Successful ways of managing schools: a story of a woman principal

by

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Declaration

I, Sibongile Maria Zulu, student number 29540713, hereby declare that this dissertation, Successful ways of managing schools: A story of a woman principal is submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Magister of Education degree at University of Pretoria, is my own original work and has not previously been submitted to any other institution of higher learning. All sources cited or quoted in this research paper are indicated and acknowledged with a comprehensive list of references.

Signature:……………………………………………………

Date:……………………………………………………………

Dedication

This research is dedicated to woman principals in high schools and to all other female teachers who are inspired to climb the school leadership ladder;

to my late parents for their hard work, sacrifices and guidance in ensuring my education. My parents were my pillar of strength. MAY THEIR SOULS REST IN PEACE!;to my aunts were very supportive throughout my studies; and to my children Simphiwe and Ofentse, for being supportive and understanding throughout my study.

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To have achieved this milestone in my life, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following people:

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has been language edited on behalf of its author **Ofentsy Zulu.**

Genevieve Wood
PhD candidate
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List of abbreviations

EEA	Employment of Educators Act
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
HOD	Head Of Department
JPTD	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
PTC	Primary Tedachers Certificate
SGB	School Government Body

Abstract

Successful Ways of Managing Schools: a story of a woman principal

This is a qualitative study that explores the strategies used by a woman principal to build a successful high school. Despite the plethora of gender supportive policies in South Africa women are still underrepresented in school management positions. Those who do shatter the glass ceiling face gender discrimination resulting from societal and cultural stereotypes. This study aims to tell the story of a woman principal who battled social, patriarchal and institutional odds and still succeeded as a leader.

The findings reveal that the principal relied on her womanly attributes of caring, empathy, knowing the community and involving parents. In demonstrating support for the community in which she worked and in having the courage to care she was able to transform her school. This study shows that caring is a form of power. She is a transformational leader who managed to change the school culture from being dysfunctional to being successful. Collaboration and staff development are the other strategies that led to the success of the school managed by Debra, the woman principal in this study.

Narrative inquiry as qualitative research approach was employed in order to explore the experiences of Debra, as the principal in this study is named. Purposive sampling was used for the selection of the participant. Data was collected by means of in-depth and semi-structured interviews supported by school documents. Transformational Leadership Theory, as described by Bass (1999), provided guidance for conceptualizing and analysing the leadership strategies used by the principal. The transformational leader promotes followers' innovation by considering their developmental needs while providing support and coaching through charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration

Key Terms:

Successful ways of managing schools; woman principal; transformational leadership; caring; activism

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CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aims to gain insight into the strategies employed by a woman principal of a high school to overcome the challenges of leadership in order to build a successful school. It specifically seeks to understand the gendered prejudices from the school and the broader community. In selecting a successful school principal, the sudy also offers insight into the gendered strategies used by the principal to transform a dysfunctional school into an award winning school.

Principals remain the central source of leadership influence and are expected to be actively engaged in initiating and facilitating continuous school improvement, rather than simply keeping their schools going. For this to be accomplished, a combination of effective management and leadership is required, because there cannot be successful management without effective leadership. The most important element to achieve school effectiveness and success is care, where, without a caring leader or manager, successful management or leadership is impossible. In this study, leadership and management are used interchangeably, because they cannot be disentangled (Place 2013).

According to Lunenburg (2010) successful management of schools requires successful principals. He suggests that a principal needs to be both effective and successful in order to achieve a more balanced administrative force. Furthermore, Lunenburg (2010) noted the difference between successful and effective. He regards successful principals as good at networking, while effective principals are as those that spend most of their time on task-related activities such as, human resource management activities. Both qualities are needed to build a successful school, with success contingent on effectiveness.

The principal, as stated by the Wallace Foundation (2013), remains the central source of leadership influence and performs five key practices, namely: shaping a vision of academic success for all students; creating a hospitable climate for education; cultivating leadership in others; improving instruction and managing people; data and processes to foster school improvement. Thabane and Selesho (2012) argue that principals should ensure that the school environment is safe in order to

allow for effective teaching and learning. Louis and Wahlsrom (2011) emphasise shaping of the school's culture as the main responsibility of the principal for the overall school improvement.

In addition, Msila (2012) highlights the importance of continuous learning as an essential tool for effective and successful leadership. Effective principals will be those who are lifelong learners, ensuring continuous professional development. Through continuous learning, the principals stay informed about the educational policies and practices that boost their confidence in dealing with challenging situations at their school.

Women principals are effective and successful managers of schools (Oboegbolem 2013). However, Schimidt and Mestry (2015) contend that South Africa is still clouded by a pandemic of gender bias against female leaders. Female principals continue to face oppression in the workplace, which is referred to as triple oppression of race, class and gender. Naidoo and Perumal (2014) place blame on Apartheid policies enshrined in the Bantu Education Act no 47 of 1953, and the extension of University Education Act of 1959. The authors note the way in which these legitimised the unequal allocation of infrastructural and financial resources amongst different racial groups and genders. In turn, traditional gender stereotypes tend to have the same configuration as these policies, since they also support race, culture and ethnic discrimination against women.

Irrespective of the policies, strategies and mechanisms put in place by the South African Government to implement gender equality in state universities, South African leadership favours males, and resists change (Diko 2014). Gender imbalances are still prevalent, where only a small number of women are appointed to leadership positions in the education sector (Naidoo and Perumal 2014). Furthermore, Naidoo and Perumal (2014) have realised that certain women have individually managed to shatter the glass ceiling, but they experienced their leadership differently compared to men, as they experience challenges and demands, which are sometimes beyond their power. To address these challenges require them to possess a wide range of attributes and skills in order to deal with such demands.

One of the challenges noted by Naidoo and Perumal (2014) is that in most cases, women are hired to lead in oppressed and disadvantaged communities, in schools with limited financial resources. Naidoo and Perumal (2014) further noticed that the culture in these schools is found to be corrupt, with high rates of late-coming and absenteeism amongst both teachers and learners. These schools are usually rural and high-poverty schools, where most community members are uneducated, and provide little support towards their children's education. The parents tend to exclude themselves from responsibility of the children's education. Due to the challenges mentioned above, learner academic achievement of the school remains low and this type of schools are referred to as dysfunctional schools. Studies show that some women are able to overcome all these challenges, and become agents of change. Moreover, these women principals become advocates, are advanced, innovative, and forward-looking (Hayes 2013). They therefore display the characters of activist leadership.

For the purposes of this study, narrative inquiry as a research design will provide a way to obtain a story from one of the successful women principal in South Africa. The principal studied is a winner of two awards, one for Best Improved Performance, and another for Best Performing School. I therefore consider her successful and relevant in providing rich and reliable data on successful school leadership that will later be analysed using qualitative methods.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The statistics presented at the first for female principals' seminar for networking and support, reveals that female teachers dominate the ranks of teaching (Pula 2013).[1] Current statistics reveal that there are 257 633 (68.3%) female teachers and 119579 (31.7%) male teachers in the public schools of South Africa (Pula 2013). However, the opposite is observed (Pula 2013) in management positions, where there are 8 210 female principals and 14 337 male principals. Female principals represent only the minority of all principals (Lumby, Azaola, De Wet, Skervin, Walsh and Williamson 2010).

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[1] Pula is an internal newsletter of the Department of Basic Education.

After appointment, women principals in South African schools experience school leadership in a different way compared to their male counterparts. Gender is still a factor that causes challenges and tensions for women leaders, and those with whom they work (Lumby et al. 2010). Female principals, according to Mestry and Schmidt (2012), are subjected to stereotyping; they are viewed as weak, submissive, highly emotional and unfit for leadership. Cultural beliefs and practices make it difficult for African males and the community to accept women principals, which results in conflict. For women to be accepted by the stakeholders, they had to adopt an authoritarian style of leadership (Mestry and Schmidt 2012; Morojele, Chikoko and Ngcobo 2013).

According to Msila (2012:50) "Mentoring is about professional development and professional development is about growth and advancement. Mentoring therefore enables adults to explore their own thinking and contradictions, enhancing self-development". Therefore the lack of mentoring or female role models is one of the factors that poses a challenge to women leaders, and one which leaves them with no choice but to rely on men as role models (Morojele, Chikoko and Ngcobo 2013).

Despite the challenges, women do want to become principals, as is evident through their determination to be lifelong learners (Lumby et al. 2010). Lumby et al. (2010) further noted that women, in most cases, do not lack confidence in their abilities as they work to acquire most administrative positions, but are discouraged by institutional racism and sexism. Even in highly patriarchal societies, Lumby et al. (2010), a woman can attain independence and leadership through higher levels of education. The majority of the principals have been prepared by the experiences gained from working as Head of Department or a Deputy Principal (Lumby et al. 2010).

Winners of the Excellence in Secondary School Leadership under National Teaching Awards provide evidence that women often become successful leaders (National Teaching Awards 2013). The awards recognise leaders who, after being appointed, managed to improve the effectiveness of their schools and sustain good matriculation results. One of the women principals from Gauteng, the winner of an award in the category of Excellence in Secondary School Leadership, outlined the the role of collective effort of all stakeholders led towards the overall success of the school and

improvement academic results of the school. The Matric or Grade twelve results in her school went from a percentage in the 40s to 88.9 percent. To improve the results, the woman principal and the award winner, introduced voluntary extra classes and an intervention programme (National Teaching Awards 2013).

Drawing from the research above it is clear that women managers in high schools are under-represented, without mentors, and experience gender-related discrimination. Despite these challenges many women are successful school leaders. However, there is limited research on how these women leaders build successful schools. Furthermore, while there is abundance of literature on women principals, its focus is largely on school leadership in general and in primary schools. It is evident that there is a lacuna in the literature of successful women leaders in high schools, especially South African high schools.

Therefore, if the leadership traits of these successful woman principals of high schools are not well understood and documented, novice women principals of high schools and those with a passion to take on leadership will be denied the guidance that might contribute to their professional and personal growth.

In this study, I shall research the strategies employed by women principals of high schools to overcome the challenges of leadership in order to build successful schools. The study will also focus on how women principals overcome the prejudices they face in the school, and the community at large.

1.3 RATIONALE OR SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Being a teacher and a member of the School Management Team and an acting Head of Department in a small high school with limited human and financial resources, taught me that the role is multidimensional. This role, for which I was not trained, involves managing curriculum, managing people, and managing a classroom as a teacher. It was then that I came to the realisation of the significance of leadership knowledge and skills, not only as an HOD for a specific department, but for the school leadership and management. I therefore became curious about the leadership strategies of other women principals in high schools, and wanted to understand how they succeed in their roles as women and as principals.

The research on women leadership has proven that women experience challenges that are based mainly on gender. Women principals are caught in middle of balancing domestic and work responsibilities, gender bias and lack of female role models or mentors. However female principals attributes of nurturing, being sensitive, empathetic, intuitive, cooperative, caring are always associated with effective administration. Their preference for participative teamwork and collaboration demonstrates some qualities of transformational leaders, because there is greater involvement of staff, as well as coaching (Horsford and Tillman 2012).

Morojele et al. (2013) recommended that school principals desist from seeking to adopt masculinity, but that they ought to strive towards personal growth. They should continue to be collaborative, caring, emotionally connected and vigilant towards meeting organisational goals. A need for capacity-building workshops, seminars, formal mentoring programmes and training for the newly appointed women principals is considered to be important in providing a deeper understanding of the expectations and challenges in the work place.

Instead of women wanting to adopt the authoritarian leadership approach to combat patriarchy, Tingely (1993), as stated in Growe and Roslin, suggested some ways of adapting to gender differences. Tingely (1993) suggests the adoption of a positive attitude towards the differences that bring about the realisation that men and women communicate differently. Once the differences are acknowledged, women will be in the right frame of mind to communicate with the opposite sex.

The coping techniques, as proposed by Morojele et al. (2013) and Tingely (1993), as quoted by Growe and Montgomery, may be of assistance to women school principals, especially in high school where male leadership dominates. However, amongst the literature reviewed on successful women leaders, coping strategies in overcoming stereotypes and patriarchy are not clearly stated or even mentioned. The findings of this study will add to the body of literature on female management in high schools, and will also be relevant to other woman managers as well as those who seek to take on principalship.

This study explores the challenges experienced by women principals, strategies they employ to overcome challenges, and a rich description of how women principals manage to build successful high schools.

1.4 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.4.1 Research purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore strategies used by women principals to build successful high schools.

1.4.2 Main research Question

How do female principals build successful schools?

1.4.3 Sub Questions

What are the challenges that female principals experience?

How do they overcome these challenges?

What strategies do women principals use to build successful schools?

1.5 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

1.5.1 Successful and effective school leader or principal

According to Ikemoto and Taliafero (2012), principals accounts for twenty-five percent of a school's impact on student achievement.

1.5.2 Successful schools

Becoming a successful school does not happen overnight, but takes years of sustained commitment. There is no single thing a school can do to ensure high levels of student performance, but researchers found that these schools have a number of characteristics in common. Researchers have discovered that successful schools have unique characteristics and processes, which are correlated with student success (Kirk and Jones 2004). Furthermore, Kirk and Jones (2004) note successful and effective schools with reference to the seven correlates of an effective school to be: a clear school mission; high expectations for success; instructional leadership; opportunity to learn

and time on task; a safe and orderly environment; positive home-school relations; and frequent monitoring of student progress.

In an effective school, there is a *clearly articulated school mission,* where the staffs shares an understanding of and commitment to instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures and accountability (Kirk and Jones 2004). The atmosphere in an effective school is conducive for teaching and learning, and leads to excellence. When educating learners, teachers of an effective school ensure the *frequent monitoring* of the students' progress. According to Kirk and Jones (2004), in effective schools, there is a *climate of high expectations,* in which the staff demonstrates that all students can master the school curriculum. Teachers in an effective school are collaborative and mentoring, so that schools become places where educators are recognised as valuable contributors with unique strengths and potential to learn, grow and improve.

The principal in an effective school acts as an *instructional leader,* who continually and effectively communicates the mission of the school to staff, parents and learners. A *positive home/school environment,* where parents understand and support the mission of the school to enhance school effectiveness is created (Kirk and Jones 2004). Students have an *Opportunity to learn and* receive *student time-on-task* for the betterment of their performance. Students are actively involved in a learning activity that is well-planned, and teacher-directed, for *a safe and orderly environment* that if free of physical harm (Kirk and Jones 2004).

1.5.3 Leadership and Management

Management and leadership cannot be separated and are part of every principals' activity, they are therefore interlocked and encompassed in the generic term of school administration. Management, as explained in Place (2013), is a process of implementing strategies and controlling human and material resources for the achievement of organisational objectives. On the other hand, leadership implies the functions that focus on the determination of organisational objectives and strategies. As supported by Bush (2008), leadership can be described as the act of influencing other's action in achieving desirable ends. Leaders are people who shape the goals, motivations and actions of others. Leaders frequently initiate change to reach existing and new goals; their leadership takes much ingenuity, energy and skills. These skills are often exhibited by managing well, and

therefore, leadership and management need to be given equal prominence towards the effective operation of schools. Effective leadership is often associated with school effectiveness and improvement (Bush 2008).

Place (2013) brings raises the issue of care and considerate leadership, noting the efficacy of management with a caring, human touch, therefore the concept of leadership involves caring and maintaining the organisational vision and motivating people toward that vision while management involves mainly the daily instructional functions. He further emphasises that a caring attitude toward everyone in the organisation and the ability to influence the culture or climate of the organisation is the indication of a true leadership. The caring attitude of the true leader will be transferred to other individuals within the organisation, so that they also care for each other.

1.5.4 Glass ceiling

The glass ceiling is the concept that most frequently refers to barriers faced by women who attempt or aspire to attain senior positions, as well as higher salary levels in corporations, government, education and non-profit organisations. It can also refer to racial and ethnic minorities, and men, when they experience barriers to advancement (Lockwood 2004).

According to Cotter, Hermseen, Ovadia and Vanneman (2001), the glass ceiling is the unseen, yet unreachable barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievement. The inequality of the glass ceiling represents a gender or racial difference that is not explained by other characteristics of the employee relevant to their position.

Cotter et al. (2001) in Msila (2013) contend that there must be four distinct characteristics to conclude that the glass ceiling exists:

- a gender or racial difference that is not explained by other job-relevant characteristics of the employee;
- a gender or racial difference that is greater at higher levels than it is at lower levels of the organisation;

- a gender or racial inequality in the chances of inequality in the chances of advancement into higher levels; and

- a gender or racial inequality that increases over the course of a career. All these represent invisible barriers, where women can see the topmost positions, but would not reach them. The contention here is that women struggle to move up in the organisation, to assume the powerful or influential positions.

1.5.5 Prejudice and Stereotypes

"Prejudice is an act of forming an opinion about a particular condition before assessing the actual condition, leading to misconceptions. For example, a misconception that women cannot make excellent leaders is a form of stereotyping which discriminates against women" (Mestry and Schmidt 2012: 547).

Stereotype is defined as a "widely held generalisation about a group of people who assign attributes to groups or individuals on the base of a limited number of categories" (Mestry and Schmidt 2012: 547).

1.5.6 Symbolic leadership

It is the way principals attempt to manage the meaning of the organisation and is about how a manager behaves in the everyday reality of the school. This includes role-modelling, in terms of punctuality, communication and respect for others (Thakathi and Lemmer 2002).

1.5.7 Intersectional identity

Intersectional identity is that identity that involves many factors, including race, sexual orientation, disability and economic status as well as gender. Women principals serve as an intersection of race and gender and their role extends from principal to that of mother, caregiver or may be nurse (Horsford and Tillman 2012).

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The study consist of five chapters, which are divided as follows:

CHAPTER 1

The first chapter of this dissertation clarifies the purpose statement, the problem statement, research questions, and significance of the study, the research methodology and the limitations thereof.

CHAPTER 2

To gain an understanding of what other researchers have written related to the topic, a literature on women education management is reviewed. The theoretical framework is also presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 3

The research design and methods employed in this study are addressed in this chapter. The sampling strategy used to obtain the participant are discussed and the ethical considerations are also outlined.

CHAPTER 4

This chapter presents the story of the participant, the woman principal. The story concerns her school leadership and management experience and how she managed to build successful school.

CHAPTER 5

This is the final chapter in which findings and recommendations for future research are discussed.

1.7 CONCLUSION

This study was conducted with an aim of exploring the ways in which women principals build successful schools. This chapter focused mainly on stating the problem statement and the rationale for selecting the topic. The aims of the study and the research questions that guide this

study are also outlined. In the next chapter, international and local literature on women school management is reviewed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ON WOMEN LEADERS IN HIGH SCHOOLS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

For the purpose of this study, this chapter present the information drawn from the literature pertaining to women in educational management, in particular, high school principals. For better understanding of how women survive in these male-dominated positions, it is important for me to begin by looking at school leadership and management in totality. In this chapter, I therefore present the literature pertaining successful and effective school leadership as well as successful and effective schools.

Irrespective of gender, no leader or manager is without challenges in his or her role; however this study is concerned with the specific challenges faced by women principal of high schools. Naturally, men and women differ, and their leadership styles and management strategies may differ too. Therefore it is also important to learn about or compare their leadership strategies, particularly when it comes to women principals. Lastly, empirical research on successful women school principals of high schools is a better way to understand their leadership success. This is a South African study, but some international literature is also reviewed, since it is also important in conveying the broader picture of women principals.

From the review of literature related to female school leadership and leadership in general, this chapter has the following themes as outlined below:

- what makes a successful school;
- a comparison of male and female high school leadership;
- challenges experienced by women principals;
- management strategies towards successful leadership by women principals; and
- empirical research on successful women principals.

More research has been conducted on women in educational management in South Africa and abroad. Under-representation of women in senior education management, as well as their leadership challenges (Thakathi and Lemmer, 2002; Uwizeyimana and Mathevula, 2014; and Booysens and Nkomo (2014) has been an issue of concern in earlier papers of

educational research to date. Lumby et al. (2010) as well as Ongaki, Omwoyo and Musa (2015) also revealed that women have leadership inspiration, determination and abilities, but their aspirations are dampened by discrimination and the lack of availability of leadership positions. However, considering patriarchal beliefs and prejudice that women face, their leadership success is still not well understood. This study therefore wishes to explore ways in which women principals build successful high schools.

According to Lunenburg (2010), the functions of the school principal differ in terms of the locality and school size. However, Lunenburg (2010) explains that the principal is primarily responsible for administering all aspects of a school's functioning, such as planning, organising, leading and monitoring. Oboegbulem (2013) clarifies this by including the aspect of controlling and coordinating as part of the management function. The success of any school administrator lies in the degree of participatory leadership the principal has with the students, Ugboko and Adediwura, 2012; and Bipath, (2012), where a transformed culture encourages staff collaboration and involvement.

Planning is the first step in every leadership function, and becomes the basis for monitoring and evaluating actual performance (Lunenburg 2010). By planning, Lunenburg (2010) shows that the leader defines where the school wants to be in the future, and how to get there. This is in line with what is stated in the Wallace Foundation[2] (2013), namely that the principal as a leader is responsible for developing a shared school vision, based on high standards and success for all students. These leadership functions also apply to female principals, who, like their male counterparts, are entrusted with the overall management and administration of their institutions (Wallace foundation 2013). They are expected to perform in the same way, or even much better than their male counterparts, in performing administrative duties (Oboegbulem 2013).

According to Lunenburg (2010) organising, as part of every principal's function involves developing the structure and acquiring and developing human resources. At this stage, as explained by Lunenburg (2010), the principal establishes policies and procedure for

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[2] The Wallace Perspective was produced as part of the commitment by the Wallace Foundation to develop and share information, ideas and insight about how school leadership can contribute to improved student learning. It was first published in 2012 and is based on feedback from teachers.

authority relationships, reporting patterns, the chain of command, departmentalisation, and various administrative responsibilities. Finally, the principal builds those formal communication and information networks necessary to reduce barriers to effective communication (Lunenburg 2010).

Furthermore, Lunenburg (2010) reveals that once all the formal plans are formulated and activities are organised, the leading of staff members to achieve the school's goals is an important action that must be taken by the leader. Leading, as argued by Lunenburg (2010), guides and influences people, and is a means of communicating goals to staff members. Lastly, all that has been planned and organised, needs to be monitored so as to ensure that departments are functional, and that policies developed are implemented (Lunenburg 2010). All these steps of management, when properly followed, cause a principal to be an effective leader of high performing school (Lunenburg 2010). A high-performing school is an indication that a caring leadership style is practiced by the principal of that school (Place 2013).

2.2. What is a successful school?

I borrow from Day (2013) who defined a school as a place where children go to be educated, and the core business or first priority is to promote learning. For the school to perform at its best, or to be successful, Day (2013) argues that effective leadership and management are needed. It is also important to understand that the concept of leadership, management and administration overlap, and have been accorded different emphases over time, and in different contexts (Day 2013).

Leadership concerns vision, strategic issues, transformation, ends and people, and it is about doing the right thing, while management concerns implementation, operational issues, transactions, means and systems (Day 2013). As stated by Leithwood et al (2006:3), "school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning. Leadership has a very significance effect on the quality of school organisation and on pupil learning." Moreover, Leithwood et al (2006) emphasises that effective leadership is the one that catalyses the existing potential and capabilities in the organisation. The school success in improved learner or pupil achievement is possible through effective and talented leadership only (Leithwood et al 2006).

Moreover, Day et al (2010) outlines the stages or phases of leadership success, within which the combination of various strategies are prioritised and managed by successful heads. These broad phases have been identified by the heads in their leadership journey, and could be classified under three broad headings as early or foundational, middle or developmental, and later or enrichment phase, respectively.

In the early phase, Day et al (2010) argue that heads prioritise by improving the physical environment of the school to create a more positive, supportive conditions for teaching and learning, which benefit both teachers and learners. This, according to the researcher, can include building more classes to accommodate all the learners in case of the increased enrolment or renovating some of the school buildings, constructing playgrounds, repairing or replacing worn out furniture and school fence and so on, setting, communicating and implementing school-wide standards for pupil behaviour, as well as restructuring the senior leadership team, together with its role and responsibilities. In short, this phase involves mainly planning and restructuring the organisation (Day et al 2010).

In the middle phase, Day et al (2010) further put an emphasis on the head as the one responsible for prioritising the wider distribution of leadership roles and responsible for the development of the staff members. In this case, Day et al (2010) consider the principal powerful to ensure that all the teachers are allocated different functions and responsibilities in their respective committees. In agreement to Day et al (2010), the researcher avers that decision-making regarding pupils' progress is informed by the use of appropriate data. This is usually done at the end of every school term, where learners' results are analysed in order to evaluate performance. The researcher further argues that the analysis of results will provide evidence of learner achievement, and suggest the way forward for improving instruction.

In the later phase, the physical environment is condusive for teaching and learning,and teachers are allocated their responsibilities. The head is more concerned with enriching the curriculum in such a way that it suits learners of different. Furthermore the leader widens and distributite leadership among all the staff members to keep all the processes of the school running smooth (Day et al 2010).

As attested to by the Northern Ireland Assembly (2010), school principals, leaders or heads experience their leadership differently, due the different context and socio-economic status of the school community. To support this, Lingam, Lingam and Raghuwaiya (2014) point out that the socio-economic factors in rural areas have some negative impact on learning, teaching and effective school management. The authors further affirm that communities in these areas tend to be economically stressed and schools struggle for resources. Despite all such difficulties, the Northern Ireland Assembly (2010) indicated the availability of resilient leaders who strive for effectiveness even when leading school in disadvantaged contexts. In their research, Northern Ireland Assembly (2010), indicates that these leaders share many of the same traits as successful leaders of other schools, where, to their surprise, these leaders are found to be energised by the challenges of leading schools in challenging circumstances and by the drive to make a difference to both their schools and communities.

Day et al (2010) also contends that leaders of school in more challenging contexts pay greater attention to and make greater efforts towards maintaining and sustaining school-wide policies established in the early phase mentioned earlier on in this section. Pupil behaviour, improvement to the physical environment, and improvement of teaching and learning, is their first priority, when compared to other schools (Day et al 2010). This study endorses Place's (2013) view that only a school principal with strong leadership skills and emotional intelligence can manage a school in these challenging contexts, because proper interaction with staff, students and parents is needed.

