

**EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF BEGINNER PRINCIPALS IN SCHOOL  
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**by**

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**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

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**DECEMBER 2018**

## **Declaration**

I declare that the dissertation/thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree Philosophie Doctor at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

.....

SEPURU M G

DECEMBER 2018

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this research to my mother Raesetja Rebecca Sepuru for her wisdom, support and encouragement. She believed in me throughout all my challenges. And to my wife Mary, my children Koena, Thabang and Reneilwe, for their outstanding support, care and love. They have been my motivation to complete this study.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This was a qualitative study that used a multiple case study methodology to explore the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management in the Capricorn District in the Limpopo Province. Fifteen beginner principals were sampled from city, township and rural schools as participants. This study contributes the voices of beginner principals about their experiences in school leadership and management.

The literature acknowledges the need for the support and development of preparation and training programmes for beginner principals. This study used the theory of leadership as a career as a lens to explore the experiences of beginner principals after they have been appointed school principals.

The findings derived from this study have confirmed that newly appointed principals are faced with leadership and management challenges. In order for them to perform their new role, they needed to receive systematic and comprehensive preparation and training programmes. The study revealed that teaching experience and further studies in educational management alone are not enough to prepare one for a principalship. The fifteen participants were all teachers in different post levels; they faced challenges ranging from managing the curriculum, human resources, finance, stakeholder relations and the legislative framework among others. The beginner principals confessed that there is a considerable difference between the roles of a principal and other post levels in the school. The appointment of beginner principals was done randomly, across all the post levels without necessarily considering the seniority and the highest qualifications of the candidates.

The findings were consistent with the literature that indicates that most beginner principals are appointed as principals without the necessary competencies. There was no support programme in place to support beginner principals, in particular. In the light of the findings, it is recommended that leadership and management skills must be integrated within the careers so that teachers are progressively developed during their careers. The study proposed the application of the integrated leadership and management model to the Limpopo Department of Education and policymakers as a support programme for aspirant and beginner principals.

**KEY TERMS:**

Aspirant principal,

Appointment,

Beginner principals,

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Leadership and management,

Learners,

Beginner principal preparation,

Principal,

Principalship,

Teachers,

Training.



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- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
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**List of abbreviations and acronyms**

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
AGM	Annual General Meeting
ANA	Annual National Assessment
AMESA	Association of Mathematics Educators in South Africa
APIP	Academic Performance Improvement Plan
APP	Annual Performance Plan
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CEO	Chief Executive Office
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
EEA	Employment of Educators Act
ELM	Education Leadership and Management
ELRC	Education Labour Relation Council
ELSEN	Education for Learners with Special Educational Needs
EMD	Education Management Development
EMIS	Education management Information System
EMTI	Education Management Training Institute
ERS	Education Renewal Strategy
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education Training
HEADLAMP	Headship Leadership and Management Programme
HOD	Head of Department (Head Office)
HoD	Head of Department (School based)
HRD	Human Resources Development
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
ISLLC	Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium
ISPFTED	Integrated Strategy Planning Framework for Teacher Development
KIPP	Knowledge is Power Programme
LDoE	Limpopo Department of Education
LPSH	Leadership Programme for Serving Heads
MEC	Member of Executive Council
MST	Maths Science and Technology
NAESP	National Association of Elementary School Principals
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa
NATU	National Association Teachers' Union
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
NGO	None Government Organisation

NLNS	New Leaders for New Schools
NPQH	National Professional Qualification Headship
NQF	National Qualification Framework
OBE	Out Comes Based Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measure
PEU	Professional Educators' Union
PFAM	Public Finance Management Act
PL	Post Level
REQV	Relative Education Qualification Value
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SA	South Africa
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SANPQP	South African National Professional Qualification for Principalship
SAOU	Suid Afrikaans Onderwyser Unie
SASA	South African Schools Act
SASP	South African Standards for Principalship
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
TED	Teacher Education Development
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Key terms.....	vi
Ethics certificate.....	vii
Language editor .....	viii
List of abbreviations and acronyms .....	ix
Table of Contents .....	xi

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT .....	11
1.3. STUDYPURPOSE.....	17
1.4. RATIONALE.....	18
1.5. BEGINNER PRINCIPAL AND PRINCIPALSHIP .....	20
1.6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	21
1.7. AIM AND OBJECTIVES .....	21
1.7.1. Aim of the study .....	21
1.7.2. Objectives of the study.....	21
1.8. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	22
1.8.1. Formation stage .....	23
1.8.2. Accession stage .....	24
1.8.3. Incumbency stage .....	25
1.9. EPISTEMOLOGY AND ONTOLOGY OF THE STUDY .....	25
1.10. RESEARCH PARADIGM .....	26
1.11. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	28
1.11.1. Research design .....	29
1.11.2. Sampling .....	31
1.11.3. Data collection .....	32
1.11.4. Data analysis .....	33
1.12. BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE .....	36

1.13. TRUSTWORTHINESS .....	43
1.14. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	44
1.15. LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS .....	45
1.16. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY .....	45
1.17. STUDY MAP .....	46

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.1 INTRODUCTION .....	48
2.2 PRINCIPALSHIP LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA AND OTHER COUNTRIES .....	51
2.3. CAREER PATHWAYS IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT .....	59
2.4. BEGINNER PRINCIPALS IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT .....	67
2.5. CONCEPTUALISING LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT .....	71
2.5.1. The leadership roles of a school principal .....	74
2.5.2. The management functions of a school principal .....	76
2.5.2.1. Planning .....	77
2.5.2.2. Organising .....	78
2.5.2.3. Leading .....	78
2.5.2.4. Controlling .....	79
2.6. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DEVELOPING BEGINNER PRINCIPALS .....	80
2.7. CONCLUSION .....	92

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAME WORK**

3.1. INTRODUCTION .....	94
3.2. RESEARCH METHODS.....	94
3.3. RESEARCH PARADIGM .....	97
3.3.1. Interpretivist approach.....	101
3.4. RESEARCH DESIGN .....	102
3.4.1. Case study research design .....	103
3.5. DATA COLLECTION METHODS .....	106

3.5.1. Interviews .....	107
3.5.2. Field notes .....	110
3.5.3. Sampling .....	111
3.6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	114
3.7. DATA ANALYSIS .....	119
3.7.1. Thematic analysis .....	120
3.8. TAPE RECORDING .....	123
3.9. TRIANGULATION METHODS .....	124
3.10. TRUSTWORTHINESS .....	125
3.10.1. Credibility .....	126
3.10.2. Dependability .....	127
3.10.3. Conformability .....	128
3.10.4. Transferability .....	128
3.11. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	129
3.12. CONCLUSION .....	131

**CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

4.1. INTRODUCTION .....	133
4.2. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS .....	134
4.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THEMES.....	136
4.4. DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS .....	137
4.5. EMERGING THEMES IN LINE WITH GRONN’S THEORY .....	142
4.5.1. Career advancement .....	143
4.5.2. Pathway for leadership during the accession stage .....	151
4.5.3. Performance of leadership and management tasks during the incumbency stage.....	155
4.5.4. Beginner principal’s expectations when assuming principalship position .....	161
4.5.5. Preparations, development and success of beginner principals in school leadership and management.....	178
4.7. LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE STUDY.....	180
4.8. CONCLUSION .....	181

## **CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

5.1. INTRODUCTION .....	182
5.2. SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS .....	183
5.3. STUDY FINDINGS .....	185
5.4. KEY FINDINGS .....	186
5.4.1. Finding one – Internal career advancement.....	186
5.4.2. Finding two – Pathway to leadership.....	189
5.4.3. Finding three – Training and induction for leadership and management performance .....	193
5.4.4. Finding four – Challenges of leadership and management of beginner principals.....	197
5.4.5. Finding five – The success of beginner principals in school leadership and management .....	203
5.5. STUDY CONTRIBUTION .....	204
5.5.1. School-based integrated leadership and management model .....	207
5.6. CONCLUSIONS.....	216
5.7. RECOMMENDATIONS .....	221
5.8. CONCLUSION .....	229
<b>LIST OF REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>231</b>

### **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 3.1: Random promotion of teachers into principalship post. ....	113
Figure 3.2: Participants experience in leadership and management post. ....	114
Figure 3.3: The promotion model from one post level to the principalship .....	117
Figure 3.4: Six steps of thematic analysis .....	121
Figure 5.1: School-based integrated leadership and management model .....	206

### **ANNEXURE**

Annexure A: Letter requesting permission to conduct research.....	255
Annexure B: Letter of approval to conduct the research .....	256
Annexure C: Letter of request .....	258
Annexure D: Consent letter from beginner principals to participate in the research. ....	259
Annexure E: Research Questions.....	260
Annexure F: Documents verification tool .....	261

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: South African standard for principalship by the DoE, 2005 and DBE, 2014.....	40
Table 4.1: Biographical Information of the beginner principals involved in the study.....	134
Table 4.2: Research questions, theoretical framework and themes .....	137
Table 4.3: Core duties and responsibilities of teachers according to PAM .....	171

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Principalship involves a position of power, authority, influence and decision-making in a school. Cheney, Davis, Garrett and Holleran (2010) and Hausiku (2015) contend that if we want to improve learner performance in schools, the focus has to be on the development and training of the principal as a leader. There is no school for principals. Instead, the teaching profession itself produces leaders who aspire principalship positions. After following due processes, the aspirant leaders are appointed principals and become leaders and managers of schools. In their early years of appointment, they are called beginner or novice principals (Meigs, 2008, Bodger, 2011, Jeap, 2013; Harman, Tomlinson, Atkinson, Levery, Newman & Westbrook, 2013).

Despite the level of knowledge and experience they possess, immediately after appointment as beginner principals, they are expected to exercise their authority and make decisions regarding effective leadership on all school activities. Best (2006) claims that the leadership roles of a school principal have changed from carrying out the usual managerial responsibilities such as budgeting, operations and discipline, teacher orientation to include other functions such as curriculum development, human resources development, data analysis and instructional leadership. It is therefore imperative that beginner principals, who are regarded as novices in the sector, are knowledgeable, skilled and ready to lead and manage successful schools. Accordingly, Davis, Leon and Fultz (2013) are of the view that educational leadership is a



profession in transition that needs a more robust preparation. Many countries have already recognised the importance of principalship and its potential to improve school and learner achievement and have introduced professional training programmes for principals (Daresh, 2006, Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010).

Countries such as Finland, Singapore, Scotland, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States of America (USA), have established their own qualification structures in training institutions to provide opportunities for school leadership and management (Quong, 2006; Walker & Qian, 2006; Oy, 2012). Some of the programmes indicated by Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr and Cohen (2007) are the Wallace Foundation, New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS), Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and Knowledge is Power Programmes (KIPP) to mention just a few. Furthermore, Mestry (2017), Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011), Mestry and Singh (2007) and Bush and Oduro (2006) indicate that in South Africa (SA), there is no predominant training institution or recognised preparation programme that offers a qualification to those aspiring for principalship. The education system in SA consists of the Basic Education and Higher Education. The basic education, which includes schools, is responsible for primary education from Grade R to Grade 12. Higher Education consists of colleges, and universities that prepare students for work opportunities. Graduates from Higher Education to schools are mostly trained as teachers and not principals. Usually, teachers will later further their studies in school leadership and management and sometimes the Department of Education offers financial sponsorship to teachers to study for school leadership. At present, in SA, each provincial department has developed its own collective agreement on how to recruit, select and appoint school principals (Education Labour Relation Council, Resolution 1 of 2008) (South Africa, 2008). Some provincial departments depend on the profession itself to develop school leadership, while others provides serving

teachers with own initiated in-service training programmes through non-governmental organisations. These organisations usually are offering short courses without any accreditation.

The importance of qualified principals was indicated by the studies by Bottom and Schmidt-Davis (2010) and Mestry (2017) who revealed that most of the struggling schools exhibited a need for capacity building and improvement of the principal's leadership. In addition, the study conducted by Bush (2006) in SA in the Gauteng Province showed that most practising school principals did not have a university degree as a qualification. Other studies conducted in other countries such as Kenya and Tanzania (Kitavi, 2007) and Pakistan (Memon & Bana, 2005), have indicated similar practices where teaching experience is considered over qualifications and knowledge in leadership and management when appointing school principals.

This study explored the experiences of beginner principals in the Limpopo Province in the Capricorn district focusing on leadership and management. In the Limpopo Province, recruitment for principalship requires a basic teachers' diploma as a minimum qualification (Education Labour Relation Council, Resolution 1 of 2008, Limpopo Government Gazette No. 1 of 2014 {Open vacancy list for principalship post}, Limpopo Department of Education, 2014). A teachers' diploma is a qualification equivalent to Relative Education Qualification Value (REQV) 13 (PAM, 2016). Oy (2012) indicates that recruiting and appointing aspiring principals differ from country to country. Mestry and Singh (2007) and Schleicher (2013) stress that equipping school principals with the required leadership and management knowledge in the current era of technology has become indispensable because the educational systems are continuously confronted with changes. Naidu (1998), Davis, Leon and Fultz (2013) Mestry (2017) argue that if we want the education system to "meet the complex demands of 21st century" education departments must prioritise leadership and management development and

training of the newly appointed principals. In order to address the leadership and management challenges of schools, the National Department of Education in SA introduced continuous professional development programme for principalship (DoE, 2006). In 2014, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) again introduced a draft policy on the standard for principalship with the purpose of clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the kind of a principal expected by the educational system and also to improve the professionalism of principalship. The policy wanted to establish conditions and standards for school leadership and management, especially for aspirant principals (DBE, 2014). Efforts from these initiatives are not recognised in any way during the recruitment and appointment of beginner principals.

Day and Sammons (2013) emphasise that there is a link between school leadership and improved learner achievement. In this regard, instructional leadership by the principal was ranked high amongst the many functions in the school that are aiming to improve learning and learner achievement. Likewise, Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) emphasise that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that affect student learning in a school. The leadership qualities of a principal in a school can be demonstrated by the quality of teaching and learning through improved learner achievement. In this vein, the research findings by the Wallace Foundation (2013) revealed that, if governments want school and learner improvement, more support must directed to the training and preparation of school principals.

It can therefore be stated that the leadership and management roles of a principal have a great influence on the curriculum, teaching and learning activities and can make the difference to learners' outcomes (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2009). The school thrives under good leadership and underperforms under poor leadership of a principal.

However, if education departments want to improve the educational standards of schools, their most important function is to get principal empowerment and development up to standard. In that way, the success and failure of principalship can be best explained through the experiences principals face in their work situation. A principal has multiple roles in the overall running of a school (Huber & West, 2002), and they are facing challenges and pressures with the rising expectations from stakeholders and the schooling reforms characterised by rapid technological innovation, massive migration, and increasing economic globalisation (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2001).

The reality is that beginner principals are expected to demonstrate good leadership and management for improved school and learner achievement despite their lack of training in this regard. For this reason, beginner principals could be struggling to manage the competing roles, and for beginner principals, these conflicting roles create identity dilemma as they come into the new position of principalship. Wallace Foundation (2013) indicate that the development of principals remains a low priority on the agenda of most education departments and policy makers and this situation can be challenging to beginner principals who are newcomers in the field of school leadership and management. The appointment of a new principal in a school is mostly accompanied by high expectations from the parents, teachers, learners and the school governing bodies. Their expectation of a newly appointed principal, amongst others, may be good leadership and management of their school and improved student achievement. Ordinarily, good leadership comes along with highly trained, prepared and skilled leadership that rarely happens to beginner principals (Wallace Foundation, 2013).

The literature showed that most of the developed countries are trying to support beginner principals and already many have development programmes to that effect. But, despite these

initiatives of support programmes for beginner principals, studies have shown that globally there is an indication of a dismal picture of beginner principals who are overwhelmed by the leadership and management challenges (Elmore, 2000, Fry, O'Neill & Bottoms, 2006, Jeap, 2013; Piggott, 2014). Tomlinson (2004) has indicated that the issue of leadership and management preparation is both a global and age-old concern. Other countries such as Australia, Europe, Asia and USA started long ago with programmes that are aimed at developing beginner principals' leadership and management skills, knowledge, attitudes and competencies (Memon & Bana, 2005).

However, empirical research showed that principals in Africa rarely received appropriate support for their challenging roles, many of whom are appointed into school leadership without specific preparation and often receive little support (Bush & Oduro, 2006; Taole, 2013). Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr & Cohen (2007) indicate that the demands for the work of a principal sometimes far exceed the capacity of the incumbent.

The South African historical education reforms on curriculum changes began after the new political dispensation in 1994 and introduced Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) in 1998 (Education Human Resources Management and Development, 2000), after which a transitional curriculum called the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) in 2000, which led to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) in 2002 and the new and current Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) introduced in 2011 (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2011). These changes strongly indicate a need for the training and development of beginner principals for effective school leadership and management. Taole (2013) points out that changes in education systems in SA have resulted in serious challenges for school principals and specifically for beginner principals. Getting beginner principals into

principalship positions without proper training or preparation may be frustrating. Marlow and Minehira (2011) have emphasised the importance of improving the competency levels of principals. One way of achieving the high level of competency in school leadership is through training and development. The development of principals' competencies to cope with the changes such as those explained above cannot happen spontaneously (Goddard, 2004); they require training and preparation.

The study conducted by Daresh and Playko (1994) and Mestry (2017) showed a need for special support for beginner principals on leadership and management. The ill-preparedness of beginner principals with regard to leadership and management can be counted among the factors contributing to poor performance in many schools. Huber (2004) is of the view that successful schools have competent leaders and failing schools have incompetent leaders. It is, therefore, extremely important for beginner principals to possess the necessary leadership and management skills for the effective management of curriculum, finance, human resource and the whole school administration. Currently, South African public schools rely on university education to provide tuition to teachers who later assume positions as principals. There is a plethora of literature indicating that on the African continent, little has been done to formalise the entry requirements and qualification for principalship positions. Studies have indicated that throughout Africa, there is no formal requirement for principals to be trained as school leaders and managers, aspirant principals are appointed on the basis of their teaching experience. Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011) argue that, currently, aspirant principals in Africa receive no formal training in school leadership and management when they are appointed, but they are appointed based on their teaching experience.

According to Bush and Jackson (2002); Bush and Oduro (2006) and Fitzgerald (2005), training for school leadership in many countries (including Africa) is not a requirement when aspirant principals are appointed into principalship. The assumption is that good teachers can become good leaders even if they are not formally trained to perform principalship roles. Teachers that are appointed as principals without going through appropriate preparation in school leadership and management often rely on their teaching experience to perform principalship roles. Undoubtedly, the roles of a teacher differ with the role of principals. The dissimilarity of the core functions of the two post levels may be challenging and may require unrelated training. Bush and Oduro (2006) stress that the demands of principalship today require principals who have the expertise and these demands can no longer be left to common sense and character alone; hence, the need for management development support.

Research by Mathibe (2007) and Naidoo and Petersen (2016) has revealed that in South Africa, principals lack the necessary skills for school leadership and management. The lack of basic leadership and management skills by aspirant principals in South Africa was explained by (Bush, 2008). Remarking on the university leadership qualification, the Department of Education (1996) mentions that many principals hold university qualifications in school management, but their impact on quality teaching and learner achievement is extremely minimal. The lack of preparation or training for school principals was acknowledged by the DBE with the introduction of Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership (ACE) in 2007 and recently the policy on The South African Standard for Principalship (DBE, 2014). The ACE programme was aimed at improving the leadership and management skills of practising principals and the rest of the School Management Team (SMT). Unfortunately, the programme could enrol only a limited number of candidates. The policy on SA Standard for Principalship (DBE, 2014) aims to enhance the image and the competency of principals in

schools. The current state of affairs of school leadership and management in the country requires much improvement, and this study wants to explore the experiences of beginner principals in this regard, particularly in the Capricorn District in the Limpopo Province.

Beginner principals are new in both the principalship position and leadership and management of the school. Literature indicates that in SA, most of the beginner principals are appointed into this position on the basis of their teaching experience, and are inexperienced, though they are expected to perform amid the major differences that exist between classroom roles and leadership roles (Daresh & Playko, 1994). Mestry and Singh (2007) point out that, in recent years, the stakeholder expectations of principalship has changed from the needs for management and control to the demands of an educational leader. This change has led to a need for the development and training of school principals by providing them with the necessary knowledge, skills, values and attitudes due to the changing educational systems and the multiple roles they are expected to accomplish. In a school, the principal is compelled to perform the dual roles as a leader and manager. Amongst others, these roles include the assurance of instructional alignment to departmental academic content standards, maintaining continuous improvement of the buildings, designing instruction for learner success, developing partnerships with parents and the community, and nurturing a culture where everyone feels valued (Habegger, 2008). The transition from performing teaching responsibilities to performing the new responsibilities of a principal; notwithstanding the managerial and leadership roles performed by teachers, demand training and preparation for beginner principals if schools want them to be effective leaders and school managers.

Given the drastic educational changes in SA just after 1994, as confirmed by Christie (2010), Botha (2004), and the high demands on educational leaders (Jansen & Taylor, 2003), beginner



principals are faced with a considerable task of understanding what school leadership and management entails. Currently, good leadership in South African schools is measured by good academic performance through learner achievement. In the quest for better education, learners are then moving away from poorly managed (underperforming) schools seeking admission at good managed (performing) schools in “search” for good quality teaching and learning. The influx of learners to the so-called performing schools and the closure and merging of some schools in the Limpopo province (National Education Policy Act, No. 27 of 1996c) could be an indication that some schools are poorly managed compared to others.

Good principalship in some schools in the rural areas, has debunked the notion by some parents who want their children to be enrolled in schools in town (former model C). Currently, in Limpopo, there is an influx of learners to some rural schools that are known to be managed effectively and produce good results every year. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) contend that good leadership in a school influences student results. The reason why some parents choose to enrol their children in schools far away from their homes can be viewed as a lack of confidence in the leadership and management in their own schools. Based on this narrative, this study explored how beginner principals experienced school leadership and management during the first years of their appointment in a principalship position. Findings from this study will provide insight into the experiences of beginner principals on school leadership and management to policy makers and the Department of Education in the Limpopo Province.

## 1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Beginner principals in SA are appointed in new position without adequate knowledge and being well equipped. They are not formally prepared for principalship and possess little understanding on school leadership and management. They depend on their teaching experience manage schools, and ordinarily gain principalship experience as the years go by. Knowledge about their experience as beginner principals (in their initial years of practice) is not explored. If the department want to improve the quality of leadership and management in schools, it is imperative to be familiar with what managers are going through at all the stages of their work. According to DBE (2014), Mathibe (2007), Naidoo and Petersen (2016) Bush (2008 and Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011), beginner principals need support after their appointment. The quality of leadership and management training received by principals and the professional development they acquire after they are appointed, does not seem to be helping school leaders to meet the growing and demanding expectations of the principalship.

The rapid changes in the educational system in SA require school leaders and managers that are fast learners, competent and knowledgeable about educational matters. Since 1994, the SA education system faced changes in education policies, administration, governance, professional ethics, and, in particular, the curriculum. Changes amongst others, included the new governing systems which replaced the School Committees in schools and required active involvement of parents in schools (South African Schools Act, Act. No. 84 of 1996b), the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), (DBE, 2011), the National Education Policy Act (Act, No. 27 of 1996c), Employment of Educators' Act (Act No. 76 of 1998), the South African Council of Educators (Act No. 31 of 2000), and many other directives and collective agreements by the Education Labour Relation Council (ELRC) (Resolution 1 of 2003,

Resolution 1 of 2008). All these changes require beginner principals who are ready to assume their leadership and management roles and have the competency to do so.

Studies by Du Plessis (2013) Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaul and Armstrong (2011) agree that educational reformation requires principals who are competent in leadership and management. Principals are, therefore, tasked with the considerable responsibility of ensuring that the new curriculum is implemented with diligence and success. Successful management of curriculum in a school, amongst others, includes the monitoring of teaching and learning activities, assessment, promotion and progression.

According to the South African Schools Act (SASA) (Act No. 84 of 1996a), the Employment of Educators Act (EEA) (Act No. 76 of 1998) and the personnel Administrative Measure (PAM, 2014), school principals are expected to implement school policies and direct all the stakeholders in matters related to education. Section 16A of SASA direct the principals to implement the departmental policies and legislation by managing the staff, resources and advising the school governing body (SGB) in the administration of school funds. The principal has occupied a strategic leadership and management position in the school that requires industriousness, skills and knowledge of education. Whereas policies are meant to direct schools, their implementation depends on the quality of the leadership vested in the principal, which makes the position to be very important. It seems that it entails heavy responsibilities which require more time of preparation for beginner principals. The absence of leadership training and preparation programmes for the newly appointed principals lead to poorly managed schools.

Despite the apartheid legacy, the South African education system has been reported as the worst performing system in Africa and the world (Spaull, 2013, Modisaotsile, 2012, DBE, 2011). The performance of learners as demonstrated in the Grade 12 results in the Limpopo Province, in general and in the Capricorn district, in particular, has not been improving since 2014. Instead, it showed a decline in pass rate with an increased underperforming school (DBE, 2017 and Limpopo Department of Education (LDoE, 2018). The speech by the Member of the Executive Council (MEC,) Mr Ishmael Kgejepe, when announcing the 2017 grade 12 results revealed a drastic decline, resulting in only 59% of matriculants passing in the Capricorn district (LDoE, 2018). Between 2014 and 2017 the Capricorn district produced a declining pass rate of 71, 6%, 66, 7%, 60, 9% and 59, 7% respectively, as reported in the Grade 12 results, (DBE, 2017). The number of underperforming schools in the Capricorn district increased from 165 in 2016 to 221 in 2017 (LDoE, 2018).

The report on the leadership of principals by The Wallace Foundation (2007) indicate that many countries may not succeed in improving the academic standards of underperforming to the required level until they become serious about the leadership and management preparation of principals. The academic achievement of learners, amongst others, can be used to measure the performance of the school and also as a criterion for assessing the successes of the leadership and management applied by the principal. Accordingly, poor learner achievement can be related to the poor leadership and management provided by the principal (Mitgang, 2013). Therefore, increase in the number of underperforming schools in the district can be an indicator for poor leadership in the school. Mitgang (2013) indicates that solid leadership is a pre-requisite for turning around failing and low-performing schools into good schools that achieve good results. Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge and Ngcobo (2013) stated that

principalship requires someone who is skilled and prepared in both capacities in order to succeed in running an institution like a school.

Currently, there is no report that focuses on the academic performance of schools in relation to the experiences of beginner principals, and or that investigated the relationship between the beginner principals' leadership and poor academic performance. Though this study is not about this, its findings may elicit the further research on the subject. The educational reforms of the recent past in S.A., the recruitment and appointment strategy of school principals in the Limpopo Province, together with the lack of training for beginner principals, can be viewed as the reasons for and challenges regarding the effective provision of leadership and management in schools.

Against the backdrop of the many challenges affecting the principalship particularly in the Limpopo Province as indicated by the foregoing reference to the continuous decline in the grade 12 results, this study postulates that beginner principals, both in the province and in the Capricorn district are faced with challenges regarding school leadership and management. This study, therefore, aims to explore the experiences of beginner principals with regard to school leadership and management in the province, in particular, in the Capricorn district. While a large amount of research has been conducted on school leadership, scant research has been conducted on beginner principals' experiences particularly in their new role as leaders and managers in a school.

The Deputy Minister of Basic Education states that there are a number of reasons for the underperformance of the school, but identified poor management of schools by principals and the lack of support to schools as the major contributing factors (DBE, 2010). Undoubtedly, it

is the responsibility of a principal who is a leader and manager in the school, to ensure that both the learner achievement and school performance improve. The principal is tasked with the function of planning, organising, leading and evaluating school activities to make sure they are successful. Beginner principals are expected to help turn the poor performance of their schools around as they assume this immense responsibility associated with school leadership and management. Unfortunately, beginner principals are expected to lead and manage schools, without receiving any prior preparation and training (Kitavi & Van der Westhuizen, 1997). Research by Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004), Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe and Meyerson (2005), Onguko, Aballa and Webber (2008) and Orr (2007) revealed that there is a general lack of training programmes for beginner principals worldwide. In African countries, in particular, teachers are promoted to the principalship on the basis of their experience in teaching, seniority in the post and as a result of career pathways (Van der Westhuizen, Mosoge, & Van Vuuren, 2004, Bush & Oduro, 2006). Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton and Ikemoto (2012) noted that beginner principals are faced with multiple challenges that can influence their likelihood of improving performance in the school.

Gaining experience as a teacher may not make/prepare aspirant principal enough to tackle leadership and management challenge in the school. Preetika and Priti (2013) mention that even experienced principals are faced with many challenges related to school leadership and management, and often they are unnoticed. It is, therefore, important to conduct research to find out how beginner principals handle leadership and management challenges in their first years of appointment in the Capricorn, Limpopo province.

I fully agree with the perception that during their teaching career teachers are exposed to leadership and management functions as heads of the department (HoD) or deputy principal

(Gronn, 1999). However, it is also true that the job description of teachers at each level encompasses different responsibility which makes them not to acquire the same leadership and management knowledge and skills. Compared to HoD and deputy principal, the work of a principal comprises multiple roles in a school. Bush, Bisschoff, Glover, Heystek, Joubert and Mloi (2005) assert that apart from career pathways, most school principals have not received adequate specialist preparation for their leadership and management. The report by Wallace Foundation (2007) indicated that the quality of training of aspirant principals does not meet the increasingly tough expectations of the job. The thrust of this research is informed by reports such as the one from the Wallace foundation about the quality of training of principal. The finding of this research will agree, disagree or add new knowledge on the current literature on beginner principals' leadership and management in school.

The complexities of school leadership in SA were demonstrated by the call for an education summit comprising different stakeholder. The summit confirmed that school leadership in SA is faced with enormous challenges that need urgent attention (DBE, 2009). The education summit tackled the challenges facing the professional development of teachers and was attended by the DBE and teachers' unions (The South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU), The National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA), Suid Afrikaans Onderwyser Unie (SAOU), The Professional Educators' Union (PEU) and The National Association Teachers' Union (NATU) with the nine superintendent generals (SGs) from the nine provinces. The summit acknowledged that not much had been done in the area of Teacher Education Development (TED). The current form of TED in the country was found to be uncoordinated and fragmented with insufficient funding. To address existing challenges in school leadership, the summit resolved to prioritise the needs of the TED by reinforcing the objectives of the Integrated Strategy Planning Framework for Teacher Development 2011-

2025 (ISPFTED) and the Action Plan 2014 for teacher development and identified school leadership for urgent attention (DBE, 2009). The lack and the weaknesses of leadership development programmes in SA are widely acknowledged. Therefore, I felt it was imperative to research further on school leadership and management focusing on the experiences of beginner principals particularly in Capricorn district in the Limpopo Province.

### **1.3. STUDY PURPOSE**

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management. Beginner principals are appointed into principalship position with varied experiences (as a teacher, HoD and deputy principal) and are expected to perform the new roles and responsibilities as principals without any formal support or mentoring. Beginner principals are not appointed on the basis of their qualification for the principalship, and some who obtained a further qualification in school management did so on their own as part of personal development. This study would want to find out how beginner principals cope in their new position as school leaders and managers.

This study wants to discover the challenges as experienced by beginner principals working in the Capricorn District of the Limpopo Province with the purpose of developing a relevant support programme for them. Without support from the district, beginner principals may be struggling to make the link between the theoretical knowledge and its practical application in a school. Principalship is a complex and demanding job that requires someone with the necessary skills to lead and manage teachers, learners, parents and the curriculum successfully. Equally important, school principals are expected to know and implement legislation and



policies as they manage schools. Anyone appointed to this position is expected to be ready and to know more and to do more with diligence.

#### **1.4. RATIONALE**

In my experience as an educator, I have realised that the leadership and management style of a principal has a great influence on teachers aspiring for the principalship. I also realised that it is not obvious that after one has learned leadership under a great principal, one will automatically become a good principal. Young, Sheets and Knight (2005) aver that the learning curve for beginner principals is steep, they have the keys to their new school in one hand, and in the other they need the hand of an effective mentor who will guide and nurture them towards mastery of the keys to becoming a successful and effective principal. Gill (2012) points out that during their first year on the job, beginner principals require contextualised mentoring and professional development. The reason for my research on the subject was enthused by my own experience as a school principal and the continuing decline of performance of schools and learner achievement. I was appointed as a school principal with little experience in school leadership and management and did not have a postgraduate qualification. I was a level one teacher, and I only had teaching experience as a class teacher and knew how to manage learners and sporting activities. In the light of the education situation in SA, this study, therefore, seeks to explore the experiences of principals in school leadership and management, and in particular, beginner principals.

My interest in the study was motivated by my own experience as a school principal. AS mentioned above, I was appointed in the principalship position with little experience in school

leadership and management. I had received no preparation or training in school leadership and management. After my appointment, the departmental official (the circuit manager) introduced me to the staff and SGB, and then left me to fend for myself. I was new to the position, the school and the community. I did not know what to do and where to start. Consequently, I had to “sink or swim.” Young, Sheets and Knight 2005), Siegrist, Pate, Monetti, Wright and Raiford (2015) claim that the real learning for principals begins when they are handed the keys to the school. I therefore, want to use this study to listen to the real stories of other beginner principals themselves and use the findings to assist researchers and policymakers to understand school leadership and management from the point of view of beginner principals’ experiences.

Through my experience, I have learned that a principalship position requires the incumbent who will be responsible and accountable to the stakeholders particularly the Department of Education. I, therefore, concluded that those who aspire principalship must be able to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, expertise and competency to lead and manage the school. However, studies indicate that after their appointment as beginner principals, most of them struggle with the feelings of professional isolation and loneliness as they transit into the new role that comes with considerable responsibility coupled with decision-making power (Spillane & Lee, 2013). Some years ago, Kitavi and Van der Westhuizen (1997) conducted a study and found that most beginner principals assumed the principalship position unprepared and are in a considerable state of anxiety, frustration, feeling of stress and self-doubt when they perform the leadership and management functions in the school. The study conducted by Jeap (2013) also found that many beginner principals are frustrated after entering the new office because of a lack of support from teachers, SGB and the department. Research findings indicated a gap that needs to be explored and make recommendations to help minimise the feelings of professional isolation, anxiety, frustration and doubts of beginner principals. Findings from

this research will be used to make recommendations for further study, and will thereby attempt to help beginner principals to be more confident when they are appointed school principals.

## **1.5. BEGINNER PRINCIPAL AND PRINCIPALSHIP**

A beginner principal refers to an employee appointed for the first time to lead and manage a school as a principal. A principalship, entails the position of authority that is occupied by the principal as a leader and a manager in the school. The literature indicates a slight difference between the use of the two words “beginner” and “novice.” Beginners have no experience of the situations in which they are expected to perform tasks (Ross, Phillips, Klein & Cohn, 2005). Beginner principalship refers to the early years of a teacher’s appointment to the position of leadership and management as a school principal.

Ross, Phillips, Klein and Cohn (2005) point out that a novice is an individual with little or no experience of the new workplace, in most instances, his expectations are naïve, and he/she lacks flexibility in comparison with the experienced individual. A novice’s understanding of the discipline is based largely on rules and mainly relies on facts and features of the domain to guide their behaviour. Usually, their knowledge and performance regarding the job are quite inflexible and limited. According to Meigs (2008), a beginner is an inexperienced school leader who is entering the job place for the first time. In this research study I, therefore, prefers to use the concept of ‘beginner principal’ to refer to the newly appointed principals who are inexperienced with regard to leadership and management of the school. To be appointed as a school principal brings with it an immense responsibility, and it may be challenging for those who are beginners. This study is used to investigate what beginner principals are going through as they navigate their way with regard to the principalship.

## **1.6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study seeks to answer the question, “What are the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management”?

In order to answer the main questions, the following critical sub questions were formulated to guide the study:

- What are beginner principals’ expectations in school leadership and management?
- How do beginner principals develop their leadership and management skills?
- How beginner principals understand school leadership and management?
- What are the challenges faced by beginner principals in leadership and management?
- What are the successes of beginner principals in leadership and management?

## **1.7. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

From the above research question and sub-questions, the study aims to achieve the following:

### **1.7.1 Aim of the study**

To explore the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management.

### **1.7.2 Objectives of the study**

The following objectives were formulated to guide the study:

- To establish beginner principals’ expectations of school leadership and management.
- To determine how beginner principals develop their leadership and management skills.

- To establish how beginner principals were prepared for school leadership and management.
- To identify the challenges faced by beginner principals in leadership and management.
- To determine the successes of beginner principals in leadership and management.

## **1.8. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

A theory in research is a process through which researchers specify what they mean when they explain particular terms in the research (Babbie, 2013). The theory, therefore, produces a specific agreed-on meaning for a concept for the purpose of research. The theoretical framework in this study was explained in accordance with the theory of “leadership as a career” by Gronn (1999) who argues that leadership is contextually bound and career based. This theory used four main concepts, namely, formation, accession, incumbency and divestiture. Mouton (1996) explains that concepts acquire new meaning within certain conceptual framework. Formation entails those preparatory stages in the form of experiences that later position the person as leadership aspirant who is socially and psychologically ready to assume the position of responsibility and authority. Accession refers to a stage of grooming or anticipation in which the candidate for leadership rehearses or test his potential capacity to lead. Incumbency is the stage where the aspirant leaders have developed and perfected personal character and have learned to project their authority. The candidate now seeks to give further expression to his/her quest for mastery and self-realisation by gaining experience through circulating amongst various elite postings and leadership roles. The last stage, in terms of this theory, is divestiture. Based on the research topic and study purpose of this study, this stage will not be considered during this research. The divestiture is the leadership career stage that

comes to the employee due to age, illness, lack of fulfilment or incapacity which lead to the employee leaving the job voluntarily or involuntarily, and planned or unplanned.

With regard to the South African school leadership context, the school is managed by the SMT. However, there is no scientific evidence on how teachers who are serving on the SMT are prepared for the principalship. The SA movement of teachers (which is not linear) towards principalship can be explained in line with the first three theoretical concepts as follows: The first would be level one (PL1) teacher, second as level two (PL2) teacher or the head of the department (HoD) and a level three (PL3) teacher refers to a deputy principal. The last level is the principal at level four (PL4). The three stages are explained in detail below:

### **1.8.1. Formation stage**

This stage is about the experiences acquired by the teacher at post level one (PL1) post level two (PL2) and post level three (PL3) during the teacher's career before a principalship. It is basically the career path of the teacher. Crow and Glascock (1995) state that the development of a leader through his/her career involves a transformative process, which is predictable for many teachers within the hierarchical field of education. In the process of teaching, teachers will after some time eventually seek to assume greater responsibility and aspire for higher positions. Ultimately, most of them are aiming to become principals. Teachers who are already at post levels PL2 and PL3 are obligated to perform managerial roles (in practical terms, this is not to the exclusion of PL1 teachers). As they do so, they learn and gain experience in school leadership and management, which prepares them for principalship roles (Gronn, 1999). Teachers who perform managerial roles, are then positioned in a state of social and

psychological readiness to assume the responsibility of principalship. It is believed that, at the formation stage, teachers are being prepared for school leadership and management.

