THE EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMMES

By

NTOMBIFUTHI NOZIPHO MWELASE

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STUDENT NUMBER: 46364064

Supervisor: DR S.J. RAPETA

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DECLARATION

I, Ntombifuthi Nozipho Mwelase, student no. 46364064, declare that the dissertation*:The Experiences of Secondary School Principals With Regard to the Implementation of School Improvement Programmes* presented to obtain a Master of Education at UNISA, is my own work and that no one has presented it before to any other institutions of higher learning. All sources cited in my research study are displayed and acknowledged in the text, with a complete list of references.



DATE: 18/10/2023

MISS NTOMBIFUTHI NOZIPHO MWELASE

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the following people:

- my late grandfather, Mr M.J. Mwelase;
- my late mother Mrs G.N. Zondi (MaMwelase);
- my grandmother, Mrs B. Mwelase; and
- my siblings, for supporting me during this challenging process of furthering my studies.

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- my brother, Mr Sithembiso Mwelase, for his support during this work;
- my kids, Mnqobi Buthelezi, Mhlengi Buthelezi and Zanokuhle Sangweni;
- my niece, Yandisa Mwelase;
- the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Basic Education, especially Ingwavuma Circuit, for allowing me to conduct the study in the area;
- principals of the five selected rural schools where the study was conducted;
- my aunt, Ms Banelile Mwelase, for her prayers and spiritual and moral support; and
- ultimately, I would like to thank the Almighty God who strengthened me with courage throughout this research study.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of principals in implementing the school-improvement programme in rural secondary schools and in improving the quality of education. This study investigates the experiences of principals in both high-performing and under-performing rural secondary schools with regard to the implementation of the school-improvement programme in these schools. The literature study/review presented an exploration of theories, programmes, management, leadership and parental participation. Many historically disadvantaged rural schools in South Africa have found educational changes to be more challenging than affluent schools and have also struggled to maintain such changes. The SGB comprises the principal, teachers, non-teaching staff, parents and learners of secondary schools. However, the majority of members on the SGB should be parents. To deal with the complex financial issues and tasks brought on by decentralised school governance and management, SGB members should develop a wide range of knowledge, skills and capacity. In the case of rural schools, governance structures usually comprise people who have limited knowledge and skills to effectively govern schools (Pierre & Mestry, 2019).

The theoretical frameworks that informed this study were Epstein's theories of overlapping sphere and her typology of parental involvement. These frameworks emerging from the review of literature provided an expressive perspective for the interpretation of data and recommendations in the final chapter of the study. The study used a qualitative methodology approach with a case-study research design. This was deemed appropriate, as data was collected through the medium of semi-structured individual and focus-group interviews with five participants, and data is analysed using content analysis. The findings revealed that in most schools there were not many strategies in place to implement school improvement. In addition, the findings of this study indicate a limited utilisation of teachers' professional development, action research, and school development planning as techniques within school initiatives for enhancing school improvement.

The study recommended that the secondary school leadership and management teams, educators, pupils, parents, and the general community must take action on these issues, which include possibilities as well as obstacles.

KEYWORDS: School improvement, parental involvement, communication, rural schools, leadership, total quality management

Kakaretso

Maikaelelo a thutopatlisiso eno e ne e le go sekaseka maitemogelo a ditlhogo tsa sekolo mo go tsenyeng tirisong lenaane la tlhabololo ya dikolo mo dikolong tsa sekontari tsa magae le mo go tokafatseng boleng jwa thuto. Phuputso ena e batlisisa liphihlelo tsa baokameli likolong tse mahareng tsa mahaeng tse sa sebetseng hantle le tse sa sebetseng hantle mabapi le ho kengoa tšebetsong ha lenaneo la ntlafatso ea likolo likolong tsena. Boithuto ba lingoliloeng/tlhahlobo e hlahisitse tlhahlobo ea likhopolo, mananeo, tsamaiso, boetapele le ho kenya letsoho ha batsoali. Likolo tse ngata tsa mahaeng tse neng li futsanehile historing tsa Afrika Boroa li fumane liphetoho tsa thuto e le phephetso ho feta likolo tse ruileng ’me li boetse li sokola ho boloka liphetoho tse joalo. SGB e na le mosuoe-hlooho, matichere, basebetsi bao e seng baruti, batsoali le baithuti ba likolo tse mahareng. Leha ho le joalo, boholo ba litho tsa SGB e lokela ho ba batsoali. Ho sebetsana le litaba tse rarahaneng tsa lichelete le mesebetsi e tlisoang ke taolo le taolo ea likolo tse arotsoeng, litho tsa SGB li lokela ho hlahisa mefuta e mengata e fapaneng ea tsebo, litsebo le bokhoni. Tabeng ea likolo tsa mahaeng, mekhatlo ea puso hangata e kenyelletsa batho ba nang le tsebo le tsebo e fokolang ea ho laola likolo ka katleho (Pierre & Mestry, 2019).

Mekhahlelo ea khopolo-taba e tsebisitseng thuto ena e ne e le likhopolo tsa Epstein tsa sebaka se pota-potileng le mofuta oa hae oa ho kenya letsoho ha batsoali. Merero ena e hlahang tlhahlobisong ea lingoliloeng e fane ka pono e hlakileng bakeng sa tlhaloso ea lintlha le likhothaletso khaolong ea ho qetela ea thuto. Phuputso e sebelisitse mokhoa oa boleng ba mokhoa o nang le moralo oa lipatlisiso tsa boithuto. Sena se ile sa nkoa se nepahetse, kaha lintlha li ile tsa bokelloa ka lipuisano tsa batho ka bomong le lihlopha tse tsepamisisang maikutlo le barupeluoa ba bahlano, 'me boitsebiso bo hlahlojoa ho sebelisoa tlhahlobo ea litaba. Liphuputso li senotse hore likolong tse ngata ho ne ho se na maano a mangata a teng a ho phethahatsa ntlafatso ea sekolo. Ho feta moo, liphuputso tsa phuputso ena li bonts'a tšebeliso e fokolang ea nts'etsopele ea profeshenale ea matichere, lipatlisiso tsa ts'ebetso, le moralo oa nts'etsopele ea sekolo e le mekhoa ea boikitlaetso ba sekolo bakeng sa ho ntlafatsa ntlafatso ea sekolo.

Boithuto bona bo khothalelitse hore lihlopha tsa boetapele le botsamaisi ba likolo tse mahareng, barupeli, bana, batsoali le sechaba ka kakaretso ba nke khato litabeng tsena, tse kenyeletsang menyetla le litšitiso.

MANTSOE A BOHLOKOA: Ntlafatso ea sekolo, ho kenya letsoho ha batsoali, puisano, likolo tsa mahaeng, boetapele, tsamaiso ea boleng bo felletseng

Okufingqiwe

Inhloso yalolu cwaningo bekuwukuhlola amava othishanhloko ekuqaliseni uhlelo lokuthuthukisa izikole ezikoleni zamabanga aphezulu zasemakhaya kanye nasekuthuthukiseni izinga lemfundo. Lolu cwaningo luphenya ngamava othishanhloko kuzo zombili izikole zasemakhaya ezingenzi kahle nezingenzi kahle mayelana nokuqaliswa kohlelo lokuthuthukisa izikole kulezi zikole. Ucwaningo/ukubuyekezwa kwemibhalo yethule ukuhlola kwemibono, izinhlelo, abaphathi, ubuholi kanye nokubamba iqhaza kwabazali. Izikole eziningi zasemakhaya ebezincishwe amathuba phambilini eNingizimu Afrika zithole ukuthi izinguquko zemfundo ziyinselele kunezikole ezidla izambane likapondo futhi zithwale kanzima ukugcina lolu shintsho. I-SGB ihlanganisa uthishanhloko, othisha, abasebenzi abangafundisi, abazali nabafundi bezikole zamabanga aphezulu. Nokho, iningi lamalungu ku-SGB kufanele kube abazali. Ukubhekana nezinkinga zezezimali eziyinkimbinkimbi kanye nemisebenzi elethwa ukubusa nokuphathwa kwezikole, amalungu e-SGB kufanele athuthukise ulwazi olubanzi, amakhono kanye namandla. Endabeni yezikole zasemakhaya, izinhlaka zokubusa ngokuvamile zihlanganisa abantu abanolwazi olulinganiselwe namakhono okuphatha izikole ngempumelelo (Pierre & Mestry, 2019).

Izinhlaka zetiyori ezazisa lolu cwaningo kwakuyithiyori ka-Epstein ye-sphere eyeqanayo kanye nohlobo lwakhe lokubandakanyeka kwabazali. Lezi zinhlaka ezivela ekubuyekezweni kwezincwadi zinikeze umbono ocacile wokuchazwa kwedatha nezincomo esahlukweni sokugcina socwaningo. Ucwaningo lusebenzise indlela yekhwalithethivu enomklamo wocwaningo lwecala. Lokhu kubonwe kufaneleka, njengoba idatha yaqoqwa kusetshenziswa inhlolokhono yomuntu ngamunye engahlelekile neyeqembu okugxilwe kuyo nabahlanganyeli abahlanu, futhi idatha ihlaziywa kusetshenziswa ukuhlaziya okuqukethwe. Okutholakele kuveze ukuthi ezikoleni eziningi awekho maningi amaqhinga akhona okuthuthukisa izikole. Ukwengeza, okutholwe kulolu cwaningo kubonisa ukusetshenziswa okulinganiselwe kokuthuthukiswa kochwepheshe kothisha, ucwaningo lwezenzo, kanye nokuhlelwa kokuthuthukiswa kwesikole njengamasu phakathi kwezinhlelo zesikole zokuthuthukisa ukuthuthukiswa kwesikole.

Lolu cwaningo luncome ukuthi ubuholi nabaphathi bezikole zamabanga aphezulu, othisha, abafundi, abazali kanye nomphakathi jikelele kumele bathathe izinyathelo ngalezi zinkinga, ezihlanganisa okungenzeka kanjalo nezithiyo.

AMAZWI ANGUKHIYE: Ukuthuthukiswa kwesikole, ukuzibandakanya kwabazali, ukuxhumana, izikole zasemakhaya, ubuholi, ukuphathwa kwekhwalithi isiyonke

ACRONYMS

ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements
CPTD	Continuing Professional Teacher Development
DoE	Department of Education
MSS 1	Mdladla Secondary School
MSS 2	Msiyane Secondary School
HSS	Hhoye Secondary School
ISS	Isiphosethu Secondary School
JSS	Jevu Secondary School
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Materials
QMS	Quality Management System
PF	Policies and Financial
SACE	South African Council of Educators
SAPS	South African Police Services
SASAMS	South African Administration and Management System
SGB	School Governing Body
SIC	School-Improvement Committee
SIP	School-Improvement Programme
SMT	School Management Team
TQM	Total Quality Management

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to ensure that schools are effective in delivering quality education for all their learners, it is vital that an improvement plan be implemented. It appears that the value of a school-improvement plan to develop a culture of teaching and learning is not considered important by many schools, particularly by low and under-performing schools (Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosogo & Ngcobo, 2008). This study aims to examine the experiences of principals in implementing the school-improvement programme in rural secondary schools and to improve the quality of education.

The Education Commission (2000:6) explains that a school improvement plan is a road map that sets out the changes a school needs to make to improve the level of student achievement and shows how and when these changes will be made‖. School improvement, which is dependent on the commitment of teachers, learners and principals in the school (Scheerens 2004:4), is seen as ongoing, where schools strive to achieve high levels of efficiency and effectiveness in learner achievement.

At the centre of school improvement is a framework which will assist schools in achieving their goals. In developing countries, quality education is vital in order to ensure that education provides the foundation for equity in society and to prepare individuals for the workplace and their place in society. School leadership, educators and other partners are the individuals who are required to deliver high-quality education in order to upgrade learners' accomplishments (Bush, 2008:8-9; Ministry of Education, 2008:4).

The aim of school improvement is to impact on the relationship between the learning and teaching development and the conditions that support it.

There are five stages of school improvement:

i. The purpose of the primary stage is to focus on the collective elements that improve the work of those in authority.

ii. The second phase focuses on the impact of the way that educational techniques advanced during the late 90s.

iii. The third phase refers to the late 1970s and the early 2000s when schools utilised the procedure of self-evaluation as a response to the growing mandate for school responsibility.

iv. The fourth stage emphasises that learning does not only centre on the school but also on the community and that educators should collaborate with community members to broaden the school's framework.

v. The last phase is concerned with the spread of information to make it more inclusive and to accomplish systematic school change at a higher level. The aim is to combine these variables in several ways in an inventive cluster to drive change in a framework that is diverse, and to organise their movement along the execution cycle (Hopkins, 1985:7).

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The researcher's interest in school improvement has developed with years of teaching in a number of public schools in KwaZulu-Natal. As an educator, learner performance is an important matter. Each school has a distinctive way to figure out its destination, depending on the design and implementation of policies, and the school culture affects the teaching and learning process and the strategies that are applied.

In the UMkhanyakude district of the Ingwavuma circuit, secondary schools have been challenged with regard to the quality of education and the poor results of the learners. Some of the factors include the lack of a good learning environment, leadership and management skills, and inadequate qualifications of teachers. The challenges of teaching in rural schools in South Africa are often not addressed by policymakers and others. If these challenges are not attended to as a matter of urgency, there is little that the country can do to alter the overall educational landscape (Pierre & Mestry, 2019). The quality of teaching in rural schools may be poorer than in urban areas (Pierre & Mestry, 2019). In addition, learners are not supported by parents or guardians, and there tends to be poor community association. Schools are challenged by the ineffective implementation and use of the school-improvement programme in rural areas, and these challenges seem to relate to the school's authority and administration, the school environment, teaching and learning, and community interest. Rural

societies in developing countries are organised in such a way that the successful implementation of policies or programmes is dependent on the involvement and participation of the community. The government should therefore involve communities in teaching and the improvement of schools. Active members of the community must be elected as members of school governing bodies where they would be in a position to monitor teaching and detect the possible deterioration of school facilities (Pierre & Mestry, 2019). According to Pierre and Mestry (2019), community support for rural schools, such as the provision of school buildings and other infrastructure, can assist in creating an empowering environment that promotes quality teaching and learning in rural schools.

This study investigates the experiences of principals in both high-performing and underperforming rural secondary schools with regard to their implementation of the school-improvement programme in the UMkhanyakude district of the Ingwavuma circuit. Curriculum delivery is vital to ensure a school environment that is conducive to learning, but it is dependent on school leadership and management, the quality of the teachers and the community's involvement.

According to Avalos (2011:10) and Doherty (2020), a fundamental aspect of enhancing schools is in recognising that professional development is centred on the learning of teachers. This learning includes acquiring the skills to study effectively and using their knowledge in practice to facilitate the progress of their pupils. These phenomena manifest within specific educational policy contexts or school cultures, with varying degrees of appropriateness and effectiveness in promoting learning outcomes. In a global context of teacher shortages and growing teacher attrition, teacher professional development is inextricably linked to teacher burnout and mental health. Needless to say, studying, while also working full-time, adds to an already heavy workload; thus, novice teachers experience burnout at higher levels than experienced teachers (Symeonidis et al., 2023).

Although much research indicates that teacher learning ultimately leads to increased learner achievement, over the past years the matriculation results have revealed very little improvement in learner achievement, as evidenced in Figure 1.1 below.

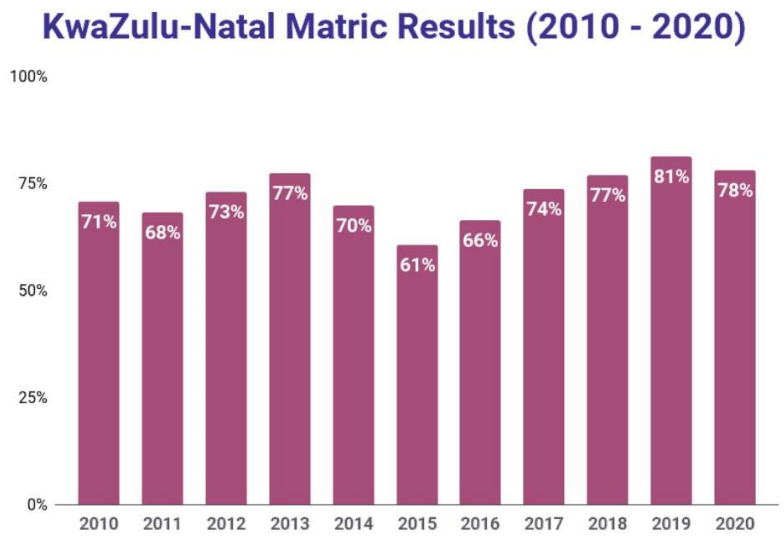

Figure: 1.1 (Researcher, 2023)

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

School-improvement programmes are primarily the obligation of the school authority and administration. School-improvement programmes need to be well planned and successful if they are to achieve their goals.

Rural areas in South Africa are striving to achieve a status of middle-level income. Public schools in rural areas are categorised by various factors that negatively impact on the provision of quality education. Rural areas are generally remote and relatively underdeveloped. As a result, many schools lack the necessary physical resources and basic infrastructure for sanitation, water, roads, transport, electricity and information and communication technology. The low socio-economic status of parents in rural areas places learners at a disadvantage. Due to financial constraints, provincial governments are unable to provide rural schools with the necessary financial support to contribute to providing learners with quality education. Moreover, educational authorities are not able to provide schools with much needed physical and human resources, which places a severe burden on parents who are then required to supply the necessities such as stationery and cleaning materials themselves. Parents in rural South Africa mostly do menial work, have a lower level of education, and usually do not attach much value to schooling. As such, these parents cannot afford additional items that teachers require, which impacts negatively on teaching and learning in these schools (Pierre & Mestry, 2019).

These challenges resulted in dissatisfaction and criticism from stakeholders, and educators put forward suggestions and recommendation for change at national level in the education system. This condition in turn calls for reform or improvement at school level (Melese & Tadege, 2019).

To implement and actualise the school-improvement programme effectively, school leadership and management need relevant information, skills and adequate experience in the various areas of school improvement. To examine and describe the implementation of the school improvement programme in rural schools Quality Management was employed in this study. It also describes how role-players within the school community interact with each other to achieve the intended objectives of the school-improvement programme. TQM was used because it enabled the researcher to study the interaction of the building blocks of TQM to achieve the intended objectives of the school-improvement programme (Melese & Tadege, 2019). It is vital for the school principal to have administrative skills that include a vision of scholastic victory for all learners; making a climate conducive to education; developing administration skills in others; making strides with effective teaching and learning; and overseeing individuals, information, and forms that encourage school improvement. These components can be considered as the essence of school administration that ensures execution and efficiency (Naidoo, 2005:26).

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study will be guided by the following main research question:

What are the experiences of principals in implementation of the school improvement programmes in secondary schools?

This research question has necessitated the formulation of the following sub-questions:

1. What is the role that principals play in the school-improvement programme?
2. To what extent do school principals contribute to the implementation of the school-improvement programme in secondary schools?
3. Which strategies can be used by school principals in implementing the school improvement programme?

4. How effective is the implementation of the school-improvement programme in improving teaching and learning in secondary schools?

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research study aims to explore the experiences of principals in implementing the school improvement programme in rural secondary schools.

The objectives of this study are to:

- explore the role of the school principal in implementing school-improvement programme;
- identify the extent to which principals contribute to the school-improvement programme in secondary schools;
- examine strategies implemented by school principals in school-improvement programmes
- determine the effectiveness of the school improvement programme in improving teaching and learning in secondary schools

1.6 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study could assist in investigating and identifying the experiences of principals in implementing the school-improvement programme in rural secondary schools, with regard to teaching and learning, which involves teachers, parents and other stakeholders in their attempts to improve the quality of education. The study could also offer possible solutions that could contribute to a more effective implementation and administration of the school-improvement programme. The findings from the study could help policymakers at the Department of Education (DoE) consider the revision of the school improvement plan to ensure effective implementation in schools, particularly those in rural areas where it could help those schools to improve learners' performance. Finally, the findings of this study could serve as a foundation for further in-depth research within the field of school improvement.

The literature reviewed in this study and other ideas discussed in the study may add additional literature and can be used as a resource material for other researchers who want to conduct further research in the field of school improvement in particular and education in general.

That is, it contributes to adding the information which enables us to understand different concepts discussed in the study related to school improvement. In addition, this study can increase conceptual knowledge and research knowledge and can contribute to the academic world. In general, the findings of this study may use as a stepping stone for other researchers who are interested to investigate further the implementation of school improvement.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

The process of literature review involves the identification and retrieval of information from relevant books, journals, and indexed publications pertaining to a specific subject matter. This entails a careful selection of literature to be incorporated into the review, followed by a comprehensive summary of the findings in a written report (Creswell, 2012:9). A literature review portrays the research and data on the subject of the inquiry, where data is drawn from conference papers, journals, books and government archives (Creswell, 2012:80).

According to Gallo's (2020) study, the educational landscape in rural schools of South Africa continues to be influenced by the enduring impact of apartheid policies, including the integration of the educational system into the Bantu Education Department. The historical and ongoing impact of Bantu Education in South Africa has resulted in the denial of decent education to a significant number of black South Africans, consequently depriving them of career prospects and other social opportunities. Therefore, it is imperative that educational institutions catering to black students in rural regions develop and execute a comprehensive strategy for enhancing their schools in order to guarantee the provision of high-quality education to their students.

The present literature study is structured according to the subsequent subtopics: the efficacy of the school improvement programme; the involvement of school principals and their impact on school effectiveness; techniques for enhancing school improvement; and the significance of parental engagement.

1.7.1 School effectiveness and improvement

School effectiveness is characterised by the process in which the school has fulfilled its objective. Effective school improvement is about change that is driven by a commitment to increase the learning outcome of every learner. School improvement needs a supportive environment to establish a relationship and develop trust among stakeholders of the school-improvement programme (MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001:9; Moreda, 2022:45). School

effectiveness is defined as school adequacy, which guarantees that learners accomplish results and that school improvement create better conditions so that learners may accomplish the outcomes that are anticipated. School improvement also involves enhancing school viability, allowing schools to undergo a process that facilitates the achievement of their goals. There is an interrelationship between school improvement and change. In schools, change plays an important role; if schools adapt their internal environment in response to change, it can in turn lead to overall school improvement. (Harris, 2005:2; Moreda, 2022:15; Teddlie & Reynolds: 2000:23).

The studies that report on school effectiveness refer to the execution of a school-improvement plan being coordinated through a method with associated targets. Schools should create favourable conditions for learners to learn and attain their required achievements by enhancing the capacity of their teachers in planning, delivering and assessing the lesson (MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001:5; Moreda, 2022). Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrich and West (2012), and Moreda (2022) state that school improvement can change the purpose of a school and can create an environment in which students can achieve their best accomplishments, both in their schools and in their communities. Students will learn in a favourable and conducive environment. School improvement may be reduced in a setting where the schools do not deal with the complex circumstances that are experienced inside the schools or between schools and outside the school environment. “Conducive environment” in this context means a favourable physical environment, like a classroom with adequate lighting, seating arrangements, ventilation, and a positive school culture and climate. Schools, which are considered successful, focus on aspects, such as forms of leadership, teaching and learning, and their commitment to continuous professional development (Harris & Muijs, 2005:132, Moreda 2022:28).

Schools ought to focus on teaching and learning to move learners forward to meet the learning outcomes. Schools that perform well demonstrate how they are led and managed by qualified and experienced principals and their management teams, and to what extent they are supported by other stakeholders, such as parents and the community. Schools are effective where good teaching and learning processes are adopted, where there is a good work ethic among all school community members and when learners are supported with the necessary knowledge and skills to develop their potential. (Hajnal, Walker & Sackney, 1998, Moreda 2022;35).

1.7.2 The role of school principals in school improvement

Principal plays a crucial role in the implementation of school-improvement programmes. Principals should be involved with certain functions that are vital in school improvement, and these include managing the school as an organisation, managing the human resources, overseeing assets, both financial and physical, developing and empowering themselves and others, and shaping the direction and development of their schools (DoE, 2015; Taole: 2022).

A principal who engages with a school-improvement plan involves the staff and stakeholders to ensure the school's learning enhancement that centres on objectives for students' advancement. The principal guarantees that learning is at the centre of school life. This indicates that a school should encourage the advancement and execution of the school-improvement programme to ensure teachers' competencies, which will then assist in focusing on the teaching and learning process that centres on learner performance and improved learner outcomes.

Principals, as the school authority, have been portrayed as the interface between all stakeholders (Bolman & Bargain, 2003). Principals are the perfect multitaskers that are required to take on numerous tasks, which range from administration of the day-to-day schedules to working with staff and guardians to actualise a shared vision.

Principals also need to ensure that their teachers are competent in their subject areas and proficient in the classroom. This is assisted by continuous professional development, where learning results in change with regard to information, abilities, demeanour, convictions, or methodologies and strategies (Mitchell, 2013). Professional development ensures that teachers continuously upgrade their knowledge and skills, particularly their subject-content knowledge, their teaching strategies and techniques, and their reflection on which skills are necessary to ensure career development (Craig, Kraft & Plessis, cited in Length Projects, 1998; Mizell, 2010). Teachers also need to improve their classroom practices. Teachers, according to Rogers (2008), should reflect on who they are, that is, their identity, to see if they are willing to learn. Professional development can occur in different ways: learning can take place through acquiring knowledge independently or by participating in activities, and through sociocultural involvement.

1.7.3 Contribution of school principals

Schools, as organisations, require solid administration for ideal viability (Luncenburg, 2001:1; Mored, 2022:133). The principal has the obligation of managing and overseeing the school and is responsible to the Department, the School Governing Body (SGB), and the school community. Luncenburg (2001:5) and Mored (2022:133) explains that the principal's role includes leading the organisation, managing and securing accountability, shaping the directions and development, and developing and empowering others. School principals also ensure the availability of a favourable learning and teaching environment; they keep parents of learners updated on the learning capacity and academic results of their children, closely monitor the learning and teaching activities in the school through classroom observations, take appropriate corrective measures regarding defective issues, and they assist parents. They further organise short-term training initiatives and programmes of experience sharing for teachers and the school community on matters vital for school improvement, at a convenient time for teachers and the school community. It is also expected of principals to study and assess the academic results of learners in terms of their grade, sex, family income, and submit quarterly written reports to parents.

Principals should work with the SGB and the School Management Team (SMT), as well as with other stakeholders within the school community, to actualise a shared vision and to ensure the schools' on-going improvement. The SMT takes on an administrator role within the operation of a school.

The principal must also oversee the human assets and make decisions on staffing. To ensure that the environment of the school is empowered, all vacant posts need to be filled with a reasonable assignment of workload among teachers. The principal ought to ensure that staff adhere to conditions of service within the school. Principals are regarded as curriculum leaders and have critical roles to play in the success of the school. However, school principals experience a myriad of complex challenges in the execution of their roles and responsibilities. It is the principal's obligation to ensure that direction is given for work-related issues, to ensure that all aspects of administering and managing the school are complied with (DBE, 2015; Taole: 2022).

In addition, the principal is responsible for putting in place plans that ensure continuous improvement of academic achievement by overseeing and assessing the educational modules;

by doing this, the quality of instructing and learning will be guaranteed (DBE, 2015; Taole: 2022). Control remains a fundamental component for the principal because it has to do with the evaluation and assessment of assignments. (Mooney & Mausbach, 2008:83.) Thus, the core purposes of the principals are driving teaching and learning within the school, ensuring the improvement of the school, and overseeing the quality of educating and learning (DBE, 2015). In addition, principals are responsible for ensuring that school objectives, concerning school advancement, are met inside the endorsement period (Marishane, 2013:23).

For school improvement to ensure the development of the culture of teaching and learning, principals, teachers, learners and parents ought to be committed to the method of change, which reflects on changing their own practices. The most perfect way to do this is to create a solid drive within the school and within the administration and authority of the school.

1.7.4 School-improvement strategies

A school must set clear objectives for school improvement. Proposals for improvement need to be developed with clear, suitable objectives. This may be challenging for some schools since objectives may be demanding and difficult to attain. School improvement incorporates finding ways to fortify the administration and the administration capacities of those working in schools to guarantee that learners are given opportunity to access quality education. School improvement could incorporate a change in teaching and learning. School enhancement implies connecting the school's inner structures, procedures, capacities and forms in a coherent way to progress particular goals (Marishane & Botha, 2011:11). There are numerous ways to enhance educational institutions; nonetheless, it is fundamentally important to consider various perspectives.

1.7.5 Parental involvement

Parent involvement entails cooperation with the school. When parents are involved in a school organisation, it is defined as an organisational culture with their input being needed for school development. Parents can become involved in numerous activities. They assist in the development of the philosophy of the school, the mission and the goals of the school, and also contribute to the design of the school uniform, the school buildings and the grounds, and the development of academic and extracurricular activities. They can volunteer to assist with school activities or with work in the classroom.

According to Epstein (2001, 2002), and Aierbe Barandiaran, Bartau Rojas and Oregui González (2023), there are multiple justifications for establishing and fostering a connection between the educational institution and the family and community. The primary purpose of this association is to support their offspring in achieving academic success. When educational institutions collaborate with parents and guardians to facilitate learning, there is an increased likelihood of children being successful, not only inside the academic realm, but also in their future endeavours. Both parents and teachers have a crucial role to play in facilitating the academic achievement of pupils. The lack of parental involvement has been marked as a key problem that often results in poor performance of learners in school. Parental inclusion is most viable when it is seen as an association between teachers and parents, and there are extraordinary benefits from parent-teacher collaboration. In the home learning environment, greater parental involvement correlates with a positive impact on academic performance. Reading skills improve considerably when parents and children read together at home. Reading aloud with a child makes a significant difference to the child's ability to communicate.

Parental involvement in their children's learning is emphatically related to accomplishment. Parents' failure to contribute to their children's education has resulted in poor learner outcomes. Learners from poor or low-class families attend school with little support from parents in comparison with the middle-class counterparts, who put more effort into the education of their children (Fouche & Strydom, 2013). The issue is that most parents in rural areas do not involve themselves in their children's education. Parents and guardians in rural schools tend not to attend school meetings about their children. When parents or guardians are called to school by the teacher to talk about the progress of their children, they do not often come. Communication between home and school in rural areas is not successful. It seems that rural schools are, for the most part, not as able as urban schools to create a relationship with parents that would empower learners to perform well.

1.8 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

A theoretical framework is a blueprint for researchers and serves as the guide to clarify a definite theory during their study; it intends to verify or prove that the theory is true or false (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The theoretical framework will influence researchers on how they draft their research, how they collect the data, and how they analyse the data (Bertram &

Christiansen, 2017.) Research has a particular area of focus, and this area is framed by certain ideas. This study is framed by Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influences, and the Total Quality Management Model (TQM) was chosen for this study.

1.8.1 Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres

This study used Epstein's model of school, family and community partnership, which is called the overlapping spheres of influences. The theory of overlapping spheres highlights six types of involvement-parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. This model consists of an outside and an inside structure. The focus of this study will be on an outside structure that perceives the three most vital components for children to be the school, the family and the community, but the focus was predominantly on the school and the family. Collaboration, communication and decision-making are the aspects which are more relevant to this study. Epstein's theory was suitable for this study because it encourages a close partnership between teachers and parents in school and it is also in line with the provision of the Employment of Educators Act, 1998 (Act No. 76 of 1998).

Deslandes (2019) proposes an integrating model, an extension of which includes parental motivational processes and the school system, as well as personal, family and educational characteristics, school-family collaboration and personal factors associated with the youngest students. This is a tool aimed at the main stakeholders so that they can reflect on and improve family-school collaboration in addition to supporting research analysing factors and processes involved in development and improvement. In this context, there is a call for evaluating communication skills between teachers and families. The use of simulation pedagogy is recommended to enhance communication with families, and interprofessional collaboration is promoted to foster a strong partnership between families and schools (Aierbe Barandiaran, Bartau Rojas & Oregui González, E.2023).

The school must involve parents in issues that affect the education of their children. Through this model, when school principals work together with parents, they will be able to understand the community and the different types of parents with whom they interact, and this will make it easier for them to understand the background of the learners.

Total Quality Management is an integrative philosophy of management for continuously improving the quality of products and processes. TQM involves the organisation's long term

commitment to the continuous improvement of quality throughout the organisation and with the active participation of all members at all levels to meet and exceed customers' expectations (Moreda, 2022). To examine the implementation of school-improvement programmes in secondary schools, the TQM model was chosen as it allowed for the study of the interaction of the elements of the school-improvement programmes. It also enables school leadership to properly plan the implementation of school-improvement programmes aimed at increasing learners' achievement. In addition, TQM is a systematic approach designed to enhance performance, it helps to forecast mistakes that hinder the proper implementation of the school-improvement plan. As a result, it can influence the leadership and management of schools in a positive way (Moreda, 2022).

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

1.9.1 Research paradigm

The use of a research paradigm could be a way of looking at phenomena around the world and a way of working with correct scientific knowledge of an accepted mode. It is also a "shared belief system" the sharing of the belief of another person about the community; a way of seeking information, what issues have to be explored, and how to explore them (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018:8). A research paradigm is not essentially about technique, but it is about ways of looking at the world with the distinctive presumptions about what the world is seen to be like, and about how the researcher will be able to get around it (Cohen et al., 2018:8.) In the research paradigm, researchers employ this outline for their reference to observe and understand life. I will make use of the interpretative paradigm in my study to understand the subjective world of human experience. This approach will allow me to get into the heads of the participants in the study. (De Vos et al, 2005:261; Maree, 2007:31; Kruger, 2021). Positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism were employed. Interpretivists are more inclined to give preference to a qualitative approach. The ontological issues are related to the nature of reality and its characteristics. When researchers implement qualitative research, they are accepting the notion of several realities. Different researchers accept different realities, as do the participants who participate in research studies research studies (Lather, 2004; Kruger, 2021)

This study uses a social-constructivist interpretivist's approach to understand principals' experiences in the Ingwavuma circuit with regard to school development activities. The interpretivist position accepts that different substances do exist, but they defectively influence

people who encounter the world from the point of view of their possessions and develop their substances accordingly (Bring Forth, 2002: 15; Henning et al, 2004:20).

Hammersley (2013) states that constructivism requires the researcher to focus on the process that leads to constructivism and that has given character to independent objects. Social constructivism conveys viable rules for ways to understand it and to oversee the setting of numerous points of view and differences. Social constructionism maintains that people look to create meaning out of their social lives, and an analyst needs to look at the circumstances through numerous perspectives (Cohen et al*.,* 2018:23). Constructivists see information as a great method of creating meaning through communication with members, in order to convey that meaning that it has in their social and verifiable setting to others (Plants, Bonner & Francis, 2006:2). Constructivism accepts that social on-screen characters create social reality through interaction. Constructivists consider that they can alter their understanding and supposition, and almost their social reality, through interaction (Eriksson & Kovalaine, 2016:15). Constructivist analysts do not just address the method of interaction among people, but they also concentrate on the particular setting in which individuals live, and they work toward making it the social and verifiable background for their constructivist members (Creswell, 2014:8).

By taking part in the investigation process and working together from a constructivist point of view, participants make sense of what they see and learn more about the school improvement programme is still most effective. The study will pay close attention to what people say or do in their everyday lives. The focus will be on different points of view rather than on one true point of view. This will help solve some of the problems that come up when people take a special, non-conformist approach. Creswell (2013:24-25) says that the research will rely as much as possible on the variety of the situations in which the participants are met. This is so that the participants' experiences can be interpreted in a personal way. Subjective consequences are "negotiated socially and historically" (Creswell, 2013:25) by working with others to find authentic and social standards that work in people's lives. When looking into a certain problem, the interpretive analyst looks at it from different points of view. The social world of the participants and their different worlds call for different sociological points of view (Tshabangu, 2015:51).

In this research study, participants were interviewed about their encounters to implement school improvement in the Ingawavuma circuit. The study will report comprehensively on the viewpoints of these participants and will decipher their discoveries from their viewpoints (Bakkabulindi, 2015:23) and will attempt to set up their meanings (Creswell, 2014:19). The objective of the investigation is to depend as much as is conceivable on the participants' viewpoints about the circumstances that are being studied (Creswell, 2014:8).

1.9.2 Research approach

There are three research approaches used when conducting research, namely quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods (Creswell, 2003). Within the inquiry, the analysts utilise a strategy in their work of portraying and anticipating the marvels of their findings (Rajasekar et al., 2013:5). These types of methodologies assist researchers to collect data easily and to arrive at key solutions. In this study, a qualitative research approach was used inside the constructivist worldview. Qualitative research is concerned with research problems related to the meaning of persons or groups assigned to a social or human conundrum or experience. Subjective inquiry is concerned with the quality of a specific movement (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006:430; Kruger, 2021). To study these conundrums, researchers use an emergent qualitative approach to do research. The collection of data takes place in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places being studied (Newby, 2010:115; Kruger, 2021: 102). A subjective enquiry is not concerned with how frequently it happens.

According to Leavy (2014:121), the qualitative approach is both methodological and hypothetical. It, moreover, adopts malleable plans in which the technique is changed in order to agree with modern learning as the investigation unfolds. The main aim of the qualitative researcher is to gain deep, clear understanding of the meaning and the feelings of how participants derive meaning from their surroundings, despite the intrigues of what they are asked to consider. It investigates the subjective perspectives of a person or of the groups of people being considered. Subjective inquiry could be a non-numerical descriptive that applies thinking by utilising words, and this suggests that subjective information cannot be graphed (Rajasekar et al., 2013:9, Okeke, 2015: 217).

Qualitative research methodology includes documenting genuine occasions, recording what individuals say with words, motions and tones, watching certain practices, or analysing visual images (Michael et al., 2012:64). McMillan and Schumacher (2010:320) and Phaiphai

(2020) expressed the view that qualitative research starts with suspicions, worldviews, the conceivable utilisation of hypothetical focal points, and the study of issues that investigate the meaning of an individual's support during human problems. If the design adhered to the research objective, it ensured that the principals' needs are attended to and made a justification for the hypotheses or investigation of posed research questions and a detailed presentation of the research steps to be followed in collecting, choosing and analysing data. Furthermore, they argued that quantitative approaches are experimental, descriptive, correctional and *ex post facto* methods of data collection.

The main aim of qualitative research is to understand, describe and discover the problem.
The researcher can describe complex phenomena such as individuals' perceptions. Qualitative research can seek to build an understanding of phenomena. The qualitative research may be a holistic picture with profundity of understanding, instead of a numeric examination of information (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2014:32). Utilising subjective strategies can be successful when deciphering advisers' pondering over investigative issues dealing with the meanings of people or groups that relate to social association, culture, or human conduct (Creswell, 2013:44).

The benefit of qualitative research findings is likely to be generalised to a whole population or sub-population; it involves a large sample which is randomly selected and from which few cases can be delivered. Members have more flexibility to decide what is significant for them and they are able to show it in its setting (Flick, 2015:11). The constructivist paradigm that acknowledges that numerous substances exist incited this consideration to utilise subjective strategies to try to understand the developments that individuals have achieved in those settings (Mertens, 2010:18). The subjective investigative approach empowered this researcher to gain in-depth understanding of the encounters of principals in school-improvement programmes in the Ingwavuma circuit (Martella et al., 2013:325).

According to Creswell (2013:45), the significance of employing a subjective approach is that it permits the analyst to accumulate information in a characteristic setting by talking straightforwardly to individuals and seeing them carry on and act inside their context. The subjective approach will help to enable this thing about to form sense of the information by understanding it inside its broader social setting (Scott & Morrison, 2006:182). The present research study has utilised the collection of information documents watch, conduct and meet

participants, as Creswell states (2013:45); it is common and wide. A researcher needs to anticipate that participants' encounters may be rebellious, and he or she needs to work calmly with the participants to prevent the reason for the inquiry from becoming an issue. This kind of attitude on the part of the researcher can produce the proper, objective findings that are required in order to produce unprejudiced findings in the research study. Through a qualitative approach, the researcher has studied the purpose of the school-improvement programme and could gain a clearer understanding about its common settings that have created deciphered by the meanings that the participants brought forward.

