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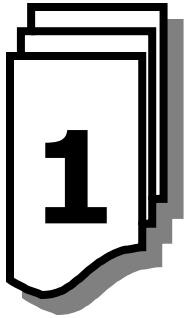
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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

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

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

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

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

1.2   Purpose of the study and working assumptions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ii. school principals would feel that these programmes assisted them in their management and leadership of schools, in other words, that EMDPs had practical relevance for their practises in schools;

iii. school principals would feel that EMDPs did not fully meet their needs and those of their schools; and

iv. school principals would feel that there are areas in which EMDPs needed to be improved.

1.3   Research questions

The following research question guides this inquiry:

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

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

i) *What are the links between formal education management development programmes (EMDP) and the needs of school principals?*

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

Furthermore, the following sub-questions will be considered:

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

1.4   Background

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.5   Significance of the study

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.6   Conceptual framework

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

i. Traditional approaches are criticised for not giving educators the time, activities and the content to improve their knowledge and skills; for PD to be effective, programmes need to be longer and to have more content focus, active learning and coherence.

ii. Quick fixes may not produce the desired results; educators need blocks of time and they should determine the appropriate time for PD.

iii. Professional development should take place over an extended period of time.

iv. Collective participation can contribute to a shared professional culture where educators develop shared values and goals; sharing stimulates educators' reflection and broadens their perspective.

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

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

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

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

7. Integration of professional development and performance of day-to-day responsibilities with district/school goals and improvement plans.

8. An environment of trust in which school leaders feel comfortable in taking risks, exploring new ideas and implementing innovative practices that enhance their continuing professional growth and promote continual improvement of schools, teaching and learning.

9. An emphasis on accountability throughout the process through periodic peer reviews documentation of the fulfilment of Professional Growth Plans, including professional development goals and intended outcomes.

10. The professional development process should be widely supported at state, district, and school levels with relevant policies, technical assistance, and resources.

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

Relevance:

Formal Education Management Development Programmes (EMDPs)

B.Ed. (Hons)   M.Ed.

Practice of Principalship:

❖ management
❖ leadership
❖ change management

Professional Development

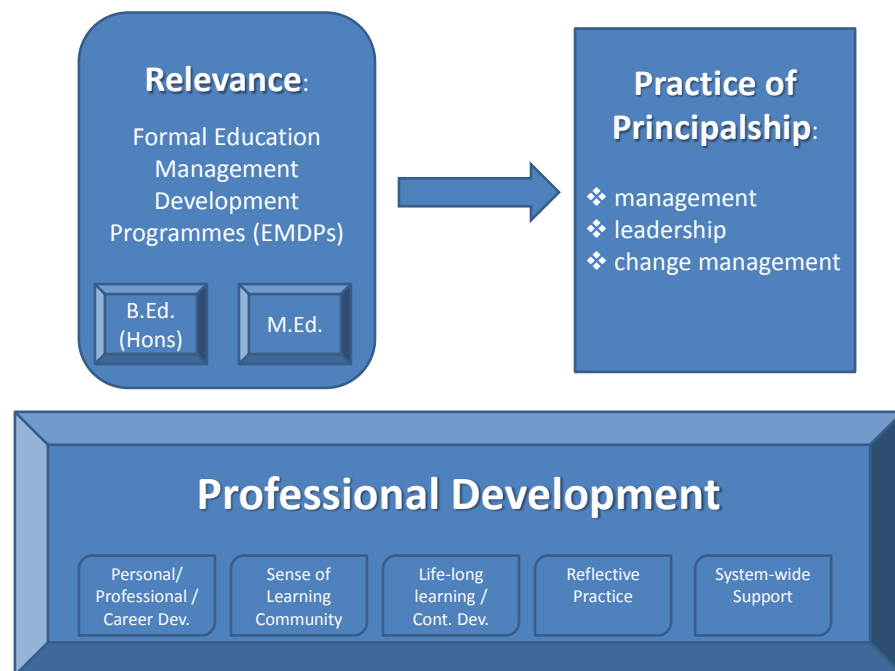| Personal/ Professional / Career Dev. | Sense of Learning Community | Life-long learning / Cont. Dev. | Reflective Practice | System-wide Support |

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

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

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

1.7   Theoretical framework

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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[9] Other scholars such as Sergiovanni (1994) have argued that our conceptions of schools as organisations need to change to that of schools as communities.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.8   Research methodology

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

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

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

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

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[10] Although the focus of the study was mainly on high school principals when the study was initially conceptualized, a total of 6 primary school principals — five of whom were women — were also interviewed particularly since most women in KwaZulu-Natal are principals in primary schools.
[11] Pseudonyms are used in the study for the three universities in KwaZulu-Natal — see Chapter 3 of the study.

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

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

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

1.9   Limitations of the study

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

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

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

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

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[12] Specific statistics were not available from the PDE regarding the numbers of principals who have undergone EMDPs in the province.

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

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

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

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

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

1.10   Discussion of key concepts used in the study

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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[14] See discussions of the programmes of the University of Port Shepstone, Montclair University North Campus and University of Melmoth North Campus in section 4.7 of the present study.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.11   Outline of the study

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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