Day and Sammons (2013) explain the most successful school leader as being the one who is open-minded and ready to learn from others and flexible, rather than dogmatic in their thinking, within a system of core values, persistent, resilient and optimistic. According Day and Sammons (2013), the traits exhibited by these leaders help explain their success irrespective of daunting conditions they come across and they manage to move on, even when there is no reason to expect progress. These small personal traits, explained by Day and Sammons (2013), lead to a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness and success.

Leithwood et al. (2006) reveal core basic practices that almost all the successful leaders draw on are:

- **Building vision and setting direction** involving the establishment of the shared purpose as a stimulant of one's work. This is more about motivating colleagues and fostering acceptance of group goals.
- **Understanding and developing people** builds the knowledge and skill that the teachers and other staff need in order to accomplish the organisational goals and also the disposition to persist in applying the knowledge and skills.
- **Redesigning the organisation** specific practices in this category concerns establishing working conditions, which allow teachers to make the most of their motivations, commitments and capabilities.
- **Managing the teaching and learning programme** this category includes specific practices that aim to create productive working conditions to teacher and in this case, by fostering organisational stability and strengthening the school's infrastructure.

Leithwood et al (2006) argue that leaders do not do all such things all at once, nor in the same way, but are informed by their context. In other words, they use these practices as the way of demonstrating responsiveness to the contexts in which they work, rather than dictating meaning that their success results from being sensitive to their contexts. In this way they do not differ from other leaders, but their strength lies in applying contextually-sensitive combination of the core basic practices (Leithwood et al. 2006). This claim is also supported by Ikemoto and Taliaferro (2012), and they refer to such principals as highly effective, and those that lead high-gaining schools.

Researchers Kirk and Jones (2004) have discovered that successful schools have unique characteristics and processes, which are correlated with student success. The correlates of effective schools as mentioned by Kirk and Jones (2004), are said to be: a clear school mission; high expectations for success; instructional leadership; opportunity to learn and time on task; a safe and orderly environment; positive home-school relations; and frequent monitoring of student progress. Thabane and Selesho (2012) agree that a clean and attractive working environment enhances proper teaching and learning, and will contribute positively towards school effectiveness.

According to Calman (2010), a principal's positive influence on staff beliefs, values, motivation, skills and knowledge can have an impact on pupil learning. Ensuring good

working conditions in the school, Calman (2010) holds that the principal can also contribute positively to improved staff performance, which will in turn improve the whole school performance, specifically learner academic performance. When all this is achieved, Calman (2010) concludes that the school can be referred to as an effective school.

Moreover, Calman (2010) see effective school as characterised as:

- ''one that promotes progress for its pupils beyond what one would expect given its intake
- one that ensures every pupil achieves at his/her highest standards possible
- one that enhances all aspects of pupil achievement and development; and
- one that continues to improve from year to year.''

Considering the time spent by principals in their management tasks Horng, Klasik and Loeb (2009) revealed that time spent on organisational management had a positive effect on learner achievement and teacher job satisfaction. Kirk and Jones (2004) view an effective school as a place where teacher excellence, collaboration and mentoring is emphasised. Collaboration and mentoring ensure that every educator is recognised as a valuable contributor, with unique strength and impressive potential to learn, grow and improve.

In an effective school, there is a *clearly articulated school mission*, where the staff share an understanding of and commitment to instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures and accountability (Kirk and Jones 2004). Creating an atmosphere in which teachers are considered professionals and have opportunities to continue their professional development, both within and without the school in which they teach, leads towards teacher excellence. The principal also provides ways towards continuous growth in teachers' careers, by arranging opportunities for them to learn from one another (Ikemoto and Taliaferro 2012).

Ikemoto and Taliaferro (2012) contend that the professional climate of shared accountability for student learning creates an atmosphere that causes teachers to know that they are of great value in the school. Therefore, this environment will attract and inspire more effective teachers to stay committed to the common goal of improving student achievement, which leads children into excellence. In this way, Kirk and Jones (2004) as supported Calman (2010), consider this as a *climate of high expectations,* in which all students are expected to master the school curriculum. Teachers in an effective school are collaborative and

mentoring, and are recognised as valuable contributors with unique strengths and potential to learn, grow and improve. The principal in an effective school acts as an *instructional leader,* who continually and effectively communicates the mission of the school to staff, parents and learners. The principal understands and applies instructional effectiveness to manage instructional programmes (Kirk and Jones 2004; Calman 2010).

Opportunity to learn and student time-on-task is significant for the effectiveness of the school, as teachers allocate classroom time to instruction in curricular areas. Students are actively involved in a learning activity that is well-planned and teacher-directed. These lead to *a safe and orderly environment,* which provides a purposeful, business-like atmosphere, free from threat of physical harm. The school is not oppressive, and is conducive to teaching and learning (Kirk and Jones 2004; Calman 2010). This school has a functional school safety committee, which should be elected, and a safety policy drawn up and implemented. *A positive home/school environment* where parents understand and support the mission of the school and have the opportunity to help the school in achieving its mission, will enhance school effectiveness. If parents are treated as respected partners, they will bring ingenious ideas in supporting the education of their children (Kirk and Jones 2004).

The study conducted by Presto, Jakubiec and Kooymans (2014) further elucidates that the principals of these schools recognise and support the intimate school-community bond by creating channels to strengthen this bond. The channel is none other than parent involvement via school councils, with the aim of attaining increased levels of student achievement. Creating a healthy, safe and supportive school atmosphere is feasible when the mind-sets, policies, structures and practices that perpetuate underachievement are identified and countered (Parrett and Budge 2012). When educating learners, teachers of an effective school ensure the *frequent monitoring* of the students' progress in order to improve individuals' performance (Kirk and Jones 2004). This, according to Calman (2010), involves the use of students tests results to evaluate the success of the school.

The studies mentioned in this section made it clear that the success of any school relies on the success and effectiveness of the principal. A talented and skilful principal is one who can build a shared vision, understand and develop people, redesign the organisation and manage teaching and learning. Effective school leadership and management depend on the leadership styles of principals. Researchers reveal the differences between leadership styles of men and

women principals, whereas only few researchers did not discover any differences between their leadership styles. The next section compares the leadership styles of men and women and their effect on the success of the school.

2.3. Comparison of leadership of male and female principals

According to Ugboko and Adediwura (2012) as well as Sharma, Sun and Kannan (2012), men and women principals' leadership styles have no significant differences, and Lumby et al. (2012) discovered the overlap between men and women leadership styles. However, researchers such as Mollel and Tshabangu (2014) and Oboegbulem (2013), point out that there is a gender difference in leadership, where male and female leadership styles tend to differ. Women possess different qualities in leadership and management positions, which help organisations maintain a competitive advantage.

Sharma, Sun and Kannan (2012) compared the leadership attributes of principals, where eight dimensions of leadership were used as indicators of leadership qualities between male and female principals. These eight dimensions include: communication skills, comfort, empathy, decision-making, influence, self-management, time management and commitment. The ratings of principals by teachers from three countries, namely China, Malaysia and India, revealed that there is no difference in leadership qualities on the basis of gender, tenure and nationality. Lumby et al. (2010) also noted that men and women do not lead and manage in completely different ways, but that there is an overlap in their management styles. This overlap serves as a continuum of feminine and masculine styles, in which women make adaptations and adjustments to practices associated with masculinity in order to be seen as authentic leaders. However women may, nevertheless, tend to differ from men since they prefer supportive and inclusive approaches.

Furthermore, a study on the examination of different supervisory strategies employed by principals in the resolution of the discipline problem, revealed that there is no significant difference on the basis of gender (Ugboko and Adediwura 2012). Oboegbulem (2013) investigated the administrative competencies of female principals in secondary school in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugn State. The data collected by Oboegbulem (2013) showed higher competencies in women's ability to motivate teachers, establish rapport and cordial relations with staff as well as planning for effective productivity among others.

On the contrary, Growe and Montgomery find the feminine attributes of leadership to be better than masculine leadership styles. They pointed out the female attributes of nurturing, being sensitive, empathetic, and intuitive, compromising, caring, cooperative and accommodative, as indicative of effective management. As explained by these authors, women stand out in embracing relationship, sharing and process, while men only focus on the task completion, achieving the goals, information, and winning. Growe and Montgomery (2010) continue to value the relational leadership of women, because their focus on relationship make maximises their chances to interact more frequently, as compared to men, with teachers, students, parents, non-parent community members, professional colleagues and super-ordinates. Furthermore, they reveal that women are democratic in their leadership, they involve all the staff in decision-making, but men utilise a top-down leadership style.

Literature concerning comparative studies on male and female leadership styles, including supervision and conflict management, confirms that there is no significant difference in their leadership styles. However there is a noticeable difference, since women were found to be better than men, since they are typically more mentoring, and their coaching style is perceived to be more favourable. Women are further found to be more democratic, and encourage participation (Oboegbulem 2013; Ugboko and Adediwura 2012; and Peters 2012).

In some of the above-mentioned studies (Oboegbulem 2013; Ugboko and Adediwura 2012), quantitative methods of data collection were employed. A survey was used in the study of Principal Supervisory Strategies, and it is not mentioned as to whether it was a posted or interview survey. In the case of a postal survey, respondents might have misunderstood the questions, which it was not possible to verify. Therefore, in my view the results may not be reliable, since the researcher may not have been in contact with the respondents. However, the information from these surveys provided an important contribution to the research, and serves to nullify the patriarchal belief that women are unfit in management. On the other hand, Growe and Montgomery (2010), as well as Peters (2012) present findings obtained qualitatively, and also consider women to be good and democratic leaders.

Women are found to be better than men in their leadership, because their approach is supportive and inclusive. Their female attributes of nurturing, being sensitive, empathetic, and intuitive, compromising, caring, cooperative and accommodative, prove their

management effectiveness. Their effective leadership and management is always accompanied by a number of challenges, as outlined in the next section.

2.4. Challenges experienced by women principals

The usually larger and more complex situation of high school, as compared to elementary and middle school grades, presents a leader with more complicated and extended challenges. Attaining a principal position in a rural school is not easy, it requires a principal to have some kind of affiliation with the school community. Principals of rural schools are found to be struggling with the lack of personal privacy, as they are expected to apathetically relate to a rural lifestyle, live within the school community, join local organisations, participate in local events, and act as a professional and behavioural, social, cultural and spiritual role model (Presto, Jakubiec and Kooymans 2014).

According to Naidoo and Perumal (2014), the main challenges experienced by women principals is that they are, in most cases, appointed in low-performing or dysfunctional schools with a corrupt culture. Another challenge is gender discrimination, which makes their leadership and management duties difficult, because they occupy positions that are stereotypically referred to as male positions. Moreover, the female principal of a rural school lacks parental support due, to the low educational level of the school community. Women are sometimes their own enemies towards their effective management, due to their lack confidence and assertiveness. All these challenges contribute negatively to the academic performance and achievement of the learners, and result into low-performing or dysfunctional school.

Adopting a school with corrupt culture (dysfunctional or low- performing schools)
School culture is of great significance and a critical element in effective leadership, because a stronger or healthy culture leads to adaptability and high member motivation. In addition, a strong culture contributes positively in building individuals who are committed to their work, who engage in cooperation with others, and who are able to resolve conflicts in a better way. Everyone in the organisation will have a great capacity for innovation, and are more effective in achieving their goals. In others words, the staff is fearless, because they are always encouraged to take responsibility, and are not afraid to take calculated risks.

As contended by Parrett and Budge (2012), another challenge arises when a principal is appointed into a low-performing or dysfunctional school that is in a chaotic situation. These schools are characterised by high rate of student absenteeism, classes do not start on time and there is a lack of proper classroom management by teachers. The instructions and assignments offered by teachers are not intellectually engaging. Everybody working in a dysfunctional school is miserable and has low expectations of those they work with and serve, including students, teachers and parents. Clearly this type of school (Parrett and Budge 2012), has a toxic culture of low expectations, making excuses, and blame, where resignation is the norm. The principal has the duty of changing the culture of the school to that of conducive to high levels of learning for all students and staff. The main challenge is that for these schools to improve, the leader or principal must take necessary actions that will be of relevance to the changes needed (Parrett and Budge 2012).

Barriers to effective leadership

The South African Schools Act no. 84 of 1996, the employment of educators Act no. 76 of 1998, The Employment Equity Act no. 55 of 1998, and The Gender Equity Act of 1996, paved the way and facilitated the entry of women into previously male-dominated school management. These acts prohibit unfair discrimination in employment, and ensure that the women are represented at all levels of employment (Morojele, Chikoko and Ngcobo 2013), but the discrimination is still prevalent, and still limits access for women to leadership positions.

Schimidt and Mestry (2015) insist that patriarchy in schools is prevalent, especially where there are blacks, whites or coloured female principals. Discriminatory views often stereotype women as being incapable and emotionally unstable. Moreover, Diko (2014) confirms that men are socially constructed so as to have the upper hand in areas of power. The cultural contexts of the school, particularly rural schools, appear to be slow in adapting and transforming, and therefore, leads to the domination of men in leadership position. Furthermore, Duma (2015) contended that female principals are prone to manage sex-biased schools, where they often find themselves powerless in terms of setting the rules. Their interest in these schools are subordinated to those of males, irrespective of their power and authority. The reason for woman's rights and leadership authority to power are the result of some cultural and social factors, which perpetuate gender inequality in South African schools.

In addition, Thakathi and Lemmer (2002) consider the unseen barrier to women's career mobility and advancement, or the 'glass ceiling', which applies at higher levels of school management, and weakens the position of women, particularly black women. As noted by Morojele, Chikoko and Ngcobo (2013), women are caught in the middle of balancing domestic and work responsibilities, where they are needed to perform domestic chores as well as their office work as principals. Akar and Mouchantaf (2013) note the obstacle experienced by women in Arab as stemming from the socio-cultural norms, which construct women's role of raising a family, promote the dominant male status of husbands, and foster a sense of fear in breaking social norms. Women in Arab rejected promotions to avoid getting higher salaries than their husbands, because these men may be considered by the society as incapable of supporting their family.

Uwiseyiman and Mathevula (2014) also contend that family responsibility is another barrier contributing towards women's advancement to higher positions, because accepting these positions tends to separate them from their families, especially when they are required to move to other countries for better opportunities. This barrier is also perpetuated by the lack of sufficient family support, and encouragement from families and work colleagues, which leads to women's lack of mobility. Many women managers would refuse to relocate when asked to because of their children's education and social support structures (Uwiseyiman and Mathevula 2014)

The following barriers have also been identified as being the major factors that explain the continued underrepresentation of women in higher management positions in general, and in South Africa in particular:

- poor self-image is a factor attributed more to women than to men;
- lack of assertiveness is a habit that is more associated with women than men;
- less career orientation is a sign of less interest in women as leaders;
- less confidence- as an argument that women, unlike men, generally lack the will to achieve;
- poor performance: a myth used as an excuse for employing fewer women in demanding occupation;

- discrimination: as a sign of low interest in the recruitment of women into leadership positions; and
- demotion: as a form of punishment thought to suit women better as they are perceived to be lazy and arrogant.

The above-mentioned barriers are also listed by Mathipa and Tsokela in Msila (2013), as those that represent fault perceptions of the true positions regarding women.

Morojele, Chikoko and Ngcobo (2013) further explain that South African women now have the full opportunity to become school principals, but discrimination based on gender seems to persist. In their study, they show that women in management positions experience more challenges in practice, as compared to their male counterparts. Morojele, Chikoko and Ngcobo (2013), as well as Mestry and Schmidt (2012), say women entering the management positions in high schools are very few, and experience challenges in executing their administrative work, as a result of gender stereotypes arising from their peers and the community.

 Msila notes that "mentoring is about professional development and professional development is about growth and advancement. Mentoring therefore enables adults to explore their own thinking and contradictions, enhancing self-development" Msila (2012:50). However, a shortage of women managers resulted in a lack of female role models or mentors to look up to, and therefore, men remain the only support system. Masculine organisational culture in school management is therefore perpetuated (Morojele, Chikoko and Ngcobo 2013; Elmuti, Jia and Davis 2009).

Scholars such as Onyango, Simatwa and Ondigi (2011) look at gender gap that exists in educational management in Kenya and globally, as result from lack of financial benefits, culture and domestic or family responsibility, which has discouraged women from applying for headship positions. Carnoy (2005) acknowledges the benefits of globalisation in creating education and job opportunities for previously disadvantaged people, such as girls and women. On the other hand, it has created more competition (Carnoy 2005) in companies worldwide, which has resulted in the need for relocation. Relocation of businesses makes it difficult for women to leave their families. This therefore adds another obstacle, as outlined

in the study of Elmuti, Jia and Davis (2009), and plays a major role in preventing women from obtaining management positions.

I tend to be in agreement with Msila (2013) who notes these challenges mentioned above, especially oppression. He tends to point out how women are culpable as those that in turn oppress themselves, where although women are oppressed in a male dominated society, they also perpetuate oppression through their expectations, perceptions of their roles that have been entrenched by their experiences. Women tend to have poor perceptions of themselves, and are thus complicit in the oppression of other women in general.

Lack of parental involvement in education

Successful school is characterised by an environment where parents feel at home, understand and support the mission of the school and to enhance school effectiveness (Kirk and Jones 2004). For the benefit of educational and overall development of students, Radu (2011) regards partnership and diverse communication between parents and schools in decision-making as being of great significance. The positive effect of parental involvement are evident, irrespective of the influence of background factors of social class and family size, and this has a significant effect on children of all ages as well as adults (Department for Children, School and Families). Radu (2011) argues that parental involvement in schools is mainly to improve the student academic achievement, but is not limited to academics only. It includes different types of engagement, and various degrees of involvement, that will also lead to the overall harmonious interaction between parents, students and teachers.

Lingam, Lingam and Raguwaiya (2014) espouse the challenge of a lack of education in most rural school communities, as an obstruction toward the support and children's education. These communities hold the attitude that teachers and schools are responsible for children's education, and not them. Duma (2015) also supports this view, by pointing out the direct influence a society has on the performance of learners, and the effective management of school by the principal. He holds the belief that schools with a large number of children from poverty or low-income families struggle to with their school work. Furthermore, Schimdt and Mestry (2015) point out the negative mind-sets of the disadvantaged families towards schooling, but Parrett and Budge (2012) reveal the fact that the previous and bad schooling experience of most parents contributes to their lack of involvement.

In my own view, parents cannot take their children to a place or an institution that they do not care about, because they always want the best education for their children. It is for this reason I believe that all parents who take their children to school do care about the school and the education offered to their children. The problem with the parents is the lack of guidance from the school, they do not know how to get involved. I therefore tend to agree with Parrett and Budge (2012) in their disagreement with the belief that parents from poverty-stricken communities fail to avail themselves in schools, because they do not care about the education of their children. Instead, they tend to disagree with the popular mind-set held about people living in poverty. They argue that the people living in poverty do care about both the children and their education, but that their life situation denies them the opportunity to get involved in school activities. These parent's lives are about day-to-day survival, they work more hours, have no access to transportation, limited access to leave, and cannot afford child care facilities. For improved academic achievement, Parrett and Budge (2012) find the schools to be obliged to come up with ways in which to connect with families. This will show a willingness to authentically engage these poverty stricken families, which is one of the practices of high-performing high-poverty schools, namely, to provide quality education for all students.

2.5. Management strategies employed towards successful leadership.

Drawing from the claims of Leithwood et al. (2006), successful school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning, and also serves as a catalyst for unleashing the potential capacities that already exist in the organisation. This includes the influencing pupil learning and achievement, and improving staff performance through motivation, commitment, capacities and ensuring that the working conditions are suitable for both teaching and learning. In addition, Day and Sammons (2013) perceive leaders as providing a clear vision and a sense of direction for the school. Most successful leaders exhibit strong moral and ethical purposes, and a strong sense of social justice.

Collaborative, caring and patient

Despite under-representation and all the challenges and barriers mentioned above, women principals managed to pave their way towards leading the school successfully (Peters 2012). They opt for collaboration and effective communication between and with all parties (Mestry and Schmidt 2012). These ideas support earlier studies conducted by Thakathi and Lemmer

(2002), where the female principal observed preferred the use of diverse channels of communication, including verbal and non-verbal communication.

Schimdt and Mestry (2015) referred to the character of women principals as constructive, complicit or collusive, in that they appeared to be submissive to the cultural gender laws with the system, and are yet subverting these by continuing their own daily work. The type of perseverance displayed in the leadership strategies of women may be proverbially described as 'going into the belly of the beast', becoming part of the beast of patriarchy, as well as functioning according to or colluding with the logic of the beast, when expected. This is an indication that women are able to survive in difficult and sometimes dangerous situations that they come across in their leadership duties.

As stated by Horsford and Tillmann (2012:5), black women exhibit an ethic of care in their leadership. They have taken on the role of teachers, caregivers, nurturers and mothers. (Horsford and Tillmann 2012:6 and Peters 2012). They also opt for the practice of being reflective within themselves, and with their staff, in order to engage the faculty in decision-making efforts to change the culture of the school. They were transformational leaders and influenced the staff and by shaping the organisational culture (Moyninhan, Pandey, Bradely and Wright 2011).

Caring, as defined by Louis, Murphy & Smylie (2016), is a property of relationships, their consequences, and the conditions that make caring become a feature of both relationships and groups, particularly those in schools. In addition, it is also a process of helping another person to grow in his or her own right that is expressed by the one caring and received by the one cared for. In schools, caring is associated with student academic achievement and a major contributor to social and emotional learning. Louis et al. (2016) further note the following aspects as core elements of caring, where, without their evidence, care, as detailed below, is not received:

- Attentiveness

An attentive leader is aware and understands the needs of the cared for, that is, the teachers and learners as well as the parents. This understanding enable the leader to help others to grow or meet their needs and this is directed by empathy.

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- Motivational displacement

In this case the principal of the school, the leader, prioritise the needs of the teachers and learners of his personal career needs since caring is the core aspect of professionalism. Caring for others in the school happens in a selfless manner, by acting on their behalf.

- Situationality

Caring is situational, and therefore variable, idiosyncratic and dynamic, but not rule-bound or rule-driven.

- Mutuality

Caring is reciprocal, where the carer can become a cared for depending on the situation. If the principal expresses his or her care to teachers, and that care is received by teachers, the teachers will in turn care for their principal. The same will apply to teachers and learners as well as parents.

- Authenticity

When transparency, openness and genuineness are evident, the caring is perceived by those cared for. In my understanding, authenticity is possible, when everyone within the school is has a voice in decision-making, and when the school vision and mission is shared by everyone including the learners. This can be achieved through collaboration among school community.

Van der Vyver et al (2014) points out that an absence of care is detrimental to the entire school as it results to a negative climate caused by the negative organisational relationships. These in turn contribute to weaker performance of teacher and lower achievement of learners.

Peters (2012); Morojele et al. (2013); Mestry and Schmidt (2012) revealed that women's leadership is attributed to caring, as they exhibit an ethic of care in their leadership. According to Peters (2012), these principals go beyond their assigned duties, where they provide food, healthcare, clothing, school supplies and encouragement to the children in the

school. They have taken on a role of teacher, caregiver, nurturer and other mother while leading schools and in many cases help families to meet needs of their children.

Place (2013) confirms that the principal of the school can foster a caring culture by demonstrating that they truly care about every person in the building. Since caring is not a finite resource, giving care to students does not limit the care to be given to the teachers. However, the acts of caring need to be balanced among the students and teachers, because if teachers are forgotten, they may worry that the principal's concern for children conflicts with their role as authority figures. Noddings (2005), as quoted in Place (2013), emphasises that caring is the property of relationship that is expressed through actions and interactions by the one caring and perceived by those cared for. The problem with caring is that it must be perceived by those cared for.

Louis et al (2016:11) suggest that the creation of an ethic of care calls for the leader to reorganize the school into a caring community by applying the following practices:

- "Engaging the school community in the vision and challenge of being a caring school
- Assessing the capabilities, contexts, and expressions and experiences of caring that can or should occur and engaging the school community in self-assessments related to caring
- Shaping school organizational culture through supportive structures, social relationships, politics, and reinforcing the norms and values that constitute a school's organization
- Cultivating the larger systems of caring relationships to which school members belong, such as parent partnerships, and partnerships and projects with community organizations"

Women are transformational leaders
Msila (2013) also contends that female leaders are more likely to be transformational leaders than are men. This leadership style suits women, because it includes nurturing aspects, where women are traditionally socialised to be nurturers. Transformational leaders motivate their followers to transcend their self-interests for the good of the organisation. On the contrary (Msila (2013) cites Flora (2003), men tend to be transactional leaders, who focus on clarifying the responsibilities of the followers, and who then respond to how well the followers execute these responsibilities. In addition, men, as transactional leaders, do what

is referred to as management by exception, as they intervene to correct followers' performance.

Interdependence, mutuality and respect across races were considered as central to the process of performing principal duties. This is true when students and staff are made to embrace the notion of unity across races. Therefore, the principal is able to transform the ethos of the school to communicate across differences (Mogadime, Mentz, Armstrong and Holtam 2010). Women principals in Schimidt and Mestry (2015) believed in waiting, listening and working together as their strategies for negotiating gender and race barriers, and they found hope in small transformation and success. They avoided conflict by all means, even though they sometimes felt insecure to such an extent that they may even have considered resigning.

Morojele, Chikoko and Ngcobo (2013) indicated that the principals in their study were empathetic, and at the same time, firm and fair to their staff members. They claimed that through maintaining an open-door policy, and the collegial management styles, they were able to establish teamwork and co-operation with the staff and learners. In agreement with the above authors, Naidoo and Perumal (2014) also notice that some of the principals appear very stern, but are open to allowing any discussion with their staff. They always say to their staff, "always when you need any assistance my office door is open, come and ask".