A qualitative approach includes collecting information, presenting this information to common people, allowing the members being interviewed to produce their reactions, gathering content or picture information, and collecting data from a limited number of people or destinations (Newby, 2010:116). Lauer (2006:76) traces the advantage of subjective investigations as giving more emphasis to setting comprehensive quality and less emphasis to confinement and to the examination of the protest that the thinking should be divided into different parts. The subjective approach investigates the normal conduct of common people (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:345). Naturalistic enquiry implies getting information in as common a setting as is conceivable (Newby, 2010:117). Qualitative research is used when there is a 'got to study' group of people who are investigated (Creswell, 2013); in this research there was a need to engage individuals to share their stories and to listen to their voices, and not to control the connections to a particular group of people. In conclusion, as Creswell (2013:48) sees it, subjective investigation is utilised to create hypotheses when existing speculations do not satisfactorily deal with the issue being researched.

The research site for this investigation is the rural schools in the KwaZulu-Natal UMkhanyakude district. The focus is on the experiences of school principals in the implementation of the school-improvement programme in rural schools. The study utilised the process of pondering over cases as an inquiry about whether this technique is pertinent to the research. The researcher has chosen to consider whether each case can make a relevant contribution to the research since it empowers the analyst to focus on the case that is being addressed (Cohen et al., 2018).

1.9.3 Research design

A research design is a coordinated framework that makes specialised choices about the reason for carrying out an efficient and thorough enquiry to address a specific issue that emerges from "a crevice in information" (Creswell 2003:15); that is, a piece of information that was not previously adequately explored. The Leedy (1997:195, Moreda 2022:123) research design provides a system for collecting data the research design includes the plan or strategy to be used by the researcher; to select the participants of the research; method of collecting data to answer the basic questions of the research and method of data analysis to answer the basic question of the problem under study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:6). A research plan may be a technique that indicates the conditions and methods used to collect and dissect data. De Vos et al. (2005:268) and Gray (2009:131) characterise the research plan as the decisions an analyst makes in carefully considering the collection, estimation and examination of information.

The utilisation of a qualitative case is a well-established approach to provide an in-depth investigative technique to conduct a new systematic investigation that will deal with the complexity and uniqueness of a specific venture with regard to such details as which approach, programme, and framework to use in a genuine life setting (Thomas, 2016:10). Ary et al. (2014:32) and Creswell (2012:293) agree that there are numerous, diverse types of subjective investigation plans, but the following eight should be used as often as possible:

i. fundamental interpretative "pondering" or considerations,
ii. a consideration of other relevant cases,
iii. the substance or the fundamental purpose of the investigation,
iv. the ethnography relevant to the case,
v. the grounded, fundamental details of the hypothesis,
vi. the verifiable considerations of the case,
vii. the consideration of the case from its own story or circumstances, and
viii. the phenomenological or structural considerations.

A case study is a technique in which the analyst investigates a programme, an occasion, an action, a personal experience, or the experiences of different people in detail. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and analysts collect point-by-point data, employing an assortment of information-collection procedures over a supported period Creswell (2007). A

case study could be planned because of requests from people in numerous areas and it involves particular assessment.

McMillan and Schumacher (2014:32) characterise a “case ponder” as a qualitative inquiry that involves a detailed examination of a bounded framework, and which utilises sources of information found inside the framework or case. A subjective case must guarantee that the issue is not investigated through one focal point only, but there should be a number of different focal points which allow numerous aspects of the case to be uncovered and understood (Baxter & Jack, 2008:544). The case that is called an outline that provides a boundary (Thomas, 2016:21) may be a fundamental strategy for certain imperative investigative assignments within the social sciences (Flyvbjerg, 2006:241). The present research utilised a case-study design that joins different strategies, such as interviews, perceptions, and experiences to inquire into the benefits of school improvement (Ary et al., 2014:32). This agrees with the statement by Bromley (1990:302) that “case considerations could be an orderly request into a set of related occasions which point to, portray, and clarify the marvel of interest”. Yin (1984: 23) characterises the case study about strategy as an observational enquiry that explores a modern wonder inside its real-life setting when the boundaries between wonder and setting are not clearly apparent and in which different sources of proof are utilised.

A case study discovers circumstances in which the case is being evaluated when there are no clear outcomes. A case study also has the flexibility to delve into and unpack more experiences. Since members in the present study are individuals from the education sector, such as principals, each school constitutes a case study about looking at encounters of school principals in the implementation of the school-improvement programme. If the case study enquires about and focuses on one member, setting, or occasion at a time, the advantage is that it allows for in-depth case examination (Ashley, 2012:102).

1.9.4 Population and site selection

Population refers to the total number of people, groups, or organisations that are used in the study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014:59). The research question about address is connected to the particular people who are being examined. The analyst needs to conclude that the true test of the study is about whether enough cases are included in the study (Creswell, et al., 2007).

It is imperative to be clear on what the study population is before data collection takes place. The population for this study was the school principals.

The research study was conducted in the UMkhanyakude district in the KwaZulu-Natal province. The UMkhanyakude district is situated in the northern parts of KwaZulu-Natal. The two dominant languages are IsiZulu and IsiSwati.

1.9.5 Sampling

Sampling is the selection of a subset of the population of interest in the research study and from whom data is obtained (De Vos et al., 2005:195; Maree, 2007: 79; Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012:79). For this study, purposive sampling was used by choosing five schools from Ingwavuma circuit. This is often regarded as small-scale research with no intentions to generalise the findings, and therefore the selected group represents itself, and not the whole population (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014;). The study was conducted in the Ingwavuma circuit in the UMkhanyakude District (KZN). These schools are among the few schools selected to start implementing the school-improvement programme.

The interviews with the school principals were conducted in this zone. The interview questions asked were based on the school principals' experiences and opportunities in driving and managing their schools' improvement programmes.

1.10 DATA-COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

Semi-structured interviews, observations, focus-group interviews, observation and document analysis were used to collect data. Data was analysed and interpreted to create meaning (Creswell, 2009; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

The researcher also gathered data through field work during visits to the relevant schools and gathered information from participant observers where possible and when needed.

1.10.1 Semi-structured interviews

According to Bertram & Christiansen (2014:80), an interview could be a discussion between the analyst and the respondent, and according to De Marrais (2004:54), it could be a discussion between the analyst and the respondent that is based on questions related to the study. The research methodology employed in this study involved the utilisation of semi-

structured face-to-face interviews as a means of gathering data from principals whose schools were selected to participate in the school-development initiative. The researcher and participants in this study are all affiliated with the education sector. To ensure that the interviews do not interfere with instructional and learning activities, careful measures were taken. Consequently, the interviews were scheduled to take place after regular school hours. The primary objective of conducting interviews is to obtain first-hand data directly from the participants. The utilisation of interviews as a research tool enables researchers to access unique information that is held within the cognitive processes of the interviewees (Merriam, 1998). The utilisation of semi-structured interviews facilitated the acquisition of responses pertaining to the study inquiries.

The interviews were soundly recorded, transcribed and examined, and the researcher utilised topical examination. According to Merriam (1998), tape recording permits the questioner to focus on understanding the reactions and to test them, where necessary, and after that, to transcribe them later. By doing this, it guaranteed the quality of the researcher's information.

1.10.2 Document analysis

Document analysis may be the framework of subjective investigation in which the analyst may decipher the voices and meanings of those being interviewed. Examining the recordings of those interviews allows the researcher to join the coding substance into topics that may focus on, may gather, or may meet the transcripts that are examined (Bowen, 2009). The researcher analysed documents, such as the school-improvement plan, school-improvement policies and forms, in order to understand the phenomenon of the school improvement programme. The researcher also requested that some of these documents be made available from the schools or from the circuit or district offices of the Department of Education, if it was not available on websites.

The researcher purposefully selected five high schools from the Ingwavuma circuit in the UMkhanyakude district. The research information was obtained by using the previous results of the school-improvement programme in these schools. The school-improvement programme documents were obtained from the circuit instruction office and examined to analyse the ways in which the principals have actualised the school-improvement programme. This study reports on the schools' change arrangements and their methodologies to make school improvement more focused; the research makes specific reference to the 2010 school-

advancement programme, as well as the school-advancement programme rules arranged at national level, and these will be utilised with reference to the critical changes made within the framework of the auxiliary instruction division improvement programme.

It was expected that the first report examination would give a clear understanding of the components relating to the experiences of principals in the implementation of the school-improvement programme. The analysis of these documents gave an objective method of reasoning for the arrangement and the procedure that detail the exercises that pass the predispositions of the participants.

1.10.3 Data analysis

Qualitative data examination is a continuous and repetitive handling of information collection that entwines investigation and reporting and is not simply a matter of progressive steps. Data analysis is a system for limiting and organising data to get findings that require interpretation by the researcher (Maree, 2007: 99 & Phaiphai, 2020). Subjective substance examination is respected as an efficient method of coding, categorising and deciphering information; according to Bernard & Ryan (2010:109), it supplies clarifications of a single wonder of intrigue, which begins soon after the collection of information, within the conceptualisation of thoughts with respect to the investigative subject. Miles & Huberman (1999:10) characterises information examination as comprising three streams of action: “data lessening, information show, and conclusion drawing and confirmation”. In this study, patterns are created in the data analysis, and concepts that help to explain why those designs are there are also within the patterns. In order to use qualitative data, the researcher needs to be clear at the research design stage about how to analyse the data to be collected. The purpose of analysing data is to be clear, to understand, and to review the plans that are there inside the “to start-with put themes, patterns, and words” (Maree, 2007:101& Phaiphai, 2020)

This research employed conversation analysis to analyse data; this is more helpful since the number of participants will be five, which means five interviews, five recordings and five translations made from the recordings. This analysis depends much more on the designs, structures and dialects utilised within the discourse, and on the words that are used, rather than on other shapes of information examination.

1.10.4 Preparing and organising the data

Qualitative data is collected by using "overlong and need assessment with understanding and reading" (Maree, 2007: 104& Phaiphai, 2020). This researcher used folders and files to gather materials dealing with the same batch of data (Maree, 2007:104& Phaiphai, 2020). First, this researcher transcribed all audio recordings verbatim, and this was done to include non-verbal cues in the transcript. The researcher briefed the participants on how the interview will be transcribed (Maree, 2007:104& Phaiphai, 2020). Then the researcher sorted and typed all the information so that the data is understood (Maree, 2007: 104& Phaiphai, 2020). This included all impressions that the researcher gained from listening to the recordings of the interviews and from the issues or thoughts from the participants in their own words. Once the typing and the sorting has been done, copies of the relevant data were made.

Information about meetings was analysed by gathering the answers of participants who were questioned (Best & Kahn, 2006:270). Information from members and their responses to various questions were arranged and provide information by analysing the members' reactions to distinguish their different textures and contrasts (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003:2). Their different perceptions were separately considered, according to their different settings and circumstances, and this report examination could be utilised to affirm why the members reacted as they did.

1.10.5 Coding the data

According to Maree (2007:105 & Phaiphai, 2020), coding is the process of carefully examining the data, line by line, and categorising it into meaningful analytical units. Coding refers to the process of assigning categorical labels to a substantial amount of selected data as part of data analysis. Multiple code names may be assigned to a specific piece of information in the event that it pertains to various facets of the investigation. Coding refers to the process of decomposing content information into smaller pieces and subsequently engaging in analysis, comparison, conceptualisation and categorisation of the data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2014: 668).

This study aimed to examine the discrete components of the data referred to as 'fragments', which are self-contained units containing a single idea (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:398). The research employed the standard coding approach to identify these fragments.

The interviews were analysed, and the thoughts and practices that appeared to be critical were identified; the aspects of this information that relate to a specific thought and therefore to a separate code were highlighted, and a list of codes were made for all the interviews. This method of coding enabled the researcher to collect content and information that relate to topical thoughts (Maree, 2007:105).

1.10.6 Establishing categories and themes

It is a good practice to write a short description for each category. During the process of data analysis in this study, new or smaller themes were identified and all the coded data labelled, in order to gain greater clarity (Maree, 2007:109). According to McMillan & Schumacher (2014:404), categories and themes represent the main ideas that can be considered in order to describe the meaning of similar coded data.

1.10.7 Analysing and interpreting data

When researchers approach data analysis inductively, it is important to use the source of the data in the process of coding. The present study analysed emerging patterns, associations and concepts when interpreting data findings based on the participants' data, and it provided descriptive summaries of what participants have said or done (Maree, 2007:111). This research reports on and interprets the data findings by using their own contexts. This helped to capture the realities of participants' experiences. Therefore, all findings were categorised by connecting their meaning and importance to the analysis (Maree, 2007: 113).

1.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is a concept used by Guba & Lincoln (1994) for interpretive research; this procedure includes credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

1.11.1 Credibility

According to Trochim and Donnelly (2007:149), credibility entails ensuring that the results of subjective investigations are solid or convincing from the viewpoint of the members within the inquiry. As subjective investigation ponders the discernments, encounters, sentiments and convictions of the individuals, it is accepted that the respondents are the leading judges to decide whether the investigative discoveries have been able to reflect their suppositions and sentiments accurately. To establish the study's credibility, audio-recording equipment were employed to capture interviews in their entirety, thereby ensuring the accuracy of the transcriptions. Additionally, respondents were asked to verify the precision of the transcribed

content, further enhancing its reliability. A person was hired to check the credibility of the study after the completion of the transcripts, in order to set up dependability (Creswell, 2014:283). The interview transcripts were presented to the participants so that they could check and comment on whether they thought the transcripts are an accurate reflection of what they had said (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014:190). The purpose was to confirm the validity of the investigative discoveries by having them confirmed by the participants. Furthermore, they were also checked by the supervisor of the research.

1.11.2 Transferability

Transferability alludes to the degree to which the results of the subjective inquiries can be generalised or exchanged to other settings. In spite of the fact that it may be troublesome to set up transferability because of the approach that is used in qualitative research, transferability could nevertheless be accomplished by broadly and completely depicting the method so that others may adapt to it and duplicate it (Kumar, 2011: 172). To ensure transferability, the researcher provided all information to participants, participating schools, and to their zone administrations; this information included the data-generation methods used and the number of sessions. To address transferability, the background of the sample school and the interview schedule were provided.

1.11.3 Dependability

Dependability is achieved when an analyst can account for the reason why there may be varieties that have to be considered. It is related to whether we would arrive at the same conclusions on the off chance that we may watch the same thing twice (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007:149). To engage in the issues of dependability in this research, triangulation was used. Usually, in a case study, the discoveries cannot be easily summed up. Records were used for all stages of the research process (Becker & Bryman, 2004:253).

1.11.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the conclusions of the research may be affirmed or confirmed by others. Confirmability may be compared to reliability in a quantitative inquiry. It is as if it was conceivable on the off chance that analysts adopt the same method in an indistinguishable way when it is to be compared (Kumar, 2011: 172). In this research, the audio recordings were transcribed and sent to the participants so that they could verify and

confirm that such transcripts indeed represent the content of what transpired during the interview with them. The research supervisor also played a part in the confirmability process.

1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All professions are guided by a code of ethics. The researcher first had to obtain ethical clearance from the UNISA Research and Ethics Committee to carry out this research. The Ingwavuma circuit manager was informed about the scope of the study. Permission from the KZN Department of Education was obtained to conduct the study in all five schools. Also, the schools involved in this study gave their permission to conduct this study. In this study, ethical measurements, such as confidentiality, anonymity, protection, the assent of the educators who are involved, and the intentional cooperation of the participants were adopted.

1.12.1 Confidentiality

It is vital to secure a participant's right to security through the guarantee of privacy. There are, however, circumstances when a researcher may have to account for why there may be various reasons for a lack of privacy, for example, if a researcher has to watch the same visuals or listen to the same recordings on two occasions, rather than just once. It is also important to inform the participants about privacy before they become involved, so that they may be free to choose whether to take part or not (Fraenkel et al., 2012:64; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:134). The researcher ensured that, after the information has been collected, its source cannot be identified.

The principals were informed about the data-collection methods, the timeframe for its completion and their confidentiality as participants. The researcher met with participants to explain the scope of the study, the reason for selecting them as participants, the data-collection materials and the timeframe. The concept of confidentiality was discussed with specific reference to the information shared by members, and they were ensured of the fact that their data was not shared with others, except for the purposes of the enquiry itself (Kumar, 2014: 286). The researcher made it clear that no one will receive the information, except the supervisor.

1.12.2 Anonymity

The point of anonymity is that the data given by participants should not, in any way, reveal their identities or personalities. A participant or subject is, in this manner, considered mysterious when the analyst or another individual cannot distinguish the participant or

subject from the data given. The researcher will guarantee that data given by participants will be kept secret, since it is not trustworthy to reveal the person's or the participant's private data (Kumar, 2014: 61).

1.12.3 Privacy

According to Cohen et al. (2002: 60), the individual data of the members must not uncover by a third party. The researcher made it clear that all participants' data will be kept private.

1.12.4 Informed consent

The term informed consent, refers to the "procedures in which people select whether to take part in an examination after being educated about the actualities that would be likely to impact on their decisions" (Diener & Crandall, 1978). It is the obligation of a researcher to ensure participants are protected from threats by asking for their consent (Cohen et al., 2002:500). Participants in this research were asked to sign consent letters that include the points of interest and the scope of the study and the secrecy clause. The researcher explained to the participants that this study presented no risk or danger to them. The participants were informed that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time if they so desire.

1.12.5 Voluntary participation

The act of engaging in research necessitates the free participation of individuals, hence requiring researchers to strike a delicate balance between effectively recruiting volunteers and refraining from exerting undue pressure on prospective subjects. The individuals included in this research investigation received explicit notification of the voluntary nature of their participation and their entitlement to withdraw from the study at any point, should they choose to do so.

1.13 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Because of Covid 19 regulations, it might have been difficult to meet with the participants. As a full-time Grade 12 teacher, who works many hours, even on weekends, the researcher did not always have enough time to spend with the participants. There was the possibility that a few of the participants might also not be accessible to meet the researcher since they are principals of schools and could have had other commitments. Therefore, the researcher had to be allowed more time when a participant was available; moreover, two other schools have

been included in this research, and there was the possibility that the two principals from these schools were available when the researcher was not. When being interviewed, some participants may not have agreed to be recorded and, therefore, the researcher had to take notes while they were responding during the interviews.

1.14 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In order to evaluate the experiences of school principals in relation to improvement in various areas, it was necessary to delimit the proposed study. These areas include school authority and administration, the teaching and learning process, the school environment, the interests of parents and communities, as well as the assessment of the current implementation of the school reform programme in secondary schools. This assessment considered inputs, processes and outcomes (Maree, 2014: 85).

1.15 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

This study incorporates various concepts, including school improvement, curriculum, family and community involvement, teacher professional development, instructional leadership, administrative zone, and the learning environment and its associated problems. The following definitions provide clarity on these concepts:

- According to Makoelle (2012), **school improvement** refers to the ability of a school to effectively achieve the objectives it has established for itself.
- According to Postholm (2012), **teacher professional development** may be described as the process through which teachers acquire information about their own learning and the ways in which they can effectively apply this knowledge to enhance students' learning outcomes.
- **Instructional leadership** refers to the principal's responsibility to ensure the effective implementation of teaching and learning processes inside the school. The term ‘should’ is associated with the principal's duty to ensure the provision of viable teaching and learning experiences (Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, 1999: 7-8)
- According to UNICEF (2010:23), **parents' and community involvement** refers to a collaborative effort between guardians, community members, and the school, aimed at promoting the success of children and collectively assuming responsibility for enhancing the educational environment.

- The concept of the **learning environment** refers to the physical setting of the educational institution, which significantly influences the behaviours and actions of both educators and students. The school's environment has the potential to provide support in establishing and maintaining a robust educational atmosphere (UNICEF 2010:13)
- The term '**curriculum**' pertains to the prescribed body of knowledge, skills and competencies that a learner is obligated to acquire, engage with, apply and achieve proficiency in. The process involves the deliberation and determination of the content, methodology and timing of educational instruction (DBE, 2012).

1.16 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter One: Overview and the Background of the Study

Chapter one of this research paper presents a comprehensive discussion on the significance of the study, elucidating its purpose and offering an overview of the research. The chapter commences by providing an introduction to the topic, including the background information, problem statement, research problem, research questions, aims and objectives. Additionally, it presents the theoretical framework, a concise summary of the study design process and definitions of key concepts.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter deals with the literature review and the theoretical framework used concerning the school improvement programme.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Research Design

This chapter will discuss in detail how the study is designed and conducted. It also looks at all the steps that were followed in order to investigate the research problem.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Findings, Interpretation and Presentation

This chapter deals with the scope of the analysis. The analysis of data collected is described, and the findings of the research will be discussed.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

The last chapter begins with the outline of the findings that have emerged from the study. It acknowledges the limitations of the study and offers recommendations based on the findings.

1.17 CONCLUSION

This study aims to examine the experiences of school principals in the school-development programme within the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) setting, specifically focusing on the Ingwavuma circuit. The motivation for doing this research was derived from the recent advancements in the field. This study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by addressing the research problem, formulating research questions and objectives, and identifying the constraints and boundaries of the study. The study commenced by conducting an audit of the existing reality surrounding school-enhancement programmes, with the aim of enhancing the quality of education.

2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The adoption of school-improvement initiatives is commonly seen as a strategic measure to ensure the overall excellence of education. The investigator employed a conceptual and theoretical framework throughout the duration of the research. The researcher provides the research instructions, which outline the essential processes to be followed in doing the research. This chapter centres its attention on the examination of relevant literature and the utilisation of a theoretical framework in the context of the school-development programme (SIP). The role of school principals and their influence on school-improvement initiatives, the execution of school-improvement strategies, and the efficacy of the school-improvement programme in enhancing educational outcomes in secondary schools are important components within the domain of school improvement. The principal objective of this technique is to augment student success levels by means of enhancing curriculum delivery, establishing a conducive learning and teaching environment, and fostering active parental engagement in their children's education, both inside the school setting and at home. The final portion of the chapter is on the theoretical frameworks utilised within the setting of this particular inquiry. The utilised framework is that of whole quality management.

2.2 CONCEPTS OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The concept of school improvement can be subject to various definitions and interpretations. School improvement is a process of changing school culture, with the assumption that if the culture of the school becomes positive school improvement can be enhanced. According to this definition, a school is viewed as the centre of change and teachers as the main actors of the change process. In other words, for school improvement to take place it needs teachers' commitment to implement the process of change; involving them in examining and changing their practice. Their practice incorporates those approaches and strategies collectively known as school improvement and rather focuses on changing school culture than structure (Harris, 2002:10-11; Moreda, 2022). The primary objective of education is to cultivate individuals who possess the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively navigate and adapt to the dynamic nature of contemporary society. In essence, the primary objective is to cultivate individuals who possess the capacity to confront obstacles, effectively address issues, exhibit a willingness to take risks, generate employment opportunities, engage in critical analysis, and actively contribute to various spheres of existence (Telli 2013: 2-3). The realisation of the

objective of education can be achieved by the schools' diligent efforts to effectively and efficiently cultivate individuals to become responsible citizens. Hence, in order to effectively achieve their desired objectives, educational institutions must demonstrate adaptability and efficiency. The school-improvement plan promotes the active involvement of administrators, teachers and parents in monitoring the development of learners, as well as other pertinent aspects, such as the school environment, which have been identified as influential elements in the academic achievement of students. When engaging in school-reform efforts, principals prioritise three key areas: curriculum delivery, school atmosphere and parental involvement. The primary emphasis of a school-improvement project is centred on evaluating the overall effectiveness and functionality of the educational institution (Moreda, 2022).

Schools may see frequent changes throughout time. This transformation can be observed through many actions. As an illustration, the rotation of school principals occurs, whereby proficient teachers are elevated to administrative roles that extend beyond the direct facilitation of teaching and learning within the classroom setting. Consequently, those with lower levels of competence will occupy positions that should be filled by those with higher levels of competence. The composition of learners' cohorts is subject to alteration due to changes in residential areas and demographic shifts. Due to the presence of many elements, certain educational institutions encounter challenges in functioning effectively, whereas others are able to maintain their operational efficiency. Consequently, educational institutions face external pressures from both the community and government to enhance their performance. Nevertheless, certain educational institutions face significant challenges in maintaining stability, let alone showcasing any signs of progress. The enhancement of educational institutions has emerged as a prominent aspect of educational reform and has garnered significant attention and acknowledgement on a global scale. The increasing need for enhanced academic outcomes in schools has led to the implementation of many school-reform programmes and initiatives (Harris & Chrispeels, 2009: 1).

Contrary to the aforementioned literature, Dimmock (2012:5-6) asserts that there exists a discrepancy in the expectations of both government and parents, as they anticipate schools to deliver education in a prompt and adaptable manner, with the aim of periodically enhancing learners' educational achievements. The conventional role of schools as a workplace is becoming increasingly incongruous with the demands and expectations of both governmental bodies and parents. The government and parents have expressed a collective expectation for

schools to facilitate the holistic development of each child, ensuring that they are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in an ever-evolving global economy. According to the aforementioned author, there is a growing recognition for the necessity of implementing novel approaches to work. Educational institutions are placing greater emphasis on reconfiguring their procedures, including methodologies, physical spaces, technology and instruments, in order to enhance their efficacy. The successful implementation of a comprehensive organisational model requires the adoption of flattened hierarchical structures, job rotation, self-directed teams, multitasking, and enhanced involvement of the school community in the decision-making process. According to Leithwood, Mascail and Strauss (2009:191), school development is achieved through the execution of various leadership functions. The motivation of educators can be enhanced by the redesign and redefinition of the school's work. The motivation of educators plays a crucial role in enhancing their performance and sustaining the necessary effort to effectively implement school-reform initiatives.

The explanation demonstrates that in order to operate effectively and satisfy the demands of governmental bodies, parents and communities at large, schools need to deviate from conventional methods and embrace transformative measures. In essence, it is imperative for educational institutions to align with the expectations of both governmental bodies and parents through the implementation of comprehensive changes within the education system.

Currently, the enhancement of educational institutions has emerged as a prevailing strategy to instigate transformation inside the global education system. According to Lemessa (2016:50), the desired transformation will be achieved through improving the quality of learning for students and expanding the capabilities of educational institutions. Based on this statement, it can be inferred that in order to increase the quality of student learning and enhance the overall capacity of schools in various areas that contribute to educational quality, the implementation of school-improvement measures is necessary.

School improvement encompasses the collective endeavours undertaken by administrators, teachers, students and families to transition the school from its present state to an optimal one. The shared responsibility of the entire school community is a commonly recognised area of focus. Based on the above explanation, it is suggested that schools should respond to the

current circumstances by implementing appropriate measures, while also emphasising the importance of including the entire community in the school reform project.

According to the citation by Miles et al. (1987: 3) as referenced by Harris (2002:10), the concept of school improvement can be defined as a methodical and continuous endeavour directed towards modifying learning environments and other associated internal factors inside one or multiple educational institutions, with the ultimate objective of achieving educational goals in a more efficient manner. School improvement is supporting learners to maximise their achievement by creating favourable conditions that encourage the process of teaching and learning. This explanation shows that schools should create a favourable condition for learners to learn and attain their required achievements through building the capacity of their teachers in planning, delivering and assessing the lesson (Arlesting and Tornsen (2014: cited in Moreda 2022)

The topic of school improvement can be examined from two distinct perspectives. One perspective pertains to the physical dimension of the educational institution. This pertains to the endeavour of creating an environment within schools that is conducive and secure for students and their educational pursuits. The second perspective focuses on the technological dimension of the educational institution. School improvement can be conceptualised as an educational strategy aimed at effecting positive change in order to enhance students' academic performance and bolster the school's ability to effectively navigate and adapt to change.

The primary objective of school improvement is to enhance student accomplishment by prioritising the teaching-learning process and the corresponding supportive environment. Hopkin (2005:2-3) and Harris (2002:10) discuss measures for enhancing the school's ability to deliver high-quality education during periods of change. This perspective posits that school reform entails the transformation of school culture, operating under the fundamental premise that enhancing the school's culture towards a positive orientation can facilitate improvements in the overall functioning of the institution. One aspect that necessitates enhancement in educational institutions is their cultural environment, encompassing the quality of interpersonal connections and the nature and calibre of educational encounters (Harris, 2002: 10-11). In addition, Hallinger and Heck (2010:97) provide an explanation that characterises school improvement as the process of enhancing schools' ability to facilitate and enhance teaching and learning. The primary aim of implementing strategic action is to facilitate

ongoing enhancement. School improvement can be more precisely described as a systematic process aimed at generating change and fostering development inside educational institutions, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the overall quality of teaching and learning experiences. The notion of school improvement is initially characterised as the overarching endeavour to enhance the quality of educational institutions, with the primary objective of creating an optimal environment for students to acquire knowledge and skills. The concept of 'the second' refers to a strategic approach to educational reform that aims to enhance students' achievements while also bolstering schools' ability to effectively navigate and implement change (Harris, 2002:10; Hopkins, 2005:5). According to Makoelle (2011:120), the concept of school improvement is defined as a dynamic process that is typified by the occurrence of change. An inherent connection exists between the enhancement of educational institutions and the process of implementing modifications. In the educational context, the concept of 'improvement change' holds significance as it pertains to the adaptation of internal circumstances within schools, ultimately resulting in enhanced school performance. The process of enhancing educational institutions is contingent upon the occurrence of change as a necessary condition for improvement. Certain schools face challenges in their ability to make improvements due to the occurrence of change. This is due to these schools' inadequate planning, initiation, implementation and monitoring processes.

The researcher posits that for a school to be successful, it must not only address its internal circumstances but also adapt to its external environment. It is imperative to engage parents, community members, governmental bodies and non-governmental organisations in the process. In order to achieve the desired improvement, educational institutions should strategically design and execute their operations according to a predetermined plan. Additionally, it is crucial for schools to actively monitor and analyse the implementation process. Put simply, without adequate planning that involves engaging stakeholders, implementing the plan, and monitoring and evaluating its execution, schools cannot achieve improvement.

2.3 PRINCIPLES OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The process of school improvement is a methodical strategy that adheres to its own set of standards. The implementation of school improvement encompasses various ideas as a

strategic approach. According to Harris (2002:17), in order to achieve the desired goals of a school-improvement project, it is crucial that the initiative for change and development originates from the school itself, rather than being pushed upon it by local educational authorities.

Luneburg and Ornstein (2012:281) have outlined a set of guiding principles that should be adhered to during the process of school reform. Educational institutions ought to establish a clear and comprehensible set of objectives and a mission statement. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of learner achievement is necessary. Educational institutions should prioritise providing assistance to students who struggle academically, particularly those with low achievement. Additionally, it is imperative to establish enrichment programmes specifically designed to cater to the needs of high-performing students. It is imperative for principals and staff members to actively engage in ongoing capacity-building efforts in order to enhance their knowledge, acquire updated information, and cultivate a positive mind-set. In order to effectively facilitate the implementation of the school-improvement programme (SIP), it is imperative that every teacher actively contributes. It is imperative for educators to actively engage in staff development through the strategic design and execution of the SIP. The school environment must exhibit qualities of safety, health and learner-friendliness. It is imperative to enhance school-community partnerships in order to foster the active involvement of community members and parents in the implementation of school-development programmes. The distribution of school leadership responsibilities should encompass the participation of staff members, students and parents.

Aligned with the aforementioned principles of school development, this study evaluates the implementation practices of existing SIPs in secondary schools.

According to Rafael (2015:339), it has been suggested that leadership for school development can be underpinned by principles. It is vital to direct focus towards the pedagogical aspects of the teaching and learning process. This pertains to optimising the opportunity for learners to acquire knowledge by optimising their attendance, providing access to materials that support the teaching and learning process, and ensuring sufficient time for studying. It involves prioritising learning as the central objective of professional capacity-building endeavours. Promoting community engagement fosters the active involvement of all individuals within the community, with a particular emphasis on parental participation, across all dimensions of

school enhancement. In essence, the objective is to encourage active engagement and foster a culture of inclusivity; so, promoting a sense of community. Every principal needs to contribute to the successful implementation of the school-improvement programme; teachers must be involved in staff development and the planning and implementation of the school-improvement programme; the school environment has to be safe, healthy and pupil friendly; school community relationships should be strengthened for the community and the parents to become involved in the execution of the school-improvement programme; and staff, students and parents should all be involved as leaders of the school (Dawit, 2020).

2.3.1 Types of SIPs

There are three major types of SIPs that are familiar to different countries (Sally, 2013:21).

- Bottom-up programmes refer to improvement initiatives that are initiated and implemented by the school itself, as seen in the case of Finland.
- Top-down programmes, on the other hand, involve external improvement initiatives that are imposed on the school, such as those provided to schools with low performance in order to address the issues leading to their low results, as observed in Italy.
- Mixed programmes encompass improvement initiatives that are initially developed by external entities but are subsequently voluntarily adopted or modified by schools, as exemplified by Portugal, where schools have the flexibility to adapt nationally prescribed programmes to their specific needs.

2.4 SCHOOL-IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME IN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

The education system in South Africa exhibits challenges pertaining to the dimensions of quality, accessibility and equity. In order to address these issues, government implemented a school-development project aimed at enhancing learner performance through comprehensive reform initiatives within schools. The primary emphasis of school improvement centres on the acquisition of knowledge by learners and the resulting learning outcomes. In order to achieve this objective, educational institutions should first assess their areas of weakness and strength, and subsequently allocate priority to each domain within the school (Chuta, 2018:10)

This process is ongoing and involves the active participation of all members of the school community, as well as other relevant stakeholders, in order to enhance student learning and improve academic outcomes (MoE, 2011:3).



Figure 2. 1 Domains of School Improvement in South Africa (MoE; 2011)

The areas of focus for school improvement in South Africa encompass learning and teaching, school leadership and management, creating a conducive learning environment, and fostering community participation (Kasahun et al., 2016:19; MoE, 2011:5; Gorfe, 2015:124).

2.4.1 Major domains of the SIPs

The first component to be discussed is the importance of leadership and specifically the role of the school principal in the SIP.

2.4.1.1 Leadership and school improvement

According to Luncenburg (2011:2), leadership involves advocating for changes and implementing new ideas, but also prioritising the comprehension of individuals' beliefs and fostering their commitment. According to Caldwell (1992: 16–17), it is essential for managers and leaders in self-managing schools to possess the capacity to establish and execute a cyclical procedure that encompasses seven distinct managerial activities. The functions encompassed within this framework consist of goal establishment, identification of needs, determining priorities, planning, budgeting, implementation and assessment.

According to Bush (2008:1), the field of management studies focuses on the internal functioning of educational institutions, as well as their interactions with their surrounding communities and the governing authorities to whom they are accountable. In essence, educational administrators are required to actively interact with both internal and external stakeholders in order to effectively guide their educational institutions. The centralisation of educational management is essential for the goal of education, as it provides a clear sense of direction that facilitates the effective management of the educational system. According to Bush (2008:2), an educational purpose is focused on attaining proficiency in management.

According to Marishane (2011:1), the onset of the 21st century witnessed a significant global concern regarding educational reform, namely, in the realm of education leadership and management. This concern arose due to the increasing demands placed on schools to enhance their performance and effectiveness. The attainment of favourable outcomes in educational institutions has been consistently linked to the presence of competent leadership and efficient management practices. In contemporary times, there has been a growing recognition of the distinction between leadership and management. Furthermore, the act of acknowledging school administrators and senior staff members as competent leaders and proficient managers was also seen (Bush, 2003).

According to Dimmock (2012:6), the definition of leadership can be broadly characterised as an influence process that operates inside a group of persons, workers or employees, with the objective of securing their commitment to shared values and goals, ultimately leading to the attainment of those goals. Leadership can be conceptualised as the act of offering guidance, vision and assistance in order to facilitate a transition from the current state to an alternative and desired state; hence, implying the need for change. Therefore, there exists a strong correlation between leadership, change and school improvement. One may argue that individuals in positions of leadership has the ability to instigate change, regardless of their hierarchical position within an organisation (Harris & Muijs, 2005:15).

The concept of management can be defined as the process of successfully and efficiently achieving the goals of an organisation via the utilisation of various activities such as planning, organising, staffing, directing and regulating the available resources within the organisation (Daft & Marcic, 2013:9; McManus, 2006:9). The authors additionally contend that management can be defined as the set of activities undertaken to ensure the achievement of

an organization's mission, encompassing the planning and control of its scope, schedule, costs, resources, and communication. According to Briggs, Coleman and Morrison (2012:3), educational management can be defined as the examination of the organisational structure of educational institutions, as well as the roles and responsibilities of staff members in coordinating and overseeing the institution's work activities, decision-making processes, problem-solving approaches and resource-allocation strategies.

Based on the aforementioned definitions of leadership and management, it can be comprehended that leadership is primarily concerned with questioning the existing state of affairs and implementing transformative modifications. Contrarily, management is engaged in many administrative operations. The analysis suggests that leadership endeavours to provide novel approaches to tasks, whereas management facilitates the achievement of these approaches.

According to Deventer (2009:68), the role of a school principal encompasses both leadership and managerial responsibilities. In their capacity as a leader and manager, the school principal undertakes the following functions. The key components encompassed in this context involve the establishment and effective communication of a distinct mission, goals and objectives. Additionally, the continuous monitoring of teaching and learning activities, as well as the evaluation of learners' progress, is crucial. Furthermore, fostering an instructional climate that cultivates a positive school environment conducive to the teaching and learning process is of paramount importance. The explanation demonstrates that both leadership and management have a role in achieving organisational objectives. Given this study, the school principal should have both talents of management and leadership to help to the implementation of school reform. The implementation of educational management entails the process of delegation, which encompasses the allocation, acceptance and execution of responsibilities to ensure the effective operation of a system involving the participation of individuals within an educational institution. Similarly, educational leadership in practice refers to the act of exerting influence on others within educational settings to accomplish objectives, thereby requiring the undertaking of specific actions, Various approaches to school leadership exist that are suitable for addressing the issues associated with the role of school leadership. Numerous sources in the literature address the topic at hand, and a selection of relevant ones will be explored in the following paragraphs.

2.4.1.2 Community participation in school improvement

Leadership plays a significant role in impacting learner outcomes across various dimensions, perhaps leading to beneficial effects on learners' achievements. The leadership dimensions that positively impact learner achievement encompass several key aspects. These include fostering the learning and development of teachers, establishing goals and expectations, prioritising curriculum by effectively planning, coordinating and evaluating instructional activities, making judicious allocations of educational resources, and cultivating a disciplined and supportive environment that facilitates the teaching-learning process. According to Briggs, Colemen and Morrison (2012:5), regardless of the specific approaches to leadership that a school may adopt, it is widely recognised that effective leadership plays a crucial role in driving school improvement. The educational institution has the option to either employ a combination of these leadership styles or select one, based on the specific circumstances and needs of the school.

According to Harris (2002:66), the significance of leadership in enhancing school progress is widely recognised and there is substantial backing for the important role that leadership plays in driving school reform. The impact of leadership on learners and school performance is significant. According to Hopkins (2001:114), it has been argued that leadership has a significant role in facilitating school reform. In pursuit of this objective, the focus is on enhancing the calibre of instruction and educational attainment, as well as fostering the development of organisational capabilities. According to Hopkins (2001:114), leaders bear the obligation of ensuring that learners receive adequate follow-up, while also providing instructors with the necessary assistance to enhance the quality of the teaching-learning process; so contributing to school improvement. The primary responsibility of the leader in the context of school improvement is to guarantee the establishment of a conducive learning environment for both the staff and the students. In order to cultivate an effective learning environment for both faculty and students, it is imperative to enhance the school's capabilities and implement various improvements across many domains. Effective leaders employ various strategies to facilitate progress and development. According to Harris (2002:73), the consistent vision is one of the approaches indicated to enhance the school community interaction. Additionally, the South African Minister of Education has emphasised the importance of schools being the focal points of community life, as stated by the Department of Education (1999:9). Currently, in South Africa, there is a growing emphasis on the school-

community link, which is being actualised through the implementation of the school-development plan known as the school-effectiveness programme. This initiative is being carried out across all provinces. This implies that parents and people of the community are formally engaged in the comprehensive assessment of the school and initiatives aimed at enhancing its performance. The implementation of these activities is gradually fostering a culture of parental and community engagement (Department of Education, 2002).

