the future through planning.

M.Q.15: In what way would your learning experiences in this mentorship programme be of benefit to your colleagues?

JB: To mentor others? (Yes) ehh... I will encourage the mentee to be open and to participate and to share each and every little problem that they may have so that I may even make them aware that I am not knowledgeable as he might think, he might be more knowledgeable than me in certain aspects and in certain aspects, I will be knowledgeable than him , so we share.. and participate freely,

M.Q.16: Do you think that you would introduce the concept of mentoring to your colleagues, and if so how would you do it?

JB: Yess... we are appointing new teachers every day, so we need to give them direction, mentor them to say this we do it like this, this we do like this.....as you share the information indirectly, the mentee will give you some information. It means its two ways. Don't see it one direction that you are a senior and you will always mentor, expect juniors to mentor you too, during the intervention.

M.Q.17: Do you regard the skills you have acquired in this programme relevant in other contexts, if so, which contexts do you have in mind?

JB: Say... I am moved to another school, bigger than this.... or another district....or province, I will use the skills I have learned here. Ehh... I need first to analyze the situation, know the expertise of different individuals in that milieu and let them tell them the importance of mentorship, mentoring one another, asking them to reveal their skills so that they may be delegated to certain things while mentoring others. We will start there. I will say, I'm good in discipline, so I am able to mentor you maybe in discipline, somebody will say I am good in recording. So we will mention all what we are able to do and make a priority list even some of us, most of us know and.....discipline, we will never concentrate at that stage on discipline. We look at the challenging area, start with the challenging area, I am the refined, if I am sure now that we are good on that one, we are flowing, at a better level then we may look at other thingswe know and, polish , make it better so that all we become better educationist so that we may.....

M.Q.18: How would you use mentoring in the situation of newly appointed staff?

JB: It has already started. If I see that you've got an expertise in certain things then we allow you to take leadership in that aspect of mentoring all of us. Our status do not count, like those who know computer, must mentor those who do not know computer, those who know how to do class management, are mentoring in class management, filing, better way of filing information, better way of recording, how it will be easy for you to (phone rings, attended to).

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PRINCIPAL [3]

TRANSCRIPT: 9

M.Q.1: What are your views and or opinions about the selection of principals into the ACE SL programme in your district?

SA: I think the selection programme is fair. Many teachers and principals benefit from the different skills development initiatives. I think this one is good for principals.

M.Q.2: How did you react when you learnt that you were selected to participate in the mentorship programme?

SA: Anyway, I may say, I was excited, you know most of the time being selected among the crowd, and it's something that I can regard as a fortune. So I was really happy to be selected because really I could see that at least there are people who are seeing that there is a contribution that I am making in our community.

M.Q.3: What do you know about mentoring and how did you get to know about it?

SA: No, I did not know anything.

M.Q.4: What expectations did you have of the mentoring programme before its commencement?

SA: When in the programme (coughing) I thought ehh somebody who would be mentoring me, ehh will be giving me directions, like I said that I was a bit worried to see most learners taking Maths and Science but failing, maybe somebody who will mentor me will help me to ease the problem, to solve such a problem because we

cannot say experience has shown us that most learners are dropping out of Maths and Science and say we leave them, instead we need to help them. So I thought this mentoring will help me improve such problems.

M.Q.5: In terms of learning, what did you expect to learn in the mentoring programme and how?

SA: The other thing that I have realized that our enrolment is going up every year, so I was expecting to learn how to control the crowd, Ja to control them as if they were still little. When we started we had 302 learners, but you cannot believe me now we are running at 450 It is almost twice the number, we are even expecting like next year we are expecting like 520. We are trying by all means to learn how to manage properly such a crowd.

M.Q.6: Who was your mentor?

SA: Mr. P P P P P

M.Q.7: Can you comment on your relationship and experiences with your mentor?

SA: The relationship was very good because, ehh...the mentor Mr. P P P P P who used to come here would clarify most of the things that I could not gather at the university. Remember we used to attend only five days in a quarter and you find that we had to cover a large scope of work. So the mentor would come, when he arrives here we would clarify most of the things and fortunately although he would visit, we were six in the group, although he would visit us one by one, on the last day he would invite us in one centre where we would tell him our problems and he will help us with those problems and he will find that we have attempted our assignments, maybe we have stuck somewhere, when he arrives, we will tell him what our problem is, and he would clarify those problems.

M.Q.8: What experiences and lessons do you take from the mentorship?

SA: Effective and responsible leadership with skills in management of resources such as finances, human and physical resources. I am now a results oriented leader through the programme.