Not sticking to one, but exercising various leadership styles, seemed to be working for the women principals in the study conducted by Naidoo and Perumal (2014). They believed in being both democratic and autocratic, depending on the context and situation. If there are matters that need democratic vision, the SMT is consulted, but in case of emergencies, autocratic leadership style is applied. In the same study, of Naidoo and Perumal (2014), a laissez-faire style of leadership is also applied in cases of running projects. In this case, the principal ensures the availability of necessary resources and demands the report as evidence that the project is done. From this study, one might realise that no leadership style is bad, but that it depends on how is applied and when.

 Thakathi and Lemmer (2002) state that communication is important in management and the work life of school principals, women tend to employ both verbal and non-verbal communication. This type of communication is the preferred feminine style, which is characterised by non-domination by the manager and allows the opportunity for staff

opinions. Diverse channels of communication, such as face-to-face, written or electronic means, are used to suite the audience (Thakathi and Lemmer 2002). Morojele, Chikoko and Ngcobo (2013), seem to base their findings only on interviews. The contribution of documents and observations, as stated in the abstract, is not clear.

Mentorship and modelling

According to Ongaki, Omwoyo and Musa (2015), mentorship is a close, long-term work relationship between a senior manager and a subordinate. It implies 'coaching' a junior staff member to acquire job competence required in a given profession. They also emphasise the importance of mentoring young graduates, who are new to the teaching profession, by the women principals, to gain more skills in the work. Similarly, Ongaki et al. (2015) suggest that women principals should look up to other successful women leaders, either in the political field, or the corporate world, for mentorship.

It is possible for women principals to look up to other successful women principals as their role models, but the underrepresentation of women principals remains a problem. An overlap of male and female leadership styles can add value to the effectiveness of the school. Being mentored by men can perpetuate domination by men, but can also be of help for the women principals to create a balance in their leadership styles.

Involvement of parents

In a successful school parents are treated as respected partners and opportunites are made available to bring ingenious ideas in supporting the education of their children (Kirk and Jones 2004). Parents play a significant role in improving academic achievement and student achievement. Sathiapama et al. (2012) refer to this as family school partnership, which further assists in building confidence, improved school attendance. Through parental involvement, social behaviour, as well as the reduction of school dropouts are evident. Moreover, Sathiapama et al. (2012) confirm that the benefit of parental involvement are good irrespective of the socio-economic status of the family, only if it follows proper planning, done according to the unique circumstances of each school.

In addition to Sathiapama et al. (2012), Williams and Chavkin (1989, pp.18-20) stated that the following seven elements should be an integral part of parental involvement programmes:

- written policies that specify areas for parent involvement;

- administrative support (resources such as a meeting venue and duplicating facilities, funds and personnel);

- continuous training of teachers and of parents in elements of parent involvement;

- partnership approaches in curricular, management and non-curricular matters, which help parents and teachers develop an attitude of ownership towards the school and take pride in it;

- two-way communication, i.e. regular communication between parents and school, e.g. newsletters, personal visits and telephone calls should exist;

- liaisons with the school with regard to parental involvement programmes, helping participants to benefit from each other's experiences; and

- continuous evaluation of the school's parent evaluation programme.

These elements will serve as a guide for all the teachers on effective strategies by means of which to involve parents in school activities. The school resources can be available for the benefit of the community, for example, the community can make copies in the school with a reasonable amount, and school classrooms can be used after school for adult teaching, and on weekends for church services and community meetings.

Van der Linde (1997: 40) adapted Bastiani's model (1996) to suit the South African school situation, and recommended it as an effective model for multicultural schools. Van der Linde specified the following areas for developing school-home links:

- communication of information;

- arrangements to discuss problems of individual children, involving parents in their children's learning, and helping with the running of the school;

- developing interest in, understanding of and support for the work of the school;

- use of parental skills, interests and experience;

- providing opportunities for parents' own education and development;

- enlisting parents' views in decision-making policy; active involvement with, and support for, family and community life.

Frequent and well-planned communication with parents concerning academic performance, or other issues concerning the students, is the best way of keeping them involved in school activities. Some parents may be asked to assist in sporting activities, and offering voluntary services for enrichment classes. Recognising and utilising their skills and experience strengthens their commitment to school, and to the community at large, which will learn to care for and protect school resources.

2.6. Empirical research on successful women principals

This section draws form the biographical narratives of three South African high school female principals who successfully became principals during the time of change, the since the end of formal apartheid, from 1994-2004 (Peters 2012). Smith (2013) points out the challenges faced by female principals leading South African rural schools. Cultural stereotypes appear to be the major inhibitors for limited freedom for woman school leaders (Mestry and Schmidt 2012). The issue of race in the USA, as highlighted by Horsford and Tillman (2012), impacted negatively on Black female leadership.

Despite of all the challenges these women principals face, Peters (2012) revealed their reason for being school leaders as an act of giving back to their communities. On their appointment, they made it clear that they were young, inexperienced in terms of school leadership, and without mentors, but chose to possess a fighting spirit, not physically, but to claim back equality in leadership through their spiritual belief. The three principles of Ubuntu remained their main focus, and they integrated them within their construct of leadership. These allowed them to create transformative environment that supported teaching and learning as a means to improve students' active participation in the life of school.

In addition, an instrumental case study in Peters (2012) that focused on district support, mentoring on two African-American females revealed that Black female principals, in most cases, lead in troubled urban schools. The women principals in this study faced leadership challenges that are based on intersecting identities (race, gender and age), and of implementing and sustaining small school reform within a large urban district. The expectations from these principals were to change the failure rate and apathy with resources and district support or mentoring, irrespective of being new in the role, and young.

In spite of challenging conditions, including the presence of gangs and neighbourhood cliques, these principals, the former principal and successor, were able to create a safer school culture, focused on instruction, and commit the faculty to ongoing regular professional development. They made school cultural reform their priority, irrespective of limited resources, and a lack of district support (Peters 2012). Horsford and Tillman(2012) examined the educational leadership of Black women in the USA, as informed by their raced and gendered positionalities, experiences, perspectives and the intersection of their marginalised identities in schools and community contexts. It is found that most of the public secondary schools principals were white males, which caused the school leadership to remain primarily dominated by men. However, black women didn't stop studying, and continued to make gains as they aspire to top leadership positions in public schools. This resulted in many black women making it possible for themselves and others to break through into levels of leadership and power previously unattainable to them.

In their leadership, black women exhibited an ethic of care, where they took a role of a teacher, caregiver, nurturer and mother while leading schools. They lead successful schools while providing for the social, emotional and academic needs of the children they serve. Their leadership styles are unique, as they go beyond their assigned duties as principals, and in this way, they exhibit intersecting identities. Hayes (2013) noted that women principals exhibit strong activist leadership qualities, by inspiring their team members, by modelling required behaviours. Moreover, activist principals are energetic leaders, who work toward the accomplishment of the school mission. They are social justice leaders, who are concerned about the wellbeing of the teachers, learners and parents (Hayes 2013).

An article by Smith (2013) also revealed the challenging experiences of female principals in a rural areas of South Africa. This interpretive narrative inquiry was done from a feminist perspective, specifically foregrounding an ethic of care and relational leadership, in order to reveal the complexities of school leadership in disadvantaged schools. The principal being studied led a school where most learners are from unemployed families, lived in squatter camps, and had little to eat at home. In assessing the situation in her school, the principal started a Non-Profit Organisation on the school premises, where there were volunteers cooking for children. This was done to complement the feeding project run by the Government. This principal exhibited an ethic of care and compassion by feeding the children of poverty-stricken community.

Furthermore, the principal studied by Smith (2013) was in charge of all the efforts of their school including curriculum, development of people, financial management, learners, infrastructure as well as parents. She served as the link between school and the community, and represented the image of the school as the good one. Relational leadership was evident in her potential to lead the school in a caring manner. The principal has conducted her work with a moral code of conduct, has empowered others to achieve, and has led by example in and out of the school (Smith 2013).

Mestry and Schmidt (2012) also discovered that female principals were subjected to stereotyping, and were regarded as unfit to be leaders by the staff, parents and departmental officials, resulting from cultural beliefs. Despite the discrimination and prejudices, women managed to keep their schools effective and functional. These women were able to responsibly and productively negotiate these differences by using peaceful and challenging measures. Their strategies relied on waiting and working together, and they were always encouraged by and appreciated small transformations and successes, instead of engaging in conflict.

The studies on female leadership especially that of black women, agree that these women manage to gain success through their unique leadership strategies. They managed to transform the cultures of their schools by uniting the races. Their intersectional identities as teachers and mothers keep their schools going, since they are able to provide emotional support for the learners.

2.3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is well known and widely documented that women leaders experience more problems in their duties, as compared to male leaders. Studies had proven that irrespective of the challenges they come across, some women principals are successful and effective in their leadership practices of their schools. The focus of this study is therefore directed on women high school leaders, or principals, with a purpose of exploring their leadership strategies that they employ to build successful schools.

Transformational Leadership Theory proposed by Bass (1999) is considered to conceptualise the leadership strategies of women school principals. Transformational Leadership refers to the leader moving the followers beyond immediate self-interest through idealised influence

or charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration. It elevates the followers' level of maturity and ideals as well as concerns for achievement, self-actualisation and the well-being of others, the organisation and society (Bass 1999: 11). Idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration are referred to as components of Transformational Leadership, and this study will use them to organise and analyse the leadership styles manifested by women principals. These components are explained below:

Idealised influenced and inspirational motivating (Bass 1999) leader envisions a desirable future and articulates how it can be reached. This charismatic leader is the role model to the followers, sets high standards of performance, determined and confident. Followers want to identify with such leader who is *intellectual stimulating* by assisting followers to become more innovative and creative (Bass 1999). Individual mistakes will not be ridiculed or publicly criticised but new ideas and creative solutions to problems are solicited from followers with the aim addressing the problem and finding solutions (Bass, Avolio, Jung and Berson 2003).

Individualised consideration is displayed when the leader pays attention to the developmental needs of followers, and supports and coaches the development of their followers. The leader delegates assignment as opportunities to grow (Bass 1999). New learning opportunities are created, along with a supportive climate for the individual to grow. A transformational leader is obliged to diagnose the needs, values and abilities of individual followers in order to build trust. Getting to know what motivates an individual will lead to an understanding that human needs and behaviours are different (Simic 1998).

Bass (1999) noted that the majority of women tend to be more transformational than their male counterparts, and are rated as effective. The problem is that they remain under-represented in educational top management; the doors are open for them in the first and middle management. Those women who managed to break through to top management experience patriarchal stereotypes and prejudices (Lumby et al. 2010; Mestry and Schmidt 2012; Morojele et al. 2013).

Considering the components of transformational leadership, women principals lack individualised consideration, that is, they fail to diagnose individual needs of their staff

members. In my opinion, this element may assist them in coping with patriarchy that is mostly displayed by male subordinates. An individualised considerate leader (Bass 1999) will be better prepared to value and adapt to the diversity of the followers. The transformational leader is therefore expected to envisage a culturally competent organisation to inspire confidence in its achievement, through intellectual stimulation, to deal with the increased diversity of their followers (Bass 1999).

I therefore decided to apply the Transformational Leadership Theory by Bass (1999) as it is reflected in my study purpose and method, which I am using to look at female principals. The theory is the significant part of my study, in providing leadership styles that will lead to successful women principals heading successful high schools

2.4. CONCLUSION

School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly, and most powerfully, through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions. Therefore, the key task of leadership is to influence pupil learning and achievement, through staff performance. Proper planning and well-organised school activities enable the principal, including female principals, to successfully lead and monitor the progress of the whole school. School culture plays a major role in effective management of the school, and it is the duty of the principal to ensure that it is shaped in a positive way, that that engages all the stakeholders.

Lack of parental involvement constitutes a serious challenge for most women principals, since the majority are employed in rural, high poverty schools. Parents in those communities do not have time to attend school activities, due to multiple jobs and long hours of work. In addition, these principals face a challenge, where they find themselves leading chaotic and dysfunctional or low performing schools. Another challenge lies with cleaning up the toxic culture of the schools for the betterment of the learner achievement by improving teacher effectiveness. Furthermore, challenges resulting from patriarchal belief were and are still experienced by women principals. They are without mentors to look up to, but women principals get on with their job, and prefer to be democratic, good mentors and coaches (Mestry and Schmidt 2012). Their leadership style is transformational, and is characterised mostly by the ethic of care and they act as teachers, caregivers, nurturers and mother figures.

They also succeed in building the strong school culture that build teacher and learner commitment.

In carefully assessing the management or leadership functions of the principals, and the experience of women principals, I propose to investigate the ways in which women principals build successful schools.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the philosophical assumptions and the design strategies that form the basis for this research study, and the research design and methodology, including data collection and analysis methods. The research design is based on qualitative approach that seeks to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2004:181). Narrative inquiry, as a qualitative approach, presents the methodology I used to study the leadership strategies employed by the woman principal selected for this study.

Narrative inquiry will be employed as a research approach, because it facilitates an understanding of how human beings experience the world. Purposive sampling has been instrumental in identifying the participant for this study. Stories or narratives of principal's experience will be shaped through discussions with the researcher in a collaborative dialogue supported by the school documents. Through the narratives, I will be able to present experiences holistically, in all its complexity and richness. Semi-structured and in-depth interviews were used to collect the stories from the participant. To supplement the interview data, school documents obtained through the participant's permission were analysed. Validation procedures, viz. triangulation, member checking and audit trail, were employed to ensure the trustworthiness of this research.

The main research question underpinning this study is:

How do female principals build successful schools?

the sub-questions are as stated below:

1.What are the challenges that female principals experience?

2.How do they overcome these challenges?

3.What strategies do women principals use to build successful schools?

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH: NARRATIVE INQUIRY

In this study I seek a deeper truth from a person who has the understanding and the ability to interpret the social reality in which she lives. As stated by Ritchie and Lewis (2003) "qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive material practices that makes the world visible. These practices turn the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations, recordings, photographs and memos to the self". Furthermore, qualitative research is directed at providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of research participants, by learning about their social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives and histories (Ritchie and Lewis 2003).

Connelly and Clandinin observe that "narrative focuses on experience and the qualities of life and education; it is therefore situated in a matrix of qualitative research" (1990:3). Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (2013:01) have meanwhile noted that:

> "unlike many qualitative frameworks, narrative research has no obvious starting or finishing point. Its definition is in dispute since there are no self-evident categories on which to focus. It does not tell whether to look for stories in recorded everyday speech, in interviews, diaries or newspaper articles. Therefore narrative research offers no rules about suitable material or mode of investigations or the best level at which to study stories"

A narrative may be oral or written, and may be elicited or heard during fieldwork, in an interview, or naturally occurring during a conversation. It is a way of understanding one's own and others actions, of organising events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events overtime. With a narrative, I will communicate the narrator's point of view, including why the narratives are worth telling in the first place. Thus, in addition to describing what happened, narrative also expresses emotions, thoughts and interpretations.

Fieldman, Skoldberg, Brown and Hurner (2004) point out the difference between the narrative and the story. These authors agree that the narrative and the story are used

interchangeably, since they often share many characteristics, such as chronological order and thematic arrangement of events. In fact, a story is merely a subset of narratives. To further define a story in details, Fieldman et al. (2004) have cited Ricoeur (1983:150) as summarised by Galie (1964):

> A story is a sequence of actions and experiences done or undergone by a certain number of people, whether real or imaginary. These people are presented either in situations that change or as reacting to such change. In turn, these changes reveal hidden aspects of the situation and the people involved, and engender a new predicament which call for thought, action or both. This response to the new situation leads the story toward its conclusion.

Clandinin and Caine (2008) argue that the good thing about narrative inquiry is that the narratives allow the researcher to present the complexity and the richness of experience in a holistic manner. Moreover, the researcher has the advantage of understanding those experiences because the narrative does not look at the outcomes only, but considers the impact of the experience itself. Through the narrative, deeply hidden information and assumptions are revealed. Narrative is thus instrumental in illuminating the temporal notion of experience with the recognition that the understanding of people and events change over time.

The limitations of narrative inquiry is that it involves working with people's consciously told stories, recognising that these stories rest on deeper stories, of which people are often unaware. Another challenging issue with this form of inquiry is that participants often construct stories that support their interpretations of themselves. These exclude experiences and events that undermine the identities they currently claim (Bell 2002). Clandinin and Caine (2008) meanwhile also caution that ambiguities, difficulties and uncertainties remain a challenge for the narrative inquirer throughout the process.

The journey toward school leadership starts from a normal teaching position, and one cannot be a principal without an extensive teaching experience of at least five years. The principal included in this study has experienced the world of education as a teacher for a number of years prior to her appointment to school leadership, where it is thus likely that she has a rich

story to share about her experience. It is for this reason that narrative inquiry as a research design emerged, suitable for this study, because the study of narrative is the study of the way in which humans experience the world. The reason for a story is that acoording to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), people by nature lead storied lives, and tell stories of those lives. I have collected the narratives of the school management experiences from the principal, and wrote her stories of experience.

3.3 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

In this section, I delve further into the study's research design, starting from the selection of the participant and her background information.

3.3.1 Selection the Participant

Selection of the participant was based on purposive sampling, and the sample comprised of one female principal of a high school.

The participant for this study, the female principal, served as a relevant source of rich and reliable data, due to her management position and leadership experience.

Because I wanted a participant that would best serve the study purpose, the selection was based on the following criteria:

1. the participant needed to be a woman;
2. she must have at least three years' experience as a school principal;
3. the school should be a secondary school; and
4. her school must prove to be effective, where the major indicator of school effectiveness is a significant (more than 15%) improvement of Matric results.

Selection of the participant was not a simple task as I anticipated. Initially, I relied on the 2013 master list of ordinary secondary schools and National Teachers Awards booklet available on Department of Basic Education website. The awards booklet assisted in finding a female principal who had exhibited excellence in secondary school leadership, taken as a symbol of effective and successful leadership. Through the awards booklet I found a principal of a school situated in Gauteng Province, Ekurhuleni North district which is

amongst the best performing high schools in the district. There has been a consistent improvement in the results at the school since the appointment of this principal in 2009.

I managed to set an appointment to meet her and discuss the purpose of the study, but logistics proved difficult when finding a suitable date to meet for interviews, due to other commitments as well as long distance in needed to travel each time to meet with her. As it turned out we simply were not able to meet and I had to begin a serach for another participant. The problem I experienced proved the point made by Cohen et al. (2007: 178), that one cannot pre-emptively fix the research participant. They suggest that at some stages, sampling may have to continue through the data collection, analysis and reporting. This means that the sample can be decided, amended, added to, increased and extended as the research progresses.

I then decided to use another strategy to find a more accessible participant. I started by asking some of the principals that I know to help me in finding any woman principal of high schools who may have won an award. As a result, I found participants who were located across other provinces and districts. Assembling a list, I began attempts at telephonic contact. This too did not prove successful as I was not able to reach them them by simply calling. Eventually, I took a risk and went to the home of one of the participants. And she welcomed me warmly without any hesitation. This experienced proved that a face to face approach may indeed be more successful in seeking research participants. As it turned out, Debra's profile provided an information rich case and she was selected as the only participant in this study. Patton (1990) suggests it is important to select information-rich cases for an in-depth study. Since purposeful sampling is more complex and has different strategies to enable one to select an information-rich case with a certain purpose, intensity sampling appeared to be the best fit for selecting this sample (Patton 1990). Since the study focuses on the strategies for a successful school led by the selected principal, this sampling method by Patton (1990) consists of an information-rich case that manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely.

My research sample for a narrative inquiry consist of one participant because Connelly and Caine (1990) agree that focus of this inquiry is more on the individual psychology over a period of time. Moreover, narrative inquiry compels a researcher in building a trustworthy relationship with the participant that will allow for self insertion in the participant's story (Connelly and Caine 1990). Choosing one participant provided enough opportunity to pay attention, to be personally attached to her and to give her a voice.

3.3.2 Background information of the Participant

The principal has 27 years teaching experience, and is amongst the hard working female school leaders in the District in which the school is situated in South Africa. Due to her dedication and hard work, this woman principal won awards in two categories in the year 2014. The categories were Best Improved School and Best Performing School in the circuit. She is in a possession of an Honours degree in Education Management which, according to her, boosted her confident in managing a school. Her career started in 1987 as a Commerce teacher in one of the high schools in Limpopo Province, where she worked for only one year. The following year, she decided to move to another high school where she continued teaching commercial subjects for ten years. By then, qualified educators were scarce and she was amongst the first group of teachers with a Secondary Teacher's Diploma (STD) and because of her knowledge in the commercial subjects of Accounting and Economics, she was appointed an HOD for Commerce within three years, in 1990.

After ten years as an HOD, she was then offered the position of the principal in one of the senior phase schools nearby. Her leadership roles extended beyond this as well, as an active and committed member of the Teachers' Union, she was also voted as a gender convenor, an executive member of teachers' Teachers' Union. After three years of being a gender convenor, she was further voted as the president of the branch in the same union. Since she was originally a high school teacher, she felt that the managing a Senior Phase School was not challenging enough for her, after which considered applying for a post in a high school.

With the interest and passion of managing a high school, she didn't start by applying for a principal post, but rather, decided to apply for both the deputy principal and principal posts, in order to acclimatise herself to secondary school. She was appointed to be the principal in this school, where she is presently serving, in 2011. On her appointment, the school was underperforming or dysfunctional, as judged by the matriculation (Grade 12) results. Moreover, the matric results were at 33% and the following year in 2012, the results dropped to 20%, while the community and the Department expected improvement. She recounted that it was a very difficult time in her leadership. She did not lose hope but continued to work hard until they managed to improve the results up to 80% in 2013 and 74% in 2014. She decided to remain at the school until retirement, and is looking forward to make a memorable mark in the school's broader community.

3.4 METHODOLOGY

The trustworthiness of data relied on triangulation of data collection methods, therefore document analysis was also used as a supplementary method for the interviews.

3.4.1 Data collection methods

Semi-structured and open-ended or narrative interviews are used to generate the data for this study. Data for this study was collected through audio recorded interviews supported by the analysis of school documents obtained through the permission of the principal. The semi-structured interviews were guided by an interview protocol that I prepared beforehand. The questions from the protocol or interview schedule were not followed, as they are merely used as a guide due to the flexibility of qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2007).

For the purpose of this research, a definition of a successful school is given in the interview protocol as stated below:

The interview questions were developed using Kirk and Jones' (2004) definition of a successful school (see Chapter1) . In addition, the study is guided by Transformational Leadership Theory, and the four components of this theory were also considered in formulating the interview questions. (See Appendix 5 for interview protocol)

The following questions formed the basis and provided guidance for all the interviews conducted. The purpose of this interview schedule is to understand Debra's experiences in managing a high school and to explore management strategies she used to build a successful school.

This interviews were guided by the following two sets of questions:
The following questions are based mainly on seven correlates of a successful school. They provide a general insight about the leadership experience of the principal interviewed.

1. Tell me about your management experiences from the first day as the principal of this school.
2. In your opinion, what is your role as a school leader?
3. Tell me about the development of your school's vision or goals.
4. How did you build consensus around your school's vision and goals?

5. What are the most imaginative things that you have done in your present position?
6. What kind of problems did you encounter since you were appointed? Did you manage to solve them? Describe how you solved them.
7. In your position as the principal, what did you learn? How did you apply this learning?
8. How do you stay current in your area of expertise, that is, management of your school?

This second set of questions are aligned with the four components of Transformational Leadership Theory, that is, idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration.

9. How do you grow professionally in your current position? How is your growth supported by those around you?
10. How do you foster the development of and maintenance of a professional, collaborative school culture?
11. How do you relate to the staff, considering their diverse personalities?
12. How do you promote the individual professional growth of your staff members?
13. What type of opportunities or activities do you provide for your staff in your efforts to promote their intellectual stimulation?
14. Do you model desired professional practices for your staff? If so, how? Will you provide examples?
15. How do you encourage the development of leadership across the school?
16. How do you ensure that the school climate is hospitable to teaching and learning?
17. Is there anything you would like to share about your life experiences that have contributed to your success as the high school leader?

The documents collected for analysis were as follows:

- School Improvement Plan
- Learner Performance Improvement Plan
- Assessment Policy
- Sports, Arts and Culture Policy
- School Safety Policy
- SGB and Parents Meetings Minutes

- Staff Meeting Minutes

3.4.1.1 Interviews

According to Van Gog and Paas (2008), interviews represent a classic qualitative research method that is directly interactive. Interviews may be structured or unstructured, and may be conducted in groups, or individually. In this study, I have relied on semi-structured and open-ended interview questions (see appendix 5) as the direction to a narrative interview with the single respondent or participant, where the interviewee is given enough freedom to narrate in her own spontaneous language instead of question-answer format (Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000).

Narrative interviews are conducted in four phases, as outlined by Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000). The phases are initiation, main narration, questioning phase and concluding talk, respectively. During the initiation phase, I explained the research topic and the purpose, where I also asked for the permission to record the interview. This was a crucial phase where I had to ensure that the participant gains interest in the topic in order to acquire a rich and a detailed narration. Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) note the importance of ensuring that the initial topic is practical, of personal and of social significance. I managed to achieve the objectives of this initial phase, because the participant is a school principal and the topic concerned successful management of school, so it was of relevance to her and her practice as a principal.

The cornerstone for conducting good interviews is to be sure one listens to respondents and records what they say, rather than to record the researcher's perceptions or interpretations. To ensure that I carefully listened to my respondent, with her permission, our conversations were recorded with a voice recorder. She was happy to use the recorder as she felt that it allowed her more time to express herself. This was during the narration phase where I tried by all means not to interrupt respondent. I only communicated with her using non-verbal ways as a way of encouragement (Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000). Moreover, the recorder was also useful to maintain the integrity of the raw data and to make liberal use of respondent's own words, including quotes. In the case of maintaining the integrity of the raw data, I transcribed the interview verbatim from the voice recorder immediately after the interview.

According to Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000), the third phase of narrative interviewing is also very significant because it allows a researcher more opportunity to probe for more clarity. Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) further warn the researcher to avoid opinion and attitude questios or arguing. Why questions should be avoided at all cost, only the what happened? And then? questions are acceptable. Finally, on the concluding talk phase I stopped the recorder, thank my respondent for her time and start to ask the why questions (Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000). This was done immediatetly after the interview so that I manage to get more clarity of some issues discussed during the narration phase.