Stefanski, Valli and Jacobson (2016: 135) assert that the establishment of partnerships between educational institutions and communities plays a crucial role in facilitating student learning, enhancing school performance, and fostering parental engagement in their children's education, both at home and in school; ultimately leading to improved academic outcomes. Contrary to this viewpoint, Kirkhaug, Drugli, Klockner and Morch (2013:346-347) assert that the involvement of the community, namely parents in school matters, has progressively grown in significance as a means to enhance student accomplishment.

Contrary to the previously mentioned notion, Tahir, Ahmad and Hassan (2013:378) argue that a significant number of schools operate in seclusion due to the prevailing belief among parents and the community that the responsibility of educating and equipping learners for global competitiveness solely rests upon instructors. This kind of thinking has additionally contributed to a growing disconnect between educational institutions and the surrounding community. Educational institutions must acknowledge and comprehend this alternative perspective, and afterwards, they must undertake the responsibility of cultivating a collective consciousness throughout the society at large, with a specific emphasis on engaging parents, in order to elicit their active involvement in supporting students' learning endeavours inside the home environment.

The term ‘community’ denotes a collective of individuals residing in a shared geographic area or locale, who are united by a common interest or purpose. The term ‘it’ in this context also encompasses a culture, ethnic group, or language group that holds specific values with the intention of passing them down to subsequent generations (Deventer 2016:376).

According to Deventer (2009:256), an essential aspect of promoting the transmission of values is the active engagement of the community in school matters, including the governance of educational institutions for the betterment of the students. This is due to the assertion made by Ahmad and Said (2013:293) that education is a collaborative endeavour

involving both the community and the school. Mutual support is provided by individuals in order to collectively attain their desired objective. In essence, the symbiotic relationship between the school and the community is characterised by reciprocal assistance, wherein the community aids the school in attaining its aims, while conversely, the school also assists the community in accomplishing its developmental aspirations. According to Botha (2013:2425), it is argued that schools are unable to sustain themselves in isolation from the population they cater for. According to Sharma (2008:74), it is specified that schools are unable to operate effectively in isolation. In order to operate effectively, educational institutions must establish strong connections with parents specifically, and the broader community in general. The framework facilitates the development of effective programmes that promote collaboration between schools, families and communities. Epstein (2011:46-47) asserts that employing a structured approach as a guiding principle is the most effective method for educating learners and providing support to families.

Parenting: According to the research conducted by Kirkhaug et al. (2013:347-348), parents engage in open communication with teachers and actively participate in school activities when their children encounter learning difficulties. Conversely, when students demonstrate satisfactory academic performance, parents are advised to reduce their level of involvement. Based on this assertion, it may be inferred that the substantial involvement of parents is a direct reaction to the issue at hand. This observation indicates that parental involvement in schools tends to be responsive rather than proactive. However, it is important to note that it should also exhibit a proactive approach. The engagement of the community in school activities yields numerous advantages. To get the benefit from community involvement, the school principals, as instructional leaders, should be familiar with the relevant community groups, and should clearly inform individual community members and the community at large to what extent the school benefited from their involvement (Mored, 2022;90)

According to Khosa (2010:16), the advantages of using these measures include enhanced adherence to home study, greater academic achievement among learners, timely coverage of subjects, and increased parental involvement and interest in the school's activities. According to Olsen and Fullen (2012:132), community engagement in school activities yields several positive outcomes for students. These include improved academic performance in terms of higher grades and test scores, enhanced attendance, consistent completion of homework

assignments, increased self-esteem, greater self-discipline, and heightened aspirations and motivations towards school.

Based on an analysis of various scholarly works, Ahmad and Said (2013:295) assert that community involvement in education yields several benefits. These include optimising resource utilisation, designing curriculum and learning materials that are pertinent to the community, identifying and resolving obstacles that impede educational progress, fostering a sense of ownership and consensus among stakeholders, facilitating informed decision making, expanding learning opportunities, enhancing access to education, promoting learner retention and classroom attendance, preparing children for school, and ensuring their overall well-being, including nutrition and health. This initiative aims to enhance the quality, relevance, efficacy and sustainability of educational programmes. It also seeks to raise awareness within communities about the importance of collecting and contributing resources, such as monetary funds, materials, or labour for school construction. Additionally, it supports the provision of teacher salaries and addresses other financial requirements, as well as encourages voluntary services to meet the needs of the school. Enhance the school's capability. According to Stefanski et al. (2016: 136), the involvement of the community in school matters significantly contributes to enhancing learners' achievement and fostering increased engagement between the school and families, as well as the broader community. Furthermore, Botha (2013:24-25) affirmed that parents, as well as the wider community, play a significant role in school governance, fundraising and ensuring the security of the educational institution.

Schools offer a multitude of advantages to the local community. Deventer (2016:385) asserts that educational institutions play a significant role in enhancing the well-being of the community through the provision of diverse services, such as adult evening classes and venues for social gatherings. This phenomenon leads to the school assuming a central role within the community, rather than depending on support from the community. To effectively use the benefits of community engagement, it is crucial for the school administrator, assuming the role of an educational leader, to possess a thorough comprehension of the community cohort. Moreover, it is imperative for the administrator to effectively communicate to both individual constituents and the broader community the extent to which the school has benefited from their active engagement. According to Deventer (2009:256), the educational institution obtains assistance and contributions from a wide array of local entities,

such as youth organisations, welfare groups, town development committees, civic leaders and ordinary members of the community. Furthermore, Shea and Bauer (2012:236) contend that the incorporation of the wider community, encompassing parents and/or family members, presents numerous advantages for students, educational institutions, and the entire community. The efficacy of this intervention has been demonstrated in terms of its favourable influence on students' academic achievement and examination results, as well as their attendance and overall disposition towards education. Educational institutions benefit from the active engagement of the community and/or parents, resulting in various positive outcomes such as improved teacher morale, favourable evaluations of educators by the community and/or parents, increased family support, and higher student achievement.

According to Olsen and Fullen (2012:132), an important factor in determining learners' academic success is not their income or social status, but rather the ability of their families to establish a conducive home environment that fosters learning. Additionally, the authors argue that setting high, attainable expectations for their children's academic achievements and future careers, as well as actively participating in their children's education, both at school and within the community, are crucial elements for promoting academic success. Nevertheless, there exists a lack of consensus regarding the extent to which parents and the community are engaged in their children's educational endeavours. Certain educators anticipate parental involvement. Educators and parents anticipate that the school will provide guidance regarding their active participation in their children's education and the specific tasks they should undertake. More concise techniques, namely waiting for engagement and dictating, have an impact on the process of involving or informing (Epstein, 2011:4).

Any member of the community has the capacity to assume leadership and make decisions regarding the selection, planning and timing of community events. In cases where community members and parents have little educational attainment, and particularly in situations where there are individuals who are unable to read and write, it is incumbent upon schools to assume the responsibility of determining the scope of parental and community involvement. Schools should undertake the task of devising appropriate plans and formulating methods to engage parents and community members in these circumstances.

The role of parenting is commonly recognised as the duty of the family in facilitating the growth and advancement of children and adolescents by creating nurturing home environments that foster their educational development (Epstein et al., 2009).

Communication: Effective communication is crucial in the creation of forms of communication between schools and homes, as it impacts instructors, learners and parents. It is imperative for educational institutions to critically evaluate the efficacy of their communication practices, particularly with regards to accommodating parents who possess limited proficiency in the English language. This necessitates a comprehensive examination of various communication channels such as parent meetings, written correspondences, and report cards, with the aim of ensuring inclusivity and effective engagement with linguistically diverse parents. There is a necessity for establishing effective channels of communication between schools and households, ensuring clarity and transparency in both directions. It is imperative for educational institutions to actively engage parents in making curriculum-related decisions for their children. According to Olsen and Fuller (2012:136), the establishment of a successful relationship between school and family necessitates efficient communication. Many educational institutions commonly employ various methods to disseminate information regarding their programmes and students' academic development. These methods typically include the distribution of school and class newsletters, report cards or narrative progress reports, parent-educator conferences, and telephone communication. The utilisation of various technological platforms, such as emails, voice notes, WhatsApp messaging and school websites, has become more prevalent in educational institutions for the purpose of communicating with families (Mitchell, Foulger & Wetzel, 2010).

Decision-making: School Governing Bodies (SGBs) play a crucial and indispensable role in the decision-making processes inside educational institutions. It is imperative that SGBs are granted the opportunity to contribute to the decision-making procedures in schools and effectively communicate pertinent information to parents. Parents play a significant role in shaping school policies that have an impact on their children's education. According to Botha (2011:230), parental involvement in decision-making processes within schools occurs at multiple levels, such as participation in school committees and school governing bodies. In a similar vein, Epstein (2011:454) elucidates that the involvement of families in decision-making processes can manifest in several forms, such as their participation in school decisions, engagement in governance and advocacy efforts through school councils or school

improvement teams. Prior to further exploring the intricacies of decision making, it is essential to grasp the underlying philosophy of decision-making. Olsen and Fuller (2012:45) assert that parent involvement in decision-making encompasses a range of modalities, including but not limited to selecting educational institutions, assessing and appraising school programmes, scrutinising fiscal budgets, participating in personnel recruitment, serving as advisors for school committees and advocating for the welfare of schools, families and children. The decision-making practices used by each school are contingent upon the school's underlying philosophy and its objectives and policies regarding family involvement. The process of decision-making entails a collaboration between parents and educators, wherein they actively engage in sharing and contributing their own thoughts and perspectives. The primary objective in this context is to address and resolve issues. Efforts are made to align actions with the collective vision, so potentially influencing the attainment of school objectives and the formulation of policies. According to Olsen and Fuller (2012:145), parents assume a leadership role in advocating for other parents, serving as representatives to express their perspectives, thoughts and concerns regarding their children's educational progress and growth. Similarly, parental leaders play a crucial role in disseminating important information on school choices and policies to families. Parents have the potential to engage in the role of advocates for educational institutions, as well as for their own families and children (Bradley & Kibera, 2006:34). According to Olsen and Fuller (2012:145), the majority of parents have assumed the role of advocates for their children on an individual basis. Parents have the ability to express their perspectives and suggestions in order to enhance their children's educational experiences. An additional form of advocacy involves the formation of a collective of parents who unite to advocate for shared objectives pertaining to matters that impact the educational quality of schools and enhance the well-being of their children and families. Parents can fulfil the role of advocates at various levels, including the local, regional and national levels.

Collaborating with community: The learners originate from the community, thus necessitating the need for partnership with said community. It is imperative to provide information to the community regarding educational initiatives such as tutoring programmes targeted at learners. It is imperative that both families and learners are provided with equitable chances to engage in community programmes. The Epstein theory posits that it has the capacity to effectively facilitate the establishment of a comprehensive framework for

collaboration, encompassing both school-based and home-based opportunities for family engagement. The level of involvement will have a direct impact on the quality of implementation. As the leader of the school, the principal bears the responsibility of ensuring that all stakeholders embrace these values, which serve as a cohesive element in their collective efforts to realise the school's vision and mission (Yan, Hou & Deng, 2022:291).

As stated by Olsen and Fuller (2012:131), community involvement refers to a range of initiatives implemented and encouraged by educational institutions, with the objective of enabling parents to actively participate in the educational progress of their children. Moreover, it incorporates the manner in which children learn knowledge across three diverse contexts. The primary determinants that exert effect on an individual's development encompass the domains of education, familial environment and community. The combination of these three contexts plays a pivotal role in augmenting children's educational experiences. Deventer (2016:376) posits that there is a shared apprehension within the community, with a specific emphasis on parental involvement, for the well-being and sustainability of the community, as well as the well-being of its progeny. As a result, the community transmits knowledge, attitudes and skills that are unique and advantageous to its younger constituents. Furthermore, throughout history, educational institutions have played a pivotal role in the distribution and acquisition of knowledge, values, and skills, and have been widely regarded as vital resources for the community. The community experiences advantages from it in one dimension, while it likewise experiences advantages from the community in another dimension.

According to Yan, Hou and Deng (2022:2911), the concept of parental participation primarily encompasses a range of parenting behaviours exhibited within the home and school settings, with the aim of enhancing children's educational and developmental achievements. The engagement of parents at all levels of education is often regarded as an essential and integral aspect, particularly in relation to making decisions about a child's education both at school and at home, as well as facilitating communication with teachers. The phenomenon is correlated with favourable results in children, such as enhanced language sources aptitude and social adeptness. Additionally, it is linked to a decrease in problematic behaviour, as well as improved retention and application of abilities. Furthermore, it is important to note that parental involvement in education is a reciprocal endeavour that yields advantages for both parents and teachers alike. Effective communication between parents and teachers facilitates

a direct exchange of information, enabling parents to gain insights into their children's academic progress, while instructors acquire knowledge about the family's values, as well as the strengths and preferences of the students. This exchange of information allows for the implementation of more focused and tailored teaching strategies. Furthermore, the advantages of parental involvement, as well as community engagement, in the education of children encompass various aspects such as academic performance, behaviour both within and outside of the educational setting, and attitudes that have an impact on both educational and none educational results. Children's growth and development occur within several systems, as viewed from an ecosystem perspective. These systems encompass crucial elements like as family, school, community and society (Simpso, 2021:229).

The school has a responsibility to assist and provide assistance to the community by granting access to school facilities for community events based on their specific requirements. By implementing this strategy, the educational institution will establish an optimal learning environment for the students. Consequently, the positive outcome of this phenomenon is that children will develop a fondness for their educational institution, thereby fostering their commitment to pursuing further education. Moreover, this inclination towards education is likely to cultivate qualities of good citizenship, as children become more inclined to exhibit responsible behaviour towards their families and the broader community. In order to enhance the quality of education within a school setting, it is imperative to involve various stakeholders, including families, communities, schools and learners, in the various activities and initiatives undertaken by the school (Epstein, 2011:3). According to Stefanski et al. (2016:136), it was proposed that schools fulfil the role of providing opportunities for community members to engage in public lectures, participate in civic debates, and utilise the school premises for recreational activities during evenings, weekends and school holidays.

2.4.1.3 Teaching and learning

One of the primary focal points of the school-development plan entails teachers initiating the teaching and learning process by first determining the content to be taught, prior to considering the methods of instruction. In essence, it is advisable for educators to first determine the curriculum content prior to selecting the instructional approach. When determining the instructional content, educators must account consider several factors, including the range of subjects offered at their institution, the specific behavioural

modifications required, the unique characteristics and needs of individual students in the classroom, and the educational standards established by the government of the respective country (Price & Nelson, 2011:3). In accordance with the argument, Killen (2015:87) posits that the content and methodology of learners' education play a crucial role in enhancing their academic performance. This is due to the direct impact of their learning experience on their motivation levels and subsequent adoption of effective learning strategies. Hence, it is incumbent upon educators to ensure that each instructional session fosters a constructive and efficacious learning environment for all students.

In order to ensure that every session is good and fruitful for all learners, instructors must possess a comprehensive understanding of the curriculum being taught in the school. Additionally, they should develop extra resources that align with the curriculum, with the aim of enhancing learners' comprehension. In order to ensure that each session is characterised by a good and productive learning environment, it is imperative for teachers to engage in meticulous lesson planning. The process of lesson planning entails informed judgements by the teacher regarding the needs, aims and objectives of the learners, as well as the content, instructional strategies, instructional media, classroom circumstances and learner assessment. These decisions are made prior to the actual implementation of the teaching. The purpose of planning is to ensure learner learning (Burden & Byrd, 2013:2-3).

In planning the lesson, the subject to be covered, instructional strategies, intended behaviours, instructional media, classroom atmosphere and learners' evaluations approaches will be established. The process of lesson planning holds significant importance for educators across various contexts. A meticulously crafted lesson facilitates the teacher in effectively organising, sequencing and gaining familiarity with the content of the instructional session. Additionally, this tool facilitates the use of several teaching tactics and activities over an extended period. It allows the instructor to compile a comprehensive set of significant questions or rules for a cooperative group activity. Furthermore, a well-crafted instructional session empowers educators to include several strategies aimed at fostering learner motivation inside each individual class. Additionally, it furnishes replacement instructors and members of a teaching team with a designated protocol to adhere to in the event of the teacher's absence. Additionally, it provides insight to other members of the teaching team regarding the actions and methodologies employed by the teacher (Burden & Byrd, 2013:5859). According to Killen (2015:90), the act of planning a lesson is beneficial for

teachers as it enables them to facilitate purposeful, effective and efficient learning for their students. Additionally, it serves to elucidate the educational objectives that a teacher intends for learners to acquire. It encourages the exploration of various strategies aimed at facilitating learners' academic progress. Moreover, it emphasises the importance of considering the unique requirements of each learner to anticipate any problems that may occur due to individual differences. Additionally, this technology facilitates effective time management for teachers. It allows them to anticipate the questions that learners may pose and adequately prepare to provide appropriate responses. Furthermore, it ensures that classes are engaging, captivating and tailored to the specific needs and interests of the learners. Once the process of lesson planning has been finalised, it is imperative to effectively execute the plan in accordance with its intended design.

According to Burden & Byrd (2013:3), the process of implementation encompasses the practical execution of instructional plans, specifically pertaining to the delivery of lessons and the assessment of student learning. The process of implementation can take place when there is active engagement between a teacher and the learners. Skills that are conducive to facilitating implementation encompass the ability to effectively present and clarify information, employ questioning techniques, actively listen, monitor progress, provide constructive comments, and demonstrate desired behaviours or processes. When it comes to the implementation of instructional planning, it is essential to possess other abilities such as monitoring learners' conduct, enforcing rules and procedures, utilising instructional technology, demonstrating respect, and fostering a good learning environment.

The purpose of conducting assessments is to ascertain the extent to which learners have attained the desired learning objectives. This allows teachers to evaluate the progress of learners and identify any deficiencies in their knowledge and abilities, so enabling them to focus their efforts on enhancing the learning process. In addition, assessments serve the purpose of identifying learners who are prepared to advance to subsequent stages of learning, diagnosing any challenges faced by learners, offering feedback to learners, communicating learners' progress to parents, identifying areas that require revision or reteaching, and identifying strategies for enhancing the process of teaching and learning (Killen, 2015:371). According to Chalchisa (2012:34), it is further argued that once the scheduled lesson has been delivered in accordance with the established curriculum, teachers are required to carry out an evaluation of the students' learning progress. Teachers provide additional support to learners

who are underperforming based on the outcome of the evaluation. Additionally, Kinde (2014:34) commented that evaluation serves the purpose of identifying discrepancies between existing knowledge and desired learning objectives. Furthermore, the utilisation of assessments aids educators in comprehending the extent of learners' attainment, hence enhancing their instructional practices and providing valuable feedback. Assessment is commonly regarded as a facilitative procedure that fosters a supportive atmosphere, allowing both educators and students to actively work towards bridging any gaps that may exist.

Assessment within the context of the teaching and learning process can be defined as the systematic gathering of information pertaining to the educational accomplishments of students, which is subsequently analysed and employed for various educational objectives (Herlen & Qualter, 2009:171). The aforementioned authors additionally expound upon the notion that assessments serve two distinct purposes within the primary school setting. The purpose of utilising the data acquired through assessments is to enhance the educational experience of each individual learner. This is commonly referred to as formative assessment or assessment for learning. Formative assessment is employed as a means of making informed judgements that support the educational progress of individual learners, during the ongoing process of teaching and learning. The second rationale for conducting assessments of learning and teaching processes is to provide information to relevant stakeholders regarding the knowledge and skills acquired by learners within a specific timeframe. This examination is commonly referred to as a summative evaluation. The purpose of this tool is to communicate the academic progress and accomplishments of students to educators, parents and educational authorities. Summative evaluation serves as a means to gauge and evaluate the progress of learners' academic accomplishments.

According to Kasahun et al. (2016:19), on the relationship between the teaching and learning process and the implementation of the school curriculum. The primary objective is to enhance learners' academic performance by offering superior quality educational experiences. Is high-quality learning achieved when educators make informed decisions regarding the content to be taught? How can educators engage learners in their educational activities? Additionally, it is important to consider how the assessment of learners' progress in the learning process will be conducted. The following inquiries will be posed in order to determine the course of action to be undertaken for future pedagogical and educational endeavours. In order to fulfil their responsibilities, educators must utilise their up-to-date expertise, create an environment that

promotes effective learning, develop strategies for achieving desired goals, evaluate student progress, and give instruction of exceptional quality.

Based on the aforementioned explanation regarding teaching and learning as a domain for school improvement, it is crucial for teachers to carefully plan their lessons by taking into account various factors. These factors include the content that needs to be covered, the instructional strategies to be employed, the desired behaviours that need to be fostered, the instructional media that will be utilised, the classroom climate that will be established, and the assessment techniques that will be employed to evaluate the learners' progress. By considering these elements, teachers can effectively contribute to the achievement of their students. In addition, instructors are required to engage pupils in the course through the utilisation of active learning techniques. Subsequently, the evaluation must be carried out through diverse assessment methodologies in order to implement remedial measures (Farrow, Kavanagh & Samudra, 2022:11). According to the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2010-2013), teachers employ active learning approaches in the classroom to facilitate learners' academic progress, as part of the broader school-development initiative. The term ‘active learning method’ refers to a range of classroom activities, including but not limited to group work, individual assignments, recitation, games and question and answer sessions. The Ministry of Education (MoE) is actively promoting the utilisation of diverse active learning strategies among instructors in both primary and secondary educational institutions. The rationale behind this decision by the ministry stems from their conviction that students are more likely to acquire knowledge and skills when engaged in active learning approaches inside the classroom setting. Studies have indicated that the conventional pedagogical approach exhibits significant inefficiency due to its uniform delivery of instructional information to all learners simultaneously. Furthermore, individuals who do not acquire knowledge expeditiously with this approach may see a rapid decline in their progress, as opposed to being afforded the opportunity to learn at their inherent pace. Student-centred pedagogies aim to prioritise the role of students in the learning process by employing an active learning approach. The role of the teacher in the learning process is not one of control, but rather that of a facilitator who enables students to have agency and control over their own learning. According to Farrow, Kavanagh and Samudra (2022:1), student-centred learning is thought to facilitate educational experiences that establish a connection between students and encourage profound and significant learning. In order to mitigate the constraints associated with conventional teaching

approaches, the Ministry of Education (MoE) is actively promoting the adoption of diverse active learning methodologies among educators.

While there exists a plethora of active learning strategies documented in the literature, the Ministry of Education (MoE) primarily strongly advocates for the use of the following approaches within the schools (MoE, 2010:12-13).

The utilisation of this pedagogical approach is applicable across various class sizes, albeit its efficacy is generally observed to be more pronounced in smaller group contexts. Engaging in class discussion necessitates the learners' ability to engage in critical thinking regarding the topic at hand, as well as employing logical reasoning to assess their own viewpoints and those of their peers.

The think-pair-share learning strategy involves a cognitive process wherein learners engage in individual reflection on the information delivered by the instructor (i.e., think), followed by collaborative discussion with one or more peers seated nearby (i.e., pair). Subsequently, a classroom discourse or exchange of ideas takes place.

The learning approach known as ‘learning cell’ involves pairs of learners engaging in collaborative study and knowledge acquisition by actively exchanging questions and answers pertaining to shared reading materials. Initially, learners will engage in preparatory activities by perusing a designated piece of a scholarly textbook, then formulating inquiries pertaining to the content inside. During the forthcoming class session, the instructor will employ a random pairing method to assign learners into pairs. Within each pair, one learner will assume the role of questioner, while both learners will engage in a subsequent discussion pertaining to the posed question. Next, it will be the opportunity for the second learner to pose his/her question for further discussion. During this period, the instructor moves among the students, providing feedback and addressing inquiries within each group.

The collaborative-learning group approach involves the teacher organising learners into groups consisting of three to six individuals, with each group being assigned a specific task or assignment to collectively work on.

The utilisation of class games as a pedagogical approach is regarded as a dynamic means of acquiring knowledge, as it not only facilitates the comprehension of course content but also fosters an enjoyable learning experience for the participants.

The aforementioned active learning approaches may not be the only optimal methods. Educators must employ several active instructional strategies based on the specific subject matter, content characteristics, individual learner requirements and class size.

2.5 THE FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY EDUCATIONAL LEADERS IN THE CONTEXT OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

According to Marishane and Botha (2011:7), the concept of school leadership revolves around the facilitation of change. School leaders employ many critical methods to facilitate future-focused change in school-development programmes. These tactics include effectively marketing and promoting the vision and strategy, motivating and inspiring stakeholders, establishing a clear vision to guide the change process, and implementing strategic planning to effectively achieve the established vision. According to Creemers and Kyriakides (2015:110), prior to formulating development initiatives, schools should do a comprehensive assessment of their specific needs. When formulating improvement methods, schools not only rely on their own setting but also draw insights from research outcomes; so, facilitating their own enhancement.

According to Makoelle (2011:75), it is agreed that educational institutions should implement a range of measures in order to enhance their performance. However, prior to implementing the tactics, it is imperative for schools to be persuaded of two underlying principles. The initial assumption posits that a prerequisite for improvement in schools is the existence of a belief that educational institutions can be enhanced. This belief is contingent upon the establishment of educational frameworks at higher levels, which define the benchmarks that schools ought to strive towards in their respective areas of focus. The second premise posits that educational institutions should engage in the monitoring and evaluation of their activities to ascertain their compliance with established criteria. According to Creemers and Kyriads (2015:2015), the achievement of successful educational reform in the form of school improvement necessitates the use of many tactics. Educational institutions are required to formulate specific strategies that align with their unique circumstances, taking into account the results of a comprehensive needs assessment conducted in their designated priority area.

The primary focus of this study revolves around the implementation of school-development initiatives. In order to effectively address areas requiring attention, schools must conduct a thorough assessment of their priority areas through a needs assessment process. Subsequently, schools must develop appropriate strategies to fulfil these identified needs. According to Meador (2017:1), it is imperative for schools to consistently seek novel approaches in order to enhance their performance. Educational institutions that fail to adopt a progressive approach hinder the advancement of their students' academic performance. Therefore, it is imperative for educational administrators to develop comprehensive strategies for enhancing school performance. According to Reynolds (2010:151), schools should consider benchmarking against effective schools when developing improvement strategies. These effective schools possess certain characteristics, such as having a clear and concise mission that is understood and agreed upon by all members of the school community. Additionally, these schools set ambitious targets for academic achievement among students. They also engage in careful monitoring of activities, utilise benchmarking practices, and maintain transparency regarding performance data. Furthermore, effective schools adopt an agreed-upon model of teaching and ensure consistent implementation of agreed actions related to teaching, managing learning behaviour and attendance. They prioritise support for students who are at risk of academic failure and employ proactive recruitment and targeted training strategies, including the delivery of agreed-upon teaching methods. Regular evaluation is conducted to assess the rapid, early, and continuous impact of initiatives. Effective schools also prioritise the maintenance of equipment to ensure optimal functionality and consistently implement rules and regulations.

According to Clarke (2012:6-10), this approach yielded a set of ten initiatives for school improvement. The interdependence of these steps is a crucial factor to consider. The achievement of a particular stage is contingent upon the completion of the preceding step. The stages under consideration are:

- **Step 1. Establishing a secure educational environment**: This entails implementing measures to safeguard pupils from potential physical and emotional harm. It also entails the construction of school walls as a means of safeguarding students from potential hazards and the influence of criminal organisations.

- **Step 2. Establishing order**: This involves fostering a sense of discipline among the school community, which facilitates punctuality among both teachers and pupils, allowing for the timely commencement of planned teaching and learning activities. Additionally, it encompasses the safeguarding of school days and class times, ensuring that they are exclusively dedicated to academic pursuits and not utilised for any other activities except from those related to teaching. The use of class time, school days, weeks, terms, semesters and years should align with the prescribed curriculum.
- **Step 3. Promote a hygienic and well-maintained educational environment**: An educational institution that upholds cleanliness, tidiness and regular maintenance fosters an optimal learning atmosphere for all students. In order to ensure the cleanliness and adherence to established standards of the school, it is imperative to regularly monitor and maintain its overall tidiness.
- **Step 4. Instructional delivery by teachers**: This step pertains to the readiness of all teachers to effectively deliver lessons in the classroom, ensuring that each lesson is taught with appropriate instructional strategies. The primary focus of every teacher is the act of instruction. It is imperative for school administrators to consistently monitor the instructional activities of teachers.
- **Step 5. Recognise exemplary performance**: It is important to acknowledge teachers who have demonstrated exceptional performance in the teaching and learning process. The commendable efforts and exemplary performance demonstrated by the individual in both the academic setting and the school premises should be recognised.
- **Step 6. Offer a variety of extracurricular activities**: The engagement in supplementary activities holds considerable significance in terms of its impact on learners' connection to their classroom lessons. In order to effectively attain its desired goals, it is imperative that the extracurricular activities are meticulously coordinated and provide regular opportunity for students with diverse interests to engage in said activities.
- **Step 7. Schedule regular events**: This must be prepared to provide enjoyable experiences for learners at each grade level or for the entire school community.
- **Step 8. Encourage student engagement**: Students should be actively engaged in the decision-making processes that directly impact them. It is imperative that learners are

involved in decisions that have a significant influence on their educational experiences.

- **Step 9. Encourage parental engagement**: It is highly recommended that parents actively engage in school-related activities. When parents actively participate in school events, the educational experience gets intertwined with the family dynamic. The participation of parents in school activities consistently yields advantages for students. The establishment of effective communication channels between parents and instructors facilitates a deeper understanding of one another, hence fostering stronger relationships and mutual trust. Due to enhanced interpersonal ties and increased levels of trust, the educators engage in collaborative discussions to systematically address the challenges encountered by the learners.
- **Step 10. Communicate:** Parents and students are provided with regular updates regarding school activities and events in order to foster a sense of inclusion within the educational community. This involves notifying parents and students about the schedule of significant dates for the academic year and informing them of other scheduled activities to be carried out during the year. In order to effectively communicate with parents and keep them informed about school activities and students' achievements, it is recommended that educational institutions implement a newsletter system.

The researcher argues that the aforementioned approaches should not be seen as the exclusive solutions applicable to all educational institutions. The expression, 'there is no universally applicable solution' implies that a singular solution or strategy cannot be universally effective. Hence, it is imperative for educational institutions to develop supplementary strategies that are tailored to their specific context, in conjunction with the aforementioned endeavours aimed at enhancing school performance. Educational institutions could also consider implementing these strategies that align with their own circumstances. In addition to the aforementioned measures for school improvement, there exist supplementary strategies. While there is a considerable amount of literature available on the subject, only a limited number of studies have been conducted to explore strategies for enhancing tolerance. The next section discusses action research as a strategic method for improving school performance.

2.5.1 The role of principals in school improvements

Principals are the key players in the school-improvement process. The principal plays a crucial role in the implementation of SIPs. One of their most important responsibilities is to ensure that improvement plans reflect the characteristics of their own school and its community. The role of school principals is central to the success or failure of the school system at school level, and it plays an important role in the school-improvement programme in the areas of managing resources and supporting staff and teachers with the aim of improving student achievement (Milkamo, 2022). Principals should be involved with certain functions that are vital in school improvement, and these include managing the school as an organisation, managing the human resources, overseeing assets, both financial and physical, developing and empowering themselves and others, and shaping the direction and development of their schools (DBE, 2015:10). A principal who engages with a school improvement plan involves the staff and stakeholders to ensure the school's learning enhancement that centres on objectives for students' advancement. The principal guarantees that learning is at the centre of school life. This indicates that a school should encourage the advancement and execution of the SIP to ensure teachers' competencies, which will then assist in focusing on the teaching and learning process that centres on learner performance and enhanced learner outcomes. It is vital for the school principal to have administrative skills that involve forming a vision of scholastic victory for all learners, making a climate conducive to education, developing administration skills in others, making strides with effective teaching and learning, and overseeing individuals, information and forms that encourage school improvement. These components can be considered as the essence of school administration that ensures execution and efficiency (Naidoo, 2005:26). Principals, as the school authority, have been portrayed as the interface between all stakeholders (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Principals are the perfect multitasks who are required to take on numerous tasks, which range from the administration of the day-to-day schedules to working with staff and guardians to actualise a shared vision. Principals also need to ensure that their teachers are competent in their subject areas and proficient in the classroom. This is assisted by continuous professional development, where learning results in changes, with regard to information, abilities, demeanour, convictions, or methodologies and strategies (Mitchell, 2013). Professional

development ensures that teachers continuously upgrade their knowledge and skills, particularly their subject-content knowledge, their teaching strategies and techniques, and their reflection on which skills are necessary to ensure career development (Mizell, 2010). Teachers also need to improve their classroom practices. Teachers, according to Rogers (2008), should reflect on who they are, that is, their identity, to see if they are willing to learn.

Professional development can occur in different ways—learning can take place through acquiring knowledge independently or by participating in activities, and through sociocultural involvement.

Principals should clearly explain the school-improvement process to staff, SGBs and parents. The community must be given the school profile detailing the nature and characteristics of the school. Principals must help educators and parents to understand their role in the process and they must ensure that the school budget reflects and support the implementation strategies.

The school principal assumes the role of representing the provincial department of education and serves as the leader of the school-management team. Their primary responsibilities encompass professional and administrative leadership, as well as ensuring the quality of education and instruction within the school. In order to effectively fulfil these duties, it is imperative for the principal to establish a collaborative partnership with the governing body. This collaborative effort aims to collectively advance the school's vision and mission within the community. Both the principal and the governing body require guidance in carrying out their respective roles. Consequently, it is crucial to provide the school leadership team, led by the principal, and the governing body of each public school with the opportunity to foster a shared sense of purpose and mutual support (Department of Education, 2015: 9). The principal's role in enhancing school improvement revolves around creating a conducive learning environment for both educators and students. This entails cultivating the capacity within the school to facilitate ongoing learning and advancement.

The school principal possesses the capacity to exert influence over the execution of the SIP by means of symbolic leadership and effective management of the interconnected components through various practices. These practices encompass:

- comprehending the expectations of the school community subsequent to the execution of the improvement programme;

- defining the purpose of school improvement as the focal point of change;
- formulating a plan to accomplish the school improvement by determining the processes and strategies to be employed;
- conducting a comprehensive review of existing scholarly material in order to enhance the scientific rigour of school reform operations; and
- the dissemination of experiences from successful school principals who have demonstrated effective school improvement strategies. In order to effectively carry out these obligations, the principal must freely embrace them and possess the requisite skills and expertise (Westhuizen 2007:198-199).

Successful leaders promote the climate for improvement in their school in a number of important ways. In order to facilitate school progress, it is imperative for leaders to establish a harmonious equilibrium between their vision and the development of staff capacity. The influence of a leader's vision on the culture of a school and its role in guiding school-level transformation and growth have been highlighted by Harris (2002:74) as the following:

- **Maximising employee potential:** It is imperative for educational administrators to actively foster staff development and allocate resources towards the enhancement of their personnel. The scope of development should encompass not just the needs that directly benefit the school and classroom, but also those that directly benefit the individual. According to Harris (2002:74), it is imperative for principals to consistently prioritise the growth of their staff, acknowledging that teachers are the primary and crucial resource in the endeavour to enhance both classroom and school performance.
- **Establishing a learning organisation:** Educational institutions serve as hubs for knowledge acquisition. The existing body of literature on school improvement emphasises key concepts that are pertinent to the development of schools as learning organisations. Professional development should be designed to facilitate collaborative work and learning among instructors. The establishment of a Centre for Teacher Development plays a pivotal role in achieving successful school improvement, particularly when the staff prioritise their engagement in professional learning (Harris, 2002:75).
- **Collaborative endeavours:** Harris (2002:75) mentions that collaborating with individuals who have achieved notable achievement is a crucial factor in fostering the

development of improvement capacity. Effective leaders demonstrate a diverse array of interpersonal qualities such as empathy, trust, credibility, courage, honesty and fairness

According to the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2011:74-75), the implementation of a SIP can be achieved via the collaborative efforts of the school community and many stakeholders. In order to facilitate the execution of school-development initiatives, it is recommended to establish school-development committees. The individual responsible for overseeing the operations and management of the educational institution assumes the role of the chairperson within the committee. The objective of the school-development committee is to develop a comprehensive approach that facilitates the active involvement of the school community and many stakeholders in the enhancement of educational institutions. This entails the following:

- The development of improvement strategies through self-assessment and to oversee the execution thereof; these plans facilitate parents' access to comprehensive and up-to-date information on their children's educational progress and academic achievements.
- The promotion of avenues for fostering a connection between the educational institution and the learners' families.
- The arrangement of concise training sessions and forums aimed at fostering knowledge exchange among educators and the school community, focusing on topics pertinent to enhancing school development, while ensuring a flexible timetable.

The following section deals with the contributions of school principals to the implementation of the SIP.

2.5.2 Contributions of school principals towards the implementation of the SIP

The SIP places significant emphasis on the role of leadership and management, particularly in relation to the planning and engagement of the school community. This involvement is crucial for decision-making processes and the implementation of activities aimed at enhancing the school's performance. Additionally, the programme recognises the importance of supporting the community and evaluating the effectiveness of school activities. This section outlines the contributions made by school principals towards the successful execution of SIPs. According to Clark (2012), it is crucial for school leaders to prioritise the facilitation of effective

teaching and learning on a daily basis in order to foster school improvement. The involvement of principals has been instrumental in providing assistance for the implementation of the SIP, as well as offering support in teaching methodology and various other aspects related to teaching and learning, with the ultimate goal of enhancing school performance (Bredeson, 2000; Steyn, 2002; Leithwood et al., 2004; Hutton, 2016; Benoliel, 2017; Hourani & Stringer, 2015; Benoliel, 2017). The writers listed above argue that, based on their examination of the connections between leadership and learning, the principal assumes the most significant position in influencing learner accomplishment. The assertion is made that effective leadership in the educational setting necessitates a high level of involvement and comprehensive understanding of the school's activities.

2.5.3 The principal is at the centre of school improvement

Classroom management refers to creating a safe and stimulating environment (George et. al., 2017) and has been highlighted as the major variable that affects every aspect of learners' performance and achievement. Effective classroom management set the foundation for cognitive and social-emotional development among learners (Patrick, 2016; Nisar et al., 2019) and the stage for the effective teaching-learning process (Nair, et al., 2019). In other words, classroom management is the science of making decisions and taking control of whatever is taking place during the teaching and learning process.

According to Hansen and Lárusdóttir (2015), the concept of instructional leadership theory can be traced back to the late 1970s. They further concur that there is a growing understanding that principals should possess strong instructional leadership skills and actively engage in the school development programme, in addition to their other responsibilities. According to the Department of Education (DoE, 2008), the primary focus of a principal's leadership role is centred on three key responsibilities: managing the school, improving the quality of teaching and learning, and increasing student performance levels. The centrality of enhancing instructional practices by principals is evident, as all school activities undertaken by principals are directed at fostering improved instruction, hence leading to overall school improvement (Hoadly, 2007).

It is known that principals' managerial duties are organising, planning, leading and controlling (Van der Westhuizen, 2002). These duties aim to bring improvement to school, but getting into the classroom and finding out what takes place there provide the principal with

first-hand and relevant information for properly planning, leading and supporting educators to teach effectively.

Schools, as organisations, require solid administration for ideal viability (Luncenburg, 2001:1l; Challens & Van der Vyver, 2019). The principal has the obligation of managing and overseeing the school and is responsible to the Department, the SGB and the school community. Luncenburg (2001:5) explains that the principal's role includes leading the organisation, managing and securing accountability, shaping the directions and development, and developing and empowering others. Principals are required to create a system for continuous improvement of all frameworks within the school, to ensure that challenges are addressed and to implement an all-encompassing approach to wellness among learners, staff and parents (DBE, 2015).