M.Q.9: What did you learn as a leader from the mentorship programme?

SA: Ja there were things that I have realized through the programme, that I was not taking them correctly, like for instance, I used to believe that even an SGB meeting should be decided by me and the members be invited by my good self, only to find that those were the duties of the secretary of the SGB who would decide the date and write the invitation, but then fortunately, I have corrected that on the spot after I 've learned through the programme that no, meetings should be conducted in this way, I we did change and I did address the SGB and told them that no, meetings should be conducted in this fashion and of course we conducted them.

M.Q.10: How often did you use your reflective journal and what did you use it for?

SA: Ehmm.... The practical example, I used it last year when we were doing the year plan. When we were preparing the year plan, I visited the one that we used in the programme and there were aspects that we added that were not there in the past. So I in a way we improved the format of our year plan.

M.Q.11: What do you know about reflection and why was it important or not important during the programme?

SA: Reflection, I think means going back and checking whether what you were doing is right or not, is it improving the situation or not? So I think it is very much important to reflect at all times not just go on without checking as to whether are you on the right track or not, because otherwise you will see by mistakes that things are not going right, but if you reflect, let's say that is why since I attended the programme, at the beginning of each term, I conduct a staff meeting where we reflect on the previous term. Educators will come up with the problems that they saw during that term and we will come up with the solution on how we can improve on that this term. Analysis of results and yes... all of that..

M.Q.12: Can you comment on any "eye on the face experiences" you had in this programme and how these were redressed?

SA: No.. no.. I believe the question refers to challenging experiences during the programme....oh no!

M.Q.13: What in your opinion should have been done differently to benefit your learning?

SA: Well, well, I really appreciate everything that he did, but maybe one different thing that I would do, maybe is to set up a programme like I am saying that on the last day he would call us on one venue. Maybe I would set up a programme that will indicate to everyone what are we going to discuss about that day, what are we going to discuss on that particular day, which aspects are we going to treat on that day.

M.Q.14: In terms of the mentorship and the learning you acquired, what can you say about its quality, and how do you see yourself as an educational leader after the programme?

SA: Well, I see myself as very much improved. Let me go back to the issue of team building and whatever. I used to know that there should be internal school development for members but did not know that we could even outsource or we could even go to people like Top Up Africa where we take all members there. I used to know that we need to develop teachers but did not know in which way, yes, I am now aware, that we can even talk to the SGB and take our educators somewhere and take our RCL somewhere because we use to leave them behind. We will just tell them you are the executive for this year but no direction was given to them, as to how to perform. At least now I am quite aware that now, no! we could outsource by going out to people like top up Africa and we are able to give the direction to the Finance Committee on how to ask some donations, how to raise funds and whatever. As in the past....

M.Q.15: In what way would your learning experiences in this mentorship programme be of benefit to your colleagues?

SA: Of course, it is developing, because one other thing that our mentor used to do, was to outline his experiences on different aspects while he was still the principal and while he was still the lecturer and those experiences will come to the fore and when he arrive at one principal, he would see good things, adopt those things, reveal them to other principals and we consolidate them and we find that at the end we are all improved on our strategies.

M.Q.16: Do you think that you would introduce the concept of mentoring to your colleagues, and if so, how would you do it?

SA: I did like I am saying, we are having workshops like team building and others, they really appreciate what we are doing in as far as that is concerned.

M.Q.17: Do you regard the skills you have acquired in this programme relevant in other contexts, if so, which contexts do you have in mind?

SA: I think so because if I have learnt to motivate or to improve team building among team members, if I have learnt to apply safety on learners, I think the same thing will be possible in another situation.

M.Q.18: How would you use mentoring in the situation of newly appointed staff?

SA: In the second week when after opening next year, the whole staff including the auxiliary staff, we are getting there for the team building workshop, and again they are also training the RCL. The executive of the RCL are also trained by the same company Top Up for Africa. So the programme has taught me that team building is very important in any situation, yes.

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PRINCIPAL [4]

TRANSCRIPT : 10

M.Q.1: What are your views and opinions about the selection of principals into the ACE School Leadership programme in your district?

AS: Thank you Sir... My view about the selection of principals in the programme is that it was done well... because there was a mixture of old and new principals. Primary schools and secondary school principals together. I t was fine... not doubts.

M.Q.2: How did you react when you learnt that you were selected to participate in the mentorship programme?