Gronn (1999) believes that teaching can be used as a platform that forms educational leaders and managers for the principalship. This character is innate and invisible until the teacher assumes the position of leadership. Gronn (1999) based his argument on the cultural and societal contexts as the main causal elements in leadership and management preparation for schools. According to the theory of leadership as a career, a leader is the product of social circumstances, and he/she is formed through other interactions in the milieu of his growth or career.

### **1.7.2. Accession stage**

The second stage of leadership and management is accession which refers to a grooming or anticipation period where the teacher rehearses or tests their potential to lead and manage. During this stage, the teacher realises the leadership capacity and character and aspires for a leadership position and feels that he is ready to assume leadership roles even before the actual appointment. Then the teacher (aspiring principal) begins to look for leadership opportunities (vacancies) and applies for a promotion. Gronn (1999) indicates that, at this stage, candidates want to demonstrate by all means to the authorities that one is ready to become a leader (principal). The teachers start to familiarise themselves with the relevant policies that can help them to become leaders. Some start to register for management courses with institutions of higher learning, while others volunteer to take on more managerial responsibilities in the school.

### **1.8.3. Incumbency stage**

The incumbency stage entails the period of appointment of a teacher as a principal. This is a time at which the teacher assumes the principalship post, and at this stage, the newly appointed principal is referred to as a beginner principal. According to Gronn (1999), the beginner principals have developed trust and demonstrated proper leadership capabilities during the interviews and have convinced the SGB who recommended their appointment to the post. The expectations of the appointing authority (employer/Department of Education) are that the new leader (beginner principal) has developed a leadership character and is in a position to make sound decisions about the leadership and management roles. The decision that the beginner principal is ready to lead and manage is mostly based on the teaching experience rather than any formal leadership development programme provided by the DBE. When beginner principals are appointed in this way, it, therefore, confirms the theory of leadership as a career as advocated by Gronn (1999). This study is consequently anchored in the incumbency stage with the purpose of exploring the experiences of a beginner as new principals. Different schools go through different challenges, and beginner principals cannot apply a one-size-fits all approach in their various work situation. This study is a scientific investigation into beginner principals' experiences.

## **1.9. EPISTEMOLOGY AND ONTOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

This study explored the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management. This is a social phenomenon that can best be studied using qualitative approach because it is an approach that is not limited to superficial description of the phenomenon (Schultze and Avital, 2011), but explores understanding and meanings to social problems in a



society; collects data in the natural setting through face to face interviews, learning and reflecting with the participants' meanings they attach to individual experiences (Creswell, 2014).

## **1.10. RESEARCH PARADIGM**

In this study, I, proposed to use an interpretivist research paradigm which holds that the world of matter is meaningless unless people give meaning to it (Goldkuhl, 2012) and that social phenomena are best understood through interpretation and analysis of social, cultural and institutional practices (Potrac, Jones and Nelson, 2014). The paradigm acknowledges that “meanings” which people accord to realities are contingent to situations and they usually vary from person to person and eventually give rise to multiple perspectives about realities (Antwi and Hamza, 2015, Leedy and Ormrod, 2014). This paradigm fits very well with the intention of this study which focuses on exploring the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management. The intention of this paradigm is not to claim generalizable objective truth about realities but to interpret situations and make sense out of them. This research approach is generally known as “relativist ontology” (Treaquist, Won and Duit, 2014). The implementation of the above paradigm calls for direct involvement of participants in a study to provide better understanding of realities (Cohen, Manion and Keith, 2011), which basically deals with interpretation and observation of realities by participants in the study (Maruster and Gijzenberg, 2013). The realities are usually distinguished by circumstances like history, culture and changing circumstances within the community. This way of understanding reality is known as “subjective epistemology” since it focuses on individual experiences as sources of knowledge (Lever, 2013).

Epistemology refers to ‘a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know’ (Crotty, 2003). To understand the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management can result in new knowledge about the truth on what beginner principals are experiencing as they assume their new roles as school leaders and managers. My epistemological understanding of the research topic stems from my rationale about seeking the reality of the phenomenon and deepening my understanding of the perceived theoretical knowledge on principalship. I needed to visit beginner principals’ work and learn about their real work situation and contextualise it to justify the theoretical framework about beginner principalship. Carson, Gilmore, Perry and Gronhaug (2001) indicate that researchers should use their pre-understanding of the phenomena and accept the influence of both science and personal experience. In this instance, I drew from my personal experience to justify the reality as experienced in the current dispensation of principalship.

The DBE assumes that because teachers are educationists, they are also ready to lead and manage schools. Findings from this study will be used to confirm the reality of the assumption. This reality then forms the ontological basis for this study. Ontology is concerned with the question of what the nature of reality is, and that reality depends on the individual mind, and it is, therefore, individually or socially constructed (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012). The assumption of the study, therefore, is that teachers are promoted to a principalship on the basis that they are experienced in the teaching field. The aim of this study was to use it to discover the reality about the experience of teachers and its contribution towards school leadership and management. The reality about the knowledge, skills, attitude and performance of beginner principals is explored in this study through their experience as principals. It is generally believed that it is easy for teachers to become principals. This study will afford beginner principals a chance to narrate their experiences as school leaders and managers.

## **1.11. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study used a qualitative approach to understand human behaviour. This behaviour related to how beginner principals experience school leadership and management at the initial stages of their promotion. Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011) indicate that a qualitative research approach allows the researcher to study the participants in their ordinary setting, and to describe their experiences and behaviour and how their lives are influenced by their own context. Beginner principals were teachers who were promoted from within the teaching sector. They were, therefore, a confluence of the teaching environment. Beginner principals are also human beings which make a qualitative approach appropriate. The qualitative approach seeks to embrace and understand the contextual influence on the research phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The approach also allowed flexibility for participants to narrate their own experiences (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011) from their different settings and background without the researcher imposing his own context and assumption.

A qualitative research approach required a researcher to be immersed in the location to give the reader enough detail of the situation under study (Firestone, 2007). Jablin and Putnam (2001) explain that qualitative research is an approach that allow the researcher to describe participant's experiences in detail by using a specific set of research methods such as an in-depth interview. A qualitative approach allowed this research to attain a deeper understanding and interpreting the meaning of the responses from the participants. This research approach also gave me an opportunity to engage in face-to-face conversations with participants. This research approach helped me to choose both areas for data gathering and participants and to use my own eyes and ears as filters during the study (Lichtman, 2009) as it involved in-depth

interviews, the collection of data in a natural setting through face-to-face interviews (Creswell, 2004).

Following the goal of social inquiry as explained by Mouton (1996) this research was aimed at producing knowledge that would be as close as possible to the truth. I therefore, identified three kinds of possible challenges that might hinder the study from reaching the truth about beginner principals. The first challenge was sociological constraints that originate with the researcher as a result of a lack of knowledge about the object of inquiry. Secondly it was the ontological constraints that originate from the object of study and include features of the object of study. The last one was the methodological constraints which refer to the use of inappropriate methods and techniques that ignore the limitations that are peculiar to a particular approach or instrument. In this regard, I chose a qualitative research approach that allowed me to conduct the study in the school situation, which was a familiar environment to me because I was a principal myself. My experience of the work of the principal and the knowledge of the legislative framework in education served as the groundbreakers in my approach during the inquiry.

### **1.11.1. Research design**

A research design refers to a master plan that I used to outline how the research project was going to be conducted. Furthermore, a research design serves to "plan, structure and execute" the research to maximise the "validity of the findings"(Mouton, 1996). Yin (2003) indicates further that a research design is a plan that directs movement from one place to the other, beginning with a set of questions as well as a set of (conclusions) answers. Using a qualitative research approach allowed me to become the key research instrument. This was done through

my direct participation during the process, and I was responsibly for data collection, data analysis, data interpretation and for reporting the findings. Babbie and Mouton (2008) describe a research design as a blueprint for conducting the research. I conducted formal interviews to fifteen beginner principals that were purposively chosen to participate in the study. I was interested in their detailed description of their work experience after they were appointed as school principals. I used a case study research design and analysed the data thematically. A case study method allowed me to think beyond the quantitative statistical results and to understand the social circumstances of beginner principals through the participants' perspectives (Zainal, 2007). Using a case study method also allowed me to examine the data collected from each participant closely in their different schools. Zainal (2007) states that case study methods are widely recognised in social studies especially when in-depth explanations of social behaviour are sought after.

This study used an interpretivist paradigm as a framework to conduct the research. Interpretivist paradigm emphasises social interaction based on knowledge (O' Donoghue, 2007) which allowed me to interact with participants and to interpret their world and experiences. The interpretivist paradigm wants to understand the world as it is from a subject point of view and seeks an explanation within the frame of reference of the participants (Ponelis, 2015). This paradigm assisted me to interpret how beginner principals, as subjects of this study, told the truth and explained their own experiences as school leaders and managers. Interpretivist paradigm also allowed me to see the world of the participants through their perceptions, discovering their reality and their views (Creswell, 2003; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2011). Thanh' and Thanh' (2015), however, state that interpretivist does not seek answers rigidly from the participants, but instead, relies on the interpretation of the original data from

the participants' responses. The findings were informed by the researcher's interpretation derived from the themes from the raw data obtained from the semi-structured interviews.

### **1.11.2. Sampling**

Based on the geographical distance, time and financial implications, it was not possible to conduct the study among all the beginner principals in the Limpopo Province. From the province, fifteen beginner principals were selected using the criteria of newly appointed within their first five years of practice. Those who were re-appointed from the lower post level coming from other schools as principals were not considered as novice in the field, and were not part of the participants. The participants were appointed after the posts were advertised in the government gazettes (LDoE, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016). Therefore, I purposively sampled fifteen beginner principals in the Capricorn District of the Limpopo Province to participate in the study. Based on the vastness and diversity of the district, schools were selected from the urban, township and rural areas, including both the primary and secondary schools.

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2007) explanation, purposive sampling allow the researcher to handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of being knowledgeable about the phenomena, hence the study sample considered only new appointees who were five years or less in their posts. I wanted to gain a wider and deeper understanding of the beginner principals from a different appointment periods and not just one year experience. I also wanted to discover the differences among participants within a period. Merriam (2009) indicates that purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to gain more insight about the phenomena and, therefore, must select a sample from among the participants who can reveal valuable information on the subject. Through this

study, I want to gain enough knowledge and to understand the experiences of beginner principals from their commencement as school principals up to five years' experience. In the period of five years, I believe newly appointed principals are not yet experienced enough in school leadership and management, and they could easily remember what they had undergone in the early years of their appointment.

Purposive sampling was used in choosing the beginner principals eligible to participate in the study. Silverman (2000) indicates that participants are chosen purposively because they possessed some features that are of interest for the research topic. Maree (2011) indicates that purposive sampling means that participants are selected because of some defining characteristics that make them the holders of the data needed for the study. The subjects of this study were beginner principals, and by its definition, these were principals who were new in the principalship positions. Sampling was further defined by counting the period of years of practice as principals, and it was further expounded in chapter three.

### **1.11.3. Data collection**

Interviews were used in this study to collect data in a face-to-face situation and to interact with the participants in their own schools. Interviews in qualitative research are seen as an attempt by the researcher to understand the life worlds of the participants from their own perspectives and to unfold their meaning about their own experiences in order to uncover the truth about their worlds (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche` & Delpont, 2011). Semi-structured interviews, were backed up with field notes. Document verification were used as data collection techniques to enhance the interviews. Arsenault and Anderson (2000) maintain that the strength of semi-structured interviews is that the researcher can use probing questions to clarify responses and

elicit in-depth information during the interview sessions. Interviews made it possible for me to seek further clarity from the respondents by asking further questions. Consequently, I was able to increase my understanding of the phenomena.

The data collection methods and techniques for this study demanded my personal presence as an active participant during the research process to observe and contextualise the different workplaces of the participants. This also assisted me to understand differences in their narratives better. Creswell (2014) indicates that in qualitative research, researchers collect data themselves through observing behaviour or interviewing participants. The use of interviews allowed me to access participants' perceptions, meanings, and definitions of their own situations and constructions of their reality. In order to understand the views of the participants even after the actual interviews, I used a voice recorder during the interviews (Liamputtong, 2008) to record the conversation with the participants.

#### **1.11.4. Data analysis**

Data was collected from the in-depth interview and then carefully transcribed into written text and the text was coded into categories of meanings which were eventually developed into themes and sub-themes to answer specific research questions. According to Creswell (2014), the purpose of data analysis is to reduce data into small themes. In this study, data analysis process was inductive and ongoing (Creswell, 2011). Inductive data analysis means that the researcher has to thoroughly read raw data in order to be able to develop concepts and themes from it (Thomas, 2006). Therefore, in this study data was analysed throughout the data collection process in order to make sense of it. This enabled the follow up where it was



necessary. In analysing data, research questions as well as concepts from the theoretical framework, guided the process.

Though aware of popular qualitative computer data analysis programmes, data in this study was hand coded regardless of the fact that it was time consuming (Creswell, 2014). I employed a thematic analysis method during the analysis. Thematic analysis is a process in which a researcher identifies, analyses and reports patterns within collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Braun & Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is one of the methods compatible with a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm within which this study is conducted. Braun & Clarke (2006) also acknowledge that thematic analysis method has phases that are similar to other qualitative analysis methods during data analysis.

The following steps as proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006) were taken: familiarise myself with data; generate initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes and writing the report. The data analysis commenced with the listening to the taped responses of the participants and then they were transcribed. The transcribed data was read and re-read to deduce logic and to get a sense of the participants' varied understanding. The data was coded using open-coding – a word-for-word, phrase-by-phrase and sentence-by-sentence analysis to get initial codes. The codes were then grouped into categories which were grouped into broad themes.

The data analysis process helped me to derive interpretations and make conclusions about the findings and the research topic through themes that emerged from the study. Briggs and Coleman (2007) state that during the data analysis, the researcher makes decisions thoughtfully, systematically, critically and, in ways, for which can be accounted. It was,

therefore, necessary to collect the relevant data that answered the research questions. “Data analysis was helpful as it brought order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data” (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche` & Delpont, 2011). The recorded tapes were transcribed and coded to derive the themes pertaining to this research. Additional information which was gathered using informal conversation and verification of documents was dealt with in the same way. It involved reducing the bulk of raw information, deriving significance from the trivia, identifying patterns and developing a way of producing a research report about the phenomena. In qualitative research, the analysis of data is primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories (MacMillan & Schumacher 2014). The distinction between qualitative research and quantitative research as stated by McMillan and Schumacher (2014) is that qualitative research allows the researcher to analyse data even during the data collection period and also after all the data had been gathered.

The data were then analysed thematically by considering the study topic and the research questions carefully during the whole data analysis process. During the study I identified, compared and determined the data upon which to focus in order to reach my own conclusions and to map out a way of improving the conceptual basis of the study. Joffe and Yardley (2004) explained that, in order to present the content when using thematic analysis, the researcher must describe the bulk of the data because a single statement may not necessarily reflect the full story. The use of thematic analysis was important because I wanted to gain insight and discover relationships between the diverse data that originated from the different participants. Thematic analysis was found to be appropriate when the samples are determined and defined before proceeding with the study (Ibrahim, 2012) which was then linked with the sampling method.

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) mention that thematic data analysis is the most common method of analysing qualitative data and it helps researchers to identify themes and patterns. The study topic and the research questions were considered carefully throughout the process of data analysis. In order to examine the trustworthiness of data, the information gathered through the three data collection techniques was triangulated.

## **1.12. BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE**

The Minister of Basic Education in South Africa, Ms Angelina Motshekga, has acknowledged that in South Africa there is no common understanding of what the department expects from teachers who aspire leadership and management positions in schools (DBE, 2014). School principals are appointed based on the general job description for teachers as provided in the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM, 2016) and the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) (South Africa, 2003). The lack of understanding of the expectation of the job of the aspirant principal can be confirmed by Bush and Oduro (2006) and Mestry (2017) who indicate that most beginner principals in SA are appointed on the basis of their teaching experience and not the competencies. Van der Westhuizen and van Vuuren (1997), Chrisholm, (2011), state that school principals in South Africa are facing the realities of transformation and are expected to implement the new educational policies, but with the little preparation they have received and without specific guidelines for managing the transformation.

During his 2017 Budget speech, the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) of education in the Limpopo Province Mr Ismael Kgetjepe declared, “Some schools have underperformed and failed to reach national norm of 60% for the past three consecutive years and more..., it takes leadership to have a functional school” (Limpopo Department of Education, 2017). The

leadership referred to by the MEC resides in the principalship and the competencies required in leading and managing the school. The continuous underperformance of schools reflects poor leadership and management on the part of the principal.

When a principal is appointed in a school, the HOD delegates the educational responsibilities to him/her (SASA, 1996). The beginner principal is, therefore, charged with the responsibility of ensuring the successful delivery of quality education to communities as promised by the government through schools. In the quest to assist underperforming schools, the Limpopo MEC for Education indicated that the province will be training the SMTs and principals on how to develop school plans, curriculum management and financial management (LDoE, 2017). The LDoE has already observed that not enough was done to equip the current serving school principals with the necessary skills for school leadership and management principles. The MEC also acknowledged that for schools to perform well, the principals must be well trained in leadership and management (LDoE, 2017). However, the endeavours to develop school principals and SMT members was not new in the Department of Education.

Accordingly, the Department of Education (DoE, 2004) started a process of establishing capacity building programme for principals called the South African National Professional Qualification for Principalship (SANPQP). The purpose was to improve the professional standards and competencies of school principals to advance the quality of the entire education service. The department also introduced the ACE programme to capacitate experienced principals and SMTs in school leadership and management (Bush, Kinggundu & Moorosi, 2011). Steyn (2004), Arikewuyo (2009) and Mestry (2017) emphasise that the changing task of school principals underscores their need to be trained as they assume their “new” roles.

The challenge of school leadership and management preparation was identified by Davis, Leon and Fultz (2013) indicating that most of the principal preparation programmes are not good at producing leaders that can address the increasingly complex challenges faced by public schools today. On the other hand, Weingartner (2009) and Zachary (2012) commend the leadership and management training programmes for beginner principals because they increase the effectiveness of the school administration and expand their capacity. Parkay, Currie and Rhodes (1992) and Arikewuyo (2009) maintain that principals, whether new or experienced, all need ample preparation and continuous training. Currently, schools depend on the employees themselves to enrol at universities to improve their leadership and management capacity. However, when commenting on the university programmes, Mendels (2012) claims that although universities provide training in school leadership and management, most practising principals still find their university training to be insufficient. This could be true especially for student teachers who are training as teachers at the undergraduate level. At this level, universities are not preparing student teachers to be school principals.

Dempster and Berry (2003) argue that most beginner principals have university qualifications but still feel ill-prepared to deal with challenges in schools when they are principals. In turn, Mathibe (2007) states that South African principals are neither appropriately skilled nor well-trained for school leadership and management. The increased accountability of school principals necessitates the strengthening of preparation and professional development programmes for all school leaders and managers who are principals, deputy principals, and head of departments, teachers, curriculum specialists and superintendents (Bottoms and O'Neil, 2001). This study on the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management becomes relevant because it will assist the educational researchers to plan how best to help the education system when employing new principals.

Today's leadership in schools operates in an ever-changing era that compels newly appointed principals to be highly developed and prolific instructional leaders (Moreno 2013). Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPonte and Meyerson (2005) point out that principals play an important role in setting the direction for schools, and the vibrant learning environments for children, unfortunately, the existing knowledge of the best ways to develop these effective school leaders is not sufficient. Most beginner principals' leadership is the consequence of their teaching careers. As they perform their roles as teachers, they end up progressively aspiring to be promoted to a principalship and subsequently they are appointed as beginner principals without any formal training. Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe and Meyerson (2005) argue that principals are expected to be visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations experts, budget analysts, facility managers, expert overseers of legal, contractual, and legal policy mandates and initiatives. All these skills pertain to different disciplines in the school, and they require training that will prepare a principal to be ready to operate and oversee all the school activities.

The Department of Education (DoE) in SA recognised the lack of a co-ordinated system and introduced a policy framework for Education Management and Leadership Development. (DoE, 2004). Subsequently, in 2005, another policy framework was drafted namely, the South African Standard for Principalship (SASP) (DoE, 2005). The intention of the DoE was to define the roles and key aspects of the profession and the expertise required from the principalship in South Africa. Ten years after the introduction of SASP, in 2014 the DBE proclaimed in the State General Notice No. 636 a Gazette No. 37897 of 2014, *The Standards for Principalship in SA* (DBE, 2014). The introduction of the two similar policies about the professionalisation of principalship in the country signifies the continuing lack of leadership and management and

the need to professionalise principalship. Explaining the purpose of the SASP in the Government Gazette, the Minister of Basic Education Ms Angelina Motshehega said “The core purpose of a principals was to provide leadership and management in all areas of the school to enable the creation and support of conditions under which high-quality teaching and learning” takes place and which promotes the highest possible standards of learner achievement” (DBE, 2014). The purposes of the SASP in 2005 and 2014 were compared and it was found that both the DoE and the DBE wanted to achieve similar goals of providing clear roles and the job descriptions for school principals. The table below depicts the goals of SASP of 2015 and 2014.

**Table 1.1. South African standard for principalship by the DoE, 2005 and DBE, 2014.**

<b>The South African Standard for Principalship (SASP): (Department of Education, 2005)</b>	<b>The South Africa Standards for Principalship (SASP): (Department of Basic Education, 2014)</b>
Provide information to all school stakeholders about what is expected regarding the role of the principal	“The enhancement of the skills and competencies of principals in posts.”
Inform better recruitment and selection procedures,	“The improvement of the recruitment and selection procedures to principalship.”
Form the basis of improved performance management and processes applicable to principals;	“The induction and mentoring of newly appointed principals.”
Identify the professional development needs of principals and aspiring principals.	The professional preparation for principals and the enhancement of the skills, attributes and competencies of deputies and middle managers.
	The twinning of new appointees with experienced principals.

Although the two policy drafts were developed in different years, they seek to address the challenge of the lack of training, preparation and development of principalship as a profession in the country. The table indicated the determination by the Department of Education prior to and after 2009 (after it was changed into the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), and the DBE had acknowledged the need to improve principalship in the country. In 2000, Daresh and Male confirmed the importance of principal preparation for principalship for effective leadership and management. Principalship preparation was regarded as a way of addressing the trauma of a new job and can help beginner principals, especially to cope in the new job. Onguko, Abdall and Webber (2008) and The Wallace Foundation (2012) maintain that effective leadership and management support of principals have a positive effect on school improvement and on learner achievement.

It is unfortunate that presently, the initiatives for the South African Standard for Principalship has been halted pending discussions between the department and teacher unions (DBE, 2014). This delay then creates a gap in the professional development of principals in SA. Subsequently, beginner principals are deprived of the opportunity to be prepared as leaders and managers of schools. The appointment of school principals is continuing as new posts are available, and beginner principals commence their new roles without the requisite knowledge of leadership and management, and this creates a gap that needs to be explored. Hughes (2014) indicates that the challenges of principals in Australia were solved through the professionalisation of principalship after the development of *The Standard for Principalship* as a policy. The literature has confirmed that principalship has considerable responsibilities (Sharp & Walter, 2012), and anyone assuming these responsibilities requires the necessary capacity and support in the area of leadership and management. Unfortunately, most principals in SA begin their work without being properly prepared, and they only depend on their teaching



experience in their work as principals. Earley and Bubb (2004) aver that there is no “know it all teacher.” Beginner principals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are expected to demonstrate knowledge of both instructional and transformational leadership. Notwithstanding the educational reforms in SA, the 21<sup>st</sup> century society has brought about drastic transformation in technology, culture, and economics and beginner principals in this era need to be prepared for these new inventions.

The need for beginner principals’ preparation in SA in the Limpopo Province has long been made known by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) project, conducted in the three districts including Capricorn (DoE, 2003). The project was conducted through the training of SMTs on leadership and management. Unfortunately, the project was discontinued after three years following insufficient funding from the service provider. However, the findings from the project were provided in the form of a report by the USAID that confirmed that principals in the three districts are faced with many challenges related to school leadership and management. This research would want to investigate the experiences of beginner principals who are appointed principals in SA specifically those who are working in the Capricorn district, which formed part of the project by the USAID.

The literature consulted has shown that principals in SA are appointed into school leadership and management positions, for which they are not adequately prepared (Mathibe, 2007; Bush and Oduro, 2006). The study by The Wallace Foundation (2007) has shown that not enough support is provided to principals by universities and districts to prepare them for their new roles as school leaders and managers. Principals are expected to take the lead today in all the activities in the school that promote influential teaching and learning for learners, and not merely to maintain the *status quo* (Peterson, 2002). This responsibility in the midst of the major educational reforms, coupled with a growing shortage of high-quality leadership development

programmes in SA, has motivated an interest in research on leadership and the management experiences of beginner principals.

### **1.13. TRUSTWORTHINESS**

For this study to be accepted in the body of knowledge, I needed to ensure that it satisfies the principles of trustworthiness (Loh, 2013). As he was previously a principal himself, he used trustworthiness to help him guard his personal judgement, intuition and biases during the research process. However, trustworthiness was used in order to observe the feelings and emotions of the participants to guard them not to exaggerate their situations. The best criterion used in evaluating trustworthiness in a research study as recommended by Loh (2013) is credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. In order to deepen the trustworthiness of this study, four concepts will be used, and more details will be given in Chapter three.

To achieve credibility multiple data gathering instruments and different forms of data collection techniques were employed to cross-check the accuracy and consistency of the gathered data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe credibility as the extent to which the results of a study are truthful or realistic, taking the social and cultural contexts of the participants and conditions under which data were gathered into account. This was relevant for this research when considering the sample and the diversity that exist in the schooling systems in the Capricorn district in the Limpopo Province.

Dependability was used to ensure that the data gathered can be replicated by other researchers and that findings from this research are similar if the same research instruments and data

gathering methods are applied to the same research sample under similar conditions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Conformability, however, was used to show the level of neutrality and the degree to which findings of the study were shaped by the respondents and not the researcher's biases or interest. An audit trail was established to allow readers to trace the logic and to determine the reliability of the findings as well as a platform for further enquiry (Koch, 2006).

Trustworthiness was further be ensured through member checking (Carcary, 2009) and when necessary, copies of transcripts and voice recordings were shared with the participants to check the accuracy of their statements. To achieve trustworthiness, multiple data gathering instruments were employed and a variety of data sources as a triangulation measure, to cross-check the accuracy and consistency of the information were used. The corroboration of different research instruments and data sources in the form of interviews, document verification, different categories of participants and sites helped the researcher to verify the perspectives of participants, as well as to obtain thick descriptions and data saturation.

#### **1.14. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

During the research process, the research rules of the University of Pretoria were observed, and an ethical clearance letter was obtained. Like any research that involves human subjects, measures were taken to ensure that the necessary ethical precautions with regard to voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, emotional and psycho-social security were adhered to (Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2006; Best & Kahn, 2002). After that, permission was sought from the Limpopo Department of Education (LDoE) and entry was requested into the sampled schools for research purposes. Lichtman (2009) points out that during the research journey, a reasonable expectation is anticipated by the participants about their involvement in

a situation which might harm them. During the research process, I had to abide to the principles of confidentiality and respect for human rights and dignity. I also sought permission from the participants and informed them that participation in the study was voluntary. The participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to do so. During and after the data gathering process, it was ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

### **1.15. LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS**

This study focused on the experiences of beginner principals with regard to school leadership and management in the Capricorn District in the Limpopo Province. In order to address the study topic adequately, data were gathered from school principals who were beginners in school leadership and management and who did not complete five years' experience as principals. The population was informed by the advertisement of principalship posts from the government gazettes dated 2012 to 2016. Fifteen beginner principals were chosen purposefully from secondary and primary schools in the Capricorn district as participants. Participants were selected from schools in the rural, township and urban areas of the Capricorn district in the Limpopo Province. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to other areas, but can be used to improve conditions of school leadership and to address the challenges of beginner principals in similar settings. Other factors like time and finances affected completion period stipulated by the university.

### **1.16. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study can help policy makers in the DBE when deciding on the appointment of school principals. The study can provide insights that lead to better understanding of the experiences

of beginner principals in their early years of practice as leaders and managers of schools. Recommendations from this study may be used in developing programmes that can assist with preparing teachers and aspiring principals in the area of school leadership and management. The study can also be useful for district support officials and circuit managers to enhance their support programmes for beginner principals. In addition, policymakers in the department can use the recommendations to inform curriculum developers in universities to incorporate the training of beginner principals in school leadership and management.

### **1.17. STUDY MAP**

A description of the research programme of this study follows: In Chapter 1, the research purpose was presented and the rationale for this study was explained. After that, the research methodology was described in terms of the approach, design, sample, data analysis and the measures taken to establish the trustworthiness and credibility of this study. Limitations to the study were also acknowledged, and the significance of the study was indicated for the other greater research community.

In Chapter 2, a literature review was presented on “the exploration of the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management,” as well as the challenges encountered during this process. In justification of the claims made in this thesis, I referred to similar experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management locally and in other countries. The theoretical framework used to guide this study was clearly specified.

Chapter 3, provided an indication on how the research was designed and the approach used to justify the choices made regarding the research instruments and strategies in terms of the

research topic as well as the research purpose, questions and objectives. In Chapter 4, an analysis was presented of the “experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management” in the Capricorn District in the Limpopo Province. Verbatim quotations from participants were used to develop themes.

In Chapter 5, the summary of the findings was given as well as the conclusions reached through rich descriptions of the participants about the analysis of the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management in the Capricorn District in the Limpopo Province. Based on the foregoing findings and conclusions, the study made recommendations aiming to contribute to the body of knowledge about the development, support and preparation of aspirant and beginner principals in school leadership and management. The study also made recommendations for further research in the School of Education on school leadership and management.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter examined the literature to determine the body of knowledge reporting on the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management. The review of the literature includes topics such as the national and international perspectives on the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the phenomena. The literature was presented under the broader sub-headings of principalship and school leadership and management. The section also provides information on school leadership development and preparation in SA and other countries and the impact of career pathway on beginner principals. The literature also covers the efforts by the SA Department of Education to improve leadership and management in public schools.

The dialogue on the qualification, certification, training and preparations of school principals on leadership and management has been ongoing for years in South Africa. Proposals and policy drafts were initiated to address the gap in school leadership and management in South African schools. The National Department of Education planned for intensive continuous professional development programmes for experienced school principals and those aspiring to becoming a principal. The National Department of Education wanted to regulate the appointment of principals and improve the quality of leadership and management in schools. In order to succeed in this regard, the DoE (2006) proposed that aspirant principals must first obtain the National Professional Qualification for Principals as a qualification for principalship.

Mestry and Sigh (2007) point out that because of the initiatives by the University of Johannesburg and the Matthew Goniwe School of Governance and Leadership, a professional development programme in Educational Management has been introduced, to address the growing concerns pertaining to the professional development of principals in South African schools. Another initiative for principalship support programme was the Continuous Professional Development framework for school principals (CPD) by South African Council of Educators (SACE) (Act No. 1 of 2000) (SACE, 2000). Since the introduction of the draft policies on The South African Standards for Principalship in 2005 and again in 2014 (DoE, 2005; DBE, 2014) there has not yet been any qualification for a principalship in South Africa.

The lack of leadership capacity building programmes in SA education was mentioned by Mr Hindle, the director-general of the Department of Education, who predicts that “the current voluntary certificate course in school management would eventually become a compulsory requirement for all current and would be principals” (The Star, 2007). The director-general comments on the poor matric results in 2007, and instead of pointing at the learners and teachers, he points straight at school leadership and management and urges that all principals must be trained and be prepared to run the schools they head. Van der Westhuizen and Van Vuuren (1997) mention that, since 1970, several requests have been made for the formal training of school principals. From 1990 to 2006 there have been proposals and recommendations about qualifications, certification, training and the preparation of school principals on leadership and management. In 1991 and 1994 after the unbanning of political parties in SA, the African National Congress (ANC) produced a discussion paper on the Educational Renewal Strategy (ERS) (1994). White paper one and White paper two in 1994 and 1996 (SA 1994: SA, 1996a) subsequently proposed task teams to assess and to identify the best practices with respect to education management in particular school principalship. The



highlights of the report led to the department introducing the Education Management Development programme (EMD) and proposed the establishment of a National Institute for Education Management.

In 1997, White paper 3 (South Africa, 1997), further introduced a qualification framework for higher education in South Africa. The purpose was to provide a framework for a higher education qualification within a single and co-ordinated higher education sector and across the South African education system. This qualification was called ACE (School Management and Leadership) aiming for the professionalisation of school principalship. The Department of Education introduced the South African National Professional Qualification for Principalship (SANPQP) with the purpose of improving the professional standards and competencies of school principals (DoE, 2004). The introduction of South African National Professional Qualification for Principalship (SANPQP) subsequently led to the realisation for the need for a national standard for a principalship in 2005 (DoE, 2005), and recently in 2014 (DBE, 2014).

Steyn (2000) highlights the changing tasks in schools and emphasised the importance of the support and development of principals in their jobs. Notwithstanding the need to improve the capacity of principals in SA, since the new dawn of democracy, it is extremely important to train beginner principals who are novices in the job. At the moment, the country is still battling to improve the leadership and management capacity of principals and not much is done for beginner principals. Cheney, Davis, Garreth and Holleran (2010) emphasise that although teacher quality is the single biggest factor to influence learner achievement, strong leadership and management in a school remain vital. In a school, teachers are led and take instructions from the principals. Principalship, therefore, is a position of power which requires someone who is equipped with knowledge about educational matters. As a result, the position requires

a person with the requisite capacity and who is mentally, socially, emotionally and educationally prepared to tackle the leadership and management challenges in the school. The considerable responsibility pertaining to principalship in SA requires the Department of Education and policymakers to focus not only on practising principals, but demand an urgent response to the plight of beginner principals.

Van der Westhuizen and Van Vuuren (2007) and DBE (2014) indicated already that South Africa is among the few countries that do not require a compulsory leadership and management qualification for a principalship position. Although the country has tried several times to come up with ways of improving principalship, particularly leadership and management, there is still a lack of training for school principals nationwide (Bush, Kinggundo and Onduro & Moorosi, 2011). This was proven by the delay in the implementation of the recent policy on The South African Standards for Principals (DBE, 2014).

## **2.2 PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA AND OTHER COUNTRIES**

The crisis surrounding education and the policy approaches adopted locally resonate with international debates with the discourse based on the comparative learning performance and what to do about it (Chisholm, 2011). The responsibility of improving performance in our schools, rest with the leadership and management strategies embedded within the competency and the knowledge of the principal. The principal is the pioneer in the school and has been delegated the authority by the HOD to manage all the activities in the school (PAM, 2016). Good leadership and management of a principal were found to be the components of successful and improved school globally (Bush and Jackson, 2002 and Leithwood and Riehl, 2003). In

order to improve the performance of our schools in South Africa in Limpopo province in particular in Capricorn district, the SGB and the department of education must hire principals who are competent and knowledgeable about school leadership and management.

Leadership and management regarding the principalship in SA have been a matter for concern in the Department of Education. The concern for and the importance of principalship development can be located in the core purpose of the establishment of SASP in 2005 and again in 2014, which was also emphasised by researchers in regard to school improvement and the enhancement of learner achievement (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan & Lee, 1982; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Waters & Kingston, 2005; Louise, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010). This recognition accentuates the prominence of the principalship position and the significance of the responsibilities of beginner principals' position in a school. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2008) further indicates the need for the preparation and training of the next generation of school principals in relation to the succession mechanism, recruitment processes and capacity building with regard to leadership and management. The challenges pertaining to the training and preparation of school leadership in SA according to Van der Westhuizen and Van Vuuren (2007) emanate from the reality that there is no single model of leadership that can be transferred easily across different school-levels, systems and contexts. Each province, district and school exhibits different challenges that may not necessarily require a similar leadership approach. The specific context in which schools operate provides limited opportunities for one principal to demonstrate leadership skills, which, inevitably, cannot be compared fairly to the other beginner principals (OECD, 2008). On the contrary, these challenging contexts are the causal factors that make leadership and management training for beginner principals absolutely necessary.

The report on principalship by the Wallace Foundation (2007) indicates that the underperformance of schools and children is likely to continue unless departments get serious about the quality of training received by school principals before and after their appointment. Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkings (2006) emphasise the importance of developing beginner principals and the need to complement the university training knowledge with less formal professional support programmes from the district. The Wallace Foundation, (2007) and Mendel (2012) question the quality of the university training programmes for principals and agree that they do not prepare aspirant principals adequately, particularly with regard to their roles as leaders and managers. The inadequacy of leadership and management knowledge for principals was confirmed by the introduction of White paper 3 by the DoE in SA that culminated in the ACE programme. It is unfortunate that in SA, schools still rely on universities to provide tuition for future principals. It looks as if this will not change any time soon unless more research on school leadership and management is conducted in detail. Teachers who are recruited for principalship positions are usually appointed from the cohort of experienced teachers who have received training at universities (SA, 2003) because the country currently does not have an institution that provides tuition specifically to produce ready-made principals for schools.

Pont, Nusche and Moorman (2008) stress that the effectiveness of leadership in a school is essential to improve efficiency and equity in the education system. Haber and West (2002) and Onguko, Abdalla and Webber (2008) aver that principals play a pivotal role in the overall leadership in a school and carry with them an equal measure of either praise or blame when their schools are perceived to be either performing well or poorly. Beginner principals are appointed to leadership and management positions under the assumption that they are ready to perform the principalship functions. Principalship is a leadership and management position that

requires someone who is ready to assume accountability right away. Botton, O’Neill, Fry and Hill (2011) have pointed out that most teachers who qualify to be school principals, have demonstrated a lack of knowledge and skills to lead successful schools. The core responsibilities of principals include: the management of curriculum and teaching programmes; human resources management; financial management and teacher professional development which are strategic and technical functions that need specialised training, and most beginner principals do not have (OECD, 2008).