Principals should work with the SGB and the SMT, as well as with other stakeholders within the school community, to actualise a shared vision and to ensure the schools' ongoing improvement. The SMT takes on administrator activities as their role within the operation of a school. The principal must also oversee the human assets and make decisions on staffing. To ensure that the environment of the school is empowered, all vacant posts need to be filled with a reasonable assignment of workload among teachers. The principal ought to ensure that staff adheres to conditions of service within the school. It is the principal's obligation to ensure that direction is given for work-related issues to ensure that all aspects of administering and managing the school are complied with (DBE, 2015).

In addition, the principal is responsible for putting in place plans that ensure continuous improvement of academic achievement, by overseeing and assessing the educational modules; by doing this, the quality of instructing and learning will be guaranteed (DBE, 2015& DBE). Control remains a fundamental component for the principal because it has to do with the evaluation and assessment of assignments. (Mooney & Mausbach, 2008: 83.) Thus, the core purposes of the principals are driving teaching and learning within the school, ensuring the improvement of the school, and overseeing the quality of teaching and learning (DBE, 2015). In addition, principals are responsible for ensuring that school objectives, concerning school advancement, are met inside the endorsement period (Marishane, 2013:23). For school improvement to ensure the development of the culture of teaching and learning, principals, teachers, learners, and parents ought to be committed to the method of

change, which reflects on changing their own practices. The most perfect way to do this is to create a solid drive within the school and within the administration and authority of the school.

It was observed in a study conducted by Hoadley (2007) that a significant number of principals have limited expertise in instructional leadership, and a majority of them do not see themselves as instructional leaders. Hoadley (2007) asserts that contemporary principals specifically possess limited expertise in the domains of instructional leadership, personnel management and educational administration. There is a scarcity of literature regarding the management of teaching and learning in South Africa, as noted by Bush et al. (2013). There is a lack of documented information regarding the implementation of instructional leadership by school principals and other school managers in South Africa (Bush et al. 2013).

2.5.4 Principals as manager of teaching and learning

It is anticipated that principals would have a significant role in the facilitation of teaching and learning processes. According to SACE (2011:26), it is imperative for principals to cultivate a conducive atmosphere that facilitates the development of a shared comprehension and overarching perspective of the curriculum within the educational institution. Furthermore, it is the duty of principals to cultivate a collective school vision that emphasises both excellence and equity. This involves establishing realistic objectives through the utilisation of educational technologies and engaging in curriculum programmes aimed at enhancing school performance (Stringer & Hourani, 2015:3). In order to foster a healthy learning environment, it is imperative for principals to exert their influence on educator learning by actively participating in the design, delivery and assessment of the curriculum. The authors, Stringer and Hourani (2015), argue that the establishment of a culture that fosters motivation among teachers and learners can be achieved through the adoption of teaching and learning models that incorporate technology. This approach not only supports the process of teaching and learning, but also facilitates the implementation of strategies aimed at ensuring access, inclusion and diversity within the educational system. Additionally, the authors emphasise the importance of developing effective teachers in this context (Stringer & Hourani, 2015:4).

According to Steyn (2002), the Department of Basic Education (DBE) is responsible for establishing the policy, legal and regulatory framework that governs the operations of schools

at both national and provincial levels. The objective of this policy framework is to ensure the facilitation of effective teaching and learning. Principals, in their capacity as leaders, bear the responsibility of ensuring the implementation of these policies, while also ensuring their alignment with the departmental policies. It is imperative for the principal to recognise the significance of establishing a tight collaboration with district officials in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. As individuals in positions of instructional leadership, they do not possess expertise in all academic disciplines. In order to design a comprehensive teacher-development programme, the principals must seek the assistance of topic specialists.

2.5.5 Strategies used by principals in school improvement

Principals employ various strategies in their endeavours to enhance schools. However, two primary perspectives exist within school-improvement programmes. The first perspective posits that schools can achieve improvement by adhering to externally determined standards. The second perspective emphasises the importance of schools reviewing their outcomes and utilising them as a basis for improvement; thereby embracing the concept of a learning school. In this educational context, the learning process is structured within the school setting, with a focus on staff development, effective leadership, clear communication, the promotion of learning within the school community, and the enhancement of community networks. It is imperative for educational institutions to establish explicit goals for enhancing school performance. In order to enhance the quality of proposals, it is necessary to formulate them with well-defined and appropriate objectives. This could provide a challenge for certain educational institutions, as the set objectives may be rigorous and arduous to achieve. School improvement include strategies to enhance the leadership and managerial skills of school personnel, with the aim of ensuring equitable access to high-quality education for all students. The enhancement of educational institutions may involve the implementation of modifications in pedagogy and the acquisition of knowledge (Moreda; 2023: 99).

2.5.6 School-development plan

The authors McGilchrist, Myers and Reed (1997), Senge et al. (2000), and Sun et al. (2007) emphasise the need of a school's ongoing process of self-learning in order to achieve enhanced performance. The educational institution acquires knowledge and improves its practices by engaging in the process of school development planning. According to Hargreaves and Hopkins (1994:3), the concept of school development planning can be

defined as a systematic approach to strategies and implement improvements inside an educational institution within a designated timeframe. In order to effectively monitor progress, it is imperative for a school development strategy to have performance targets (Hulpia & Valcke, 2004). According to MacBeath (2010:7), the implementation of a school development programme enables schools to accomplish the following:

- Articulate and embody their vision
- Adopt a comprehensive approach to enhance their performance
- Attain their intended goals and objectives
- Assess the rate of change
- Foster creativity among educators
- Enhance the quality of staff development
- Streamline reporting processes
- Enhance the collaboration between staff and the SGB

2.5.7 The effectiveness of the implementation of the SIP in improving teaching and learning in secondary schools

The concept of school effectiveness pertains to the evaluation of a school's ability to achieve its intended goals, as described by MacBeath and Mortimore (2001:9). School effectiveness refers to the extent to which a school can provide sufficient resources and support to ensure that students achieve desired objectives (Harris, 2005:2). On the other hand, school improvement involves making necessary changes to the educational environment to facilitate students in attaining the expected outcomes. School improvement refers to the enhancement of the overall effectiveness and sustainability of a school, enabling it to undertake a systematic and purposeful process aimed at achieving its desired objectives (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000:23).

The studies that report on school effectiveness refer to the implementation of a school improvement plan being coordinated by a method which has related targets (MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001:5). Ainscow et al. (2012:198) state that school improvement can change the purpose and make an environment from which students can achieve their best accomplishments, both in their schools and in their communities. Learners will learn in a favourable and conducive environment. School improvement may be reduced in a setting where the schools do not deal with the complex circumstances that are experienced inside the schools or between schools and outside the school environment. Schools, which are

considered successful, focus on aspects, such as forms of leadership, teaching and learning, and their commitment to continuous professional development (Harris & Muijs, 2005:132).

Educational institutions prioritise the instruction and acquisition of knowledge in order to facilitate learners' progress towards achieving predetermined educational objectives. According to Hajnal, Walker and Sackney (1998), schools that exhibit high levels of performance can be attributed to the competent leadership and management of skilled and experienced principals, as well as their management teams. Additionally, the extent to which these schools receive support from other stakeholders, including parents and the community, also plays a significant role. According to Monnane (2002), the presence of highly effective managers or leaders in schools is indicative of the effectiveness of the educational institution. Consequently, there exists a correlation between effective school management and the overall effectiveness and improvement of the school. Effective leaders and managers has the ability to improve school effectiveness, hence providing a comprehensive understanding of the notion of school management. School effectiveness is realised through the implementation of the school-improvement process, which facilitates transformative measures aimed at achieving the objectives of the educational institution. Additionally, it is crucial to provide a contextual understanding of the SIP.

Strategic information emphasises the importance of modifying fundamental organisational procedures and prioritising strategic information within a specific environment in order to gain comprehensive insights into transformative processes (Harris, 2020). The importance of addressing internal conditions and enhancing developmental ability is widely recognised in the literature (Hopkins, Harris & Jackson, 1997). There exists a significant corpus of academic literature pertaining to social intelligence that lays considerable emphasis on the development of skills and competencies, as well as the influence of educational environments. The presence of capacity building plays a significant role in achieving desired outcomes, since the absence of such capacity might hinder schools from maintaining ongoing school-improvement initiatives that lead to enhanced student outcomes (Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001). Thus, Harris (2011) emphasises the significance of intentional, focused and strategic capacity development in order to achieve successful implementation of change. King and Bouchard (2011) suggest that the concept of school capacity encompasses five interconnected characteristics that exert an influence on the calibre of instruction and academic performance of students inside educational institutions. The aforementioned

elements encompass the professional community, teachers' expertise, abilities, and attitudes towards education, the alignment of programmes, the efficacy of principal leadership, and the availability of technical resources. Mincu (2015) emphasises the significance of collective-capacity building in the context of social innovation strategic information asserting that such ability may be cultivated through teacher development and the utilisation of research-derived knowledge. There is a pressing need for research conducted inside school settings that places a strong emphasis on collaboration and inquiry. Such research is crucial in enhancing the ability of schools to facilitate good transformations. This is because the responsibility for effecting change in schools is a collective one, requiring the active participation and engagement of all stakeholders (Ainscow, 2020). According to Ateş and Ünal (2019), it is recommended that every educational institution should undertake the implementation of a school-improvement project, which would afterwards facilitate its transition into a professional learning community. The case study conducted on a school-improvement demonstrated that the project effectively established a learning environment that was consistently present, served as a catalyst for motivation, granted autonomy, and addressed the inherent desire for purpose among teachers.

The literature has identified some crucial attributes of school improvement that necessitate thorough examination. First and foremost, there exists a correlation between school culture and student engagement. The significance of school culture as a crucial source of information regarding the emotions, assumptions, values, and beliefs that shape an individual's identity is highlighted in the study conducted by Zhu, Devos and Li (2011). In their study, Lee and Louis (2019) observed that schools that possessed a robust presence of cultural factors, such as academic press, student support, trust and respect, low negativity, and professional learning community, demonstrated superior levels of school performance in comparison to similar schools without these characteristics. The significance of these cultural factors in ensuring the long-term success of social integration has been unveiled. Harris and Jones (2010) argue that the prevailing school culture has a crucial role in either facilitating, or impeding innovation and transformation. According to Fullan (2020:140), there is a suggestion that the establishment of a culture that fosters continuous improvement requires leaders to create an environment where individuals willingly adopt and demonstrate a commitment to this endeavour, both for their own benefit and for the benefit of others. The establishment of a change-supportive, robust, improvement-oriented, and positive culture might be seen as

crucial for the success of school improvement. School leadership is an additional factor that is considered in the context of school improvement. According to Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2020), the impact of school leadership on several aspects of schools, such as the quality of teaching and learning, has been well recognised. They argue that effective school leadership plays a crucial part in the success of most school-improvement projects. Similarly, the authors Robinson, Bendikson, McNaughton, Wilson and Zhu (2017) contend that leadership assumes a pivotal function in orchestrating endeavours to enhance educational institutions. According to Supovitz, D'Auria, and Spillane (2019), the primary objective of educational leadership is to achieve significant and enduring school improvement. An expanding body of scholarly literature has demonstrated the impact of school leadership on favourable student outcomes (Coelli & Green, 2012; Bruggencate, Luyten, Scheerens & Sleegers, 2012; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Özdemir & Yalçın, 2019; Karadağ, 2020;). The impact of school environment on student engagement has been extensively studied, with research indicating that it is a significant predictor of students' academic, behavioural and psychological well-being (Wang & Degol, 2016). Thapa, Cohen, Guffey & Higgins-D'Alessandro (2013:369) assert that the concept of school climate encompasses the collective perceptions and experiences of various stakeholders within the educational institution, including school personnel, students and parents. These perceptions encompass multiple dimensions, including social, emotional, civic, ethical, and academic aspects of school life. It is suggested that an examination of school climate should be conducted by considering the perspectives of staff, students and parents across four key dimensions of school life, namely safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the institutional environment. Additionally, it is worth noting that the examination of the impact of school environment on school transformation is of great importance. This inquiry can provide valuable insights into the processes and efforts related to school improvement, hence enhancing our understanding in this area. The study conducted by Karadağ, İşçi, Öztekin and Anar (2016) revealed that school atmosphere emerged as a substantial predictor of student accomplishment, as indicated by a meta-analysis. The findings of this study demonstrate the significant influence that many attributes of the school environment can exert on social integration. Teacher collaboration is an additional crucial factor that exerts a favourable influence on student engagement, as evidenced by the research conducted by Hoque, Alam and Abdullah (2011). According to a study conducted by Weddle, Lockton and Datnow (2020), the act of teachers collaborating with one another has been found to provide beneficial effects on both teacher practices and

student learning outcomes. Aldridge, Rijken and Fraser (2020) propose that an increase in interactions among teachers is associated with a greater likelihood of engaging in reflective thinking, evaluating their classroom actions, and subsequently transforming their instructional practises. In order to foster genuine collaboration among educators, it is imperative for them to cultivate interdependence and cultivate a shared vision and duty aimed at enhancing student learning (Ibrahim, 2020). Similarly, there is a connection between teacher professional growth and social intelligence (Hoque et al., 2011). According to Mitchell (2013:390), professional development can be defined as the systematic acquisition or enhancement of skills, knowledge, and attitudes to enhance one's practise. Mitchell further argues that teacher professional development can be considered as successful instructional intervention if it leads to improvements in both teacher practices and student outcomes. According to Poekert (2012), teacher leadership may be viewed as a type of professional development that is integrated into the job. The author suggests that teachers should be cultivated as leaders, as this can potentially improve student accomplishment and strengthen the overall capacity of the school. This perspective establishes a connection between teacher leadership, professional development, and school improvement. The items presented in the literature review of this study are not comprehensive. According to Hopkins (2001), there are several elements within schools that are linked to the growth and progress of educational institutions. Some of these elements, which have been previously discussed, include staff development, active participation of staff, students, and the community in school policies and decision-making processes, transformational leadership, efficient coordination strategies, inquiry and reflection, and a dedication to collaborative planning activities. Based on prior research, it is plausible to assert that school improvement can be attained through collaborative endeavours and contributions from the school community.

2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Education has a pivotal function in empowering individuals within a society to assume meaningful responsibilities that positively contribute to the overall welfare of the community. Education has a significant role in fostering societal development by enhancing the capabilities of individuals. Moreover, it assumes a crucial function in the societal and economic advancement of a nation through the transformation of inputs into outputs in a process. The absence of a high standard of education renders individuals incapable of thriving within societal structures. In order to facilitate the intended function of education, it is

imperative to use quality management strategies aimed at enhancing the overall quality of educational systems (Tyagi, 2012:74). One widely adopted strategy for enhancing quality is known as Total Quality Management (TQM). It enables school leadership to plan properly the implementation of school improvement programmes to increase learners' achievement. (Tyagi, 2012:74; Koontze & Weihrich, 2005:392).

Total Quality Management (TQM) as an improvement strategy is also suggested by Harris, Bennet and Preedy (1997:263–268) and Motaboli (2009) who posit that improvement takes place in this cyclical TQM process, defined as "continuously meeting agreed customer requirements at lowest cost".

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a systematic approach to organisational management that aims to ensure that all tasks and processes are executed accurately and consistently on every occasion. This systematic approach to quality management is characterised by the adoption of a quality management mind-set throughout all stages of the supply chain. The TQM idea is a comprehensive managerial philosophy that encompasses the entire supply chain, extending beyond the confines of purchasing and supply management (Mbanje & Lunga 2015:90).

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a strategic approach employed to modify the organisational culture of a company, involving the active engagement of all employees in various aspects of the organisational processes. The primary objective of TQM is to foster continuous improvement in quality through collaborative teamwork, ultimately leading to the attainment of the organisation's intended goals (Hosein 2016:1155). Total Quality Management (TQM) is a strategy framework that necessitates the ongoing assessment and enhancement of continuous improvement (Karim, Roshanfekr, Azizi & Hatami, 2013). Total Quality Management (TQM) is a comprehensive management philosophy that aims to achieve ongoing enhancements in the quality of both goods and processes. The holistic approach to achieving long-term success is characterised by a perspective that regards continual improvement across all facets of an organisation as an ongoing process rather than a fleeting objective. According to a study conducted by Lysons and Farrington (2012), as reported by Mbanje and Lunga (2015), based on a comprehensive analysis of many scholarly contributions, the present synthesis aims to encapsulate the essence of TQM by highlighting its core focus on the attainment of customer satisfaction. The aforementioned statement refers

to a management philosophy that aims to establish a customer-centric, knowledge-based company committed to achieving complete customer satisfaction by consistently enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation and its processes. Additionally, it is asserted that TQM fulfils the customer's perceived requirements. The achievement of desired outcomes within an organisation is contingent upon the collective commitment of all individuals involved, who must demonstrate a steadfast dedication towards attaining results. This commitment should be accompanied by a fervent pursuit of excellence, wherein a strong emphasis is placed on ensuring high standards of quality. Moreover, decisions made within the organisation should be informed by objective performance data, so promoting a data-driven approach to decision-making. According to the provided definition, it is imperative for all components of the organisation to be committed to the objective of attaining the utmost levels of performance, as demanded by both internal and external consumers, in alignment with the pursued strategy (Murgatroyd & Morgan 1993:60). According to Zaman and Anjalin (2016:207), it is widely acknowledged that TQM is a management philosophy that is effective in promoting continuous improvement, enhancing customer satisfaction, and achieving organisational excellence.

Quality management refers to the methodical administration of customer-supplier interactions inside an organisation with the aim of ensuring the attainment of quality performance (Murgatory & Morgan, 1993:59). Total Quality Management (TQM) is a strategic approach to quality assurance that prioritises meeting customer demands and expectations via a commitment to ongoing improvement (Collin, 2014:196). According to MacBeath (2008:8) and Collin (2014:197), the factors that contribute to the path of a school as an organisation are the following:

i. **Cultivating a customer supplier focus** is a key aspect of organisational orientation within the school setting. This entails fostering a collective mind-set among individuals within the school community to actively engage in establishing collaborative relationships with both internal and external stakeholders, including customers and suppliers.
ii. **Constant dedication to continuous development** is expected from every individual within the school community, both in their professional and personal lives, as well as in their engagement with the wider community.

iii. **A process system approach** entails perceiving each school as an organisation that operates as a system, wherein the tasks performed by individuals within the school are regarded as continuous processes.

iv. **Consistent quality leadership** is necessary for the successful implementation of quality transformation. It is essential for the management to assume responsibility for the outcome of this transformation. The attainment of this objective necessitates a sustained commitment to the concepts and implementation of TQM, which can only be accomplished via the passage of time.

According to Harris (2006:263-268), TQM has been proposed as a viable technique for enhancing school improvement. The author elucidates that the process of improvement occurs in a cyclical manner, with the aim of consistently satisfying consumers' agreed-upon objectives while minimising costs. Total Quality Management (TQM) is a managerial methodology that focuses on the whole development of educational institutions and the attainment of school improvement. According to Harris (2006:268), there exists a correlation between TQM and the field of strategic management. The author suggests that individuals within the TQM group should actively identify chances for improvement and actively participate in problem-solving activities. Moreover, TQM places emphasis on the achievement of objectives by educational institutions and evaluates the extent to which schools effectively align with their established routines. TQM also emphasises the importance of making informed decisions regarding the improvement and sustainability of the school. Furthermore, TQM advocates for the adaptation of external changes to suit internal needs, with a particular focus on the internal conditions of the school. Additionally, TQM utilises performance data to inform future development efforts. Lastly, TQM recognises the necessity of embracing change in order to facilitate the transformation of school culture.

According to Middlewood and Lumby (1998), if correctly practised, it entails:

- being proactive;
- maintaining consistency of purpose and mission;
- being reflective;
- utilising the organisational capabilities;
- being creative;
- being effective in approach;

- examining external environment; and
- being accountable to stakeholders.

In the realm of strategic management, it is imperative to formulate a vision and mission in order to establish unambiguous objectives. It can be situated within an organisational culture that is oriented towards enhancing effectiveness and fostering continuous improvement. The marketability of a school is influenced by both internal and external factors in the realm of strategic management. The school-development plan typically encompasses the strategic thrusts. In order to effectively attain strategic objectives, it is imperative for managers to facilitate the establishment of cooperative relationships among all stakeholders within the school community, including fostering strategic governance with the School Governing Body (SGB). The governing body of the school is actively engaged in the processes of strategic planning, policy formulation and the assessment of overall school advancement. The concept of strategic management is focused on facilitating the self-governance of educational institutions. Caldwell and Spinks (1998) delineate the following four dimensions pertaining to self-managing schools:

- **strategic leadership** - capacity to see the bigger picture and allow others to make a contribution;
- **cultural leadership** - changing the way things are done and introducing a culture of performance;
- **educational leadership** - developing a community of learning; and
- **responsive leadership** - building a culture of accountability and responsibility

Leadership is a crucial aspect in ensuring that all members of the educational institution are engaged in activities that promote continual high performance and continuous improvement of the school. Leadership, when viewed through the lens of comprehensive quality, is grounded in a methodical approach that enables the facilitation of others' work in order to attain ambitious objectives that not only meet but surpass the expectations of stakeholders.

In the educational setting, educators are inherently regarded as possessing authority within their classrooms, and there is a strong acknowledgment of the importance of granting teachers significant professional independence. This recognition is rooted in the principles of TQM, which aim to empower teachers by decentralising decision-making authority and allowing

them the freedom to establish ambitious objectives for the educational processes under their purview (Firdissa, 2008:26; Collin, 2014:197).

Deming (1993), developed a framework consisting of fourteen principles that outline techniques for school improvement in the context of TQM implementation. These points are sufficient for implementation at a single school, but may vary significantly between various schools (Firdissa, 2008:30; Collin, 2014:197-200). These fourteen principles are as follows:

i. **Adopt a new philosophy:** Quality is needed in everything (book storage, security of the school, classroom rules, interaction with legislature). In order to achieve this quality in the school, the atmosphere of cooperation as opposed to completion must be instilled.

ii. **Avoid obsession with goals and slogans:** SMT must improve the processes so that the goals can be achieved.

iii. **Break down barriers:** Cooperation must be encouraged and unnecessary competition avoided. Cross-function teams must be encouraged to address problems and the process of improvement. All stakeholders will have a broader perspective in addressing issues and everyone must be involved in the decision-making process; this will result in a better solution that will also be easily accepted by all.

iv. **Cease dependence on mass inspection:** This focuses of student achievement and progress in learning;

v. **Constantly improve processes**: learners and parents are more satisfied than they were in the previous year in terms of achievement;

vi. **Create constancy of purpose**: This study focuses on the development of a mission statement for the school, which outlines the educational institution's corporate purpose and its commitment to fostering the growth of students' abilities, attitudes, knowledge, and motivation within the school environment.

vii. **Define management's responsibilities to make it happen:** School management at every level but particularly at the very top must take pride in adopting the TQM philosophy.

viii. **Drive out fear**: Fear is a big issue in students. Teachers must balance their roles to reduce students' fear, because fear can have a negative impact on students' performance at school.

ix. **Eliminate numerical quotas:** It is known that numbers are the crutches of poor supervision. Quality should be a priority. Only after the process is designed so that quality is assured should the question of quantity be addressed.

x. **End the practice of conducting business alone:** The role of the school leader encompasses that of a designer, tasked with creating an atmosphere that actively seeks out barriers to effective communication and productivity, with the aim of eliminating them.

xi. **Institute training:** It is important to teach TQM to everyone in schools because once everyone knows about and understands the management principles, the more easily for everyone to accept the ideas.

xii. **Institute school leadership:** Everyone should play a leadership role at school. School leadership is better than school management. Each person should be a supervisor; not a judge. The school principal should create and design a good school environment. Effective school leaders will search for barriers to communication and productivity and remove them.

xiii. **Organisation-wide involvement:** It is imperative to involve all relevant stakeholders in the process of enhancing school performance. Individuals inside educational institutions who acquire knowledge about TQM are significantly more inclined to support the concept and propose innovative approaches for its implementation within their respective roles.

xiv. **Remove barriers to pride of workmanship**: According to Munoz (1999:6, as stated in Tekalign, 2016:53), TQM is seen as a strategic approach wherein both management and employees collaborate to achieve ongoing enhancements.

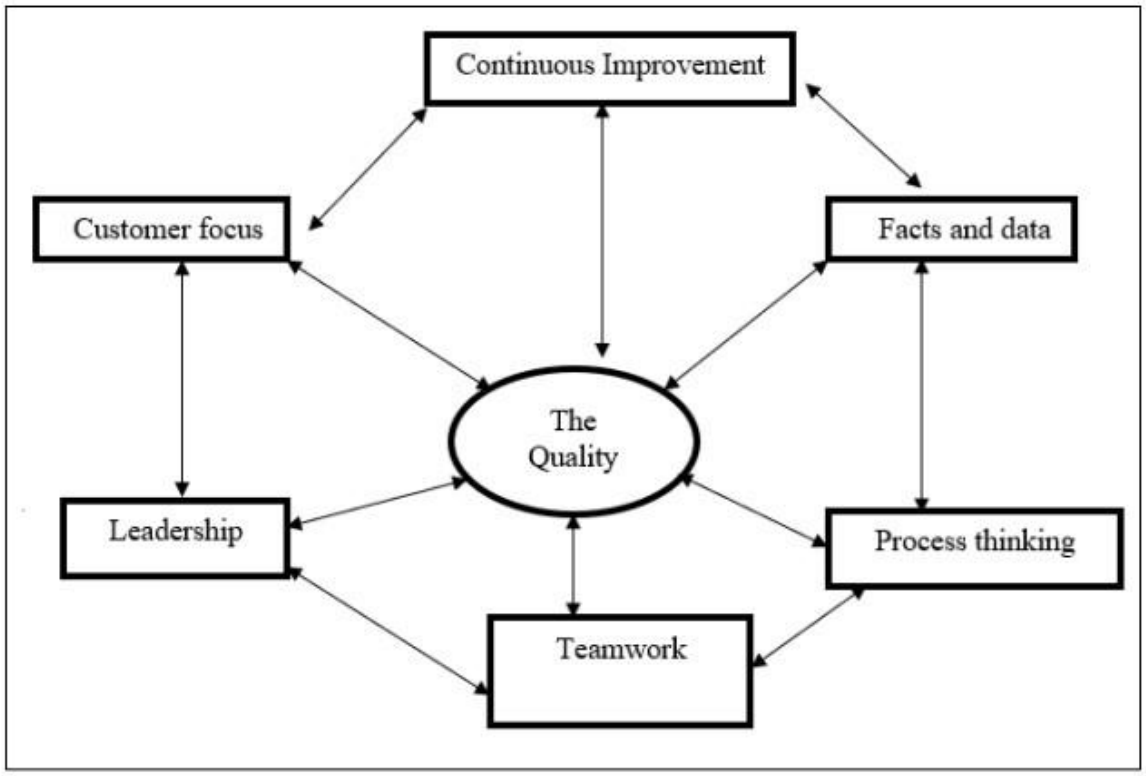

Figure: 2.2. Total Quality Management in School Improvement Programme (Adopted from Irwin, 1993:15 cited in Moreda 2022: 65).

Figure 2.2 illustrates the cyclical nature of the school improvement programme, which is based on the principles of TQM in order to achieve effective enhancements in educational institutions. The aforementioned cycle commences with the implementation of continuous improvement, wherein the design of school-development strategies is grounded in factual evidence and data. Additionally, the adoption of process thinking, cultivation of team spirit, demonstration of effective and efficient leadership, and prioritisation of learners and parents are integral components of this cycle. The chosen model for studying the interaction of factors in the cyclical process of implementing school development-programmes in secondary schools surrounding Ingwavuma is the Total Quality Management (TQM) model. This model allows for a comprehensive examination of the implementation process. Additionally, it facilitates school administrators in effectively strategizing the execution of educational enhancement initiatives aimed at enhancing students' academic performance. Moreover, TQM is a methodical framework aimed at improving performance by identifying and addressing errors that impede the effective execution of the school development plan.

According to Tekalign (2016: 55), this phenomenon has the potential to exert a favourable impact on the leadership and management of educational institutions.

2.7 CONCLUSION

Chapter Two provides a comprehensive literature analysis on the experiences of school principals in the execution of school-development programmes. The chapter further provided an analysis of the fundamental inquiries pertaining to the nature of school improvement and the manner in which this idea is delineated. Furthermore, the discourse encompassed the examination of various matters, including the efficacy and enhancement of educational institutions, the involvement of school principals in the process of school amelioration, the contributions made by school principals in the execution of school improvement initiatives, the tactics employed for school enhancement, and the engagement of parents in these endeavours. The concept of school leadership was also examined as the mechanism through which the school's vision is realised. The concept of school improvement was delineated.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of the research methodology utilised in the current study, with a specific emphasis on the importance of utilising qualitative research techniques and the application of the case study approach. It further explicated the process of data collection, along with the strategies utilised for analysis. Furthermore, this chapter outlines the strategies utilised to address the research questions. Moreover, this section includes a comprehensive study of demographic and sampling approaches, provides a justification for the chosen data gathering techniques, and outlines the data-analysis process used to triangulate the data. This is followed by an in-depth analysis of the methodologies utilised to ensure the integrity, dependability, and credibility of the study, and in conclusion is a discussion on the ethical implications and the researcher's role in the research endeavour.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

3.2.1 Relevance of the qualitative approach to the study

The study adopted a qualitative research methodology, utilising multiple case studies that were comprehensively detailed. Qualitative research methodologies encompass the gathering of data through various methods such as observations, interviews and document analysis. The primary mode of summarising the obtained findings in qualitative research is through narrative or verbal techniques. According to Leavy (2014:121), the qualitative approach is both methodological and hypothetical. It, moreover, adopts malleable plans in which the technique is changed to agree with modern learning as the investigation unfolds. The main aim of the qualitative researcher is to gain a deep, clear understanding of the feelings of participants and how they derive meaning from their surroundings, despite the intrigues of what they are asked to consider. It investigates the subjective perspectives of a person or the groups of people being considered. The subjective inquiry could be a non-numerical descriptive that applies thinking by utilising words, and this suggests that subjective information cannot be graphed (Rajasekar et al., 2013:9; Okeke, 2015: 217).

The qualitative research approach is characterised by a preference for a naturalistic context. The study priorities do not primarily revolve around theory and hypothesis-testing, but instead prioritise the perspectives and experiences of the research participants. The researcher assumes a crucial role in the relationship between the researcher and the participant, serving

as a tool for research and data gathering (Neuman, 2006). The qualitative research methodology encompasses the process of documenting authentic occurrences, capturing persons' verbal expressions, non-verbal cues, and vocal inflections, observing specific behaviours, or assessing visual representations (Michael et al., 2012:64). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 320), qualitative research involves the exploration of suspicions, worldviews, the potential application of theoretical frameworks, and the examination of concerns that delve into the significance of an individual's contribution to a societal or human problem. Moreover, the authors suggested that quantitative methodologies encompass experimental, descriptive, correlational, and *ex post facto* techniques for gathering data.

The researcher can describe complex phenomena such as individuals' perceptions. Qualitative research can seek to build an understanding of phenomena. The qualitative research may be a holistic picture with a profundity of understanding, instead of a numeric examination of information (Ary et al., 2014:32). Utilising subjective strategies can be a successful way when deciphering advisers' pondering over investigative issues dealing with the meanings of people or groups that relate to the social association, culture or human conduct (Creswell, 2013:44).

Participants have more flexibility to decide what is significant to them and they can show it in its setting (Flick, 2015:11). The researcher needs to be general and broad and in seeking to understand the participants' experiences. The constructivist paradigm that acknowledges that numerous substances exist incited the consideration to utilise subjective strategies to try to understand the developments that individuals have achieved in those settings (Mertens, 2010:18). The subjective investigative approach empowered this researcher to consider in detail the encounters of principals in school-improvement programmes in the Ingwavuma circuit (Martella et al., 2013:325).

While some researchers perceive qualitative and quantitative research methodologies as conflicting paradigms, scholars like Cresswell (2003) consider them as mutually supportive within the study process. The chosen research methodology for this study was qualitative in nature, as it facilitated the exploration of phenomena in their natural environments. This technique enabled the researcher to incorporate the perspectives and experiences of both the researcher and the participants, thereby enhancing the comprehension and depiction of the

collected data (Motaboli, 2009). The utilisation of a qualitative research methodology was chosen for this study in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of school principals involved in the implementation of a school development initiative.

Qualitative approach includes collecting information, presenting this information to common people, allowing the members being interviewed to produce their reactions, gathering content or picture information, and collecting data from a limited number of people or destinations (Newby, 2010:116). Lauer (2006: 76) traces the advantage of subjective investigations as giving more emphasis to setting comprehensive quality and less emphasis to confinement and to the examination of the argument that the thinking should be divided into different parts. The subjective approach investigates the normal conduct of common people (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 345). A naturalistic enquiry implies getting information in as common a setting as is conceivable (Newby, 2010:117). Qualitative research is used when there is a 'got to study' group of people who are investigated (Creswell, 2013); in this research, there is a need to engage with individuals to share their stories and to listen to their voices, and not to control the connections to a particular group of people. In conclusion, as Creswell (2013:48) sees it, the subjective investigation is utilised to create hypotheses when existing speculations do not satisfactorily deal with the issue being researched.

The research site for this investigation is the rural schools in the KwaZulu-Natal UMkhanyakude District. The focus is on the experiences of school principals in the implementation of the school-improvement programme in rural schools. The study utilises the process of pondering over cases as an inquiry about whether this technique is pertinent to the research. The researcher has chosen to consider whether each case can make a relevant contribution to the research since it empowers the analyst to focus on the case that is being addressed (Cohen et al., 2018).

A correlation exists between case-study methodology and qualitative research. Noor (2008) asserts that the case-study technique is a qualitative research approach with strategic implications. The association between the qualitative research approach and case study primarily arises from the imperative to cultivate a more profound comprehension of the issue under investigation and to duly acknowledge the perspectives and encounters of the research participants. The primary objective of employing the case-study technique is to derive interpretations that facilitate comprehension of the topic under investigation (Noor, 2008).

The subsequent section will include an elaborate exposition of the case study and its pertinence to qualitative research.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN: CASE-STUDY

A case study typically centres on the examination of small groups or individuals within a larger group, with the aim of documenting their experiences in a particular context. According to Robson (2002:177), a case study can be defined as the specific circumstance, individual, group or organisation that is the focus of our inquiry. Barkley (2006) further elucidates this concept by incorporating the notion that case studies are employed to examine current phenomena, particularly in situations where there exists a nuanced distinction between the phenomenon under investigation and its surrounding context. A case study is a technique in which the analyst in detail investigates a programme, an occasion, an action, a personal experience, or the experiences of different people. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and analysts collect, point by point, data employing an assortment of information-collection procedures over a supported period (Creswell, 2014). A case study could be planned because of requests from people in numerous areas and it involves a particular assessment, in which the analyst creates an in-depth examination of a case, frequently a programme, an occasion, an action, a process, or the experiences of one individual or more.

According to Martella et al. (2013:324), case-study research has the advantage of allowing for in-depth investigation of the case as well as probing and drilling down through prolonged immersion with the case (Ashley, 2012:102). The researcher picked an instrumental case study because there are various kinds of case studies. In order to gain new knowledge that could guide the development of policy, the use of an instrumental case study was intended to investigate the experiences of school principals in the implementation of a school-improvement programme (Fouche & Schurink, 2011:322). In a single instrumental case study, the researcher concentrates on a problem or issue before choosing one constrained case to represent the problem (Creswell, 2007:74). It goes further, though, and is employed to comprehend more than what is immediately apparent to the observer (Tellis, 1997). Because it aids in pursuing the external interest, the case is frequently examined in-depth, its circumstances are examined, and its routine actions are documented (Stake, 1995). In order to get insight into some more general difficulties, the researcher used an instrumental case study to look at instances of school improvement in public schools (Lodico et al., 2010:158). The case study has the benefit of concentrating on actual events and testing theories in connection

to the phenomenon as it manifests in practice (Flyvbjerg, 2006:235). The case study helped to shed light on the problem with the school-improvement programme and accomplished the objective of gathering principals' experiences (Stake, 1995; Willig, 2008:214). The case study, in accordance with Flyvbjerg's view (2006:221), generates the kind of context-dependent knowledge research on learning required to enable individuals to go from rule-based novices to virtual experts. Multiple kinds of case studies are mentioned by Rule and John (2011). The case-study approach has the advantage of examining unique circumstances in-depth for the views and experiences of the research subjects. Robson (2002:179) outlines the characteristics of case studies, and the following justifications for using case studies were used in this study:

- The aforementioned concept can be characterised as an approach rather than a method.
- This field of study encompasses research in a wide range of areas.
- The methodology employed in this study is based on the utilisation of empirical evidence.
- The focus is specifically on a certain case.
- The study centres its attention on the phenomenon within its specific environment.
- The process involves the triangulation of data obtained from several sources.

A case study could be divided into multiple smaller units or cases for individual, independent study. The case study method is suitable to study the case of the five schools in the UMkhanyakude District. In this study, the researcher used a case study; to examine and describe the implementation of the school improvement in secondary schools, the qualitative research approach was chosen to achieve this aim. Because it enable to get the deep understanding and view of the research participants on the experiences of principals in the implementation of school improvement programme in secondary schools. (Ary et al., 2014:32).

3.3.1 Population and site selection

Population refers to the total number of people, groups or organisations that are used in the study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014:59). The setting or location is connected to the particular people who are being examined. The analyst needs to conclude that the true test of

the study is about whether enough cases are included in the study (Creswell, et al., 2007). It is imperative to be clear on what the study population is before data collection takes place.

Sapsford (2007) defines population as the entire set of objects about which generalisations are made. Kumar (2014) states that researchers can only go to those who have information that is required and who are also willing to share it with the researcher. Usually, in qualitative research, participants are selected for inclusion that is based on the possibility that each participant will expand the variability of the sample (De Vaus 2010; Newman, 2014).

Principals of zone schools made up the study's sample. Five secondary schools were chosen through convenience sampling techniques from a total of 39 secondary schools (Grades 8–12) in the administrative zone of Ingwavuma. Data was also gathered through interviews. Using the purposive sampling method, five teachers were chosen and interviewed. There was a total of five individuals in the study who took part in focus groups and interviews. Secondary data was gathered from documents that were readily available, including annual reports from the zone's education office.

Purposive sampling was once more used in the study's second phase to choose five of the 39 schools where the researcher had conducted interviews for additional investigation. Based on the numerous interventions implemented at the schools, how well they were performing academically during these interventions, and how well they were functioning generally. The principals of the two schools told me during my early interviews that the schools were operating smoothly, had enough resources, and were not doing too poorly. However, the worst performing schools had sufficient resources while having a very dismal performance, according to the principal. Based on these testimonies, the researcher decided to focus attention on these five schools to learn more about the dynamics at work within each one and to try to figure out why one school was performing well while the others were not, despite the fact that these schools had access to enough resources.

Cluster sampling is a type of sampling in which groups of elements rather than single ones are randomly chosen (Johanson & Christensen, 2012:228). Cluster sampling with two steps of sampling was the method employed in this investigation. In two-stage cluster sampling, according to Johanson & Christensen (2012:229), a set of clusters is randomly chosen, and then a random sample of elements is taken from each of the clusters chosen in stage one. Therefore, based on geographic location, the population was segmented into clusters of

uniform units for the study. Instead of using individuals as sampling units, the study used groups. Then, samples of these clusters were chosen. Each unit from the chosen clusters was examined.

3.3.1.1 Purposive sampling

Sampling refers to a way of collecting data when the population is large (Bless, Highson & Kagee, 2006). Furthermore, Guthri (2010) and Babbie (2010) state that sampling is used by researchers as a starting point of research methods and design since design involves the use of samples. Sampling has effects in heading with the findings and the extent to which they can apply beyond the sample. Sometimes it is not possible to involve the whole population in the study, and therefore only a sample could be drawn.

In this study, the researcher chose a purposive sampling of five schools from Ingwavuma circuits that represented the whole population of schools in the UMkhanyakude district, KwaZulu Natal province, and principals of schools were selected to be participants. The school principals of secondary schools of Ingwavuma Circuit were believed to be the best sample since they are the leaders and have more information about the topic. These schools are among the few schools selected to start implementing the school-improvement programme.