As an ethical requirement and following the four phases of interviewing, I successfully negotiated entry from the Department of Education and from my participant (see appendix 1). However, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) caution that successful negotiation and application of ethical principles do not guarantee a successful study, because collaborative study calls for a relationship. Cohen et al. (2007) further emphasise that the interviewer is obliged to show respect in order to establish and maintain a good rapport with the interviewee. It was gratifying for me that by the end of this study I found that Debra and I had established good mutual respect and were able to speak with each other comfortably.

I conducted formal interviews with Debra and transcribed each. (See Appendix 6 for sample of transcribed interview). As time went by, I could see that Debra had developed trust in me, and I decided to use phone calls to follow up on our conversations. This was a convenient method for me to get in touch with her, whenever I needed clarity is needed on some issues arising from the transcripts. Luckily, Debra was willing to speak on the phone. I did not use the telephone conversation as a replacement for face-to-face conversation, but considering the busy schedule of the principal as it was not always easy for us to meet (Manther, Fox and Hunn 1998). Clandinin and Huber (2000) emphasise the ongoing negotiation with participants, since this allows the narrative inquirer to create research texts that both critically and deeply represent narrative inquirer and participant experiences. These negotiations also maintain the integrity of the inquirer and participant, as well as their relationship into the future. I therefore arranged follow up meetings with Debra for further discussions and clarity, as part of the ongoing narrative record. Each of our interviews or conversations lasted for more than one hour and forty-five minutes.

The interviews were conducted mainly in English, but because the participant is originally a Sepedi speaker and knows a bit of isiZulu, all the three languages were incorporated in our discussions. The interchange of languages made our relationship easy, since no one of us struggled to understand any of those languages, and as advised by Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000), served to avoid the imposition of any languages not known by the participant. With the aim of creating a more inviting atmosphere, an interview was conducted in a place preferred by the participant, and she, in most cases, preferred our conversation to be held at her home after school hours. This assisted her in recalling her experiences in both time and space, and is where she felt most comfortable.

Boyce (2006) reveals the fact that interviews allow the researcher to obtain more detailed information, because they provide a relaxed atmosphere for the participant. Good as they are, interviews have their shortcomings, as they are prone to bias. The person interviewed might want to impress the interviewer by giving biased responses to prove that a given programme is working, or the school administartion is running smoothly. To minimise bias, I thought it would be better for the respondent not to be given interview questions beforehand. Another reason for not preparing her is that I, as Boyce (2006) has suggested, wanted a real and autonomous story about her school leadership experience.

Another challenge with interviews is that the generalisation about their results is not possible, due to the small number of the sample that is mostly limited to purposive sampling. The same applies to my study, where it centres on the story of only one partipant, where it stands to reason that what is experienced by a single principal cannot be generalised to all principals.

3.4.1.2 Document Analysis

As defined by Bowen (2009) document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating documents. Thus, data needs to be examined and interpreted in order to gain understanding and develop empirical meaning. Document analysis was of assistance in revealing the picture of the school's overall performance and procedures as documents are, according to Cohen et al. (2007), useful in clarifying the research phenomenon under study. They further regard documents as useful in longitudinal analysis, as it may show how situations have evolved over time (Cohen et al., 2007). Documents like comparative analysis of results over the past years to date, as well as the meetings and attendance registers for

educators and learners were studied. General school policy, departmental policies and other committee's policies were also analysed (Bowen 2009; Cohen et al. 2007).

Knowledge of the history and context surrounding a specific setting comes in part from reviewing documents. I therefore supplemented interviews by gathering and analysing documents produced in the course of everyday events, for example, School Improvement Plan, minutes of SGB and Staff meetings or constructed specifically for the research at hand. The good thing about documents is that they enabled me to access the language and words of the participant, and they represent thoughtful data because necessary attention have been given when compiling them (Cresswell 2009). Documents represent written evidence, and they saved me the time and expense of transcription, since my duty was to read the contents and compare with the interview data.

As with interviews, documents are not always without flaws, because people are different, not all equally articulate and perceptive (Cresswell 2009). The way people express themselves during the interviews may not be evident in the documents they compiled, therefore interview data may not correspond exactly with the data from the documents. Cohen et al. (2007) also agree that the documents may lack presentation, lack objectivity, selective and be of unknown validity. They are also concerned about the deliberate deception in documents, which jeopardises their validity.

Documents that are very personal, such as, letters and diaries, which may show personal details and feelings, were avoided in order to respect the participant's confidentiality. Avoidance of such document ensured that the privacy and confidentiality of the participant was upheld.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The first step in data analysis, especially interview data, is the transcription and through reading of the data while listening to the recordings. I started with the data analysis immediately after conducting the first interview, so as to prevent data overload, but most importantly, to ensure that the data are continually analysed throughout the study. "Early and ongoing analysis is regarded as the major hallmark of conducting qualitative research that takes place from conceptualisation through the entire data collection phase. The processes of analysis and writing are together called analysis and interpretation" (Van Gog and Paas 2008:774).

Qualitative data consist of words, not numbers, while analysis and interpretation are the means of bringing order and understanding. Text or narrative data comes in many forms and from a variety of sources. The data might include brief responses to open-ended questions, the transcripts from interviews or focus group, notes from a log or diary, field notes, or the text of a published report. The data may come from a few individuals, or a single case. The data for this research study comes from the interview transcripts that I generated from interviews conducted with one participant. Another part of the data is from the school documents that I collected and analysed.

Irrespective of the researchers' proficiencies in interpreting everyday stories, Fieldman et al. (2004) warn that the researchers should have rigorous methods of analysis, considering the very nature of stories. In analysing the data from interviews and documents, responses were thoroughly read and patterns or themes among the data were noted. I then categorised the data according to the participant responses to preserve their coherence and integrity. Analysis by the research question was also done so as to ensure that all the relevant data for the exact issue of concern to the researcher is drawn together. This also helped in preserving the coherence of the material. All the relevant data from interviews and document for analysis were collected in order to provide a collective answer to a research question.

In summarising the five steps suggested by Piercy (1998) the starting point in any qualitative analysis of interview data is to carefully read the transcripts, while making notations on the margins. Although I used a computer software programme as part of my analytic strategy, I could not continue without reading printed copies on interview transcripts before entering them into the software's database. I created wide margins for easy note making and decided to break the long respondent soliloquies into individual paragraphs so as to reflect the transitions from one idea to another. In the second step, the notations made on the document margins are examined, memos written, and pattern codes developed. In addition to the memos, basic themes are developed and reports of all data are printed and attached to specific codes. Finally, all themes from all interviews are grouped in order delineate predominant themes which form basis for writing up the data.

In spite of all the procedures and the methods I used, as mentioned above, the linear, hierarchical approach and steps as suggested by Cresswell (2009) served as a guide, and

made it simple for me to analyse the data. This approach, as illustrated in Figure 1, allows for the data analysis that builds up from the bottom (from the raw data, or the interview transcripts and documents) to the top (interpreting the meaning of themes).
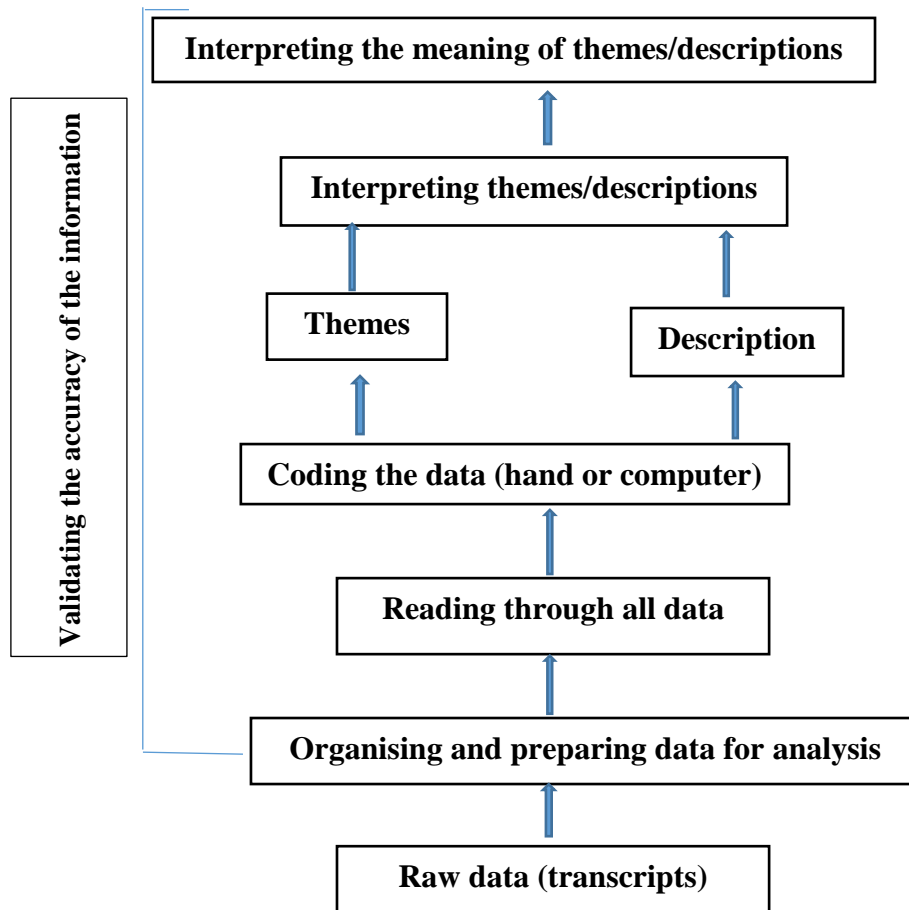
Figure 1: Linear hierarchical approach

I also liked the flexibility of this approach, irrespective of the interrelatedness, which does not restrict one to follow the exact order of the steps or stages. Piercy (1998) also came up with steps of analysing data as summarised above, that are closely related to those of Cresswell (2009), where both insist that the researcher should read and re-read the interview transcripts as the first step of data analysis, accompanied by the use of computer software.

As suggested by Creswell (2009), in the first step of analysing data, I transcribed the interviews data from the voice recorder, arranged them according to the dates, for example, interview transcript one, two etc (see appendix 6). The school documents that I collected were then also arranged according to their names. Importantly, I did not wait for the data to pile up, but started with transcription immediately after the first interview. Secondly, I

wanted to obtain the general sense of the information in order to reflect on its overall meaning, such as the general ideas of the participant responses. That is when I decided to record the general thoughts by writing notes on the margins of each transcript. In this way, I summarised each narrative by removing all the crucial elements of the story.

In the third step detailed analysis began, where I assigned codes to the segments of texts to assist in getting the meaning of the information. The computer software, ATLAS.ti, has been of great assistance to me in assigning the codes, predetermined as well as in-vivo, but I started part of my coding, as per transcript, before using computer software. After that, I then entered all the transcripts into the data management programme, and coded each paragraph into themes and sub-themes, using the participant's own language, wherever possible. This programme enabled me to see all aspects of data and analysis on the screen and to visually map out the relationships between different parts of data or transcripts. Theoretical ideas helped to form links between the parts of the data and jump back and forth to stimulate ideas and recognising patterns.

The fourth step involves coding to generate a description of setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis. I have generated some codes for this description and used them to further generate a number of themes or categories that I used for the story. These themes are used to create major headings in the story and the finding of my study. They also display multiple perspectives from the participants, and are supported by the quotations. Step five involves a discussion of events in a chronological way and the detailed discussion of themes, together with the sub-themes. Finally, in step six, the data is interpreted, and the findings and the information from the literature are compared.

During this process, I always went back to listening to the tape several times and recorded my impressions of what was going on for the participant, for me, and between us, as the narrative unfolded. I then recorded my thoughts and insights about the data into a memo file attached to the participant's narrative file and coded this insights. I tried to conduct this process with humility. The writing up process became intertwined with the analytic process (Hunter 2009).

The process involved summarising each story from my participant in a few pages, coding the data into themes and sub-themes using participant's own language. As noted by Boyce

and Neale (2006), I provided quotations from the respondent throughout the story to add credibility to the information. I was very careful to use a pseudonym, since confidentiality was promised.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Being a narrative inquirer, I had to ensure that I comply or even move beyond the legal and procedural aspects of ethics held by the institutional research boards by ensuring that there is no harm to the participants. Researchers are obliged to learn an attitude of empathetic listening, by not being judgemental, and by suspending their misbeliefs as they attend to particular stories (Clandinin and Huber 2000). In addition to what is documented about avoiding harm to the participant, honouring our appointments is an important ethical aspect, because arriving late may inconvenience the participant. For this reason, I made it a point that I arrive on time. On the issue of phone calls, I also asked for her permission and a convenient time for calling. Although she was not so strict about time, as an ethical researcher I decided not to make calls to her during working hours, or very late at night.

Ethical consideration are central to narrative inquiry, because they permeate narrative inquiries from start to finish; at the outset, as ends-in-view are imagined; as inquirer-participant relationships unfold, and as participants are represented in research texts (Clandinin, Pushor and Orr 2007). "Interviews and the data collection instrument for this study have an ethical dimension, which concerns interpersonal interaction and produces information about the human condition. The main ethical issues pertaining to interviews were informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and their respective consequences" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007: 382).

3.6.1 Getting access to the Participant

As a qualitative researcher interested in studying the management strategies of the principal, I needed to negotiate a strong relationship with her. I had to negotiate entry to the school as the initial step towards building a relationship (Kitchen 2006). The negotiation began with obtaining permission from the Department of Education and from the principal to be engaged. The letter inviting the Principal to participate in the study was sent to her after the approval from the Department (see appendix 3). The letter outlined the research topic and purpose, and informs the participant of her right to participate or withdraw from the study in

case of any discomfort. To ensure that she understands the meaning of the consent letter, I read and explained the letter to her.

Before commencing with data collection, institutional approval from the Research Ethics Committee is required. A letter requesting a permission to conduct research in a school was sent to District Office, and permission was granted within a week. Finally, another letter to the principal or senior official head of the research site was sent. Since the principal of the school was the only participant, this letter was inviting her to participate in this study.

3.6.2 Voluntary participation

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) say that research subjects or participants have the right to be informed about the nature and the consequences of the research in which they are involved. This is in line with the social science's commitment to individual autonomy. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) also compel the inquirer to ensure that participants agree voluntarily to participate without physical or psychological coercion, are informed of the duration, methods, possible risks and the purpose of the study.

Before commencing with the data collection, permission granted by the respective Department of Education to allow me to conduct research, was produced for the participant. The letter and permission served as proof that the permission could not have been granted if any unethical practices were involved. I then explained what the forms from the Department of Education allow and do not allow during research. The meaning of the consent letters was thoroughly explained to the participant.

In order to be consistent with the ethical procedures of voluntary participation, the principal of the school was given an informed consent letter addressed to her (see appendix 4). The right to withdraw from the study is stated in the informed consent letter. In order to further explain the contents I visited the participant after making an appointment with her. The informed consent clearly stated that she is free to withdraw from the research should she feel uncomfortable to continue being part of the interview and the production of school documents. It also made it clear that she will be audio taped during our conversation and that will be done only by her permission. The purpose and the aims of the research were clearly indicated in the informed consent letter.

3.6.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Confidentiality, as further explained by Cohen et al. (2007:65) is another issue in interviews that need to be considered. Participant's right to privacy can be protected through the promise of confidentiality.

Prior to the start of our interviews, I assured Debra that her name or the name of the school will not appear in my dissertation or any other publication and that no information disclosed will be used against her, now or in the future. I used a pseudonym of Debra for the participant and the school. Before the use of pseudonym, in my transcripts and theses, I firstly consulted Debra to find out if she was comfortable with the name. The voice recorded data will also not be used in any presentation of any sort that may reveal the voice of the participant.
The names of individuals who worked with Debra are not mentioned. Where necessary the position and authority of such individuals is described. In such instances I am careful to not provide information that may inadvertenly reveal the identity of the person.

3.6.4 Deception and Privacy

No deception was used in this research. I made it clear to my participant that the research study is for educational purposes only, and that no monetary benefits should be expected from me or from the university. Kimmel, Smith and Klein (2010) made me realise that it is morally wrong to mislead research participant, because deception violates the individual's basic right to informed consent undermines the trust inherent in the implicit contractual relationship between the researcher and the participant and is inconsistent with the moral duty to be truthful. Deceptive procedures could harm research participant by lowering their self-esteem and impairing their relationship with others or by serving as a model for deceptive behaviour in participant subsequent action.

3.7 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007: 149), in qualitative research, reliability or dependability can be regarded as a fit between what the researcher records as data, and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched. Dependability involves member checking or respondent validation, debriefing by peers, triangulation, negative case analysis and audit trails. To ensure validity and reliability of the data, I will apply member checking, audit trail and triangulation.

3.7.1 Triangulation

Cohen et al (2007:141) put it that "triangulation may be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of human behaviour", noting that it is a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity in qualitative research. I therefore conducted interviews and document analysis to receive greater assurance and avoid bias. This has also assisted in explaining more fully the richness and complexity of human behaviour or situation being studied (Cohen et al. 2007).

3.7.2 Member checking

As explained by Harper and Cole (2012), member checking is primarily used in qualitative inquiry methodology, and is defined as a quality control process, by which a researcher seeks to improve the accuracy, credibility and validity of what has been recorded during a research interview. It is also an ethical to allow the participant to have a say in the recording and the interpretation derived from it (Loh 2013).

According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 147), this is the process of asking the research participants to tell me whether I have accurately described their experiences. Member checking is also known as participant verification, informant feedback, respondent validation, applicability, external validity and fittingness (Harper and Cole 2012). However, Loh (2013) says member checking is not member validation, but a follow-up data collection and an extension of researcher's analysis. Therefore it is not a necessity for the researcher to honour all the criticisms, but is bound to weight their meaningfulness.

After every interview, I sent transcripts of the interviews for validation before they are used. The participant was given enough time to make amendments to the transcripts. To save time, and with an understanding that my participant might have a lot of administration work, I sometimes used to take the transcript for the previous interview and read it to her, and make corrections together before engaging in the next interview. After the completion of the whole research project, as advised by Clandinin, Pushor and Orr (2007), I took back the research report to the respondent or participant as a way of renegotiating them and to ensure that her voice and stories are represented in resonant ways. In these negotiations, I have received responses that were sometimes affirming and sometimes disrupting or discouraging.

This allowed for the prolonged interaction time with the participant, since our conversation was extended and the text was revisited, rethought and rewritten when necessary (Clandinin, Pushor and Orr 2007). The participant had a fair chance to either agree or disagree that the summaries of the data reflect her views, feelings and experiences. I then relied on my participant to confirm the accuracy and completeness of the data summary and I therefore declared the data to be credible (Harper and Cole 2012).

3.7.3 Audit trail

In my study, I have recorded a description of all the stages of the research process from the research problem to the analysis of the data. Cohen et al. have noted that "audit trails enable the researcher to address the issue of conformability of results, in terms of process and product" (2007: 149). In my audit trail, I documented the course of development of the completed analysis. In developing the audit trail, I the researcher, have provided an account of all the research decisions and activities throughout the study. This has also assisted me in examining the research process and the product of inquiry to determine the findings' trustworthiness.

In order to develop a detailed audit trail, I maintained a log of all the research activities, and developed ways to maintain the research journal and document all data collection and analysis procedures throughout the study.

The following categories were collected to inform the audit process:

- Raw data which was tape recorded (raw data or interview transcripts and the school documents such including policies and minutes of meetings)
- Data reduction and analysis notes
- Data reconstruction and synthesis products
- Process notes
- Materials related to intentions and dispositions
- Preliminary development information

3.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to the story of a single woman principal of one high school in Nkangala District, which is situated in a rural area in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. Therefore the results of this study apply only to the person interviewed.

3.9 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study will add to the body of literature on female leadership and management of high schools, and will also be relevant to other women principals, as well as those who seek to take on the school leadership.

3.10 CONCLUSION

Narrative inquiry, as one of the qualitative research designs, provided a way toward the success of this study. Human beings live a storied life, collecting the narratives of the principal allowed me for the in-depth study of her school leadership and management experiences. As a way of collecting the narratives, semi-structured and in-depth interviews were conducted and supplemented by the analysis of school documents. Before beginning with the study, ethical principles had to be followed to the letter. Gaining access to the participant was the first step that involves the negotiation of strong relationship with the participant, but the primary procedure is to get permission from the Department of Education (District Offices). These ethical principles were fulfilled through the use of consent letters sent to both the gatekeepers and the participant. The consent letters explain the purpose of the study and specified that the rights of the participant and the promise of confidentiality are the documents that are needed in order to get access.

The data was then analysed by transcribing the recorded interviews, read and re-reading the transcripts, using the computer software for the generating of codes and themes as per guidance by the steps provided Cresswell (2007) and Piercy (2008). The whole process, including data collection and analysis contributed to the write of the story in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: DEBRA'S STORY

The Queen of the Jungle: Caring Against All Odds

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This story was collected as a number of stories collected through conversations with Debra. I did not only relied on the stories that was on hand but made follow-ups whenever needed. In addition, all the stories, including the follw-ups, were all transcribed and printed to make it simple for me to make notes on the margins. Moreover the analysis methods discussed in Chapter 3 were of great assistance in bringing all the different stories together into one rich story.

I will firstly describe Debra's personality, her academic achievements, and career advancement. The socio-cultural context of the school and the key challenges that Debra faced in this school are also discussed. I then go on to offer insight into Debra as an activist leader, and discuss how Debra managed to systematically turn a dysfunctional rural school into a highly functional one. In addition, she also managed to bring the community, in particular, parents, into the school. Her ethics of care enabled her to win the trust of teachers. Finally, I show that despite the extreme conditions of poverty and apathy in the school, teaching and learning is possible if there is a committed school leader like Debra.

This chapter presents a story of a courageous and caring woman principal of Thembisile High School in South Africa[3]. In 2011, Debra took control over the school, providing the leadership that the children longed for many years.

All public schools in South Africa are classified into one of the five quintiles. The quintiles were determined by analysing socio-economic indicators of the communities surrounding the school. In 2007, schools in Quintiles One and Two were declared no-fee schools. This was extended to Quintile 3 schools in 2010 (Diltiens & Meny-Gilbert, 2012). Thembisile High School is a public, deep rural school that is classified under Quintile One, and a no fee school, due to the socio-economic status of the community. On her appointment to Thembisile High School, Debra was entered a very difficult situation. She faced rejection from the staff and community, lacking their support. The school was totally dysfunctional,

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[3] Not the real name of the school.

lack of teacher discipline, low self-esteem, low work motivation and low learner expectations prevailed, contributing to the low academic performance of learners.

Debra did not despair, but continue to take care of everyone in the school, despite all the difficulties. Her transforming ability and her attributes of care gave her the strength to gradually build healthy relationship with the staff and parents. After two years of her leadership, the academic performance of the school improved, and in the year 2014, she won two awards for improved performance for a performing school. The socio-economic status of the school community has never been a threat for Debra, where instead, she relied on her previous school management and political leadership experiences. She also drew her strength from her former male principal, but was most highly motivated by her involvement in School Governance Circuit Team, mentored by the woman Circuit Manager, and her knowledge of policies and regulations of the Department of Education. Debra drew upon some policies relevant to her school for the proper functioning of the school.

Debra is truly an inspirational and a motivating leader, who the staff, students and I look up to with respect. She is always open, approachable and willing to share information when needed, and I am convinced that the staff members are happy to work with her. She is a role model for other principals and teachers, who aspire into the school leadership and management. She is caring and nurturing, and shows compassion, understanding and respect when dealing with teachers as well as learners. She communicates with everyone within the school community, always ensuring that parents are fully involved in the education of their children.

4.1.1 Who is Debra?

Debra is a principal in one of the South African High Schools in Mpumalanga Province. She is married, a mother of four children and a grandmother to one boy. As a mother and a member of a community, she takes part in most community events and activities such as wedding celebrations and funerals. In my assessment, Debra seems to succeed in balancing both identities, of a mother and as the principal and leader, because manages to perform duties related to both these roles. These roles are governed by strict rules, such as the precise time for locking the gates so that every child knows the latest time to be inside the yard. Since Debra manages such detailed aspects of school life collaborating with her colleagues,

as well as alongside her home duties, where she collaborates with her husband and children.

She is in her early fifties still looking young and energetic, in good physical shape, and never forgets to put on her makeup. Debra is a very talkative, kind and a welcoming person who is always ready to share information and give advice. To add to that, she likes dancing and singing. On our second meeting, she invited me to her daughter's wedding, which I attended. That is when I saw her dancing and singing with her friends and family. Because of her caring attitude, she managed to create an opportunity to meet and show appreciation to every guest attending the ceremony. Her caring and welcoming attitude made me feel comfortable in her home, and I noticed that all guests were happy and comfortable, too.

I knew Debra as an activist, because she was the Branch Executive Committee Chairperson of the teachers union, SADTU. Before she was voted in as a Chairperson of the Branch, she was a Gender Convenor of the same Committee mentioned above. Bascia and Osmond (2013) have stated that SADTU is not solely concerned with teacher collective bargaining and striking, but responsible for establishing and ensuring basic educational infrastructure. Bascia and Osmond (2013) further highlighted that as per NEPA requirements of 1996, the government is required to consult with the teacher unions and other education stakeholders before any educational legislation is passed. Therefore, Teachers Unions like SADTU are working closely with government and thus contributing to policy development, including curriculum policy (Bascia and Osmond 2013). As a SADTU chairperson, Debra participated in policy development and curriculum issues, and had the advantage of getting first-hand information on policy changes. With her knowledge of policy and curriculum, she was able to inspire the team members, leading by example and stand by them in any task that they might require.

It was on Sunday afternoon when I visited her for the first time to ask her to participate in my research study. I found her daughter, who told me that she was still at church, and gave me her mother's cell-phone number to call around 16:00. I did the same and fortunately managed to come and talk to her, explained the topic, purposes of the study and her rights as the participant before giving her a written consent letter. To my surprise, she did not hesitate, but agreed, seeming clear on what the study required, and we then agreed on the date for the first interview. She even mentioned that it was thoughtful of me to think about involving a local person in my study, who are usually overlooked, which proved to be the case, since I

had initially relied on the Teaching Award booklet and the internet in an unsuccessful search for a participant. I first looked for a high profile person, but later realised that valuable experiential insight could be gathered from a person like Debra, who is otherwise unknown, but doing credible work.