Mongon and Chapman (2012) note that the raising of educational standards has become central to many governments and has led to an intensive focus on improving educational systems, which need knowledgeable and skilled principals. In SA, the educational system mainly depends on the profession itself to prepare and train teachers aspiring for a principalship. Previously, the literature indicated that the country did not have a specific qualification or training institutions where principals are produced for leadership and management. Instead, teachers themselves enrol to improve their qualification, and most of them choose courses in leadership and management with universities and colleges for career advancement and promotion purposes. The recruitment processes for a principalship recognises the initial teachers’ qualification and teaching experience as a basic requirement when recruiting principals (Taole, 2013), but those who have improved their qualifications in the area of leadership and management, stand a better chance for selection. The initial teacher qualifications and work experience are not sufficient and do not guarantee that the incumbent will run a successful school automatically (Bush & Oduro 2006). Additional to the teaching qualifications and experience, certain skills and knowledge in school leadership and management are needed if we want the principal to be effective. Appointing teachers to a

leadership and management position without empowerment or preparing them for the new responsibility, can be frustrating and they may experience challenges as beginner principals.

Findings by the Wallace Foundation (2007) indicate that in most schools that are reported as underperforming, the demands of the job of the principal far exceed the capacity of the incumbent. At times even with beginner principals who have degree qualifications in education, research has found that the university programmes provide them with inadequate knowledge to lead in today's high-pressure, achievement-based and accountability school environment (Bottom, O'Neil, Fry & Hill, 2011). Traditional principalship preparation programmes are identified as one of the challenges of effective and quality leadership and management in many schools (Wallace Foundation, 2007). Knapp, Copland and Talbert cited by the Wallace Foundation (2007) mention that beginner and practising principals are not well prepared, and they receive inadequate support to deal with the challenging work of instructional leadership and school improvement.

School leadership and management capacity are not necessarily a matter of high qualifications or accumulation of teaching experience, it is even broader than ordinary university qualifications. Although teachers are prospective principals, it is not true that teaching experience alone is enough for one to become a leader and a manager of a school. Teaching qualifications are mainly aimed at preparing a teacher, who after completing the training, will still need support from the circuit and the mentorship of experienced teachers. Similar situations apply to the beginner principal who may seem to be ready, but still needs support from the district and mentorship by an experienced principal. The two levels of responsibilities are not experienced in the same way, and the occupants can relate different experiences if they

are given an opportunity to speak about their responsibilities. Each responsibility may require a different approach when preparing an incumbent.

Orr (2007) notes that the public demand for more effective schools has placed an increasing emphasis on the important role of school principals. In countries, such as America, there is a growing shortage of high-quality leadership for schools that intensified the development of school leadership as a major reform strategy (Wallace Foundation, 2007). The role of the principal is crucial in terms of his/her capacity to provide effective and efficient leadership and management in the school. Given the prominence of the importance of the principalship, there is an increasing need to capacitate and develop school principals, particularly, beginner principals in the area of school leadership and management to prepare them for this crucial assignment. A study by Onguko, Abdalla and Webber, (2008) postulates that even though some principals are doing a sterling job in schools, their preparation to perform effectively is a source of concern globally.

The literature indicates that there is no common approach or universal practice for principalship development and preparation, along similar lines to the way teachers are prepared. The need to prepare both aspirant principals and experienced principals in countries such as England and Wales has already been established (Bush, 2011), and aspiring principals are attending mandatory preparation programmes for leadership and management training with the National Professional Qualification Headship (NPQH) as a way of capacitating a cohort of beginner principals. Such practices are not yet prevalent in SA.

Bush and Jackson (2002) confirm that other countries such as Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Singapore, Sweden and USA are already ahead with development and training

programmes on leadership and management matters for aspiring and beginner principals. The findings by Bush and Jackson (2002) indicate that, in other countries, beginner principals are appointed into a leadership and management position without proper training and preparation. The assumption could be that good teaching and experience are sufficient for one to become a good leader and manager in a school. In comparison with SA, the training of school principals in developed countries has always been seen as important for appropriate knowledge, skills and the understanding of educational institutions (Bush, 2011). The theory by Gronn (1999) on leadership, as a career, was found to be supportive of the current practices on school leadership and management in SA. This could be the main reason why, even today in SA, beginner principals' development and support are not given enough attention, instead, greater focus is on the challenges of the experienced principals. Most of the literature on school leadership and management, address the challenges experienced by practising principals and novice teachers and little is known about the challenges of beginner principals. The theory by Gronn (1999) advocates a career path as an important practice used to prepare the leaders of different organisations including schools.

Traditionally, in SA, deputy principals, head of departments (HoD) and good teachers are most likely to be appointed as principals without any formal leadership training or exhibition management competencies. Contrary to this point of view, Bush and Oduro (2006) note that good teaching abilities are not necessarily good indicators that when a good teacher is appointed principal, he/she will be a capable educational leader and manager. Onguko, Abdalla and Webber (2008) refer to the principalship in public schools in Pakistan where teachers are recruited and promoted into principalship on the basis of their good teaching experience rather than their leadership and management skills or qualifications.



Meyer (2002) and Onguko, Abdalla and Webber (2008) assert that most beginner principals are promoted as a result of good work as teachers, but they are unaware of the complex knowledge and skills of managing work and employees. At times, the unawareness of principalship work cause stress for beginner principals. In 1994, Daresh and Playko conducted a study in which they discovered that there were major differences between the roles of a classroom teacher and a school principal and frequently, beginner principals experienced considerable anxiety, frustration and self-doubt in their first year after entry in the post. Oplatka (2004) points out that in other countries, for example, Nigeria and Botswana), in particular, principals are not even appointed on the basis of teacher career paths or the criteria regarding qualifications and experience in teaching, some principals have never been in the classroom, however, they are appointed as principals on the basis of influence of political powers.

Taylor (2008) argues that the key to improving school performance lies in leadership and management, and unless professional development programmes for school principals are taken seriously, there will be no changes in our schools. Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011) explain that many serving principals did not receive basic management training prior and after their entry into a principalship. Most of the appointed beginner principals imprudently rely mainly on their own experience and intuition in leadership and management (Day, 2003). However, Copland, Darling-Hammond, Knapp, McLaughnlin and Talbert (2002) remarked that experience in leadership and management alone cannot teach beginner principals everything they need to know about principalship or school leadership and management. Newton and Tarrant (1992) note, some years ago, that the day-to-day experience of employees did not prepare them enough to assume a leadership and management position compared to formal training, especially with regard to the understanding of educational policies.

The educational reforms in SA have resulted in considerable challenges in the education system, and principals are affected the most (Taole, 2013). Research on principalship in SA was conducted by Bush and Heystek (2006) in the Gauteng Province; Van der Westhuizen (2004) in Mpumalanga and Bush, Bisschoff, Heystek, Joubert and Moloji (2005) from the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance, discovered that most principals of schools were appointed without proper qualifications in school leadership and management or formal training in principalship roles. After their appointment, beginner principals start attending self-initiated short courses for in-service training to upgrade their knowledge. Bush and Heystek (2006) recommend that training for beginner principals should take place even before the appointment of the candidates. Pre-service and in-service training for school leadership is already conducted in Finland, France, Sweden and New Zealand with the aim of preparing beginner principals for the new job (Oy, 2012). The Department of Education in SA often conducts workshops for principals as a way of assisting practising principals with school leadership and management. In this regard, the department acknowledges the need for developing principals and such workshops can be extended to beginner principals.

### **2.3. CAREER PATHWAYS IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The Revised Policy on the minimum requirements for the teacher education qualification, outlines the three broad pathways that teachers may follow for career advancement (Nzimande, 2015). Firstly, there is a teaching and learning pathway, secondly, there are the management and leadership pathways, and lastly, there is the educational planning, research and/or policy development pathway (Nzimande, 2015). This departmental policy indicates that qualifications are derived through teaching and learning from different sources. The teaching career by its nature, encompasses the continuous learning and acquisition of skills in the process. In most

cases, this kind of learning is informal, unmonitored and with no particular set of standards. Usually, it is the most preferred method used to prepare teachers for principalship for the future. The accumulation of such experiential learning by teachers may sometimes lead to unintended learning, yielding poor results, especially for teachers who did not intend to become principals. Swanepoel, Erasmus and Schenk (2012) point out that, although new teachers are appointed after being trained for the job, it does not mean that they will be able to meet the present and future requirements of their jobs and potential career advancements and stay in the same job. Not all teachers intend to make teaching a career; as such, it would not be sensible to depend absolutely on a career for leadership development. Bottom and Schmidt-Davis (2010) indicate that if governments want to use careers to identify potential teachers for leadership and management positions, departments must develop and formalise a succession plan early in the careers of teachers.

Swanepoel *et al.* (2012) describe four career patterns in the workplace, first, there is a linear career pattern, which implies that there are some employees who want to progress through the hierarchy within the same organisation, secondly, there is the expert career pattern, these are employees who want to identify themselves with their area of specialisation and do not want promotion, instead, they seek to acquire more knowledge of their specialised skills, for example, science teachers. The third aspect is the spiral career pattern. These employees want to gain experience from teaching and use it as a basis for their future work prospects. The last pattern is the transitory career; these are the kinds of employees that do not stay in the same job long. After acquiring skills in one job, they use that as a step ladder to apply for another job with better financial rewards or benefits. These career patterns are an indication that not all teachers will want to become principals. Using a career pathway to prepare for the next generation of school leaders may not help the education department to achieve their core

purpose for principalship development. The identification of future cohorts of principals should be guided by the Revised Policy on the minimum requirements for teacher education qualifications (Nzimande, 2015) and the career patterns and the development of school leadership and management may not be so generalised but should be selective of potential principals from among the teachers. In this regard, it would be teachers who are in the linear career pattern approach as explained by Swanepoel *et al.* (2012).

The Wallace Foundation (2012) states that, in many countries, the development of principals into effective leaders and managers for schools still remains a lower priority in their education policies and agenda, precisely because of the experiential learning as advocated by Gronn (1999), which is not well or formally monitored as a kind of learning that can develop and be accredited with regard to potential and talented teachers to be recommended for promotion in principalship. Career pathway can be used as a developmental process, mindful of the fact that during the teaching process, teachers perform management functions and leadership roles at a small scale. In order to support the career pathways for leadership and management, the department of education, the sector bargaining council and government can agree to formalise the teaching experience in the form of prior learning. In any way, the attempts will be striking a balance between the theory of leadership as a career by Gronn (1999), which is followed by different departments somewhat knowingly or unknowingly.

Nzimande (2015) points out that a qualification must certify that a planned and systematic programme of learning was followed and completed successfully through formal or informal learning and work experience. The Revised Policy on the minimum requirements for the teacher education qualification recognises a career path as learning. The policy implication is that when teachers are teaching and accumulating experience, they are learning and are

qualifying themselves informally in one way or another. This policy is in line with Lashway (2003) who indicates that school leadership is an accumulation of formal and informal experiences through teaching. However, Orr (2007) suggests that this kind of learning should have approved content for educational leadership, and the programme needs to be redesigned in order to influence career development and graduate tuition. This calls for the monitoring and evaluation of the experiential learning and the establishment of agreed standards of performance.

A career path is not new in the Department of Education. The introduction of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) programme in the DoE (2006) by the department was an acknowledgement of the experiences accumulated by teachers in their jobs. RPL means the accumulated teaching experience is translated into a recognised teacher's qualification that either improves their income or confirms that the teacher has attained the next possible higher qualification. The teacher's qualification is then upgraded and can enable him/her to qualify for promotion. The RPL exemplified career pathways in one way or another. While teachers are gaining experience in their teaching careers, they are also advancing their careers and knowledge and, in the process, stand a better chance of getting opportunities for promotion in comparison with the newly appointed teachers. When commenting about career paths in connection with promoting teachers, particularly for a principalship, Mulfor (2003) states that the Department of Education must seriously address the need for school leadership by providing coherent and systematic training to aspiring principals because of the transition from one career to another. As they make the transit, many of them find it difficult to cope with the new challenges that come with the new responsibilities of the new job. In the USA for example, career paths in school leadership and management for beginner principals are given extensive attention compared to SA (Mulfor, 2003). A beginner principal is given one-year period of

coaching by a master principal together with two years' intensive professional development (Moller, 2002). The policy on the minimum requirements for teacher education qualifications in SA (Ndzimande, 2015) specifies the following examples of career pathways for teachers in the Department of Education:

- Most teachers will begin their careers as subject specialists, and will usually work in a classroom at a school gaining extensive teaching experience and working with people.
- At any future point after that, some teachers may wish to deepen their competencies in the chosen teaching and learning specialisation, or else develop an additional role or practice to support teaching and learning in a school. These teachers may continue to work in the classroom or as a subject advisor at the district office.
- Some teachers may choose to embark on a career in *management and leadership and/or policy development*, where they may be employed as either principals or deputy principals (Nzimande, 2015).

Career pathways, as a preferred method of principal preparation in some countries, is criticised by Steyn and van Niekerk (2012) who reason that, it is unrealistic to expect the beginner principal to do well if he/she lacks leadership and management knowledge and skills. This assertion by Steyn and van Niekerk implies that prior experience as a deputy, head of department or good classroom teacher in a school does not necessarily guarantee one will be a good leader and manager in the new position as a principal. When commenting on beginner principal preparation methods. Murphy (2001) shows that preparation methods have been characterised as bankrupt and very slow to change, and, are sometimes irrelevant to the current realities operating in modern schools today. Career pathways as a method used to prepare teachers to be future principals was found to be limited with regard to addressing the challenges

faced by school principals. Career pathways in school leadership could be cumbersome compared to the university programmes which are more formal and provide accreditation. The content of a formal training course at a university will usually change from time to time, guided by the educational reforms of that time, based on the relevant research findings and recommendations. Jeap (2013) recounts the experience of beginner principal, Rachel Wilson, as follows:

Wilson was promoted from the vice-principal position and the school board hoped that her appointment as a school leader would bring internal continuity and leadership stability to the school. Unfortunately, Wilson experienced resistance from the veteran coalition serving as the de facto decision-makers in the school. Her collegial supervisory efforts were dismissed by staff and as a result, the position and the efficacy as a principal was challenged.

The experience by Wilson may serve as an example to indicate that a career pathway cannot be relied upon totally as a preparatory method. It has its limitations and weaknesses. Botha (2004) indicates that current systems in school management demand a new professionalism from principals because it challenges the traditional concepts of 'principal preparation' and the 'principalship position.' Principals are no longer expected to be only managers and administrators, but with the advent of the school-based management system, Botha (2004) asserts that today principals are more accountable for their school and the academic performance of learners.

The studies by Bush and Oduro (2006) and Mathibe (2007) indicate that the SA literature on effective leadership and management has shown that many serving principals lack the necessary skills needed to perform their roles. This lack of skill may result from the fact that

most practising principals in our schools have not gone through a formal preparation programme but have been appointed through career pathways in the teaching fraternity. The introduction of technology and myriad changes in education in SA require principals to possess a wide array of competencies in order to lead and manage the school effectively. These competencies include the ability to work with and build a team, impart a vision, understand and interpret legislation and policies. Furthermore, it is imperative for a principal in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to be a life- long learner so that he/she can be dynamic, versatile and flexible. Taole (2013) comments that a principal is expected to wear many hats as a manager, administrator, instructional and curriculum leader. All of these functions will require a beginner principal to be prepared to perform and may not be acquired through career pathways only, but he/she will need formal schooling and accreditation for training.

The study by the State of Ohio Department of Education (2012) in the USA shows that beginner principals enter the principalship position through multiple pathways. Some will undergo a career progression from classroom teacher to deputy principal, to principal. Others moved directly from classroom teaching position to the position of principal. Still, others further their studies and acquire higher qualifications before aspiring to the position of principal. On the other hand, Lauder (2000) is supportive of career pathways and agrees with the theory by Gronn (1999) that teachers can do well as principals because they simply have to learn from their prior experience by adapting their knowledge of and leadership skills and management practices.

Regardless of the path along which beginner principals are appointed as principals, their first years of leading and managing schools need to be investigated notwithstanding the amount of experience in education and teaching or the level of the qualification. The study by the Ohio



Department of Education (2012) indicates that even experienced principals are sometimes in a situation where they need additional support. Most beginner principals assume the new position with expectations and excitement about their appointment, however, the feeling quickly diminishes without proper support (Ohio Department of Education, 2012). When asking beginner principals to describe how they feel just a few months into the job, many indicate that they are frustrated, overwhelmed, tired, stressed, isolated and feel alone (Spillane & Lee, 2013). Without proper support and training, principals are being thrown into the job without a life jacket, and they are expected to perform optimally. The research by Willer and Recht (2011) indicates that even coursework in school leadership and management at a university is sometimes insufficient for the preparation of beginner principals for dealing with the varied and abstract nature of complex situations in schools. To minimise the feelings of frustration, isolation and stress, beginner principals need the right kind and amount of support.

In many schools, the principal remains the absolute decision-maker in most matters in comparison with other members of the SMT. Unlike the principal, SMT members possess limited powers and cannot take major decisions. For this reason, beginner principals are expected to be prepared in terms of leadership and management so that they are able to give proper direction to the subordinates. Although many countries depend on career pathways as a means of breeding new principals, many are struggling (Bush & Jackson, 2002). The study on beginner principals by Daresh and Male (2000) reports that even beginner principals who claim to have gained extensive experience as deputy principals, after being appointed as principals, they still experience intense problems related to cultural shock, high level of stress, financial management and the need to come to terms with their new sense of isolation. The absence of leadership and management programme for principals creates a gap, particularly to beginner principals. This even applies to teachers who have accumulated enough experience in teaching.

The urgency of the need for support of both beginner and experienced principals could be increased by the pressure from poor learner achievement and school improvement particularly in the Limpopo province in Capricorn district.

#### **2.4. BEGINNER PRINCIPALS IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Assuming a principalship marks a distinct and sometimes abrupt change in perspectives, expectations and work for most beginner principals. Many of them have teaching experience mainly and require sufficient time for adjustment. Unfortunately, the school education and schooling system, especially in the SA context, as mentioned before, does not have preparatory programmes for beginner principals. Once they are appointed, they start with their work right away, sometimes even without a mentor. Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton and Ikemoto (2012) confirm that beginner principals, that are new in their schools, “face a variety of challenges that can influence their likelihood of improving their schools’ performance” negatively.

The appointment of beginner principals in SA and in Ghana is similar (Bush & Oduro, 2006); in these countries training for beginner principals is not a priority and they are appointed without any formal preparation. Principals are given leadership and management support in the form of workshops late after years of practice. This kind of support is usually provided to address challenges in schools or the new programmes and changes necessary to align with educational development. Such programmes are not necessarily provided to assist beginner principals, but their training is mainly focused on principals irrespective of the gap between the beginner and experienced principals. Some of the workshops are provided by non-government organisations (NGO) who often select a few schools to participate in the training because of their budgetary constraints (Van der Westhuizen, 2007). Regrettably, the training

provided by such agencies is not sustainable because it does not meet the expectations of beginner principals. Training of this nature was provided to SA schools and in the Limpopo Province and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was the service provider (DoE, 2002). The aim of the programme was to support SMTs with regard to school leadership and management, however, it was discontinued abruptly because of the lack of funding (Department of Education, 2002). Research conducted by Kitavi and Van der Westhuizen (1996) indicated that beginner principals in developing countries in particular Kenya were faced with problems that differed drastically from the problems faced by their counterparts in developed countries such as the USA, UK and Australia.

In many countries including SA, studies have shown that the experience of most beginner principals is not an easy one, they are faced with a daunting transition with the ultimate responsibility and decision making powers exacerbated by expectations from the parents, government, teachers and learners of the new appointee into this high position in the school (Spillane & Lee; 2013). This was also true of the experienced principals who are faced with overwhelming challenges, and Jeap (2013) explains that there is a growing complexity in schools regarding the principal's role and associated leadership tasks, the changing societal realm and educational reform that pose serious challenges even for experienced principals. The literature points out the many challenges faced by beginner principals, especially during the first years of their practice. Hobson, Brown, Ashby, Keys, Sharp and Benefield (2003) carried out a study on beginner principals in different countries commissioned by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and discovered that most of the beginner principals are faced with varied challenges.

Particular difficulties experienced by beginner principals were professional isolation, loneliness and a lack of report back on their progress, inadequate preparation to deal with the governing body, implementing teacher appraisal, maintenance of the buildings, the management of school finances and educational legislation and reforms (NCSL, 2003). Beginner principals in Wales, in particular, experienced challenges regarding finding time to observe classroom teaching, school building management, finances and the provisioning of resources for curriculum implementation. The research in Scotland found that beginner principals face challenges with the lack of personal and family time, they do not have time to conduct classroom monitoring, the increase in the amount of paperwork, and insufficient time for their studies and professional growth, lack of knowledge to manage, incompetent teachers and deal with the leadership style of the previous principal. The study further indicates that beginner principals in Europe need training and support regarding how to deal with poor teacher morale and commitment (NCSL, 2003).

Tekleselassie (2002) and Bush and Oduro (2006) have concluded that beginner principals in SA, Ethiopia, Kenya and Ghana are appointed without a university degree in education and have limited opportunities for leadership development. The lower qualifications of beginner principals then compel the Department of Education to organise supplementary training in the form of short in-service training courses to enhance their ability to lead and manage the school. McLennan (2000) indicates that more often than not, in-service training is poorly organised and yields meagre results, especially when conducted by the department. The recommendation by Bush and Heystek (2006) and Wilmore (2004) on beginner principals' preparation was that training for beginner principals should be extended , but the best way would be that training should take place before they are appointed. The study by Siegrist, Pate, Monetti, Wright and Raiford (2009) has shown that it is a common practice in many schools that most beginner

principals are handed the keys to their offices, asked to sign several forms and given sets of reports, and wished good luck without any clear direction on school leadership and management.

The search for a principal should not end when one is appointed. The appointment of a principal is the start of an effective job, but helping the beginner principal to succeed and grow in the job needs more attention. The appointment of beginner principals and requiring them to start working in such a demanding career without specific preparation “is a recipe for personal stress and system failure” (Bush & Heystek, 2006). This was indicated long ago by Daresh (2006) who indicated that beginner principals are ill-prepared to deal with many procedural matters including legal issues, budgeting, policy implantation, and also need help with interpersonal skills such as conflict management.

When beginner principals are asked to comment on their preparation and training for the principalship, some emphasised the importance of career paths by first working as deputy principals, while others highlighted problems resulting from inadequate preparation when dealing with the staff, governors, finance and educational legislations (National College for School Leadership, 2003). Studies on beginner principals’ experience on school leadership and management found that, whereas, they differ in terms of their work backgrounds, the work environment is similar, either trained or untrained, most of their challenges were common. Some of their challenges were revealed by Male (2001), NCSL (2003) and Spillane and Lee (2013) and are summarised below:

- 2.4.1. Beginner principals experience a sense of professional isolation and loneliness;
- 2.4.2. Beginner principals face a challenge with managing the legacy and the practice of the principal that they are replacing;
- 2.4.3. Management of the multiple tasks imposed by the post they are occupying;
- 2.4.4. Working with ineffective and resistant staff;
- 2.4.5 Working with stakeholders, in particular the SGB;
- 2.4.6. Implementing new government policies;
- 2.4.7. Limited technical skills and expertise;
- 2.4.8. Time management;
- 2.4.9. Management of finances; and
- 2.4.10. Professional growth management.

## **2.5. CONCEPTUALISING LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN A SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**

The concepts of ‘leadership and management’ are usually used interchangeably, but Day and Sammons (2013) accorded them different emphases in different contexts. This study does not aim to differentiate between leadership and management and does not discuss the different leadership models in the literature. The basis of the study is to understand the experiences of beginner principals in relation to their roles and functions as leaders and managers of schools. In order to conceptualise their experiences regarding the two concepts, it is necessary to clarify them and indicate how they are involved in a school.

Leading and managing are distinct, but both are extremely important for ensuring that an institution like a school is run effectively and efficiently. Although the two differ conceptually,

in a school situation, it is the principal who performs both functions. In a school, it is possible to distribute leadership roles and management functions among a range of people (Coleman & Glover, 2010). The principal, deputy principal, heads of departments and teachers are performing leadership and management responsibilities individually and cooperatively in their day- to- day practice. For example, teachers lead and manage learners in the classroom and sports activities, HOD monitors and support teachers with the work they are doing, the deputy principal maintains discipline and the principal directs the school and accounts for everything done in the school. Distributed leadership in a school environment creates a practical opportunity for teachers to experience leadership and management and, at the same time, advancing their career within the profession. Distributed leadership by principals is supported by Tomal, Schilling and Trybus (2013), indicating that the work in a school is performed effectively when different tasks are performed by different people or groups at different levels of responsibility. This kind of leadership can then be regarded as training or preparation for future leaders and managers for our schools. Those who are engaged in a distributed leadership gain experience in the job and later aspire to become principals. Unfortunately, studies revealed that this process occurs informally, uncoordinated and not monitored. Therefore, it does not contribute much to the development of the cohort of beginner principals.

Throughout the process of distributed leadership, only the principal has the prerogative power to delegate or not to delegate responsibilities to teachers (Tomal, Schilling & Trybus, 2013). In a school situation, therefore, the leadership and management development of future principals is not reliable either hierarchically or in terms of seniority, because the principal decides to whom power must be delegated. Bolman and Deal (1997) note that when a school is over- managed, but under- led it loses its sense of purpose. Similarly, when the school is poorly managed and has a strong charismatic leader, the school experiences a short period of

success and then fails. Career development can be chaotic depending on the type of a leader in the school. Although experience in teaching can contribute towards developing teachers for leadership and management, it cannot be guaranteed. As for beginner principals who are expected to lead and manage in the era of democracy and continuous educational changes, they must then be found knowledgeable and ready for amicable solutions of problems that arise from the school community. Bush (2011) contends that effective leadership and management are essential if schools are to achieve wide-ranging objectives set for them by their many stakeholders. Schools exist with a purpose to achieve set educational goals, and beginner principals are primarily employed to assist governments and communities to achieve these goals.

Smith and Cronje (1997) state that managers are able to help schools to achieve their goals and leaders are assisting schools to realise the purpose for their existence. It is important for beginner principals to know and understand the distinction between the two concepts when they are appointed as principals. Steyn and Van Niekerk (2012) point out that the situation in SA schools needs educational leaders that can give direction in the educational systems and help schools to attain their goals. The attainment of the set goal in the school is evaluated, amongst others, through the learner achievement and school improvement. Steyn and Van Niekerk (2012) argue that it is sometimes unrealistic to expect beginner principals to do well if they lack basic leadership and management knowledge and skills. After being appointed, the principal is expected to demonstrate leadership and management expertise by influencing the activities of teaching and learning, however, finding an appropriate strategy for their training still remains a problem (Grado-Severson, 2007; Jansen 2009). Throughout the literature, it is clear that in a school, principals are expected to perform the roles of a leader and the functions of a manager interchangeably.



### **2.5.1. The leadership roles of a school principal**

School principals are under considerable leadership pressure to ensure that their work contributes to school improvement and learners' achievement (Day & Sammons, 2013). Among other challenges facing school leadership, (Day & Sammons, 2013) include: ensuring consistently good teaching and learning, integrating a sound grasp of basic knowledge and skills within a broad and balanced curriculum, managing behaviour and attendance, managing resources and the environment, building the school as a professional learning community and developing partnerships beyond the school to encourage parental support for learning and new learning opportunities. Given these challenges, it immediately makes it imperative for beginner principals to be knowledgeable and prepared in the area of school leadership. It was confirmed by Leithwood, Louis, Wahlstrom and Anderson (2004) who indicated the need to develop a cohort of school leaders with the necessary capacity to give schools a wider choice of the kind of leadership needed by the school.

According to Bush and Glover (2003), leadership is the process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes for the organisation. It involves inspiring and supporting others towards the achievement of a vision for the school, which is based on clear personal and professional values. Leadership means influencing others' actions in achieving desirable ends, and leaders are people who shape the goals, motivations, and actions of others. Successful leaders in a school are distinguished by and concerned with setting the direction, developing other people and redesigning the organisation to improve student learning (Leithwood, Louis, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2004). Frequently, they initiate change to reach existing and new goals (Dimmock, 1999). Leadership in schools is regarded as the most important role of the

principal, which has a positive effect on classroom instruction with direct impact on learner achievement (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013). Leithwood, Louis, Wahlstrom and Anderson (2010) argue that effective leadership can improve the general performance of the school including its administration. There are five key tasks that are expected to be carried out by the school principal acting as a leader (Mongon & Chapman, 2008; the Wallace Foundation, 2011) which are:

- Shaping a vision of academic success for all learners;
- Creating a climate hospitable to education in order that safety, a cooperative spirit and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail;
- Cultivating leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their part in realising the school vision;
- Improve instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and learners to learn at the best of their abilities;
- Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement.

The short explanation about the leadership roles of a school principal indicates the thoroughness and the capacity needed from any individual who aspires to be appointed a principal. The importance of teaching experience, training and preparation in the educational matter was very apparent. Beginner principals need to be multi-skilled if they want to be successful leaders. Shaping the vision and improving instruction in a school would require someone with extensive educational knowledge and experience. In order to create a climate hospitable to education, cultivating leadership in others and managing people beginner principal need to be trained.

### **2.5.2. The management functions of a school principal**

The management function of a principal entails the efficient and effective maintenance of systems in the school. Commonly known functions of a manager are planning, organising, leading and controlling of the systems in the school. These are universal in the sense that they are the standard functions performed by all managers in the course of their job. The performance and achievement of a principal are usually judged on the basis of the managerial successes in the school. As leaders and managers, beginner principals' achievements in the school will also be judged on the basis of their success with regard to these managerial functions. School management entails the successful implementation of policies, compliance with educational prescripts and the directives and the efficient and effective maintenance of the school's current activities. Day and Sammons (2013) highlight the key features of a manager as follows:

- Ensuring that management practices reflect leadership actions.
- Carrying out restructuring so that the school organisation is more effective and efficient.
- Collaboratively designing and carrying out strategic plans;
- Meeting accountability requirements.
- Getting things done.
- Making sure the organisation is running smoothly.
- Working effectively with people.
- Providing effective financial management.
- Marketing and promoting the school.

All the functions listed above are important and cannot be redesigned. It is the duty of the principal as a school manager to be able to develop measures to help the school to achieve what

the department of education has planned by managing programmes efficiently and effectively. In carrying out his functions the school manager plans, organises, leads and controls what they are doing. Planning sometimes involves strategies, and when engaging in strategic planning already one need to demonstrate leadership capacity even though he/she is a manager. That is the reason why in a school situation the two concepts are not performed separately and are vested in the principalship position. It is the reason why beginner principals are expected to exhibit both leadership and management expertise. Unlike as is the case in a corporate world where you have a chief executive officer and the board of directors with separate responsibilities, in a school, the principal is expected to guide the school governing body on all educational matters (SASA, Act No. 84 of 1996) (South Africa, 1996a). The importance of good knowledge of leadership and management by beginner principals cannot be overlooked. Leadership and management is a complex responsibility in a school environment, and those who are appointed into such a position must be acquainted with its complexities. As a manager the principal is expected to perform the functions which are briefly explained below:

#### **2.5.2.1. Planning**

Beginner principals must know and understand the context of school management that involves setting objectives, standards and determining a course of action for achieving the set goals. Planning in a school is centred on learner achievement and school improvement. Beginner principals are therefore required to know about schools develop plans, annual performance plans, school improvement plans, academic performance plans, and staff development plans to mention a few. During planning, the principal is expected to establish objectives, time frames, identify alternative courses of action for achieving the set objectives. Equally important is the expectation to develop different school policies, a function that requires the aspect of leadership from the principal. In order to succeed in performing the function of planning, the principal

must be knowledgeable about relevant legislation in the country and in education in order to succeed in planning for a school. Planning in school is of paramount importance and if it is not taken seriously, may be the beginning of the downfall of the school.

#### **2.5.2.2. Organising**

This management function will require the beginner principal to have knowledge of the important different structures in the school. Complexities of the management of school activities compel the establishment of committees and sub-committees that support the principal. This function involves organisational and project management skills that are usually acquired through formal training. It also involves the knowledge of financial management, especially because it requires the provision of resources to accomplish the objectives. In practising this function, beginner principals are expected to develop a job description for every structure and individuals in the school.

#### **2.5.2.3. Leading**

This function has an element of developing others through distributed leadership. Leading involves influencing teachers and other employees in the school to work towards the attainment of the objectives set by the school. To succeed in this function, the beginner principal should demonstrate the ability to motivate, communicate effectively and to show teachers the way towards the attainment of objectives. Beginner principals, therefore, are expected to possess profound knowledge about the principalship position.

#### **2.5.2.4. Controlling**

Controlling is a management skill that involves safeguarding performance so that it does not deviate from the set standards. In this instance, beginner principals are expected know what is quality teaching and learning and how it can be accomplished by teachers. It is predicted that beginner principals are knowledgeable about the performance standards of staff members and the corrective measures for those who deviated (EEA, Act No. 76 of 1998) (South Africa, 1998). Performance standards in a school situation are measured at the end of the academic year when learners' achievement has improved which is a result of effective teaching and learning. School improvement concerns the raising of learners' achievements and the principal's ability to coordinate all the activities in the school (Reynolds, Hopkins, Potter & Chapman, 2001).

Principalship position requires someone who is knowledgeable about educational matters; possess the necessary skills and understanding of educational prescripts. A school principal is expected to demonstrate both the roles of leaders and the functions of a manager. Those who are appointed to the principalship position where possible must have the experience of schooling activities but with particular reference to classroom teaching. There are some of the roles and functions of the school principals that require specialised skills, for example, management of finances, policy development and evaluation of staff performance to mention a few. Beginner principals who are appointed only based on teaching experience may not cope as leaders and managers of school and may require support.

## 2.6. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DEVELOPING BEGINNER PRINCIPALS

Research by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) (2013) has concluded that although experience is necessary for school leadership and management, it is also important that beginner principals be provided with pre-service training that prepares them for their new responsibilities. Training and support for beginner principals are important requirements that can build capacity and enable them to perform their duties better (Bottom & Schmidt- Davis, 2010). Studies conducted by Davis, Darling-Harmmond, LaPointe and Meyerson (2005) and Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton and Ikemoto (2012) have established that there is limited research on beginner principals' experience coupled with the lack of training opportunities that can help with developing a highly qualified crop of beginner principals in school leadership and management. Dimmock (2012) maintains that successful learning is built on professional development, which is reliant on effective leadership in schools. However, unfortunately, educational leaders today are faced with a challenge on how best to prepare and develop school principals. This limited research and knowledge about the experiences of beginner principal need to be explored in various contexts so that research can build a rich knowledge on this phenomenon. Dimmock (2012) avers that the training and preparation of beginner principals is a *sine qua non* for school transformation and improvement.

Mitgang and Gill (2012) and Bottom and Schmidt- Davis (2010) suggest that the Department of Education should assume the responsibility of empowering and supporting beginner principals to enable them to meet their expectations. Wallace Foundation (2012) indicates that the success of the current education system needs school principals who are well-prepared to change and improve the curriculum. The Institute for Educational Leadership (2005) shows that the preparation of principals and providing them with ongoing professional development

and support is a precondition for a successful school. The importance of this study fits within the discoveries about the insufficient information about the experiences of a beginner in school leadership and management. The literature signifies that most beginner principals do not have the necessary knowledge and skill in leadership and management and are appointed based on their experience in the teaching profession which is a career path preparation anyway. However, stakeholders expect good leadership and good management for good results from their influence.

A report by the National Association of Elementary School Principal (NAESP) (2013) has found out that highly supported, monitored and coached principals are doing extremely well in school leadership and management. Studies are proving that the methods used by other countries like SA, Kenya and Tanzania (Bush, 2006) are not supportive enough for effective school leadership and management.

It has already been shown by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (Nzimande, 2015) that the policy on the minimum requirement for teacher education qualification requires four years of formal training from a university, which is equivalent to a degree. Consequently, there should be a requirement (standard bearer) for principalship through an accredited, recognised formal qualification for those who aspire leadership and management position in schools. According to the ELRC, (Collective Agreement No. 1 of 2008) (South Africa, 2008), an experienced teacher with a three-year teacher's qualification (those from former colleges of education) is legible to be appointed as a school principal. Christie, Thomson and Whitely (2009) comment that it is extremely important to get a good principal to lead and manage the school, but equally important is preparing beginner principals to be ready to do the job. Grounded on the requirements for a principalship in SA, one wanted



to understand how beginner principals succeed in performing their leadership roles and management function based on the appointment criteria. In addition, it was important to explore their experiences in school leadership and management as novices in their jobs.

The need for developing school principals' leadership and management skills was identified by the Minister of Education in 1996 (Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge & Ngcobo, 2013). In 1996, the secretary of commonwealth also identified the need to prepare beginner principals in Africa, unfortunately, budget limitations from international donors and the lack of internal capacity on leadership development were the stumbling blocks (Bush & Oduro 2006). In 2007 the DoE introduced a leadership and management development programme for school principals. The effectiveness of the preparation programmes for beginner principal as advocated by Dimmock (2012) is that their preparation must extend over a longer period and should be combined with on-the-job learning as opposed to one-day workshop.

As part of a wider strategy to improve educational standards for principalships, the DoE in SA introduced Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) as a leadership and management qualification to develop serving principals (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011). The introduction of ACE by the education department could be viewed as an effort by the policy makers in the Department of Education to address the gaps in school leadership and management as previously referred to by Van Westhuizen *et al.* (2004) in the Mpumalanga and Gauteng Provinces. However, the ACE programme was extensively intended on supporting the SMT, in particular, practising principals. It was not addressing the needs of beginner principals who are the emphasis of this study. In response to improving the quality of school leadership and management, in some countries they virtually adopted principal certification and established school leadership license as a standard for principalship (Sun, 2011). In the USA

for example, they established an organisation called the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) that runs formal leadership and management programmes for individuals who aspire to become principals. In order to develop principals with regard to school leadership and management, the education districts in Chicago and Denver have collaborated with universities and have designed training programmes for beginner principals (Mitgang & Gill, 2012). Cities such as New York, Boston and the Gwinnet countries also formed their own training academies and worked with non-profit training providers to create programmes suitable for the needs of beginner principals.

The literature indicates that there are some countries that have already realised the need for support for beginner principals. This study will illustrate that if SA beginner principals of whom many are appointed by virtue of their experience, do need support as is happening in other countries, especially in the west. The quality and the effectiveness of principal preparation programme has been questioned (Mitgang & Gill, 2012), and there is a need for a deeper analysis of their strength and impact on beginner principals, especially in SA where there have been drastic educational reforms. Mitgang and Gill (2012) observe that the current preparation programmes for school principals need a revamping or improvement. Internationally, the importance of preparing school leaders was recognised by the government of England some time back (Dunford, Fawcett & Bennett, 2000) when the government had indicated that, by 2002, all the newly appointed school principals must have obtained a qualification by attending a programme called Headship Leadership and Management Programme (HEADLAMP) and the Leadership Programme for Serving Heads (LPSH).