This is often regarded as small-scale research with no intention to generalise the findings, and therefore the selected group represents itself, and not the whole population (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). In this study, the researcher used one strategy of purposive sampling, which is ‘convenience sampling’.

3.3.1.2 Convenience sampling

The participants in this study were selected through convenience sampling, which involved choosing individuals based on their ease of access to the researcher (Leavy, 2017:149). According to Palinkas et al. (2015:536), convenience sampling facilitates the researcher's data-collection process by providing a convenient means of obtaining information from participants. Convenience sampling was selected because of its ease and convenience in situations where there are limitations in terms of time and financial resources; yet, it may be perceived as a manifestation of a lack of thoroughness (Tracy, 2013:134). Furthermore,

participants were chosen opportunistically in addition to convenience sampling, taking into consideration factors such as availability, time constraints, geographical location or ease of access (Ary et al., 2014:459). The participants were selected based on their familiarity and expertise with the schools-improvement plan (DeMarais, 2004:58). This investigation was conducted under the guidance of reputable sources of information (Kumar, 2014:248). The individuals chosen to serve as resource persons in this study were principals of schools, specifically selected for their ability to offer valuable insights and detailed accounts of their experiences in executing the school-reform plan.

3.3.2 Site selection

The researcher chose a site that was suitable for the research problem, with free access and convenient to the participant (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:377). The research study was conducted in the UMkhanyakude district in the KwaZulu-Natal province. The UMkhanyakude district is situated in the northern parts of of KwaZulu-Natal. The two dominant languages are IsiZulu and IsiSwati. Moreover, these schools are among the few schools selected to start implementing the school-improvement-programme.

Interviews with the school principals were conducted in this zone. The interview questions were based on the school principals' experiences and opportunities in driving and managing their schools' improvement programmes. During the sampling process, the researcher ensured that the representativeness of the population that the researcher wanted to conclude from was also taken into account (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

3.3.3 Participants selection

Since the study took place in a deep rural area of the UMkhanyakude district, five secondary schools were selected. In addition, these schools were in the Quintile 2 group. South African schools are grouped into quintiles. The Minister of Basic Education determines these quintiles and identify every school that qualifies as no-fee school where learners are not charged school fees. The data received from the five schools are be summarised in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Table 3.1: The grouping of the participant schools into Quintiles

School	Participant	Place	Quintile	Charge fees Yes/No
School A	Principal	School	1	No
School B	Principal	School	2	No
School C	Principal	School	1	No
School D	Principal	School	2	No
School E	Principal	School	2	No

(Researcher,2023)

3.3.4 Data-collection techniques

Data collection refers to the methodical process of acquiring information from diverse sources in order to obtain a comprehensive and precise understanding of a certain subject matter. This facilitates the ability to address research inquiries effectively. This section provides details on the use of semi-structured interviews, observations, focus groups, and documents analysis to collect data. Data was analysed and interpreted to make meaning (Creswell, 2009; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). At the beginning of this study, ethical clearance was required. The researcher obtained an ethical-clearance certificate from the University of South Africa and also received approval from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education to conduct a study in their schools. Data was collected using document analysis, group interviews that were focused on Quintile 1 and 2 schools, observation, and through individual interviews with relevant stakeholders; recordings, where necessary, were also used.

3.3.4.1 Interviews

An interview is a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participant questions to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participant and were used collect data for the study (Maree, 2007: 87). The aim of qualitative interviews is to see the world through the eyes of the participants, as they can be a valuable source of information, provided they are used correctly (ibid.). An individual

interview is a face-to-face method of data collection that involves an interviewer and respondent discussing topics in depth, used when seeking information on individual, personal experiences from people about a specific issue (Hennik, Hutter & Bailey, 2011).

I adopted the semi-structured interview technique as these interviews were deemed appropriate particularly when topics are selected in advance, but which give the freedom to decide the sequence and wording of the questions during the interview process (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:381). This allows for probing and the clarification of answers; semi-structured interviews define the line of enquiry (Maree, 2007). Semi-structured interviews were therefore used for this research because of suppleness with regard to presentation structure and allowing the respondents to freely respond without any form of constraint. Drever (2003:13) argues that the aim of the semi-structured interview is to expound interviewee‘s comprehension of the research topic, and consequently produce in-depth information hence, my strongest choice to use it.

3.3.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014:80), an interview could be a discussion between the analyst and the respondent. The interview is described as a data collection instrument in which the interviewer asks questions orally and the interviewee answer the question orally. When conducting the interview, the response of the interviewee is recorded either verbatim or in summary De Marrais (2004:54, McMillan 2012 as cited in Moreda 2022). It is conducted in face-to-face interaction between both interviewer and the respondents, it could be a discussion between the analyst and the respondent that is based on questions related to the study. The semi-structured interview is a method of data collection that involves engaging in a personal dialogue with an individual participant in order to delve into the research topic or area of study (Watts & Ebbutt, 1987; Burton & Chadwick, 2000; Bryman, 2001; Wengraf, 2001; Cresswell, 2003; Yates, 2004;Trochim, 2006 & McMillan 2012 as cited in Moreda 2022). Consequently, this section examines the benefits and drawbacks associated with interviews, while emphasising the pertinence of utilising the semi-structured interview approach in the context of this research.

Bryman (2001), Denzin and Lincoln (2003), and Bryman and Teevan (2005) agree that interviews are commonly employed as a means of data collection in research endeavours under the following circumstances:

- There is a requirement for a more comprehensive comprehension and perception of the phenomenon.
- The examination should prioritise the content and manner of individuals' expressions.
- Adaptability has significance in the research procedure.
- The emphasis on the interviewee's perspective is of utmost importance.

According to Bryman (2001, as cited in Denscombe, 1998; McMillan 2012, as cited in Moreda 2022), there are several advantages associated with the use of interviews. These advantages are as follows:

- Interviews serve as a valuable tool for enhancing the recollection of the researcher when transcribed accurately. Furthermore, the transcribed material can be meticulously scrutinised and analysed in depth.
- Multiple analyses of data can be conducted repeatedly.
- The data can undergo scrutiny by fellow researchers.

The research study involved conducting individual interviews in five rural secondary schools located in the Ingwavuma circuit. Each interview session lasted for two to two-and-a-half hours. The researchers employed semi-structured face-to-face interviews as a means of gathering data from principals whose schools were part of the school-development initiative. The study involved individuals who were affiliated with the education sector, including both the researcher and the participants. To ensure that the interviews did not interfere with educational activities and learning schedules, cautious measures were implemented. Consequently, the interviews were scheduled to take place after regular school hours. Prior to bringing a voice recorder inside the study room, the researcher conducted a thorough examination and assessment to ensure its functionality and reliability.

The primary objective of conducting interviews is to obtain first-hand data directly from the participants. Through the utilisation of interviews, researchers have the opportunity to access unique information that is held within the cognitive faculties of the respondents (Merriam, 1998, McMillan 2012, as cited in Moreda 2022). The utilisation of semi-structured interviews facilitated the acquisition of responses pertaining to the study inquiries. Note-

taking and audio-recording techniques were employed to effectively capture the essential elements of the interviews. The utilisation of an audio recorder during the interview session allowed the researcher to divert the participants attention away from note-taking and instead concentrate on the interview itself, enabling them to capture the participants' facial expressions. These expressions could then be transcribed at a later time. The recorded material of interviews was procured in advance, as mentioned by Creswell (2013:173) and cited by Rapeta (2019:110).

While acknowledging the potential disruption caused by the use of an audio recorder to the respondent in the study, Cohen et al. (2011) argue that employing this method ensures the accuracy and reliability of the researcher's data.

3.3.4.3 Document analysis

Document analysis is a process of looking at the official documents of an institution to gather detailed data on the practices of the institution. In addition, document analysis may be the framework of a subjective investigation in which the analyst may translate the voices and meanings of those being interviewed. Examining the recordings of these interviews allows the researcher to join the coding substance into topics that may focus on, gather or meet the transcripts that are examined (Bowen, 2009). The researcher will analyse documents, such as the school-improvement plan, school-improvement policies, minutes and forms, to understand the phenomenon of the school-improvement programme (Prior, 2008).

The first report examination was expected to give a clear understanding of the components relating to the experiences of principals in the implementation of the school-improvement programme. The analysis of these documents was given an objective method of reasoning for the arrangement and the procedure that detail the exercises that pass the predispositions of the participants.

3.3.4.4 Focus-group interviews

According to Becker and Bryman (2004:268), De Vos et al. (2005:287), and Fraenkel and Wallen (2006:455), the focus group is a methodical and deliberate kind of discussion that aims to gather insights and perspectives on a specific topic of interest within a permissive and non-threatening setting. According to Morgan (1997: 6), focus groups are a research method

that involves gathering data through group interactions on a topic chosen by the researcher. According to Morgan and Krueger (1998, Vol. 1: 33), a prevalent misuse of the term ‘focus groups’ arises when it is erroneously attributed to contexts unrelated to research. Typically, focus-group interviews are employed in the evaluation of academic programmes to gather qualitative and descriptive data (Rikard & Beacham, 1996:248).

According to Owen (2001:653), focus-group interviews serve as a valuable tool for individuals who have limited reading abilities, as well as for those who experience discomfort when being interviewed individually. Focus groups facilitate a systematic exchange and comparison of ideas and perspectives among the members. One advantage of utilising focus-group interviews is the ability to foster closer connections between individuals; so, creating a more amicable and courteous environment. The research method in question is a socially-oriented approach that involves the collection of real-life data within a social context. This method is characterised by its flexibility, high face validity, efficient production of results, and relatively low expenses (Babbie, 2004:303, as quoted by Makoelle, 2011:139). According to Kumar (2014:157), it is recommended that the group consist of a minimum of three people. This assertion is supported by Rapeta (2019:111).

Focus-group interviews was employed as a means of triangulating the data obtained through questionnaires and interviews. Consequently, the researcher diligently facilitated participants in providing accurate accounts of their experiences pertaining to the implementation of the school development plan. This particular interview format facilitates the gathering of individuals' experiences pertaining to the outcomes of the school-development programme. According to Colluci (2007), the utilisation of a focus group facilitated the participants' unrestricted participation and enabled them to express their perspectives openly throughout the course of the research.

The completion of the ethics application, consent forms and letter of invitation preceded the commencement of the focus group. Furthermore, the researcher, ensured that the necessary information was adequately prepared (Gibbs, 2012:188). The utilisation of semi-structured interview questions proved beneficial in ensuring comprehensive coverage of pertinent topics during the study process. Consequently, the researcher had a sense of ease when participants raised their concerns (Lichtman, 2006:129; Mertens, 2010:242). The interview revolved around a set of inquiries, with the researcher serving as the moderator of the focus group. It

was her duty to ensure the smooth progression of the discussion and to ensure the active participation of each group member (Holstein & Gubrium, 2016:84).

3.3.4.5 Observing

Observation is a widely employed technique for data collection. Observation is a deliberate, organised, and discerning method of seeing and audibly perceiving an individual (Kumar, 2014:173). It involves the systematic gathering of unrestricted information through the act of observing within a designated research area (Creswell, 2007: 241). In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, it is important for researchers to familiarise themselves with the prevailing circumstances. It is worth noting that individuals may exhibit hesitancy in openly discussing some topics, which can lead to the emergence of conflicting viewpoints among participants that may not be readily apparent through interviews alone (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:139). The researcher's visual perception encompasses multiple aspects concurrently, including the temporal, causal, and substantive dimensions of the observed phenomena. This comprehensive observation is particularly focused on the narrative surrounding the research topic (Stake, 1995:90). Observation involves the act of recording and documenting behaviours and occurrences that are experienced during a given procedure (Best & Kahn, 2006: 264). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016:136), two observations can be derived from interviews. Firstly, the observation takes place in the natural setting where the phenomenon of interest occurs, rather than in a designated location for the purpose of conducting interviews. Secondly, the observational data obtained from interviews provide a direct encounter with the phenomenon of interest, as opposed to relying on second-hand accounts obtained through interviews. The observational methodology is a data-collection method that relies on the researcher's direct observation and recording of phenomena, rather than relying on the subject's self-reported responses to inquiries (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:224). According to Stake (2010:94), the primary duty of the spectator is to visually and audibly perceive the events taking place, and thereafter endeavour to comprehend its meaning. According to Kumar (2014:134), there are two distinct types of observation participant observation and non-participant observation. Nieuwenhuis (2007:84) discusses four distinct styles of observation employed in qualitative research, namely complete participant, observer as a participant, participant as an observer and complete observer.

In this study, a non-participant observer was employed to gather data and validate the reliability of the qualitative research findings (Kumar, 2014:134). The objective of the observation conducted in this study was to examine the behaviour and actions of principals throughout the execution of school-reform initiatives within the Ingwavuma circuit, situated in the UMkhanyakude district. The author conducted an observation of principals in their natural environment with the aim of comprehending the intricate nature of human behaviour and the interconnectedness that exists across groups (Lichtman, 2006:139). The researcher engaged in an analysis of behavioural patterns in order to gain insight into the underlying assumptions, values and beliefs held by the participants. This analysis also aimed to comprehend the social dynamics at play within the observed settings. It is important to note that the researcher maintained a position of non-involvement and refrained from exerting any impact on the observed dynamics (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:85).

One advantage of employing observation as a research method is its ability to accurately record and document the authentic behaviours that occur within a given context (Ary et al., 2010:219). Another advantage of observation is the researcher's ability to obtain first-hand experience from participants, which may provide access to unanticipated knowledge (Martella et al., 2013:313). Furthermore, an advantage of employing observation as a research method is its utility in investigating topics that may elicit discomfort or reluctance to speak during interviews. Hopkins (2007:71) asserts that a drawback of surveillance is the potential infringement upon an individual's personal space, which might undermine the establishment of trust.

Field notes are collected after engaging in observation, as observation typically takes place during fieldwork (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:150). These notes serve as a comprehensive documentation of both objective and subjective experiences (Spradley, 1980:56; Desselle 2020:1472 cited in Kubheka, 2022). According to Mertens (2010:367), it is crucial for researchers to engage in prolonged observation in order to accurately identify significant concerns and prevent premature conclusions. According to Hopkins (2007:71), it is important to exercise caution in order to prevent the inclination to hastily pass judgement throughout the process of observation.

3.3.4.6 Data storage

It was the researcher's duty to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants, and so she described how she would store data for the study (Creswell 2013:175). The researcher created backup soft copies of computer files to store data. Computer files were encrypted with a zip password for security purposes. Hard copies of interview notes were kept in a safe locked location where no one has access except the researcher. The researcher stored other data on the external drive, while digital records were copied to a memory stick and were password protected. The researcher followed all these data-storage techniques to ensure the protection and confidentiality and anonymity of participants, and to ensure that the data for this study was safe.

3.3.5 Qualitative data-content analysis

Qualitative data examination is the continuous and repetitive handling of information collected that entwines investigation and reporting and is not simply a matter of progressive steps (Maree, 2007: 99 & 2016 cited in Kubheka, 2022). Subjective substance examination is respected as an efficient method of coding, categorising, and deciphering information; according to Bernard and Ryan (2010:109), it supplies clarifications of a single wonder of intrigue, which begins soon after the collection of information, within the conceptualisation of thoughts with respect to the investigative subject. Mile and Huberman (1994:10) characterise information examination as comprising three streams of action, namely "data lessening, information show, and conclusion drawing and confirmation". In this study, patterns are created in the data analysis, and concepts that help to explain why these designs are there are also within the patterns. In order to use qualitative data, at the research design stage, the researcher needs to be clear about how to analyse the data to be collected. The purpose of analysing data is to be clear, to understand, and to review the plans that are themes, patterns, and words (Maree, 2007:101& 2016 cited in Kubheka, 2022).

Qualitative data analysis is done through content analysis. In addition, McMillan and Schumacher (2014:395) also mention that qualitative data analysis is a process that involves sorting the data into groups so that emerging themes, trends and patterns can be studied and recognised.

For this study, analysis of data involved consistencies in data from respondents, while observing similarities and differences between individual narratives. This research used

conversation analysis to analyse data; this is more helpful since there were five participants, which means five interviews, five recordings, five observations, and five translations made from the recordings; this conversation analysis depends much more on the designs, structures and dialects utilised within the discourse, and on the words that are used rather than on other shapes of information examination.

According to Maree (2007:100& 2016 cited in Kubheka, 2022), the primary objective of qualitative data analysis is to condense and synthesise the observations and auditory inputs of a researcher into commonly used vocabulary, phrases, themes or patterns. One of the primary benefits of employing content analysis as a research method is its capacity to facilitate the collection and analysis of substantial volumes of data. The study employed qualitative analysis to examine and analyse.

The data-analysis process was conducted by following the subsequent steps.

3.3.5.1 Preparing and organising the data

According to Maree (2007: 104& 2016 cited in Kubheka, 2022), qualitative data is gathered through the utilisation of "prolonged and in-depth assessment, comprehension, and interpretation". The data acquired through the methods of observation, interviews and focus-group discussions were subjected to qualitative analysis. The utilisation of folders and files was employed as a means to collect and organise items pertaining to a specific set of data on my computer; so, ensuring secure storage and facilitating convenient analysis (Maree, 2007:104). Furthermore, the researcher provided the participants with a comprehensive overview of the transcription process for the interview, as outlined by Maree (2007:104). The initial step involved the meticulous transcription of a 30-minute audio tape, encompassing interviews in their entirety, while ensuring the inclusion of non-verbal cues within the transcript. The researcher enhanced her proficiency in acclimating to first-stage data by transcribing the transcript. According to Grey (2014:604), in every interview, the researcher incorporated all impressions derived from the analysis of interview recordings and the participants' own expressions of their thoughts and concerns. The data was comprehensively analysed by engaging in many iterations of listening to the audio recording, reading the relevant materials, and carefully studying the scripts in a simplified version. This approach was employed to gain a holistic understanding of the entire data set (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:398). In addition, the process of organising entails the repeated

examination and analysis of the text (Taylor & Renner, 2003:2). The researcher successfully decomposed the data into discrete components. During the process of reviewing the transcripts, the researcher engaged in the practice of note-taking. Consequently, the act of reading and again reviewing the notes that were recorded in the files and documents of the transcripts proved important in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the events that transpired during the observation (Grey, 2014:604). The aforementioned notes and additional data were transformed into a format that was conducive to conducting analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:398). To identify disparities, the data was systematically arranged by examining the entirety of participants and their respective answers to the posed inquiries (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003:2). Moreover, the researcher employed computer software known as ATLAS to aid in the analytical portion of the study, namely for classifying the data and establishing categories with corresponding themes.

In the context of the given topic, the aforementioned numerical value can be denoted as the process of programming the data. According to Maree (2007:105), coding can be defined as the systematic process of carefully examining interpreted data, line by line, and categorising it into meaningful analytical units. Coding refers to the process of assigning categorical labels to a substantial amount of selected data as part of data analysis. Multiple code names may be assigned to a specific piece of information in the event that it pertains to various facets of the investigation. Coding refers to the process of dissecting content information into smaller parts and subsequently examining, contrasting, conceptualising, and classifying the data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2014: 668). Coding refers to the systematic procedure of arranging data into distinct groups and assigning a descriptive term to represent each category within the margins. Furthermore, the process of coding includes the categorisation of data or images obtained during data collection by assigning them specific labels or terms (Creswell, 2014:248).

In order to effectively organise qualitative data, the researcher in this study utilised the method of inductive content analysis, which involved the processes of open coding, category formation and abstraction, as outlined by Elo and Kyngas (2008:109). The utilisation of the ATLAS programme facilitated several coding procedures, encompassing data coding, text retrieval based on keywords, code renaming or merger without impacting the remaining codes, and the generation of graphic representations depicting emergent codes and their interconnections. According to Elo and Kyngas (2008:109), it is common practice to include

notes and headings within the text while engaging in open coding. Upon reviewing the written information, the researcher meticulously examined the content and proceeded to annotate headings in the margins; so providing concise summaries for each section of the topic. The comparable codes were organised into a category, which was afterwards assigned a label that accurately represented the importance of the codes. In their study, McMillan and Schumacher (2014) identified discrete units of data referred to as segments, each of which encapsulated a single concept.

3.3.5.2 Establishing categories and themes

Writing a brief description for each category is a smart idea. In order to get greater clarity in the learning study, new or smaller themes were identified and all the coded data was labelled during the data-analysis phase (Maree, 2007:109). Categories and themes, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2014:404), are the key ideas that might be considered in order to describe the meaning of similar coded data. The information acquired through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, document analysis, and observations was analysed and interpreted as social interaction. In this study, the researcher organised the information into codes and themes that were used throughout the writing and checked patterns embedded in the text to generate new categories and subcategories so that the data made sense. In order to explain what the researcher learned through this study, the main and minor themes in the coded data were defined during the data-analysis process (Lodico et al., 2010:185).

3.3.5.3 Analysing and interpreting data

It is critical to incorporate the source of the data in the coding process when conducting inductive data analysis. When assessing data findings based on the participants' data, the current study searched for developing patterns, associations and concepts, and provided descriptive summaries of what participants have said or done (Maree, 2007:111). To analyse data, the researcher gave abbreviated codes, or letters, and placed them next to the themes and concepts discovered (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003:2). Participants' code labels were in the form of words. To decrease the amount of data, the researcher also developed themes that formed common ideas and then divided them into sub-themes using colours assigned to data segments. She began modifying codes on the second data reading and eliminated one code

that appeared to be related to the same issue (Gray, 2014:604). A literary category to identify the codes that connect to a concept in the literature was then utilised.

3.4 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness refers to how compelling, systematic and thorough the research methodology was, as well as if the study findings were convincing and believable parallel criteria is viable for establishing trustworthiness of qualitative research on indigenous social protection systems. The criteria can facilitate credible and reliable research outcomes in research on improving social protection policy and practice (Enworo, 2023; Lincoln and Guba 1985). Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are factors that determine qualitative research's trustworthiness (Kumar, 2011:219). In this study, Guba's criteria, which are used by positivist investigators (Shenton, 2004) to improve the quality of data and assure rigor in this study, were also utilised.

3.4.1 Credibility

Trochim and Donnelly (2007:149) argue that credibility in subjective inquiries involves the establishment of robust and convincing conclusions that are deemed satisfactory by the participants of the inquiry. Qualitative credibility is attained by the utilisation of member verification and triangulation, alongside the application of crystallisation and dense description techniques. The notion of credibility pertains to the degree of accuracy exhibited by data in representing observed social phenomena (Wahyuni, 2012). The primary focus lies on determining if the study effectively measures or tests the expected outcome. In accordance with Bryman (2012), it is common practice to evaluate the intermediate findings obtained from the initial interview during future meetings with the practitioners. This process serves as a means of responder validation. Researchers utilise several methodologies to ensure the validity and dependability of their findings. Data triangulation, method triangulation, and various other techniques serve as illustrative instances of these methodologies.

In order to enhance the credibility of this research undertaking, the data triangulation, method triangulation, and evaluator triangulation were used. Preliminary visits were conducted to the selected schools as part of this research project, with the aim of familiarising oneself with the research settings of the participants. During the data-collection phase, participants were instructed to provide truthful and candid responses when answering the questions. For instance, the researcher communicated to them that the questions posed do not possess a

definitive or incorrect response; rather, the crucial aspect lies in their willingness to divulge their personal encounters and viewpoints. Additional measures were implemented to ensure confidentiality. The participants were consistently reminded that any information disclosed during our interactions would remain strictly confidential. Furthermore, it was emphasised that there were no definitive correct or incorrect responses inside our debate. Consequently, the primary point that the researcher in this study conveyed to them was to refrain from fixating on the pursuit of what they personally deem to be factual, but rather to engage in the sharing of their perspectives and experiences pertaining to the process of transformation. Another technique employed to enhance trustworthiness involved conducting member checks as part of the interview procedure. The examination of the study's believability aspects is presented in greater detail in the subsequent sections.

3.4.2 Thick description

The concept of 'thick description' refers to a methodological approach in social sciences and anthropology that involves providing detailed and rich descriptions of social phenomena, events and interactions. According to Henning et al. (2004:6), the thick description offers a rational and cohesive explanation of the phenomenon being studied, while also going beyond just factual information, by offering an interpretation of the collected data. According to Tracy (2013:235), the concept of thick description pertains to the capacity of qualitative research to access implicit information, encompassing both empirical and theoretical understandings. In order to produce a comprehensive and detailed account, this researcher allocated additional time to engage with the participants and conducted thorough investigations to cover additional layers of information.

3.4.3 Triangulation

In the context of research methodology, triangulation refers to the use of many sources or methods to validate and corroborate findings. According to Creswell (2013:251), the validation of a result derived from a specific set of procedures or sources of evidence necessitates the utilisation of an additional method or source of evidence to provide corroborating support. The utilisation of triangulation, which involves the integration of many data sources, data kinds, or research methods is a prominent strategy in case-study research. This approach supports the idea of examining and comprehending the phenomenon from various perspectives, as advocated by Baxter and Jack (2008:556) and Mertens (2010:258).

By employing triangulation, researchers can enhance the reliability and validity of their findings, assuring consistency in their analysis, as emphasised by Stake (2010:123).

By employing a variety of data sources and employing the triangulation method (Ary et al., 2010:498), the present study was able to prove its credibility. The establishment of participants' trustworthiness was achieved through a comparative comparison of their statements during interviews with the information obtained through document analysis. According to Ary et al. (2010:500), when interviews, supporting documents, and recollections of other participants provide consistent descriptions of an event, or when a participant responds consistently to a question presented multiple times, it can be observed that there is evidence of trustworthiness. The present study aimed to investigate the phenomena of school improvement by employing a diverse range of data sources, such as interviews, observations, and relevant documents (Ary et al., 2010:500).

The utilisation of triangulation facilitated the validation of the findings by showcasing the convergence of several research approaches in independently attaining consistent outcomes. The ethical need for employing triangulation arises from the imperative to verify the soundness of procedures while concurrently enhancing the dependability of data and the methodology employed for data gathering (Tellis, 1997).

3.4.4 Transferability

The concept of transferability, as described by Ary et al. (2010:501) and Trochim and Donnelly (2007:1490), pertains to the extent to which the outcomes of a qualitative study can be used or extended to various contexts or populations. It is the term used to describe the extent to which the findings of subjective inquiry can be used or extrapolated to various contexts or circumstances. Although it might be challenging to achieve transferability in, it is possible to overcome these obstacles by providing a comprehensive and inclusive description of the study methodology, enabling others to replicate and adapt it (Kumar, 2011: 172). According to Ary et al. (2010:501) and Mertens (2010:259), in qualitative research, the reader recognises similarities between the study site and the receiving context by making necessary comparisons and judgments. To ensure transferability, the researcher shared all relevant information with participants, all participating schools, and their zone administrations,

including the data-generation methods employed and the number of sessions. The history of the sample school and the interview schedule were presented to address transferability.

3.4.5 Dependability

Dependability is achieved when an analyst can account for the reason why there may be varieties that have to be considered. It is related to whether we would arrive at the same conclusions on the off chance that we may watch the same thing twice (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007:149). The researcher conducted a dependability audit by attesting to the interview procedure's quality and appropriateness (Mertens, 2010:259). In order to assure the reliability of the data, many forms of documentation were preserved, including transcripts of interviews, field notes, minutes of meetings with participants, draught reports, and a duplicate of the audio recordings of the interviews. In order to ensure reliability, the researcher employed several techniques including the usage of an audit trail, code-recoding and triangulation (Becker & Bryman, 2004:253). By organising and retrieving original data, the researcher asked others to test the veracity of my interpretations (Robinson & Lai, 2006:61 cited in Kubheka 2022).

3.4.6 Confirmability

Confirmability alludes to the degree to which the conclusions of the research may be affirmed or confirmed by others. Confirmability may be compared to reliability in a quantitative inquiry. It is as if it were conceivable on the off chance that analysts adopt the same method in an indistinguishable way when it is to be compared (Kumar, 2011: 172). Confirmability, according to Becker and Bryman (2004:253 cited in Kubheka 2022), analyses factors such as whether the researcher permitted personal values to interfere in an unwelcome way, Qualitative researchers keep detailed notes of all their decisions and their analysis as it progresses. . According to Mertens (2010:260), a confirmability audit can be combined with a dependability audit. After gathering data, the researcher listened to the voice recorder and transcribed the voices into text to determine confirmability. In order to support the data findings, the researcher also used direct quotes.

The audio recordings were transcribed for the participants in this study so that they could verify and confirm that the transcripts accurately represented what happened during the interview.

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Munro (2011), ethics can be understood as a collection of moral principles put forth by an individual or a collective entity that enjoys broad acceptance. These principles encompass regulations and expectations regarding the ethical treatment of various parties involved in research, such as experimental subjects, respondents, employers, sponsors, fellow researchers, assistants, and students. According to Beauchamp and Childress (2012), ethics plays a crucial role in safeguarding the well-being of participants and upholding the principle of confidentiality, as researchers bear a responsibility towards them. Consequently, the researcher has taken measures to ensure the safety of the participants and the confidentiality of the information provided in this study to the greatest extent possible.

The University Research Ethics Policy provides a definition of research ethics, which encompasses the principles and actions that govern the ethical behaviour in the realm of research. It is imperative to ensure that the rights of individuals who are directly or indirectly impacted by the research are duly acknowledged and upheld. Rights such as privacy and confidentiality, protection from harm, informed consent, access to pre- and post-research information, and proper acknowledgment are all illustrative instances. Ethical research conduct encompasses the conscientious avoidance of all types of suffering, alongside the preservation and safeguarding of the environment. The researcher familiarised herself with and comprehended the university's research ethics policy and procedures, as well as its policy and procedures pertaining to plagiarism. Additionally, they possess an understanding of the rationale behind obtaining consent. Prior to commencing this research, the researcher obtained ethical approval from the Research and Ethics Committee at the University of South Africa (UNISA). The request for authorisation to carry out research was dispatched to the designated educational institutions, in addition to the Department of Education.

The scope of the investigation was effectively communicated to the circuit manager of Ingwavuma. The study was authorised by the KZN Department of Education to be conducted at all five schools. In order to carry out this research, it was necessary to obtain permission

from the respective educational institutions involved. The study encompasses various ethical considerations, such as informed permission, privacy, self-determination, and confidentiality, among other pertinent factors.

3.5.1 Confidentiality

Bailey (2007:24) defines confidentiality as the act of informing research participants about the nature of the study, namely whether it guarantees anonymity and secrecy. Scott et al. (1997:44) assert that confidentiality is addressed with regards to the methods employed for data collection and storage, ensuring that the identities of the study participants remain undisclosed. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006: 53), the researchers ensured that personal data of the participants, including their names, addresses, and workplaces, were removed in order to prevent any possibility or at least hinder any attempts to make inferences about individuals involved in the study. The study ensured the anonymity of respondents and focus-group discussion members by presenting their personal information in an anonymous manner. The right to privacy of respondents was guaranteed by the assurance of confidentiality. Orientation was provided to participants in five secondary schools by researcher. The researcher avoided asking leading questions, which could lead to principals responding in a planned manner.

To collect qualitative data, semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions and observation were used to collect information from high school principals to learn about the status and practices of school leadership and management, the teaching and learning process, the learning environment, and the effectiveness of parents and community involvement in the school-improvement programme. Following the completion of the sessions, the interviewees were provided with transcripts for the purpose of verification. Due to the reluctance of certain interviewees and focus-group participants regarding the use of audio recordings during the interview sessions, the researcher resorted to taking written notes as an alternative approach to address this issue. Acknowledgements and credit were appropriately and relevantly provided as a consequence.

3.5.2 Anonymity

The notion of anonymity is that the information submitted by users should not reveal their names or personalities in any way. When the analyst or another individual cannot distinguish the participant or subject from the data presented, the participant or subject is termed mysterious. Participants' information should not disclose their identity, according to Cohen et al. (2000:61) and Henning et al. (2004:13). As advised by Fraenkel and Wallen, the researcher deployed pseudonyms to assure and ensure participant anonymity (2006:53). The researcher ensured the anonymity of participants in order to maintain confidentiality in this study, which focuses on workplace situations where participants may express their thoughts and viewpoints on work-related subjects, including criticisms of the department of education or government (Grey, 2014:74). The utilisation of pseudonyms for participants was implemented in order to adhere to ethical guidelines, as it is considered unethical to disclose the identities of individual participants (Kumar, 2014: 286). Consequently, the participants were assigned pseudonyms such as Principal of School A-E.

3.5.3 Privacy

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2002: 60), it is imperative to refrain from disclosing individual participant data to any external entity. Throughout the investigation, the privacy of both the participants and other individuals was carefully considered. In accordance with the findings of Cohen et al. (2000:60), measures were taken to safeguard the confidentiality of participants' personal information; hence, preventing its disclosure to any external entities. The researcher refrained from engaging in intrusive questioning due to the awareness of the sensitivity surrounding certain matters, recognising that excessive inquiries may be perceived as an encroachment upon personal boundaries (Ary et al., 2014:56; Kumar, 2014:185). Deceit, as stated by McMillan and Schumacher (2014:363), constitutes a transgression against the principles of informed consent and privacy.

3.5.4 Informed consent

The concept of informed consent pertains to the process by which individuals make a voluntary decision regarding their participation in a study or examination, following the provision of relevant information that may impact their choices (Diener & Crandall, 1978).

The primary duty of a researcher is to safeguard the well-being of participants by obtaining their informed consent (Cohen et al., 2002:500). Prior to engaging in any research endeavour, it is imperative that participants are duly apprised of the potential hazards and protocols involved (Lodico et al., 2010:147; Bailey, 2007:17). Consequently, subsequent to acquiring a comprehensive understanding of the methodologies employed, the participants willingly furnished the necessary raw data for the research.

Prior to data collection, the researcher engaged in communication with the participants who had been identified for the study in order to ascertain their willingness to participate (Sotuku & Duku, 2015:116). The participants were provided with consent forms to complete and sign; so confirming that they had granted their informed consent (Kumar, 2014:284). The participants were duly informed that their involvement in the study was entirely voluntary and that they retained the right to withdraw at any point. The consent forms of the participants were carefully reviewed and signed before being securely stored in a separate location from the study's results (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:130). According to Ryen (2016:38), the submission of a fully executed permission form guarantees that potential participants have been adequately informed about the study and have provided their explicit consent to participate. The establishment of individual autonomy was demonstrated by the implementation of a comprehensive informed-consent process, enabling participants to make a more impartial and subjective decision regarding their voluntary withdrawal from the study in the event that they no longer wanted to continue their participation (Atkins & Wallace, 2012:32). Consequently, the researcher granted participants the opportunity to exercise their prerogative in deciding whether or not to engage in the research study (Ary et al., 2014:56; Sotuku & Duku, 2015:117).

3.5.5 Voluntary participation

The act of engaging in research necessitates the voluntary involvement of participants, hence requiring researchers to carefully navigate the delicate equilibrium between effectively recruiting individuals and avoiding any undue pressure that may be imposed upon prospective volunteers. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014:130), voluntary involvement refers to the notion that individuals should not be compelled to partake in activities against their will. The individuals were invited to partake in the research study. Subsequently, the researcher distributed a consent form to the participants, encompassing relevant study

materials and a clear statement emphasising the voluntary nature of their involvement, allowing them the autonomy to decide whether or not to partake in this study. The concept of informed consent entails that the participant willingly agrees to participate in the research endeavour while retaining the right to terminate their involvement at any given point.

3.5.6 The researcher's role

The researcher, acting as the interviewer, made a conscious effort to refrain from imposing personal beliefs upon the participants. This measure was implemented to ensure that the interview would accurately capture the information as expressed by the participants in their own words and language. The ethical requirements of the investigation were strictly adhered to. Firstly, the authors whose work was referenced were acknowledged and the author expressed her gratitude. The study was conducted on a voluntary basis, with all requisite consent documentation duly executed. Considerable effort was made to guarantee that neither the participants nor the researcher experienced any form of discomfort. The assurance of anonymity was provided to the participants. The study encountered potential obstacles to its validity and reliability, which were subsequently identified and addressed.

3.6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that the primary emphasis of this chapter was placed on the examination of the research paradigm, research methodology, and research design employed in the study. The text initially presents a concise overview of the case-study approach, followed by an elucidation of the epistemological perspective employed in this study as a theoretical framework or foundation. The chapter additionally included definitions and explanations of demographic and sample structures, highlighted the procedures used for data collecting and analysis, and elucidated the measures taken to ensure the research's validity, reliability and trustworthiness. The chapter concluded with examining ethical considerations and the researcher's responsibility.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS, DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The technique, processes, sample and research instruments utilised to collect qualitative data in order to answer the research questions were discussed in the preceding chapter. The data gathered through interviews and observation is analysed, interpreted, and summarised in this chapter

In this chapter, the researcher presents biographic information about the participants, and identifies themes that aid in answering research questions. The findings from interviews, two focus-group meetings, and document analysis are presented and discussed.

This study answered the following four research questions:

- What is the role that principals play in the school-improvement programme?
- To what extent do school principals contribute to the implementation of the school-improvement programme?
- Which strategies can be used by school principals in implementing the school-improvement programme?
- How effective is the implementation of the school-improvement programme in improving teaching and learning in secondary schools?

An analysis of the data was presented in four themes, each of which is based on the study's objectives:

- Explore the role of the school principal in implementing school-improvement programme.
- Identify the extent to which principals contribute to the school-improvement programme in secondary schools.
- Examine strategies implemented by school principals in school-improvement programmes.
- Determine the effectiveness of the school-improvement programme in improving teaching and learning in secondary schools.

4.2 PROFILES OF THE PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Before presenting the data, the researcher commences with a profile sketch for each of the participating schools.

4.2.1 Profile of Mdladla Secondary School

Mdladla Secondary School (MSS1) originally opened its doors in 1992. It was designed to ease the considerable distances that students who wished to continue their education had to go. Students had to travel more than thirty (30) kilometres to the nearest school. This is a Quintile 1 school with grades ranging from 8 to 12. It has 34 teachers and ten non-teaching employees (which include the administrative clerk, security guard, cleaner, screener, and those who help with the school's nutrition programme). MSS benefits from the government's schools nutrition programme as part of government policy for schools in low-income regions. The majority of the school is not enclosed, but there is fencing that surrounds the school's buildings. It is currently one of the best performing schools in the Ingwavuma circuit, with about 1150 students enrolled. It provides a wide selection of curriculum packages that allow students to pursue a number of occupations after graduating from Grade 12. Humanities, sciences, commerce and technology are some of the subject packages available. MSS is also a Section 21 school. This means that the school has the authority to purchase textbooks and other materials without going through the Department's procurement process, as is the case with Section 20 schools. MSS is a no-fee school due to the severe socioeconomic challenges surrounding the school. From 2018 to 2020, the school attained an average of an 89.5% matric pass rate.

Table 4.1: Learners' enrolment at Mdladla Secondary School during the past five years (2017-2021)

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Enrolment	823	877	980	1005	1150

(Source: Researcher: 2023)

Table 4.2: MSS1 Grade 12 learners' performance during the past five years (2017-2021)

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Performance	82%	90%	84%	93%	83%

(Source: Researcher: 2023)

4.2.2 Profile of Isiphosethu Secondary School

In April 1996, Isiphosethu Secondary School (ISS) was founded. This is a Quintile 2 school with grades ranging from 8 to 12. It has 17 educators, including the school-management team (SMT), and three non-teaching personnel (school cleaner, school security and admin clerk). ISS is also a Section 21 school, which means that it benefits from the Department's school nutrition programme as part of the government's strategy for schools in low-income regions. It is also located in a rural area near Ingwavuma and serves students from the neighbouring community. It is now the best performing school in the Ingwavuma circuit. The school is enclosed and has access to clean, piped water as well as power. It has infrastructure issues, such as inadequate restrooms and play areas. Similar to MSS, it is a fee-free school. The neighbourhood is plagued by a variety of social evils, including high rates of adolescent pregnancy. Humanities, commerce, science and technology are among the curriculum packages offered by the institution.