When I visited her for our first interview, she was most kind, and made me felt comfortable. It was very hot and she insisted that I park my car inside one of her garages, since her husband was not around, and there was a space for one car. She wanted my car to be protected from heat, and I found it as an unusual offer from her because we did not know each other well. Her actions towards people are always generous and caring. She has a way of making other people feel welcome in her home. On that day, she had come from the school to issue the Grade 12 results, and her learners performed very well. She greeted me with a smile and said:

You know I am going to pop champagne with my learners who got 2 distinctions, in Life Sciences and Agriculture. He [one of them] *also got 76% in Mathematics and Physical Sciences. I am so happy because my learners will go to the University. There are other two boys who worked very well, even if they did not obtain Bachelors, but got 70s in all subjects.* [sic]

Our learners did not perform well, and I was therefore was lamenting. However, it was also a good thing for her to be happy, because it allowed us enough time to talk. On my second visit, it was still very hot and I decided to use a taxi, since I was going to walk only a few metres from the taxi to her house. I had nothing to protect myself from the sun and she was not happy at all, and advised me to always protect myself, even when I am inside the car. That is the other thing I liked about her, she is caring and does not hesitate to voice her opinion. Moreover, she was busy preparing for her second daughter's wedding, and I felt like I was disturbing her, but she gave me all the attention I needed, and we even spent more time than I expected.

It was unbelievable to me that she allowed me more time, irrespective of what she was doing. In my thinking, she was driven by the spirit of *ubuntu.* According to Mbiti (1981) in Brubarker (2013), *ubuntu* refers to the philosophy that 'a person is a person through other people', or 'I am, because we are and since we are therefore I am'. Debra expressed and

extended humanness in a compassionate, dignified and respectful manner. She expressed her generosity out of concern and that her willingness to sacrifice her own self-interests to help me. Debra's behavioural expression of *ubuntu* extends to her school with the staff, learners and the parents. Debra makes an effort to be connected to the family of the learners so that they get necessary support from the school, and in turn, the school also receives the support from the parents for effective teaching and learning. All this is done with an understanding and belief that it, literally, 'takes a village to raise a child'. Teachers in her school are confident, and have high expectations for the learners, because learners are highly valued in this school, their ideas are respected, and they understand and share in the vision and mission of the school.

From our conversations, it was easy to deduce Debra's style of leadership. She reminded me of Marie Curie, who declared, *"now is the time to understand more so that we may fear less"* (Famous Scientist 2014) Marie Curie won two Nobel Peace prizes in 1903 and in 1911, despite battling sexism throughout her entire career. Other women kept on asking her how she managed to balance her family life with her scientific career, and she admitted that it was not easy. Through her determination and courage, her research contributed to the development of x-rays in surgery. Unlike Marie Curie, Debra was not a scientist, but was against sexism, just like Marie Curie, as she spent her entire life fighting sexism. As a high female principal, Debra is still fighting sexism and gender stereotypes, because she also occupies what is socially expected to be a male position of school leadership. She indicated that both male teachers and female teachers remained a challenge since her appointment in the current school, a Thembisile High School. However, she managed to stay strong until she won the trust of every staff member, irrespective of gender. Just like Marie, Debra had also won two awards in the year 2014, Best Improved Performance and Best Performing School Award. At the same time, she was a mother, a grandmother and a school principal.

Considering her dual roles, as both a mother and a principal, I was admiring of her amazing strength, and interested to know how she copes with these two roles. She admitted that it is not an easy task, but hard-work and determination, and the love of education, were the key to her success. In order to cope well, she mentioned that she is always an hour early for work and leaves two hours later than the designated time, to get her administrative work done while supervising afternoon studies for learners. The other important aspect of coping with the workload is for the leader to accept help when necessary. Delegation is another strategy

that may assist a leader in 'working smart' instead of working hard, in order to get the job done, and also helps those to whom she delegates to become strong leaders (Hayes 2013). Through working extra hours and through delegation, she managed to cover most of the work at school so that she came home ready to face the duties of domestic life.

The challenges she experienced before her appointment in Thembisile High School contributed positively to her current strength and abilities of balancing her tasks. During her first year of teaching, Debra was ill-treated by her male principal, who held a patriarchal belief that women cannot be good leaders. But she managed to free herself. She did not hesitate to resign and move to School B, where her abilities and skills were recognised for personal and professional growth. Working in School B made her realise her potential of leadership, and she was brave enough to accept a principal's post in School C. Debra was then a principal of School C, and at the same time, the Branch Executive Committee Chairperson of SADTU. Those were the most demanding roles she experienced, where she had to hold a series of meetings with the committee and resolve grievances of union members. Moreover, the Branch had to be represented on the Regional Executive Committee and Provincial General Council meetings. Furthermore, as a principal, she had a small schedule of classes to teach. Being a school leader, an activist or union leader and a teacher requires a strategic and a committed person. Apart from home, she had to balance all the roles in the workplace, serve in the union, manage the school, and teach. So she mentioned that extra morning and afternoon classes, were her solution to catch up for lost time, in order to maintain a balance between her various roles.

As for Debra, I found the descriptions I used below relevant to the way in which she handle her leadership activities. In particular, I used Transformational Leadership Theory formulated by Boyett et al. (2006) as a lens. It appeared to me that Debra's leadership styles are indeed transforming. Therefore Debra charismatically leads the school, sets a vision, and instils trust, confidence and pride in working with the staff. She is enthusiastic, optimistic, communicates high expectations for both learners and teachers, and commits herself to share the goals of the organisation. Everybody around her is inspired and encouraged to engage into teamwork to reach the common goal of the school. People are treated as individuals, where she takes into consideration their unique abilities. She is a teacher and a coach when needed, and the staff members are awarded opportunities to come up with innovative and creative ideas. She a caring and a democratic leader, who has managed to transform the

culture of the school and crated a hospitable environment for learners, teachers and parents. Considering her attitude towards everybody in the school building, I cannot hesitate to say that, as Place (2013:19) has coined it, she "dares to care".

4.1.2 Her School, Thembisile High School

The description given below is for the current school lead by Debra, the one she refers to as her final destination, which was dysfunctional on her appointment, and succeeded to transform it into a functional school. Before coming to this school, Debra had been a teacher for two years, an acting HOD for ten years, and a principal for another 10 years. She therefore had enough experience in teaching and leadership.

This was a serially underperforming and most corrupt school, with no specific rules and regulations, and chaotic, starting from the building, teachers and learners. In 2011, when she was appointed to this school, Grade 12 results were 20.33%, and 32.3% in 2012. The noticeable improvement of 80.76% and 78% took place in 2013 and 2014, respectively. As the school mentioned in Msila (2014), the previous principal of the school had a laissez fair leadership approach. Classrooms and other facilities were not properly managed and the teachers were divided, not given equal treatment and not involved in any decision making processes of the school. The school was even condemned by the community as a failure. Parents too, did not care much about the school and the education of their children, because they were not made aware or educated of their role to school and uninformed of their importance to the education of their children, because they were never involved (Parrett and Budge 2012).

When it comes to education, most school's parents are illiterate and unemployed, which makes it difficult for them to be actively involved in the education of their children. Education is argued by Radu (2011) as the precondition for a parent to become interested and more engaged in their children's education. The poverty in the village is visible as described below.

You know what happens? I wish you could go to Ramatsetse ne! By merely looking at the structure of their houses you will even feel like crying. You I have the chairperson of the SGB, in that house there is nobody that is employed, I don't even know how they are surviving. This chairperson is actually employed with CWP. They only work for two days

and get R500 per month. [sic]

Some of the people who are employed in this village work for only two days per week and receive a maximum of R500. That is $31.47 per month, which is the money required to maintain the entire family. What they earn is not even sufficient enough to keep body and soul. On her appointment, Debra mentioned that the school was mentored by one of the Departmental representatives, and that assisted a great deal in improving the state of the school, from being dysfunctional to functional, or from the state of being a low-performing school to a high-performing school. According to Parrett and Budge, the school is now a high-performing, high-poverty school.

The school headed by Debra is situated in a rural area, where education, to most of the people is not so important. As stated in Ncube (2013), parents of learners in rural schools usually show lower levels of literacy, and tend to be low in educational aspirations, which in turn leads to lower educational aspirations in the learners. Parrett & Budge (2012) note the fact that people living in poverty may be seen as not attaching any value to the education. They point out the relevance of education in the lives of these parents. Beegle, in Parrett & Budge (2012), revealed the lack of meaning of education for many people resulting from the fact that attending school was simply a mandatory imposition. The other reason low-income parents don't commit themselves is the limited opportunity for school involvement provided by the current system of education. They therefore do not know how to help, and what makes the situation worse, is that they work multiple jobs, work in the evenings, do not have paid leave, cannot afford childcare, and do not have transportation. All these factors reduce parental commitment to education. Moreover, school for many parents was stressful and alienating in their own experience, and this provide a strong link between parental education level and non-commitment to children's education.

Thembisile High School is the FET[4] phase school, where classes start with Grade 10 up to Grade 12. Isaacs (2007) discussed the three broad bands that form part of education system in South Africa. These band are recognised by National Qualification Framework, and they are:

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[4] FET stands for the Further Education and Training. It is the last phase of basic education and starts from Grade 10 to Grade 12.

- General Education and Training (GET), which runs from Grade 0 Grade R to 9, and includes adult basic education.
- Further Education and Training (FET) which takes place from Grade 10 to 12. FET includes career-oriented education and training offered in other FET such as technical colleges and private colleges. This training, as mentioned by the Centre for Education Innovations, is referred to as Technical and Vocational Education and Training.
- Higher Education and Training (HET), which includes education for undergraduate and post-graduate degrees, certificates and diplomas up to the level of the doctoral degree.

The two bands, GET and FET fall under Basic Education and runs for thirteen years or grades, that is, Grade R or Reception year to Grade 12. The FET phase prepares the learner for Higher Education and Training, including universities. Grade 12 is final year of general schooling or basic education, and is also called Matriculation. The school has an enrolment of about 341 learners and 14 educators, including the principal. Small schools like this one always suffer from limited human and financial resources, as well as learning and teaching support materials. The reason for the shortage emanates from the Government allocation of funds. Funds and teachers are allocated to school based on the number of learners, the lesser the number, the smaller the funds allocated the school. The teachers' allocation or appointment too relies on the number of learners, irrespective of the subjects offered in the school. Considering the socio-economic status around the school community, is classified under Quintile[5] One, a no-fee school and therefore regarded as a deep rural school. This types of school are also termed high-poverty school in (Parrett & Budge 2012).

Debra had the same belief or mental map as Lingam, Lingam and Raguwaiya (2014) and Ncube (2013), who note that parental illiteracy in rural communities contributes to the lack of parental interest and support for education. However, her reflective and introspective behaviour compelled her to challenge her own mind-set when it came to the commonly held biases and stereotypes about people living in poverty. She realised that this mind-set

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[5] All public ordinary schools in South Africa are classified into one of the five quintiles. The quintiles were determined by analysing socio-economic indicators of the communities surrounding the school. In 2007, schools in Quintiles 1 to 2 were declared no-fee schools. This was extended to Quintile 3 schools in 2010 (Diltiens & Meny-Gilbert, 2012).

underpinned professional practice, but was not examined, and could limit her effective management of school. Despite all of these challenges, including lack of resources and misbehaviour in the school, she did not despair, but her passion compelled her to continue to serve the community. According to Parrett & Budge (2012) Debra succeeded to disrupt the cycle of poverty by rescuing the learners from the future of illiteracy. The next section presents Debra's stories about her journey of successful school leadership.

4.2 DEBRA'S STORIES OF SUCCESS

I decided to divide the story of this woman into two categories, taking into consideration her past and present leadership and management experiences. As I highlighted in Section 4.1.2, the recent leadership position occupied by Debra is not her first. She was previously the HOD of Commerce in a Secondary school for ten years, which is, from her third year of teaching, and further, became a principal of a Senior Phase school for another ten years, from the year 2000 until 2010. Her leadership journey had not been a smooth one, and challenges were always there, but she had the courage to further her leadership responsibilities. The quotation above is an indication that she had faced extensive challenges to her leadership duties before, but was not discouraged, where instead, she wanted to explore more challenges than she faced before. Indeed, she also experienced hardship when entering her most recent position, but learned to thrive under the circumstances. Her story concentrated on the period from the beginning of her teaching career until now, as the principal of the now-performing school. The stories examine when she was still climbing her leadership ladder until now, at her final destination.

4.2.1 Climbing Her Career Ladder

Enthusiastic

"I was in charge of almost everything. I was there with the gymnastics, majorettes, discipline and uniform, in the class my learners passed very well."

Debra started teaching in a Secondary school (School A) in 1987, but because she could not tolerate mistreatment by the principal, she decided to move to School B the following year, in 1988. Debra was very young, 21 years old, when she started working. She was allocated a Grade 12 class, to be a class teacher or class manager, where she strove to maintain proper classroom management and discipline. After such an endeavour, the principal decided that she exchange classes with another teacher in a lower grade, Grade 8. This decision was taken

without any reason or Debra's consent, she was not given an opportunity to voice her concerns. The main problem was that the class she was required to manage had problems with discipline, and the class register was not well managed. She felt very bad because she had to start from the beginning doing somebody else's job, while her job had been properly done. She could not subject herself to such mistreatment, and decided to resign and move to School B. Debra thinks that she was undermined because of her age and gender.

I was not happy being the person that I am with the then principals, who were hard on teachers because they would just make very impossible decisions. I then decided to move to Dennilton the following year. That is when I moved to School B. [sic]

In the second school (School B), which was also a secondary school, her career advancement began. Two years were enough to make her stand out of the crowd. What accelerated her career progress is that she was amongst the first group of qualified teachers, with Secondary Teachers Diploma. What made her exceptional was that her qualifications were more relevant and current, compared to the other teachers with PTC and JPTD. Moreover, her subjects of specialisation added more value to her career.

Debra specialised in commercial subjects, which were scarce skills then, as they are even now. With her knowledge of both Economics and Accounting, the principal did not hesitate to take her to teach in Grade 12. In every school, Grade 12 teachers are thoroughly selected, based on their teaching abilities and experience, but her case was different. She was fresh from the college, even if it was her second year of teaching, but she was new at the school. Nevertheless, that did not close the doors to her first step of leadership ladder, as she was appointed as an acting Head of Department in her third year of teaching in1989. She was thus in charge of the Commerce Department, which made her to work even harder to ensure production of good results. Eventually, her learners were doing very well, and that proved her to be the subject Master.

Debra is thankful for the principal of School B, who believed in her strengths, and did not discriminate against her because of gender, age or experience. He believed in her abilities irrespective of being a new teacher, without experience.

I always say I will forever be grateful to my second principal because he was very objective. He was not one of those principals that would discriminate teachers. He would tell you that he does not promote people but people must promote themselves because of their work. So he loved what I did, in fact he enjoyed my being at the school, because I was in charge of almost most of the things. I was there with the gymnastics, majorettes, discipline and uniform, in the class my learners passed very well. He was very happy, that is why he did not hesitate to make me an HOD. [sic]

The good leadership of this principal made a difference in her life, as her good leadership would make a difference in the lives of others. Debra achieved all this because she was an active teacher, involved in many activities of the school, including gymnastics, uniform and sports. This principal's behaviour is similar to that of the principal in Fennel (2008), as he also acted as Debra's mentor in her early years of teaching. He encouraged Debra by appointing her to the position of Head of Commerce Department, and she had a chance to try her hand at various activities, including extra-murals. Debra worked with this principal for few years, but stressed the positive influence and support he had on her professional development.

She did not measure her self-worth by someone else's opinion
Everything was good for Debra in School B, until the arrival of the new principal, who tried to make her uncomfortable in her duties. He accused her of having had an affair for promotion. I asked Debra on her feelings about this ill-treatment, since she was threatened with demotion. The principal wanted to come up with a new School Management Team of his choice. I could not believe it when she mention to me that she was not be worried at all. She had all the support of the staff members, learners were performing well, and loved her, and the SGB was also satisfied with her work.

But you know principals differ, there was another principal who was appointed because this was an acting principal. I am one person who likes to wear my make-up and when he came into the school he realise that I am the only female there. He was thinking that I was in the office because I had an affair. He even said that I was in the office because I can smile better than others. Then we fought for a very long time and he even told me that 'you must understand that when I come in here I will decide who will be the HOD, it is not that because you are an HOD already then you are here to stay'. I challenged him and told him that it

Because of her confidence and the love of her work, Debra did not sit back and be submissive but challenged the principal in return. She made it clear to him that if this is really her calling, it depends only on God not on how the other person thinks. Luckily, she evaded the threat of this unfair treatment, and was able to continue on an upward career path.

Exposure

When I went to School C, I was already spreading my wings, because I was working with the woman who was responsible for Governance at schools. I was going to schools with her to conduct workshops on governance, SGB and RCLs. [sic]

On her appointment as the principal in School C, Debra had all the confidence she needed for running the school. She had leadership experience, obtained from being the HOD of Commerce. Immediately after appointment in School C, she was actively involved in matters related to school governance, where she served as the secretary of the Circuit Governance Team. She was involved in conducting workshops on Governance for the SGB and RCLs. The aim of those workshops was to teach the SGB and RCL about their duties and responsibilities in school governance, which includes the management of school finances, and the drawing and implementation of school policies (for example, admission, language, religion and general school policy). The Governance Team was led by the woman Circuit Manger and a few principals of other schools. These workshops equipped her with a wealth of information and confidence regarding how to run a school, and all the activities of the school. She was therefore leading School C with confidence, as she was always talking from an informed and knowledgeable basis.

The Circuit Manager had known Debra very well before she became a principal in the Senior Phase, as she was the one who recommended her appointment as the principal. Because of her hard work as a Secondary School Commerce teacher, it was easy for the principal to recommend her to the Circuit Manager. Debra was therefore not interviewed for her principal post in School C. Debra is normally someone who does not sit back and watch things happen,

but always at hand, helping people. She was also informative, and by then, was doing her BA degree, where some of the information pertaining to school management and governance was still fresh in her head. The Circuit Manager realized that Debra could be of assistance. That was the reason Debra was selected, together with other principals, when the need to form a Governance team at the Circuit office arose. There was a group of four, who were assigned different tasks in the team. They moved around schools to workshop principals in the Circuit. That is where Debra got to know and network with other principals, and when she found her feet at the Circuit Office.

Debra's hunger for knowledge did not end there, she further worked together with the Circuit Manager at this time. The reason she liked to work with Debra was because, unlike other women, Debra was able to challenge even men intellectually, because she was confident. Together with the Circuit Manager, they were conducting interviews for promotional posts (HODs, Deputy Principals and Principals posts). Back then, the Circuit Manager alone was in charge of interviewing, because the schools as well as posts were scarce. Sometimes Debra was the one who represents the Circuit Manager in conducting the interviews. In her own words, she did not 'hide her light under the bushel', but exposed herself to this type of informative activity and was willing to assist other people. In this way, she managed to attract experienced people, which caused her to gain much experience.

The other thing that helped her was when she was elected into a Teachers' Union to serve as a Gender Convenor, which forms part of the Branch Executive Committee (BEC). This committee supervises and coordinates the activities of the Site Executive Committee (SCE) through meetings. The Branch is formed by a number of schools and the Site refers to the school. Each school or site elects a committee that represents them in the Site Steward Council (SSC) meetings. Debra was a member of the BEC, and her role involved issues affecting the women educators in the branch.

Moreover, as a Gender Convenor, she was enabled with opportunities to attend workshops that examined the importance of women's roles and challenges in global education. The workshops provided her with an opportunity to hear from other world leaders in education and women's issues. Furthermore, these workshops dealt with topics pertaining to the so-called 'glass ceiling'. Women's leadership in education Trade Unions in the classroom, Teacher Trade Unions taking the lead. She notes:

And you know with the Teachers' Union, it will expose you, you will go to workshops, get the manuals, you must master those manuals and explain it to members and all that. So it is a question of exposure. [sic]

All this experience she gained from participating in the Teachers Union gave her courage, and caused her to be confident, and she did not hesitate when offered a principal's position. She confidently accepted the offer to lead School C, the Senior Phase School, in the year 2000. This is the school that starts from Grade 7 to 9, and forms part of the GET band mentioned earlier in this chapter. In those years, the year 2000, interviews were not always conducted, but the Circuit Manager, through the approval of the Principal, who would just recommend an appointment for you. So that was the case for Debra, where she was offered a principal's post without any interviews, which constituted the rewards for hard-working teachers. That was her first leadership position from the year 2000 up until 2010. As she was always concerned about the failure rate of learners in the High School, she then accepted the offer for the principal position in School C. She took the post as an opportunity to experience the cause of high failure rate for learners when they reach Secondary school. The school was a Senior Phase school, which prepares learners to the final FET Phase.

Unfortunately, the situation was not as she expected, because she was used to a secondary school situation, and was not sufficiently challenged, but continue to do the good work of a leader. The school had just been dismantled from a combined school to an exclusively Senior Phase one. Much had to be done as a result, starting from drawing the policies that would suit the type of school, but that were not a difficult task for Debra. With the help of cooperative and committed staff members, they worked collaboratively, and managed to start afresh with all the policies, and other relevant documents.

Being few steps ahead

I wanted management skills but at the same time, like I told you, you need to be at least one step ahead of the teachers. [sic]

Debra became a principal in School C, with only a Teacher's Diploma, and obtained her BA degree when she was already a principal. She then felt the need to do some management

courses, because she thought it was not enough for her without management or leadership knowledge and skills. Like the women principals in Morojele et al. (2013), Debra wanted to ensure that she understood the complex matters of school management, by not using experience only, but also by engaging in continuous learning.

I wanted management skills, but at the same time, like I told you, you need to be one step ahead of the teachers. So teachers were studying back then, and most of them had Honours degree. When I started to be the principal I had two teachers who had already had Honours degree, and I only had my STD. It becomes a bit of a challenge, because sometimes they will think you don't have knowledge. I was also able to assist them with their assignment and they benefitted a lot from me, and were even encouraging me to enrol for ACE. [sic]

She then registered with a university to do an ACE Certificate, which was not her initial intention. She actually wanted to register for a B.Ed. Honours Degree, but her pass percentage in BA Degree was below 60%, which did not meet the admittance requirements. Instead of spending two years on an ACE, she asked to do it in one year, which required a lot of work. She did the course in one year, and managed to obtain more that 60 percent. It was not an easy task, because she had to personally submit a typed assignment every Friday.

I had to type the whole night. Because I was so desperate for a B.Ed. Honours Degree, I had to sleep on my computer. By then my son was two years, I would be sitting on my computer typing and he would be sitting on my lap. It was tough, I would not advise anyone to do what I did. [sic]

Fortunately, her family gave her the support she needed throughout the study period by helping with the household chores and baby-sitting. She also mentioned that some staff members in School C encouraged her to continue with her studies. The staff members were very cooperative and supportive, and Debra notes that staff effectiveness and cooperativeness depends on how the principal relates to them. Debra also believes that, as the principal, she has to be some two or three steps ahead of her subordinates.

For those principals who are managing schools without the information of leadership and management, don't enjoy their work. Once you have leadership and management as one of the courses, then you have a backup, because there are so many challenges. [sic]

After completing this, she was now ahead of the other staff, because she was rich in information regarding school policies and procedures. In addition to these qualifications, being a Governance team member, Gender Convenor of the Teachers' Union, and the Secretary of Circuit Management team, gave her an additional advantage.

When she was serving as the Gender Convenor, Debra focused on balancing gender issues within the schools. She then got a clearer picture that, as a woman, she also had a chance to forward her career, and that one significant aspect of the problem of gender disparity in the workplace is that women are still undermining themselves, or have been indoctrinated to believe that woman ought to always remain submissive to men. Debra further commented that serving in the Teacher's Union helped her so much because at some point, she felt like she could be the President of the country if she wanted to be. This was an amazing feeling! That is the way they were trained, their minds were liberated in such a way that gave her the strength to say to herself, as she put it, ***"I can challenge anybody, anywhere."*** That is when she gathered the courage of applying for Secondary school management positions. She continued on to say, ***"even when I saw a man, I was no longer seeing a man as a man, but seeing a man as a person like myself, as my equal."*** This woman was really brave and courageous!

4.2.2 Her Final Destination (second and current principal position)

"I was saying, this is going to be my final stop, because I have been working for the past 27 years, now since it is my final stop, I am going to work there and go on pension in that school. I then said to myself, okay, if that is my final place, I must make sure that I leave a mark, so that even when I go out of that school, I must be able to be remembered to say at one point there was this kind of a person." [[sic]

Good things usually come when they are least expected, and are often accompanied by other problems. It was around May 2010 when Debra was interviewed for this principal's post and obtained her appointment in December 2010. By then she had already lost hope, because it took a much longer time than usual. Debra accepted this opportunity without fear, because she was determined to leave a mark in Thembisile High School, by ensuring that the learners received quality education. She was not aware of the issues behind the delay, as there was a dispute concerning the post. Procedurally, when a post is advertised, the applications are sent

to the District Office for the shortlisting of the applicants. After the shortlisting process, all the shortlisted applications are forwarded to the relevant schools where they are further shortlisted to five applications. Finally the five shortlisted candidates are called in for the interview. This process, together with the interviews, is conducted by the interview panel, consisting of the principal of the school, or SMT members, the SGB representative, and the Teacher's Union members.

During the interview the problem started, where it appeared that the interview results have been manipulated to suit the wishes of the School Governing Body, certain staff members, and the community. They wanted an educator who was also a Chairperson of the SGB, and who originates from the same village to occupy the post. The reason was that he originates from the same village, same community, a male and he is the Son of the soil, *Ngwana Wa Mobu,* in Sepedi, the language used in the community. They did not want a person from outside to occupy the principal's post. Unfortunately, the Department of Education discovered their plans, and investigations were conducted, until the final decision of appointing the relevant candidate was reached. Finally, Debra was decided to be the successful candidate.