Darling-Hammon, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr and Cohen (2007) have confirmed the lack of support and preparation programmes for the principalship with the ensuing possible negative effects on to school improvement and is also instrumental in the failure of school principals to

deal with the challenges of instructional leadership. After realising the challenges confronting beginner principals, the education department in the USA provided funding in support of professional developmental programmes to foster beginner principals (Davis, Leon & Fultz, 2013). There is a need for formal preparatory programmes in school leadership and management, particularly for beginner principals. Policy makers and governments must start to realise the distinction between support programme for principals, aspiring principals and beginner principals. The three levels are not the same, and their developmental needs differ. The significance of entry to principalship and preparation in SA has not yet received attention as compared to USA and Finland. In Finland, a principal candidate for principalship must have completed a master's degree before he can be considered for selection (Oy, 2012). Bush and Oduro (2006) indicate that the absence of formal management qualification in SA as a requirement for principalship needs to be revisited because qualification in management will provide a sound starting point for beginner principals.

Spillane and Lee (2013) indicate that the lack of proper preparation for beginner principals may lead to their failure to deal with the legacy and practices of the previous principal. This was confirmed by Jeap (2013) who discovered a beginner principal who was stressed by teachers who were resisting changes because they were comfortable with the old routines and culture created by the former principal. The challenges as explained by Jeap (2013), showed that the position of a school principal requires not managerial functions only, equally important to the position is the leadership capacity. This was supported by Mongon and Chapman (2008) and the Wallace Foundation (2011) who indicated that, amongst the other roles of a principal, was to influence a vision, creating a hospitable educational climate, cultivating leadership in other members, improving instruction to enable teachers to teach and being able to manage people. In SA, most experienced teachers started working prior to 1994 when the system of education

was an integral part of the apartheid regime which was organised racially and ethnically (DoE 2007). The advent of drastic changes in the education system may still be facing the resistance either from teachers or managers from the old order. It would require a competent beginner principal with good knowledge of SA educational policies and legislative framework to successfully perform his roles and functions as a leader and manager in the school. This also attests to the significance of developing beginner principals, especially in SA.

The report of the Task Team on Leadership and Development commissioned by the Minister of Education identified the competency of educational management as a vital means to improve the quality of education in schools and recommended the establishment of a National Institute for Management and Leadership Development. This did not materialise, and currently, educational management development in SA is still fragmented (DoE, 1996; Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Masoge & Ngcobo, 2013). In 1996, the Task Team on Education Management questioned the programmes offered by universities on school leadership and management. It appeared that the focus of their programmes was more on the collection of certificates with little attention to the actual ability to transfer management knowledge to learners (Bush & Oduro 2006). The question of the relevance of the university support programmes on school leadership seems to be a global challenge. Unless it is addressed, the challenges pertaining to leadership and management in schools will be perpetuated. Without proper preparation in school leadership and management, beginner principals will continue to face unresolved challenges (Jeap, 2013) and will ultimately collapse the quality of education. Employing principals who do not have the requisite capacity in leadership and management, and possess little knowledge, experience or few qualifications can be a recipe for leadership and management frustration.

The study by Goddard (2004) revealed that the principal could not develop leadership proficiency spontaneously, but they need preparation and training that would develop them to become strong leaders. Mitgang (2013) indicates that solid leadership is a prerequisite for turning around failing and poor-performing schools. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the Education Department (employer) to appoint strong principals in schools and also prepare them to lead and manage schools. Mitgang (2013) posits that those preparing beginner principals in classroom instruction and management could bring positive changes in the school including a significant improvement in learners' performance.

Mulford (2003) mentions that the improvement of teacher performance depends to a large extent on leadership effectiveness and managerial efficiency in the school, and the poor performance by the school reflects the poor performance of the school management. Mulford (2003) supports the finding by Mongon and Chapman (2008); the Wallace Foundation (2011) and Day and Sammons (2013) who focused on the characteristics of leaders and managers. They all agree that the principal is responsible for the development to improve learner performance, however, it can be a difficult task for the principal who was never trained to perform such a responsibility. According to Mulford, the unpreparedness of beginner principals can be viewed as the cause of poor performance in schools.

The importance of beginner principal support programmes is based on the fact that they need to be abreast of the changes in educational policies and to be equipped with better ways of working in the framework of co-operative governance in the school. Co-operative governance is a new model of school governance in SA which seeks to balance the imperatives of integrating a fragmented and racially segregated system of education with the obligations of democratic governance. This new order in SA education has made it possible for Black people

(Africans) to be appointed principals in predominantly white managed schools (previously referred to as Model C schools). White principals are also managing multi-racial schools with many African learners and teachers thus introduced the majority of black parents as part of their school governing body (SBG). In a SA context, democratic dispensation brought changes in our schools where people from different racial and ethnic groups with varied social life, diverse cultures, conflicting political background and unequal level of income are compelled to work together in the school governance and management. These reforms in education require diligent beginner principal. Naidu *et al.* (2013) points out that changes in the education system in SA brought the need for leadership and management development of principals who should deal with the complex situation and new policies in the school.

Dimmock (2012) states that the tasks and the skills associated with leadership are forever changing and these changes call for a comprehensive and formal preparation of beginner principals. Bush (2006) also concluded that employing school principals without proper preparation is a recipe for personal stress and system failure. Clarke (2008) confirms that principals are expected to lead ever more uncertain and unpredictable situations which have led to some principals to link school leadership with complexity. It is true that SA schools operate in varied contexts and environment that require different approaches to leadership and management. The varied situations in SA have brought about the inequality, poverty and affluent literacy level and the cultural diversity of our different society serviced by public schools. This diverse situation in South African schools requires beginner principals who are well prepared in the area of school leadership and management. Given this background, Naidu, *et al.* (2013) indicate that the demands from a rapidly changing educational environment have place a huge challenge on the management of schools, particularly, the principal. Recognising context in school leadership development, Sayce and Lavery (2013) found that preparation of

beginner principals in rural areas with indigenous learner population requires culturally sensitive and appropriate preparation attuned to the context. Sayce and Lavery (2013) indicate that preparation for beginner principals needs to be contextualised within the needs of a particular school.

Bottom and Schmidt-Davis (2010) argue about the lack of flexibility in some of the training programmes which prevent some principals from finding solutions suitable for the needs of their school environment. The importance of context in school leadership and management training was brought forth by Bottom and Schmidt-Davis (2010) claiming that more often trainers apply a one-size-fit all approach with a rigid and centrally controlled content. This approach sometimes becomes irrelevant to certain school environment and affect the practices of the principal. Most contemporary perspectives of leadership suggest that there is no one best way of exercising leadership for all contexts, moreover, appropriate leadership responses depend inter-alia on the nature of the organisation (Leithwood & Richel, 2005). Another dimension from this finding could mean that it is not possible to emulate the other country's training programme of beginner principals and impose on the other one. When developing a training programme for beginner principals in SA, the policy-makers and the department of education must acquire concrete data from research. However, it should be noted that even similar districts within the same province and country may not require same training programme.

While there is an increasing body of evidence that leadership makes a significant difference in schools, it also true that currently in SA there is little agreement about what preparation is required to develop appropriate leadership for beginner principals (Orr, 2007; Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi, 2011). There seems to be a gap about preparation and support for principalship

and particularly beginner principals. The concern raised by literature on the lack of development programmes for principalship calls for further research. However, principalship can mean more than one dimension, in this instance, the dimension for research was beginner principals and their experiences. Bush (2008) emphasises that quality leadership is essential for effective school leadership and management and has a positive impact on learner outcomes.

Education and Training Inspectorate (2013) pointed out that principalship in a reforming education system requires preparation programmes which are capable to develop principals suitable for 21<sup>st</sup> century schools. Principals are expected to manager the curriculum, and in SA, in particula,r, there has been dismal curriculum changes, and principals are direly in need of support. Leadership in schools needs to rise to the expectations and challenges arising from the changing demands of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. School principals are better positioned to respond to these through the schooling system. In this context, the Education and Training Inspectorate (2013) states that leadership preparation programmes for beginner principals must be very clear and systematic in order to address the looming challenges in society and education. Education and Training Inspectorate (2013) argue that educational leadership in the context of reforms demand principals who can reflect much on their professional knowledge regarding their work. In order to provide the education system with such principals, the department of education should begin to develop aspirant principals. In this context, leadership development programmes require a clearly designed pathway that can prepare a new school principal.

Bush and Oduro (2006) indicate that the current educational situation in Africa makes it difficult for most of the beginner principals to lead and manage the successful school. Many of these beginner principals are appointed but are experiencing little support from the leadership



and management from the district. The importance of preparing beginner principals is to familiarise them and make them to understand the basics of school leadership and management regarding curriculum, policy, human resources, finances, governance, conflicts and meetings, the list is endless. The study conducted by the New York City Leadership Academy on beginner principals discovered that schools led by principals who attended school leadership and management programme performed better in comparison to schools led by other beginner principals with no form of training (Gill, 2012).

Matthews and Crow (2003) state that the first challenge for beginner principals is those teachers who have been at the school for years with a strong power to want to influence and shape the new leadership styles. Without a strong preparation and support programmes, beginner principal may face a difficult transitional period of leading and managing a school in this respect. Jeap (2013) points out that, in the period between the retirement or resignation of the principal and the time of the appointing of a new principal, staff members may turn to inoculate themselves from the new principal and as a result cede leadership allegiance to the senior teachers who eventually form veteran coalition to serve as the *de facto* decision-makers in the school. As a result, the position and the efficacy of the beginner principal in the school are challenged. In such circumstances, a beginner principal could be faced with leadership and management dilemma in the first few years of appointment.

The principal is the accounting officer in the school and is responsible for everything that happens in the school irrespective of whether they are directly involved or not. Beginner principal should, therefore, have the understanding of the people, structure, policies, systems and procedures related to the school which are usually features of preparation programme. Moos, Johansson and Day (2011) indicate that the understanding of the work environment and

context by the school principal plays a pivotal role in the way in which the principal looks at, conceives and constructs his leadership. When the education department appoints a principal, it is for the newly appointed person to undergo induction and preparation which should relate also to the contextual challenges facing the school and its community. This may help the beginning principal to be familiar with the new work environment.

Bottom and Schmidt-Davis (2010) argue that the educational districts are unable to hold principals accountable for improved school and classroom practices and learning unless they have provided principals with the necessary tools to succeed. The emphasis by Bottom and Schmidt-Davis (2010) is on the fact that districts must not appoint principals and leave them to fend for themselves if they want to hold them accountable. Furthermore, the failure to prepare beginner principals in matters of school leadership and management will then weaken the power of accountability vested in the principalship post. Without accountability, it would be difficult for school principals to improve the performance of the entire school with the possibility to collapse the whole education system. Moreover, this is amongst other many reasons indicated by literature that beginner principals should be developed in the area of school leadership and management. This should be the responsibility of the district and the circuit management and not individual school leaders. The district has the responsibility to ensure that schools are performing and respond to the national and provincial Annual Performance Plan (APP). The Human Resources Development (HRD) Directorate for employees is stationed at the district office, and the job description of the circuit manager includes support for school principals (ELRC, Collective Agreement No. 4 of 2017) (South Africa, 2017). Despite the unpreparedness of school principals, Bottom and Schmidt-Davis (2010) indicate that the expectation for principals to improve learners' performance has risen and has become a national concern.

Earley and Bubb (2004) state that through working as a deputy principal has been found to be an extremely good source of “on- the- job” professional development, it is recommended that a beginner principal attends preparation for the new job. Shen (2012) mentions further that while experienced principals typically have opportunities within their profession, new principals are daily faced with numerous challenges of leading their schools while simultaneously learning how to be instructional leaders. Dimmock (2012) states that the tasks and the skills associated with leadership are forever changing and this calls for preparing school principals for the changing work place in the future. Mitgang (2008) indicates that the importance of principalship and the need to provide effective leadership in the school has long been supported by scholars. In this technologically inclined education system in which many schools are moving towards electronic learning (E-Learning) systems, the need is unavoidable. The results of the survey by Earley and Bubb (2004) on school management indicate that most school principals welcome further training and development opportunities in leading and managing staff, leadership skills, self-management, teaching and learning and communication. This researcher will be using this study to explore the beginner principals’ experiences in Limpopo Province and record the findings.

## **2.7. CONCLUSION**

The findings from the literature have revealed the lack of developmental and support programmes for beginner principals and thereby confirm that the appointment of most beginner principals in SA, and other countries is purely grounded in the teaching experience. Taole (2013) states that educational reform in SA calls for a need for a paradigm shift in leadership and school management systems. The need for the training and preparation of beginner

principals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is urgent if the department wants to improve the management of schools. Currently, SA relies on the career path as a way for developing the principalship candidates which was considered by many scholars to be insufficient particularly with regard to the changes that SA has recently experienced. As much as a principalship needed experience of teaching, equally important is the preparation for beginner principals with the necessary skills that will help them to address the growing challenges in educational reforms and curriculum in schools. The literature, therefore, has revealed that rapid changes in the SA education system are not congruent with the kind of leadership provided to schools. Unfortunately, currently, there is no specific programme that addresses the plight of beginner principals with regard to school leadership and management. It is still an area that requires more research and this study seeks to deliberate on the matter in the hope of increasing the volume of academic knowledge in the sphere.

This chapter has reviewed the literature on principalship, and leadership and management of school based on the following: Description of a principalship narrative of different countries including SA. Beginner principal and school leadership and management will be explored in this study. The comparison of experiences of beginner principals from different countries in relation to school leadership and management from other countries was reviewed. The chapter clarified the use of the two concepts; leadership and management in the study and their importance in a school environment. The next chapter will discuss the research methods and the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter dealt with the research methodology and outlined the steps and procedures used to conduct the research. The purpose of research according to Berg (2004) is to find answers to the research questions through the application of systematic procedures. In this chapter I also discussed the research design and paradigm, the data collection strategies, analysis and sampling techniques employed in the study. Creswell (2013) explains the three research approaches generally used by researchers in scientific studies. These approaches are the qualitative, quantitative as well as the mixed-methods research approaches. The researcher cannot choose the research approach randomly. Instead, it is the study topic, aims and the research questions that in most cases determine the research approach the researcher ought to follow. For the purpose of this study, a qualitative research approach was preferred and found to be appropriate in answering the research question through the examination of various social settings.

#### **3.2. RESEARCH APPROACH**

“Qualitative research is an umbrella term used to describe” forms of enquiry that assist in understanding and interpreting the meaning of social phenomena of the natural setting with as little description as possible (Merriam, 2009). I was convinced that a qualitative research approach will provide some meanings that could be helpful during data analysis and also

prevent the study results from being too technical, but instead be constructed from personal interaction with the participants. Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2009) state that qualitative research entails developing explanations for social phenomena with the aim of understanding the social world in which we live. Principals are social beings, and I wanted to understand their experiences with regard to school leadership and management which formed part of their world of work.

By using the qualitative research approach, I was able to receive information directly from the responses of participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014) as this approach offered direct contact with the participants. The qualitative research approach allowed for time to be spent in direct interaction with the participants in the schools. I found the approach to be appropriate as Creswell (2014) indicates that researchers use qualitative research to explore and to understand the meaning of individuals or groups ascribe to their social or human problem. Qualitative researchers typically study people or systems by interacting with them and by “observing the participants in their natural environment (in situ) and focusing” on their meaning and interpretations (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996). During the study, I had to visit participants at their workstations to see and interpret their natural environment to a certain extent. In order to maximise data collection and research findings, I found the qualitative research methodology to be suitable especially in addressing the research topic and answered questions pertaining to the study phenomena (Creswell, 2014).

A qualitative research approach allowed me to link the different approaches that he used to collect and analyse data and also answered the research question (Wilson, 2009). The justification for selecting the qualitative research approach over other approaches was that the approach outlines the purpose, procedures and the techniques suitable for the research topic. I

employed qualitative research so that I could understand the social life and the meaning that the people attach to their everyday life. Using a qualitative approach in this study, I aimed to elicit the participants' accounts of meaning, experiences or perceptions about leadership and management in their work environment (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Creswell, 2008), and also because it explores the "why" question (Maree, 2011). I used a qualitative approach to investigate the experiences of beginner principals and the way they behave in their new roles and how they are affected by what they are doing. The attitudes and practices of beginner principals towards leadership and management were explored through the use of the interviews.

This qualitative study capitalised on using semi-structured interviews for becoming acquainted with the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 2009). The qualitative approach attempts to uncover meaning via the analysis of non-numerical data that comes from multiple participants. Qualitative data does not include interpretive judgements about whether what occurred was good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate; the data simply described and explained what had occurred. The qualitative research approach was appropriate for this study because its design, was naturalistic, preferring to study people and events in their natural settings (Punch, 2011). Berg (2004) indicates that by using qualitative research, the researcher is able to access unquantifiable facts about the actual people. In this case, I conducted interviews and established the availability of documents that supported what the respondents said.

The purpose for using a qualitative research was again to produce the findings that will lead the reader to an understanding of the meaning of the experience or phenomenon being studied (De Vos *et al.*, 2005) and an attempt to discover the meaning of the phenomenon and the world of the participants (David & Sutton, 2011). Leedy and Ormrod (2015) indicate that a qualitative research study is typically focused on the phenomena that are occurring or have previously

occurred in a natural setting. This approach was used because the experiences of beginner principals are an ongoing phenomenon in our schooling system. As long as schools are employing principals, it is necessary for the department to know about their experiences as novices in the new field of work as school leaders and managers. In effect, the qualitative research approach was chosen base on the belief that it would enable me to listen to the beginner principals from their natural settings that is, in their “real world” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015).

### **3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

According to Blaikie (2009), research strategies are located within the broader frameworks of theoretical, methodological or philosophical perspectives, commonly referred to as paradigms. In research, a paradigm directs the researcher’s path and shapes the way the study will be undertaken. Johnson and Christenson (2009) define the research paradigm as a perspective about research held by a community of scholars or researchers that is based on a set of shared assumptions, concepts, values and practices. Myers (2009) adds that every research study is based on certain philosophical assumptions about the nature of the world and how knowledge about the world can be obtained.

These assumptions are made explicit even before the study unfolds for the researcher’s position or point of departure is known to the readers, supervisors and other scholars. These assumptions provide the foundation for everything that follows in any research process. Blaikie (2009) also indicates that each research paradigm presents a different way of making the linkage between ideas, social experience and social reality. The philosophical assumptions guiding this study



are discussed in terms of the epistemological, ontological and methodological assumptions of the study (Creswell, 2009; Whitehead & McNiff, 2009).

The philosophical assumption underpinning this study was based on my previous knowledge and realities about the qualification requirements for the appointment of principals, which differed from one country to another. Based on my knowledge, as far as the requirements for the principalship post are concerned, South Africa included, are teacher's qualification (teachers' diploma) and at least five years' teaching experience (EEA, Act No. 76 of 1998 (SA, 1998) and ELRC, Collective agreement No. 1 of 2008) (SA, 2008). The studies by Daresh (2006) and Oy (2012) showed that in Finland, a teacher who aspires to the post of a school principal must have a master's degree over and above a minimum qualification in teaching.

“The epistemological and ontological assumptions underpinning this research” was that knowledge is constructed through participants' social interaction with reality (Creswell, 2003). I understood epistemology as a core branch of philosophy that is concerned with “the theory of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods” and the possible ways of gaining knowledge of social reality (Grix, 2001). Therefore, I moved from the knowledge obtained from the plethora of literature that when beginner principals are appointed into principalship and are not properly prepared to do the job. Whitehead and McNiff (2009) refer to epistemology as the theory of knowledge that involves two parts ... a theory of knowledge (what is known) and a theory of knowledge acquisition (how it comes to be known). My rationale about the leadership and management role of beginner principals explained the knowledge and the reality on the procedures used by the Limpopo Department of Education when recruiting and appointing a school principal. The process was supported by the provincial prescripts (Collective Agreement No. 1 of 2008) (SA, 2008). Currently, it is not yet

documented about the kind of the experience they are going through after they have been appointed. This is an area that need further research to expose the realities of what they are going through as newly appointed leaders and manager of schools. Through this study, I listened to beginner principals who were telling their own experiences.

As beginner principals were narrating their stories, I realised that I could not make conclusions merely based on my personal knowledge about the experiences of beginner principals in leadership and management. In this regard, Audi (2003) states that epistemology “is concerned with how we know what we know, what justifies us in believing what we do, and what standards of evidence we should use in seeking truths about the world and human experience.” Therefore, I believed in using empirical research to provide substantiated findings on these phenomena. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) believe that epistemology asks: “How do I know the world?” and “What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?” Epistemology, therefore, implies an ethical-moral stance towards the world and the self of the researcher. In research, it has to be acknowledged that “researchers’ epistemological stance is influenced by their ontological position.” Therefore, how researchers understand the nature of reality influences what they regard as knowledge (Creswell, 2009).

This implies that knowledge of beginner principals’ experiences of leadership and management can be obtained by exploring the experiences of the participants who have lived through the phenomenon. I also believed in the existence of multiple realities (Merriam, 2007), because of the responses that are acquired from multiple participants. What the participants share with me was the reality of the phenomenon; different participants had different experiences of their practices of school regarding leadership and management. The beginner principals are expected to have diverse concepts of realities of leadership and management depending on their

experiences and settings. This study was located within a constructive/interpretive paradigm which permitted me, to analyse data inductively and to use the results of the analysis to make recommendations.

The stance taken on the philosophical assumptions, guided me to shape the questions asked and how they were answered (Grix, 2001). Ontological assumptions are concerned with what is believed to constitute reality; the nature of social reality; and how what exists is described (Grix, 2001). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), ontology asks basic questions about the nature of reality and the nature of the human being in the world. My ontological stance in this study was that beginner principals are not well- prepared to deal with the challenges of school leadership and management based on the experience and the pathway taken through their principalship post. As a qualitative researcher, I assumed that there are multiple challenges and dynamic realities they are experiencing which this research study needed to explore. In the study, the data collected from the participants regarding their lived experiences of professional development, present the multiple realities of the phenomenon under the study.

In terms of this study, I believed that knowledge of school leadership and management could be generated by interpreting the experiences of the participants who have experienced the phenomenon. This research was conducted in line with the principles of an interpretive paradigm which includes inductive reasoning (Devetak, Glazar & Vogrinc, 2010). The interpretivist view assumes that access to reality, whether given or socially constructed, it is only through social construction. The epistemological assumption of an interpretivist paradigm is that data cannot be separated from theory. What becomes necessary when data are controlled, is the theoretical interpretation and the facts that must be reconstructed in the light of interpretivists (Myers, 2009). Theories are reconstructions of facts, and the principle of a good

theory is an understanding of the meaning and the intention rather than the deductive explanation.

### **3.3.1 Interpretivist approach**

Creswell (2003), Yanow and Schwartz (2011) and Thanh and Thanh (2015) introduced a research “interpretivist” as a research paradigm claiming that, by using this paradigm, the researcher can discover reality through the views of participants, their own background and experiences. Interpretivism is about assigning meaning to the data collected within the context of the phenomena; it is what defines the situation and prescribes the meaning the participants attach to their experiences. Schwandt (1994) states that interpretivists have the “hypothetical belief that reality is socially constructed and flexible.” Thus, knowledge is always discussed within cultures, social settings and relationships with other people (Schwandt, 1994). In seeking to answer research questions in this study, this researcher used an interpretive paradigm which he believed would help him to understand the experiences of beginner principals by constructing and interpreting data collected (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Maree (2011) explains that interpretivists want to understand the phenomena under study through the meaning that people assign to it. Based on the fact that interpretivists do not seek answers for their studies in a rigid way (Thanh *et al.*, 2015), but seek to understand the world of participants as they, themselves, experience it (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012), I was therefore convinced that interpretivist was relevant for this research study.

David and Sutton (2011) also agree that, for interpretivists, there is no fixed human nature in a social world, which means that reality (ontology), and knowledge (epistemology) about school leadership and management cannot be treated as fixed phenomena. Indeed, the school setting

is ever changing as it is influenced by educational changes, societal changes and generally the kind of a generation it is serving. My choice of interpretive research paradigm was based on the fact that qualitative research often gives rich reports that are necessary for interpretivists to understand the context fully (Willis, 2007). Thanh *et al.* (2015) indicate that, regarding the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher's aim or purpose is to get “insight” or “in-depth” information from the participants. Merriam (2002) further indicates that learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world, and what it means for them, is considered an interpretive qualitative approach.

An interpretivist research paradigm will help readers to understand what beginner principals are facing or grappling with during the commencement period of school leadership and management. Maree (2011) points out that qualitative data analysis is based on an interpretive philosophy that is aimed at deriving the qualitative meaning from the raw data. For the researcher to be able to understand a phenomenon, he had to observe the internal reality, experiences of the people involved and develop a sense of understanding of the meanings imparted by the participants to the phenomenon in their own social context. To do all this, this I planned to conduct face-to-face interviews with beginner principals.

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study used a case study design as a roadmap for research. The research design is a general plan or description of procedures for conducting the study, and it indicates how the research is set up, what will happen to the subjects, the methods of data collection used, and the conditions the data will be obtained (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014). The concept “design” in research is used differently in literature. Mark (1996) prefers the term “methods,” Babbie (2001) talks

about “paradigm” and Creswell (1998) and Neuman (2000) state that a research design encapsulates the process of research from conceptualising a problem until when the researcher writes the report. The concept design recommended by Creswell (1998) and Neuman (2000) was used with the aim of laying down a plan for generating empirical evidence that was used to answer the research questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). A case study was suitable in this study because it helped me to learn more about a little known or poorly understood situation and how individuals can change over time as a result of certain conditions or interventions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015).

#### **3.4.1 Case study research design**

“A case study is an in-depth analysis” of a single individual, group, activity, or event (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Using a case study method, I selected a small geographical area and a “limited number of individuals as the subjects of study” (Zainal, 2007). The Capricorn district has thirty-two (32) circuits comprising rural, township and urban or city schools. The geographical areas included fifteen beginner principals were chosen from fifteen circuits and fifteen schools based on the period of their appointment into school leadership and management. I also had to consider the diversity in terms of gender and location to ensure that the study were collected from varied contexts.

A case study method helped me to explore and investigate the contemporary real-life of the participants “through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions, and their relationships (Zainal, 2007)” This was possible because the study was used to explore the experiences of beginner principals in relation to their work as leaders and managers of schools. Each beginner principal was visited at his/her own school and was allowed to talk

about his/her experience limited to the school where he/she is appointed. Yin (1984) defines the case study as a research approach for “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.”

A case study method was used to conduct the interviews in more than one school, and multiple visits were made to the participants involved in this study. A case study is recommended for those researchers who are interested in providing causal explanations, such as describing the effects of innovation on the participants in the setting (Zainal, 2007). Based on the fact that the education system in South Africa has undergone changes (innovation) that affected school leadership and management since 2005 (Education Human Resources Management and Development, 2000), I regarded a case study as the best method for my research. It allows beginner principals to give explanations and describe their interactions with their work place. The impact brought about by the new and advanced system (innovation) of education in SA has had a considerable impact on the manner in which schools are led and managed, and Education Human Resources Management and Development (2000) confirms the fact that South African schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century need strong leaders and managers.

Yin (2009), Merriam (2007) and Creswell (2009) describe a case study method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-world context, which fits in well with this study because the participants were visited physically and the interviews were conducted in their own schools. The case study offered me as the researcher an opportunity to collect in-depth data from different sources, to take field notes and observe the working environment of different beginner principals physically. The working environment in this study varied from the city, township and rural schools. Leedy and Ormrod (2015) indicate that a case study

method is appropriate to investigate how individuals or programmes change over time as a result of certain conditions or interventions. A case study also helped me to be able to separately investigate a single individual/beginner principal (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015), based on the topic and research questions pertaining to this study. Data were mainly collected through interviews and supplemented by field notes and documents verification. Interviews were recorded, and I had to spend a large amount of time with the participants by making regular visits to the sites to look for documents especially to corroborate the interview responses.

Gay, Mills and Peter (2008) maintain that a case study method assisted researchers “to gather comprehensive, systematic and in-depth information about each case of interest.” I visited individual beginner principals, for interviews to gather data individually from each principal. Each participant was afforded the freedom to openly express their views without peer influence about his/her own personal experience. Looking at the contextual dissimilarities of the district, it also helped me for probing. Case studies provide unique examples of real people in real situations which enable readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply presenting them in terms of abstract theories or principles (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Accordingly, a multi-site case study (Merriam, 2009) was used during the data gathering process. This type of study involves collecting and analysing data from several sites and participants. Instead of studying one school only, data as collected from fifteen public schools in the city, township and rural areas in the Capricorn District in the Limpopo Province which was vast and diverse, consisting of ten ethnic groups that perceive leadership and respond to authority in their own way depending on their cultural or ethnic group. The Capricorn District is the hub of the province because that is where the City of Polokwane is located, and most principals in this district came from the various parts of the province. When choosing fifteen cases for this study,



it was decided where possible, to accommodate and listen to at least more than one ethnic group and hear different principals from different social and economic backgrounds.

The data of fifteen schools were compared to strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of this study by cross-checking the findings. Given that this study aimed to investigate a small sample of beginner principals in schools, it fits in with a bounded characteristic of a case study and nuanced interaction between participants which is typical of an interpretive case (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2015).

This study used a qualitative research approach and case study method to interpret the meaning constructed from a participant during face-to-face interviews to explore the experiences of beginner principals in leadership and management in public schools. The responses of the participants were recorded as data that could be analysed to compile a report about the phenomena. As the participants came from different schools with different social biospheres, it was expected that diverse information could be gathered in accordance with the different realities constructed by each participant (Merriam, 1998).

### **3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

Interviews were used as the main data collection method. The other methods used, namely, field notes, and document verification were employed to corroborate the interviews but were not the main focus during data collection. Document verification helped with checking the availability of important legislative policies that are necessary for school leadership and management, particularly for beginner principals.

### 3.5.1 Interviews

This study used in-depth semi-structured interviews, which, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2001) and Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012), are used to collect data in a face-to-face environment where the researcher interacts with participants in their own settings. Interviews were used to try to understand the world of the participants from their own perspective and to explain participants' experiences in order to uncover their lived lives prior to the controlled explanations (De Vos *et al.* 2005). Interviews were used as a two-way conversation, and participants were asked questions purposefully to elicit responses about their experiences, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours about principalship (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012).

During the interviews, people told their stories, and the meaning of every word was examined as it represented a microcosm of their consciousness. One way to find out about or understand a phenomenon was to ask people who were involved, similar questions, directly. Each person's answer reflected his or her perceptions which provided a basis for interpretation (Tuckman & Harper, 2012). Semi-structured interviews made it possible to ask participants questions from a wide range of sub-topics within the main research topic. Hancock, Ockfelford and Windridge (2009) indicate that the use of semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to engage participants in an open-ended question session about the research topic and in areas that the researcher wants to cover.

The use of open-ended questions helped me to pose structured questions during the interviews and also provided opportunities for me and the participants to discuss certain concepts in more detail. In order to maximise the neutrality of the study and consistency of its findings, Tuckman

and Harper (2012) state that the researcher often follows an interview schedule and asks participants the same questions. Therefore, questions were prepared and used in all the interview sessions. A face-to-face interview allowed the researcher to establish rapport with the participants and gained their cooperation that led to a good response from the interviewees (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). Participants in the interviews were informed in advance, about the visit, and during the interview, I followed a planned standardised set of questions carefully that allowed probing with the aim of eliciting participants' responses (see annexure, E).

Semi-structured interviews are regarded as purposive communication that goes beyond mere conversation. This data collection tool was important because participants were able to give valuable information about their excitement, frustrations or challenges about leadership and the management of schools in the Capricorn District in the Limpopo Province. Semi-structured interviews allow a specialised form of communication between the researcher and the selected participants about school leadership (Arsenault & Anderson, 1998).

Semi-structured interviews also allow participants to discuss their worlds and express their points of view about the research focus (Creswell, 2007). Hancock (2002) maintains that data from the qualitative study is mostly derived from the face-to-face interviews, and usually involve a small group of participants. Interviews were useful because it allowed the presence of the researcher on site to access perceptions, meanings, and definitions of participants about their situations (Punch, 2011). Creswell (2014) indicates that in qualitative research, researchers collect data themselves through observing behaviour or by interviewing participants.

During the research study, I visited the schools where beginner principals were working in order to have direct interaction with them by conducting semi-structured interviews in their natural settings. I also looked into the school policies that the schools developed and those the department provided (see annexure, F) in order to strengthen the data about school leadership and management. Schools are public institutions and are legislated. Hence their leadership is based on policies, and their leadership thrust mostly depends on the successful and effective implementation of these policies. Knowledge of school policies was important and was good to reveal the beginner principals' practices of leadership and management in the school, to a large extent. This was usually visible when the principal was expected to resolve matters pertaining to conflicts, curriculum, finance, human resources management and so forth.

Tuckman and Harper (2012) indicate that when the researcher is collecting data using interviews, they may also gather information from documents. In this instance, as the researcher, I checked the availability of some of the policies on school leadership and management developed by SGBs to assist beginner principals in running the school. The purpose was not to analyse these policy documents but to establish an understanding of the knowledge of beginner principals in school leadership and management in relation to policies. Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012) indicate that the researcher must be observant during the data collection process and be able to identify and explore new emerging lines of enquiry that are directly related to the phenomena being studied. Due to the fact that data were collected at the school, it was possible to observe and take notes before, during and after the interviews.

### 3.5.2 Field notes

The field notes documented the researcher's aim of verifying the participants' responses to interview questions in the later stage during the data analysis process. Field notes entail a written report about what happened during my visits to the research site before, during and after the interviews. Emslie (2009) states that field notes are the records of the researcher's thought processes, philosophical position and the construction of the meaning of the research. Thus, field notes in this study formed the first step towards data analysis. In this study, field notes included what I saw and heard during my visit to the research sites. The field notes contained the descriptions of the participants, the physical setting of the site and other contextual features with regard to the site, the welcoming (emotions) actions (Chambale, 2014), and the observer giving meaning to particular events.

Taking notes and keeping a record of field notes during the research process was helpful as suggested by Conroy (2003). Field notes or data collected differed from school to school and were compiled according to each research site. Berg (2001) indicated that the content of the field notes depends on the context, the study objectives and the type of the relationship the researcher established with the participants. Field notes were used to compile the on-site record that helped me to understand the lives of the participants and events pertaining to their workplace. Field notes were also used to record personal opinions, feelings, and preliminary ideas that were helpful and made feasible in understanding the impression of the events that occurred during the interviews (Berg, 2001). The data gathered during interviews, documents verification were corroborated for the justification of the information collected.

### 3.5.3 Sampling

A sample represents a small portion of the total set of a particular population identified by the researcher. A common question raised by many qualitative researchers has been how large the sample should be in order for it to be representative enough (David & Sutton, 2011). The qualitative research approach made it possible for me to purposefully select participants and the sites that were helpful “to understand the problem and the research question” (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research is characterised by a small sample, but the sample size depends on the preferred design chosen by the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Sampling in this research study referred to the process used to select a portion of the population for study. Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012) indicate that the reason for the small sample in qualitative research is because in terms of this approach, researchers want to collect deep and rich data which usually takes a long time to be collected.

The participants were chosen purposely because they possessed certain features that were of interest for my study (Silverman, 2000). According to Maree (2011), purposive sampling means that participants are selected because of some “defining characteristics that make them the holders of the data needed for the study.” In other words, the sample chosen demonstrated convincing features that indicated that the participants were knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena under investigation. According to Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012), while purposive sampling entails that the researcher relies on his/her own experience, previous judgement or ingenuity to find participants in such a manner that can be “considered to be representative of the population” and usually specific selection criteria are used to identify the most suitable individuals. The sampled beginner principals for this study were drawn from the database provided by the Department of Education when advertising principalship posts.

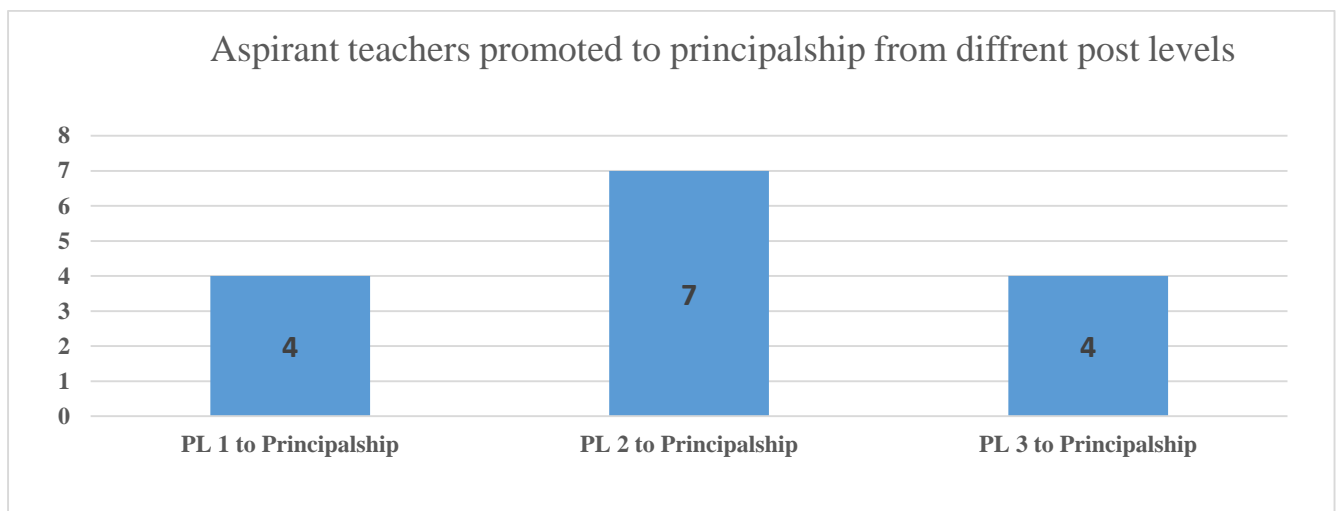
Based on the appointment list accessed from the district human resources section, I had to develop a database of the schools in which they are employed. The participants were chosen from a sample of one hundred and thirty-nine (139) beginner principals appointed during the period between 2012 and 2016. In this study, only beginner principals who had fewer than five years' experience in their current posts were sampled. Principals who moved from the lower level post of principal and was appointed in a new school at a higher post did not form part of the sample. Only those principals who were appointed for the first time as school principals were classified according to this study as beginner principal. In choosing the sample, I was mindful of the availability of the participants and accessibility to their schools, the financial costs, diversity and the time factor in carrying out the study.

In line with the advice of Creswell (2014) who advocates a small sample, a small sample of fifteen beginner principals was chosen. A common criticism levelled at qualitative research approach was that the results of the study may not be generalisable to a large population because the sample is small and participants are not chosen randomly (Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge, 2009). The fact of the matter was researchers do not always seek information from the general population. The availability of the participants within the area of this study and the pool from which the participants ought to be chosen, was a matter of consideration that guided the sample.