Table 4. 3: Learners' enrolment at Isiphosethu Secondary School during the past five years (2017-2021)

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Enrolment	520	536	540	540	541

(Source: Researcher: 2023)

Table 4.4: ISS Grade 12 learner performance during the past five years (2017-2021)

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Performance	56%	77%	94%	87%	82%

(Source: Researcher: 2023)

4.2.3 Profile of Msiyane Secondary School

Msiyane Secondary School (MSS2) opened its doors for the first time in early 1993. It was formed because learners from the surrounding community could no longer be accommodated in the adjacent high schools, and the parents have accepted full ownership of its infrastructure creation and maintenance since then. Academically, the school's performance had been varying on average, but it has recently shown gradual growth, thanks to the dedication of both educators and students. MSS2 benefits from the Department's schools' nutrition programme

as part of the government strategy for schools in low-income regions. The school has 20 teachers, three department heads, one deputy principal, and one principal. MSS2 is a Quintile 2 school with grades ranging from 8 to 12. From 2020, the school attained a matric pass rate average of 81.9%. MSS is a no-fee school due to its socioeconomic status and is ranked as the best performing school in the Ingwavuma circuit. Learner enrolment at Msiyane in the five past years (2017-2021) is shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Learner enrolment at Msiyane Secondary School during the past five years

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Enrolment	660	680	690	684	689

(Source: Researcher: 2023)

Table 4.6: MSS2 Grade 12 learner performance during the past five years (2017-2021).

Year	2017	2018	219	2020	2021
Performance	80%	74%	67%	80%	90%

(Source: Researcher: 2023)

4.2.4 Profile of Jevu Secondary School

Jevu Secondary School (JSS) is a publicly funded secondary-educational institution situated in the Bhekindoda Area of Ingwavuma. JSS is a conventional educational institution that focuses on typical academic disciplines. The educational institution in question operates as a Section 21 school, which entails receiving financial allocations from the relevant department. It assumes the responsibility of procuring stationery, textbooks and conducting maintenance activities independently. Furthermore, it falls under quintile 2 classification, signifying its status as a no-fee establishment. The school in question is presently regarded as one of the top-performing educational institutions within the Ingwavuma circuit, boasting an enrolment of over 1500 learners. It provides a wide selection of curriculum packages that allow students to pursue a number of occupations after graduating from Grade 12. Humanities, sciences, commerce and technology are some of the subject packages available. The educational institution encounters a number of challenges, one of which pertains to the absence of a consistent supply of flowing water. Instead, the school relies on rainwater collection and water tanks, resulting in an unpredictable water supply. The presence of only one security guard at the school leaves both educators and learners exposed to potential risks. This is

particularly concerning due to the school's location in a remote rural area characterised by instability. Learners undertake extensive journeys without access to dedicated transport services for scholars or learners.

Table 4.7: Learner enrolment at Jevu Secondary School during the past five years

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Enrolment	860	946	1102	1189	1186

(Source: Researcher: 2023)

Table 4.8: JSS Grade 12 learner performance during the past five years (2017-2021).

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Performance	80%	76%	82%	75%	72%

(Source: Researcher: 2023)

4.2.5 Profile of Hhoye Secondary School

Hhoye Secondary School (HSS) is a publicly funded educational institution situated in the Mbodla Area of Ingwavuma. HSS is a conventional educational institution that focuses on standard academic disciplines. The educational institution in question is categorised as a Section 21 school, which signifies that it receives financial allocations from the relevant department. As a result, it assumes the responsibility of procuring stationery, textbooks and conducting its own maintenance operations. Furthermore, it falls under quintile 1 classification, indicating that it operates as a no-fee institution. Presently, the educational institution in question exhibits exceptional academic performance within the Ingwavuma circuit. Based on a survey completed in 2016, the educational institution had a student population of 500 individuals, with instructional support provided by a faculty of 15 teachers. This yielded a student-teacher ratio of 34:1. However, it is important to note that the current enrolment has exceeded 1200 pupils. The institution offers a diverse range of curriculum packages that provide students the opportunity to pursue several career paths upon completion of their Grade 12 education. Subject packages such as humanities, sciences and commerce are among the options provided. During the period spanning from 2018 to 2020, the educational institution achieved a commendable average pass rate percentage of 96.8% in the matriculation examinations.

Table 4.9: Learner enrolment at Hhoye Secondary School during the past five years (2017-2021)

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Enrolment	720	812	950	1132	1156

(Source: Researcher: 2023)

Table 4.10: HSS Grade 12 learner performance during the past 5 years (2017-2021).

Year	2027	2018	2019	2020	2021
Performance	100%	96%	97%	98%	88%

(Source: Researcher: 2023)

4.3 PARTICIPANTS' BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Table 4.11 below presents the biographical information about participants in the research study.

Table 4.11 Participants' biographical information

Participants	Gender	Teaching experience	Grade that the school offer	Teaching experience as principal
Principal 1 (HSS)	Male	19 years	8-12	8 years
Principal 2 (ISS)	Male	36 years	8-12	16 years
Principal 3 (MSS)	Female	28 years	8-12	14 years
Principal 4 (JSS)	Male	29 years	8-12	16 years

Principal 5 (MSS)	Male	28 years	8-12	8 years

(Source: Researcher: 2023)

The participants were coded as Principal 1 to 5. In order to maintain the privacy of participants, unique codes were assigned to each individual. Prior to conducting the interviews, biographical information was collected from each participant.

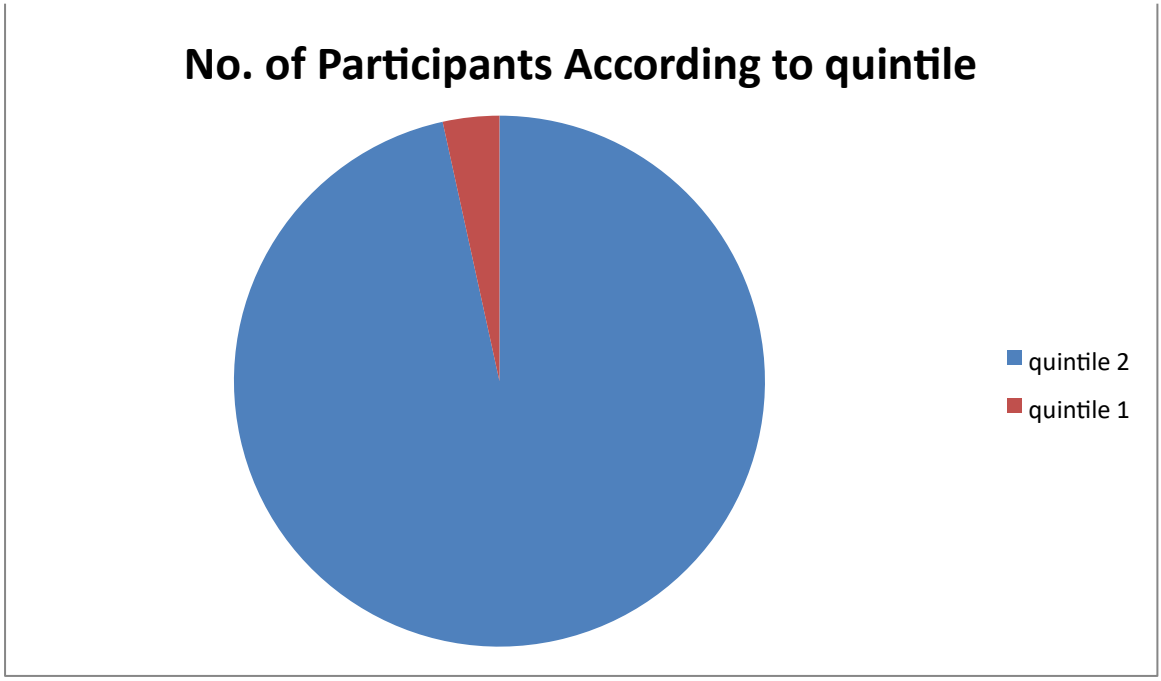

Figure 4.1: Number of Participants according to Quintile in the Study (Researcher: 2023)

As seen in Figure 4.1, five (5) principals of high schools participated in the research study.

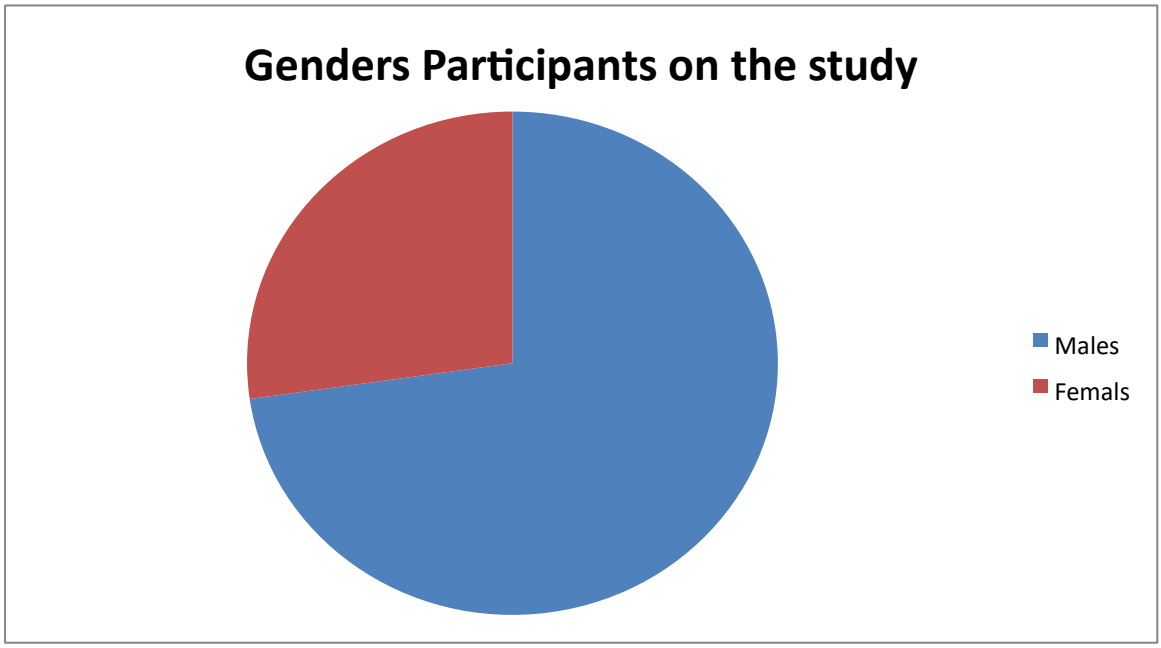

Figure 4.2: Gender of Participants in the Study (Researcher: 2023)

As indicated in Figure 4.2, one (1) principal was a female and four (4) principals were males. The researcher took care to treat the men and the woman as equals.

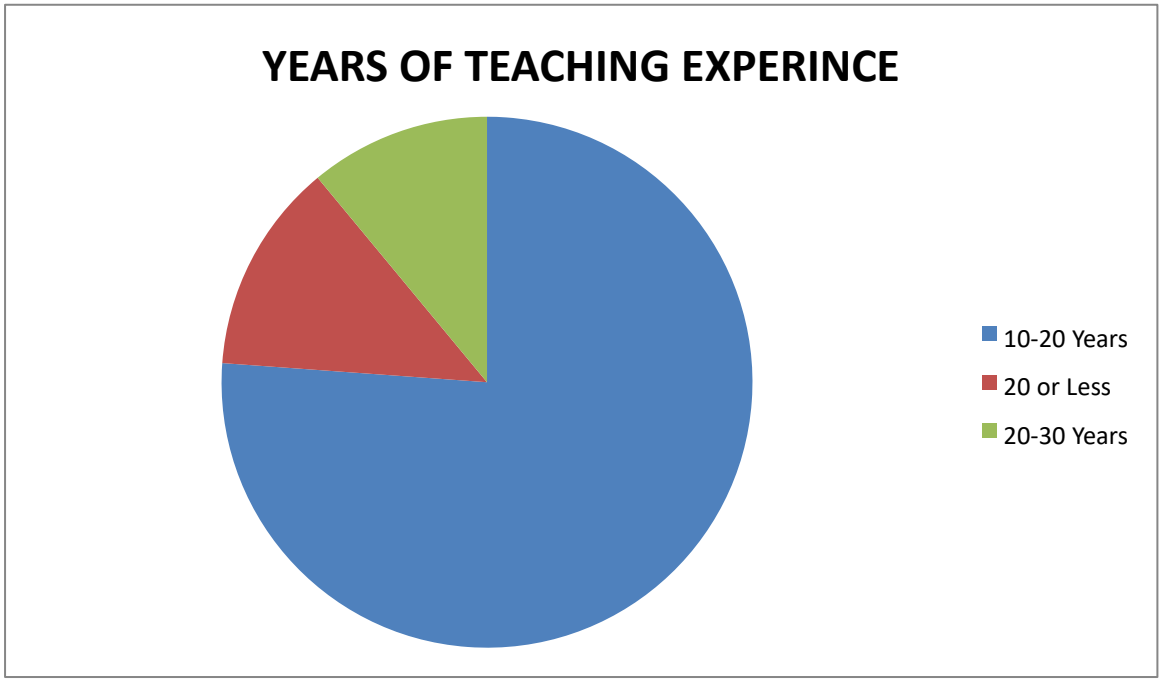

Figure 4.3: Years of Experience of Participants in the Study (Researcher 2023)

Figure 4.3 illustrates the cumulative years of experience for the entire sample of the five persons involved in the study. It is evident from the table that these schools have highly

skilled and knowledgeable staff. The data clearly indicates that those with a greater number of years of experience were selected for managerial roles. Based on the data provided, it can be observed that all principals surveyed have teaching experience above 10 years, while all of them also have leadership experience of more than five years in their roles as principals. This suggests that they possess an understanding of the ongoing transformations occurring inside the educational system.

These developments bring with them new responsibilities for school principals in order for the school to achieve its objectives. Their experiences should not only improve their understanding and knowledge of their new positions, but also enable them to perform these duties. Before becoming principals, all principals had extensive experience as educators. As a result, they are familiar with the traditional technique of evaluation, in which schools were inspected by a group of inspectors. As a result, they can distinguish between the role that the principal performed during the inspection days and the one that principal's play or should play in whole-school evaluation, which is one of the new evaluation methods. However, these principals claim that they never took a single course on whole-school evaluation. This begs the question of how these principals can comprehend and effectively perform their roles in whole-school evaluation if they have never attended a whole-school evaluation session. The role of school leadership is a complex and challenging endeavour that requires continuous development and growth over time (Maxwell, 2010). In order for principals to be successful in their position, they must have obtained significant experience and undergo preparation. According to Steyn (2002), competent administrators in the field of education is characterised by their commitment to continuous learning and their ability to educate and guide teachers in the implementation of new policies and the dynamic curriculum. According to Maxwell (2010), it is widely acknowledged that leaders who are effective possess the characteristic of being committed to lifelong learning, which is sustained through self-discipline and perseverance. The magnitude of the sacrifice made by these principals in their personal development endeavours, undertaken independently of support from the Department, is significant. What is particularly discouraging is the lack of recognition of their qualifications, evident in their compensation received. Upon examining gender-related issues, it becomes evident that a notable disparity exists in the representation of males and females in high-school leadership positions. Specifically, out of a total of five high schools, just one female administrator is responsible for overseeing the management of a high school. The study

acknowledged that possessing expertise does not always ensure the principal's optimal performance.

4.4 FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY AND THEMES CREATED

The research was conducted within a single circuit (Ingwavuma) of the UMkhanyakude district. All of these schools are classified as no-fee schools in general. To obtain data from principals, one-on-one interviews and focus-group interviews were conducted, and the researcher also interviewed five principals using semi-structured questions. According to Shayi (2015:62), an interview is a two-way dialogue in which the researcher asks the participant questions with the goal of gathering data to learn about the participant's ideas, perspectives, attitudes, and behaviours in a specific context. The purpose of focus-group interviews was to allow principals to express their opinions on their experiences with the implementation of school reform programs. Furthermore, data was generated through utilising documents, which are regarded as rich sources of information (Henning et al., 2004). Minutes and management plans are examples of documents that govern school progress. Finally, the sessions allowed the researcher to listen and to better grasp the school-development initiative.

The themes that emerged from the collected data, were:

- the experiences of principals in the implementation of school-improvement programmes;
- the role of principals in the implementation of school-improvement programmes;
- leadership approaches applied in schools to bring future focused change in the school improvement;
- supervision and support provided by principals so that teachers can meet the purposes of the school improvement; and
- challenges to school-improvement programmes.

Each main theme has a number of sub-themes and these are outlined in Table 4.12, below.

Table 4.12: Summary of the central themes and sub-themes

Main Themes	Sub-Categories (Sub-themes)
1. The experiences of principals in the implementation of school-improvement programmes	• The purpose of school-improvement programmes • Understanding of school-improvement programmes • Whole-school improvement
2. The role of principal in the implementation of school-improvement programmes	• The principal's role as instructional leader in strategic directions of the SIP in the schools • Schools' strategic planning • Schools' monitoring and evaluation system
3. Leadership approaches were applied in schools to bring future focused change in the school improvement	• Management style • Parental involvement
4. Supervision and support provided by principals so that teachers can meet the purposes of the school improvement	• Improving classroom instruction for a suitable learning environment • The support given by the district to the principals to advance their leadership roles in order to bring about quality results at schools

	• Instructional leadership as a foundation for teacher development
5. Challenges to school-improvement plans	• Important information about the school-improvement programme. • Communication problems

The next section examines and evaluates statistics on the role of school leadership and administration in the implementation of the school-improvement programme. The following parts include data analysis and interpretations from one-on-one interviews and focus groups.

4.4.1 Theme 1: The experiences of principals in the implementation of SIPs

All staff members look to the school principal for counsel, direction, guidance and assistance/support. As a result, the principal must take the lead, especially during times of transition and/or uncertainty. Participants were asked about their experiences with implementing school improvement programmes. According to the examination of their responses, several variables encouraged principals in this study to engage on school improvement efforts. Three sub-themes emerged from the data: training provided in whole-school improvement programme, understanding of school-improvement programme, and purpose of school-improvement programme.

4.4.1.1 Sub-theme 1: The purpose of the SIP

Recognising the goal of school improvement is a key component, according to the participants. All participants agreed that they needed to involve all necessary parties in order to realise their shared goal of improving schools. Participant 2 stated that in order to make

decisions that are best for their schools, principals should consult with other stakeholders as well.

Principal 2*:*

> *The school improvement programme is a cornerstone of our schools because we will not be able to succeed in high school unless we improve our results from grades 8-12. In order to achieve our target goal, we as a school involve all relevant stakeholders such as parents, students, and educators.*

He explains that working as a team assists in improving results and achieving goals as a school.

Principal 3 mentioned that*:*

> *The school is in charge of implementing the school improvement programme; it serves as a guide and a plan, and as principal, it informs me of what is expected of me. Consultation with the school's key personnel also helps. Because of this programme, we were able to achieve more than 70% of our goals. Although this programme is beneficial, the problem is that there is insufficient funding for infrastructure on the district level, particularly in the infrastructure programme.*

Principal 3 indicated something similar to what participant 2 has said, which prompted him to take action.

Principal 1 said:

> *As school we have our own school improvement programme, it give as direction of what is expected to us as school in order to produce a quality results. Since the implemented this programme our passing rate is increasing each and every year.*

Principal 1 indicated that the school-improvement programme guides them as a school to ensure quality results.

During the data-collection process, it was observed that School A demonstrated a commendable emphasis on the efficient allocation of teaching time. The punctuality of educators was demonstrated by their adherence to the time-book, which they signed upon arrival and departure. During the school tour, the principal provided the researcher with a comprehensive overview of the institution. It was evident that a qualified instructor was

present in every classroom, ensuring that no class was left unattended. When inquiring about the measures taken to guarantee the presence of a teacher in every class, the respondent indicated the implementation of a robust monitoring culture, whereby the senior management team (SMT) assumes the responsibility of ensuring the provision of educators for all courses.

Principal 4 said:

> *I think the aim of this programme was to improve results, in my school this programme help as in improving result and guide us as school, SMT, teachers and SGB we work together in planning this programme of which it made it easy for us to apply the strategies for our programme to be successfully.*

The participant above also indicated that a school-improvement programme is key for improving results of the school and it is easy if they work together to implement the programme.

Principal 5 *said:*

> *As principal I inform staff about the programme, for my experience this programme foundation of school that made school progress. The principal must be an effective planner, ensuring the availability of school vision and mission. The principal is the one who sets the tone of the school, and leads by example*

The comment suggests that principals have a significant influence on the conduct of the entire school community, emphasising the importance of their words and actions warranting careful consideration. According to Maxwell (2010), leadership can be defined as the systematic process by which school leaders exert their influence and guidance on educators and learners, with the ultimate goal of attaining educational excellence. The individual agrees with the notion of positional influence, asserting that leadership is a form of influence that is inherently associated with one's official title. While the impact of teacher performance on student success is undeniable, it is the calibre of leadership that holds paramount importance in influencing the motivation of teachers and the overall quality of their instruction.

The study conducted by Kalman (2023) revealed that various factors contribute to student success. These factors include the establishment and communication of a vision for achievement, the creation of a positive learning environment, the proactive involvement of

school leaders in identifying and addressing the needs of their schools, the cultivation of a positive school culture, the monitoring of student progress, the engagement of parents in educational practices, the provision of a secure physical environment, and the availability of necessary materials. Furthermore, it has been shown that the successful advancement of educational endeavours relies on the active engagement of all parties involved and the establishment of a school culture that fosters positivity and trust. Robinson et al. (2017) argue that the capacity to execute a cohesive and synchronised endeavour is important in attaining enduring accomplishments.

4.4.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Understanding of the SIP

The principals of the school expounded upon their understanding of the school-improvement programme during the interviews. The shared understanding among school administrators on school development is that it entails a sequence of targeted seminars aimed at addressing the challenges they encounter. There might have been a tendency to perceive leadership development as a process that must be undertaken to enhance and adapt to the requirements of the primary position of school leadership. This situation potentially obscures the distinction between the concept of professional development for educators and the participants' perception of it as leadership development. The examination of the data in this manner served as a catalyst for my subsequent line of inquiry during the individual interview. This line of questioning aimed to further explore and elaborate on the participants' comprehension of school principals' leadership growth, with a focus on their personal practices.

In this regard, **Principal 4** stated*:*

> *As a principal sometimes we felt that the changes that were being implemented were oppressive to us, but that did not determine because I knew that the changes were within the education prescripts and the Department's directive.*

Change is needed since our education system is changing.

Principal 2 said: *This programme requires a lot of pre-planning. The focus has always been the improvement of the school and all role players sharing a goal that unites us as school.*

Principals are in need of sufficient training.

Principal 1 said*:*

> *From my perspective, the trainings I require as a school leader pertain to effectively managing the school. These trainings encompass various topics, particularly those provided by the department, such as school management, financial management, school safety, discipline, and budgeting. While the department has organised numerous trainings to a certain extent, they may not fully address the specific challenges we encounter at our school. I believe the primary issue lies in the fact that each of us faces distinct struggles, necessitating an understanding of our operational context, environment, and needs. Managing a school is not solely a theoretical endeavour; it involves grappling with practical issues that push us to our limits. Nonetheless, this does not diminish the value of trainings. Rather, it underscores the importance of selecting trainings that are relevant to our individual struggles and align with our specific circumstances.*

According to Principal 1, training needed to run a school, especially for the SMT, provided by the Department of Education, are not necessarily focused. Many more topics should be covered in training.

Principal 3 said:

> *Well, it is important for us to receive training for all principal, running a school especially high school is huge task. Different schools has different issues, training help as to over challenges, even in budget it assist on how manage a school funds. But sometimes training provided by department does not have directions sometimes in principals meetings you ask questions maybe about SASAMS they don't give you a clear answer.*

The above participant indicates that training assists with overcoming challenges within the school, but sometimes training does not help since the Department failed to give them clear instruction or advice.

Principal 5 said:

For me the programme is good, department assist as with workshops about the programme, what I like most in this workshops we set target pass percentage for school performance, the programme made us a to know what is our weakness because we analyse results each term.

Principal 5 indicated that the training they receive from the Department helps them to understand school improvement.

Literature indicated that school improvement is a strategy of improving the quality of education by equipping schools to provide quality education to the learner and strengthening schools' capacity for change (Modera, 2022). Accordingly, the data collected from the participants of the study, revealed that implementation of the school-improvement programme in the schools under the study was effective enough. In other words, it did improve the quality of education.

4.4.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Training offered in whole-school improvement

Based on the feedback provided by the participants, it was observed that the Department of Education occasionally demonstrated a lack of commitment towards adequately equipping school principals with appropriate training. During the interview session, the researcher aimed to elucidate the specific training programmes provided for entire school improvement. Additionally, she explored how these programmes were contextualised to address the leadership difficulties and demands of the principals. Furthermore, the researcher investigated whether these training programmes were tailored to particular principals or if they were generally applicable to all. The participants' answers indicated the customary training provided by their respective departments and the difficulties they encountered in their educational institutions, which influenced their perceptions of leadership development and determined their identified requirements.

Participant 1 of School A described it as follows:

I have actively engaged in numerous training sessions, particularly seminars, pertaining to various aspects of school management. These include topics such as financial management, school safety concerns, disciplinary measures, and budgeting. The department has planned a plethora of such training opportunities for our benefit.

I have had extensive involvement in the areas of discipline, management, and strategic growth inside a school setting on multiple occasions. What are the alternative programmes administered by the South African Council of Educators (SACE) for principals? Peers employ the utilisation of CPTD (Continuing Professional Teacher Development) and QMS (Quality Management System) to augment and oversee performance.

The participant reported his participation in a course focused on school management, financial management, and school safety concerns. Additionally, he mentioned that the Department organises training programmes aimed at supporting principals in their school-administration responsibilities.

According to **Principle 2**:

There are instances where departments have been unsuccessful in carrying out training. The dissemination of knowledge through circulars without accompanying training is a common practise, wherein individuals are expected to execute tasks in a sequential manner. The school administration fails to inquire about our potential needs before the commencement of the academic year or seek feedback at its conclusion regarding areas for improvement in our educational practises. Additionally, there is a lack of inquiry into the principal's areas of need for assistance.

Liljenberg and Wethander (2023) propose that thorough engagement with school leaders prior to the commencement of training sessions can serve to establish a connection with their sensitivities and address the issues they face in their role as principals. By incorporating the insights gained from these consultations, the training programmes can be tailored to be more relevant and effective.

Principal 3 indicated that, *they Involve all of us and if ask for training they respond positively, they involving us, we plan together so it easy for us to work towards the implementation of school improvement."*

The above participant indicated that the Department works hand in hand with school principals regarding the planning for developing the staff in the implementing the school improvement programme.

Principal 4 added:

Within the school after training we implement the programme than we sat down as a group and reviewed the recommendations. We discussed these issues and created a list of items that should be included in our school improvement plan. We prioritized these items and listed them. We held regular meetings following the whole-school evaluation to plan how to improve their school.

He mentioned that they use different strategies as a group to discuss issues and they prioritise important issues in order to make decisions.

Principal 5 stated that *planning is the key to achieving our objectives. We invite all interested parties to participate in the planning and training process. The plan's priorities were determined with teacher input. Positive responses from teachers."*

The principal thinks that if a plan is created by involving teachers, the goals will be easier achieved. After a whole-school evaluation has been completed, principals and educators view planning for the creation of the school-improvement plan as their first step. They claim that these plans specify how they intend to address both the supervisors' recommendations, as well as the problems they found during school self-evaluations.

According to research, school-leader education must be structured to give school leaders opportunities to put the knowledge and skills they are learning into practice while they are receiving it (Fluckiger et al. 2014; Cosner et al. 2018). This has proven to be crucial in enabling school leaders to look for new information, theories and models that can improve their leading practices once their education is complete. According to Liljenberg and Wethander (2023), the development of school leaders' capacity to plan and implement scientifically based improvement work is facilitated through their engagement in a learning activity that integrates training practice with school leadership practice. Additionally, this experience facilitated introspection among the school administrators regarding their acts and the underlying motivations behind them, thereby enhancing their self-awareness in relation to their own professional development. As a consequence of this heightened awareness, there was a subsequent increase in the promotion of learning within training practices and school-leadership practices. In order to cultivate a conducive learning environment and enhance the readiness of school administrators for their roles, the incorporation of action research is deemed necessary within the educational framework of this study.

In the realm of school leader education, it is imperative for educational administrators to effectively implement predetermined leadership strategies, generate comprehensive documentation, and subsequently present it for evaluation by peers. This educational approach encompasses a fusion of theoretical instruction and practical application in the field of school leadership. Moreover, empirical evidence indicates that the integration of school leadership practice with school-leader training might yield advantageous outcomes for the professional development of novice school leaders (Wrethander & Liljenberg, 2023).

The subsequent section delineated the role of school management and leadership in facilitating the execution of the school-improvement programme.

4.4.2 Theme 2: The role played by school principal in implementing the SIP

This section explores the extent to which school leadership and administration are enhanced through the implementation of the school-improvement programme. This section provides an analysis of the administrative policies, practices and staff structure. The following subthemes were utilised to present the research findings: administrative policies, practises and staff structure; strategic directions of the school-improvement programme (SIP) in the schools; strategic planning of the schools; financial management of the schools; and monitoring and evaluation system of the schools.

4.4.2.1 Sub-theme 1: The principal's role as instructional leader in strategic directions of the SIP in the schools

In this context, a strategic direction is a process that ensures a high-quality plan of action for school improvement, in which the school has key strategies to encourage reform and inventiveness in the school for additional sustainable school improvement programmes (MOE, 2010:24).

Principal 2 said:

> *As the face of the school, the principal sets the tone and exemplifies leadership. I believe that planning is the issue. I would say that the long-term planning is ultimately not properly implemented. For instance, the principal might plan everything you want to accomplish at the beginning of the school year, but principals are often called to meetings and workshops right away. As a result, the principal are*

prevented from carrying out your plans for that specific day or even for several weeks.

He suggested that principals sets the tone and exemplifies leadership, and he also believe in planning.

Principal 1 added:

The responsibility for enhancing classroom education rests with all educators within the school, with the principal assuming the role of supervisor. It is imperative that every class collectively formulates the class rules in conjunction with all stakeholders, and thereafter ensures their implementation and adherence by all members.

Supervision is important in the running of schools. Principal 1 believes that class rules should be followed and respected by both learners and educators.

Principal 3 said:

Principals assume a crucial role in facilitating the classroom instructional process by effectively managing the curriculum. It is imperative for individuals to consistently engage in classroom visits to teachers in order to offer assistance and assess their efficacy in delivering high-quality instruction and facilitating effective learning experiences. In addition to their administrative responsibilities, principals are tasked with establishing effective curricular frameworks within the school setting. These frameworks serve to assess the effectiveness and quality of classroom instruction, while also placing emphasis on the professional growth and development of teachers within the school community.

The fact that the respondents believed that the principal should be actively involved in curriculum matters was incredibly interesting to note, even though the principal's involvement was viewed from a different angle. The following respondents agreed that the principal ought to be actively involved in classroom activities.

Principal 4:

It is imperative that principals establish a comprehensive system for conducting classroom visits, effectively execute this strategy, and provide timely feedback to instructors on a consistent basis. It is essential that written work conform to a

standardised pattern and be submitted on a weekly basis to the School Management Team.

Even though the principal's involvement was seen from a different perspective, it was extremely interesting to note that the respondents thought the principal should be actively involved in curriculum matters. The following respondents agreed that the principal should participate actively in lessons.

Principal 5:

It is imperative for the school principal to possess a comprehensive understanding of curriculum management. Principals are required to possess knowledge regarding the activities undertaken by educators inside the classroom setting. Additionally, they are expected to collaborate closely with the Head of Department in order to oversee and evaluate learner performance in the classroom. This collaborative effort aims to develop a climate conducive to good teaching and learning.

The above participants' responses revealed that principals ensure that a favourable teaching and learning environment is established for effective teaching and learning.

Instructional leadership, according to Hansen and Lárusdóttir (2015), is when school administrators emphasise fostering a climate that supports teaching and learning. As a result, the importance of the principals' role in establishing a positive learning environment cannot be overstated because it forms the cornerstone of efficient teaching and learning. To support this, the DoE (2008) asserts that the principal has a key role to play in fostering an environment where all school personnel are motivated to perform at a high level. In such settings, teachers and principals collaborate harmoniously to review current teaching methods with the aim of enhancing those (Hansen & Lárusdóttir, 2015). In terms of the internal evaluation, access and equity are performing well, according to Principal 2. Quality and effectiveness, however, are issues. Therefore, the DoE employs strategies such as preparing, tracking and assessing through training to increase the quality and efficiency of education through school improvement.

4.4.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Schools' strategic planning

This entails the organising of a strategic-planning session for the staff during which the vision and mission statement, as well as a scan of the environment and the establishment of the school's organisational goals, are shaped and shared by all stakeholders (Workneh & Tassew, 2013). It does not only entail the prioritising of school goals, but also the development of an action plan that will be followed.

Principal 1, state as follow:

> *The principal must be an effective planner, ensuring that the school vision and mission are available. I must supervise to ensure that each staff member not only understands what is expected of him/her, but also that each member performs his/her duties as expected. I also keep track of whether or not people (educators and nonteaching staff) attend workshops organized by the Department (the Department of Education).*

A principal must make sure that school's mission and vision is available. Principal 1 also mentioned that educators and non-teaching staff attend workshops or training organised by the DoE.

Principal 4 added that *planning is the key to achieving our objectives. We involve all stakeholders in the planning process. We established the plan's priorities by involving representatives from all stakeholders.*

The principal believes that having a plan and involving the school community will make it easier to achieve the goals. Furthermore, the plan adheres to the agreed-upon priorities.

Principal 3 said that e*ducators were provided with adequate support by ensuring that they had adequate resources. Newcomers were paired with experienced educators within the schools".*

They provided all required resources for teachers and also used different strategies to assist newly appointed educators.

Principal 2:

> *In order to develop programmes based on what the school may identify as their challenges, we meet with the SMT to hear the staff's perspective on the situation and*

learn about their challenges. I encourage them to express their frustrations and challenges.

According to the aforementioned claim, the plan of action is specially designed for the school. This finding suggests that the school is actively involved in the planning and execution of the course of action rather than having it imposed upon it.

Principal 5 also commented:

After reviewing the school's grades from eighth to twelfth, I came to the conclusion that it was underperforming. I started the procedure because I wasn't happy with my school to be referred to as a 'T60' school or to receive criticism at every meeting.

The strategies to improve the situation at their schools were initiated by the principal, and a smooth process required the cooperation of all parties. Among other things happening at school, he began by studying the matric results.

Planning involves the identification and assessment of the financial resources necessary for a school to achieve its educational goals. It also involves the identification of employees who will be responsible for monitoring and controlling the budget, with the principal providing continuous oversight. The quantification of time limits for achieving predetermined school-improvement goals is a necessary requirement, as stated by the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2010:17) and Nega (2012:18). Nevertheless, the use of collaborative planning has significantly contributed to the achievement of school development goals in both school A and school C. The aforementioned viewpoint aligns with the recommendations put forward by Makoello (2011:266) and Huff, Preston and Goldring (2012:162), whereby they assert that the formulation of school-improvement plans, rooted in comprehensive needs assessments, is regarded as an obligatory measure that can effectively support schools in attaining their objectives for enhancement.

The success of a strategic implementation plan is influenced by various elements, including the plan's quality, the training received by the persons responsible for leading the plan, and several other considerations. In a study conducted by Bell (2002), an examination was conducted regarding the strategic-planning frameworks employed in English schools. According to Bell (2002), the inflexible nature of strategic planning results in fragmented

outputs that are detached from knowledge. Consequently, this limits the acquisition of knowledge to competences that are specific to a particular setting.

According to prior studies (Dee & Jacob, 2010; Huber & Conway, 2014; Lee, 2019), educational institutions have increasingly focused on preparing students for state assessments. Consequently, schools have prioritised standardised assessments over the individualised curriculum for each subject, resulting in assessments that may not accurately measure the overall academic performance of schools, but rather their proficiency in preparing students for standardised tests.

4.4.2.3 Sub-theme 3: Schools' monitoring and evaluation system

The evaluation and tracking system of the school-improvement programme will yield various data and insights. These include information on student growth and the attainment of desired learning outcomes, as well as an assessment of the status and effectiveness of the programme's implementation. Additionally, the system will provide insights into the requirements and preferences of school stakeholders, as well as identify any challenges, problematic issues or risks that may hinder the efficient implementation of the programme (Nega, 2012:23; Workneh & Tassew, 2013:27; MOE, 2014:1).

Principal 3 stated as follow:

> *I set target for each grade in all subject and I also designed a recover plan for subjects who performed below average. Departmental Heads compile a classwork and homework timetable. I collect data on how many informal tasks per subject per grade monthly.*

These responses clearly indicate that that setting of targets for schools encourages schools to show improved results in subjects where results used to be poor.

Principal 1 said:

> *In my capacity as the principal, I would conscientiously monitor the educators' performance by assessing the quantity of tasks accomplished, the scope of curriculum covered, and the students' exercise books to ascertain the alignment between the students' work and the objectives outlined in the educators' annual teaching plan.*

A principal is required to assume the responsibility of overseeing the monitoring of the curriculum. This was confirmed by participant 1, who diligently observed the educators' work by assessing the curriculum covered, the quantity of assigned activities and reviewing the learners' exercise books to ensure that their work aligned with the educators' stated ATP.

Principal 2,

As a school, an examination of resource allocation within the stipulated period is done to ensure conformity with the stated policy. Accounting was observed to be allocated three sessions rather. The school use the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) rules by allocating enough time to different areas.

The principal is involved in monitoring various essential components of the school's evaluation and monitoring system.

According to **Principal 4**,

> *The strategy also encompassed the aspect of time management, requiring educators to adhere to punctuality and effectively use the entire duration of each class hour for instructional purposes. Adhering to fundamental principles was anticipated to aid our educational institution in effectively improving its academic performance.*

In contrast, the principal of School D has mostly focused on implementing fundamental measures to effect positive change, such as enhancing the extracurricular programme.

Principal 5 mentioned that,

> *The deputy principal assumes the role of overseeing the curriculum. In this capacity, she gathers and collaborates with the Senior Management Team (SMT) to evaluate the performance data that has been collected. This analysis serves to assess progress and inform the development of future action plans.*

The principal engaged with the SMT in school monitoring to track performance and measure progress in order to be able to plan for the future.

To ensure curriculum control in all five secondary schools, SMTs were required to oversee teachers' work via a roster (Mbokazi, 2015; Chikoko, 2018; Steyn, 2018). The importance of

departmental-head monitoring is highlighted in the literature on monitoring and evaluation systems in underprivileged contexts (Mbokazi, 2015; Chikoko, 2018; Steyn, 2018).

The section that follows explains leadership approaches for bringing future-focused change to the school-improvement programme.

4.4.3 Theme 3: Leadership approaches to bring future focused change in the SIP

This section offers an explanation on the leadership approaches used by secondary schools to facilitate the implementation of a school-improvement programme with an emphasis on future-oriented change. In response to the aforementioned query, three principals concurred that a prevailing pattern exists wherein strategic-planning sessions are being conducted at secondary schools, involving the staff and other relevant entities, with the aim of collectively shaping and disseminating information among all stakeholders. Nevertheless, it is evident that principals exhibit a deficiency in their understanding and proficiency when it comes to the allocation of responsibilities, including determining reporting structures and effectively delegating specific tasks to individual staff members in accordance with collective decisions. According to two school principals, it has been established that schools are facing a shortage of cash, which poses challenges in achieving the aims of school-improvement programmes. Nevertheless, in instances where educational institutions possess sufficient financial resources to support their educational endeavours, there is a tendency for some of these finances to be mishandled.