After her appointment, Debra found herself in a double bind. The SGB, staff, and the community were not happy, and did not provide her the support she needed. They were against everything she was trying to do, or to introduce, even working according to policy. It was a challenge, but she was able to quickly read the situation, and thought of an approach that would enable her to win the favour of all. She started by withdrawing a bit, studying everybody on her own, starting from the SGB, individual teachers, and then getting to know the culture of the school and the community. Debra, a mission-focused activist leader, took her time and set the pace for her team until they saw the real person she is (Hayes 2013).

Before she were appointed, the school would start at eight in the morning and knock off at ten. Learners would even go home on lunch break and not come back. The reason for the chaotic situation in this school was due to a group of six teachers, who were running the school from behind. These teacher were always problematic, where even before Debra's arrival, they made it difficult for the previous principal to run the school. They would sometimes misbehave, disrespect and say vulgar words, which undermined the authority of the principal during the meeting, and in some cases, the principal would not finish the

meeting and leave crying. After the previous principal had left the school, they were all feeling that they could be the principal of the school, and when the post was advertised, the six of them applied, where none were eventually shortlisted. The whole process was run by the chairperson of the SGB, who also wanted the post, and was keeping it from other candidates. They were full of anger as a result. To their surprise, a woman was appointed, while a male principal left, because he could not handle the pressure he was put under.

Debra mentioned that they had also planned the same for her, so that she would not last, but leave, just like the other principal. This was a staff of mostly experienced people, above 45 years of age, who were competing fiercely for the chance to become a principal. They were not supportive to their new principal at all, instead, they always looked for negatives in whatever she was trying to do. It therefore took Debra a long time before she was able to get to know and relate well with the staff members. They used to call her to private meetings outside the school yard, each one trying to win her exclusive loyalty. When the learners were late, these teachers would lock them outside the schoolyard by way of punishment. According to Debra, they did so intentionally, knowing full well that this is against the policy of education, and the child's right to education. When she disagreed with their decision, they would complain that their help was not accepted. As Debra explained, in this way the attempt was made to bait her into acting unprofessionally.

The other problem she experienced on her arrival in her school was teacher indiscipline (Morojele et al. 2013). Teachers seemed to suffer from low self-esteem, low work motivation, lack initiative, commit absenteeism, and have low expectations of themselves and the learners. What came as a shock to her was the unusual and irresponsible behaviour displayed by teachers. They were all leaving the school during the lunch break and go to the neighbouring village, which is about 15 kilometres away from the school, for lunch that lasts for 45 minutes. The learners were left unattended during the break, and the learners knew that the teachers would be late, no one would monitor their movements. They were left with the two general workers whose sole responsibility was to ring the bell for the learners, and it was really an awkward situation. That was the reason for the learners to leave the school during break, where they were not monitored at all. These teachers seemed to lacked empathy or developed apathy for students, as well as for their administrators (Place 2013). The apathetic behaviour displayed by the educators does not really mean that they hate students but might, as Place (2013) has suggested elsewhere, be the result of burn out.

In addition, the teachers were also refusing to attend staff meetings after school hours. They just wanted to depart immediately after school, together with the learners. So Debra had to revert to policy and show them that policy says that beyond the seven daily hours, a teacher still has eighty more hours where they are required to be on duty, to do administration work including meetings. Debra notes in this regard:

So I took them slowly, you don't have to be harsh and say just because you did this today and tomorrow you are hard on the person. You need to bring something that will convince the person and ultimately I was able to win them. [sic]

She demonstrated caring acts by enlightening the staff about the policies and practices of the school. These acts developed and promoted emotional growth for the staff members as well as creating a positive school climate. Debra then decided to get an extract from the policy document, copy the pages, and make a copy for individual teacher, and further explain the Personnel Administration Measures (PAM) under Employment of Educators Act (EEA) no 76 of 1998. PAM is determined by the Minister of Education in terms of the EEA and the Regulation made in terms of the Act. EEA determines the terms and conditions of employment of educators. It also outlines the regulation of the conditions of service, discipline, retirement and discharge of educators and for the matters connected therewith. In section 3.2 of PAM, the requisite workload of educators is explained, where it mentions that educator is on duty for seven hours, including breaks.

After the explanation of this policy, teachers were nonetheless resistant to change, since they were used to the laissez faire leadership of the previous principal. Debra realised that she is, as stated in Hayes (2013), leading more experienced team members, who need more structure and focus than she thought. As warned by Hayes (2013), she did not allow their behaviour and judgemental attitudes to mislead or intimidate her, but continued to set the pace, using her unique gifts, and her character as an activist leader. To remedy the situation, Debra had to resist and diminish apathy prevailing within the school by simple acts of caring (Place 2013).

She transformed the culture of the school

Debra took her time to make them understand the policy requirements until teachers accepted the change. Debra is always practising what she preaches, so she made a point to follow everything she taught in terms of policy. Formal teaching is not always interesting, therefore Debra opted for informal conversation, where, during lunchtime, she raised some issues on teacher conduct and behaviour. In this way, as noted to be favourable by Badenhorst and Koalepe (2014), she made herself visible in the school by walking around the schoolyard, visiting classrooms and holding spontaneous conversations. This strategy was of assistance in getting to know and understand her staff members well, as well as to know of everything happening around the school. Moreover, Debra is a resource provider, because she takes necessary actions for the provision of personal and material resources in the school and community. She is also an instructional resource, who is actively engaged in improving instruction, and developing staff (Badenhorst and Koalepe 2014).

Policy alone would not be of help to make the school functional and improve learner achievement. Womenly attributes of care, empathy and consciousness of other's feelings allow them to tolerate diversity of everyone in the school. However, Morojele et al. (2013), reported that most women principals find themselves without choice, but are sometimes compelled by the situation to exercise the leadership between democratic and autocratic management approaches. This strategy enabled them to stay firm and fair in their dealings with their staff members, since they are able to have a voice in decision-making, firmly guided by the principal (Morojele et al 2013).

Eventually, after two years, staff finally agreed to bring their lunch to school so as to keep in line with official policy. Debra acknowledged the fact that she has an experience of school management before her appointment in Thembisile High, and that serving in the Teachers' Union assisted her with the knowledge of policy and the ELRC document. She managed to exercise authority through her personal, interpersonal and professional competencies, by means of cooperation and shared commitment (Place 2013). Whenever they wanted to mislead or place blame upon her, she would quote the policy, and they were able to realise that she was clear when it came to education policy. This gives an indication that the principal needed to know many things in order to provide caring leadership in a school of this nature, however, that does not mean to know everything. Most importantly, the principal needs to do her own research in order to determine whether the teacher is engaging in student learning as the core business of schooling (Place 2013).

Debra is innovative, she does not rely solely on the prescribed policy from the Department of Education, but believes in drawing policies that are relevant to her own school, and as informed by the situation. Those policies should be agreed upon by all staff members. For instance, they have a marking policy guiding them during the time of marking formal assessments tasks, examinations and tests written every term. The results of these tasks are used to issue the report cards for the learners, where, before issuing the report cards, mark schedules are required to be submitted to the circuit office for checking. In previous years, the school was struggling to submit mark schedules on the stipulated date, because teachers could not finish marking on time. This was a problem, but was solved by using this marking policy, as it was guiding every teacher on the number of days allocated for marking and the submission date to the principal.

The marking policy states that the teacher should finish marking the scripts three days the paper was written, and submit the marked scripts together with the mark-sheet, the question paper and the memorandum to the principal. The principal will then forward the scripts to the relevant HOD for moderation. Moderation procedures are also included in the marking policy, where this must be done so as to ensure the correct marking and allocation of marks. The moderation of marked scripts ought to be done within two days of submission, and be taken back to the principal for final checking. The mark sheets are used to make a composite mark schedule per grade, where, finally, report cards are produced. In the case of failure to comply with the policy, a written explanation by the subject teacher ought to be submitted to the Subject Head or HOD.

Before the introduction of the marking policy, there was an unfair culture of stepping in to help those teachers who could not finish marking, which was compulsory for all the teachers of the same department. This culture was not fair to teachers, who are dedicated to their work because it was promoting laziness amongst some teachers. This marking policy is drawn in order to specify marking period as well moderation of learners' scripts. According to the marking policy, the subject teacher is given a minimum of three days and a maximum of five days depending on the number of subjects the teacher is marking, so as to ensure that everyone has enough time to mark. A policy of this kind has eradicated the culture of laziness and reliance on others. Debra confirms that the policy worked very well, because they are now able to submit on time, as for other schools.

The other challenge faced by Debra was that the school was managed by the office administrator or clerk, which she found to be sad, because there are still many schools that are managed by the administrators or clerks. When she checked with other neighbouring schools, trying to find out about the winter schools, she was told that the administrator refused to pay teachers for extra classes, because there was no money. According to Debra, money cannot be the reason for not conducting extra classes (winter enrichment classes) because, she believes, a good relationship with teachers can solve such problems.

Even if there is no money for the school, if you are working well and have a good relationship with your teachers, you can negotiate that, 'let's have this winter school and we will see what to do, we will reimburse you as soon as we have money'. But if the administrator says there is no winter school, then it's a challenge. The same thing applied to this school, the teachers were so much afraid of the administrator, they didn't have access to photocopying, papers. So I had to put the administrator in his position, indicate to him that the SMT is actually the senior at the school. [sic]

The clerk checks, so that was the situation on Debra's arrival in the school. Another problem was the dilapidated school building, where the roofing was not in good condition, and about three pieces of corrugated iron had been blown away by the wind. Debra related, "***you can imagine, it was easy for the school to just say, let's get money to buy the three corrugated irons and it was not even R500"*** [sic]. But they could not do so, because the administrator told them that this money was not for repairing the school. Debra critiqued, "***then you ask yourself if it is not for repairing the school, what is the money for?"*** There was even no photocopier, and the computer she found there was the one donated by the department free of charge a long time ago, around 2003. The school did not have even a laptop, because the admin clerk was the one giving orders on what should or should not be bought in the school.

So it was a very serious challenge for Debra, who was obliged to discuss with the SMT their role in school management. She also had to put the administrative clerk in his rightful position, by making him understand that SMT is actually in charge of the school and that he would gather information from the SGB and the SMT.

Once I got the admin right, the staff members started to be free at the school, no longer afraid to go to the office and ask for copies, typing and printing. Then I was able to win the staff over, because they could see that I was able to get the SGB, the admin right. [sic]

According to Place (2013), the ability to prioritise the well-being for people and enhanced their relationships, creates a climate that promotes a sense of value for the feelings and voices of all community or school members. The school was now transformed into a caring school, where adults are relational or relationship-oriented. As further contended by Place (2013), the culture of caring was fostered by demonstrating the care about each person in the school building.

Eventually, the culture of the school changed, because the learners were also starting to behave well, and the parents were also happy, because there was now normal schooling. It was a challenge to Debra, but in solving such situations, she recommended that one has to plan, and to be tactful, because one slight mistake can worsen the situation. Through careful and correct planning it is possible to bring about the desired harmony between and investment from others. Duma (2015) warns that these this types of schools and their challenges require specific knowledge and skills, as the challenges differ in rural schools from those of schools in urban areas. Right now, they are able to conduct winter school and even if they do not have money, teachers arrive to teach during the winter schools. The only thing that Debra does is to sit down and discuss with the SMT and SGB on how we reimburse the teachers with the transport, because it's the holidays.

Debra managed to bring the policies of Department of Education, such as the Educators Employment Act 76 of 1998, into practice. She therefore succeeded in transforming the culture of the school. As mentioned by a number of studies in women's leadership, Schmidt and Mestry (2015); Morojele, Chikoko and Ngcobo (2013); Naidoo and Perumal (2014) came across a number of challenges in her position. On her arrival to this school, discrimination based on gender and race was prevalent, and this was encouraged by the cultural stereotypes and beliefs that a woman cannot lead, but only men are leaders. In realising the problematic situation, she decided to 'go into the belly of the beast', where she decided to function in accordance with or in collusion with 'the logic of the beast' when expedient (Schmidt and Mestry 2015). In a method similar to that mentioned by Mollel and Tshabangu (2014), she would transform people's self-interest into the goals of the school.

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She was able to negotiate these difficulties without engaging in conflict, but by using peaceful and challenging measures.

Debra is proud to say that she managed to bring about discipline, as well as proper teaching and learning, and eventually the culture of the school changed. She also succeeded in bringing about change, even though the staff members were not on her side (Peters 2012). She used policy, from the ELRC[6] file, which every teacher possesses, in dealing with the staff members, since they were appointed by the Department of Education. Every time she came across a situation where she realised that teachers may be getting out of hand, she would remind them to take heed of the policy.

Maintains frequent communication

To ensure frequent interaction and communication with the staff, Debra decided to conduct the morning briefs every day of the week, to ensure that the teachers were always aware of the policy. Initially, she did not understand the morning brief, as it was new to her, but then remembered one of the professors, while was doing her BA Degree, talking about morning briefings, and realised what ought to be done.

When I came to this side I realised that there was a morning brief every day. I initially asked myself of this morning brief, and then I remembered our lecturer talking about the morning brief, and I realised what is supposed to be done. Initially, I would take circulars and remind them of some meetings or workshops, but I remember that sometimes it is not supposed to be information every day. I realised that people do not know their own ELRC documents, so I had to take part of the documents and talk about it with the staff, like the part of the leave and give advice on the type of leaves. You don't have to theorise it, do it practical, and tell them what you expect from them. [sic]

At first, she would use it to issue circulars and remind teachers of certain meetings, and workshops to attend, but realised that it should not be about information every day. As time went by, she realised that people do have the policy handbook, but do not understand its

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[6] ELRC is the Educational Labour Relations Council. It is a statutory council whose primary objectives are to promote and maintain peace in education, prevent and resolve dispute in education, and promote collective bargaining in relation to matters of mutual interest.

contents. She therefore decided to teach the policies step-by-step, by taking part of the policy document and talking about it with the staff during the morning briefings.

And just to even tell them that 'today colleagues we are going to have an SGB meeting'. It's very important so that they are not going to be surprised when they see people coming in. With the morning brief, we inform them about all that; and it also assist because during the morning brief we are able to know who is going to be absent today, and we are able to know that there is going to be a relieve timetable. Therefore who is going to relieve whom at what time; so it assists us a lot. With us, we have a relief time table, we have given two teachers per period every day, so every period has two teachers who are on standby and they already know that. If a teacher is absent or going for a workshop he/she will always report. [sic]

Formal staff meetings are also held on a monthly basis, or when the need arises. In a staff meeting, teachers are given an opportunity to voice their views about certain issues that affect them, such as decisions taken by financial committees. Things like tariffs and catering affect the teachers, and they need to know what is happening in various committees of the school.

With the staff meeting there is lot of issues to be discussed. Usually in the staff meeting I focus on issues that are related to other stakeholders in the school. We talk about curriculum, financial reports, talk about the SMT's decisions, what the SGB and QLTC, what are they saying about the Learner Attainment Strategies. You take all those things to the staffroom and inform them, and invite their views, so that they are able to augment where there is a need to change, then decide on the implementation date on issues that affect the teachers, like tariffs and catering. In fact, the staff meeting is supposed to be talking about all those issues that are in the operational plan. [sic]

According to Debra, the staff meeting is very important, because certain operational plans are drawn that just indicate the activities, but the responsibility of all the activities ought to be ironed out with the staff in the staff meeting, so that everybody has the same understanding. Therefore, the staff meeting is allocated more time, as compared to the morning briefs, so that it will allow everyone to have to share the common vision of the school.

She accepted help when needed

Once we accept that we are dysfunctional then we will be able to stand up and go to be functional. [sic]

As they were dysfunctional,[7] Departmental officials such as Curriculum Advisors would frequently visit the school, with the aim of monitoring and supporting teachers on individual subjects. Teachers usually feel uncomfortable when they are being monitored by their Subject or Curriculum Advisors. It appears to them as a fault-finding mission, but with the help of a caring principal, teachers are able to understand and accept help from their Subject Advisors. Therefore, Debra advised the teachers to stay positive, and to listen to any official speaking on the subject of dysfunction, to accept whatever advice that they may be offering. Debra knows that acknowledgement provides the opportunity for growth. Looking for a better word to describe what they were doing, would mean that they do not understand themselves.

I was also telling them that you know, at the performance that we are at, we don't have to be negative to anybody that comes in through that gate, whether is from the national office or provincial office, and we need to take whatever they tell us because we don't know which one will work for us. I am also going to use that opportunity, when the Curriculum Advisor leaves; I call the Curriculum Advisor and find out what is our position there, what is happening? How you see the teacher? I also take notes, because I did not specialise in all the subjects. So I want you to also do the same. When they say you must do that, try it maybe it can help you, rather than to be negative. It assisted us a lot and when they come in, I was telling them, I am going to welcome them with a smile, and when they want to see Mr. so and so, I am going to come and call you with a smile, and I expect to also approach these people with a smile. Accept that you do not perform, listen to the people who have been moving around, they have suggestions, some of them will work and some will not. Whatever works is for the benefit of this community, and the learners. That's how we got out of the problems. [sic]

In most cases, teachers' attitudes towards the Curriculum Advisors remain negative, because

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[7] Learner performance was below 50% as measured by the pass percentage of grade 12.

they think that the Curriculum advisors are always looking for mistakes. However, their job is to support teachers on curriculum issues. Debra was well aware of that attitude, and insisted that the Departmental Heads HOD hold Departmental meetings to discuss subject-related matters. She also ensured that the HODs check the subject files for teachers on a monthly basis, so as to encourage teachers to be in line with the curriculum needs. The other thing that boosted the teacher morale was to create a stronger relationship between teachers and the Curriculum advisors. Debra relied on the meetings for analysis of results, held with the staff every school term, to inform her of the performance in various subjects offered in the school. She then identify those subject that are underperforming, hold individual meeting with those subject teachers to find the problem. During the discussion, she usually advised the teacher to get help, and to organise the Curriculum Advisor to come and assist the teacher in need. The important aspect here is not to take the decision on behalf of the teacher, but collaborate and come up with a unanimous decision so that the teacher will not feel undermined.

If you are not firm enough, teachers will tell you not accept instructions from the CIs. They will want a file, and a teacher will say 'my file is at home'. I would say no, I will not accept anyone of you who will tell the CI that 'my file is at home', and your file must always be at school, with you. When it is needed, you must present it. This is how people can measure whether you are working or not, this is how people can monitor your work. You take them home, work overnight, take them back into the car and bring them back to school. [sic]

Debra said the attitude of acceptance and being open to advice helped considerably, due to all that was done was for the benefit of the community and the learners. That is how they overcame the dysfunctional. She also acknowledges the necessity of being firm, because if you are not firm enough, as the principal teachers will tell you not accept instructions from the Curriculum Advisors. This includes making sure that files are always available for assessment.

I tell them when I go to school, I want you to watch me, every time I go to class I always have my file in my hand. Sometimes you realise that the topic is too long, then if have your file with you, you will check if you are still on the right track. If you don't your file to class, then how do you do it? If you want to plan a test with your learners, you need a work schedule to check whether, will I be able to go up to that point at that particular date. It's a challenge;

unfortunately we still have a long way to go. [sic]

Debra's beliefs in role modelling enabled her to put into practice whatever she says. As she wanted the teachers to be in possession of their subject file, she always carries her files so that she can produce them anytime they are needed. She leads by example.

Debra also highlighted another thing that supported them as the school, namely that when they were underperforming, one of the Departmental representatives, an Internal Auditor of the Province, mentored the school. His role in 2014 was to ensure that all learners apply for their tertiary studies, so that when the results come, they are ready and they have student numbers to hand. Therefore all the learners have applied, and are able to choose the universities at which they want to continue their education. Because of her understanding of the family background of these learners, Debra had to intervene in the case of career choices, where she had to encourage the learners to choose the careers that have more chances for bursaries, because the school can help with the registration only.

She said that registration is not that much of a problem, since they had a Portfolio Committee of Education from the Province, who took on the school when it was seen to be underperforming. The function of this committee is to present the situation of the school to the community leaders, and people who might 'adopt' the school. These volunteers come and assist the learners with issues of registration only, the other fees are left to the parents or the bursary in such case that a learner may have one. What they ensure is that the learners must be registered, just in case they pass well and get the bursary. The big issue is for the learners to be registered.

I would argue that Debra's mission in improving overall school performance was better than that of women principal mentioned in the writings of Peters (2012). She received district support because she was working closely with the Curriculum Advisors, and the school was mentored by the Internal Auditor when the school was dysfunctional.

Bringing parents closer to school

Parents should not be taken for granted. [sic]

A school is like a three legged pot in which the legs are formed by the school, parents and the learners. If one of the legs breaks, the pot cannot stand, where the same applies to education, where if one of the stakeholders hold back their efforts on its behalf, the school will not run properly. For every school to be successful, parents should be involved in the education of their children, and be informed of every activity taking place in the school. Getting parents to come to the school is a task for most principals, but Sathiapama et al. (2012) assert that academic improvement and student achievement require a good family-school partnership. This partnership further assists in building self-esteem, improved school attendance, social behaviour, and a reduction in school dropout rates. Moreover, Sathiapama et al. (2012) confirm that the benefit of parental involvement is good, irrespective of the socio-economic status of the family, only if it follows proper planning to be done according to the unique circumstances of each school.

In finding her ground in the school, Debra did not only concentrate on the teachers and learners. In her first two years as the principal in this school, she was adjusting, trying to get to know its members, trying to get them to know her, and to understand her point of view, where she came from, her vision and all that. For the past two years, she is now certain that they know exactly what is expected from them and the community is more than happy. She started by working closely with teachers in 2012, as the immediate people that she was and working with. In 2014 she focused on the parent and she named it the year of the parents. She made sure that everything is in order. She introduced Cultural Day or Arbour Day, that was previously not honoured, and they only had their first matric farewell in 2012, and the second one in 2013. That was because in 2013, they focused on both the parents and the community at large.

Last year I was working on the parents, 2012 was working on teachers. So last year it was the year of the parents. I made sure that we have everything in order. We never had a cultural day or Arbour Day previously; 2012 we had our first farewell and 2013 the second one. Then 2013, because I was focusing more on the community and the parents, we had the Arbour day and invited parents for planting trees. We also had a cultural day and the parents were invited again. The whole of last year, right from Term One, when we were doing book review and presentation of results, we focused much on the parents. We ensure that they are served refreshments and it was very cheap. When I started it, they thought, I was going to waste was going to start something that I was not going to sustain, but it took only R350. [sic]

When Debra came up with the suggestion of refreshments, some stakeholders thought it was a misuse of school funds and it would not be sustainable. The parents appreciated that a lot and at first, they struggled to get parent for meetings, but these days, their hall gets full in such a way that they even do not have enough chairs. Her aim was for the parents to be part of the school and to understand the school so that they will help with the improvement. At the end of every school term, learners are assessed so that their performance is monitored in order to take relevant steps when there is a need. The report cards based on those results are then prepared and collected by parents. Other than the analysis of results, report cards advise the teachers about the way in which parents have to be treated when collecting their children's results.

Before we go to the parents we hold a meeting with the staff, we analyse the results and prepare for presentation to the parents, every quarter. In our analysis, the most important part is that I tell the educators that, 'let us change and see these parents as clients and ourselves as business persons'. For us to ultimately have a big school with all learners fighting to come to Thembisile, we must treat our learners and parents very well. These two are our clients. A learner must feel very free and confident to come to the office and to the staffroom. When they come here open up your arms, welcome them and talk politely with them. Don't talk harshly with them; do not be too hard on them. [sic]

Parents must be given the report and comforted in case their children have failed, and the learner too needs to be comforted so that they may not lose hope. She warns the teachers that parents should be treated as clients, and teachers should see themselves as business persons, that is, to market the school properly. This will help in making parents to feel comfortable and garner trust and confidence in the school. She further appeal to the teachers to be open and try and make learners feel free and confident to approach them, for whatever reason. They should be welcome, and talk positively with them, and avoid being harsh on them.

If the parent is very hard and do not understand why the learner has fail, then you send the parent to the office and I will be able to handle them. I do it so well that the parent even forgets that they were actually angry with the school, and will start to talk positively and understand the situation. You take the parent through the whole processes and even tell the parent about their child. [sic]

She is very much appreciative of the response from the parents, since the inception of refreshments. As she is unselfish and always likes to share knowledge with other people, she was also selling this idea to other principals. She values the contribution of the parents a lot, and advises that parents to be considerate and actively involved in all activities of the school, where the school should not in any way take their support for granted.

She makes effort to get to know learner families

When there is a need, Debra does not hesitate to visit the families of the learners to discuss with and advise parents on how to provide educational support to their children. Involving the parents and understanding the family background of learners make it easy for the principal to provide assistance where possible. Knowing their families plays a major in reducing absenteeism, and late coming for the well-disciplined learners.

So you can see those are the ways in which I get to know the families, and usually with Grade 12, I take them to be my personal responsibilities, my assignment. So, when I call the parents, I also tell them that for this year, you must understand that you will be a mother to this child, but in fact, they belong to me. When they don't come for morning classes or Saturday classes, I go to their homes and want to see them. Sometimes, on Saturdays, the bus will come, and the child would not have bought a bus, I then drive home and get the child. That is where I get to see the poverty in their house, because I am actively involved in their families, such that the parents are trying very hard to do their best, so that I must not come uninvited to their houses, because they know that any slight mistake, I go straight home. Even if I do not know your home, I will get one learner or one SGB member and they will take me there. So the situation is dire there and education is not so important to them. [sic]

When I enquired as to how she gets to know the state of the learners' families, she told me of one heart-breaking incidence. As they always conduct morning classes, a certain girl in Grade 12 happened to be late for the Agriculture class. The teacher concerned confronted the girl, only to find out the reason for being late, but the girl could not answer, and just cried. The teacher decided to bring the girl to the principal, Debra. The girl still did not want to talk until Debra decided to release the teacher, and remained with the girl. The girl confided in her the way she was ill-treated by her parents, and was complaining that her mother has neglected her. She felt that her parents do not care about her at all.