De Vos *et al.* (2005) stress that in purposive sampling, the researcher first thinks critically about the parameters of the population before the choice of the sample. According to Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012) participants in purposive sampling are chosen because they are willing and available to participate in the research project. To make the sample more

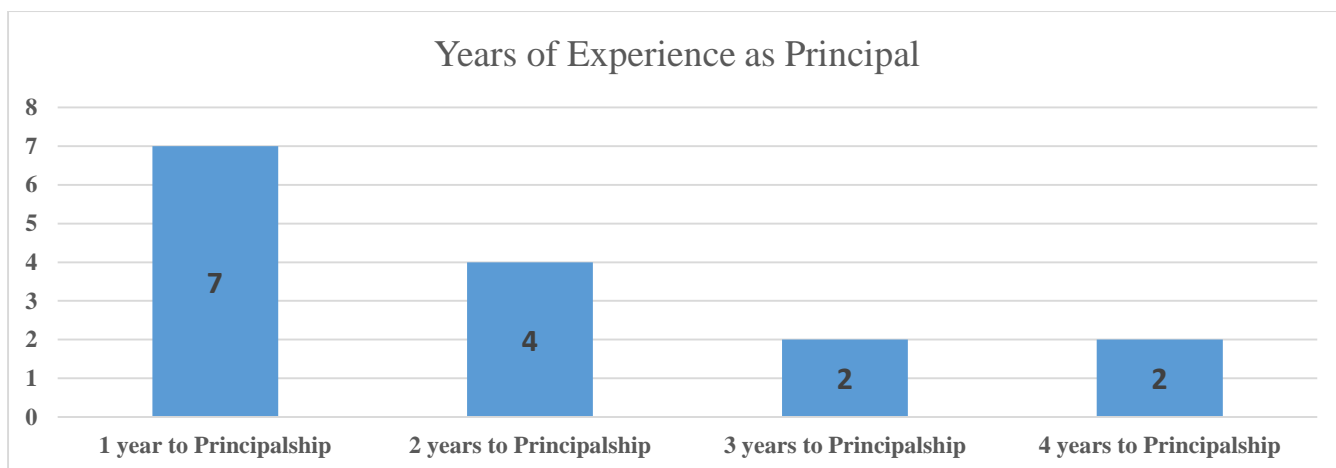
representative, I had to consider the gender, age, number of years in the post and academic qualification of the participants. The sample included only beginner principals who were appointed from 2012 to 2016 and had been appointed for the first time as principals or had worked for five years or less. So, it was necessary to find suitable participants for the study. Figures 3.1 and 3.2, below are the graphic representation of the promotion path of aspirant principals in terms of school leadership and management. The two graphs also showed the post levels and the years of teaching experience of aspirant principals when they were appointed beginner principals. Figure 3.1 indicates that any teacher at any post level can be appointed as a principal as long as the teacher shows aspirations for the principalship, has the necessary teaching experience and satisfies the basic qualification for teaching. Figure 3.2 indicates the number of years of the participants in the position of a principal.

Career pathway and years of experience of the participants.



**Figure 3.1. Random promotion of teachers into principalship post.**





**Figure. 3.2 Participants experience in leadership and management post.**

### **3.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theory underpinning this study was leadership as a career that stems from the fact that by gaining experience in a particular work setting, it is possible for one to perform leadership and management responsibilities. In this theory formulated by Gronn (1999), he argues that in organisations like schools, the sources that influence a leader do not wholly reside at the top level of the management. This approach is different from the corporate world where leadership and management responsibilities reside with the directors or the chief executive officer (CEO) who are unlikely to socialise or hold meetings with employees at the lowest level. In a school situation, meetings are frequently held with employees (teachers) at the lower level together with the management team including the principal. During these meetings, teachers have the opportunity to observe leadership and management practices taking place in the school environment. The leadership hierarchy in a school is flexible and not bureaucratic and strict. Every day, teachers, HODs, deputy principal and principal work together exchanging periods and classes. The school working environment allows openness and makes it possible for the

teacher to be in contact and converse with those in leadership, and managerial position on a day-to-day basis, irrespective of the level he/she is holding.

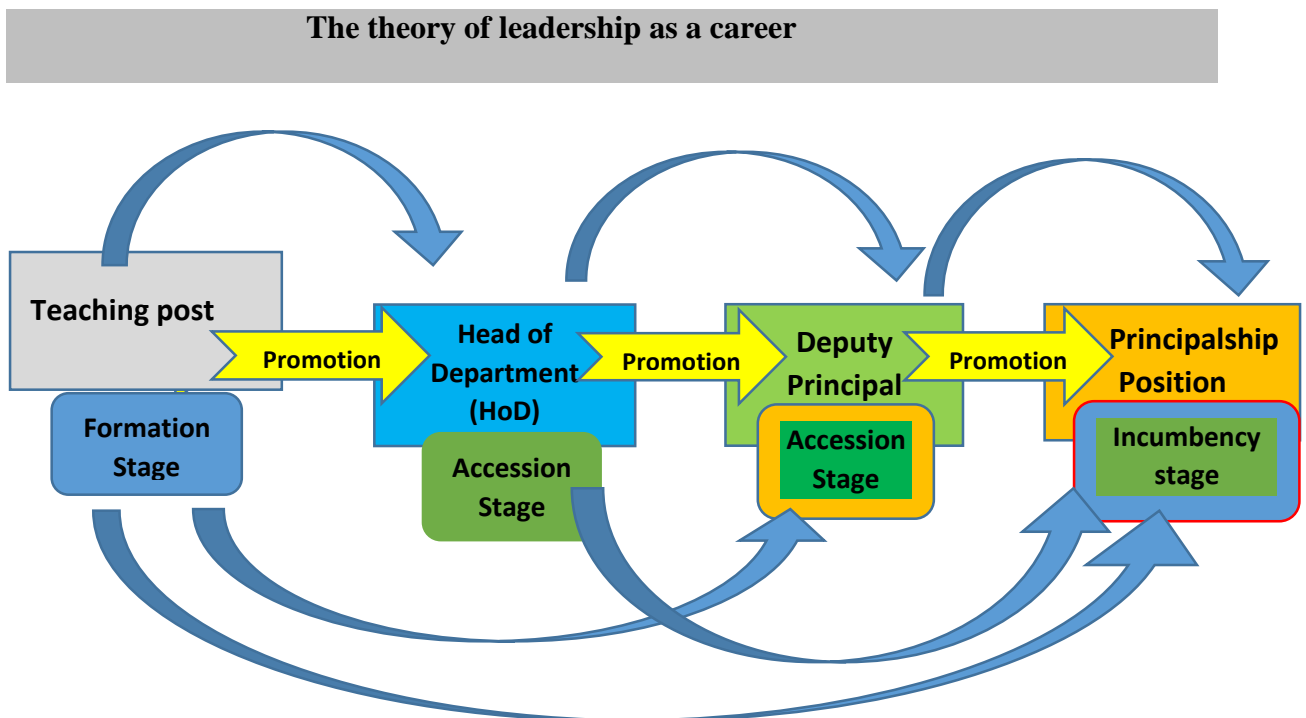
This model of leadership is supported by Garret and McGeachie, (1999) and Jayne, (1996) who pointed out that leadership opportunities often come from the “management” or “administrative” work in which teachers, as education practitioners are engaged. I concur with their discovery because, in a school situation it is not easy to separate the two concepts of ‘leadership’ and ‘management.’ Teachers generally employ and utilise their leadership and management skills in a wide range of their day-to-day activities. As they perform their teaching practices, at the same time they found themselves providing leadership to learners through discipline that is enforced during the lesson.

Gronn (1999) claims that school leadership, in particular, is characterised by emotional ties or the psychological process of modelling, attachment and bonding between followers and their leaders. This close relationship between the leader (principal) and the followers (teachers) can create an atmosphere of aspiration and longing for teachers to become principals and even end up imitating their principals in the process. Therefore, leadership and management in a school situation is embedded in the day-to-day activities. This can be brought about by the fact that in every work situation, there are cultural dictates that influence employees (Gronn, 1999) on how to relate with one another. In this instance, the leadership and management systems in the school are such that teachers admire the principal and hope to become one by working harder and demonstrating leadership qualities in what they do. Gronn and Ribbins (1996) argue that leadership by virtue of its attributes, is heavily context-bound and it is the contextual factors that shape or “form” a leader through a career.

Gronn (1999) comments that a career offers the employee more understanding of the various contexts in which leaders have to lead. The activities in the school that the teacher performs and those performed cooperatively or as delegated by the principal, should groom them with regard to leadership and management potential. Teachers are not expected to perform teaching responsibilities only, but they also perform some administrative duties. These include preparing schedules, controlling time registers and organising tours for learners. The working environment and relationship between the school principal, deputy principal, HOD and teachers can be explained as part of a formation stage towards the leadership and management of a school. According to Gronn (1999), the formation stage in leadership refers to those processes and experiences which later position the employee as an aspirant leader in a state of social and psychological readiness during the employee's career.

When the teacher is at the point of readiness (formation stage), he/she then performs leadership and management responsibilities normally known to be performed by the principal, deputy principal and the HOD. Moreover, when the teacher earns the trust of the principal in this way, the teacher senses that he/she has arrived at a stage called accession. Accession is the stage where either a teacher, HOD or the deputy principal has a feeling that he/she can become a principal. It is during the accession stage that the aspiring leader becomes alert to vacancies that will lead to promotion (Gronn, 1999). In education, the teacher will then apply for promotion and attend an interview (ELRC, Collective Agreement No. 1 of 2008). Once the teacher (who is now an aspirant leaders) have acquitted themselves well during the interviews and have received a letter of appointment as a principal, they enter a new stage called incumbency. At the incumbency stage, the aspirant leader has developed and honed his/her public persona (Gronn, 1999). At this stage the incumbent has learned to project his/her authoritativeness after convincing the school governing body and after succeeding at the

interviews (Gronn, 1999). It is at an incumbency stage where the aspirant leader becomes a beginner principal. Teachers enter this stage irrespective of their post level because there is no prescript that determines the preferential order of hierarchy. The method of promotion influences one to want to investigate the experiences of beginner principals regarding the leadership and management of a school. The diagram below attempts to explain the current promotion model of aspirant leaders into school leadership and management after following certain career pathways. The theory of leadership as a career is extended and summarised in figure 3.3.



**Figure. 3.3. The promotion model from one post level to the principalship.**

The upper part of the diagram shows one of the models of the promotion process. The model indicates that a level one teacher would ideally be promoted to HoD post level first and gain some basic school leadership and management skills (accession). At this first level of leadership and management, the teacher would show improvement and then be promoted to

the second level of leadership, which is deputy principal (accession stage) and, eventually, after gaining enough experience become a school principal. A principal is an ultimate leader and manager in the school; and it is expected that he/she possesses knowledge of school administration. This knowledge can be gathered through experience or higher qualification.

The lower part of the diagram depicts a promotion model that is common in South African schools, and it is supported by the Employment of Educators Act (Act No. 76 of 1998) (South Africa, 1998a) and Education Labour Relation Act (Collective Agreement No. 1 of 2008) (South Africa, 2008). The model permits teachers irrespective of their current post level to be promoted to the position of principal (leadership and management) “randomly”. A level 1 teacher can become a principal by skipping the HoD and deputy principal post. In this instance, the beginner principal is now leading and managing the HoD and deputy principal who have more experience in the higher post than that of the senior (beginner principal).

Notwithstanding the promotion pattern in the upper part of the diagram, promotion patterns in the lower part of the diagram persuaded this investigator to investigate the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management, particularly in the Limpopo Province. The literature indicates that both experienced and beginner principals do experience challenges with regard to school leadership and management (Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton & Ikemoto 2012; Shen 2012; Preetika and Priti, 2013; Bohn 2013; Jeap, 2013).

Adler and Reed (2003), Orr (2007), Nelson, De la Colina and Boone (2008), Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011) and Spillane and Lee (2013) indicate in their studies that extremely little is done for beginner principals’ development. In turn, Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton and Ikemoto (2012) state that beginner principals are faced with multiple challenges and these may

influence their likelihood of improving school performance as they are trying to conform quickly to a new school culture. The inadequate development and multiple challenges faced by school principals have made this researcher believe that beginner principals possess a wealth of untold experiences that had to be uncovered through interviews. The choice of a qualitative approach, a case study research design, face-to-face interviews and the inductive analysis of data helped this researcher to conduct this study successfully.

The literature indicates that in other countries such as Finland, France, Sweden and New Zealand, teachers who aspire for promotion, especially to the post of principalship, are expected to enrol for a preparatory programme in school leadership and management (Daresh, 2006 & Oy, 2012). In the cities of New York and California, Oy (2012), avers that anyone who aspires principalship position must have obtained a master's degree and a licensure in school leadership. The difference in the appointment procedures of school principals would result in them having a variety of experiences in school leadership and management. In South Africa, an aspirant teacher with a minimum qualification (teachers diploma), (EEA, Act No. 78 of 1998 (South Africa, 1998) and the Collective Agreement No.1 of 2008) (South Africa, 2008) and without attending any formal preparation programme in school leadership and management (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011; Spillane & Lee, 2013) qualifies for appointment to the principalship position.

### **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

The process of data collection and data analysis was a back-and-forth process based on the research approach that was used, which allowed me to collect and analyse the data simultaneously. Data analysis was guided by the research questions, research problem and the

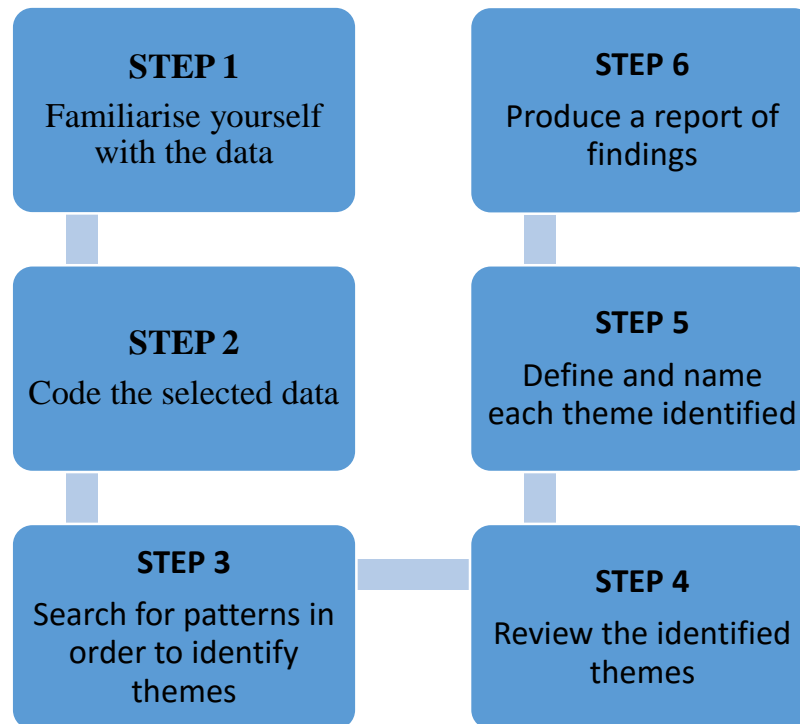
theoretical framework (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Neuman, 2006). Thematic analysis was done by analysing the data from the interviews; while triangulation of the information from the field notes was carried out and the availability of the policy documents that are extremely important and helpful in school leadership and management was checked.

### **3.7.1 Thematic analysis**

Thematic analysis is a method used to identify, analyse and report on patterns discerned in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It illustrates the important themes used to describe the phenomenon under study. The result of a thematic analysis was used to highlight the most salient constellation patterns of meanings present in the data. Furthermore, thematic analysis facilitates the gathering of knowledge of the meaning derived from the phenomenon under study by the groups studied and provides the necessary groundwork for establishing valid models of human thinking, feeling and behaviour. Importantly, thematic analysis is among the most systematic and transparent forms of such work, partly because it regards the occurrence of themes as important, without sacrificing the depth of analysis.

In the analysis, the six steps of thematic analysis suggested by (Braun, 2006) (see Figure 3.4 below) were followed. During the first step, I had to familiarise myself with the data by reading and re-reading the transcriptions, and field notes and by listening to the tape recordings and then wrote the important ideas down. Then during the second step, I coded the selected data using coding schemes in order to simplify correlations between these data. In the third step, I had to search for patterns in order to identify themes across the selected data sets. After the themes had been identified, I had to revise them in the fourth step. It is during this step where I ensured that the themes identified matched the codes already identified. During the fifth step,

I defined and named each theme, the process that helped me to complete the sixth step of reporting the findings. Figure 3.4 represents the six steps of the thematic analysis suggested by Braun (2006).



**Figure 3.4: Six steps of thematic analysis.**

Although collecting data by means of interviews was time-consuming, it was the most suitable approach for a case study. Data sets was used to identify underlying themes present in the data. After transcribing the taped interviews, the bulk of the data was reduced by coding them into smaller, more meaningful parts (Yin, 2009). Coding is the process of applying codes to chunks of text so that those chunks can be interlinked to highlight similarities and differences within and between texts (David & Sutton, 2011). Before coding the data, I had to read through the transcribed data line-by-line and divided it into meaningful analytical units (Maree, 2011). The data were coded and merged into categories. A codebook assisted with the identification of themes (Kodish & Gittelsohn, 2011). Constant comparison was made inductively with codes



emerging from the data which were categorised into themes in readiness for interpretation through contextual descriptions and direct quotations uttered by the research participants (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The colour-coded data, in the form of phrases and statements, were collated verbatim as evidence of the phenomenon under study. Examples of themes were grouped together to make sense of data using colour themes for interpretation to provide descriptive accounts and to provide explanations. The qualitative data comprising the primary information elicited from the participants were analysed, processed and organised into categories and patterns and relationships among the categories were identified.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), data analysis is a systematic process of coding, categorising and interpreting data in order to explain the phenomenon under study, thus answering the research question. Data organisation, analysis and interpretation, was guided by the primary research questions and responses from interviews with the participants in the study. Firstly, verbatim transcriptions of the interviews were done. Transcriptions were given to participants to verify if what was written was what they had said. The data were presented qualitatively as narratives in the form of words developed around themes that emerged from the data that had been collected by means of various methods.

The data analysis process involved reducing and organising the data, synthesising, searching for significant patterns, and discovering the important aspects (Ary, Razavieh & Sorensen, 2006). This was followed by chronologically ordering of the interview transcripts and other information. This was executed through careful reading of transcriptions at least twice for comprehensive understanding. The next step was to execute initial coding through generating numerous category codes and labelling related data. Thematic content analysis (coding), the most common method of analysing qualitative data (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007) helped to

identify themes and patterns. Coding followed a progressive process of sorting and defining pieces of data applicable to the research topic, purpose and research questions (Given, 2008). The codes were coloured to extract the research findings. The researcher organised similar or related codes into categories and then themes within and across the life stories of the participants (Creswell, 2007). Constant comparison was conducted inductively, with codes that emerged from the data, with the help of the voice-recorder because replaying the recordings was possible. Qualitative data analysis, by its nature, is trying to establish how participants derive the meaning of a specific phenomenon by analysing their perceptions, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values, feelings and experiences in an attempt to approximate their construction of a phenomenon.

### **3.8 TAPE RECORDING**

During the interviews, audio tape recordings were made to gather first-hand information from the participants. This method was used to avoid writing all the responses from participants down. Maree (2011) points out that writing answers down during interviews is time-consuming and may become destructive. Recording the responses of the participants saved time and allowed me to play and replay the recorded interviews any time when I wanted to verify what a particular respondent said. The recording contains original information from the participants that were used to confirm direct quotations when reporting about the study findings. The recorded interviews were later transcribed and entered on a Word document. The transcripts were used during coding and when finding the themes.

### **3.9 TRIANGULATION METHOD**

Wilson (2009) refers to triangulation as an introspective technique mostly used to corroborate participants' responses and the sources with regard to the data collection. The participants' responses enabled an inductive analysis of the data and the use of the results as the findings of this study. In this study, triangulation meant the inclusion of multiple techniques of data collection, different groups of participants and different sites of data collection. Wilson (2009) supports triangulation because it makes the study findings more powerful through the convergence of its perspectives. Fifteen schools were chosen from the thirty-two circuits in the Capricorn District, consisting of eight secondary and seven primary schools. This choice consisted of male and female beginner principals from different localities, with experience ranging between one and five years. The sample allowed for diverse data gathering techniques and the researcher was able to triangulate the responses during the analysis. The triangulation method was fitting because data were analysed inductively.

It is important to note that scholars such as Silverman (2013) criticised the use of triangulation in qualitative research on the basis that, comparing results from different angles of enquiry could not be used to strengthen a common finding. The argument about the viewpoint of Silverman (2013) was that although different school principals were interviewed, they were employed by the same department, under the same act, and were implementing a similar curriculum policy statement, and were pursuing the same vision of leading and managing the provision of quality teaching and learning. Their workload (job description) as contained in the Employment of Educators Act, Act No. 76 of 1998 (South Africa, 1998) is the same nationwide. It was for these reasons that triangulation was found to be important for this study.

Different principals were afforded the opportunity to express their experiences regarding how they constructed meaning as they interacted with their own social worlds. Their experiences were triangulated during data analysis. It is important to point out that triangulation was used to confirm the data collected through interviews, field notes and documents verification. Using triangulation reduced the possibilities of the researcher being biased and increases the validity and reliability of the findings (Schwandt, 2001).

### **3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

When people read a research study, they need to be assured of the validity of the results (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012), which is related to the trustworthiness of the research data. The research findings and results should be a true reflection of what is happening, what people experience and are feeling about the phenomena. I did not manipulate data to suit my own understanding, instead, trustworthiness was sought to avoid biasness during data interpretation. To achieve trustworthiness, it was ensured that the participants were feeling safe in a non-threatening relationship that was relaxed, open and trusting (Wagner *et al.*, 2012). In order to create this atmosphere, interviews were conducted at the venues convenient to the participants (at the school in the principal's office) that in my opinion was user -friendly. During the interviews, I was mindful and adhered to the requirements of the ethical clearance as promised and declared to the participants with regard to their anonymity during the research process.

Maree (2011) indicates that trustworthiness in qualitative research is generally achieved when the researcher engages multiple methods of data collection. In this study, interviews, field notes and document verification were used as data collection techniques. Even though there are

critics that are reluctant to accept the trustworthiness in qualitative research, Guba (1981) notes that frameworks for ensuring rigour in this form of work have been in existence for many years. Maree (2011), Graneheim and Lundman (2003) and Guba (1981) use four different concepts/criteria to describe various aspects of trustworthiness as discussed below.

### **3.10.1 Credibility**

With regard to the credibility of the study, I attempted in all respect to demonstrating a true picture of the phenomenon as well as ensuring that accurate data are presented (Shenton, 2004). Care was taken to guarantee that the categories and themes identified were both correct and relevant and that irrelevant categories and themes were excluded from the data. In order to confirm the credibility of the data, Graneheim and Lundman (2003) remark that, the researcher will have to seek agreement among co-researchers (the literature), experts and participants within the data. In chapter two, relevant literature for the study was sought. Credibility refers to the extent to which other readers perceive the findings of the study to be convincing and worth taking seriously (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). Credibility in this study was used to check if the findings corresponded with reality as a way of confirming the trustworthiness of this study. In order to improve the study credibility, face-to-face interviews were conducted at the schools where the beginner principals were working. The interviews were audio- recorded and later transcribed to avoid distorting raw information from the respondents.

The qualitative data comprising the primary information elicited from the participants were analysed, processed and organised it into categories and patterns and relationships among the categories were identified. Different data collection methods were used during this study as a means of triangulation, and the credibility of the data was also ensured, namely by means of

interviews, field notes and document verification. Patton (1987) and Andler and Andler (1988) indicate that, in order to increase credibility, the research context should be controlled, and by choosing participants with various experiences, gender and ages. The sampling table above indicates how the participants were identified in accordance with such considerations.

### **3.10.2 Dependability**

As was previously explained, the reason for using multiple data collection methods was an integral part of the quest to search for common themes from data. In this way, I sought to ensure the dependability of the findings from the collected data by using multiple sources in the data collection process. The dependability of the findings entails that if the same study is conducted by a different researcher in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, similar results would be obtained (Shenton, 2004). Dependability compels the researcher not to interfere with the meaning of the findings of the data collected or constructed from the participants. In educational research, dependability means taking instability factors into account during the study.

Interviews field notes, and document verification, were used to corroborate data collection and in a way enhancing the dependability of the study. Dependability in research usually relies on the degree to which data change over time and alterations made by the researcher during the analysis process. It was fortunate that there were no policy changes from the Department of Education that affected either the appointment of principals or the principalship as a leadership and management position. Throughout, I was careful of the possible changes that would have an effect on the research and, thus, affect its dependability. Shenton (2004) alerts researchers to be aware of the changes that may occur during the research process, and then on how to

infuse them without necessarily changing the contents of the data. Dependability, therefore, means the extent to which judgements about the similarities and differences of the data are consistent over time by the same or different researcher.

### **3.10.3 Conformability**

Shenton (2004) signifies that a researcher must demonstrate that findings emerge from data and not from his/her own predictions. Therefore, conformability indicates the impartiality and the objectivity of the research findings. During this study, the researcher reserved his subjective thinking as much as he could to avoid any bias. Gasson (2004) emphasises that research findings should represent the situation being researched rather than the beliefs or biases of the researcher. This was done to ensure that the research results reflected the truth and not the researcher's assumptions. To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, he did not tamper with the results or manipulate the findings to suit his own experience. Holloway and Wheeler (2002) are of the opinion that an audit trail on the decisions made and the process used in the research can confirm the findings of the data. To ensure the conformability of the study, the interviews were recorded and transcribed and both the electronic and hard copies will be kept for future reference.

### **3.10.4 Transferability**

Trustworthiness also addresses the question of transferability, which refers to the extent to which the research findings can be transferred to other settings or groups (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003). When speaking about transferability, Shenton (2004) notes that the results of the study must demonstrate the possibility to be applied to wider situations or populations. This

research was conducted in fifteen schools in the Limpopo Province which has 3818 schools and 934 are located in the Capricorn district. Accordingly, I trusts that the findings of the study will be useful to address similar challenges in many schools in the district and the province rather than in the country. Shelton (2004) further indicates that qualitative research is based on a small sample; it is, therefore, impossible for the findings and conclusions of this study to apply to other situations and populations especially outside the province.

Stake (1994) and Denscombe (1998) submitted that, although each research case may be unique, the results of a qualitative study are an example within a broader group and, as a result, the prospect of transferability should not be rejected immediately. It is therefore, important to recognise that even though this study was conducted in a district from one province, the study findings can be applied in other provinces. Borgman (1998) admits that the understanding of a phenomenon is gained gradually, through several studies, rather than one study conducted in isolation. Graneheim and Lundman (2003) affirm this by asserting “there is no single correct meaning or universal application of research findings, but only the most probable meaning from a particular perspective.” Since transferability does not depend on the findings of one study, therefore, I also believe that the findings of this study will also add to and validate the findings of other research projects and will be useful for the readers.

### **3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical matters are issues that must be considered at every step of the research study (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012) for the mere reason that, during the study, participants may be harmed physically or emotionally that may result in the researcher losing his/her job, reputation and funding for both the researcher and the institution (Salkind, 2009). Leedy and Ormrod



(2015) recommend that whenever human beings or other creatures with the potential to think, feel, and experience physical or psychological distress are the focus of the investigation, researchers must consider the “ethical implications of what they are proposing to do.”

The nature of my research topic involved adult human beings who were already employed and had a relationship with their workplace. For me to succeed in this study, it was necessary that to protect the names of the participants as well as that of their schools in order to retain the trust and the respect with regard to any other anticipated ethical issues during the research process. Creswell (2014) advises that before the researcher can embark on research, he/she should seek approval and permission from the ethics board of the university and from the participants and the governing authorities especially employees. I, therefore, obtained permission from the Department of Education in Limpopo Province (see annexure A) and again from the schools where research was conducted. I also received permission from the district office (see Annexure B) and circuit managers responsible for the schools.

Abiding to the ethical principles in research studies was necessary because some researchers fake the data, report data inaccurately and some skew results to support their assumptions (Glicken, 2003). In order to observe the ethical requirements, consent was obtained from the participants as explained by Christians (2005) that participants must agree to participate in the study without feeling coerced. Participants were fully informed about the purpose, duration, method and the importance of the research. I avoided deception at all times and applied privacy and confidentiality, accordingly, the participants’ names and their locations were not disclosed. Furthermore, I adhered to the ethical requirement of accuracy (Christian, 2005) whereby it was ensured that the research report was factual and avoided fabrications, fraudulent materials, omissions and contravention which were unethical. Leedy and Ormrod (2015) agree that

researchers “must report their findings in a complete and honest fashion, without misrepresenting what they have done or intentionally misleading others about the nature of their findings.” The recording, transcriptions and the reporting in this study represented feelings of the participants and not the thoughts of the researcher.

Another critical element about ethics in research is making participants aware of their rights. Leedy and Ormrod (2015) indicate that the four categories of ethical issues in research are protection from harm, voluntary and informed participation, right to privacy, and honesty with professional colleagues. In order to reassure the participants of their confidentiality and the protection of their rights, they were asked to sign a consent form (see annexure D) to agree to their participation. The form explained their right to withdraw, voluntarily participation, knowledge of the methods involved in and the purpose of the study. Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012) and Leedy and Ormrod (2015) propose that sometimes researchers may consider how participants may gain or benefit from participating in a study. In this study, participation was voluntary and no form of benefit was promised to the participants.

### **3.12 CONCLUSION**

The chapter explained how the research was conducted, while the research methodologies involved throughout the study were also clarified. I chose and expounded on the qualitative research approach and its appropriateness for the study. The chapter also discussed the research designs and the reasons for the choice of a case study as a suitable research design were given. The concept of a ‘research paradigm’ was discussed based on the research topic, and was befitting to involve the interpretivist paradigm for this study.

In this chapter, the sampling and the sampling size were clearly explained. The proposed data collection methods were also explicated in detail. The strategies for data analysis and the elements of trustworthiness were indicated clearly. Lastly, the chapter dealt with the ethical issues where the rights of the participants were guaranteed and the importance of accurate reporting by the researcher was explained.

The next chapter dealt with the analysis of data from the interviews. The audio recordings and transcriptions of the interviews when analysing the data were also explicated. During the analysis, cross references were made through assessment of the literature to confirm the theory and to corroborate the researcher's rationale with what participants themselves had indicated as individuals. This was done through coding and formulation of themes which helped me to reduce the extensive data.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The study has explored the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management in the Limpopo Province using a qualitative research approach. The previous chapter discussed the procedures and methods that were followed when conducting this study. The chapter also explained the various steps of the study and how the research was implemented. The research design and methodologies used were justified as well as the reasons for the choices made with regard to the research instruments and strategies, the research topic, the research purpose, questions and objectives. This chapter presents the data gathered during the semi-structured interviews from beginner principals. The data were presented and discussed in terms of the aims of the study and the research questions. The study explored the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management in the Limpopo Province, beginner principals' expectations of school leadership and management, and beginner principals' practice of leadership and management skills after appointment in schools.

The legislative framework underpinning this study included the educational policies such as Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM, 2016), the integrated quality management system (IQMS) in the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC), Resolution 1 of 2008 (ELRC, 2008), The National Policy on Whole-School Evaluation (Department of Education, 2001), The South African Standards for Principalship (Department of Basic Education, 2014) South African Schools Act (no. 84 of 1996) (SASA) (South Africa, 1996a) and Employment of

Educators Act no 76 of 1998 (EEA) (South Africa, 1998a) and the theoretical framework that guided this study as indicated by Gronn (1999). Reference was also made to the variety of documents and prescripts developed by schools themselves. Beginner principals in this study were new principals appointed to the leadership and management of a school with five or fewer years' experience. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted separately in the principals' offices after working hours. Only two principals were interviewed outside their school premises, one at the circuit office and the other at his house, at the beginner principals' request. The data were then analysed thematically.

#### 4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

**Table 4.1: Biographical information of the beginner principals involved in the study**

<b>Beginner principal</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Leadership and management experience</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Promotion From - to</b>
Principal A	Female	A	4 years	Masters	Deputy to principal
Principal B	Female	B	2 years	Honours	Deputy to principal
Principal C	Female	C	2 years	B.Compt & ACE	Deputy to principal
Principal D	Female	D	2 years	Honours	HoD to principal
Principal E	Male	E	1 year	Honours	HoD to principal
Principal F	Female	F	1 year	Honours	HoD to principal
Principal G	Female	G	1 year	Honours	Post level one to Principal

Principal H	Male	H	1 year	HED	HoD to principal
Principal I	Male	I	3 years	Honours	Deputy to principal
Principal J	Male	J	4 years	Teachers' Diploma	HoD to principal
Principal K	Male	K	3 years	Teachers' Diploma & ACE	HoD to principal
Principal L	Male	L	2 years	B A Degree	Post level one to principal
Principal M	Female	M	1 Month	B ED (Honours)	Post level one to principal
Principal N	Female	N	1 Month	Master's degree	HoD to principal
Principal O	Male	O	1 year	B Ed (Honours)	Post level one to principal

Of the fifteen beginner principals, six had one-year experience, five had two years', two had three years', and two had four years' experience. The youngest beginner principal was less than thirty years old with two years' experience as a beginner principal, and the oldest was over fifty years old with one year's experience in the position. Two of the beginner principals had a master's degree qualification; eight had obtained honours degrees, one had an undergraduate degree, while four held teachers' diplomas. Four of the beginner principals were promoted from a deputy principal's post; seven were promoted from the head of the department and four were promoted from a level one teachers post. This confirmed the theory underpinning this study that leadership springs from one's career. All the beginner principals participated willingly in the interviews, and some were extremely excited to have been selected. The fifteen beginner principals consisted of seven males and eight females involving eight secondary

schools and one combined special school, and six primary schools. Despite variations in post levels, experience, and qualifications, the beginner principals at the incumbency (beginner level), demonstrated different levels of competencies with regard to leadership and management. However, all indicated the need for training and development in school leadership and management.

Beginner principals of ordinary public schools, special schools (Education for Learners with Special Educational Needs - ELSSEN), and public schools under the control of a religious authority (Mission school), are all governed by the South African Schools Act, (Act No. 84 of 1996) (RSA, 1996a). Special schools and mission schools are well-resourced as compared to ordinary public schools. However, the infrastructural provisioning does not affect their developmental level in leadership and management. Some of the beginner principals experience limitations in performing some administrative duties due to a lack of office space. One of the beginner principals was concerned about the impact of the lack of space, which resulted in a community protest and school closure. The protest had a negative impact on teaching and learning as the schools had to be closed for three weeks.

### **4.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THEMES**

The research questions and the themes reflected in the following table are followed by a detailed explanation.

**Table 4.2: Research questions, theoretical framework and themes**

RESEARCH QUESTION	THEMES (Linking with the theory)
1. What are beginner principals' expectations in school leadership and management?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal career advancement (formation &amp; incumbency stages)</li> </ul>
2. How do beginner principals develop their leadership and management skills?	Pathway to leadership and management (accession stage) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
3. How are beginner principals prepared for school leadership and management?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incumbency stage</li> <li>• Training and induction for leadership and management performance.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
4. What are the challenges faced by beginner principals in leadership and management?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of the leadership style and managerial functions in the school.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
5. What are the successes of beginner principals in leadership and management?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support from experienced and expert colleagues</li> </ul>

#### 4.4 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

The process of data analysis as Boeije (2010) puts it, includes working on the data to make sense of it in the light of the research questions that guided the study. The findings of this study emerged from the semi-structured interviews, field notes and document verification. Several



techniques/methods used to collect the necessary data were triangulated to substantiate the credibility of the data. An inductive approach using little or no predetermined structure or framework involved the analysis of qualitative data analysis, was followed (Burnard, Gill, Steward, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). This qualitative approach is preferred because it is comprehensive and able to create detailed descriptions from the data. It is compatible with the worldviews within which this study was conducted, namely, the constructivists/interpretivists paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although the process is time-consuming, it was the most suitable for investigating the phenomenon under study. The constant comparison of thematic content analysis (coding), the most common method of analysing, was followed to generate themes from beginner principals' responses (Onwuegbusie, Dickson, Leech & Zoran, 2009). The data analysis process for this study involved:

***Getting familiar with the data involved:*** verbal data were first transcribed into a written form in order to understand and reduce it to an understandable form (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To do so, I had to be immersed in the data to familiarise myself with the depth and breadth of its content. After reading through the entire set of data more than once, ideas and possible patterns and shapes were identified before coding was done. I also listened to the voice recordings over and over again to relate well with the ideas and the possible patterns discerned from the transcripts.

***Generating initial codes:*** interesting information which emerged from data collected was organised into meaningful categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Tuckett, 2005). The categories were grouped according to their similarities.

**Emerging themes:** The different categories were then *sorted* and assembled as identified and potential themes. Visual representation helped to sort the different codes into themes and to form an understandable pattern of all the assembled concepts.

**Naming and defining themes:** Similar codes from the data were organised into broader names called themes. Accordingly, the crux of what each theme was all about was captured (Braun & Clarke (2006).

### **Reviewing themes**

The generated themes were read and re-read to ensure that they represented the voices of the beginner principals' data. The themes emerged from answering the following research questions:

What are the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management in the Limpopo Province?

What are the beginner principals' expectations of school leadership and management?

How do beginner principals practise leadership and management in schools after the appointment?

The findings are discussed in relation to the themes that emerged from the interviews linking them to the theoretical framework used in the study. Field notes and document verification were mainly used to supplement the responses from beginner principals during interviews while themes were conceptualised within the study theory. There was correlation/ alignment between the research problem and the findings. Undoubtedly, beginner principals are experiencing leadership and management challenges in their workplace. The experiences in

school leadership and management are presented and guided by the theoretical framework of leadership as a career (Gronn, 1999). Gronn's (1999) theory indicates four stages of leadership, namely, formation, accession, incumbency and divestiture. The emerging themes of this research study are tied to the first three stages of Gronn's theoretical framework of leadership as a career.

Data from the field notes revealed that many school principals in rural areas do not have proper office spaces to carry out their leadership and management responsibilities as compared to those in the township and city schools. Principals without offices, converted a classroom into the principal's office and a staff room, at the same time. The absence of the proper office space for principals made it difficult for them to keep good filing systems. This was evident during the document verification process where the beginner principals would take a long time to find the requested documents in the same office. The lack of office space was also seen as a factor that weakened the principals' authority over the teachers, especially in schools where the principal and the teachers were accommodated in one room and used it as staffroom as well as an office for the principal. The absence of privacy on the part of the principals was seen as a challenge that could affect the position power of principals negatively. This was a challenge for most beginner principals who expected to work alone in his/her office as a principal, and who knew that a principal has an office, and some, especially those who had been deputy principals, were used to work in their own offices at their former schools.