During the interview, the school principals exhibited divergent perspectives regarding the leadership methodologies that ought to be employed in order to engage all stakeholders in the decision-making process. The previous discourse has elucidated that leadership is no longer limited to the domain of the principal's office, but rather necessitates distribution and sharing among all stakeholders concerned. For principals to enhance their effectiveness, it is imperative that they adopt a democratic and participatory approach, fostering relationships and ensuring the efficient and effective provision of high-quality education to students. Consequently, the impact of the principals would be magnified. The inclusion of various stakeholders in the decision-making process is crucial for enhancing the impact of principals on learner accomplishment. Therefore, it is imperative that principals possess the requisite abilities to effectively engage with these stakeholders.

The leadership style exhibited by the principal significantly influences the overall success or failure of the school. According to the findings of Kariuiki et al. (2016), the principal holds a position of utmost significance in school leadership and administration. Their capacity, expertise, personal traits and professional aptitude significantly impact the overall atmosphere and effectiveness of the educational institution. The data analysis revealed the emergence of the following subthemes: management style, parent participation and communication.

4.4.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Management styles

The responses from Participant 1 allude to the democratic leadership style of the school principals. All of the principals had one thing in common—communication. It was, however, presented in different ways. According to the responses of the principals, the most important skill that the principals require is to encourage the involvement of other stakeholders in decision-making.

Principal 1 said:

> *In order to facilitate inclusive decision-making, it is imperative for school leaders to engage in consultations with all relevant stakeholders. This collaborative approach to leading and managing the school ensures that diverse perspectives are considered and incorporated into the decision-making process. Additionally, principals should possess the skill of delegation, as it enables them to effectively distribute decision-making authority throughout the organisation. By decentralising decision-making power, principals empower individuals and teams to contribute to the overall management and success of the school. In order to provide access to decision-making processes, it is imperative for principals to actively encourage the introduction of innovative practises and establish an inclusive and transparent atmosphere that encompasses all relevant stakeholders. The facilitation of stakeholder involvement is enhanced through decision-making communication, active listening to stakeholder opinions, and the establishment of community networking and partnerships.*

This suggests that policy is not always well understood by educators who are supposed to put it into practice. This has an impact on how these policies will be implemented. Effective policy implementation is determined by how policies are communicated to stakeholders, particularly those who implement them.

Principal 2 stated:

> *Various leadership approaches exist, as per my comprehension. One method prioritises the task while neglecting the employee, and conversely, the other approach prioritises the employee while neglecting the job. The alternative approach provides equitable regard to both the employment position and the individual employee. Out of the three ways under discussion, I opt for the approach that entails providing equitable regard to both personnel and the job at hand. The presence of dedicated employees is crucial for the successful execution of job tasks, since their motivation directly impacts job performance. Inadequate job performance can lead to organisational failure. Hence, I strive to maintain equilibrium between the professional responsibilities and the workforce.*

The resolution of conflicts involves facilitating a dialogue between the parties involved in the disagreement and reaching a mutually agreeable solution to address the underlying causes causing the conflict.

Principal 3 said: *We pinpoint the conflict's root cause. We raise awareness if a lack of awareness is the root of the conflict. If it was intentionally created, we use the rule to solve it.*

Principals emphasised that they list down the tasks that must be completed in accordance with the school-improvement plan of the schools when delegating tasks to the school community for the effective implementation of school improvement.

Principal 4 said: *My approach to instruction is to lead. The teaching and learning process is directly influenced by instructional leadership. Without putting this leadership into action, change will never come.*

The participant above claims that he influences teaching and learning through instructional leadership.

Principal 5 stated:

The democratic management style is implemented at our school to foster collaboration among all stakeholders in the processes of planning, organising, leading, and controlling our activities. This approach is favoured as it promotes a sense of teamwork.

The administrators of highly efficient educational institutions employ a democratic approach to management, in contrast to the autocratic management style commonly observed in less effective schools. The comprehension of the concept of a democratic management style, as it pertains to the principals of highly productive schools, involves the active involvement and engagement of various stakeholders within the school community.

Naicker and Waddy (2002) assert that the implementation of the South African School Act, No. 84 of 1996 brought forth a novel paradigm for the education system, encompassing transformative methods for instructional administration, and governance inside schools. According to Steyn (2002), the adoption of this novel method requires principals to reassess their roles and duties inside educational institutions. This suggests that it is necessary for principals to adopt an invitational approach, which entails inviting all stakeholders to engage in the decision-making process and therefore sharing the responsibility of leadership.

The findings indicated that the leadership exhibited by principals was highly efficacious in facilitating school improvement. The participative leadership style is known to have a positive impact on school progress. The incorporation of a collaborative leadership style is additionally enhancing the efficacy of leadership. Principals that possess strong leadership characteristics are able to effectively address various obstacles and challenges in order to drive school improvement and ensure the provision of high-quality education.

Although a style of leadership that is authoritative is suitable for accountability for improvement, a shift towards a participative leadership style is necessary, claim Batool, Arif, Ali and Jabeen (2023). The ultimate goal of accountability is to guarantee academic advancement. Other studies have shown that leadership practices vary from school to school. There are more difficulties for heads of elementary schools. A majority of elementary school principals in the research under consideration were also classroom instructors.

The findings support Cox and Mullen's observation that elementary school principals deal with more instructional challenges than secondary school principals (Aslam et al., 2019;

Ndungu et al., 2015). The conditions and requirements to apply for the post of principal need to be revised because the role of principals has changed over time. Contextual considerations, such as the fact that various schools require different leadership techniques, should be taken into account when drafting a school-leadership policy. According to Batool et al. (2021) and Noman & Gurr (2020), the findings showed that principals have become more crucial to school improvement. The responses provided by the principals and teachers seem to support the idea that principals manage various roles at various times (Singh, 2021). The principal serves in multiple capacities throughout the day, including manager and administrator, instructional leader, pedagogical leader, curriculum leader and coach. In addition, they exhibit a democratic or participatory leadership style when making decisions about certain school-related issues.

As previously mentioned by Hallinger et al. (2020) and Northouse (2021), it was found that when a principal is acting in the capacity of a leader, a supportive work environment is created in the school, and a small gap exists between teachers, academic coordinators, and principals of the school. These parties frequently share information and feedback, and as a result, learning between teachers and students is obvious. Teachers also seem to connect with the planned activities because they were a part of the decision-making process.

4.4.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Parental involvement

In order to guarantee that the learners are well-behaved, parents' cooperation with the schools is essential. Strong and friendly relationships between the home and school will develop as a result of parental participation in school activities, which is essential for the development of secondary school students (MOE, 2010:34).

Principal 1 said:

> *Lack of parental involvement and support in school governance is the problem. I found that parents are not concerned about their children's education. Low level of involvement. They could do more for the school, in my opinion. As an illustration, parents do nothing when students steal doors, furniture, and chairs with the names of the school on them. The school is not important to the parents. They make no effort to control the school.*

Another issue that came up during the data analysis is a lack of funding, which hampers management's efforts to effectively manage and lead parental involvement. Principal 1 noted that there were few resources available and that many tasks required self-funding.

Principal 3 said:

> *I communicate the decision while also listening to the stakeholders' and communities perspectives. The principal mostly informs educators about educational policies. In meetings, we (principal and educators) discuss them. The issue is that even the education officials occasionally fail to answer our questions because the Department changes from time to time. Educators convene with parents when required, and at a least of two times per academic term, in order to furnish comprehensive assessments and engage in discourse regarding the academic accomplishments of pupils.*

Communication is key; they sit down as a body of staff to communicate about policies since the DoE changes the policies from time to time.

Principal 5 added:

> *The principal should be open to other people's perspectives and listen to them. Before the start of the following academic year, I always identify problems and issues that we want to address in the school's annual plan, and the school plan is developed based on the agreed priorities.*

They do planning before the following academic year commences, based on agreed priorities.

Principal 2 said*:*

> *It is imperative for parents and schools to collaborate in order to establish and maintain a structured disciplinary framework for pupils. The active participation of parents in school events cultivates robust and amicable home-school connections that are essential for the advancement and maturation of secondary school pupils. The school actively promotes parental and student involvement in their children's education. One issue that arises is the lack of parental involvement in fostering motivation for learning among their children or students. The students solely derive motivation from their teachers during their time at school, while their activities at home primarily consist of sleeping and eating. That encompasses the entirety of the subject matter.*

It is incumbent for parents to perceive their involvement in their children's education as a responsibility. It is imperative for parents to effectively motivate and inspire their children to maintain a strong commitment to the pursuit of knowledge. Additionally, parents should endeavour to offer substantial support, including assistance with academic tasks such as homework completion.

According to **Principal 4**,

> E*ducators convene with parents on an as-required basis, and at minimum two times per academic term, in order to furnish comprehensive assessments and engage in dialogues pertaining to pupils' scholastic accomplishments. Meetings are organised by parent teacher associations and school boards with the purpose of discussing student achievement and providing parents with information regarding assessment and the results of school reform efforts. There exists a subset of parents that exhibit a lack of cooperation when approached to attend school-related events or meetings, with the primary responsibility for initiating contact resting solely on the school's administration. Nevertheless, their participation in our group remains pending, and it remains uncertain whether this is attributable to a disposition held by the senior leadership. Nevertheless, a significant obstacle that we encounter pertains to parents who exhibit a tendency to disengage from the school's initiatives designed for their children.*

As part of school procedure they meet with parents to discuss learners' performance; there are challenges with regard to parents who do not attend any of the SGB meetings.

According to Msila's (2012) findings, rural schools shared many characteristics with the participants' schools, who emphasised that the families' poverty made it challenging to run the schools. The principals admitted that running schools without parents was difficult. The results highlight the difficulties in involving parents in rural schools. The parents have demonstrated that their role in public schools is undermined by factors other than poverty. The study's conclusions benefited from the parents' recommendations as well. When given the chance, even rural parents who are typically viewed as being indifferent to school involvement can make significant contributions. According to Hoberg (2004:42), principals play a significant part in fostering a professional school climate, the importance of good public relations, collaborative decision-making and reviving a concern for moral values in the

school. The parents in the study want the *Ubuntu* philosophy to be taught in classrooms. According to Msila (2009:71), the African village is built on respect, trust and care for one another. He also quotes Khoza, who believes that *Ubuntu* has real-world applications for the workplace. The most crucial traits include teamwork, empathy in communication, and creative cooperation.

The authors Yulianti, Denessen, Droop and Veerman (2022) noted that parental involvement was not significantly impacted by transformational leadership. There were some notable effects of teacher invitations on parental involvement, particularly involvement at home. According to their previous research (Yulianti et al. 2019), transformational leadership was a factor that was pertinent to the study of parental involvement because it helped teachers invite parents to participate.

The findings of Yuliant et al. (2022) and Hornby and Witte (2010) suggest that the success of government initiatives to increase parental involvement may be hampered by the lack of professional development regarding parental involvement for school leaders and teachers on forming home-school partnerships and working with parents. To enable teachers and schools to implement strategies to encourage parental involvement, professional development for school leaders and teachers is required (Hornby & Witte 2010). The authors LaRocque, Kleiman and Darling (2011) advise teachers to take part in professional development to hone the communication skills required for working with families. Another crucial component missing from the schools was parent education, which was organised by the schools. Appropriate parent education can assist parents in giving their kids the kind of support at home that will help them succeed academically and in understanding the significance of their involvement, especially at school (Epstein 2001; Hornby & Witte 2010).

According to the findings of Bukola Oyinloye (2021), affective and economic relationships and interactions take place both inside and outside of the school, the latter in a variety of communal spaces. Others have also suggested that teachers' values are more in line with those of the school communities they interact with, which supports the idea that school communities have an impact on teachers (Buckler & Alison 2012). According to Esteban Guitart and Moll (2018), teachers' adherence to or alignment with communities' sociocultural lives, made possible by affective relationships, provides a solid foundation for incorporating

local cultures as educational resources into formal schooling in a way that affirms the knowledge that communities already possess.

The following section explained supervision and support provided by principals so that teachers can meet the purposes of the school improvement.

4.4.4 Theme 4: Supervision and support provided by principals so that teachers can meet the goals of school improvement

This section addresses the following question: To what extent does the school principal supervise and support department heads and teachers in order to achieve the goals of school improvement? In order to address the inquiry, a total of five school principals were questioned, consisting of four males and one female. The influence of leadership on school success has been recognised as a significant factor. The concerns addressed regarding leadership-support inside educational institutions pertain to the methodologies employed in providing assistance to the employees. In this domain of school supervision, there is a need for capacity-building initiatives targeting school principals and department heads in order to address prevailing challenges. The data analysis yielded several sub-themes pertaining to the impact of instructional leadership on enhancing classroom instruction. The function of instructional leadership serves as a fundamental basis for the development of teachers. This includes exploring the relationship between instructional and inviting leadership, as well as the principal's responsibility in promoting instructional leadership and fostering an appropriate learning environment.

4.4.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Improving classroom instruction for a suitable learning environment

It was fascinating to observe that while most of the respondents appeared to be unsure about the distinction between curriculum management and instructional leadership; all of the respondents were aware that the principal should be actively involved in curriculum matters. The principals provided the following feedback when asked about the principal's role in enhancing classroom instruction.

Principal 1 said:

I have been using strategies to assist teachers in the school. When some teachers face specific challenges. I apply a coaching approach. We sit down with them, discuss the issues, and make suggestions for solutions.

This shows that principals must have strategies to assist educators, even though they have personal challenges.

Principal 2 mentioned:

Sometimes, I discuss with individual teachers. However, deputy principals play an important role in supporting teachers on a daily basis. The deputy principal, in particular, is in charge of issues concerning teaching and learning.

This demonstrates that the principal provides limited support to the teachers.

Principal 3 said: *To be honest, I don't have much time to devote to assisting teachers. Outside of school, I was mostly involved in activities and meetings. I come to school two or three times a week at times.*

This gives us a clue that those principals who spend more time in schools because of different activities and meetings, usually are those principals who are more active in unions.

Principal 4 also commented:

I know that I have to support all educators in the school in various aspects. However, I believe that my support is limited because I am responsible for all staff, including non-teaching staff and students. They have a variety of issues, and it is difficult for me to address all of the teachers' concerns.

The above participant understood that it is important to support all staff, but he also mentioned that his support may not be enough because he must also support leaners and nonteaching staff.

Principal 5 said that:

I attempted to demonstrate to them that I have all of the resources they require. My school collaborates with a group of schools in the neighbourhood. Every month, we

have a group meeting. We share our best experiences with one another. Despite some challenges that are impeding the process of sharing experiences, our teachers are learning from best practices.

Participant 5 obviously give educators all the resources they need. He added that the educators gets together on a monthly basis to share experiences. The third participant said he disagrees with educators when it is necessary. This results in an unsuitable learning environment.

As previously elucidated, the act of exchanging experiences has the potential to aid educational institutions in acquiring knowledge about optimal methodologies and enhancing areas of deficiency. Another principal has verified that the primary difficulties in school management and leadership encompass a deficiency in experience and capacity development, a lack of internal decentralisation characterised by the sharing of leadership responsibilities among staff members, inadequate collaboration among stakeholders, and a dearth of knowledge and skills in instructional leadership. There is a need for capacity-building initiatives targeted towards school principals and department heads in the realm of school supervision in order to address prevailing challenges.

Public schools' unfavourable learning environments have a significant negative impact on students' academic performance. To create a successful learning environment, teachers must use effective classroom management. There are differences in how teachers run their classrooms (Dela Fuente, 2021), but little is known about the connection between good classroom management and students' academic achievement.

Jamba & Norbu (2023) showed that effective classroom management has a big impact on how well secondary-school students do in school. Effective teaching and learning processes are supported and facilitated by effective classroom-management techniques, which ultimately enhance students' academic performance. A base competency for teachers who want to significantly affect their students' academic performance is the ability to master classroom-management strategies and apply them in a real classroom, according to researchers like Wang (2009).

This outcome corroborates the conclusions drawn by Sibiya et al. (2019), who argue that proficient classroom-management skills encompass the capacity of educators to assert their

authority when required, exhibit patience towards students, exhibit a strong grasp of lesson content, employ effective time management strategies, and maintain a sense of order and tidiness within the classroom, among other factors. Dube (2023) posits that various factors have been identified as influential in shaping the classroom-management abilities exhibited by student teachers. These factors include the provision of a safe school environment, the impact of staff members such as teachers and principals, and the involvement of community members.

4.4.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Support given by the district to the principals, to advance their leadership roles to ensure quality results at schools

How would you rate the school-improvement committee's involvement in self-evaluation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation? The topic under consideration is expounded upon inside this particular section. In response to the specific inquiry, it was found that all principals who were interviewed on school self-assessment and development planning provided a unanimous response, stating that self-assessment and planning are implemented in their respective schools. Nevertheless, the participation of the school development committee is predominantly characterised by passivity and inactivity. Regarding the attainment of the intended objectives, the principals acknowledged the presence of deficiencies in the monitoring and evaluation of such objectives. These shortcomings hindered the identification of the underlying reasons for the failures and impeded the adoption of appropriate corrective measures.

When queried about the level of assistance provided by the district to principals, a significant proportion of participants expressed the belief that the UMkhanyakude district does indeed offer support to principals in fulfilling their leadership responsibilities within schools. The support indicated encompasses several aspects, including the provision of teaching aids and materials, curriculum support, workshops on curriculum-related issues, provision of learner-teacher support material (LTSM), and recognition of exemplary performance.

The following statements represent the principals' perspectives regarding the level of help they receive from the district office:

Principal 1:

The level of support I am receiving from the district encompasses a variety of activities, including meetings and seminars. The district occasionally disseminates circulars and instructional materials pertaining to the curriculum. The district is responsible for providing both the curriculum coverage monitoring tool and the topic annual teaching plan.

The district offers a comprehensive range of resources, including curriculum coverage monitoring tools and circulars to support schools.

Principle 2:

The school district offers instructional materials and resources, as well as facilitates the professional growth of educators through orientation seminars and other teacher development programmes. The district also does school visits in order to facilitate curriculum management and offer a range of assistance activities. Appraisal is recognised for its positive impact on the performance of educators and schools. Numerous diverse programming are provided to schools in order to enhance efficacy, including career counselling, welfare campaigns, sports initiatives, and development programmes.

As was the case for participant 1, according to Principal 2, the district offers tools and enhances teacher development through orientation sessions.

Principal 3 stated that,

The district arranges courses, including induction workshops for newly appointed principals and curriculum management workshops for all principals. Educational institutions are routinely inspected, and subject consultants provide assistance and guidance. Imbizo meetings are convened to facilitate inclusive participation of all relevant stakeholders in order to deliberate on strategies aimed at achieving improved outcomes. (LSTM) models exhibit punctuality in their delivery. Workshops tailored to the individual needs of each study area are organised for instructors.

Again, the district provides materials; subject specialist also provides support by visiting schools, and Imbizo (meaning different stakeholders meetings) are held by the district.

Principal 4 said:

The trainings offered to all principals by the district—the Department of Education, or DoE—are excellent, I won't lie, because they frequently cover a wide range of topics, including some you may not be aware of before you become aware of them. However, occasionally they are insufficient because they are not what you need because school B may differ from school A or school C.

The participant above holds a different view than that of participant 1, 2, and 3; he mentioned that workshops sometimes do not help since schools have different needs.

Principal 5:

Running a school presents a number of challenges and difficulties. My desire is to be trained as an administrator in financial management, human relations, interpersonal relations, and curriculum development if the department can do so without constantly threatening us when we don't follow the curriculum. I'd like to receive training on managing educators, managing teaching and learning, and parental involvement, among other things. How to deal with policy implementation challenges in my school as well as policy abuse and misuse.

The principals' responses revealed that the district's involvement in the leadership and management training of principals is limited. Briefing sessions and induction workshops were mentioned by principals as forms of assistance. As can be seen from the responses above, the majority of the support provided to schools goes towards managing and administering the curriculum. Nothing was said about how to improve a principal's management and leadership skills so that they can be a productive and successful instructional leader.

The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, which mandates that workplaces be used as active learning organisations, is violated by the Department's failure to train principals in pertinent leadership skills (Maxwell, 2010). In order to keep up with changes in school leadership and management practices, principals should be given opportunities to attain new knowledge and acquire new skills. These opportunities should include fostering school professional development, creating and communicating shared goals and vision, and encouraging teamwork within the school, all of which will advance and improve teaching and learning (Maxwell, 2010).

The lack of principal participation in district-wide decision-making and a lack of collaboration that limit opportunities for principal engagement are highlighted by Bantwini and Moorosi (2016). The lack of autonomy may imply that their school district lacks confidence in them, but it could also be partially explained by the bureaucratic nature of the educational context, which holds schools accountable to the government (Bush, 2016). According to Bantwini and Moorosi (2016), more collaborative leadership styles that encourage school-principal involvement in decision-making may be more beneficial for school improvement.

Bush (2016) contends that accountability and autonomy are related, and that bureaucratic models tend to be characterised by hierarchical authoritarian leadership styles (Bush, 2011). Furthermore, Naicker and Mestry (2013) discovered that school bureaucracy, which is prevalent, influences the autocratic and hierarchical leadership philosophies of school principals.

4.4.4.3 Sub-theme 3: Instructional leadership as a foundation for teacher development

The calibre of the teachers a school employs is a constant determinant of the quality of its instruction. Therefore, it is crucial that the principal always considers educators' development to be one of their most important responsibilities. In this study, Principal 1 stated that they have begun implementing programmes to support educators in developing their teaching abilities. These programmes, according to Principal 1, have improved teachers' attitudes toward their jobs.

Principal 1:

> *It has been disclosed that, throughout the course of the planning phase, the school administration team executes the objectives outlined in the school development plan, so facilitating the establishment of more cohesive and precise secondary school goals. Additionally, they set forth the objective of ensuring that department heads and senior teachers are held responsible for delivering a more comprehensive articulation of the teaching objective, including the necessary requirements and strategies for its attainment.*

The SMT takes the lead in developing the school-improvement plan.

Principal 3 confirmed that,

> *Planning was completed following the school improvement committee's self-assessment of the school. The school improvement committee does the initial planning at one location. Annual plans, on the other hand, were sometimes rushed through without the participation of stakeholders.*

According to the participant above, as a school has a school-improvement committee, the committee is responsible for the drafting of the annual plan for school.

Principal 2 revealed that a major issue in school-improvement planning was a lack of close collaboration among stakeholders. In light of this, a student proposed that their "school principal must work closely with the district education office and other stakeholders beginning with the planning phase".

The above participant mentioned that a learner at school suggested that the school and district should plan together.

Principal 4 stated that *"the school improvement committee's involvement in the school improvement programme is improving periodically at all stages. However, the school improvement school boards' participation in these tasks is minimal and passive."*

Over time, the school-improvement committee's involvement has improved.

Principal 5 added:

> *We have the School Improvement Committee (SIC) to conduct monitoring and evaluation, and I am the chair of the committee,' says Principal 5. We use a variety of checklists to conduct observations and collect relevant data. Then we organise the data for reporting to the appropriate offices.*

This principal serves as head of a department in school, and in this case, the principal is the chair of the committee. In addition, he works with his committee to organise information to be sent to relevant offices.

This data suggests that the results of monitoring and evaluation are not used to make changes to ongoing practice. This implies that the monitoring and evaluation intentions outlined in the SIP documents were not met.

According to Urio (2023), the leadership of each school must take the initiative, dream big and plan for the future of each institution. As a result, an effective leader must create the school's vision, communicate it to the school, and establish high performance standards for the school's community. According to the literature, leaders in the best-performing schools offer both social and individualised support, while in the worst-performing schools, leaders offer a lot of social support but little individualised support. These differences can also be seen in how the items were ranked in these two school categories—while individualised support was highly ranked in best-performing schools, it was ranked as average in worst-performing schools. According to teachers in the first category of schools, they receive assistance with things such as resolving salary issues and dealing with illness (Urio, 2023).

Furthermore, Urio (2023) argued that in order for teachers to adapt to the changing needs of both students and society, professional-development programmes are required. If quality education is to be realised, teachers should be given priority in order to be familiar with and exposed to such knowledge, innovation and change. This is because new knowledge and skills are constantly emerging. The results also showed that best-performing schools had a greater capacity to support teachers and encourage positive changes within their school communities than the worst-performing schools.

According to Streich (2009), being a leader in the classroom involves more than just walking the halls and telling students to ―tuck in their shirts‖. Instead, he clarifies, it is about dynamic modelling that promotes excellence in all facets of the school community and encourages collaboration. Additionally, he said that acting as a role model helps teachers and students to make changes and improves school performance because of one's dedication and upbeat attitude.

The following section explained challenges with regard to the implementation of school improvement.

4.4.5 Theme 5: Challenges with regard to the implementation of school improvement

The educational system is currently facing a deficiency in various resources essential for effective learning. These resources include textbooks for students, adequate learning spaces equipped with chairs and tables, administrative offices, teachers' rooms with appropriate

facilities, laboratories, sufficient funding, consistent instruction on school improvement, as well as instructional materials for the community and parents.

The insufficient involvement of the community and parents in fulfilling their role of assisting schools in providing educational resources, as well as the economic challenges faced by families in providing enough educational materials, contribute to the aforementioned issue. There is insufficient awareness among parents regarding their role in providing support for learners within the home environment. There is a perception that the responsibility for educating children lies solely with instructors in schools. This perception is often attributed to a lack of educational resources provided by parents and the socio-economic challenges faced by families. Consequently, this lack of support from parents and limited resources has resulted in a failure to adequately guide and support students in their learning journey. There are several factors that might hinder effective learning among children. Firstly, the responsibility of serving others at home can result in late arrival at school, which in turn can impact their ability to learn. Additionally, the lack of subject-matter expertise among parents can limit their capacity to provide enough support to their children's learning at home. Furthermore, the absence of technological resources, such as internet access in schools, can restrict students' ability to utilise online reference materials for academic purposes. Consistent monitoring and evaluation of the execution of school improvement should be ensured. It is recommended that individuals currently fulfilling roles as deputy principals, unit leaders, and department heads be considered for appointment to the principalship position.

4.4.5.1 Sub-theme 1: Important information about SIPs

This section responds to the question: Do you have any suggestions or other information about the school improvement programme that I did not ask for? The vulnerability of the Ingwavuma circuit was revealed in this area. Based on the responses of the principals in this district, one can conclude that working as a school principal in this part of the country is extremely difficult.

When asked to name the challenges that principals face on a daily basis, the participants responded as follows:

Principal 1:

Late arrival due to water scarcity issues in the area, absenteeism of learners on grant pay day, social ills factor, but which are minor, a high rate of poverty in the area, and high pregnancy rate, all of which occur on an annual basis.

Regarding absenteeism, Principal 1 claimed that students skip class to collect grants, while others go to prenatal clinics, and that all of this is due to teen pregnancy. Some departmental policies, according to the principal, cannot be implemented in the school because they are unrealistic. Although other challenges, for example, a shortage of water, are issues in the school; teenage pregnancy specifically presents a unique challenge because learners are absent when they go to the clinic during weekdays.

Principal 2:

Absenteeism, tardiness, and learner pregnancy are the three main challenges facing education due to its unrealistic policies and financial restraints (PF). The lack of student discipline, unenthusiastic teachers, the department of education's unrealistic policies and the financial restrictions (PF) are all very demoralising.

A few of the issues raised above, such as poverty-stricken neighbourhoods, tardiness, absenteeism, and teenage pregnancies, have their roots in society. Some teenagers become pregnant in order to obtain funds to combat poverty. The DoE should revise or review its learner pregnancy policy.

Principal 3 said:

The issue is that the school lacks the resources to effectively carry out our work. Learner discipline and educators who are not passionate about their work are a problem. I am confident that we could complete our work as efficiently as suggested by the external evaluators if we were receiving support from the Department.

The lack of resources is an issue in most rural schools. If the Department can provide enough resources the work can be done on time.

Principal 4 commented:

You wind up in a courtroom every day because some staff members lack professionalism and some students lack discipline. It is disappointing that some

parents continue to be uninvolved and uncommitted, and that staff members disregard company policies.

The majority of the difficulties in schools are caused by the Departments and their policies.

Principal 5 made the following assertion:

> *The list of common occurrences include things like teacher absences, students arriving late, departmental workshops and disjointed meetings, a lack of water, teacher union meetings, parents taking their kids to the doctor, and teachers taking extended sick leaves. Dealing with horrifying problems like student overcrowding in classrooms, student drug use is a terrible experience. It takes time for clusters, circuits, and districts to convene meetings and workshops on short notice. Meetings and workshops are a constant source of work for principals. The uncooperative union representatives interfere with teaching and learning. Parents don't make an appointment to visit the school.*

The list of common occurrences includes things like teacher absences, students arriving late, departmental workshops and disjointed meetings, a lack of water, teacher-union meetings, parents taking their kids to the doctor, and teachers taking extended sick leaves. Dealing with problems like student overcrowding in classrooms and student drug use is a terrible experience, causing anxiety and stress. It takes time for clusters, circuits and districts to convene meetings and workshops on short notice. For principals, attending meetings and workshops is a constant source of work. The unhelpful union representatives obstruct instruction and learning. When parents visit the school, they do not make an appointment. Parents and students should have a say in the creation of these regulations. If they are involved, these stakeholders will eventually take ownership and would want to see the regulations implemented.

According to Naicker and Waddy (2002), the new educational philosophies call for school administrators to encourage collaboration and teamwork, develop their own skills, and take responsibility for their management. This clearly illustrates the need for intensive training in order to effectively implement new policies and democratic values. Before applying these same principles to school life, this training must first focus on assisting participants in understanding how these values affect their day-to-day work.

Most of the aforementioned difficulties stem from the department. These included issues like crowded classrooms, post-provisioning standards, principals' heavy workloads, a lack of water in schools, a shortage of qualified professionals to teach, and meetings that interfere with instruction. The DoE needs to take action in this regard. The DoE should review its policies regarding principals' workload. Principals, educators, subject-cluster meetings, and workshops should be scheduled in advance to give everyone involved enough time to prepare for the meetings and organise themselves. Due to shocking occurrences of rapes and drug use, the principals must establish effective Safety and Security School Committees. The local iziNduna, religious leaders, social workers, psychologists, local policing forum members, and SAPS representatives are among the members of these committees.

These were difficulties that principals can overcome; however, to do so, the principal needs to be given more power. Teachers should receive professional conduct training from the principal. It is important to establish and strictly enforce shared policies regarding student and teacher behaviour. A clear statement of the expected behaviour and the consequences for deviating from it should be included in the student and teacher codes of conduct. The principal should employ their emotional and invitational leadership styles when dealing with the lack of involvement and commitment from parents. In their capacity as leaders, school administrators are expected to work in a democratic and participatory manner to forge connections and guarantee the efficient and effective provision of high-quality education for students (Naicker & Waddy, 2002). Effective principals are aware of the importance of parents, therefore, they must be treated with respect and dignity (Stoll, et al 2013; Deventer & Kruger, 2008). If employees believe their workplace is supportive, they will give their best effort. According to Maxwell (2010), people are more concerned with how the principal treats them than with how much principals know or how educated they are. This indicates that leaders' hearts, not their brains, are what affects people. The majority of the parents on the Ingwavuma circuit were illiterate and gave their children's education lower priority because of this. While some believed in the value of education, they lacked the skills necessary to provide effective support. Many of the students in this district were raised by their grandparents.

In the study conducted by Naidu et al. (2013), it was observed that principals encountered the task of implementing policy changes while simultaneously striving to optimise the educational development of all students in order to address the evolving demands of society.

This occurred within the context of the government's efforts to rectify the historical injustices of the apartheid era by granting schools greater autonomy as self-governing entities. This can be attributed to the lack of preparedness on the part of principals for this particular undertaking. The observed substandard outcomes, particularly in rural regions, and the increasing prevalence of schools designated as underperforming have prompted inquiries into the adequacy of principals' competencies, knowledge and proficiencies in effectively managing schools within this demanding and intricate context (Naidu et al., 2013).

The study conducted by Escobar (2019) presents evidence of the positive impact of development plans implemented in participating schools on the academic performance of pupils, particularly those from highly disadvantaged backgrounds. Consequently, individuals entrusted with the implementation of the plan were granted increased authority, thereby highlighting the necessity for enhancements within their educational system and equipping them with the requisite resources to effectuate such improvements.

Javed (2019) opined that by fostering robust relationships between parents and students, educational institutions can promote parental engagement in the academic achievements of their children. According to Barnes (2004), the initial phase involves the establishment of a school-improvement team, comprising individuals who engage in collective efforts to strategise, oversee, and synchronise the process of enhancing the school. According to Javed and Nawaz (2019), it is necessary to consider stimulating aspects both before the implementation of the plan and during the payment process in order to ensure the success of the initiative. Moreover, a significant drawback within the system lies in the inadequate, insufficient, and substandard approach to curriculum dissemination. Another obstacle to progress is the lack of strong district support and monitoring activities.

4.4.5.2 Sub-theme 2: Communication problems

Ineffective management and leadership and the lack of parental participation, partnership and cooperation can to a significant extent be attributed to deficiencies in communication. Sometimes reports are not effectively communicated to parents, resulting in limited parental awareness regarding their children's academic progress.

Principal 1 asserted that,

[t]he absence of engagement from key stakeholders, such as parents and the community, in their children's education undermines the efficacy and administration of the school. The involvement of parents is crucial. They may not participate in the direct academic instruction or assessment of the students. It is vital for parents to possess and continually acquire knowledge regarding the academic advancement of their children, as well as the overall success of the educational institution. The inclusion of these individuals could potentially yield contributions that positively impact the overall progress and advancement of the educational institution. The full potential of a school is unlikely to be realised if parents and the community are not actively engaged in its operations.

Inadequate communication results in parents being uninformed about their children's academic achievement; so hindering their ability to provide assistance.

Principal 3 added:

Parents tend to exert pressure on their children to attend school, relinquishing their responsibilities to educators. Numerous learners have expressed unfavourable remarks regarding the parental evaluations of their academic performance at the institution. However, there is a lack of commitment on their part to provide assistance to educators. The responsibility appears to rest solely on the educators. Based on my preliminary observations, it appears that there exists a deficiency in communication or rapport within the educational institution, rather than solely among the instructors themselves.

In addition, the researcher found inadequate communication as a contributing factor to the ineffectiveness of management and leadership in relation to parental participation.

Principal 4 said:

I believe that as a school, we must do more. I occasionally believe that we don't include parents. The parents frequently feel excluded, and I believe that our communication is ineffective. We stay away from them. I believe that the majority of the time, when a student misbehaves, we talk to the parents and ask them to get involved. In addition to that, we don't generally welcome parents into the school

setting, which is why some parents believe they should be involved in their children's education.

The participants above have brought up the issue of poor communication, which plays a significant role in the inefficient management and leadership regarding parental involvement. It could be argued that schools do not effectively communicate with parents, and as a result, parents may be perceived as failing to fulfil their responsibilities.

Principal 5 said:

The principal must be open and honest, as well as provide a forum for parents, students, teachers, and members of the community to express their views. Any effort made by another role player must be recognized by the principal. The principal must present reports to all stakeholders on a regular basis.

Participants 5 indicated that the principal must be open and truthful to teachers, parents, learners and community members (SGB); they must inform staff about educational policies.

Principal 2 mentioned that,

Communication skills are important in decision making. The principal must communicate the school's vision and mission statement to all stakeholders in order for them to fully participate in school decision making. Consultation and listening skills, as well as reporting and feedback, are all essential for the decision-making process.

Participant 2 agreed that communication skills are crucial in decision-making. Participant 3 said that in addition to hearing what stakeholders and the community have to say, the principal also needs to listen.

Conflict is a result of issues with communication in the classroom, organisational design, personality and human factors, and due to a lack of resources (Arslan, 2020). According to Bayar's (2015) research, conflict is caused by the size of the organisation, barriers to communication, a lack of resources, a lack of shared values and opinions, variations in management style, personnel differences, and distinctions in status and roles. Conflict occurs in schools because communication channels are not used effectively, teachers are not promptly informed about important information, administrators are using insufficient

channels of communication, teachers have different personalities and cultural structures, and the workload is not distributed fairly within the school (Erdoan, 2002).

According to Ertürk's (2022) research, it is crucial to use communication effectively in schools where interpersonal relationships are strong. Conflict will not be an issue if parents, teachers and administrators have open and effective communication. Effective communication, timely completion of tasks, organisational harmony, acceptance of the assigned task, a small staff, teachers and administrators acting in accordance with professional ethics and work ethics, and ensuring sustainability in professional development through collaboration and teamwork are the factors that ensure there is no conflict in schools, according to Ertürk (2022). In addition to communication, working together in a team will promote organisational harmony by fostering greater interaction between teachers, administrators and parents. This is because many school operations require teamwork and cooperation (Ertürk & Argon, 2019). In schools, which are educational institutions, it is crucial for teachers to have a positive view of the institution in order for the school's atmosphere to be positive (Gürcüolu & Uyar, 2020).

4.5 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The primary goal of the focus-group discussion in this section was to evaluate secondary school principals' management of school improvement-initiatives while also holding them jointly accountable for school leadership and management. The role of school principals, strategies, school planning, and the technical support provided by the district and zone education offices are covered in the following section.

4.5.1 The role of school leadership and management teams

The following question was presented to the participants: To what extent do school leadership and management teams run the implementation of the school-improvement programme? In relation to an inquiry regarding the leadership and management of schools in Quintile 2, specifically School B and School C's participants, two participants from a focus group (one male and one female) expressed that "since the initiation of the school improvement programme in 2008, the management responsibilities, encompassing tasks such as planning, organising, directing, and controlling the system of the school improvement programme, have

progressively strengthened over time". In the context of school planning, significant importance was attributed to the establishment of the school's vision, goals and objectives.

The participants collaborate with school principal to coordinate the planning process, aiming to establish connections between various elements of the school-improvement framework, such as the school community. This collaborative effort seeks to enhance the efficiency of executing school improvement tasks by fostering collective action. Furthermore, it was expressed that the school lacks a robust connection with the local community. The organisation has yet to establish a mechanism for continuous communication with parents and other relevant stakeholders. The level of community engagement in school-improvement efforts and utilisation of school resources and facilities was insufficient. In contrast, the male students from Quintile 1 schools 5, 1, and 4 reported engaging in school-improvement initiatives by utilising a systematic checklist school B. These activities mostly revolve around assessing the extent to which the schools' goals and objectives are being met. As per the findings of a study conducted by a team from ISS Secondary School, the primary concerns in school leadership and management within these two educational institutions revolved around the school principals' tendency to prioritise managerial and administrative responsibilities, as well as external assignments from district administrative bodies. Consequently, the task of teaching and learning was often delegated to individuals lower in the administrative hierarchy, despite it being the fundamental objective of a school. This section presents the school leadership and management strategies employed in school-improvement programmes.

4.5.2 School leadership, management and strategies

The following questions were put to participants: What leadership and management techniques were used in your respective secondary schools to bring future-focused change through the school-improvement programme? According to the principals of secondary schools in Quintile 1, conducting school self-assessment activities offers a valuable foundation of data for evaluating the alignment between the yearly plan and the school strategic plan over a period of three to five years. Furthermore, there was a lack of clear articulation of school goals in order to foster accountability and enhance instructional progress. Additionally, challenges were observed in cultivating a healthy climate, specifically pertaining to the norms and attitudes exhibited by instructors and personnel, which have a direct impact on the learning environment within schools.

The three additional principals from the secondary schools in Quintile 2 have confirmed that there exists a process of analysing the information gathered during the self-assessment phase. This process involves identifying key areas for improvement within the school, on an annual basis. Furthermore, the school leaders demonstrate significant dedication towards implementing the school's vision through the school-improvement programme, with a focus on enhancing the learning experience for the students.

The school currently lacks comprehensive student-support techniques. At the departmental level, there exists a deficiency in teachers' comprehension about how to effectively assist pupils and engage with them in school-improvement endeavours; so, facilitating their academic success. The school's current implementation of reform packages has created a conducive climate for teaching and learning. In contrast, school principals were unable to cope with the insufficiency of cash, materials and other essential resources required for the instructional process. Principals, in and of themselves, lack the necessary financial means to independently orchestrate and sustain instructional and educational endeavours. Additionally, there was a notable deficiency in instructional leadership and a lack of favourable circumstances for instructors to establish conducive environments and obtain the required human and material resources to enhance academic attainment within the broader teaching and learning process. Furthermore, it has been substantiated that school principals have a deficiency in both the aptitude and inclination to engage with others, namely the staff, in the process of decision-making. The subsequent section addresses the provision of technical support by district education offices and zone education offices.