That is, a learner that comes from Grade 11 into Grade 12; we want a focused learner, who does not have problems, so that we are able to get through those learners and so that she must also cooperate with us. When we were talking, I realised that the mother is not married, she is still staying at home with the child's grandmother, and the mother has four children and there are also children of the aunts in the same house. She knows her father but the mother and the father are no longer together. When she calls her father, the father understands, but when the others go back to the father, tell him about this girl, then the father turns against this girl again. So this girl is like, 'I don't have anyone who is on my side' and she is left to us as a school to comfort her. [sic]

This is how Debra got to know these families, because in situations like this, she goes to the families to discuss the matter. She considers herself responsible to give advice to the parents, where she asserts that all the child needs from them as parents is love and nothing else. If there is anything that the child does wrong, they should not wait up until the mistakes accumulate to scold her.

Debra wanted to get to the root of this issue, and continued asking the girl what actually happened before confronting the parents. The girl told her the reasons as follows:

I then asked the girl what actually made her to be late this morning. She was telling me 'I am staying outside in the back rooms, and I wanted to get into the house, the door was locked, when I knocked at the door, my mother told me she is still asleep and cannot wake up. So I had to wait until she decides to wake up, and thereafter, come and open up the doors that I must get into the house and prepare myself for school. [sic]

Debra did not rush to any conclusion by just punishing the child who was late, but wanted to get reason for the late coming. It might be possible that the child was lying, but by taking matters like this one seriously, it may be possible to help to solve the situation, and the learners' conduct may improve. Debra demonstrated an ethic of care to the learner. She cares for all learners, including disadvantaged children, so that they all benefit from the structure of the school. Caring involves social justice and it focuses mostly on those who have not received as much care and support, like this girl, who lacked parental care and support.

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This is how I get to know these families, because right now, I was talking to her and wanted to go to the family to talk to the mother and grandmother. I must tell them all that the child needs from them is love, and nothing else, and if there is anything that the child does wrong, don't wait up until they accumulate then you start shouting at the child. [sic]

So Debra, as an activist leader, who always serve as an advocate whenever her team members face challenges (Hayes 2013), also does the same for the learners. She saw a need to intervene by going to the family of the learner, in order to discuss the problem, and giving them some advice. She did not do this with the aim of interfering into family matters, but for the sake of the child's wellbeing and the importance of education. Thorough planning was made before meeting with the parents, so that she did not upset them, but instilled the value of education in the parents. In this way, she is not caring for the child only, but also extends her caring attitude to the family for the benefit of both the parent and the child (Place 2013).

She walks her talk

In teaching we do not only talk, we act, do things and learners will copy. That is how you get it right, but if you don't model everything that you want your learners to be, then they will not follow. [sic]

Sometimes teachers need assistance and support in running their classrooms and maintaining students' discipline. It remains the duty of the principal to provide that support, but the challenge lies in the way that the support and assistance is given to those teachers without instructing them. Debra does not rely on talking and giving instructions only, but believes in modelling the desired behaviour and attitudes that she wants the teachers and learners to follow. In understanding of the saying that "students don't care what you know until they know that you care", she therefore decided to use her actions to mirror the discipline language. As a way of putting her words into action, she adopted the most problematic class that had endless issues of late coming, absenteeism and disrespect. She decided to work together with the class teacher assigned to that class. She managed to help the teacher in changing the behaviour of the class, and within few weeks, everybody was astonished. All she did was to ensure that learners wore proper uniform, came to school on time, and kept their classroom clean. During the lunch break, they would dish up well, clean their classroom after eating, and arrange the desks.

Debra asserts that learners changed due to her consistency, noting that their behaviour had improved *"because I am always there for them." [sic]* They have a register period from 7:45 to 8:00, where during that period, Debra would go to the class, and mark the register by calling each learner's name. She would call those who were absent, sit down, talk, and reprimand them up to a point, where there was at least one or two learners absent per week. She argued, *"That should be a goal, you do not go to a class and just mark a register. No! You go to a class with a goal of ensuring that all the learners are present every day" [sic]*. It must be only under very serious circumstances that you find a learner being absent. So towards this end, she came to know each learner, and engage with each one of them personally. They felt valued, because it was not only about marking the register, but also about being praised for good behaviour and wearing proper uniform. In this way, students are moulded towards the goals set on their behalf for them by their educators.

She became exemplary by adopting the most problematic class as a class teacher and managed to change the learners' behaviour, by not just punishing them, but by making the learners feel a sense of belonging in a school. Before engaging in any disciplinary measure in this class, she took her time to find out and understand the cause of ill-discipline and misbehaviour. Her focus was not on punishment, but assigned appropriate consequences that made a statement, without causing any embarrassment to any student. As alluded to by Harris (2016), she used words of accountability to hold the students accountable for their behaviour, and words of encouragement to help learners overcome challenges, or a sense of defeat or apathy. She used words of grace to separate the students from unacceptable behaviour, forgive past mistakes, and provide a second chance. Using words of guidance, she helped the students to find their way to become successful in their behaviour, as well as words of high expectation that made the students hold themselves to higher standards.

Absenteeism and uniform irregularities were noticeably reduced, because she was always there for them and congratulating them whenever they did the right thing. According to Ugboko and Adediwura (2012), it is the duty of the principal to ensure discipline, through various strategies. The principal managed to change the behaviour of these learners through the use of proper supervision and respectful discipline, that builds relationships, teaches responsibility, and encourages moral development.

As an instructional leader, she was aware that the strategies and the instructional practices used by the teachers are significant to student achievement, and she therefore guides the teachers to recognise their significance to academic performance (Mendels 2012). She is a transformational leader, who is proud of her job as a teacher, and consistent in conduct with underlying ethics, principles and values of being a teacher. She also emerged to be an inspirational leader in way that motivated other staff members in class teaching (Bass, Avolio, Jung and Berson 2003). Her actions inspire the teachers to believe that all learners have the ability to achieve, and therefore will have high expectations for all the learners (Ikemoto and Taliaferro 2012). Krasnoff (2015) contends that academic success becomes the driving force for improved instruction, which is subsequently adopted by all the teachers, so as to take the student progress to higher levels. This academic success will be proof of the principal's effectiveness, where she will have ensured that the school environment caters for effective teaching and learning.

She is a Motivator and an Advisor

Motivation is central to Debra's approach, and she always insist that the learners be motivated in order to boost their confidence in their studies and to change their behaviour. Learners should be made to see themselves passing the grade at the end of the year, and the only person capable of helping them achieve this mindset is the class teacher. She believed in motivating the learners intrinsically instead of extrinsically. If the leaners receives intrinsic motivation, they would be able to act responsibly, not for the sake of pleasing their teachers or the principal, but they would enjoy being the persons they became. When Debra gets into the class, the learners know that they ought to stand up, after which she will check their uniforms, and congratulate them. She does not limit herself to punishing them for misbehaviour, but makes sure to congratulate them when they do right. The other thing that she always does is to advise the teachers to carry their files whenever they go to class, as she always does. She models everything she wants the teachers to do. She comes early to school, leaves late, and monitors the afternoon classes, as she wishes all other teachers to do.

You need to look yourself in the mirror when you leave in the morning. You also need to check yourself before you tell the learners something. If I say the learners must be at school

at seven o'clock in the morning, I also need to check what time I arrive. You cannot tell learners about punctuality if you do not know the meaning of that. [sic]

Another way of motivating learners to perform at their best is to give awards to those learners who performed well. She suggested to the staff members that end of year results be analysed in January, together with the Grade 12 results. The analysis was presented to the parents in the first meeting of the year, before the formal award ceremony. Throughout the year, every quarter, the results were presented and awards were given in form of the certificates. Recently, they decided not to give certificates only, but best performed learners were also given trophies.

We are going to look at the best performing learner from Grade Seven up to Grade 12. For us to motivate them last year, for the whole of last year, the best performing learner per subject was at 70 percent. So if you did not get 70% in the exam, no award would be given. [sic]

She mentioned that the learners were motivated from the beginning of the year, as they were given certificates for Term One up to Term Three, but come Term Four, a certificate would be accompanied by a trophy, for being the best learner in that subject. If there is no 70%, there is no certificate, no trophy. So all the learners were fighting for 70%, where she thinks that is the reason why they had so many 70% in Grade 12 results, because they set high standards of achievement from the beginning of the year.

Ja, last week Friday I had a meeting with them; it was our first meeting since we started this year. The aim was just to tell them the difference between certificates, Diploma and Bachelors that they can get in Grade 12 and also to conscientise them about the requirements to get Certificates, Diploma and Bachelors. You also need to tell them that they cannot all get Bachelors, it is very important, so they must look at themselves and start working towards getting whatever they can get according to their IQ. We mostly motivate them to try and work towards ensuring that in each and every subject they pass at 50% so that they get Bachelors. On the other hand, there are these intelligent ones and we encourage them to work towards getting 70% in all the subject, because is not only the pass that will get you into university, is the quality of the pass. [sic]

Former students are not forgotten in this school, their contacts are recorded so that they may be called upon to motivate other learners in the school. Debra told me that they have people who 'adopt' the school, such as Mr. Mahlangu[8], who is an internal auditor of Mpumalanga Province. He assists with registration and keeps records and they also use him to track those learners who are at tertiary institutions.

Every time a learner is admitted to a university he also reports to say 'we are happy today so and so is admitted to Wits' or wherever. Then we are able to keep records of how to go about following them, because we even have their contacts. As soon as they get into their Matric class, like I said I was having a meeting with them last week Friday, the first thing in that meeting we circulate the register where they write their phone numbers. I then save them in my phone, I form a group then I am able to communicate with them even on Whatsapp. I use Whatsapp specifically for my learners most of the time. [sic]

Debra prefers the learners from the same village to lead this motivation task so that these learners may be encouraged, and prepared for tertiary education.

We want to use them as motivational speakers because in our programme for learner attainment strategies, we have a quarterly motivational speaker from outside, so I would not like to call an older person like myself to motivate young people, I prefer to have young people to come and motivate learners. So it is good when you get the same learners from the same village to come and motivate them, then they become motivated because they see that oh if these one can do it I can also do it since we are also from the same village. [sic]

Inviting tertiary students who are from the same village as their learners' builds more confident and hope that if some people are able to go beyond Grade 12, then they too can make it. By so doing, those students who are invited to motivate others are also motivate to see that they highly valued by the principal, teachers, learners and even the community.

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[8] Not a real name

She is empathetically driven

I had to go to High school bare foot, because my mother could not afford a pair of shoes.
[sic]

During our discussion I perceived some doubts and thoughts that Debra may have had some regrets after choosing to work in that school, in a poor community, with so many challenges. On the contrary, when she mentioned her childhood background, which I found difficult to believe, considering her present situation, it was obvious that she was driven by passion.

The other thing that makes me to even enjoy myself is that when I grew up I grew up in a very poor family. I remember when I did Grade 8 that was Standard 6 back then, I had to go to High school without shoes because my mother could not afford a pair of shoes. I went to school bare foot, at the High School, and back then it was a very big deal, but I had no choice. I was not that neat and tidy child that would be loved by teachers but remember one of my teachers when I was Grade 4. In that year my mother could not pay for my school fees and back then you remember how... you had no choice but pay school fees, buy books and textbooks and when I was doing Grade 4, I think one of my sisters was on matric, and the elder one doing nursing, and it was too much for my mother. She could not pay school fee for me and my twin brother, we at the same school. [sic]

I could also deduce that from her voice as she narrated her story, she still remembered every hardship she and her twin brother went through in their early years of schooling, and it was very emotional. That is one of the reasons that made her not to worry about the situation of the place and circumstances, but instead, she enjoyed herself in helping this community, because she grew up in a very poor family.

So what the teacher did, I assume, she went to the office and talked to the principal about that. Next time she came into the class I was afraid she was going to tell me about the school fees and she never said anything about the school fees and instead gave me a letter to give to my mother. In that letter she was saying it is ok the school fees will be cancelled. You know, that on its own, touched me very much, because I could see that she was empathetic to me, my brother and my family for the poverty in which we were. So because of my poverty background I have this soft spot for people who are poor. [sic]

It is plain that this teacher's actions served to guide Debra's own actions later in life. That

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serves as a proof for Debra's empathy, "unselfish, loyal and benevolent concern for the good of others" (Place 2013: 11). Academic performance is not her only concern, but she is also concerned about the overall wellbeing of the students and teachers. She even provides poor children with food so that they might be able to learn better (Place 2013). Due to her impoverished background, she developed a strong commitment to people who are poor, more especially children. Muzvidziwa (2014) also contends that childhood experience influences one's perception of others, and how she relates to them. The manner in which the principal responds to community problems is a reflection of a caring leader, committed to improving the well-being of people in her school environment. Even in her school, in her class, those learners who are looked down upon by everybody, those who are ridiculed, are very close to her heart. In other words Debra is an educational leader for social justice, because she focus her care and support mainly on those learners who have not received much care and support (Place 2013). Those are the learners that she always brings closer to her, and with whom she always tries to share her food.

In most cases, needy learners are shy, and afraid to come forward and explain their problems. It is therefore the duty of the teacher to identify them and take action to assist in their situation. When she has more bread, she brings it to school, and just says, I have bread and anyone who needs it can come to the office. Once you have this type of child closer to you, then it becomes easier to help by giving him or her things that they need. Debra also advises that it is important that as a teacher or a principal, you might also need to be closer to the parent too, because some parents may take it negatively.

Clearly, her family background contributed to the way in which she interacts and sympathise with the learners, especially those from disadvantaged families. This is evidence of relational leadership, as she manages her school in a caring manner (Smith 2013). She goes beyond her assigned duty of leading and managing the school, and providing food for those children in need (Peters 2012). Because of her focus on relationship, she frequently interacts with teachers, students and parents (Growe and Montgomery 2010). She is a link between school and the community, and ensures that the image of the school remains a good one. According to Smith (2013), Debra is in charge of all the efforts of the school, including curriculum, development of people, learners and infrastructure, as well as parents.

So, she stressed the importance of becoming closer to the parent as well so that they may

understand your relationship to the child. Debra thinks that her childhood experience is one of the things that contributed to her feelings that she needs to help this community. She has a similar background and knows exactly how it feels to be in a situation where one feels hopeless. She therefore wanted to give hope to this community to say, as she put it, *"as long as I am here, I will make sure that your children do not end up in that situation that you find this village or yourself in. Rather these children must take you out of this poverty and make you a better community"*. [sic]

To support this, Debra points out the reason they are trying so hard in the school to ensure that any learner that gets out of the school, must at least go through the process of a matric certificate, because that is the only way the community can find relief from poverty. She holds a belief that low education attainment plays a major role in perpetuating poverty, and therefore education, especially secondary education, is a major determinant of the brighter future and mobility out of poverty (SAHR and UNICEF 2014). Debra always maintains a caring relation with the learners and their families and always ensures that the care is well received by the cared for, in this case, the learners and their parents (Noddings 2005).

She is a mentor and a coach

"You can't have a championship team without a gifted coach because teams need leaders" (Ikemoto and Taliaferro 2012:5).

According to Hayes (2013), Debra understands very well that as a leader, her job is to ensure that the team members performs tasks for which they were trained. Without the team, there can be no mission, so the team comes before the mission. Ikemoto and Taliaferro (2012) assert that a leader like Debra is always relentless and thorough to improve teaching, performing her leadership duties frequently and intensely. Like the women principals mentioned in Growe and Montgomery (2010), Debra maintains frequent interaction with the staff, and spends more time in the classroom with teachers to discuss the academic and curricular areas of instruction, and tries by all means to assist with desirable teaching methods. She does this by observing the classroom often enough to be familiar with every single teacher's strength and weaknesses and progress toward improvement.

The most important aspect that Debra takes into consideration, before all efforts to improve teacher effectiveness, is thorough planning:

I already have a plan since last year, because I could see this coming from the June results. They performed well only in Term 1 then Term 2, because they set about 75% of the syllabus, then I could see that there is a problem and also in Term 3. I have already told them that I am going to pretend like they are new teachers for me. I am going to start with the induction and going with them to their classroom to look at what actually they are doing. I want the actual classroom environment just to see how they approach a lesson from the work schedule. What are their plans in ensuring that they cover up their work, the lesson that they plan, the presentation and the assessment of the learners. [sic]

Debra is future-orientated and ahead of her time, she foresees a problematic and challenging situation of poor results. She then decides to sit down and discuss with the staff members as to how to remedy the situation of poor performance. She already had a plan, and told them that she is going to pretend they are new teachers for her, and will start with the induction, where she will be accompanying every teacher to their classroom to look at what they are actually doing. This was not a fault-finding mission, but she wanted the actual classroom environment, just to see how they might approach a lesson from the work schedule. The other thing was to find out whether there are any plans in ensuring that the teachers cover their work, how they plan their lesson, how they deal with presentation and the assessment of the learners conducted. They therefore agreed that she was going to stay with each teacher for the whole week. In a week's time she would focus on a given teacher and grade. The action taken by Debra is like that of highly effective principals studied in Ikemoto and Taliaferro (2012), where the principal maintained a scheduled classroom to observe instruction and provide feedback. Most importantly, the feedback given has to be specific, timely and actionable so that the teachers can use it immediately to improve their practice.

From your period on Monday follow up on Tuesday until on Friday so that I must see step by step how do you teach, assess and how do you link the topics. Within a week I must be able to see how you link the topics. That's the plan that I had with them. [sic]

She also developed a shared vision for the brighter future of the school, through staff motivation and empowerment. The leadership was spread widely among all the staff members where everyone was encouraged to take responsibility and practice their roles fearlessly (Bipath 2012). Committees were changed every year so that everybody becomes experienced in all the structures and the systems of the school. Teachers were initially

resistant to this change, because they felt comfortable in their positions, for instance, those in the timetable committee had the advantage of manipulating the timetable such that it favoured their own scheduling interests. This was unfair on other staff members, since those in the timetable committee would put themselves strategically on the timetable so that they would not have first periods or last periods. Some members of the staff were neglected, and not given a chance, because committee members would not step down, complaining that they were experienced in their position and therefore ought to stay.

Debra holds the belief that people can be very innovative, but you cannot see them unless you place them in those positions. She believes in giving every staff members a chance to experience different role in the school activities, as a way to stimulate their efforts to be innovative and creative. As argued by Bipath (2012), the school culture was therefore transformed from a style that emphasises control, into on in which leadership is shared and spread widely among the staff.

Her way of managing conflict

I have a relationship with all the staff members and I am very hard and harsh, but there is no teacher that hates me. They always ask me how I stay positive all the time, and I tell them that there are two people in me. There is me Debra and there is me the Principal. When I interact with you, either is Debra or the Principal, and when I come to school I did not even know you. So there is no time for me to be personal with you because we are here for professional issues. So when I work with you whatever relationship that we have with you I try by all means to keep it professional. I don't call them and reprimand them in the corridors, when there is a problem I don't respond immediately, I take my time especially when they are angry. I take my time, allowing them to cool off, sometimes take a day or two before I attend to a problem. Isn't that when you differ with the teacher, they will go into all the staff rooms any complain, make noise with others and plan whatever? For the first two days she will be tired to go about telling people and when they are all waiting that you are going to respond, you don't respond, sit back and focus on other things. You wait up until you get this teacher alone without all this other educators, because they were waiting for you day one and two you did not respond, day three they continue with their work. One they get away from this teacher and the teacher is left alone then you get the teacher. Sit down with the teacher, formally so, you present the case and you don't even get angry. I tell them that there is no need to conflict, no need for us to fight because we are at work. It is normal

that we must differ, very much normal. We cannot be following each other like we are donkeys. [sic]

So it can be seen that Debra addresses conflict with a plan (Harris (2016) that does not resolve conflict alone, but a plan that also builds relationships. By doing this, the principal is able to pay attention to each individual's need or problem. Instead of resorting to conflict, she rather coaches the teacher for achievement, and therefore is displaying the characteristics of a transformational leader for considering individual needs, that is, individualised consideration (Bass et al. 2003). As stated by Mestry and Schimidt (2012) she acknowledges the importance of communication in resolving conflict. She avoids ridiculing or publicly criticising her staff members for their mistakes.

There is no need to be angry, I don't ever get angry, because whatever I do is my job and one of the most important parts of my job is to ensure that you do your work. When you push people hard, no wants to be pushed. Obviously when you push a person they will retaliate and its normal and I am pushing you because there is something wrong. [sic]

Debra acknowledges the fact that, it is very normal that sometimes there must be differences among people but that difference must awaken your mind (Harris 2016). She insists that whenever a problem arise, one must check what the cause is and ask these question as to why we might be this point? What happened? What led us to this point? After finding the cause, thereafter it is possible to start working towards the solution. If there is a need for an apology, apologise and pave the way forward.

Improving learner achievement

I am planning to get a teacher around this circuit, a good teacher who is passionate. There is a very good teacher at one of our neighbouring school, Mr. X, is very passionate. So I am going to arrange with him to teach my learners on Saturdays and afternoon. We will see how to augment with the resources. I tried a physics teacher but unfortunately, was too greedy. It is this teacher who feels that they must be paid for everything. He came over the September holidays; I wanted him to teach for a week on September holidays and for the camp. He wanted to be paid R200 a day, so I could not afford him, because he had no passion for the subject, but making money. I felt very bad, because I knew he can assist my children, but I could not afford his services, it was too much. [sic]

The main objective of every school is effective teaching and learning, which is followed by good results. Debra made efforts to get good results by getting another teacher to help with the most problematic subjects. Due to a lack of finance, her plans were unsuccessful. However, she didn't give up, but relied on the Learners' Camp, which is another way to improve learners' results, by taking them away from home and other disturbances in order give them enough time to study. I was surprised by the issue of the camp, and was really interested in how they managed the camp, since their school is not a boarding school, no proper accommodation for learners to sleep.

She then explained to me that the learners' camp is held immediately from the beginning of final examination of November/December, until they finish writing.

We adopted the Provincial programme that was saying 'let us walk the learners into the exam'. So we also adopted it to our school, to say we are not going to say, because they are writing exams, therefore they can stay at home, and come and write on the day they are writing. We said to them, 'ok, yes you are starting with your exams but you are going to come to school normally'. [sic]

Debra mentioned that the camp was successful and they were fortunate as a school because the learners were very cooperative. During this period, the learners were coming to school as usual, in their school uniform and started normally, at 8:00 until 15:00. After 15:00 they would go home and relax a bit, then prepare themselves for the evening classes, the Camp. Then at 18:00, the study would commence, up to 20:30. From then on, they would drink tea, as the school had bought them all the groceries for tea, and they would only bring bread and others. From 21:00, the learners would go back to their books, and study until 23:00. At 23:00 they knock off until the next day at 5:00. This routine continued until the last day of the examination. So the learners were advised to eat their supper at home, because the school could not afford to provide meals, only the tea was provided. In addition to camp, Debra is obliged to come up with diverse strategies to ensure the improvement of learner achievement.

We have also made a turnaround strategy in our school. We have also changed the educators who are teaching Maths at GET, so that it must be these vibrant educators, who are passionate about the subject, and who will be able to motivate the learner right from Grade

Seven to start loving the subject. Ultimately when they get to Grade 10 and 11, they have a nice base, and they are also passionate and love the subject. It needs a lot of hard work. [sic]

This was a good strategy, as explained by Debra, since it ensures that the learners get a strong base for the FET phase. According to Debra, it become easier, because the teacher ends up teaching Maths throughout both phases, and in that way, the teacher becomes a specialist in that subject. The aim of this reshuffling was to avoid blame from GET teachers by the FET teachers, where each subject teacher would progress with his or her learners from GET to FET phase. Therefore, when the time to account for poor performance has arrived, the teacher is required to be fully accountable for the failure of the learners, because the teacher themselves the one responsible for the learners throughout. As Debra has noted, "*so we have two teachers who are basically working on Maths, and we believe that can work because they are passionate, they are teaching in the FET phase and therefore they will give themselves time to also teach well in the GET.*"[sic]

Debra saw this plan of reshuffling as the good way of assisting and encouraging the teachers to focus on one subject. This is not only good for learner achievement, but would contribute in creating teachers who are subject masters. Moreover, she holds the belief that this strategy would encourage proper and quality teaching from the lower grades in the school. It was a very challenging decision for Debra, because it involved a great change for the teachers, and adjusting was not easy. In realising this challenge, Debra worked hard to provide support to the teachers, in the awareness that when people are pushed into doing something without their cooperation and understanding, no good job would be able to be done. So she stressed the important of ensuring that the teachers share the same vision as hers, and have the same passion that she wanted to see in those learners.

Debra would not stop to mention her first principal that gave her courage and confidence in her duties as the teacher. She always tried to be on his footstep when performing her leadership and management tasks.

Ja, he believed in me. You know he was confident that even if he can give me whatever duty, I am going to do it. That was an advantage of getting a very good principal that believes in me. I also have this teacher in my school, she is good in management and is always in touch

with educational issues. So when I send such a person to get information, I know for sure that I will get results. [sic]

Ikemoto and Taliaferro (2012) mentioned that it is of great significance that teachers are also give a sense of ownership over decision making of the school. As further commented by Ikemoto and Taliaferro (2012), the increased acceptance of and commitment to school-wide initiatives is possible because the teachers are given a voice in how the school is run. It is for that reason that Debra did everything in her power to create clear pathways for great teachers to expand their reach, both inside and outside the classroom.

She acknowledges Master teachers/ Experienced Teachers

Harris (2016) advises that it is a good and relevant practice for the principals to encourage new teachers, but that master teachers must not be forgotten. These master teachers are experts of the curriculum, and have sharpened their teaching skills to an art. Most importantly, students and parents know and love them, and they are a resource to other teachers in the school as well. In her school, Debra also has one teacher who has more teaching experience and has been declared a senior teacher. This teacher has been teaching for more than fifteen years, and she knows that even though this teacher is not in a management position, that he is nonetheless reliable and proven to be good a leader, because he contributed extensively in the management and leadership issues. When attending meetings and workshops, this teacher is able to give proper feedback and advice on some issues. She then saw a need for recognising this teacher's experience by matching his skills with the relevant roles and responsibilities that would fit the needs of the students and the school. In ensuring that the talent of these skilled teacher is not wasted but maximised, she co-opted him into the SMT. She decided to increase the number of SMT members, irrespective of the small number of staff, as a way of cultivating leadership and providing a pathway for leadership expertise and responsibilities (Ikemoto and Taliaferro 2012).