TS: I was very much excited because ehh.. before that there were some other , my principal, my colleagues and other friends who entered for this kind of study and I was left behind. So I was very much excited to be informed that I am also selected this time around. So what I was also happy about was that the circuit manager ehh.. mostly decided to choose newly appointed principals because they... the principals that I entered with from our circuit were newly appointed, so I took it as a fair practice from her site and that is why that led me to be more excited.

M.Q.3: What do you know about mentoring and how did you get to know about it?

TS: No, not really, but ehhh.. after I have entered these studies I've started to be aware of the issue of mentoring, but before that I had little information as far as mentoring is concerned.

M.Q.4: What expectations did you have of the mentoring programme before it's commencement?

TS: Yahh.. I expected a lot from the study because I knew that after this study I will be more empowered so that I can be able to face some of the challenges that I am experiencing as a principal of the school, so I expected more from the study in assisting me in running the institution. I have learnt a lot from the study, I have learnt a lot, for instance I can indicate that I have seen how other schools are doing their things, developing programmes that can ensure that the school runs smoothly and ehh policies governing the school, governing the department of education. So that has assisted me a lot because somewhere, we were doing things ehh not knowing that we were doing the right thing and somewhere we were doing things only to find that we are on the wrong side, so eh.. this study assisted me to be abreast in as far as the policies governing the education department is concerned.

M.Q.5: In terms of learning, what did you expect to learn from the mentoring programme?

TS: Like I indicated earlier, I...., I expected mainly to learn how to run a school successfully and to be a successful principal.

M.Q.6: Who was your mentor?

TS: Mr. TTTTT

M.Q.7: Can you comment on your relationship and experiences with your mentor?

TS: Hey.... A very much healthy relationship, a very much healthy relationship. The guy was very good to us, Freddy, he was a very good gentlemen, a very good gentlemen. All our team ehhe we wish that we could join together and do something good for him. He was a good gentlemen for us really, he did.

M.Q.8: What experiences and lessons do you take from the mentorship?

TS: Yahh I strongly believe that it has contributed to my growth as a person. Like I indicated earlier on that ehhe it taught me that I must check whether how I relate to my colleagues, you see. Because sometimes you might think that this colleague is arrogant ehhe is not cooperating, but only to find that you are the one ehhe instigating this person to be unco-operative.

M.Q.9: What did you learn as a leader from the mentorship programme?

TS: Ehhe indeed, actually it is an idea that I think the department must look into. It's a very good thing. Because there is no school for principals..... So a mentoring is very much key. Ehhe mind you, years back there was never induction. For your information, I was never inducted as a principal. I started to be a principal in 2002, I was never inducted. I served in another school for close to 6 years and then I moved to this school eh in 2008, la now 6 years...I was never inducted, but this programme, this study has assisted me a lot, I am more empowered now. I think I am a perfect leader who can study the future, who can see the now, who can analyse things, who always believe in planning."

M.Q.10: How often did you use your reflective journal and what did you use it for?

TS: Yahh, though I can't say frequently, but what I used it for is to remind myself as far as the study is concerned just to take me back and see if I am still correct.

M.Q.11: What do you know about reflection and why was it important or not important during the programme?

TS: Reflection is important, it's like ehh self introspection, eh hh about checking yourself as to whether are you still intact. So it is important. I believe that each and everyone must at some stage visit him or herself so that he can correct himself or herself in case there are some other wrongs that he is doing.

M.Q.12: Can you comment on any “eye on the face experiences” you had in this programme and how these were redressed?

TS: Well even though I may not be precise, but I think it has to do with some difficulties and problems I experienced in the programme?... (yes..). I almost dropped out because of the workload... assignments and school work. You know it was at times very difficult. How I survived is because I told myself that it would be embarrassing to drop out. So I sat down with my mentor and sorted my priorities out.

M.Q.13: What in your opinion should have been done differently to benefit your learning?

TS: Come again..... (repeating the question). Ok. No I think what I can do is to check even after this programme as to whether ehh my eehhh subordinates are still executing what ehh they have been taught you see, because there is this tendency where people are just studying for the sake of studying or in the sake of... eh hh.. qualification. So what I would do ehh I will check if are they executing what they were taught to execute even after the programme eh hh is finished.....

M.Q.14: In terms of the mentorship and the learning you acquired, what can you say about its quality, and how do you see yourself as an educational leader after the programme?