During the interviews, one principal had to request the teachers who were working after school hours to leave the staffroom for some time until we had finished with the interviews. These teachers took their chairs and waited outside and others just used their cars to give us space for the interviews. I almost suggested that we go to my office, which was 35 kilometres away from

the school, but I could not do it because he was the one who had recommended the time. In addition, there were parents waiting outside on the school veranda, for the principal's attention, to whom he spoke after the interviews. There was literally nothing that these beginner principals could do to accommodate parents in a respectful manner. As a beginner principal working in such unbearable conditions knowing that everyone in the school is looking up to you as a leader to provide solutions to all the problems in the school can be challenging. My observation was that the leadership and management responsibilities of principalship were extremely demanding. This study has determined that beginner principals working in the Capricorn District with professionalism, integrity and dignity may become overburdened by what is expected of them.

Despite what was happening at the school, I agreed to carry on with the interviews because it was not easy to get an appointment for interviews with most of the principals. As it happened, I had some interview dates that had to be rescheduled because of some leadership and management commitments that came up with regard to some principals in-between our appointments. I later realised that the lack of classroom spaces had led to a protest that forced the Department of Education to supply this particular school with mobile (temporary) classrooms. The lack of office space had led to some schools converting classrooms into teachers' accommodation, thereby, depriving students of learning spaces (classrooms). In one of the primary schools, the principal resorted to multi-grade class teaching that he was never taught how to manage. As a result of a serious challenge of the shortage of teachers, one teacher had to teach more than one grade. The following section will discuss the processes of data analysis and validate the findings of the research with the theoretical framework and explain in at least a sentence what multi-grade teaching is about.

Although it did not matter to most of the beginner principals, I also observed that only two schools were provided with security guards for school safety. I was concerned about the safety of the female principals working in deep rural areas, who came in extremely early in the morning and left extremely late in the evening because of the workload. However, this did not trouble any of the beginner principals working in these areas. There was a general shortage of support staff in all the urban, township and rural schools, the worst situation in this regards was in rural schools. There was no single support staff (personnel) in their post provisioning compared to the townships and city, special and the mission schools. Beginner principals were on their own, performing clerical work assisted by teachers.

The verification of documents revealed that all the schools had policies from the Department of Basic Education and school policies developed by the school governing body (SGB). In many schools, these documents were kept in boxes where they were not easily accessible. This could be an indication that they were not used frequently and it may be possible that they were not used on a daily basis as were supposed to be used. Policies are extremely important documents for schools to use to lead and manage learners and the school staff. The availability of such documents in a public institution is a sign of a functional system.

#### **4.5 EMERGING THEMES IN LINE WITH GRONN'S THEORY**

It has been indicated already that Gronn's theory advocates four stages of leadership during one's working career. At the initial stage, teachers are formed into becoming leaders and gradually grow their leadership skills and knowledge with time during the accession stage. There is no formal order that is used to measure the level of experience, knowledge or empowerment, but in the process, some teachers begin to show an interest in becoming leaders

and aspire for a principalship. At this point, they feel that they are ready even though they are not formally trained or prepared. Their aspiration is demonstrated when they apply voluntarily for the available position of principalship when they are advertised. The following section discussed the study themes in relation to the three strategies of the theory and research questions.

#### 4.5.1 Career advancement

The interview responses from the beginner principals confirmed that their early teaching career and competence in teaching inspired them to apply for leadership and management positions. This is in line with Gronn's first stage of formation in leadership as a career. The following response attests to this claim:

*“My experience as a CSI educator has contributed to being where I am, I wanted to be like somebody who was a principal. When I grew up we were having this other principal who was doing good things to us, and I then said, when I grow up, I want to be like this principal.”*

During the early stages of teaching, observations about the teacher's competencies may indicate good practices, which may have been emulated from the principals. Part of teaching involves classroom management and learner assessment activities which are key to leadership and management. . One of the interviewees also responded as follows:

*“Through my experience as a teacher, I have learned many things from my principal that made me realize that one day I was going to be a leader.”*

When teachers are performing the leadership and managerial tasks and are successful, they gain confidence which inspires their interests in leadership and management in their careers and the hope of becoming principals in the future.

The interviews also revealed that not all teachers wanted to become principals in their teaching career. Responses from the interviews indicated that out of fifteen beginner principals, four beginner principals got into leadership by default, the following is what some of them said:

*“I never thought of becoming a principal, it happened by accident, and I was not ready”. “I was not ready to apply, but my colleagues encouraged me to apply for the position”.*

*“I applied from the PL1 position just to get exposure about how people were interviewed for a principalship position. To my surprise, I was interviewed and got appointed”.*

*“I never in my wildest dream thought of becoming a principal, actually I wanted to exit and join the university as a lecturer. My colleagues motivated me to apply for the position, and, I got the job.*

In some instances, the teacher who was the only head of department and had no desire to become a school principal was compelled to act as a principal when the principal retired because of old age. This is so because when the principals retire or resign, the most senior teacher in the school has to act in the position of a principal and, in such cases, the school has no option but to appoint the HoD as the acting principal. The departmental processes of recruiting principals are centralised at the provincial office and it sometimes takes a long time to fill the vacant post of principals in schools. This was demonstrated by one beginner principal:

*“When the principal retired, I was the only HoD in the school, but I went to the senior PLI teacher asking her to act as principal, and she declined. I had plans to exit teaching, but I had to act as the principal.”*

The above beginner principals were experiencing challenges in leadership and management because their progression did not prepare them for the leadership level. Gronn states that, as you do your current job, it prepares you for the next promotional level. The interview responses revealed that some teachers did not want to become principals because there was a significant difference between the principal’s work and that of a teacher. It is, therefore, not automatically the case that all teachers can be developed to become principals. According to the responses of the beginner principals, there is a loophole in the recruitment procedures of principalship appointment, which, according to Mampane (2015), reveals that some teachers are pushed up the system, or it is by sheer luck that they are principals today. Some of them liked the position but lacked leadership and management skills. The following is a comment from one beginner principal:

*“I wanted to become the deputy principal.” “I was asked to apply for the post of the principal, I accepted just to go and understand the interview process”. “When they told me that I got the principal position, I did not want to go, but my uncle encouraged me, and here I am today”.*

When asked if they would want to attend a leadership and management preparation workshop, all beginner principals agreed with enthusiasm.

*“If the opportunity comes, I will grab it ... I am still learning in a number of things”.*



The interviews indicated that while experience on the job is important in developing one with regard to leadership in the organisation, it is inadequate. Sometimes the employer has the responsibility to identify aspirant teachers in leadership and management positions and prepare them for leadership and management before they are appointed to the position. Through this study, I also discovered that the teaching career itself has other organised professional bodies that help with the development process of teachers.

Another finding from the beginner principal responses about career advancement was the admission that teachers who were actively involved in union activities, gained leadership skills and aspired to become principals. It was apparent that they entered the formation stage in leadership of some kind when they performed union responsibilities. Union activities mostly involved the employer and employee engagement on professional matters of teachers, which usually took place at the leadership and management level. Union leaders participate in the Education Labour Relation Council (ELRC), and at this level, members are intensively trained in problem-solving skills. During interviews, beginner principals who held union positions indicated that the union helped them to become leaders. The response below is proof of this:

*“The experience I got from the union made me confident. I became confident and was ready to lead the school even though I still needed much experience regarding management.”*

Although most of the beginner principals hold their former principals in high regard for support, as well as those who studied advancement in leadership and management, those who come from the teacher unionism structures, did not hesitate to say how the union groomed them to become principals (or leaders). This is what one of the beginner principals said:

*“The union has contributed too much in making me a leader today”. The union is involved in developing policies and resolutions that are used in the education system. The Education Labour Relation Council is the organisation where the employer and the employee sit and draw educational laws and policies.”*

Another response from the interviews indicated that beginner principals from the union’s side felt quite ready when assuming the position of a principal as union training also developed their members in leadership and management skills. One interviewee indicated:

*“I recently got a certificate in leadership from Nelson Mandela University through the support of the union.”*

I was led to understand that there are certain activities performed at the level of the union were developmental in empowering such teachers (members) to become educational leaders. In the process of performing such activities, these teachers were formed into leaders. Based on their careers, some aspired to the principalship position, which was an indication that, they had indeed, already entered the formation stage of leadership as a career as defined by the theoretical framework. Careers can also be advanced through further studies in leadership and management. During the interviews, it was clear that knowledge gained through further studies served as a pathway for many teachers to become school leaders and managers, especially those who had received a B Ed Honours degree in education management. The six interviewees commented that they had aspired to be principals after receiving qualifications in school management at different universities:

*“After I got my honours degree, I was inspired and told myself that I am ready to be a principal to implement what I learned in leadership and management.”*

Other teachers enrolled and qualified for an Advanced Certificate in Education Management (ACE) offered by local universities. This programme was specifically designed to prepare (form) members of the SMT to become future principals. Most of the interviewees indicated that after completing their further diplomas/degrees with institutions of higher learning, they felt quite secure about becoming leaders and managers of schools. One beginner principal said:

*I was not trained to become a principal, but with the knowledge gained from education management studies at the university, I felt prepared.*

Most beginner principals registered for further studies in education management, while they were still teachers and wanted to increase their chances of promotion in their teaching careers. Others wanted to become better employees who were more prepared for better opportunities when they were made available. Beginner principals who have furthered their studies, are more advantaged during principalship interviews compared to those with only teachers' diplomas. However, Figure 3.1 and Table 4.1 show that participants who hold only a diploma qualification are considered for appointment as principals. The recruitment criteria for the principalship post goes through three phases during shortlisting (Education Labour Relation Council, Resolution No. 1 of 2008) (RSA, 2008). In the first phase, many candidates who possess only the basic teaching qualifications qualify for the second phase that requires a qualification in school leadership and management, and at this point candidates with a further qualification such as ACE and a B. Ed Honours degree, are advantaged over those with lower qualification and they usually go through the shortlisting process. The last phase is additional

responsibilities such as participation in professional activities. This finding reveals why some teachers enrol in school leadership and management. However, as they improve their qualification, in one way or another, they have entered the formation stage because the qualification itself prepares them for school leadership and management.

The interview responses revealed that the career advancement of most teachers in leadership and management was developed by participating in subject committees. Subject committees are formed by different teachers teaching or practising the same activities/subjects in the circuit, region and province. Teachers are chosen to be members of committees such as a chairperson or a secretary. During meetings, teachers learn how to plan, organise, lead and coordinate teaching and learning activities which awaken latent skills in leadership. Participation in school committees is part of teacher formation for leadership and management in schools because in the processes these teachers are introduced to the leadership of other professional bodies in education such as: The Association of Mathematics Educators of South Africa (AMESA), the Accounting Olympiad and Mathematics Science and Technology (MST). Teachers who are elected to participate at a regional and provincial level in these organisations are bound to develop in their career skills and are also prepared and formed to be ready to take leadership and management responsibilities in the educational field with enthusiasm. These teachers soon become interested when the principalship post is advertised. Some beginner principals indicated that they had previously served on sporting committees at national level by representing their circuits and they made their impressions known:

*“When I was elected the chairperson of a sports committee in the circuit and the region, and then the deputy treasurer of the province, this was the climax of my leadership.”*

*“As a chairperson of the English Reading Committee, I attend meetings with district officials, and I learn a lot on how to do things in those meetings.”*

*“When I saw that I could do well as a deputy chief examination official and successfully managed grade 12 examinations I realised that I could apply to become a school principal”.*

The realisation of leadership skills in the aspirant principal was mostly prompted by their good performance in professional activities during their careers. There is no doubt that some teachers discovered their leadership potential in the process of performing professional responsibilities in their schools. It is therefore important to recognise the contribution of the participation in school committees in leadership and management of beginner principals during their careers as teachers. It enhanced their leadership potential, which is actually the formation phase. Although beginner principals mentioned that they received some leadership skills development from the union, the church, professional bodies and community organisation, they still indicated a strong desire to receive leadership training in school leadership and management. All of them agreed that the workload of the principal was immense, challenging and demanded a high level of school leadership and management skills. All beginner principals expressed their need for formal preparation to advance their leadership skills. They conceded that they were still learning and needed more workshops on school leadership and management. Some remarked as follows:

*“The department must first take me for a workshop for four weeks and introduce me to all the policies and how they work.”*

*“I had thought before I started working I would be taken through? to understand my work, but there was no one, and I had to hit the ground running on my own”.*

#### **4.5.2 Pathway to leadership during the accession stage.**

According to Gronn (1999), accession is the second phase after the beginner principal has felt that he is formed/prepared with regard to leadership and management. While formation is a preparation stage, the accession stage means the beginner principal is in an aspiring mood and feels he/she has acquired all the skills necessary to make him/her become a principal. At this stage, the teacher starts to perform leadership and management duties even if he is not appointed or is acting as a principal. He/she looks for advertised posts for the principalships, and is eager to apply. When the teacher has entered the accession stage, he/she performs leadership and management duties for a while at any post level, either as PL 1, PL 2 (HoD) level or as a deputy principal at PL 3. Ironically, it was found that not all HoDs and deputy principals do aspire principalship. That could be the reason why a PL 1 teacher can become a principal because the HoD or the deputy principal has not entered the accession stage yet (is not ready) and did not apply when posts were advertised.

PAM (2016) points out that HoDs and deputy principalship posts are managerial posts usually referred to as SMTs, and by performing their duties, SMT members are being prepared (formed) into leaders and managers for schools. However, this study proved that entering the formation stage does not automatically make one ready to enter into the accession stage where one aspires to become a principal. The study found that the accession stage propels principal candidates to apply for the principalship. At the accession stage, beginner principals have the urge and believe in themselves that they have honed their leadership and management skills,

and they are ready to become school principals. This became apparent in one beginner principal's comments:

*"I never thought I would be a principal; I was not ready to become a principal.*

Another principal said, *"I became a principal by chance."*

The comments from the interviews are contrary to the theory confirming that it does not mean that to be a HoD or a deputy principal, one has reached the accession stage automatically. The researcher noticed that most PL 1 teachers who enter the accession stage earlier than their seniors (HoD and deputy principal) are those who take part in delegated responsibilities, participate in professional bodies, have long experience in teaching and have furthered their studies in education management. Of course, it is an undisputed truth that those teachers who are HoDs and deputy principals stand a better chance of becoming principals compared to the PL 1 teachers. There were varying responses from the HoDs and deputy principals about their readiness to become principals. Their responses were,

*"Yes, I was ready to become a principal." "To be honest, I was not ready... I had fears."*

Although the beginner principals emphasised that the work they did as HoDs and deputy principals was the same as that of a principal, they all agreed that the principal's tasks are immense and require a great deal of knowledge on departmental policies and the management of the curriculum. This is in agreement with Meadow (2017) who signifies that a teacher who aspires to become a principal is expected to have the necessary professional and academic qualifications, so are beginner principals. It was discovered by this researcher that all beginner principals in the study were not trained in school leadership and management specifically, but

relied mostly on their career/teaching experience and further studies that they acquired individually.

It became clear through the interviews that most teachers enrolled for Education Management courses in order to improve their qualifications with the aim of becoming principals. They are first driven by personal desire, and in the process later voluntarily start to do managerial duties in the school, and participate in professional bodies eventually or accidentally enter the accession stage. One beginner principal responded:

*“I was not ready to become a principal, but when the principal retired, I was the only HoD in the school, and I had to act in the position.”*

Another beginner principal said:

*“When I saw that as a principal I was not doing things right, I decided to enrol for leadership and management degree”.*

When the school principal retires from work, the department does not advertise the post immediately; it usually takes quite some time for the post to be advertised, some posts remain vacant for a period of a year. This is so because promotional posts are centralised for advertisement at the provincial office of the Department of Education. This kind of advertisement is gazetted and usually goes through a long process until the HoD gives the approval. In the meantime, the deputy principal (in case of a big enrolment school) or the HoD (in case of a small enrolment school) is requested to act as the principal.



By the time the post is advertised, the acting principal has already developed the skills necessary for school leadership and management and, to some extent, an interest in becoming a principal. Acting as a principal in a way provides the candidates with an opportunity to learn management function and grow the skills for leadership. In the process, the candidate develops interest in the position, which according to the study theory the candidate has entered the accession stage of the career. It must be indicated that even after acting as a principal, there are some who still feel that they are not ready and do not apply when the post is advertised. According to the Limpopo ELRC, resolution 1 of 2008 (RSA, 2008) any teacher who has acted in a principalship post for more than 12 months, must be shortlisted automatically for the interview if the candidate satisfies the minimum qualifications and has shown an interest in applying for the post. Some participants indicated that some acting principals did not apply for the posts even though they were acting, and a new person was then appointed. This was a clear indication that such acting principals had no interest or they felt not ready to become principals even though, according to the theory, they were in the formation stage by acting as principals. This simply indicated that such acting principals never entered the accession stage.

During the interviews, most beginner principals indicated that after working for a long period as teachers, they started aspiring to the position of a principal. This is how one beginner principal responded:

*After 20 years as a teacher, I wanted to grow in my career. I did not want to be a level one teacher forever.”*

The study established that indeed it was possible for a level one teacher to skip two levels, that of a HoD and deputy principal, to become a principal. This confirmed Gronn’s theoretical

framework that teaching as a career, plays a key role in preparing teachers for becoming leaders and managers of schools in the future. The emphasis was mainly based on the fact that teachers are managers and leaders of classes and continue performing managerial responsibilities in their everyday function when they are on duty. Practising or performing leadership and managerial responsibilities in a small way, in the long run, prepares the experienced teacher to practice and excel in performing some responsibilities at a higher level in the school that put the teacher in the accession stage even if the teacher does not hold a promotional post. One participant responded:

*“As a level one teacher, the principal regularly allocates duties (delegated tasks) to you, and as you perform those duties and report back to the principal, who is the accounting officer, you start to realize that you are performing the functions of the principal.”*

#### **4.5.3 Performance of leadership and management tasks during the incumbency stage.**

The incumbency stage starts when an aspirant teacher is appointed as a principal and begins to perform leadership and management functions in a school. At this juncture, the appointed principal is called the beginner principal. It is at this stage where the beginner principal is expected to perform leadership and management responsibilities in the school. During the interviews some beginner principal’s remarks were:

*“After the circuit manager had introduced me to the staff and the SGB, there was no induction or mentoring about leadership and management. I was thrown into the deep end.”*

The beginner principals indicated that they were expecting that after appointment, the department would prepare or orientate/induct them in school leadership and management matters. Others thought that after the introduction, the SGB would remain at the school and show the beginner principal the school buildings and grounds, do the handover of school policies and perhaps also explain the school vision. Unfortunately, the department official and the SGB left immediately after they had presented the beginner principal to the teachers and expected the beginner principal to perform at the same level as the previous experienced principal. One beginner principal commented:

*“I was so frustrated. I had to run the school using my common sense... I had expected to find a committee that would mentor me for some time to allow me to see how the school is running its affairs.”*

Some of the responses from beginner principals at the incumbency stage were unbelievable, one beginner principal responded by saying:

*“I was introduced to the school in a meeting and the circuit manager seemed to be in a hurry, rushing for other programmes. I had no time for orientation about important activities of the school. Even the SGB did not have time for the handing -over of documents.”*

Other beginner principals added:

*“... the handing -over was only the keys of the office and the cellular phone ... it was for me to start afresh; ... things are tough here”.*

*“I was expecting to be given a chance to learn, but I realised that there was no time for that... as a leader you hit the ground running... the department does not even consider that you are new, you have to adapt.”*

The above comments are supported by Anderson (2007) who states that the role of a principal is challenging and stressful and a beginner principal needs more support. In the Capricorn District in the Limpopo Province, this researcher discovered that beginner principals find it tough when they begin their work. Most of them navigate their leadership and management skills on their own without any support. This was not surprising when looking at the theoretical framework that postulates that leadership skills in educational management are developed throughout one’s career. However, interviews with beginner principals revealed that beginner principals at the incumbency stage experience loneliness, frustration and fear. Some indicated their feelings as follows:

*“... When I started I had fear that I would not make it, I had mixed feelings, and I doubted myself. I was not sure whether I would ever gain strength and confidence in this position”.*

Despite the fact that some beginner principals indicated that they had attended a principal’s workshop a few months after their appointment, the workshop was not for beginner principals but was a generic workshop for principals in the district. One beginner principal indicated that when attending the workshop, she felt afraid to ask questions amongst the experienced principals. The responses from the beginner principals indicated that the department developmental programmes for school principals did not cater for principals in the incumbency stage (beginner principals) instead meeting of principals are conducted like a one-size-fits-all approach.

This study discovered that there were beginner principals who were appointed in the fourth quarter of the academic year. The fourth quarter is extremely crucial for the school because this is when examinations (assessment) and performance evaluations of teachers take place. The interviewees explained how the lack of support for beginner principals affected their performance, particularly the management of Annual National Assessment (ANA) and Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS). This is how one beginner principal responded:

*“...I came in September, and I had to manage ANA which I did not know because when I left the school to become a full-time union shop steward,, it was not yet introduced... I only knew of IQMS as a level one teacher and not as a principal. It was a challenge to manage these two programmes.”*

This beginner principal used the trial and error method and was assisted by the staff to complete the process of IQMS. The response by this beginner principal clearly indicated the need for support after beginner principals are appointed as leaders and managers of schools. It is not enough to rely on the career and teaching experience for the formation of a principal. Furthermore, becoming a leader does not mean you do not need support. Leadership may become weak if leaders are left unguided in a particular discipline. This particular beginner principal admitted to feelings of loneliness and frustration, as he said:

*“At a certain point I felt as if the leadership knowledge I gained from the union was not enough and that I would fail ... the work was very challenging in the beginning.”*

The need for preparation and training reverberates throughout the interviews, and when reading through the transcripts and listening to the tape recordings, it was found that most beginner principals felt as follows:

*“During the first days of my appointment, I went back to my former principal who assisted me on how other things operate.”*

*“My former principal helped me a lot on how I report to the circuit. I was also shown how to deal with the curriculum at the level of a principal... that helped me because I was the HoD before I became a principal.”*

*“The deputy principal told me about the school journal and submission register which I did not know about.”*

Even though the beginner principals agreed that teaching experience contributed a great deal to prepare them to become leaders and managers in school, they still expected formal training/workshops at the incumbency stage before they could start with their new work. All the beginner principals shared the same experience indicating that circuit managers just introduced them to the school and left them to fend for themselves. Some remarked as follows:

*“... I expected to receive orientation before I start my work, but I was on my own using common sense.”*

Most of them expressed their concern about their lack of knowledge of different school policies. They expected to be taken through a workshop on the application of the school file “master file” containing all the policies or at least be given the file on the first day.

*“I expected to be given a package of all policies and be introduced to each one of them.”*

Some of these comments support the responses of beginner principals when they asserted that “teaching responsibilities cannot prepare a teacher to take leadership and management responsibilities in the school.” This was said although teachers were performing delegated responsibilities during their teaching careers. Even though teachers are performing delegated responsibilities, the study revealed that there was a considerable difference between what the principal did in the capacity of a principal and what the teacher did when performing delegated responsibilities. One beginner principal indicated during the interviews that:

*“I did not know the difference between the visitors’ book and the school journal... the deputy principal told me that when the departmental officials visit the school, they wrote in the school journal...I knew about these registers, but I did not know how they were used.”*

These are some of the principal’s duties that look so trivial but can be embarrassing and discouraging when you are corrected or taught by your subordinate. One beginner principal declared:

*“It is important for teachers aspiring for school leadership and management to first go for training. As a teacher, I was a sports organiser.... I was not involved in office work, so I did*

*not know about a submission book.” I realised there was a huge difference between teaching and leadership and management of a school now that I was a principal.”*

This researcher agrees with Gronn’s theoretical framework that one must be a teacher first before becoming a principal. However, the imperial study showed that it was imperative for a beginner principal to be trained or prepared at the incumbency stage in order to reduce his/her stress, frustrations, fear and loneliness. To a lay person, it might sound logical that experienced teachers can do well in educational leadership and management. But the findings on the matter indicated that after they are appointed, beginner principals begin to realise the vast difference of the two posts. However, the findings clearly revealed that beginner principals possessed much understanding on matters that dealt directly with teaching and learning, for example, managing examinations, preparation of a schedule for the results and learner management, which are leadership and management responsibilities too. However, they need support that will assist them with the transition from responsibility to accountability. This was found to be the challenge for beginner principals, especially at the incumbency stage. Translating some of the functions they performed while they were HoD or deputy principals into the new position of principalship was not simple.

#### **4.5.4 Beginner principal’s expectations when assuming principalship positions.**

The findings revealed that beginner principals come into the principalship with high expectations. Common to all, was the intention to improve learners’ performance and school improvement. The researcher could relate to this expectation because a principal influences the processes of teaching and learning and thus influence learning and learner achievement. The absence of the leadership of the principal in the school is usually demonstrated by the poor



performance of learner outcomes. It is also paramount to note that to succeed in this endeavour through effective leadership and management in the school, the principal has to possess the knowledge and the expertise to perform some of the responsibilities towards improved learners' performance and sustain the growth of the school.

This study indicated that when beginner principals entered the incumbency stage, they acknowledged the dissimilarity between the work of a teacher and that of the principal. Many beginner principals who believed that teaching experience contributed towards making them principals, realised later that there is a significant difference between teaching responsibilities and the responsibilities of the principalship post. Most beginner principals indicated that they struggled with performing some of the leadership and management responsibilities in their first year as principals (the incumbency stage). They admitted that they demonstrated their lack of knowledge in most areas that required leadership and management skills on the part of the school principal. Their struggle was so intense, that some beginner principals indicated during the interviews that if an opportunity for training principals in leadership and management arose, they would surely attend. Some beginner principals had an expectation that they would be taken for training on school leadership and management to prepare them for the new job. Some remarked:

*“When I was appointed I expected the department to take me through a rigorous workshop... it never happened, and I had to fend for myself.”*

Anderson (1997) refers to this kind of situation where principals are left on their own “sink-or-swim, learn on your own” situations which form part of the induction process, which, in turn, increases their anxiety about fulfilling their responsibilities. The beginner principals’

expectations were not met, and instead, they were confronted with a myriad of challenges in their incumbency stage. The study established from the interviews that the failure to train/prepare beginner principals in school leadership and management offset their expectations, which resulted in them experiencing challenges because of their lack of skills in school leadership and management in areas such as the curriculum and financial and human resources management. These aspects will be discussed in the following sections.

#### **(a) Curriculum management**

Beginner principals had expected to be trained in the management of the curriculum. Many of them expressed the need for training by explaining how they were struggling with curriculum management. During the interviews, the researcher established that the challenge experienced with regard to curriculum management by beginner principals was mostly the result of the fact that South Africa has specialised schools that offer different types of curricula. Chapter three explained that the study sample was drawn from academic and vocational special schools, primary and secondary schools. The recruitment and appointment of principals allow beginner principals to be appointed across all types of schools and phases. An advertisement for a principalship post does not require subject specialisation from the prospective principals. However, when teachers are trained at colleges of education and university, they specialise in primary, secondary or special needs education and are trained in specific subjects in a particular stream, for example, commercial or sciences. This can be explained as follows: in a primary school, the education system offers the general education and training (GET) band consisting of a foundation phase (Grade R-3), intermediate phase (Grades 4-6) and senior phase (Grade 7). In a secondary school, there are two bands which are general education training band (Grades 8-9) and the further education training band (FET) (Grades 10-12). Some special

schools do not offer an academic curriculum, but instead, they offer vocational (skills) curriculum.

I actually agree with the views of beginner principals who expected to be trained before the assumption of duties to prepare them to manage the varied curricula in schools. Beginner principal M was a level one teacher in a secondary school and was appointed as a principal of a primary school. This beginner principal N was also a HoD of a primary school and was appointed a principal in a secondary school. The two beginner principals indicated that they were still struggling to complete the school general timetable. This affirms this researcher's argument of the importance of training before occupation of a promotional post. Unless beginner principals were participating in the various school committees such as the general timetable committee, it may not be easy in the beginning to draw up a primary school timetable when coming from a secondary school and vice-versa. Leading and managing the curriculum in the different bands in the school requires the application of the relevant knowledge and policies by the principal.

The lack of the relevant curriculum knowledge was found to be a serious challenge to some beginner principals who were frustrated about managing CAPS, especially in the first year of their practice. One beginner principal from a special school revealed:

*“I am coming from a special school, and I have little knowledge about the new curriculum called CAPS. In a special school, I did not do this curriculum. I was the HoD in a special school, and the school is doing vocational skills.”*

All ordinary public schools (primary and secondary) in SA are implementing the continuous assessment policy statement (CAPS), and it is expected that principals who are heads of

institutions, should monitor its implementation and success. The lack of knowledge of CAPS by the beginner principal may undermine the educational rights of learners as indicated in the SA Constitution (Act 1 of 1996) (RSA, 1996a) Failure to understand the curriculum and its correct implementation may disappoint beginner principals' expectations to improve learners' outcomes. The dearth of knowledge may influence classroom teaching and learning negatively. It also demeans the leadership of the new principal in the eyes of teachers and parents. Therefore, this researcher, agrees with beginner principals that training before promotion is important. This lack of knowledge of curriculum management was also expressed by other beginner principals who commented

*“As the HoD I was working with the curriculum in the senior phase, and now as a principal, I went to ask my former principal who assisted me especially on how to manage curriculum in the foundation phase.”*

Curriculum management and implementation form part of the core business in the school, and it is the responsibility of the principal to allocate subjects in order to generate the general and class timetables. Although the principal may delegate this responsibility to a sub-committee, it is the principal who must ensure that all the subjects are allocated the correct teaching time. All these aspects are covered in the CAPS policy (DBE, 2011), which beginner principals are expected to know, understand and manage with diligence.

#### **(b) Financial management**

The management of school finances emerged as a major challenge to most beginner principals. The study indicated that thirteen beginner principals expected that before they began with their principalship duties, they would be taken through a workshop on financial management. The

two beginner principals (C and G) seemed to be the only two who knew about financial management during the interviews. In turn, principal C had a degree in Accounting Science. That was proven by the changes she brought to the school through her fundraising efforts. She had already erected one classroom through the money obtained from fundraising and during the interviews, indicated that she had expected the department to take her through the procurement processes followed during the ordering and purchasing of books as they were allocated money to procure school books. Beginner principal G was extremely confident during the interview and said he did not have any challenge in the area of finances. During the interviews, he indicated that he was the finance manager in the church and found the task of managing school funds easy. This idea is confirmed by Gronn's theory pertaining to the fact that the formation stage of a leader also emanates from the environment or the community and may not be related directly to one line of duty. During the interviews, other beginner principals made the following observations:

*“When I was HoD I was never exposed to finance matters”. Even now my challenge is financing..., I even told myself that from now on I am going straight to the circuit office to sit with the finance official to explain each and every step in finance.”*

*“The SGB did not have a budget”. I had to go back to my former principals to help me on how to manage finances.”*

The study on beginner principals by Sayce and Lavey (2013) in Australia also points to financial management as a challenge for beginner principals. Beginner principals K and H asserted that if a teacher has never been a member of the finance committee, it becomes extremely difficult to manage the school finances when appointed as a principal. The

sentiments of these two beginner principals were also affirmed by one beginner principal who commented:

*“The challenge with finance was that I was never exposed to finance or what a finance officer does; I was in the sports committee as sports organiser.”*

In a school situation, financial management is one of the main functions of the principal and the SGB. Only teachers who are elected to work with the SGB have the privilege of working with school finances and not all teachers are elected to be on the SGB. It was not surprising that beginner principals had expected to be trained in the area of financial management.

It is true that most teachers are not exposed to how the school finances are managed. Although the knowledge of financial management is one of the dimensions considered during the principal selection and interviews, in the interview, members of the panel require a theoretical knowledge of finance that can be acquired through reading. Indeed, the beginner principals revealed this fact in their interview responses.

This study did not have a specific question during the interviews that tested beginner a principal’s knowledge of finances, but many of them cited it as a serious challenge. The principal represents the Department of Education on the SGB and is expected to guide them with regard to the legislative framework, particularly, the proper use of school funds (SASA, Act No. 84 of 1996) South Africa, 1996a). According to the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) (Act No 1. of 1999) (South Africa, 1999) all public institutions must develop a budget showing their income and expenditure before spending money on public funds. According to SASA, (Act No, 84 of 1996) (South Africa, 1996a), the school budget is drafted by the SGB and is presented to the parents who have the power to approve or disapprove it. In a school,

situation, a principal act as the accounting officers on school finances (PAM, 2016) and are expected to be knowledgeable on financial matters. The challenge with regard to financial management was confirmed by a beginner principal who pointed out:

*“When I came here I found that the school had a challenge in the management of finances, they were using cash as a means of payment, claims were paid without completing claim forms, and there were no documents.”*

This particular beginner principal exhibited little knowledge of how the school finances were managed. He indicated that he sought assistance from the neighbouring experienced principals to solve the challenge. Experienced principals were willing to help beginner principals in many areas, including finance. As a former teacher, my understanding was that even if a teacher is a member of the SGB, it is not easy for that teacher to acquire adequate skills and knowledge on the management of school finances. The Provincial Financial Prescripts (Limpopo Department of Education, 2011) dictates that the SGB treasurer must be a parent member who is automatically the chairperson of the finance committee together with the school principal and the SGB chairperson. Teachers are mostly additional members who perform the least responsibilities as far as school finances are concerned. Their position as members of the SGB and the finance committee results in them not knowing all that is to be known about financial management in the school. This reality contradicts the ‘accession’ concept of Gronn’s theory of leadership as a career, especially in the formation stage.

One beginner principal revealed:

*“When I came to this school I found that finances were mismanaged. If it were not for the advice of the circuit manager, I would have reported the matter to the police.”*

Unlike other management challenges in the school, financial management requires specialised knowledge, because it is usually a rare type of expertise for most beginner principals to possess. Clarke (2008) indicates that the management of school finances can be one of the most challenging responsibilities of a principal because, for many, it is an area in which they have little or no training or expertise. Based on the findings, the expectations of beginner principals on financial management training were relevant. The interviews indicated that the challenges on financial management for most beginner principals were inherited from their predecessors. The statement by Clark (2008) was supported by the interview responses of certain beginner principals that some schools did not have annual budgets and monies were spent without proper documentation. According to section 16A of the SASA, (Act No. 84 of 1996) (South Africa, 1996a), the principal must assist members of the SGB with the management of finance and must take every reasonable step to prevent any financial maladministration or mismanagement.

The need to equip beginner principals with financial management skills was resolved by the ruling party of the Republic of South Africa contained in the National Development Plan (NDP, 2011) which is a roadmap for growth and development for the country. The resolution states that “principals should gradually be given more power to administer schools, including financial management.” Although some beginner principals had indicated that they studied financial management during ACE and B.Ed. Honours, they confessed in their responses that they were not given an opportunity to practise their skills (this could be that teachers are not prepared during the formation stage as it is argued by the theory). This was the reason why beginner principals wanted training in financial management, particularly, as financial officers.



**(c) Human resources management**

The study findings have shown that beginner principals have a rudimentary knowledge of human resources management principles and strategies. Most beginner principals indicated that they never thought that managing human resources could be a challenge as they were observing what principals were doing during their career as teachers. The beginner principals admitted during the interviews, that their knowledge of the management of human resources as PL1, 2 and 3 was limited compared to that of the principal. Beginner principals, who were both PL1 and PL2 confessed:

*“... when I started my work here, I had a challenge in managing a leave register, I was never exposed to it.”*

As a researcher, I thought that beginner principals knew that when an employee go on leave, he had to have filled in a leave form with the principal. However, the findings proved that no all of them had the knowledge about the administration side of leave management before they were submitted to the district office. I then understood that teachers only fill the leave forms and do not know the details of their administration. It is only the principal or the delegated teacher who processes the leave forms and file them according to the nature of the leave.

Human resources management can be confusing when looking at the job description of teachers as contained in PAM (2016). According to PAM (2016), the core functions and responsibilities of the post of a PL1, 2, 3, 4 teachers look similar, which may cause one to believe that it is possible for beginner principals to perform the job of the principal. The table below illustrates the responsibilities of different post levels in a school:

**Table 4.3: Core duties and responsibilities of teachers according to PAM (2016).**

<b>JOB TITLE</b>			
Teacher - PL1	HOD - PL2	Deputy Principal - PL3	Principal - PL4
Core duties and responsibilities for the job			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching.</li> <li>• Extra- and co- curricular.</li> <li>• Administrative.</li> <li>• Interaction with stakeholders.</li> <li>• Communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching.</li> <li>• Extra- and co- curricular.</li> <li>• Personnel.</li> <li>• Administrative.</li> <li>• Communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative.</li> <li>• Personnel.</li> <li>• Teaching.</li> <li>• Extra-and Co-curriculum.</li> <li>• Personnel.</li> <li>• Communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative.</li> <li>• Personnel.</li> <li>• Academic performance of the school.</li> <li>• Teaching.</li> <li>• Interaction with stakeholders.</li> <li>• Extra-and Co-curriculum.</li> <li>• Communication.</li> </ul>

The above table depicts the functions of teachers, the heads of department, the deputy principals and the principals. Although their functions look similar, a closer look at the table clarifies how each post title performance standard (as contained in IQMS, 2003) signifies a considerable difference between the work performed by a teacher and the work performed by the principal with regard to each core responsibility for each post level, For example, communication. All the post levels are expected to perform this function, practically, a PL1, 2 and 3 teachers communicate with learners, parents and departmental official to a certain level

and the principals have another level of communicating with the same people. In fact, the principal comes in when all other teachers have failed and bases his communication on their recommendations. Principals make decisions. When communication is taking place at these lower levels, teachers who are involved, are going through the formation stage as Gronn highlighted in his theory of leadership as a career, but when the same is done by the principals, the responsibilities are different.

During the interviews, beginner principals failed to point out explicitly the differences with regard to the same responsibility as it is performed at different post levels. Most beginner principals were saying:

*“The work of a principal is huge and too challenging.” If it were my will, I would say the principal must not teach; there is too much work for the principal.”*

Most beginner principals complained about the overwhelming administrative functions they are expected to perform over and above their teaching responsibilities. According to Gronn’s theory, when teachers apply for a principalship, they should have passed the two stages of formation and accession. However, when they are appointed as beginner principals and then complain about the overwhelming administrative duties in their office, it confirms the gap between the two different job titles. This gap was found to be the main cause of the challenges of beginner principals, which could not be closed by the two stages of the theory of leadership as a career. Much as beginner principals thought they could manage human resources, some experienced challenges and said:

*“I have a challenge of class attendance by teachers ... and it is not yet solved.”*

The management of the classroom attendance of teachers is the core responsibility of the principals, and they need knowledge of instructional leadership to succeed in this area. Many beginner principals correctly asserted they had expected to be taken through rigorous training in school leadership and management after their appointment. According to Gronn's theory of leadership as a career, teachers at PL2 and 3 are in the formation stage, and some are ready to progress to the accession stage and are expected to be ready to perform principalship functions because the career has prepared them. However, this study has found that there is a gap in the career pathways as is also demonstrated in the implied job description across all the post levels.