So the SMT in the school constitutes half of the staff, that is, six SMT members out of twelve staff members. Two of them are the ones who are officially appointed as HOD for languages and HOD for Sciences. The other three are assisting in the team, because their school has two phases, these appointed HOD is responsible for FET phase, and the one that is requested to assist is responsible for the GET phase. So Debra understands very well that when such

people are not given the opportunity to participate in leadership, their talent is wasted and the success of the school is jeopardised.

Where opportunities arise, I always tell them, go there and find something and maybe come back with something. Just by going there, they come back as different people. Even when opportunities for skill development come, they are the first people that I consider and have already given them two opportunities. They have completed the skill development course and they have done ACE in management. [sic]

Debra was still referring to the information he got when she was doing an ACE in one of the South African Universities, back in 2008. She remembered that their Professor was telling them that a school must always have people who will come and get into the managerial position when the principal leaves. So to achieve that, a principal must always work towards creating leaders from the very same staff, because they are familiar with the culture of the school. It is unlikely getting somebody from outside, who would come with their own culture, and whom it would take staff time to get to know.

4.3 Conclusion

The success and effectiveness of any school relies on the leadership of a caring principal. Debra's management experience has never been easy, but has been accompanied by a number of challenges that brought about difficulties in performing her management duties. She experienced gender discrimination due to cultural stereotypes. The school she manages was a high-poverty, low performing or dysfunctional school, with a lack of parental support. Moreover, there was a lack of discipline in the school, where learner and teacher absenteeism was prevalent. It was a school with a corrupt culture, where the widespread of apathy among teachers and learners was in control. Despite the challenges, Debra succeeded in transforming the dysfunctional school into a high-performing one, by her feminine acts of caring and her activist leadership approach.

CHAPTER 5: Gendering transformational leadership

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I use Transformational Leadership Theory as described by Bass (1999) to analyse the findings discussed in Chapter 4. To recount, Transformational Leadership Theory comprises four key components. A leader with an *idealised influence* or *charisma* envisions a desirable future, and articulates how it can be reached. The leader is the role model to the followers, sets high standards of performance, determined and confident. Followers want to identify with such a leader, who is *intellectually stimulating,* by assisting followers to become more innovative and creative (Bass 1999). This transformational leader refrains from ridiculing and publicly criticising individual mistakes but is open to accepting new ideas and creative solutions to problems (Bass, Avolio, Jung and Berson 2003). The transformational leader has *Individualised consideration,* because she pays attention to the developmental needs of followers, and devises means to coach and support their development.

I use Debra's story to expand transformational leadership theory. Bass (1999). Bass argues that a Transformational Leader makes efforts to move the followers beyond immediate self-interest, through idealised influence or charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration. In addition, my study was informed by caring leadership by Place (2013), and the activist approach of Hayes (2013). Place (2013) has argued that without care, effective management of the school is impossible. Caring and education can transform everyone in the school, and care plays a major role in transforming relationships between student, teachers, support staff and parents. Moreover, Hayes (2013) has stated that activist leaders are enthusiastic, optimistic and advanced leaders, who can see the end of the mission. In using Bass (1999), Place (2013) and Hayes (2013), I offer in-depth exploration into the strategies used by Debra in transforming the school. I use this idea to analyse how Debra was able to transform a dysfunctional school into a highly functional, high-performing school.

Indeed Debra's story builds on transformation leadership theory in two ways, where she shows:
- that caring is transformational; and
- that an activist approach to leadership is also potentially transformative.

Looking back

I conducted this research study with the purpose of exploring the strategies used by a woman principal to build a successful high school. The main question of the study was:

How do female principals build successful schools?

To respond to this my sub-questions looked at the challenges that woman principals experiences and what strategies they use to overcome these in order to build successful schools.

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two reveals that women principals experience their leadership roles differently, when compared to their male counterparts. Patriarchal belief held by society that management and leadership are men's jobs, hinder the women in performing their administration duties. Regardless of these challenges, women manage to obtain such positions. However, women are often appointed to lead rural and dysfunctional schools lacking in resources and with a corrupt culture. Studies further show that female leadership styles differ from those of men. Instead of being autocratic like men, women choose democratic and collaborative leadership styles. Their feminine nature, of caring and empathy enable them to transform the culture of schools.

I made use of narrative inquiry as the research methodology to obtain the story of Debra's leadership experiences. In-depth and semi-structured interviews, supported by school documents, were employed to obtain a rich and reliable data. The analysis of the data produced the story that is presented in Chapter Four.

Debra's story provides the holistic picture of her management experiences through her transforming acts of caring and activism. In this chapter, I therefore show that her management strategies build on and extend Transformational Leadership Theory. The dependency and the extension of her management strategies is clearly explained by the components of Transformational Leadership, namely: *idealised influence, inspirational motivating*, *intellectual stimulating* and *individualised consideration* (Bass 1999).

5.2 Caring is transformational

The school Debra was appointed in symbolises a jungle, because it was dysfunctional in both academic achievement and discipline. Teachers lacked direction, and so the learners were neglected. Moreover, the school lacked financial resources, as well as human resources, but Debra was brave enough to lead this school. Like a lioness, her care is unlimited, she cares for the young, for the older or injured, as well. Her intention, as highlighted by Hayes (2013), was not to steal the limelight from other experienced teachers she found in the school. All she wanted was to be the principal for all students, teachers and community members (Place 2013). Instead of feeling overwhelmed by the challenges of the school, she took things one small step at a time, with love (Place 2013).

For the findings presented below, I refer to the Transformational Leadership Theory by Bass (1999), which states that a leader worked tirelessly to elevate the followers' level of maturity and ideals, as well as concern for achievement, self-activation and the well-being of others, the organisation and society. Her ethics of care and activism led to the transformed culture of the school, and improved academic learner performance.

Leading by example is Debra's motto and her way of showing care to her followers. She became exemplary by adopting the most problematic class, working together with the class teacher and managing to change the learners' behaviour by cultivating a sense of belonging. She models everything she wants the teachers to do. For example, she comes early to school, leaves late, and monitors the afternoon classes, as she wishes all the teacher to do. Teachers are advised to be in possession of their teaching resources, such as files, as she always carries hers whenever she goes to class. She works according to the Transformational Leadership theory, and she exudes the kind of charisma that encourages the teachers to identify with her.

Debra makes use of technology to strategically convey a caring attitude, and to promote a continuous atmosphere of care. She can balance the ever-increasing presence and influence of technologies with the academic and professional goals of education. She uses social network to communicate with the students after school, to check if they are coping with their tertiary studies. It was therefore possible for her to keep on motivating and lend her support whenever the learners experience some challenges. Debra is therefore compassionate to the learners, even when they have moved to other levels of education. Her transformational leadership style is considerate of all the followers, including the learners. She continues to

be an inspirational motivator to the learners, in order to help them achieve their goals for the future.

Debra is caring for everyone in the school, teachers, learners and parents (Place 2013). She is an inspiration to her subordinates as she sets high standards of achievement for the learners and ensures the provision of continuous encouragement. An award ceremony is held quarterly at her school, where certificates and trophies are awarded to the best performing learners. The rewards given to the learners are based on high performance, from 70% per subject upwards. Parents are invited to these award ceremonies, so as to celebrate the achievement of their children. Transformational Leadership theory is expressed in terms of inspirational motivation for both learners and teachers, for hard work and determination in school work. Parents are also inspired by being recognised when their children's achievement is rewarded.

Caring principals empower everyone in the school as a way to foster improvement and significance change. She questions the traditional ways of doing things, and encourages her followers to rethink ideas that had never been questioned. She empowers the teachers by ensuring that leadership is shared, and spread widely among the staff. Committees are changed annually, so that every teacher becomes experienced in all the structures and systems of the school. This is according to Transformational Leadership Theory, because intellectual stimulation gives an opportunity to be creative and innovative.

Debra has shown herself to be a caring instructional leader by ensuring that she knows whether the teacher is engaging students in learning (Place 2013). This knowledge is used to assist the teacher if required, in specific subjects. Debra plans to spend some time teaching and coaching followers. Her focus is on developing the strengths of individual teachers. By observing the classroom regularly, Debra is familiar with every single teacher's strengths and weaknesses, as well as progress toward improvement. She is a caring leader, who understands that followers are important, as individual human beings. Curriculum Advisors are warmly welcomed in her school, because she advised her staff to use them effectively for issues or problems related to curriculum. This indicates that Debra is a transformational leader with individualised consideration.

The caring role played by Debra is consistent with the four component of Transformational Leadership Theory, that is, idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. Leading by example is achievable through her charisma, which inspires her teachers. The staff is given the opportunity to be creative and innovative, and are allowed to take part in various structure and system of the school. This is the practice that stimulates the intellectual abilities of people. Lastly, she is aware of the individual strength and weaknesses of each staff member. The component of individualised consideration is displayed as she strives toward improving the progress of those in need of assistance. This proves that Debra's leadership strategies build on Transformational Leadership Theory.

Debra's leadership strategies further extend to Transformational Leadership Theory, because it does not concentrate on the followers as teachers only. Her caring attitude extends from the learners and teachers, to the community and parents. Moreover, learners who matriculate through Debra's school are not forgotten, but continue to be cared for. These former students are involved during the award ceremonies, and Matric farewells, to motivate other learners.

In this way, caring works wonders for improving the morale in the school, while influencing the quality of working life for its constituency. Feminine attributes of caring leadership bring noticeable transformation in the school. The transformational leadership role played by Debra was facilitated by her caring attitude and activist leadership approach.

5.3 Activist approach to leadership is Transformational

"Leading without considering people is a failed mission from the beginning. The activist leader relies on helping others work and move together toward a common goal" (Hayes 2013). An activist leader understands that for the mission to be completed, team cohesion is the prerequisite. An activist leader is explained in terms of leadership facets, which include: activation, role modelling, training and development, and innovation and advocacy.

Activation is one of those facets of the activist leader that focuses on working on team progress, instead of individual progress (Hayes 2013). The leaders acknowledges experienced team members to assist in school management. With their expertise on the subject, they are also assigned to help less experienced members in their subject. Debra then

saw a need for recognising this teacher's experience, by matching his skills with the relevant roles and responsibilities that will fit the needs of the students and the school. In ensuring that the talent of these skilled teachers is not wasted, but instead, maximised, she co-opted him into the SMT. Debra display inspirational motivation, because the experience of the teacher is maximally utilised towards the broader school mission. This facet of activist leadership is based on Transformational Leadership Theory.

An activist leader is innovative, ensures that team members are always engaged in various school activities, and are allowed autonomy in developing new ways of doing things. Every teacher in Debra's school is given an opportunity to experience new roles in order to acquire new skills. This is done by allocating them into different committees, where they perform different activities each year. This is an activist approach that is intellectually stimulating, because the teachers are assisted towards creativity and innovation. Transformational leadership theory is made manifest through the component of intellectual stimulation, because the teachers are challenged beyond their comfort zones.

Hayes (2013) argues that an activist leaders is a role model, where she leads by example, and therefore has to jump in and work, in order to complete her mission. She inspires the team members by standing with them in difficult times. For example, she decided to work together with the class teacher to resolve issues of learner discipline and absenteeism. When there is a project to be done, she is the first one to get her hands dirty. She role models the required attitudes and behaviour, for example, she make sure that she arrives at school on time in possession of all the require resources, such as the files. Transformational leadership theory is confirmed through her influence over staff.

Furthermore, her innovation is displayed by her ability to formulate policies as informed by the situation in the school. As an activist leader, she is concerned about the well-being and fair treatment of individual staff members. During the examination period, marking was taking a long time, and delayed the submission mark schedules to the Circuit Office. Debra, together with the SMT, developed the marking policy so as to ensure that every teacher completed his or her marking on time, without waiting for others to help. The old ways of doing things or reliance on others was called into question, and modified so as to benefit everyone in the school. This is an individualised act of consideration that is part of the Transformational Leadership model.

Training and developing team members is another important aspect of activist leadership (Hayes 2013). Debra always strives to help her team members to perform their duties to the best of their ability, so that they fit into the vision of the school. Through her activist leadership approach, she trains the team members, so as to ensure that they have the relevant skills for their job, and that they make some follow up, so as to check if they apply the skills. She conducts class visits to observe instruction, and provide actionable feedback on time. Her vision is to inspire and motivate followers to achieve the important goal of the school. Moreover, she pays attention to the teachers' individual needs, and so provides ongoing professional development and personal growth. She is also a transformational leader with individualised consideration.

An activist leader is an advocate, when team members and learners face challenges (Hayes 2013). Debra, through her activist approach to leadership, provides support for the teachers by assisting them in classroom management and discipline when necessary. Social justice for every learner is her main responsibility. Debra could not stand to see one of the learners mistreated, and she then decided to intervene when one learner became chronically late to school. Instead of punishing the learner for late coming, she saw it relevant that she determine the actual cause of late coming. She then managed to determine the cause and intervene by meeting with the parents, in order to discuss the matter, and to give advice, for the sake of the education of the learner. This intervention symbolises compassionate leader with individualised consideration, based on Transformational Leadership Theory.

As stated in Hayes (2013), Debra is an activist leader who is forward looking and thinking. Failure does not discourage her, because she believes that failing in one area means that one is closer to the solution. Before being appointment, the school's level of academic achievement was very poor. In the first year of her leadership in Thembisile, there was no improvement of results as expected by the community and the Department of Education, who went from 20.33% in 2011 and 32.3% in 2012. Because she knew that failing ought not to prove an impediment to growth, she kept on investigating for the solution until the situation changed. Eventually, the results went up to 83.76 and 78% in 2013 and 2014, respectively. She therefore won two awards for Best Improved Performance and the Best Performing School. Through an activist leadership approach, Debra's strategies truly build on Transformational Leadership Theory.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This study confirms that Debra's management strategies builds and extends Transformational Leadership Theory. This study shows that caring is also transformational. Caring leadership has the power to transform dysfunctional school to a high-performing school through charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration. A good relationship between teachers and learners and between the school, the parents and the community is the manifestation of transformational and caring leadership. Transformational leadership Theory is extended in the act of caring, and being gentle and humane. This study has shown that Debra was able to use her activism and her attitude of care to exercise transformational leadership.

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7. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Researcher: Sibongile Maria Zulu
Cell: 0849981959
Email: oz.ofentsy@gmail.com

Supervisor: Professor Venitha Pillay
Email: Venitha.Pillay@up.ac.za

Co-supervisor: Dr Teresa A Ogina
Email: Teresa.Ogina@up.ac.za

Circuit Director
Mpumalanga Department of Education
Siyabuswa
0472

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

Dear Sir

My name is Sibongile Maria Zulu. I am a Masters Student at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies under the supervision of Professor Venitha Pillay and co- supervisor, Dr Tersesa Ogina. My research topic is: **SUCCESSFUL WAYS OF MANAGING SCHOOLS: A STORY OF A WOMAN PRINCIPAL**. The purpose of this study is to explore strategies employed by women principals to build successful high schools.

I hereby seek your consent to approach one high school headed by a woman principal in the Nkangala District, Mpumalanga Province as the participant for this project. I have provided you with a copy of my proposal which includes copies of the measure and

consent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the University Of Pretoria Research Ethics Committee in (EMPS).

This research project will involve in-depth and a semi-structured interviews with the principal as the participant. The interviews will be conducted after school hours to avoid disturbance in her work. The interviews will take place at the school or an alternative place that suits the principal. I will further seek consent from her to tape record the interview. After transcribing the interview, I may ask the principal for a follow up interview for clarity.

The information obtained will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used solely for the research purpose and there are no known risks the principal as the participant. The principal is not going to be required to respond to acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes. Her name and the name of the school will be anonymous. Pseudonyms will be used to conceal her identity and the name of the school. Her participation is voluntary and she will not be subjected to any risk or harm of any kind. The principal will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. The information is only required to assist the researcher to in her studies.

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide the Department of Education with a bound copy of the full research report. If you require any further information, please contact me or my supervisors on the contact details mention on this letter.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.
Yours Faithfully
Zulu S M
University of Pretoria

APPENDIX 2

Researcher: Sibongile Maria Zulu
Cell: 0849981959
Email: oz.ofentsy@gmail.com

Supervisor: Professor Venitha Pillay
Email: Venitha.Pillay@up.ac.za

Co-supervisor: Dr Teresa A Ogina
Email: Teresa.Ogina@up.ac.za

<div align="center">

Circuit Manager's Consent Form

</div>

The topic of the research is: **SUCCESSFUL WAYS OF MANAGING SCHOOLS: A STORY OF A WOMAN PRINCIPAL.**

I understand that the principal will be interviewed about this topic at a venue and time that will suit her, but that will not interfere with school activities or teaching time. I give consent for the principal to be interviewed and for the interviews to be audio taped. I further give consent for the handover of the copies of school policy, management plans and minutes of meetings to be analysed by the researcher as part of data collection.

The principal's participation in this project is voluntary and I understand that she may withdraw from the research project at any time. Under no circumstances will her identity be made known to any parties or organisations that may be involved in the research process. The information is only required to assist the researcher to complete his study.

I understand that the researcher subscribes to the principles of:

_ *Voluntary participation* in research, implying that the participants might withdraw from the research at any time.

_ *Informed consent*, meaning that research participants must at all times be fully informed about the research process and purposes, and must give consent to their participation in the research.

_ *Safety in participation*; put differently, that the human respondents should not be placed at risk or harm of any kind e.g., research with young children.

_ *Privacy*, meaning that the *confidentiality* and *anonymity* of human respondents should be

---

protected at all times.

_ *Trust*, which implies that human respondents will not be respondent to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.

I agree / do not agree to allow Ms Zulu SM to conduct research in this school.

Name of the Circuit Manager: _____

Signatures: Circuit Director_____ **Date** _____

Name of the Researcher: _____

Signatures: Researcher _____ **Date** _____

Name of the Supervisor: _____

Signatures: Supervisor _____ **Date** _____

Researcher: Sibongile Maria Zulu
Cell: 0849981959
Email: oz.ofentsy@gmail.com

Supervisor: Professor Venitha Pillay
Email: Venitha.Pillay@up.ac.za

Co-supervisor: Dr Teresa A Ogina
Email: Teresa.Ogina@up.ac.za

Dear Principal

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

My name is Sibongile Maria Zulu, I am a Masters student at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies. I am under the suoervision of Professor Venitha Pillay and co-supervisor, Dr Teresa Ogina. My research topic is: SUCCESSFIL WAYS OF MANAGING SCHOOLS: A STORY OF A WOMAN PRINCIPAL. The purpose of this study is to explore strategies employed by women principals to build successful high schools.

You are invited to participate in this research study. Your personal contribution and responses are crucial in assisting me and those who seek to take on the school leadership, in understanding the Management strategies of women principals in high schools. I also want to understand the challenges you experiences and the ways in which you overcome the challenges. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time should you uncomfortable to be part of the study.

This research project will involve in-depth and semi-structured interviews with you. The interviews will be conducted after school hours to avoid disturbance in your work. The interviews will take place at your school or at alternative place that suits you. I will further

seek consent to tape record the interviews. After transcribing the interview, I may ask for follow up interviews for clarity.

The information obtained will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used solely for the research purposes and there are no known risks to you as the participant. You are not going to be required to respond to acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes. Tour name and the name of your school will be anonymous. Pseudonyms will be used to conceal your identity and the name of your school. Your participation is voluntary and you will not be subjected to any risk or harm of any kind. You will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. The information is only required to assist the researcher to complete her study.

Yours Faithfully

Zulu SM

Name of the Participant: _____

Signature: Participant: _____ Date _____

Name of the Researcher: _____

Signature: Researcher _____ Date _____

Name of the Supervisor _____

Signatures: Supervisor _____ Date _____

APPENDIX 4

<div align="center">Participant's Consent Form</div>

The topic of the research is: SUCCESSFUL WAYS OF MANAGING SCHOOLS: A STORY OF A WOMAN PRINCIPAL.

I understand that I will be interviewed about this topic for approximately two hours at a venue and time that will suit me, but that will not interfere with school activities or teaching time. I give consent to be interviewed and for the interviews to be audio taped. I further give consent to handover the copies of school policy, management plans and minutes of meetings to be analysed by the researcher as part of data collection.

My participation in this project is voluntary and I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any time. Under no circumstances will my identity of be made known to any parties or organisations that may be involved in the research process. The information is only required to assist the researcher to complete his study.

I understand that the researcher subscribes to the principles of:

_ *Voluntary participation* in research, implying that the participants might withdraw from the research at any time.

_ *Informed consent*, meaning that research participants must at all times be fully informed about the research process and purposes, and must give consent to their participation in the research.

_ *Safety in participation*; put differently, that the human respondents should not be placed at risk or harm of any kind e.g., research with young children.

_ *Privacy*, meaning that the *confidentiality* and *anonymity* of human respondents should be protected at all times.

_ *Trust*, which implies that human respondents will not be respondent to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.

I agree / do not agree to allow Ms Zulu SM to conduct research in this school.

Name of the Participant: _____

Signature: Participant: _____ **Date** _____

Name of the Researcher: _____

Signature: Researcher _____ **Date** _____

Name of the Supervisor _____

Signatures: Supervisor _____ **Date** _____

APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Researcher: Zulu SM

Research Topic: **Successful Ways of Managing Schools: Story of a woman principal**

The purpose of this schedule is to understand women principals' experiences in managing high schools and to explore management strategies used to build successful schools.

For the purpose of this research a definition of a Successful school is given below:

Successful school is a school with unique characteristics and processes which are correlated with student success. There are seven correlates that identify a successful school and they are: a clear school mission, high expectations for success, instructional leadership, opportunity to learn and time on task, a safe and orderly environment, positive home-school relations, and frequent monitoring of student progress (Kirk and Jones 2004).

This interview will be guided by the following questions:

1. Tell me about your management experiences from the first day as the principal in this school.
2. In your opinion, what is your role as a school leader?
3. Tell me about the development of your school's vision or goals.
4. How did you build consensus around your school's vision and goals?
5. What are the most imaginative things that you have done in your present position?
6. What kind of problems did you encounter since you were appointed? Did manage to solve them? Tell me how you solved them.
7. In your position as the principal, what did you learn? How did you apply this learning?
8. How do you stay current in your area of expertise, that is, management of your school?
9. How do you grow professionally in your current position? How is your growth supported by those around you?

10. How do you foster the development of and maintenance of a professional, collaborative school culture?
11. How do you promote the individual professional growth of your staff members?
12. What type of opportunities or activities do you provide for your staff in efforts to promote their intellectual stimulation?
13. Do you model desired professional practices for your staff? If so, how? Will you provide examples?
14. How do you encourage the development of leadership across the school?
15. How do you ensure that the school climate is hospitable to teaching and learning?
16. Is there anything you would like to share about your life experiences that have contributed to your success as the high school leader?

APPENDIX 6

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT (2)

Me: Good evening Debra

Debra: Good evening Sibongile, you may come in.

Me: Thank you, how are you?

Debra: I'm okay and how are you?

Me: I fine and hope you are now fine and rested enough after your daughter's wedding and the award ceremony at your school.

Debra: Yes I am fine now and happy because I also managed to do all my submission to the Circuit.

Me: Yes it's good if you submit even before the due date because you do not have to work under pressure. Did the award ceremony go well?

Debra: They went very well. We managed to get trophies but we gave a best learner per grade, from grade 7. We differentiated the trophies according to the sizes; the smaller grade got the smaller trophy. We had because they didn't put the emblem on the trophy but we improvised by printing the emblem on our own printer and paste it on the trophies. It was so good in such a way that the parents we speechless. We gave them certificates too. Every year we must budget for the trophies

Me: So do you cope with the money from the Department or you have other sources?

Debra: It's tough because the service providers and businesses don't want to cooperate with schools; they see schools as not influential. They want to cooperate with Circuits and District offices because they are able to get a bigger market. With schools, we struggle, it is very rare that you can go and ask for a donation and get it except for those big ones like Old Mutual and Lottery, that's where you will get attention because they are also catering for schools. With the local businesses, you will leave your application there and will never even look at it or they just go to storeroom and bring something that is not actually adding value. So we do not get much cooperation from the local businesses unless maybe if we can request a meeting with the manager but even if that is the case you have to present your case very well and you have to ensure that you go there well prepared and you are not talking about something that you are expecting now, it must be something you are expecting maybe six months from now or so because they will tell you about the processes of the head office and that it must approve whatever that you are asking for. So it is a bit of a challenge but sometimes we use parents, you know, and we tell them about the project because initially we struggled when they introduced the no fee school process, they told us that once you are declared a no fee school then you cannot go back to parents and request anything. Fortunately last, after they realized their allocation is too little, they reemerged

and come to say, you can go to the parents and ask openly so that I am asking for the donation. If they give those donations, then you are fine. So at least in that case, our plan for this year is to go out there and ask from parents but you must be well prepared because you must have all your projects in one piece. You must tell the parents the type of projects you need money for so that when it comes in it goes straight to the project and follow up the processes of asking for donations.

Me: They must see the project happening

Debra: Yea...they must see project and you must go back and report to them so that is something that we need to work on. The unfortunate part is that right now we are changing SGBs, we are electing in March, so we will wait for the new SGB and sell the ideas that we have for School Development plan. Anyway the new SGB is going to come up with its own developmental plan for three years. It is then that we can also put all the things that we have like, annual cultural thing of giving awards.

Me: From our last conversation you talked of paying university registration fee for the learners who performed well. I would like to know how you manage to do all these good things.

Debra: Okay this one of registration is not so expensive and we have people who adopt schools. Since we started as an under-performing school and once you are an under-performing school, there is this portfolio committee of education in the province. This committee presents the situation of the school to community leaders and will have people in the community adopt the school. Those people are the ones that we use to come and assist these learners in case of registrations.