TS: Indeed, I am doing things differently, the.... I have developed the school.. you see the programme has empowered me a lot. I can quote quite a number of developments that I came up with in this institution especially after the study. So I do believe that I am now a different person. Ehh for instance, before that you will find that this ehh... table full of documents you see, now for sure now you can see that it's quite few documents that are here, but before that you will find quite a number of documents here, you would not have space to put whatever that you wanted to put on the table here. You see, it has also strengthened the idea that I had before that

you must 'n't doubt the principal, immediately you get out of here actually you must not be told who is the principal, immediately you get in you must know that this might be the principal.

I learnt a lot for instance... what I can indicate is that ehh.. ehh.. so that I can get more confidence as a principal. So the study has assisted me a lot in as far as building confidence is concerned ehh as a leader of this institution. I am more confident enough and ehh... I can see that I can move this institution to greater heights, yes...

M.Q.15: In what way would your learning experiences in this mentorship programme be of benefit to your colleagues?

TS: Really, I believe so. I strongly believe so. Recently there were awards on Friday last week we were issuing the awards to learners those who are performing good. So there was also awards that were given to educators, support staff and SGB members. So they were very much thankful. They were not even aware that they qualify for those awards, so I took it lightly, ehh but the manner they were thanking me ehh it indicated that it had an impact.

M.Q.16: Do you think that you would introduce the concept of mentoring to your colleagues, and if so, how would you do it?

TS: Yah.. for instance, you are hinting a very good thing. The study taught me that ehh... I must sometimes check how I react to my colleagues because sometimes the manner I react it might cause an unhealthy relationship between me and some of my colleagues and it also ehh guided me as far as the issue of consultation is concerned that I must try by all means to engage all the stakeholders when I am executing my duties as the leader of the institution (knock on the door and response).....

M.Q.17: Do you regard the skills you have acquired in this programme relevant in other contexts, if so, which contexts do you have in mind?

TS: Yes, I strongly believe so, that I can apply these mentoring in different situations. Yes I strongly believe so.

M.Q.18: How would you use mentoring in the situation of newly appointed staff?

TS: Normally what I do of which I think I still gonna do it, I use to sit down and plan what is it that I must do in trying to capacitate this new educator. For you information, we have just recently appointed an HOD, it's the lady that I was talking to her. I table almost everything that I thought I would need her assistance of, that will be her duties, so then thereafter I convene a meeting with her and then I table everything that I will expect from her. And that has assisted me a lot. And she has fit ehhe very well in the institution.

NB: After thanking the principal, he indicated that he forgot to mention something. This is what he said:

TS: There is something that I also learned there... the issue of weekly projections. Before.. I was just working...just working and then... I learned that as a leader you must have a....a.... plan for the week. Fortunately even our circuit manager even introduced that but it continue... but some of my colleagues were not doing justice to it, he ended up stopping it, but I have not stopped, I am still doing it even though I am not submitting to the circuit manager, but I ensure that every week I must have a weekly projection so that I can move this institution to greater heights.

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PRINCIPAL [5]

TRANSCRIPT: 11

M.Q.1: What are your views and opinions about the selection of principals into the ACE School Leadership programme in your district?

TM: I think it is fine because this programme assists principals and it is principals that are selected in the programme.

M.Q.2: How did you react when you learnt that you were selected to participate in the mentorship programme?

TM: I....my first reaction was, I was a bit nervous because I know that sometimes there are so many things I am lacking. So I thought maybe by selecting me, they will come at school and find me incompetent, but at the same time I was happy because I was going to learn the new skills because its management. That is what I am doing daily, so I was happy at the same time, I was looking forward to gain more skills and knowledge in the course

M.Q.3: What do you know about mentoring and how did you get to know about it?

TM: Yes, I also underwent a certain course for four days on mentoring and coaching at Nelspruit.

M.Q.4: What expectations did you have of the mentoring programme before it's commencement?

TM: I expected the lecturers, or I expected to...to know maybe some of the things the policies especially, the usage of the implementation actually of those policies at schools because we have so many policies which are not implemented. So that was also one part, I was happy about that maybe they will teach us how to implement the policies and also before that, the making of the policies and whom to involve in the making of the policies also filing systems, the arrangement of the office, the school, the running of the school as the whole, the management of human resources as I have indicated earlier and there are so many things like abo ma conflict , how to manage the conflicts, ama interactions between the different structures like circuit, district up to the province and also working together with the parents because they are also one of our stakeholders and other stakeholders around the village, yes..... I wish I could be equipped so that when put together with other principals in the community schools that are fully constituted, then I must also excel.”

M.Q.5: In terms of learning, what did you expect to learn from the mentoring programme?

TM: How to formulate and implement policies, how to work with parents and stakeholders, and many more as I did indicate earlier.