The other area of human resources management where beginner principals were found struggling was the areas of managing the relationship with teachers. One beginner principal echoed these words:

*"In the beginning teachers did not welcome me and felt I was not respected and some even said I was not supposed to be the principal in this school."*

*"Teachers did not accept my leadership saying I am still young."*

In relation to the theory of leadership as a career, one would expect that during the formation and accession stages, teachers have learned or are prepared regarding how to lead and manage subordinates especially those who are appointed at PL2 and 3 levels as HoD and deputy principals. The findings confirmed that beginner principals, irrespective of their teaching experience, need to study further and participate in professional bodies. They need training in school leadership and management, especially at the incumbency stage. When a principal is

not accepted by the people he is supposed to lead, that is an indication of low self-esteem which could lead to frustration and eventually failure to lead and manage the school.

While beginner principals C, L and I indicated that they enjoyed their welcome by the SGB and the teachers, principals A, B, E, F, K and N were faced with a challenge of overcoming resistance from teachers who were acting as principals before the appointment of the beginner principal. Some of them made the following comments:

*“The person who was acting as the principal before me did not accept me... and eventually he resigned from teaching.”*

*“My challenge was the HoD who was 20 years older than me who had expectations of becoming the principal. She did not accept my authority and she would not support the SMT to work as a team. She was conniving with some teachers to sabotage everything I was doing.”*

*“When I came to this school I realised that there was someone they wanted to be a principal. The SMT tried to sabotage my work even hid some departmental circulars from me.”*

The field notes revealed that most rural schools had low learner enrolment figures that led to a small teacher establishment. Eventually, some schools resort to multi-grade teaching which was not understood by beginner principals, and they were struggling to manage such classes. One interviewee revealed his frustration with the management of human resources in a multi-grade school by maintaining:

*“I was never exposed to multi-grade teaching in my life... it was frustrating when I came to this school as a principal because we had eight classes but few teachers.”*

The other beginner principal observed:

*“I thought when I am a principal my work load would be reduced ... I am teaching eight subjects, and I am a principal.”*

These findings supported the research findings of the study by Jeap (2013) who refers to the challenges of a newly appointed principal who was the deputy principal as follows: “I thought my work would be reduced when I am a principal, but I find myself overwhelmed by a lot of paper work, answering telephone calls and had no time to visit teachers in the staff room.” Human resources management could be seen as a small responsibility of the principal, but beginner principals explained that it was unexpected to find such high volumes of work when they are managers.

#### **(d) Stakeholder support**

Beginner principals were expecting to receive support from teachers, officials from the Department of Education, the SGB and teacher unions. The experience of beginner principals with regard to this matter was quite different. Beginner principals from township and rural schools faced the challenge of the lack of parental involvement in the education of their children, especially the poor support of school activities. Most beginner principals complained that:

*“Parents do not attend school meetings, and often times it delays the school programmes because they are supposed to ratify some decisions from the SGB, in particular, the budget.”*

The poor attendance of parents for the annual general meetings (AGMs) aimed at the approval of the school budget affects the management of the school, especially where finances are required. Members of SGB alone cannot approve the school budget; they need parental involvement as stated by SASA.

Most beginner principals expected support from the department of education but instead appreciated the support from teacher unions more especially in the formation stage of their leadership. When comparing the role of the union and the department of education on leadership development for school principalship, some commented:

*“The department is doing less to groom people, but the union organises constant workshops of grooming comrades into becoming good leaders.”*

*“My union has prepared me to become a leader though they were not training us specifically to be principals.”*

*“As a union leader I have gained a lot of leadership skills concerning education on how to deal with leave and absence and how to manage pensions.”*

The challenge with the union starts (at the incumbency stage) when these teachers are now appointed principals. Beginner principals expected continuous support from the union; however, this was not the case. Their responses during the interviews were:

*“My biggest challenge was unions protecting teachers for not doing their work... the union was disruptive and disrespectful to my job ... they can just barge into your office without an appointment.”*

My interpretation of the sudden soured relationship between the union and the beginner principals was that union members no longer view beginner principals as supportive members. They associate beginner principals partly with the employer/Department of Education. Therefore, it is clear that, at the incumbency stage, beginner principals lacked induction in their new role and how they must conduct themselves in relation to the union.

Another challenge was the struggle of working with the SGBs. Section 16 of the South African Schools Act (Act No. 84 of 1996) (South Africa, 1996a), clearly distinguishes between the governance functions and responsibilities of the SGB and the management functions and responsibilities performed by the school principal. Some beginner principals had no option and performed the functions of the SGB in order for the school to continue operating. Their expectation was that SGB members would perform all the governance responsibilities and allowing the principal to perform his/her professional functions. Unfortunately, members of the SGB are not readily available, and principals end up performing dual responsibilities.

#### **(e) Legislative framework**

Beginner principals also lacked knowledge of the application of educational laws and policies. They indicated their expectation was to be informed about school policies. During the interviews, the beginner principals indicated that they participated in sub-committees that empowered them with regard to leadership skills. They anticipated training on the new policies



about which they had no chance to access or to learn during their formation stage. This might be the result of the hesitance of others when they had to apply for leadership posts. This lack of knowledge about the legislative framework was an indication of the importance of training beginner principals.

What was interesting was that schools had policies formulated by the Department of Education, and the SGB had developed its own policies too. However, they still struggled with their implementation. These were the remarks made by beginner principals:

*“I had a challenge with learners who disrespected teachers ...learners are given a code of conduct, but they come to school without a proper school uniform.”*

These responses clearly indicated the lack of knowledge of the policy implementation, and confirm the fact that even though teachers had gone through the formation stage during their teaching career, they were still not ready to deal with matters related to policy by the time they are leaders and managers of schools.

#### **4.5.5. Preparations, development and success of beginner principals in school leadership and management**

The first two stages (formation and accession) of leadership as a career explained by Gronn’s theory were found to be extremely important stages that prepared and developed most beginner principals informally for becoming principals. Delegation of responsibilities assisted beginner principals to practise and improve their leadership and management skills. Those who were already members of the SMT were advantaged as they were entrusted with administrative

responsibilities (PAM, 2016) which offered them an opportunity to refine their skills and knowledge. Though the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP, 2013) agrees that experience is necessary for school leadership and management, their conclusion on the matter was that it is still very important that beginner principals be provided with formal training that prepares them for their new responsibilities. Beginner principals emphasised the contribution of professional bodies in the developing their leadership. Others mentioned that their former principals were of assistance when they needed support in school management.

Mitgang and Gill (2012) and Bottom and Schmidt-Davis (2010) suggest that the Department of Education should accept the responsibility of developing beginner principals and help them to meet their expectations. Participants in this study indicated that they were not exposed to any formal training on leadership and management when they began their work as principals. This was found to be contrary to what was said by the Education and Training Inspectorate (2013) that principalship in a reforming system requires preparation programmes that can develop principals suitable for the 21<sup>st</sup> century schools. The report by NAESP (2013) has shown that principals who are well prepared thrives in school management and can improve the educational outcomes.

Some beginner principals accentuated that their success was the result of their participation in the SGB, teachers' union and other professional bodies, especially those who held positions. Most beginner principals who were part of the SMT associated their success to the delegation of responsibilities by the principals, which was congruent with the accession stage. Although the beginner principals saw formation and accession as developmental and preparatory that helped them to achieve success in their principalship, Dimmock (2012) states that the tasks and skills associated with leadership are forever changing. These changes therefore, call for a

formal preparation. Bush (2006) concludes that employing school principals without proper preparation is a recipe for stress and system failure.

#### **4.6. LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE STUDY**

Based on the study findings and the recommendations by Blandford (1997), Moloi (2007) and Prew (2007) on school leadership and management, it can be concluded that beginner principals are in dire need of professional development when it comes to school leadership and management. The responses of most participants indicated the need for a training and support programme in the area of leadership and management. What came as a surprise about beginner principals was that even though they all needed training or preparation, they never blamed the Department of Education for the lack of support. Instead they believed that the district officials were overloaded and were convinced that they were busy with other urgent programmes. Although this researcher agrees with some, it can be stated that if the district wants to get things right in the school, they must prioritise the training of beginner principals.

Accordingly, Bush and Oduro (2006) contend that limited induction and the lack of support to beginner principals make them to be ill prepared about their new jobs and not knowing where to start after appointment. With regard to the challenge of the lack of principal preparation leading to insecurity, Hoadley and Ward (2009) asserts that many principals in SA demonstrated a lack of knowledge of leadership and management. The findings from this study emphasise the need for the development of support programmes that will help school leaders and managers in their early stages to cope with their work. Notwithstanding the current career pathways in school leadership preparation (formation, accession and incumbency), Chapter

five will introduce a collaborative model as a recommendation with regard to improving the current leadership and management support practices.

#### **4.7. CONCLUSION**

This chapter analysed the data collected from the empirical study through interviews, field notes and document verification. The introduction provided the beginner principal's biography and the type of schools where data were collected. The study used a thematic data analysis approach with reference to Gronn's theory and research questions. This process was important and helped with directing this study that had a great deal of data with many issues raised by beginner principals during the interviews. The analysis was consistent with the topic, the problem statement, the theoretical framework and the research questions. New themes emerged during the data analysis process and interpretation indicating that beginner principals experienced more challenges than support, hence, the need for development in all aspects of leadership and management. The next chapter deals with the findings, conclusions and recommendations of this study.

## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management in order to determine the competencies required for principalship. Principalship is central to the development of the school and play a key role in its daily operations. The role played by leadership in a school has long been recognised by researchers and policy makers as important for improving the quality of education and for developing high-performing schools (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr & Cohen, 2007). The study was conducted in both primary and secondary schools in urban and rural areas in the Capricorn District in the Limpopo Province. The study used a qualitative research approach and employed semi-structured interviews to collect data. The data were then analysed thematically, guided by the interpretivist paradigm. The responses from the participants concurred with the departmental policies espoused in PAM (2016), DBE (2014) and ELRC, Resolution 1 of 2008) but shows a need for training beginner principals in matters related to school leadership and management.

The rationale for the study was that beginner principals are inadequately prepared for leadership and management, hence, the need for training and development for effective management in public schools. Not only are beginner principals ill-prepared for their leadership and management roles, they also showed lack of skill in policy implementation and stakeholder support and relations. Beginner principals were found to be receiving insufficient support from the district, the SMT members, the teaching staff, parents, unions and the SGB members. The

assumptions in this study were beginner principals should be supported, trained and receive orientation about their roles and functions in the school in order to lead and manage schools effectively.

This chapter provides a summary of the research findings about the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management. Recommendations were established based on the findings of the study. The beginner principals in this study were found to be faced with multiple challenges related to school leadership and management, especially in their first years of appointment as principals. Many of them solicit their own support from experienced principals, most particularly from their former principals. Although, it is true that principals are first teachers, and during their teaching careers, they gain experience in the profession; this study established that when they are appointed as beginner principals, they require training. Many of them are not competent in the area of leadership. In comparison with their former positions as teachers, they realised a vast difference with regard to their new responsibilities as principals. The theoretical framework of Gronn was found to be in line with the current recruitment and appointment systems in the district and the province of Limpopo.

## **5.2. SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS**

In Chapter 1, the research purpose was presented; the rationale for the study was explained; and the research questions were outlined. The research design and the measures taken to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the study were also described briefly. The theoretical framework underpinning the study was recognised and also acknowledged. The limitations and delimitations to the research was emphasised. This chapter clarified the terminology used by the study.

Chapter 2, provided a literature review concerning the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management, regarding how they are supported at district level and through career pathing. An explanation was given of the professional development, as well as the challenges faced by aspirant and beginner principals in schools. Local studies reported a lack of support and professional development of beginner principals in South Africa. Furthermore, this chapter compared the practices of other countries with regard to the experiences of beginner principals. International studies indicated the importance of developing beginner principals through the pre-service and in-service training programmes. The gap identified in the literature was that there were no standardised development programmes for beginner principals in South Africa, resulting in inadequate preparation.

Chapter 3 discussed the research design and methodology employed to conduct the research. Accordingly, the data collection methods were discussed. In this regard, the data collection process entailing the use of semi-structured interviews with beginner principals was discussed in terms of the aims of the study and the research questions. Chapter 4 described the data analysis process and interpretation of the data according to emerging themes supported by *verbatim* quotations and an analysis of how beginner principals experience school leadership and management in the Capricorn District, the Limpopo Province.

The final chapter, Chapter 5, presents the research findings, compares them to the relevant literature, makes recommendations and draws conclusions. The study proposed the introduction of a leadership and management model as a strategy to integrate the experiences, knowledge and skills of teachers during their career.

### 5.3. STUDY FINDINGS

A principalship is a complex and challenging job that needs someone with skills and experience that are not offered by colleges or university programmes when training teachers. The Wallace Foundation (2013) indicates that principalship development remains a low priority on the agenda of most departments and policy makers. Until recently, not much research has been done in the area of principalship development, and many beginner principals are appointed without proper training. School leadership and management require multiple skills and knowledge about teaching, leadership and organisational management. Most beginner principals lack knowledge and competencies on leadership and organisational management, and this was confirmed by their acknowledgement of the fact that the work of a principal differed considerably from that of the teacher. They are not coping in their new positions as beginner principals, and this implied that the traditional preparation methods (career and teaching experience) did not assist them, particularly in getting them ready for leadership and management in schools.

The study findings showed that beginner principals begin to realise their lack of knowledge of leadership and management at the incumbency stage (at appointment stage). This was confirmed by the Wallace Foundation (2007) by mentioning that both beginner and experienced principals are inadequately prepared and lack the support when they are dealing with the challenging work of instructional leadership and school improvement. Leadership development and support for beginner principals should be continuous for all principals if the department wants schools to perform effectively. Furthermore, district officials and circuit managers need to perform continuous quality assurance (through monitoring systems), to



establish the leadership and management needs of beginner principals and also those aspiring principalship position.

Beginner principals are appointed into the position of principalship without proper training or preparation and are appointed across the post level and not necessarily on the basis of seniority as indicated by other scholars. After their appointment, beginner principals are left alone and are expected to perform their roles without orientation and induction in a new school. The empirical research revealed the need for special training for beginner principals in school leadership and management. Most beginner principals furthered their studies on their own with the aim of improving their professional knowledge regarding school leadership.

#### **5.4. KEY FINDINGS**

When exploring the experiences of beginner principals, it was established that beginner principals in the Capricorn District are faced with multiple challenges related to school leadership and management. This study highlights their challenges as indicated in the research questions and the theoretical framework underpinning this study. Chapter four showed how the themes derived from the data were correlated to the research questions and the three stages of the theory. To answer the main question, the study had five sub-questions which were summarised as findings and were discussed as follows:

##### **5.4.1. Finding one - Internal career advancement**

With regard to the question on beginner principals' expectations, findings from the participants revealed the need to be supported (for support throughout the teaching career from the lower

post level) in their career in order to advance to the required level of leadership. Career advance could be provided through the following aspect:

- ***Delegation***

The participants emphasised the importance of delegation as an effective way of increasing efficiency when they are given leadership tasks or roles. This was confirmed by Jammal, Khasawneh and Hamadat (2015), namely that delegation improves the capacity level, increases the skills knowledge and raises the level of self-trust of the employee. During the period of the delegation, the employee is learning and at the same time improving. Delegation can provide invaluable learning opportunities that build the experience and skills of aspirant principals. It serves as a powerful tool for developing aspirant leaders, their experience, skills and potential, especially in school leadership and management. Serrat (2011) indicates that delegation is the grant of authority by the supervisor to the subordinates for the agreed purpose. In a school situation, delegation, therefore, means, the transfer of authority by the principals to teachers for the performance of the entrusted duty.

PAM (2016) shows clearly that members of the SMT are co-managing the school with the principal and from time to time, they are delegated the authority to perform some leadership and management duties. During this period, they are given responsibility, and they are advancing their career and knowledge, and develop self-confidence. How beginner principals are delegated tasks can also reflect the level of development in their leadership and management skills. Effective delegation results in career advancement and may also increase efficiency when the talents of principals are nurtured. However, if the delegation is not effective, beginner principals become less capable and are at risk of failure.

The empirical research reveals that teachers who are never given the opportunity to perform delegated responsibilities will not acquire leadership and management knowledge and skills. The beginner principals that participated in this study indicated that although teaching experience is important in terms of advancing a teacher to the principalship, delegated responsibilities contributes a great deal towards developing a teacher into becoming a knowledgeable principal. Although the leadership skills and knowledge acquired may not be directly linked to the principalship, some of the skills acquired assisted the beginner principal to deal with activities that were related to leadership. Most participants in small schools were delegated tasks such as participation in sub-committees that dealt with leadership issues; while those from bigger schools (especially PL1) were rarely delegated leadership tasks.

Another finding related to the delegation of responsibilities to aspirant principals resulted from compulsory requirement with respect to the job description of a principal (PAM, 2016). Aspirant principals who had previously been SMT members had the advantage of being delegated leadership and management activities, while others indicated that, even though they were HoDs, they were overlooked and not delegated leadership and management tasks. The research findings have shown clearly that the principals have the prerogative powers of delegation, and at some schools, the principal deliberately delegates the leadership role to post level one teachers and not the SMT members. In this instance, SMTs are less empowered in terms of leadership and management responsibilities compared to ordinary teachers. The participant responses emphasise the importance of delegation for career advancement, but not all beginner principals had an opportunity to participate in professional development during their career. This study also found that when principals delegate duties to aspirant principals, no criteria are used to identify performance or competency level. Consequently, there was no way of knowing the performance progress or competency level in leadership and management

for future recommendation to the principalship. Even those who were given delegated responsibility were found doing the same thing year in, year out which offered them a limited opportunity for growth in leadership and management.

The delegation was also found to promote the internal career advancement of aspirant principals when they were given roles with regard to extramural activities. When performing the roles related to extramural activities such as sport, the candidate was expected to practise both his/her leadership and management responsibilities. During music or athletics competitions, for instance, the candidate were expected to organise learners, identify suitable and competent learners to represent the school at district and provincial level, and coordinate with other schools by engaging in preparatory meetings. When performing these responsibilities as part of their jobs, in the process, one was learning leadership roles and management tasks in an indirect manner. Internal career advancement through delegation offered most beginner principals an opportunity to learn about certain leadership roles, while others understood some functions of a manager within the school.

#### **5.4.2. Finding two- Pathway to leadership**

With regard to the question of how beginner principals develop their leadership and management skills, findings derived from the responses of the participants revealed the need to develop professionally through further studies. Pathways to leadership and management could be provided in the following ways:

- *Further studies*

An important finding based on the responses of the participants was that beginner principals initiate own professional advancement through further studies. Most beginner principals were inspired to apply for a principalship after completion of a management certificate. The participants that studied further felt ready for school leadership and management after acquiring a university qualification. Unfortunately, reality hit them when they advanced to a higher post that demanded leadership and management responsibilities. They realised that the qualifications they got did not prepare them adequately for the practical leadership and management of schools. A qualification in education management from institutions of higher learning, still required them to get in-service training with regard to school leadership and management. Their responses confirmed the findings by Willer and Recht (2011) and Mendels (2012) who assert that coursework in school leadership and management at a university was sometimes insufficient for preparing beginner principals to deal with complex situations in schools. The training and preparation for leadership and management was cited by most participants as a pre-requisite for leadership and management in schools. This view indicates that some of the work in the office of the principal can be learnt only in practice.

Though some participants held honours and master's degrees in school leadership and management, they still indicated the need for assistance with regard to principalship. In addition to their qualifications, it was also necessary for beginner principals to perform managerial responsibilities that would make them succeed when performing the leadership and management functions after their appointment. Further studies formed part of the professional development teachers, and its contribution was found to be necessary in the development process of aspirant principals. It helped significantly to the acquisition of knowledge and theories on how to lead and manage a school. It was further found that knowledge gained

through further studies, and participation as SMT member especially those who were often delegated tasks, definitely contributed to the formation of leaders and managers in schools. Teachers who could not further their studies in school leadership and management and were seldom involved practically in some school leadership activities, struggled after their appointment as principals.

Nzimande (2015) points out that many teachers further their studies not only to be promoted as principals, but to advance their career opportunities in the education sector. It is therefore, not automatic that schools will benefit from every teacher who study further, and the department may not rely on it. He identified three broad pathways that teachers might follow, namely, a teaching and learning pathway; a management and leadership pathway and educational planning, research and/or a policy development pathway. Principalship posts are frequently advertised, and the reason why some participants applied for principalship was because they had completed a senior degree and the only available posts were those of principals. Some participants also indicated that although they applied for the principalship post, this was not the career path they would have chosen. They indicated that there were limited promotion positions in education. This could sometimes results in the appointment of inappropriate people to leadership and management. This kind of appointment contributes and causes challenges that cannot be resolved because of the appointment of people who lack leadership and management and passion in the position they hold.

### ***Participation in professional bodies***

The professional work performed by teachers contributed to the acquisition of leadership and management skills by aspirant principals. Apart from their professional work, their participation in professional bodies and activities dealing with leadership and management

issues, are seen as a scaffolding process that enhanced the latent leadership potential of many beginner principals. Green (2015) contends that professional bodies are extremely important with regard to shaping the knowledge of young professionals and increase their chance for promotion. Some participants indicated that they never thought that they could become principals one day, but through their success in providing leadership in committees such as sports, music and classroom committees at the higher structures above the school, they discovered their leadership potential. Leadership and management are about influence, so aspirant principals who were allocated class leadership discovered their leadership and management abilities when they could influence learner behaviour and provide solutions to problems. The leadership potential became evident when learners came back to appreciate the support given. The more they were appreciated, the more confident the aspirant principals became.

Teachers who performed managerial and administrative functions were also gradually exposed to the sphere of leadership and management. Other participants, who were also given an opportunity of being delegated responsibilities by external bodies, also grew in leadership and the management of schools. These were beginner principals who indicated that as teachers, they served as union site stewards. During their time as site stewards, the union trained them in educational labour issues, which helped them address labour conflict issues between the teachers and principals. The discussions they held with the different school principals and circuit managers assisted them to bring about labour peace in schools. During these engagements, the aspirant principals were exposed to several leadership and management skills that prepared them for solving conflict in schools. Kudumo (2011) stresses that the roles of teacher unions are no longer confined to the traditional functions of improved working and living conditions, but have expanded to include participation in educational policy formulation.

Interrelated functions of trade union leaders exist between what are termed “trade union functions” and “professional functions.” These participants also indicated that their aspiration to a principalship came as a result of the knowledge they had acquired during their involvement in the union.

Involvement in other structures of the school such as school governing bodies (SGB), was also a factor contributing to the acquisition of leadership and the management of beginner principals. The South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 (South Africa, 1996a) allows teachers to become part of the SGB, whose functions include the development of the code of conduct of learners and other policies that relate to the leadership and management of schools. Participation in the different sub-committees of the SGB such as the finance, admission, and disciplinary committees empowered most beginner principal’s leadership and management skills. In effect, beginner principals gained knowledge on how to manage these management activities during their participation as SGB members.

**5.4.3. Finding three - Training and induction for leadership and management performance**

With regard to the question on how beginner principals are prepared for school leadership and management, findings from the participants revealed the need for the training and induction of beginner principals. Preparation for leadership and management performance could be provided through the following aspect:



- *Preparation for leadership and management performance*

Most participants expected to be taken through an induction workshop on school leadership and management when they were appointed as principals. This was, however, not the case. Bush and Middlewood (2005) & Mabaso (2012) agree that induction creates an environment for socialisation, enabling the new principal to develop a feeling of welcome that may cultivate an appreciation of the core values and beliefs of the institution. The research findings revealed that after appointment, the beginner principals were rarely inducted and were only introduced in a meeting where there were SGBs and teachers, by the district official (circuit manager). Most beginner principals felt isolated and frustrated after the departure of the district official and the SGB because they did not know where to start.

The effective implementation of the induction policy reduces the feelings of fear, anxiety, insecurity and stress due to reality shock. (Steyn, 2004). Kempen, (2010) acknowledges that a well-designed induction programme can help new employees improve their practice and can assist with the application of the knowledge acquired in their work experience into the real work situation. Steyn (2005) also states that induction programmes help new employees to create a realistic expectation of their new job. The importance of the induction programme was also emphasised by Wong (2002) who indicates that induction helps the newly appointed principal to understand the school community. Darling-Hammond (2003) agrees that induction can improve the attitudes, feelings of efficacy and the instructional skills of the principals. Some participants, though not inducted, received support from the deputy principal, while others indicated an unpleasant relationship between their deputy principals and the rest of the staff members. These responses from beginner principals show that the district does not have a well-designed induction policy for beginner principals.

The Wallace Foundation (2012) indicates that beginner principals who are trained in leadership and management are likely to perform better than those who did not go for training. Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi, (2011) recommended that specific training for principals was a necessity, especially in South Africa. This finding about the need to train South African principals addresses the findings by Moloï (2007) who avers that “SA principals are not appropriately skilled and trained for school leadership and management.” Daresh and Male (2002) who conducted an international study on principalship support showed the need for the training of beginner principals because they experience a “cultural shock” as they transit from teaching into principalship. Therefore, effective training was found to be helpful for school principals in coping with the tasks of their new job. The study found that the induction of beginner principals was neglected by both the Department of Education and the SGB, which contributed to the challenging experience by beginner principals as leaders and managers in schools.

The study findings also revealed that beginner principals expected the department of education to take them through induction workshop and training programmes on school leadership and management as a way of supporting them. Many of them indicated that they had to use common sense and they were learning new things in the process. The participants appreciated the support from principals’ meetings, but indicated that they were not friendly to beginner principals who felt undermined by the experienced principals when they asked questions during meetings. Their feeling was that the circuit manager should have had a separate meeting for beginner principals only, where they would have been free to participate. The participants indicated that at the schools where they had been appointed, they found that systems were not in place to allow them to perform leadership and management functions. They were not introduced to the school policies such as the constitution, code of conduct, minutes of the SGB and parents, for

example, explaining previous resolutions and other important updates for the school. Beginner principals had to make sense of all these things without the support from the district or the SGB, and that was accompanied by much frustration in the beginning.

#### **5.4.4. Finding four– Challenges of leadership and management by beginner principals**

With regard to the question on the challenges faced by beginner principals in their practice of school leadership and management, the findings derived from the responses of the participants revealed the need for knowledge of leadership and management functions. Training in leadership and management functions could be provided through the following aspects:

- ***Instructional leadership***

Beginner principals are expected to be instructional leaders who have to manage the curriculum, human and physical resources. Most participants lacked curriculum management skills in areas in which they had never been trained. Beginner principals who had previously worked in ordinary public schools following an academic curriculum were appointed in a public special school following a vocational and special curriculum. This became a challenge because the beginner principal had to be trained for a specialised curriculum and also be able to appoint teachers for the particular subject specialisation. For beginner principals from public special schools offering a vocational curriculum, it was difficult to manage the new curriculum called CAPS in the public ordinary school. Most challenges of beginner principals were based on the lack of technical knowledge in curriculum implementation. This included the allocation of duties and the timetabling, examination, development of monitoring instruments for teacher support and measuring curriculum coverage.

Beginner principals from both the primary and secondary public schools were confused and frustrated when they realised their lack of curriculum knowledge in the different schools and phases. A primary school beginner principal who was previously the HoD in the senior phase and had never taught in the foundation phase, struggled with curriculum management in the

foundation phase. The transition might look obvious; however, this transition requires curriculum management skills. The lack of instructional leaderships expounded by the research was confirmed by Taole (2013) who emphasised the educational changes that resulted in serious challenges for many school principals in SA. Appointing beginner principals without proper training may lead to frustration. Marlow and Minehira (2011) also indicate that in order for school principals to be effective managers, they need to have a wide array of competences.

- ***Human and physical resources management***

Beginner principals faced challenges of poor human relations, especially from long experienced teachers in the school. These teachers disrespected the authority of the new principal and influence other teachers not to take instructions from the beginner principal. This behaviour frustrated the beginner principals especially the resistance that undermines the principal's authority. Beginner principals faced with this challenge did not report it to the department for fear of being exposed as failing in their leadership and management roles. The failure to deal with the resistance from staff members also exposed their lack of knowledge of policies. Challenges from other members of the staff made some beginner principals to apply for transfer to other schools to avoid confrontations.

Jeap (2013) notes that many beginner principals were frustrated when they assumed the new position and did not receive support from teachers. Matthews and Crow (2003) state that the first challenge for beginner principals was those teachers who had been at the school for years and had influence to shape the new leadership styles. Jeap (2013) further discovered that old members of the staff tend to inoculate themselves from the new principal and cede leadership allegiance to the senior teachers who eventually form a veteran coalition to serve as the *de facto*

decision-makers in the school. As a result, the position and the efficacy of the beginner principal in the school is challenged.

Beginner principals were also frustrated by the fact that unions were not supportive after they had been appointed. After their appointment, the beginner principals were surprised that the support from the union declined and some became frustrated because they were still members. The union associates them with the department and protects teachers against the principals. Other challenges emanated from the management of teachers leave for absence. Many beginner principals indicated that the difficulty of leave management was that it involved teachers' salaries. Some experienced challenges of allocation of workloads, which differed according to post levels and the size of the school. It was evident that beginner principals needed preparation to deal with the administration in the office of the principal. The lack of cooperation in improving the school performance was revealed through the refusal of some teachers to be involved in extra tuition for learners as required by PAM (2016).

This study established the need for beginner principals to be empowered in conflict management in line with the legal framework. This showed that beginner principals lacked the knowledge of school policies and their application. However, the schools had policy documents provided by the department. Policies play an important role in public institutions. They shape and direct the leadership and management activities of the school. It is, therefore, vital for beginner principals to be introduced to them, know and understand them. Most beginner principals who worked in rural schools, experienced challenges pertaining to multi-grade classes and the lack of office space that deprived beginner principals of professional privacy and the freedom to perform some of their leadership and management activities. In multi-grade classes, it disturbed adequate management of the curriculum, leading to compromise in the

monitoring and support systems by the principal. The challenge of the supply of classrooms and office administration blocks for schools was common in rural areas. Though beginner principals needed these facilities, it was the responsibility of the provincial department and not the SGB to provide such amenities. By the look of things, the department was experiencing infrastructure backlog in many schools, and there was no hope that it would be resolved any time soon. That implied that for years to come schools will experience the challenge which impact negatively to the leadership and management of principals in schools.

Beginner principals in rural schools were also performing administrative responsibilities because their schools were not provided with clerical staff. This was not the case in urban and some of the township schools. The study found that in urban schools where parents were allowed to pay school fees, the SGB employed administrative staff who assisted the principals. All the rural schools were regarded as no-fee schools, and were forbidden from charging mandatory school fees (SASA, Act No. 84 of 1996) (South Africa, 1996). In essence, beginner principals from rural schools were overburdened with high workloads level compared to their counterparts from city schools.

- ***Financial management***

The study found that financial management was a serious challenge for beginner principals. Beginner principals lacking financial knowledge, found it frustrating to be called accounting officers, when they did not know about school finances. According to SASA, Act no. 84 of 1996 (South Africa, 1996a) the financial responsibility of running the school rests with the SGB, while the principals are expected to guide the SGB on all matters related to school finance. The Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), Act no.1 of 1999 (South Africa, 1999) maintains that heads of institutions are the accounting officers and principals are heads of

schools. It is, therefore, expected that school principals possess knowledge about financial management. The responses of the participants showed that beginner principals are not knowledgeable about financial management. This was, however, not the case with all the participants. One participant demonstrated knowledge of financial management from being involved as a finance manager in the church, while the other participant had a B. Com Accounting qualification from the university. Most challenges in financial management were experienced by beginner principals from rural schools in comparison with those at urban schools. Urban schools had employed financial administrators who were qualified in financial matters as support staff. These schools are able to employ staff because they charge parents school fees, while the rural schools could not do so as they were categorised as no fee schools (SASA, Act No. 84 of 1996) (South Africa, 1996a). Though working in the same district and province, beginner principals were faced with different challenges regarding financial management. Each school's approach differed in respect of its contexts and location.

- ***Parental support for improved learner performance***

Responses from secondary school beginner principals revealed that one of their key expectations was to improve the Grade 12 results. For the past five years, Capricorn District have experienced a sharp decline in Grade 12 results compared to the other five districts in the province. The past five years, from 2013 to 2017, the district showed a declining performance of 70, 1%; 71, 6%; 66, 7%; 60, 9% and 59, 7% respectively. The Capricorn district used to compete between positions one and two in the province in the previous years. Beginner principals are coming into the principalship ready to improve their schools' performance. Unfortunately, the performance statistics of the district shows a negative picture. Hallinger and Huber (2012) remark that successful learner outcomes require strong leadership in the school



through effective parental support. The importance of parent involvement in school activities was acknowledged by a study by Meigs (2008) who indicates that the support from parents helped the school to increase the learner performance up to 95% in Mathematics and Physical Science for ten uninterrupted years. In order to improve learners' results, beginner principals have to be able to manage the curriculum and assessment cooperatively with parents. The study has found a contrary view on curriculum knowledge on the part of the beginner principals. Many of them indicated that they were experiencing a problem with curriculum management and parental support. The participants, especially beginner principals from rural schools, clearly indicated poor parental involvement. The poor parental involvement may not improve unless schools have competent principals who will employ effective methods of involving parents in the activities of the school.

Wildy, Clarke and Elkin (2010) show that, generally, learners from rural schools performed poorly in comparison with their counterparts in the urban areas mainly because parents of the learners from rural schools are not involved in the education of their children. The participants were found struggling to manage schools without the support of parents. Over and above their struggles, they did not have a solution to the challenge. The literature defines leadership as the ability to influence others, who will follow the leader. In Limpopo province where school contexts are so diverse, a one size-fits all approach for principal support cannot work. This study, therefore, found the importance of contextualising training programme for school leadership and management. Without the strong support of parents, beginner principals will not succeed in managing schools.

In support of the claim, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr and Cohen (2013) are of the view that to date there are no contradictory findings of a school improving its learner

achievement in the absence of parents. The importance of improving learners' results is also among the top priorities of the national Department of Education in the Annual Performance Plan (APP) (DBE, 2014). The South African Schools Act (SASA) (South Africa, 1996a) also requires principals to develop an Academic Performance Improvement Plan (APIP) and report to the HOD on how the school has planned to improve learner performance in the academic year. All these efforts cannot be realised if the parental support of the school and its management are not improved.

#### **5.4.5. Finding five: The success of beginner principals in school leadership and management**

- ***Support of experienced principals***

The participants' responses indicated that beginner principals relied on the support of the experienced principals. Importantly, the participants indicated that they went back to their former principals to ask for assistance concerning some of the things they did not know or understand about school administration. Some requested help from the neighbouring principals (peers) who were ready to help them. Extremely few (only three) beginner principals mentioned that they were assisted by their experienced deputy principals and members of the SMT, but in some schools, it was not possible because the older (experienced) teachers were not supportive to the new leadership. Often beginner principals resorted to the leadership skills they acquired from other organisations, professional bodies and common sense to lead and manage schools. Beginner principals who acted as principals before and were appointment, were found to be better compared to those who never acted before. Participants confirmed that the support of the circuit manager and attendance of departmental meetings helped them to

understand their leadership and management roles. Their concern though, was that these kinds of support were rare and limited.

- ***Support from principals' meetings***

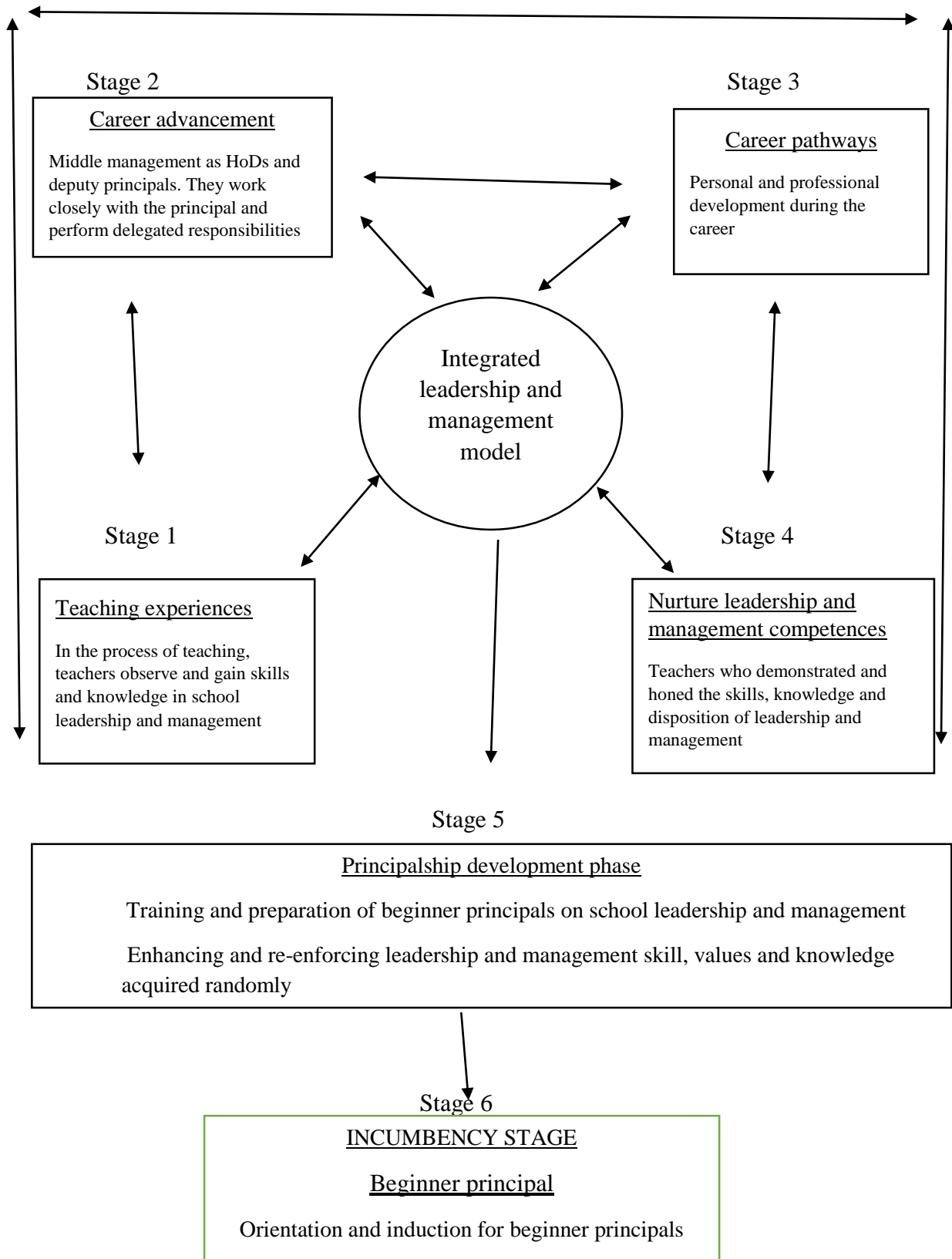
The participants indicated that they mostly benefited from the departmental meetings that were convened by the circuit manager, the district, and the provincial department. Their concern was that these kinds of meetings usually addressed experienced principals mostly and they were afraid to ask many questions. They had hoped that such meetings should be organised for beginner principals only and must be given enough time for engagement. Principals' meetings are called by the departmental officials either to introduce a new policy, provide updates on the educational development, and sometimes the official wants to clarify the understanding of policy. During principals' meetings beginner principals began to understand and know most of the operational matters relating to their work, though there was no time to entertain personal challenges. In areas where beginner principals needed clarity, they then asked experienced principals after the meeting.

## **5.5. STUDY CONTRIBUTION**

The findings from this study led to the development of a leadership and management support strategy for aspirant and beginner principals. The strategy seeks to establish a roadmap for principalship from the time a teacher is appointed until the time the same is appointed as a beginner principal. Taking into consideration the teaching experiences, teaching roles, career advancement, and career pathway and the nurturing of leadership and management competencies. The strategy can be applied by the school, the circuit and the district to enhance

current approaches used to prepare leaders and school managers from the initial stage of formation until the incumbency stage. This strategy is presented as a model named **an integrated leadership and management model for aspiring and beginner principals**.

This study concluded that prospective and beginner principals need to be prepared/trained through a model that is integrated into the school's overall leadership and management. The model is in such a way that it fits within the day-to-day school leadership and management processes which provide a linkage between teaching experiences and roles, career advancement and required competences for the future principalship. This study has led to the development of an integrated leadership and management model that seeks to empower aspirant as well as beginner principals into the principalship. The integrated leadership and management model progressively considers all the professional activities performed by teachers during their careers. The study found different school contexts that demanded different approaches of delegation. In small schools, teachers do almost everything and in some large enrolment schools, the workload is shared proportionally among the teachers. This disparity makes the development of teachers in school leadership and management inconsistent with the post levels. For example, in a small enrolment school, a post level one teacher can be delegated the role of a deputy principal even if the teacher is at post level one because of the lack of manpower in the school, hence, the inclusion of "integration" and not waiting for teachers to go through the full developmental cycle or levels of promotion. The model also recognises the current leadership and management development practices of the district, but aim to improve the practice at every stage. The diagram below depicts the roadmap for integrated leadership and the management of teachers with regard to a principalship:



**Figure 5. 1: School-based integrated leadership and management model**

### **5.5.1. School - based integrated leadership and management model**

According to Hess and Kelly (2005) & Collinson (2008) learning on-the-job is a better strategy for developing leadership skills than formal university and college coursework completed by candidates appointed to the job. This model is regarded as a strategy to enhance the experiences, knowledge-skill and observations of teachers in school leadership and management throughout their careers. This was supported by Bottoms and O'Neill (2001) and Young (2002) indicating that when preparing adult people for work, formal classroom instruction cannot be a substitute for the real world of work for the development of professional expertise. In the education fraternity on-the-job training is not formally considered for accreditation (Hess & Kelly, 2005), but in the corporate world, on-the-job training is already considered for leadership development (Felstead, Fuller, Jewson & Unwin, 2009). But the theory by Gronn (1999) postulates that through work experience, teachers can be promoted to the position of leadership and management.

The findings from this study indicated that beginner principals who were teachers in school lack skills and knowledge in school leadership and management and they are in dire need of development. The Department of Education recommends the teaching experience of teachers highly when they apply for principalship posts. The literature also confirmed that in Africa and in particular, in South Africa, teachers are appointed into principalship mainly because of their experience in teaching (Bush & Oduro, 2006; Sang, 2010). Based on the recruitment practices for principals in SA, I believe that schools will find it easy to implement the model. However, Copland, Darling-Hammond, Knapp, McLaughlin and Talbert (2002) & Snoek (2014) have argued that teaching experience alone will not develop beginner principals into competent school leaders and managers. The strategy pertaining to the integrated leadership and

management for beginner and aspirant principals would seek to close the existing gap and contradictions about the leadership and management of beginner principals, but still recognise the contributions of other scholars. The integrated leadership and management model introduces six stages of principalship development. Because of the contextual environment in different schools that display different developmental levels, teachers are, therefore, not compelled to go through all the stages before they apply for a principalship. However, the model makes it compulsory (irrespective of the stage at which teachers apply for a principalship) for all aspirant principals to enter into stage five. The six stages are explained in the following paragraph:

***Stage one: Teaching experiences***

There is a saying that “*experience is the best teacher,*” meaning that when people are doing the same thing all the time, eventually, they become adept at what they do and, ultimately, become masters at it. The same applies to teaching. Teachers mostly perform teaching activities in a similar way throughout their careers. They engage in teaching, maintain discipline in class, assess and evaluate the student performance, prepare schedules and progress reports, amongst others. By keeping on engaging in these activities, this causes them to gain experience about those activities, thereby, aspects of leadership and management are developed. The integrated leadership and management model, therefore, aims to support teachers who have already gathered enough teaching experience to begin to participate in school leadership and management activities in a formal manner. The model also wants to recognise the different contexts in SA schools and to acknowledge that teachers in different schools are exposed to leadership and management activities in different ways.

Based on the post provisioning model, small schools with only five teaching posts do not qualify for any promotional posts according to the staff establishment (PAM, 2016). For this reason, the findings confirmed that, in small schools, teachers are offered the opportunity of performing leadership and management roles and functions compared to high enrolment schools with many teachers. In the process, they acquire skills and knowledge about leadership and management activities. Some participants indicated that they never wanted to apply for HoD posts. Instead, they applied for a principalship because they felt already performing the job of the HoD while holding level one teaching post.

According to Gronn's theory of leadership as a career, such teachers, have already passed the formation stage by virtue of their experience and have entered the accession stage. Even when they are PL1 teachers, they are motivated to apply for principalship posts. While this research might agree with Gronn about a leadership as a career, the findings indicated that beginner principals still expect to be trained in leadership and management. The integrated leadership and management model recommends that though the PL1, teachers (aspirant principals) may feel they are ready to become school principals because of sufficient experience in teaching, they still have to be supported before they are appointed. This was supported by the sentiments from all the participants who indicated their expectation regarding training before they assume their responsibilities in leading and managing their schools. The model recognises the contribution made by the teaching career or experience, and does not expect such teachers to go through the full cycle from stages one to four, but insists that the aspirants must enter stage five before they are appointed as beginner principals.

The model aims to integrate the teaching experience of the aspirants to a semi-formal and focused principalship preparation programme in stage five. Based on the literature and current



practices related to school leadership and management, participants still want to be trained and developed. The integrated leadership and management model uses teaching experience as the catalyst for teacher development towards a principalship. Compared to low enrolment schools, in high enrolment schools, the staff establishment has more teachers, some schools have thirty-five teachers, for example, and in such schools, it is not possible for a PL1 to be exposed to leadership and management responsibilities. A school of this magnitude has five HoDs and two deputy principals who are members of the SMT. The PL1 teachers working in an environment of big schools have rarely been exposed the responsibilities of leadership and management.

It must be stressed, however, that the participants indicated that the principal sometimes uses his prerogative power when delegating responsibilities and that allow him/her to identifies a PL1 teacher and engages her in leadership and management responsibilities, thus getting the particular teacher to gain experience over the appointed HoD who is senior in rank. In this instance, such a teacher becomes ready and eventually applies for a principalship, and most of them are appointed (see Figure, 3.3 and Table, 4.1). Stage five of the integrated leadership and management strategy, therefore, becomes a leadership and management standard bearer and a pool for the principalship development stage. The reason for every aspirant principal to go through stage five was that in a school, teachers perform leadership and management responsibilities in a disintegrated format which rendered them unprepared.

### ***Stage two: Career advancement***

The second stage in the model is career advancement, where teachers are promoted as HoD and deputy principals as PL 2 and 3 respectively. These are legitimate members of the SMT. According to PAM (2016), members of the SMT are delegated leadership and management responsibilities by the principals and are accountable for such responsibilities. HoDs lead a

group of teachers, they plan for the activities in the department, and they preside over all meetings in the department just like the principals do during the staff meetings. The deputy principals deputise the principal in all matters pertaining to the school and act as the principal in the absence of the principal. Compared to the PL1 teachers, teachers who occupy promotional posts are exposed to leadership and management roles and responsibilities. Participants who were in this category indicated that they were ready to become principals, but also indicated that when they occupied principalship chair, they began to realise that there was a considerable difference between their work and the work of a principal. They also indicated that they needed training in their new responsibilities as beginner principals.

The participants who completed their degree in school leadership or management also indicated their readiness for principalship, but explained their shock after their appointment as principals. University studies in school leadership prepare teachers, especially those on the SMT to improve their performance. The participants remarked:

*“After completing my degree in school leadership and management I felt I could become a principal. ... Moreover, I saw many mistakes made by my principal.”*

The integrated leadership and management model, therefore, acknowledges the experience of HoDs and deputy principals, but still recommends that before they can be appointed as principals, they must be supported by entering into a readiness programme proposed by this study at stage five. The findings showed that even the HoDs and deputy principals expected to be trained before they began their new jobs. The beginner principals indicated their lack of knowledge about minor responsibilities such as how to use a school journal and the

management of a leave register, which then showed that they needed to be developed in some aspects; stage five of the model provides such support to beginner principals.

### ***Stage three: Career pathway***

The third stage of the model takes the contribution by the professional bodies in the career life of beginner principals into consideration. The participants indicated that their participation in professional bodies exposed their leadership and management skills and made them realise that they were ready to become principals. Furthermore, the participants who were union leaders were not hesitant to speak about the role the union played in making them realise their leadership potential. Some beginner principals, who thought they would never become principals, began to realise their potential when they were performing union activities. Holding a leadership position and participating in the programmes of the union gave beginner principals confidence and they felt prepared to become school principals. Union leaders engage in matters of policy with the school management, and, by so doing, they are exposed to the leadership and management activities of the school.

The participants who participated in academic, professional bodies such as chief examiners, for external examination and those who were elected leaders in the subject associations such as Association of Mathematics Educators in South Africa (AMESA) revealed that they felt they were ready for school leadership and management. The model, therefore, recognises the contribution by the professional bodies in school leadership and management. Professional bodies were seen as career pathways for participants. However, the findings confirmed that beginner principals who went through the professional bodies' pathways felt inadequately prepared after their appointment as principals. This feeling of inadequacy was seen as a gap

which needs to be closed. In order to close the leadership gap of aspirants who thought they were ready, they need to go through stage five of leadership and management development.

***Stage four: Nurture of leadership and management competences***

The fourth stage recognises those teachers who have been in the profession for a considerable amount of time and have gone through all the stages of the model, but do not have an inclination to become school principals. These teachers possess worth of experience about education and it must be exploited and be used to benefit the school. The study discovered some beginner principals who never thought they could become school principals. They applied for the principalship post after they were encouraged by their colleagues and mentors and they were appointed. This group is referred to as potential principals, who were called aspirant principals in line with stages one to three. The difference between the two is that in the first three groups, the beginners felt they were ready for a principalship (either by virtue of experience, delegation and participation in professional bodies), while the fourth stage addresses a group of teachers who did not have the aspiration to become principals. They may be in post levels 1, 2 and 3 as SMTs and had the required competencies for the principalship. Some already demonstrated their leadership and management skills and abilities (knowledge, skills, disposition and performance) to their seniors, but they did not believe they could succeed as principals. They lacked enthusiasm, doubted themselves and needed someone to encourage and motivate them.

Stage four, therefore, requires the principal to play his role as a leader who develops other leaders (DBE, 2014). Unlike as is the case in the three other stages, in the fourth stage, the school principals must identify the leadership and management competencies of the potential principals and deliberately encourage them by making them aware of what they are able to do.

The principal or the deputy principal must provide mentoring support to the potential principal. The senior must always make him aware of his accomplishments and express appreciation for him/her. The mentoring process must have targets with the purpose of building the confidence of the potential principal who must, ultimately, develop a desire to apply for a principalship post. Successful candidates who are appointed as beginner principals then enter into stage five of the model where they will be attending a developmental programme that prepares them to perform the principalship role effectively.

### ***Stage five: Principalship development programme***

The need for training beginner principals in school leadership and management has long been acknowledged by Newton and Tarrant (1992); Weingartner (2009) and Zachary (2012) who indicate that the day-to-day experiences of employees do not prepare them enough to assume positions of leadership and management in contrast with formal training, especially, with regard to the understanding and implementation of policies. The findings of this study revealed that beginner principals, irrespective of their level of readiness, felt inadequately prepared for the work of a principal and anticipate further training after appointment as principals. The Education and Training Inspectorate (2013) argue that beginner principals in a reforming education system needed leadership preparation programmes that are capable of providing principals suitable for 21<sup>st</sup> century schools. The integrated leadership and management model provides for multiple entries into the leadership and management development programme. What is problematic during this study was that newly appointed principals begin their new jobs without attending a formal leadership and management training programme.

Day (2003) clarifies the idea of most beginner principals who mistakenly rely mainly on their teaching experiences and intuition when leading and managing schools. The integrated

leadership and management model requires the provinces and districts to provide formal leadership and management support to beginner principals. Different to the theory of leadership as a career by Gronn (1999), the integrated leadership and management model provides a semi-formal preparation at stages one to four and a formal preparation programme at stage five as a roadmap and a strategic approach that can be used to identify the leadership and management potential of teachers at different stages in their careers. The model does not endorse a linear promotion approach, but acknowledges leadership and management activities in the career life of teachers and recognises each activity as a building block in teacher development.

At stage five, all the experiences from each stage are refocused in one direction of leadership and management of a school. This research study discovered young beginner principals with the least teaching experience but who demonstrated outstanding leadership and management skills in their schools. The findings and responses of the participants revealed that beginner principals do not receive support as the leaders and managers of schools. The importance of supporting beginner principals was emphasised by Bush and Oduro (2006) who observe that beginner principals have to be taken through an induction and orientation workshop on school leadership and management responsibilities. The research findings confirmed that beginner principals lack basic management training prior to and after their entry into the principalship. The five stages of the integrated leadership and management model, therefore, seek to close the existing gaps in the current system of recruiting and appointing principals.

### ***Stage six: Incumbency***

According to the theory of Gronn (1999), the incumbency stage means the beginner principal assumes his/her new responsibilities as a new principal. The findings showed that beginner principals entered this stage with the expectation that they would perform well, but they soon

realised that they still needed further preparation. This study developed a model that clarified the entry points of beginner principals' appointment, but also provided an opportunity for development for every beginner principal in stage five. In stage five, beginner principals are provided with support on the important aspects of school leadership and management. Beginner principals attend a compulsory development programme that will train and prepare them to become effective school principals. Based on the fact that the appointment of beginner principals is usually in groups, the programme cannot be a one-size-fits-all. A generic approach, particularly on policy aspects, could be applied, but with regard to other aspects, programme developers need to consider the school context.

The period for preparing beginner principals will be determined by the district, but it should not be less than a week. At the end of the programme, the district must organise a formal meeting through the circuit manager to present the beginner principal to the school community (structures). The SGB must be provided with a programme on how to conduct the handing-over and orientation process with regard to the beginner principal. The process must be supportive and well-coordinated by the circuit manager. The purpose of a formal handing-over and orientation is to declare the presence of the beginner principal to everybody in the school (stakeholders) including teachers and support staff. The handing-over and orientation processes must help the beginner principal to settle in without any fear or frustration with the support of the SGB, teacher unions and the circuit manager.

## **5.6. CONCLUSIONS**

The study has determined that beginner principals working in the Capricorn District in the

Limpopo Province are faced with multiple challenges related to school leadership and management. After their appointment, beginner principals are expected to be trained in the area of school leadership and management. Unfortunately, the Department of Education does not provide training opportunities for beginner principals. After their appointment, they are introduced to the SGB and teachers and they are left to fend for themselves. This creates feelings of isolation, loneliness, frustration and fear as they are new in the school with experienced teachers who have been in the school for a long time. There is no handing-over of documents from the previous principals, or the school programmes that indicate school activities for the year.

Beginner principals end up seeking support from their former principals and other experienced principals. After their appointment, the beginner principals realised that their teaching experience was not enough to prepare them to lead and manage the school. Some of them enrolled for further studies in school leadership and management courses to augment their knowledge and skills. However, this study has established that even those who had completed their leadership course at a university, still needed to be prepared for principalship. The recruitment and appointment process was found to be open to manipulation and made it easy for less professionally qualified aspirant principals to be appointed regardless of those who were better qualified professionally. The system made it possible for a principal candidate with a primary teacher qualification to be appointed as a principal in a secondary school and vice versa. It was typical to find principal candidates from public ordinary schools offering an academic curriculum, but appointed in a public special school offering a vocational curriculum. The appointment of beginner principals was not based on their leadership and management competencies, but on their teaching experience. The literature confirmed that in South Africa there is no formal training programme to prepare aspirant principals for leadership and



management. Contrary to the local approach to principalship support, beginner principals from developed - western countries/ in the north are required to complete formal programmes on leadership and management before they qualify for appointment.

Some countries even raised the qualification requirement for principalship to a master's degree level. In comparison with western countries, beginner principals in South Africa are inadequately prepared. It was only after being appointed that these beginner principals begin to realise that they are not ready to perform their leadership and management roles and responsibilities. The beginner principals have acknowledged in this study that the work of the principal is overwhelming compared to all the other jobs they have performed prior to their appointment into the principalship position.

The Capricorn District appeared to have diverse schooling contexts that demanded different approaches for principalship preparations. The challenges experienced by beginner principals in rural schools were not exactly the same in comparison with the challenges of beginner principals from the township and the city schools. Sayce and Lavery (2013) argue that when training principals for school leadership, trainers must contextualise their programmes because of competing demands in rapidly changing environments. Even though the recruitment and appointment policy for a principalship recognises the teaching experience for a principalship, the beginner principals indicated that it did not contribute directly to making them principals.

The study has determined that the leadership and management skills accumulated through teaching experience, delegation, further studies and participation in professional bodies are uncoordinated and random. Through this study, I realised that it is important for one to be a teacher first before becoming a principal. There are more of the minor teaching activities in the

educational system that one needs to learn hands-on in one's career and not through attending a university class that forms some milestone for school leadership. After all, these educational activities ignite a desire for a principalship. I also agreed to some extent with Gronn's theory that educational leadership emanates from the career itself.

The leadership and management preparation through teaching experience was found to be disjointed and isolated from the systematic learning processes. This research regarded delegation and participation in professional activities to be part of the formation process in the career life of an aspirant principal and not as preparation for school leadership and management. Even though professional activities are performed in a disjointed manner, this study has found linkages to school leadership and management in them. Most teachers who were senior or deputy chief markers during the marking of the National Senior Certificate were not members of the SMT in their school, but they gained important managerial skills on how to manage examinations, which is a professional managerial function of the school principal.

The importance of induction for newly appointed leaders was long considered by Daresh and Playko (1994); Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopking (2006) and the Wallace Foundation (2007) who indicate that the first year of principalship is marked by substantial anxiety, frustration, isolation and self-doubt. Brundrett, Fitzgerald and Sommfeldt (2006) argue that leadership in a school requires the kind of reflective knowledge and higher order cognitive abilities that will undoubtedly succeed in the increasingly complex world of educational leadership in the 21 century.

In order to assist beginner principals and the Department of Education, the findings from the study made this research to conclude by recommending a developmental approach in the form

of an integrated leadership and management model as a roadmap to support teachers and aspirant principals throughout their profession and post levels. This model is designed to develop the leadership and management knowledge and skills of teachers and aspirant principals from their early years in the profession. The aim of the model is to search for the leadership and management talent of teachers and aspirant principals, recognise it and support them continuously after they are appointed as beginner principals. The first four phases of the model emphasise support with the intention of preparing and grooming future principals, and the last phase emphasises the training of the beginner principals.

The need to prepare and train leadership and management in SA schools can no longer be overlooked. The National Development Plan (NDP, 2011), (SA, 2011) which is a roadmap by the SA government in the form of vision 2030, requires the DBE to ensure that school principals are empowered to be able to fulfil their roles as leaders and managers who are capable of implementing curriculum reforms; improve education and training by building proper qualified competent and committed teachers, and professionals; develop and sustain the teaching profession where schools are run by skilled and dedicated principals, and develop an education system with the capacity to address the lack of capacity in school leadership and management as well as expand the production of highly skilled professionals and enhance the innovative capacity of the nation. The recommendations discussed in the next section were found to be consistent with the national vision and fits in with the career path of teachers. The approach proposed by the model is not costly in monetary terms and can be applied by every school in the province and the district.

## 5.7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The key findings in this study were based on the research topic: exploring the experiences of beginner principals in school leadership and management. The findings revealed the need for leadership and management support for beginner principals. The study recommends preparation for training in advance for teachers and beginner principals. The current recruitment process for principalship was found to be consistent with the theoretical framework by Gronn (1999), but lacks support for the leadership and management responsibilities during the career and after the appointment of beginner principals. This was confirmed by Bush and Oduro (2006), Taole (2013) and Jeap (2013) who argue that South Africa does not have a formal obligation to train aspirant principals to become school managers. Principals are appointed on the basis of teaching experience with the implicit assumption that this provides a sufficient starting point for school leadership. The need for skilful school principals was emphasised by Naidoo (2015) who indicates that compared with other international countries, there was an increasing demand for skilled principals with the deep knowledge of improving school leadership in SA. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for the provincial Department of Education, the district and schools in the Limpopo Province.

### **The Provincial Department of Education**

- *The provincial department of education should develop a formal support programme to train beginner principals on school leadership and management.*

According to Bush and Jackson (2002), Bush and Oduro (2006) and Fitzgerald (2005), training in many African countries including SA is not a requirement when appointing school principals. Principalship development in developed countries is recognised as important for improving schools and learner achievement, and already introduced professional training

programmes for aspirant, beginner and experienced principals. Organisations such as the Wallace Foundation, New Leaders for New Schools, the National Professional Qualification Headship, and the National College for School Leadership and the National Association of Elementary School Principals, to name few, are formally established institutions aimed at the training and preparation of principals for school leadership and management. Mestry and Singh (2007) contend that providing principals with the necessary knowledge, skills, values and attitudes is increasingly important in relation to the difficulties faced by a dynamic and changing educational system.

The need to train and develop beginner principals in SA was indicated by the introduction of The South African Standard for Principalship that aimed to establish what the education system expects from those they appoint in the position of leadership and management (DBE, 2014). Until now, this draft policy has not been implemented.

***The provincial department of education should develop the expected performance standards as measuring tools for the competence of aspirant principals.***

Stage five of the integrated leadership and management model suggests that all aspirant principals must go through a developmental stage that prepares them as beginner principals. This stage aims at enhancing the competence of the aspirant principals to the expected level of performance. At this point, the provincial department of education should create milestones as key performance areas that beginner principals must achieve.

The integrated leadership and management model, therefore, becomes a roadmap that integrates experiences accumulated from the other four stages into an organised and formalised manner. Marlow and Minehira (2011) explain that in order for school principals to be effective

managers, must possess a wide array of competencies gained through training and preparations. The model creates prospects for the development of training and preparation opportunities for beginner principals.

The DBE (2014) indicates that currently in SA, there are no specific performance standards for aspirant principals. A limited definition of the roles of aspirant principals exists in the Personnel Administrative Measure (PAM, 2016) and Integrated Quality Management Systems (ELRC, Collective Agreement No. 8 of 2003) (RSA, 2003). This limited definition of the expectations for performance standards for aspirant principals can be the reason that, even today, SA still uses teaching experience as a yard stick for the appointment of aspirant principals for school leadership and management.

***The provincial department of education should train the school governing bodies on how to support beginner principals in their schools.***

The South African Schools Act (Act No. 84 of 1996) (RSA, 1996a) gives the SGB the right to recruit, interview and recommend to the provincial HOD the appointment of teachers including the principal. Section 20 of the act continues by stating that the SGB must adopt the school constitution, develop the mission statement of the school, and support the principal in the performance of professional functions. The participants pointed out the lack of support from the SGB as one of their frustrating aspects in their careers. Accordingly, it is the responsibility of the HOD to establish a programme that provides introductory training for the SGB members to enable them to perform their functions. The findings indicate that SGB members do not perform their functions of supporting beginner principals as expected. The provincial department of education should capacitate SGB members to conduct the handing-over and induction of beginner principals. The support of the SGB to beginner principals if well-

coordinated can help build confidence of beginner principals, and minimise challenges from those teachers who have been at the school for years and exhibit a defiant spirit (Matthews & Crow, 2003) and also can promote learner discipline.

The participants highlighted the challenge of stakeholder participation, particularly, the poor support from parents and unions. The lack of support from the SGB can be a justifying factor to the challenges mentioned by the participants. The SGB members represent a parent's body and as a governing structure, it is in the best position to engage the unions. The DBE (2014) stresses that when the principal works with the SGB, a collaborative relationship and partnership is fostered within and between the internal and external school community for the mutual benefit of all concerned.

- ***The Department of Basic Education should strive for synergy amongst all its disconnected programmes that aim at enhancing teacher development and recognise their contribution to a whole.***

The Department of Basic Education (2014) acknowledges that the current form of teacher education development in the country is uncoordinated and fragmented with insufficient funding. The model for integrated leadership and management for aspirant and beginner principals also gives credence to the fact that teachers gain different types of experience during all the stages in the teaching profession. The theory of leadership as a career gave impetus to teacher appointment as principals are appointed randomly at all the stages. The participants also shared that they gain leadership and management experiences from their participation in professional bodies. The Department of Basic Education recognises the teaching experience, honed performance through delegation and knowledge gained through further studies. The

experiences gained by aspirant principals from holding leadership and management positions during Umalusi external examination, unions and associations of subjects should be recognised. The department need to establish competency levels for activities by professional bodies and reach an understanding with regard to awarding of professional points to participantsts. Professional points could also be awarded to teachers at each stage of the suggested model. When aspirant principals apply for principalship posts, selection should be done on merit, based on the professional points of the candidates. The selection criteria could be developed by the professional policy-makers in the provincial Department of Education.

#### **The Department of Education at the district level**

- ***The district should elevate teaching career and experience as a developmental roadmap for leadership and management.***

During the teaching processes, teachers who are performing delegated roles, holding positions and participate in professional bodies should be made to prepare portfolios of evidence to the circuit office. The department or the Education Labour Relation Council (ELRC) should develop criteria for awarding professional points for those teachers who demonstrate evidence of professional development in the area of leadership. Such teachers could then be targeted for formal training in leadership and are accredited and recommended as aspirant principals. In this manner, the department will be establishing a pool of future leaders and managers of schools, and when principalship posts are advertised, the department will have a wider pool of potential school principals from which to choose.

- ***The district should train circuit managers on mentorship and coaching.***

The circuit manager reports directly to the district director. According to ELRC, Collective Agreement No. 4 of 2017 (RSA, 2017), the job description of a circuit manager includes the



management of the selection processes of the appointment of principals and the support of principals with regard to curriculum delivery and administration of the school. However, there is no guidance on how principals must be supported to that effect. The participants indicated that after being introduced to the school, they did not receive any support from the circuit manager. They felt abandoned and isolated, however, some of them were privileged to be advised by their former principals and other experienced principals. The district has a duty to provide circuit managers with a programme that will direct and empower them in terms of how to support beginner principals. This support programme could be in the form of mentoring and coaching. To some extent, the circuit manager may entrust enthusiastic and experienced principals with some responsibilities and delegate them to take up the role of mentoring and coaching beginner principals. The circuit manager will then receive a progress report from the delegated principals and intervene and assist those beginner principals who are showing slow growth.

- ***The district should provide beginner principals with the necessary policy documents relevant to leadership and management.***

The Department of Education has developed numerous policy documents that are implemented at school level. Some documents have been amended, and not all schools have the amended copies of the policy documents. After a new principal is appointed, the circuit manager and the district director must ensure that the beginner principal is provided with and is inducted with regard to all the necessary approaches to policy implementation. Together with the SGB, the circuit manager should help the beginner principal to access policies that are drafted by the school. The participants indicated that after they had been introduced to the school, they were never given policy documents and they struggled and took time to put systems in place.

- ***The district should form small groups of beginner principals for peer-support.***

The district and the circuit offices may establish small groups of beginner principals in a circuit or cluster depending on the number of appointees and get them to learn and support each other. A group of beginner principals can be a good platform for sharing their challenges in an open manner and develop their own practical solutions without any form of authoritarianism from their managers. Belonging to a small group of the peers may also minimise feelings of isolation and loneliness in beginner principals. The participants revealed that they were sometimes hesitant to ask the circuit managers questions during principals' meetings, because they felt inferior amongst the experienced principals. In any case, they could not ask the circuit managers questions, even after meetings, to avoid being seen as incompetent. Therefore, they resorted to going back to discuss their queries with their former principals. This approach showed that, beginner principals wanted a forum where they could express their frustrations and/or views. The establishment of a peer-support group could assist many of the beginner principals, especially those appointed from outside the school.

#### **The Department of Basic Education at school level**

- ***The circuit manager should work with the SMT and the SGB to prepare a hand-over of the necessary documents for the beginner principal***

The circuit manager should help both the SMT and the SGB to prepare all the internal documents used in the school to assist the beginner principal to familiarise him/herself with the new school environment. The SMT could provide the beginner principal with the school journal, the academic performance improvement plans, the school improvement plans, sporting activities, admission registers and memorabilia, to name only a few. The SGB could provide the beginner principal with a historical background of the school, the school development plan,

and the school policies. All these activities cannot be handled in one day. The participants indicated that when they are introduced to the school, the circuit manager and the SGB do not spend time at the school to provide support to the new principal. The planned handing- over will help the beginner principal to settle down and may also reduce the level of frustration and anxiety.

- ***The circuit manager together with the SGB should arrange an orientation session with the beginner principal about the school***

The circuit manager and the SGB could arrange short monthly meetings with the beginner principal on governance matters. For example, aspects that could be addressed are information on the maintenance of the school buildings and grounds, financial management and the code of conduct for the learners. Furthermore, the SGB should introduce the beginner principal to the parents' meeting, unions and local councillors and in village schools; the SGB could initiate visits to the Chief/Induna to introduce the beginner principal. By meeting with and knowing the stakeholders, the beginner principal will know whom to consult in times of need instead of facing the discomfort of asking his subordinates for information.

- ***The circuit manager should pay regular visits and support the beginner principal.***

After introducing the beginner principal, the circuit manager should pay regular visits to the school and could even visit the beginner principal once a week with the aim of mentoring and supporting the new principal. The circuit manager may agree with the beginner principal on the planned visits and create a discussion time on the challenges that the beginner principal is facing.

### **Recommendations for further studies**

The findings indicated that a gap still exists in the research on the development of beginner principals in school leadership and management skills. Much is written about the principalship with the focus on the challenges school principals are experiencing, but mostly with reference to experienced principals. Beginner principals lack both the knowledge and skills with regard to the leadership and management of schools and need support. Accordingly, more research is needed on beginner principals' experiences in school leadership and management.

This study also recommends further research on the preparation and training programmes for beginner principals in provinces and districts. Therefore, the Department of Basic Education should re-think the current traditional method of teaching experience as a strategy used to prepare for school leadership and management and develop a formal and systematic professional preparation or training programme for aspiring and beginner principals.

There is a need for further research on the challenges of beginner principals in school leadership and management.

## **5.8. CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided the summary of the research findings derived from the empirical research. The main findings confirmed that beginner principals in the Capricorn District in the Limpopo Province are experiencing challenges related to school leadership and management soon after being appointed as principals. The findings answered the main research question and the sub-questions and found that beginner principals are not ready to deal with challenges pertaining to the curriculum, finance, human resource legislative framework and stakeholder

relations. It needs to be emphasised that they need support in the form of training. Beginner principals come into principalship positions with positive expectations, but become frustrated when they cannot meet the demands of the principalship because of inadequate preparation. In the midst of their challenges, many of them go back to their former principals to solicit their support.

Notwithstanding the initiatives by the DBE in The Standard for Principalship, this study has recommended an integrated leadership and management model to the district that can serve as a roadmap for the preparation of aspirant principals. The model is easy to apply because it enhances the current strategy of principalship preparation in the district. This chapter also indicated the need for further research on the experiences of beginner principals on school leadership and management.

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## Annexure A

Letter requesting permission to conduct research

Enq: Sepuru M G

Date: 07 December 2015

082 937 2975

DISTRICT SENIOR MANAGER

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

SIR/MADAM

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY IN THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE:  
CAPRICORN DISTRICT

1. The matter above refers.
2. I am currently studying with the University of Pretoria in the Faculty of Education.
3. I am registered for Ph.D. degree and am about to conduct my scientific study in schools.
4. My study topic is: **Exploring the experiences of beginner Principals in School Leadership and Management.**
5. I therefore request permission from your office to visit schools in your district and to conduct interviews school principals. Participation by principals is voluntary.
6. I am willing to abide by all the educational procedures during the period of the study.

Hoping for your support

Yours sincerely

---

Malesela Gilbert Sepuru

Student No: 14339600

**Annexure B:**

Permission to conduct research



**LIMPOPO**  
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF  
**EDUCATION**  
**CAPRICORN POLOKWANE DISTRICT**

Private Bag X 9711  
POLOKWANE  
0700  
Tel: 015 285 7300  
Fax: 015 285 7499

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Enq : Mphaphuli AJ  
Tel No.: 015 285 7410  
Email : [MphaphuliAJ@edu.limpopo.gov.za](mailto:MphaphuliAJ@edu.limpopo.gov.za)  
Date: 09 December 2015

To : **Sepuru MG**  
University of Pretoria  
Faculty of Education

**SUBJECT: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN LIMPOPO  
PROVINCE.CAPRICORN POLOKWANE DISTRICT.**

**Title: To analyze the experience of beginner principals in School Leadership and Management.**

1. The about matter refers.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct a research has been approved.
3. The following conditions should be considered
  - 3.1 The research should not have any financial implication for Limpopo Department of Education.
  - 3.2 Arrangements should be made with both the circuit offices and schools concerned.
  - 3.3 The conduct of research should not in any way disrupt the academic programs in schools.
  - 3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time examinations especially the fourth term.


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Cnr Blaauwberg & Yster Street, Ladanna

**" We Belong, We Care, We Serve "**

- 3.5 During the study, research ethics should be practiced, in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).
- 3.6 Upon completion of research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with Department.
- 4 Furthermore you are expected to produce this letter at schools/offices where you intend to conduct your research as evidence that you are permitted to conduct the research.
- 5 The Department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wish you success in your research.

Best wishes

  
MR MOTHEMANE KD  
ACTING DISTRICT SENIOR MANAGER

9/12/2015  
DATE

SUBJECT: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN LIMPOPO  
PROVINCE. CAPRICORN POLOKWANE DISTRICT.



## Annexure C

### Request for participation and consent letter of participants



Enq: Sepuru M G

Date: 07 December 2015

082 937 2975

SIR/MADAM

#### REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH STUDY ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

1. The matter above refers.
2. I am currently studying with the University of Pretoria in the Faculty of Education.
3. I am registered for a PhD and am about to conduct my scientific study in schools.
4. My study topic is: **Exploring the experiences of beginner Principals in School Leadership and Management.**
5. I therefore request your participation during the study. Your participation should be voluntary. Your name and the school and the community will not be disclosed.
6. During the study you will be interviewed. Interviews will be conducted at your school and will take approximately an hour. The researcher will be using a tape recorder during the interviews.
7. Participants are free to withdraw their participation at any time during the study period.

NB: Please note that all the data collected with public funding will be made available for public and scientific use.

Regards

Signatures: \_\_\_\_\_

M G Sepuru: (Researcher)

Participant

M. A. U. Mohlakwana(Supervisor)

## Annexure D



### Consent letter

1. I hereby agree to take part in the research study as requested by the researcher.
2. I will cooperate with the researcher, avail myself for the meeting for the research as per the research programme.
3. I am aware that with regard to my participation in this study, I will be interviewed by the researcher and I am ready to make a contribution.
4. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may not be forced to act in a manner that makes me feel comfortable.
5. I understand that I can withdraw my participation from the research at any time.

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Researcher

[sepurumg@yahoo.com](mailto:sepurumg@yahoo.com)

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Participant

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Supervisor

[agnes.mohlakwana@up.ac.za](mailto:agnes.mohlakwana@up.ac.za)

Student No: 14339600

## **Annexure E**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Briefly tell me about your life history as a leader?
2. Tell me of events that contributed to your development of leadership and management skills?
3. How do you understand the role of a school principal?
4. At what stage in your life did you aspire for principalship position?
5. How did your experience as a teacher inspire you to be a leader?
6. How were you prepared for principalship position during your teaching career?
7. How were you supported as a school principal?
8. How were you informed of your appointment as a principal?
9. What do you think your role as a principal entails?
10. What were your expectations as a new principal?
11. Tell me about your first week experience at your current work place?
12. Tell me about the challenges you have experienced as a new principal?
13. How did you overcome them?
14. What type of workshop did you attend during your role as a school principal?
15. Now that you are a principal what is your opinion about providing training to principals on school leadership and management?
16. Do you have anything to comment about your work as a principal?

## Annexure F

### DOCUMENTS VERIFICATION TOOL

SRN	DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION	Availability	
		YES	NO
1	Constitution of the school		
2	Curriculum management Policy		
3	Finance Policy		
4	Safety Policy		
5	Policy on Religion		
6	Code of conduct for learners		
7	Disciplinary Policy		
8	HIV & AIDS Policy		
9	Admission Policy		
10	Leave management Policy		
11	Assets management Policy		
12	Language Policy		
13	Visitors management Policy		
14	Handover report form from the former principal		
	<b>Availability the following departmental legislation:</b>		
15	South African Schools Act		
16	Collective Agreement No. 1 of 2008		
17	Collective Agreement No. 2 of 2003		
18	White Paper N. 5		
19	White Paper No. 6		
20	White Paper No.7		
21	National Performance Plan on Education: Towards Realisation of Schooling 2025		
22	Policy Hand Book for Educators: (ELRC)		

Signature of the beginner principal ..... Date .....

Signature of the Researcher.....Date .....