M.Q.6: Who was your mentor?

TM: Dr.GGGGG

M.Q.7: Can you comment on your relationship and experiences with your mentor?

TM: We had a wonderful relationship with our mentor. Actually at the beginning, I was at the certain group and our mentor passed on, so although we had a good relationship but because he could not come to our school, so he only came twice, but the other one visited our school and also made us as a group to visit each other, other schools so that we can see what our colleagues were doing because at your office or at you school, you won't learn much because you thought everything is fine, but going to other schools as well you understand some things.

M.Q.8: What experiences and lessons do you take from the mentorship?

TM: I have grown, as I have said as an individual, I've grown to be a better person. Yes. My confidence has grown. I also counsel people on what they have to do.

M.Q.9: What did you learn as a leader from the mentorship programme?

TM: After the programme, actually before I as you said, firstly, I realized that my, the policies we made were wrongly made, after learning we learn how to design policies I felt confident because I could talk to the policy, I knew what to put in the policies and how to deal with people or which procedures are used when something is not according to the policy and also the importance of involving other stakeholders because they own the policies because I felt after doing the course my eyes were opened in cases like the policies, as well as the curriculum matters also, sometimes, like delegation, I almost did everything by myself and only to find that at the end of the day I was so tired and after doing the course I felt, I... knew that I must delegate some of the work and monitor, at the same time I am teaching my.... colleagues, not necessary my colleagues, also the post level one educators. They are now given a responsibility, responsibilities to do the work which are supposed to be done, by that I also developing them.

M.Q.10: How often did you use your reflective journal and what did you use it for?

TM: Ok it helped me to tick or it was my check-list , how far am I with everything and also to make me aware of some of the things which I was not aware of like keeping records of everything and not letting something's.... Ja or just to stay in the cupboard, without me intervening.

M.Q.11: What do you know about reflection and why was it important or not important during the programme?

TM: Ok, when we normally have our plans may be for a week or for a month, when you do reflection, you check at what you achieved and what you did not achieve and then you find ways why you did not achieve and you must... must make some means so that everything you planned you must do it, so it help you to keep on track of what I have planned to achieve them at the end of the month or the week.

M.Q.12: Can you comment on any “eye on the face experiences” you had in this programme and how these were redressed?

TM: Ok, I had some, I had hopes that at the end of the whole course, I will become a better manager than I was ehhe..... and also the knowledge I have gained, I will be able to instil it and help my other colleagues as well. And also the fear , my fears were like as I've indicated that maybe what I thought I was doing right, was, you may find that the university does not take it as right, because they told us that the course is a practical course, they will come time and again at our schools. So because I know that by then I had some lacking at some of the things, so because I always read, but I did not have the practical part, that was my fear, maybe also the time constraints also my fear because we did not have much time to do, yahh.... The programme was two years.

M.Q.13: What in your opinion should have been done differently to benefit your learning?

TM: Maybe what I can do differently from him, I can visit more often the schools than he did. I know maybe he is busy with his own programmes, I will do also follow ups immediately, Ja , that is what I will do differently.

M.Q.14: In terms of the mentorship and the learning you acquired, what can you say about its quality, and how do you see yourself as an educational leader after the programme?

TM: I.....I.....see myself as changed person because I also now understand people better than before, because now I don't just take people at the level and there I meet them, I also need to know their backgrounds and also need to understand the causes of, the root causes maybe of their problems like absenteeism, so that maybe like a person whose got financial problems, I know now that I must learn how to talk to people, I've got that pastoral care and even trying to organize maybe people who have knowledge to help them.

M.Q.15: In what way would your learning experiences in this mentorship programme be of benefit to your colleagues?

TM: Sharing with them the knowledge and the experiences I got from the programme. Actually I have just started that with everyone in the staff.

M.Q.16: Do you think that you would introduce the concept of mentoring to your colleagues, and if so, how would you do it?

TM: Ya, I think I will be in a position to conduct mentoring on my own. I can do that through checking their needs first and then do a programme for that and... also ask for help from other knowledgeable people to help.

M.Q.17: Do you regard the skills you have acquired in this programme relevant in other contexts, if so, which contexts do you have in mind?

TM: Yes. I may not be able to mention other contexts now cause I did not have a thinking around that for now.

M.Q.18: How would you use mentoring in the situation of newly appointed staff?

TM: Yes, I think I will have a programme and then, I will have a programme and look at different things which I want to mentor them and also I will do a research on the different aspects, not using my knowledge, the things I found and also use my past experience to help them become better people.