4.5.3 Technical assistance from the zone education office and district education offices

The question presented to the participants was: How do the zone education office and district education offices provide technical assistance to secondary schools to carry out secondary school improvement-programme initiatives? In relation to this query, the topic of interest pertains to the first quintile in secondary educational institutions. According to statements made by participants, it was asserted that the primary role of the zone education office was to oversee and assess the progress of school improvement in secondary schools on a quarterly and cyclical basis. Both organisations concurrently disclosed that the technical assistance provided by district education offices establishes a more intimate connection with schools by offering training and extensive oversight. The participants were asked to propose additional

school-improvement activities that could have an impact on the implementation of the current school improvement programme. According to the response provided by Quintile 2, it is suggested that the implementation of transformational change strategies is necessary among various stakeholders, including school teachers, students, school leadership and management team, and other relevant parties, in order to facilitate significant alterations inside the secondary school system.

4.5.4 Alternative strategies to the SIP

This section responds to the question: What additional school improvement measures will you recommend to improve the efficacy of the current school-improvement programme implementation? Participants 1 and 3 have provided the following suggestions regarding the necessary measures for the ongoing school-improvement programme:

> *[by] enhancing the clustering of secondary schools to foster trust among various stakeholders at different levels and clusters (e.g., schools to schools, principals to principals, teachers to teachers, teachers to parents, parents to parents, parents to traditional leaders, parents to local governments, schools to local governments), and promoting educational practicum*.

In a similar manner, the interviews conducted with principal 2, 4 and 5, revealed that secondary schools did not exhibit a strong tendency to form clusters under the jurisdiction of the zone education office in relation to school reform initiatives. Hence, it is recommended that secondary schools be organised into administrative zones alongside district education offices, based on their geographical proximity.

4.6 SCHOOL-LEARNER EMPOWERMENT

This section answers the question: What is your experience in the implementation of a school-improvement programme? Student empowerment involves teaching students how to take responsibility for their actions and to live a disciplined life (MOE, 2010:20). By giving students more agency, we can deepen their engagement in the classroom, promote a more democratic learning environment, and, of course, identify the most potent resource. In order to do this, we should give our students a voice through forums for their feedback, empower them to make decisions about a particular aspect of the curriculum, support the use of

meaningful technology in the classroom, and engage them in current events (MOE, 2010:21). The system of student empowerment in schools, the habit of accepting responsibility and living a disciplined life has been ingrained in students. Students give teachers helpful criticism regarding teaching and learning. Students' cooperation, accountability, and self-control are encouraged. Students who are able to articulate the reason behind their learning, are driven to do so, and actively engage in class activities. The qualitative findings from the Iluababor Education office's document analysis are presented in the following section.

4.7 CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis is a qualitative research method employed to discern and explore particular words, concepts or themes within a designated collection of qualitative data (Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, 2022). This data may encompass various forms such as written text, audio-visual media, symbolic artefacts and tangible objects. The interviews that were recorded verbatim were analysed in the context of this research. During the process of analysis, interview transcripts were examined for recurring concepts and themes. These recurring elements were then categorised to facilitate subsequent interpretation of the transcripts. The researcher diligently recorded observations and reflections in the form of notes and memos during the data-analysis phase. The aforementioned notes encompassed the inquiries posed by the researcher, the interrelations established among several abstract concepts, and the patterns that surfaced (Briggs, Morrison, & Coleman, 2012). According to Zhang and Wildermuth (2009), this research tool is widely utilised in educational research. A notable benefit of employing content analysis is in its capacity to examine huge volumes of data (Cohen et al., 2000). The process involves the analysis of data for the purpose of discourse and the identification of meaningful patterns (Merriam, 1998). In order to initiate the process of data analysis, the researcher undertakes the task of transcribing the gathered information. Subsequently, the transcribed data is organised and categorised into relevant classifications that align with the research emphasis, as outlined by Henning et al. (2004). This enables the classification of data into codes, categories, topics and units of meaning.

The researcher found content analysis to be highly advantageous in her examination of principals' encounters with the implementation of the school development programme in secondary schools. This was primarily due to its user-friendly nature. Table 4.13 provides a

comprehensive summary of the units of meaning, codes, categories and themes that were identified during the content analysis of the aforementioned material.

Table 4.13: Content analysis

Units of Meaning	Categories	Codes	Themes
At all times, sufficient resources must be made available for use.	Shortage of resources	The school lacks sufficient resources to allow educators to work successfully.	Limited resources at school
Work commitment makes tasks easier to complete.	Lack of commitment	Learners are not focused on their studies.	A lack of dedication
Training reduces workload.	It is stressful.	Principals did not receive enough training.	Principals' work stress
Sufficient funds must be available for schools.	It is stressful.	Schools did not have enough funds to run the school.	Budget cuts for Schools
Officials are always available.	Easy to run school	Schools received support from DoE	Support from Department officials

(Source: Researcher, 2023)

4.8 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Document analysis is a technique for analysing documents in both hard copy and electronic form. It entails data analysis and interpretation in order to gain knowledge and develop a clear understanding of a specific issue (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Rapley, 2007).

The following are the advantages of document analysis:

- Researchers have access to many documents, including organisational policy documents. These can be accessed without first obtaining permission from the authors. This type of documentation is also widely available on the internet, making it easily accessible.
- Document analysis necessitates only data selection rather than data collection.
- The inclusion of exact names, references and event details makes documents useful in the research process.
- Document analysis is considered a cost-effective research method since the necessary data has already been collected and documented. As a result, researchers are only required to discover and access these papers in order to gain the desired information.
- Document analysis is a reliable method of obtaining information, as it ensures consistency due to the researcher's inability to alter written content. Furthermore, these materials can be readily accessed for future examination.
- Document analysis is a time-saving and efficient approach that enables the examination of extensive temporal spans and diverse contexts, encompassing a wide range of events and locations.

Nevertheless, document analysis also has its disadvantages:

- The information in documents may be skewed. Official documentation's information may be unduly aligned with corporate agendas.
- The information obtained by the researcher may be insufficient. The information may be insufficient for the researcher's needs, and thus cannot fully answer the relevant research questions.
- It can be difficult to locate documentation at times. Access to documents is sometimes purposefully restricted.

4.8.1 A description of documents analysed

The documents analysed include the following:

- **The school improvement plan**: These are the plans produced by the school regarding school improvement in a particular period of time.
- **Minutes:** These are the decisions made at particular meetings. They were used to describe how the decisions that were made in the schools/ were affecting practice

- **Examination results of the students:** These are students' performance results in the national, provincial and school-level examinations and were used to describe the performance of the schools and the students.
- **Reports:** These are the performance reports of the school to the school community that are meant to indicate what the school has achieved during a particular period of time.

Document analysis for the current research study entailed reading and interpreting various reports, examination results for students, meeting minutes, and a school-improvement plan. The goal was to gain a better understanding of how the principals' experiences in implementing the school improvement programme in selected secondary schools. The researcher recorded the words and images in these documents without altering them.

The primary objective of a school-improvement plan is to facilitate the evaluation of a school's strengths by administrators, teachers and school councils, with the aim of identifying areas that require enhancement. This process is intended to benefit all learners and enhance their academic performance. These initiatives promote the active involvement of educators and parents in monitoring the academic development of their pupils, with the availability of current and reliable data on the performance of learners. The aforementioned policy serves as a framework employed by the educational institution to enhance the academic performance of students by the implementation of effective curriculum-delivery methods, fostering a conducive learning atmosphere, and fostering greater parental engagement in their children's educational journey both within the school premises and at home. In accordance with this policy, the proposed approach necessitates the collaboration of teachers, school councils, parents, and other community stakeholders to collectively collect and analyse data pertaining to the school and its student body. The primary objective of this endeavour is to identify areas within the school that require enhancement.

Minutes are records regarding the decisions at specific meetings. They were used to describe how decisions made in schools were influencing practice. The minutes' purpose is to create an official record of the actions taken at a meeting. Minutes serve to memorialise the actions taken for those in attendance as well as those who were unable to attend the meeting. It serves as an authoritative and permanent record of proceedings, provides formal evidence of decisions made and authority over expenditure and actions, provides a record of policy

decisions made, and provides guidelines as a starting point for future action. The document assists the school in keeping records and financial reports or school budget decisions made.

The following data represents the outcomes of students' performance in national, provincial, and school-level tests, which were utilised to assess the academic achievements of both schools and pupils. The primary objective of examinations or academic assessments is to facilitate the attainment of educational objectives, specifically focused on learning. In this context, the multifaceted construct of performance outcomes encompasses various components. A phenomenon known as diverging performance arises when there exists a disparity between a student's academic performance and their anticipated level of performance. Unsatisfactory academic performance refers to a level of achievement that does not meet the expected standards. The evaluation of school performance is typically conducted by educational institutions to assess the extent to which they have achieved their objectives, as well as to determine if their performance is exceptional, average, or below average. In the event that the school's performance falls below the average, it is advisable to provide assistance in order to address this deficiency.

Various methods can be used to communicate learner performance to a range of recipients, including learners themselves, parents, educational institutions, and other relevant parties such as employers. Examples of communication methods between schools and parents include report cards, parent meetings, school-visitation days, parent-teacher conferences, phone calls, letters, and a class or school newsletter. The principal objective of reporting is to furnish learners with consistent developmental feedback, apprise parents/guardians of the progress made by the particular learner, and offer information to schools and district or regional offices regarding the current performance level of learners.

The use of recorded data serves multiple purposes within the educational context. Firstly, it serves as a means to inform teachers and other relevant stakeholders about the performance of learners. Additionally, it facilitates the provision of constructive feedback to learners regarding their progress. Moreover, recorded data is instrumental in providing feedback to parents and other stakeholders regarding the performance of learners. Furthermore, it plays a crucial role in informing the planning of teaching and learning activities. Lastly, recorded data is utilised to inform the implementation of intervention strategies. The policy document mandates that learners are obligated to provide updates on their progress and disclose their

performance on examinations. Prior to including the documents into this study, the researcher conducted a thorough examination to ensure their legitimacy.

4.9 DOCUMENTS ANALYSIS RESULTS ON THE SIP FROM THE ILUABABOR ZONE EDUCATION OFFICE

This component of the study focuses on an analysis of the records obtained from the yearly reports of the zone education office. These records refer specifically to the school development initiatives implemented in past years. The yearly reports of each of the five secondary schools in the Iluababor administrative zone were independently structured. This document analysis also facilitates the examination of decision-making, strategic planning, resource allocation, and the outcomes of the school development programme within the administrative zone. The main objective of this study was to integrate the findings from document analysis with those obtained through interviews, observations, and focus-group discussions. This approach aimed to establish a comprehensive understanding of the research topics at a sub-basic level, enabling the drawing of conclusions and the provision of recommendations.

4.9.1 Document analysis on school leadership and management in secondary schools

The goal of this section's document analysis was to look at the administrative zone's leadership and management practices to see if there were any processes in place for monitoring the effectiveness of the school-improvement programme. The qualifications of secondary school principals in the Iluababor administrative zone are discussed in the following sub-topic.

4.9.1.1 School principals' qualifications

The daily management of schools is the responsibility of the principals. They are in charge of overseeing the behaviour of the faculty, the students, and all other school personnel. They must therefore obtain a license in school leadership and management in order to fulfil their duties. Table 4.14 presents the qualifications of secondary school principals.

Table: 4.14 Principals' of the five secondary schools respective subject qualifications

School principal	Physics	Biology	English and others languages	Mathematics	Educational management	Geography	History
Principal 1	✓		✓				
Principal 2			✓		✓		
Principal 3		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Principal 4	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Principal 5	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Total	3	3	5	2	2	2	1

(Source: Researcher, 2023)

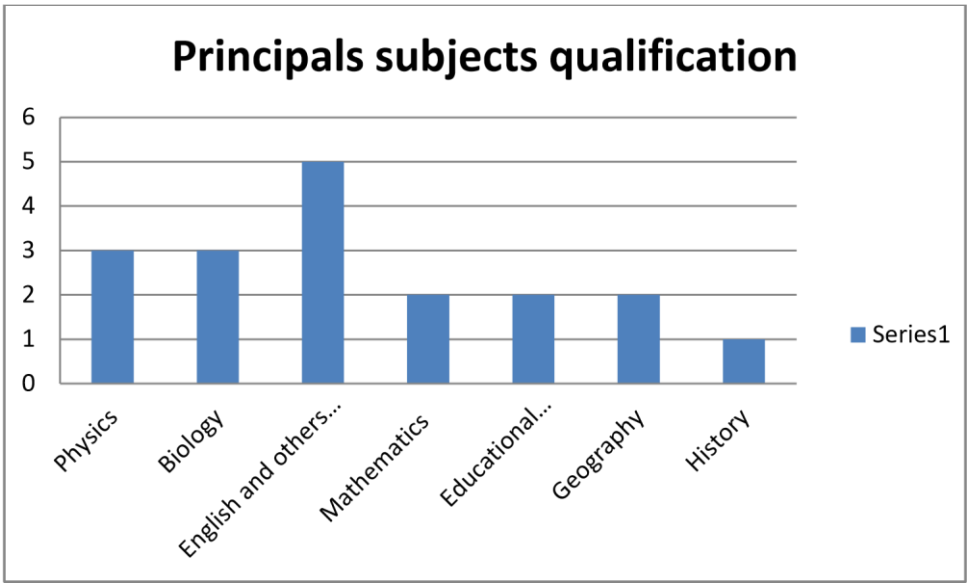

Figure 4.4: Number of Participants with their Respective Subject Qualification in Five Secondary Schools (Source: Researcher's own design, 2023)

Only two school principals (40%) of the five secondary schools listed in Figure 4.4 with their respective subject certifications had training in educational planning and management, respectively. According to this data, there are not enough school principals who have received formal training in managing and leading educational institutions.

4.9.2 Document analysis on parents and community participation in secondary schools

According to the documentation gathered from schools regarding community involvement, members of the community were passive and uninvolved in parent-teacher associations, school boards, and community involvement. The main issues the documents revealed were poor cooperation between school stakeholders; ignorance of the fundamental concept of the school-improvement programme; and the distance between the school and parents' points of contact due to parents' lack of education.

4.9.3 Document analysis on major challenges of implementing the SIP in secondary schools

The analysis of the documents indicates that the primary challenges encountered in the school-improvement programmes included insufficient classroom capacity to accommodate a large number of pupils, inadequate infrastructure, limited provisions for sanitation and hygiene, as well as insufficient funding and budgetary allocation for the effective implementation of school improvement initiatives. In relation to the allocation of resources for the effective implementation of school improvement literature, it has been found that the provision of adequate physical school facilities and the establishment of a conducive learning environment are essential factors in facilitating the teaching and learning process. In order to foster an environment favourable to learning, it is not always necessary for school furniture to be brand new; however, it is imperative that it undergoes periodic renewal. In essence, it is imperative that they possess the ability to effectively facilitate the educational and instructional procedures, encompassing both the standard and quantity aspects (Botha, 2013:24).

Another issue that was brought up by the participants is the level of competence exhibited by principals. The literature indicates that the school principal's competence is crucial for effectively implementing school-development initiatives. The achievement of this task can be facilitated through the establishment and dissemination of a well-defined mission, goals and objectives, coupled with the ongoing assessment and evaluation of the teaching and learning processes. In essence, his objective is to effectively convince individuals to contribute their assistance towards the attainment of the school's desired objective. According to Deventer (2009:68), it is important for the individual in question to possess both competence and experience in order to do the task at hand. According to Clarke (2012:1-3), it is imperative for educational institutions to prioritise the appointment of dedicated and well-informed educators to the role of school principal. Regarding teacher competency, the aforementioned author claimed that educational institutions should possess instructors who demonstrate dedication and proficiency in overseeing student progress and delivering feedback that is informed by the outcomes of such monitoring. In order to accomplish this, individuals must enhance their understanding of session initiation protocol In relation to the matter of effective school-improvement planning, scholarly literature suggests that educational institutions should do a comprehensive assessment of their strengths and shortcomings, subsequently prioritising them within the framework of their improvement initiatives. According to the Ministry of Education's 2011 report, the participants of the survey also acknowledged the challenges that hindered the implementation of the school-reform programme. The subsequent section provides explanations for these.

4.10 CONCLUSION

In the previous part of this chapter, the researcher presented and analysed data pertaining to the principals' experiences in implementing the school improvement programme in secondary schools in terms of the SIP's outcomes on the school effectiveness of the five schools. The results were then discussed in terms of what the data indicated, the findings in the literature, and the researcher‘s own comments. Thus, the chapter provided an analysis of the data on principals' experiences in the implementation of school-improvement programmes, the role of principal in such programmes, leadership approaches used in schools to bring about future focused change in school improvement, supervision and support offered by principals to teachers so they can fulfil the goals of school improvement and challenges to such programmes.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The presentation and the discussion of the findings supported by literature were the topics of the previous chapter. The main conclusions of the research are summarised in this chapter. The summary that results from the findings will demonstrate that the fundamental research questions have been successfully addressed by correlating the problem statement of the study as formulated in Chapter 1 with the findings as presented in this chapter. The researcher made appropriate recommendations based on the study's findings and called for more investigation into principals' experiences with the implementation of the school-improvement programme in secondary schools. It also clarified how the study had obstacles. Additionally, the chapter suggests a model for assessing, keeping, and enhancing the implementation of school improvement programmes based on the research findings. In light of this study, the researcher also recommend that more research should be conducted on the topic.

The following section explained the summary of the study.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The present study was directed by a primary research inquiry, subsequently subdivided into four secondary research inquiries. The main research question was: *What are the experiences of principals in implementation of the school improvement programmes in secondary schools*? The four subsidiary research questions were:

- What is the role that principals play in the school-improvement programme?
- To what extent do school principals contribute to the implementation of the school improvement programme?
- Which strategies can be used by school principals in implementing the school improvement programme?
- How effective is the implementation of the school-improvement programme in improving teaching and learning in secondary schools?

This research study aims to explore the experiences of principals in implementing the school improvement programme in rural secondary schools in the UMkhanyakude district of the Ingwavuma circuit in the KwaZulu-Natal Province.

The objectives of the study were to:

- explore the role of the school principal in implementing school-improvement programme;
- identify the extent to which principals contribute to the school-improvement programme in secondary schools in the Ingwavuma circuit;
- examine strategies implemented by school principals in school-improvement programmes; and
- determine the effectiveness of the school-improvement programme in improving teaching and learning in secondary schools.

5.3 MAJOR FINDINGS

The study's findings in Chapter four were organised into five primary themes, with corresponding sub-themes arising within each main theme. This part presents a discussion of the different findings within each primary subject, with the aim of providing a comprehensive understanding of the realistic conclusions and recommendations.

5.3.1 The experiences of principals in the implementation of a SIP

Most participants in this study hold diverse perspectives regarding the experiences of principals in the execution of school-improvement programmes. It is emphasised that giving priority to the implementation of foundational elements is of utmost importance in facilitating substantial changes in teaching and learning within the school. For further details, please refer to (Chapter 4, sections 4.4.1.1, 4.4.1.2 and 4.4.1.3). The study revealed that there is a clear requirement for leadership training that is specifically tailored to enable the acquisition of knowledge and abilities that are crucial for efficient school administration (refer to Chapter 4, section 4.4.1.4).

The researcher observed that aggressive efforts were made to seek input from all pertinent stakeholders to define the content and design of the school-development programme. The empirical evidence obtained from the experiences of school administrators provide support for the importance of include diversity and relevance in the distribution of resources to improve school leadership. The study also discovered that collaboration within a team contributes to enhanced outcomes and the attainment of objectives. Furthermore, the implementation of a school improvement plan is crucial for enhancing the academic outcomes of the institution. This process can be facilitated by fostering collaboration among stakeholders and ensuring a clear understanding of the programme's objectives. Additionally, it is imperative to recognise the significant role that principals play in shaping the overall behaviour and culture of the school. Therefore, principals should exercise caution and mindfulness in their words and actions, as they have a profound impact on the school community. The existing body of scholarly literature on educational transformation consistently emphasises the significance of teacher autonomy, collaboration, and leadership as a crucial element in improving student outcomes (Hargreaves & Ainscow, 2015; Harris, Jones & Huffman, 2017; Datnow & Park, 2018). The collaboration of instructors in establishing a clear and mutually agreed upon set of goals can have a profound and enduring effect on the results of learners (Sharratt, 2018).

5.3.2 The role of principals in the implementation of SIP

The objective of this study was to assess the level of involvement of principals in the school reform plan within secondary schools located in the Ingwavuma circuit. The research findings indicate that the monitoring and assessment of school-improvement activities are sufficient, demonstrating successful cooperation among stakeholders at various levels. The significance of the principals' involvement in developing a pleasant learning environment cannot be overemphasised, as it serves as the foundation for effective teaching and learning. According to the Department of Education (DoE) (DoE, 2008), it is said that the principal plays a crucial role in cultivating a conducive atmosphere that motivates all members of the school staff to perform at an elevated standard (refer to Chapter 4, section 4.4.2.1). Moreover, instructional leadership comprises other elements, such as strategic management of schools, facility management, management and leadership of personnel, students, and the wider community,

as well as information management. Based on the internal assessment, the indicators of access and equity demonstrate satisfactory performance.

According to Van Deventer and Kruger (2008), it is acknowledged that principals can successfully accomplish the goal of maintaining teaching and learning as outcomes. The centrality of enhancing instructional practices by principals is evident in the overall functioning of schools. The principal's efforts are directed towards fostering improved instruction, which ultimately leads to school improvement (Hoadly, 2007) (Chapter 4, section 4.4.2.2).

5.3.3 Leadership approaches were applied in schools to bring future focused change in the school improvement

The objective of this study was to determine the results associated with leadership techniques implemented in educational institutions with the aim of promoting future-focused school development. The school administrators exhibited divergent perspectives regarding the leadership strategies that ought to be employed in order to engage all stakeholders in the process of decision-making. The previous discourse has shown that leadership is no longer limited to the principal's office, but should rather be spread and shared among all stakeholders concerned (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.3). For principals to enhance their effectiveness, it is imperative that they engage in a democratic and participatory approach, fostering relationships and ensuring the efficient and effective provision of high-quality education to students. The impact of the principals would be magnified therefore. The inclusion of various stakeholders in the decision-making process is of utmost significance in enhancing the impact of principals on learner accomplishment. Therefore, it is imperative that principals possess the requisite skills to effectively engage in this endeavour. In the study conducted by Kariuiki et al. (2016), it was found that the principal plays a pivotal role in school leadership and administration. The principal's capabilities, talents, personality traits and professional competence were identified as significant factors that significantly impact the overall atmosphere and effectiveness of the educational institution. The study presents the results in terms of Epstein's model of parent participation and communication, as well as management style. It is emphasised that the involvement of various stakeholders in decision-making communication is the most crucial ability that principals need (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.3.1). The research findings indicate that the principal assumes many roles during the day,

encompassing managerial and administrative responsibilities, instructional leadership, pedagogical leadership, curricular leadership, and coaching. Furthermore, they demonstrate a leadership style characterised by democracy and active participation in decision-making processes pertaining to specific matters within the school context. The research conducted by Batool et al. (2021) and Noman & Gurr (2020) provided evidence that principals have assumed a more significant role in facilitating school improvement. According to Singh (2021), the replies offered by principals and teachers appear to corroborate the notion that principals assume diverse roles at different junctures.

Another concern that arose during the examination of the data is the insufficient allocation of financial resources, which impedes the ability of management to properly oversee and guide parental engagement. Principal 1 said that there was a limited availability of resources and a significant number of jobs necessitated self-funding, as referenced (in Chapter 4, section 4.4.3.2). Based on the research conducted by Msila (2012), it was seen that rural schools had certain commonalities with the participants, who highlighted the difficulties associated with managing these schools due to the impoverished circumstances of the families involved. Effective parental education can play a crucial role in equipping parents with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide their children with the appropriate assistance at home, hence enhancing their academic achievements. Moreover, it enables parents to comprehend the importance of their active engagement, particularly within the educational setting (Epstein, 2001; Hornby & Witte, 2010).

5.3.4 Supervision and support provided by principals so that teachers can meet the goals of the school improvement

The objective of this study was to examine the effects of principals' supervision and assistance on teachers' ability to fulfil the objectives of school development. The influence of leadership on school success has been recognised as a significant factor. The concerns with leadership support at educational institutions pertain to the approaches employed in providing assistance to the staff, as outlined in (Chapter 4, sections 4.4.4.1, 4.4.4.2 and 4.4.4.3). The adverse learning conditions presented in public schools have had a substantial detrimental effect on the academic achievements of students. In order to establish an optimal learning environment, educators must employ efficient strategies for classroom management. This outcome corroborates the conclusions drawn by Sibiya et al. (2019) and Sethusa (2020), who

posit that proficient classroom-management skills encompass the capacity of educators to exercise authority when required, exhibit patience towards students, exhibit strong pedagogical content knowledge, employ effective time-management strategies, and maintain a sense of order and tidiness within the classroom, among other factors. Additionally, it was determined that principals concur on the existence of a prevalent practice in secondary schools, which involves the organisation of collaborative brainstorming sessions that engage staff members and key stakeholders. The primary objective of these sessions is to promote growth and facilitate the exchange of knowledge among all engaged parties.

As per the accounts of educators affiliated with the schools falling under the first group, they receive support in addressing matters such as compensation discrepancies and managing health-related concerns, (Urio: 2023). Moreover, the author stated that the implementation of professional development courses is necessary for educators to effectively respond to the evolving demands of students and society. In order to achieve the goal of providing quality education, it is imperative to prioritise the professional development of teachers, enabling them to acquire familiarity with and exposure to information, creativity and transformative changes. The study discovered that the principal possesses the capacity to incorporate or exclude different stakeholders from the decision-making process by means of proficient communication.

5.3.5 Challenges to SIPs

The study identified experiences of principals in implementing school improvement programmes in secondary schools, including a scarcity of educational resources such as textbooks for students, an insufficient number of learning spaces equipped with chairs and tables, a shortage of administrative offices and teachers' rooms with proper facilities, a lack of laboratories, inadequate funding, infrequent instruction on school improvement, and a dearth of instructional materials for the community and parents (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.5.2).

Further challenges are the insufficient involvement of the community and parents in fulfilling their obligations to support schools in providing educational resources, coupled with the financial limitations faced by families in procuring enough educational materials, as well as the insufficient level of parental understanding regarding the provision of support for learners within the home environment. The results are articulated in Epstein's parental approach (see

Chapter 2, section 2.4.1.2). Naidu et al. (2013) assert that principals encountered the task of modifying policies and simultaneously ensuring the realisation of each learner's maximum capabilities to address the demands of a transforming society. This occurred as the government sought to rectify the consequences of the apartheid era by designating schools as self-governing entities. The observed subpar outcomes, particularly pronounced in rural regions, together with the increasing prevalence of schools categorised as underperforming, have prompted inquiries into the adequacy of principals' abilities, knowledge and proficiencies in effectively guiding educational institutions within this demanding and intricate context. The research findings indicate that inadequate communication is a significant factor contributing to the ineffectiveness of management and leadership in relation to parental involvement, collaboration, and cooperation (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.5.2). According to Ertürk (2022), based on his scholarly investigation, the proper utilisation of communication has significant importance inside educational institutions characterised by robust interpersonal connections. The occurrence of conflicts can be mitigated by the establishment of open and effective lines of communication among parents, teachers and administration. A significant discovery indicates that several factors contribute to the absence of conflicts in schools. These factors include effective communication, timely completion of tasks by all individuals involved, organisational harmony, acceptance of assigned tasks, a limited staff size, adherence to professional and work ethics by teachers and administrators, and the promotion of sustainability in professional development through collaboration and teamwork.

5.4. THE CONCLUSIONS ALIGN WITH EACH OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

5.4.1 Sub-objective 1: Explore the role of the school principal in implementing the SIP

The study's findings indicate that principals fail to fulfil their obligations in the implementation of school reform in secondary schools within the Ingwavuma circuit, situated in the UMkhanyakude district. This assertion holds particular validity with regards to the involvement of principals in these initiatives. Numerous ways for enhancing school performance have been identified in the school-improvement recommendations and other relevant scholarly publications. The study's findings revealed that a limited number of

strategies, such as planning, parental involvement, and monitoring, were employed. The execution of school improvement did not incorporate additional measures such as workshops and training sessions. Principals exhibit a tendency to employ a restricted range of tactics while implementing the school-improvement programme, while simultaneously displaying minimal initiative in disseminating knowledge of these strategies among both the school community and the broader community.

According to scholarly literature and established guidelines for school improvement, it is an imperative for educational institutions to undertake a comprehensive self-evaluation process, which involves soliciting input from the school community and other relevant stakeholders. This self-evaluation serves as a foundational step in formulating an effective plan for enhancing the school's overall performance and quality. Principals actively encourage parental involvement in their children's education, recognising parents as crucial partners in the enhancement of the school

The primary responsibility of educational leaders is to provide assistance in facilitating the essential process of recapturing and restructuring within the realm of instruction, with the aim of establishing an educational environment that is inclusive in nature. Consequently, the educational leader assumes the role of a change agent by formulating strategies aimed at engaging parents and other stakeholders (Calitz, Fuglestad & Lillejord, 2002). Hence, the cultivation of involvement and collaboration is integral to the leadership process. The collaboration between the community and educational institutions is of utmost importance in order to effectively enhance healthy interpersonal connections and foster a sense of shared accountability. According to Maxwell (2010), leaders who demonstrate self-awareness and recognise their own limitations are more likely to actively pursue information from others as a means of personal and professional development. This type of relationship fosters an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning.

5.4.2 Sub-objective 2: Identify the extent to which principals contribute to the SIP in secondary schools in the Ingwavuma circuit

Secondary school curricula currently in place are intended to significantly improve educational quality. The schools also have a clear reference for tracking student progress across year levels and a well-organised plan for delivering the curriculum that ensures consistent teaching and learning expectations (ESDP IV, 2010:15, 20). In light of the existing

curricula that align with the policy and strategic direction of the DoE, the results of the interviews and document analysis were thus favourable and encouraging. The study's research methods also showed that the current curricula enabled people of different nationalities and backgrounds to receive an education and develop an understanding of their place in society.

Although some principals are aware of the value of parental involvement in learner education, particularly in the formulation of school policies and as part of learner disciplinary measures, the researcher had observed that they view it as time-consuming. As a result, they choose to take short cuts by creating their own policies or purchasing ones that have already been created. They use physical punishment to discipline students, which is against the participation and values of the Constitution. Regarding policy creation, this eventually leads to a situation in which the policies are not owned by all parties involved and the use of corporal punishment encourages a violent culture in schools.

5.4.3 Sub-objective 3: Examine strategies implemented by school principals in SIPs

The school's principal is responsible for ensuring that the necessary materials are available for effective teaching and learning. The study reveals that principals of underprivileged schools are unable to offer these resources, though. Most underfunded schools lack both instructional and educational resources.

In addition to helping to create the school-improvement plan, the principal must make sure that the DoE's recommendations are implemented. According to the study, educators anticipate the principal to take the lead in ensuring that the school improves. The principal should therefore establish the frameworks required for creating the school-improvement plan. For instance, he or she should call staff meetings to go over the DoE's changes and new policies. However, it became clear from this research that not every principal is able to create effective school-improvement plans. They consequently anticipate complete action from the Department.

5.4.4 Sub-objective 4: Determine the effectiveness of the SIP in improving teaching and learning in secondary schools

The goal of the study in this area was to ascertain whether the school-improvement programme was successful in enhancing secondary school teaching and learning. The study's findings were based on the following conclusions:

According to the findings of focus groups and interviews, teachers in secondary schools used teacher-centred methods of instruction to implement active learning strategies. There has been a noticeable increase in the school-improvement programme, according to the interview results regarding indicators of practice in the school's teaching and learning process, the mean value, and standard deviation. The input received from the participants verified that, as planned and carried out over the past couple of decades, the school-improvement programme in the UMkhanyakude district improved the school's teaching and learning processes. As a result, school principals and governing bodies must act quickly to meet the needs of students by keeping their word and following the guidelines established by the District Manager and Circuit Manager.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concentrated on the principals' experiences with the implementation of the school-improvement programme in secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal's Ingwavuma circuit. These recommendations have been derived in accordance with the sub-objectives detailed in Chapter One and the related findings presented in sub-sections.

5.5.1 Recommendations with regard to sub-objective 1: Explore the role of the school principal in implementing the SIP

Whole-school evaluation will not be successful if principals are not fulfilling their responsibilities. Therefore, it is imperative that principals precisely understand what is expected of them during the school-improvement programme. The Department must therefore make sure that principals are supported in order for them to better understand their roles. However, the study shows that there is no such support. Therefore, it is advised that measures be taken to ensure that principals receive the assistance they need. Departmental representatives ought to be present in schools to offer assistance when needed. Principals also require assistance from the Department in order for the school to support teachers and other stakeholders. Principals might end up employing hit-and-miss methods without this support.

The following will prevent the effective implementation of the school-improvement programme and other reforms.

5.5.2. Recommendations with regard to sub-objectives 2: Identify the extent to which principals contribute to the SIP in secondary schools in the Ingwavuma circuit

The findings from the interviews, focus groups, and document analysis indicate that secondary schools possess more robust administrative policies, practices, and staff structures that facilitate the implementation of improvement programmes. These programmes emphasise collective responsibility among all members of the institution for ensuring students' adherence to the rules and regulations set forth by the Department. The researcher proposes that the Total Quality Management (TQM) approach, which is a suitable leadership style for schools, should be adapted along with the transformational change strategy and the implementation of the clustering-school system. These modifications aim to improve and effectively implement the practices and initiatives of the school-improvement programme, while also considering the existing strategies. There is a need to enhance the existing school-improvement programme, and it is imperative for various stakeholders within the school community, including teachers, administrative staff, students, parents, and local communities, to collaborate harmoniously. This collaboration is essential for effectively monitoring, evaluating and offering feedback on the programme, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the overall quality of educational services. In order to boost the performance of secondary schools, it is imperative to implement significant changes in the manner in which the entire school community utilises Total Quality Management (TQM) as a means to augment school-improvement endeavours. Furthermore, it is imperative to engage in dialogues with both students and parents, as they serve as key stakeholders and ultimate evaluators of the quality of services provided by educational institutions. Moreover, in order to foster transformative change, educational institutions should consistently endeavour to enhance their performance across all areas and elements of school enhancement. In order to establish a standard for proactively pursuing external modifications and enhancements, educational institutions should consistently engage in the study of exemplary public schools. This practice enables the identification of specific areas that require development and facilitates the selection of the most effective strategies for implementing these improvements. Therefore, it is recommended to use efficacious and proficient strategies inside the school enhancement initiative to

facilitate a substantial transformation in secondary educational institutions. To enhance the quality of instruction and educational outcomes, it is imperative for educational administrators and governing bodies to collaborate in implementing essential reforms. The constant restructuring of the school-improvement system and processes is necessary. However, comprehensive understanding of the elements that are relevant to the implementation of TQM in secondary educational institutions would prove advantageous for principals and governing bodies of those schools. In order to effectively implement TQM within the context of secondary schools, a collaborative and coordinated effort is required from various stakeholders including principals, school-management teams, teachers, staff members, parents, and local communities.

5.5.3 Recommendations with regard to sub-objectives 3: Examine strategies implemented by school principals in SIPs

The study's findings show that there were not many strategies used to implement school improvement. These were a planning and monitoring cluster of nearby schools. In addition to these, role players in school improvement, like schools, must employ other strategies. As a result, implement more income-generating strategies, strengthen those that already exist, and increase government funding for school improvement, while regulating its use. Additionally, organise experience-sharing between schools in the Ingwavuma circuit, create competition between grade levels and schools to motivate them to improve the quality of instruction and offer rewards to institutions, as well as to individuals or groups of students, parents, members of the local community, teachers, and members of the school management-team who perform well.

5.5.4. Recommendations with regard to sub-objectives 4: Determine the effectiveness of the SIP in improving teaching and learning in secondary schools

The results of this study's interviews showed that secondary school teachers, who primarily used teacher-centred methods of instruction, were active learning strategies. As a result, the researcher advises that teachers be given access to modules that serve as handbooks in the areas of active-learning strategies, ongoing professional development for teachers, continuous assessment manuals, and instructional leadership manuals for secondary schools. . Accordingly, teacher can use clusters from surrounding schools in same subjects to work as a team, for the better implementation of school improvement for the good performers of

institutions and individual and/or group of learners, parents, community member, NGO, teachers' principal and school management team member. In addition, to overcome the current difficulties in implementing the school-improvement programme, capacity building, in-service training, and summer programmes are also necessary. On the other hand, effective curriculum committees must be established within the Department for the implementation of assessments and active learning techniques.

5.6 SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Although the study successfully achieved its original objectives, further investigation will be necessary. The subsequent paragraphs provided an explanation of the recommended areas for further research that can contribute to the effective implementation of the school development programme. The study encompassed a study region consisting of five secondary schools, with a small sample size of five participants. Furthermore, the research was imposed exclusively on public secondary institutions. In order to adequately illustrate policy direction, it is imperative to undertake a comprehensive nationwide survey encompassing a substantial sample size of elementary and secondary schools, including those from public, private, and missionary institutions across the country. The existing methodology employed for this purpose is deemed inadequate. School-development programmes are formulated at national level, with the expectation that they will be implemented consistently throughout all levels of the country's educational system, ranging from the national level to individual schools. Various elements can potentially exert effect on the implementation of these factors within national and regional contexts, including educational institutions. Hence, it is imperative to conduct a comparative analysis in order to ascertain the extent to which the school-reform project is uniformly executed across all schools throughout the country. The findings of this study indicate a limited utilisation of teachers' professional development, action research, and school-development planning as techniques within schools' initiatives for enhancing school improvement. Hence, further investigation is warranted to ascertain the impact of these concerns on the effective execution of educational enhancements. Examining the contribution of the instructional-leadership method is equally significant. Examining the function of

primary schools in the execution of teacher-training programmes holds significant importance. The limitations of the study are addressed in the subsequent section.

5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The Ngwavuma circuit, with a total of 63 schools, can be considered a substantial educational network with inherent constraints that shape the scope of its research. A total of five principals were selected for interviews, using deliberate sample methodology, and their responses served as the primary data for the present study. Among the total of 63 principals, it was observed that a subset of five individuals failed to sufficiently encompass the entirety of the Ngwavuma circuit. Ngwavuma posed a constraint due to its remote location and limited availability of resources and infrastructure, potentially impeding the ability of the principals overseeing the 63 schools to fulfil their leadership duties. Moreover, the interviews did not involve any primary-school principals.

The current study was subject to some limitations. This study encompassed the secondary principals of rural secondary schools within the Ngwavuma circuit. Consequently, there may be variations in the educational experience between township and urban secondary schools within the province, as well as across other provinces in the country.

Another limitation encountered in this study was the difficulty in identifying suitable participants for interviews and/or focus group discussions, primarily attributed to the demanding timetables of educational institutions. The underlying factor responsible for this phenomenon is the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to the mandate aimed at mitigating the spread of COVID-19, educational institutions implemented modifications to their conventional operational procedures. Consequently, both the interview and focus-group discussions were administered by the researcher. Another concern that arose was the recruitment of principals for the focus-group discussion. Due to their responsibilities in overseeing the operations of the educational institution and participating in various administrative gatherings, their availability for leisure activities is limited. The task of uniting them proved to be difficult. The researcher successfully addressed these challenges by strategically arranging the focus group discussion and interview sessions to take place outside of regular business hours.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the school-improvement programme and the rationale for the DoE's consistent emphasis on school improvement throughout their school visits, the researcher opted for a qualitative research methodology. The researcher's primary area of inquiry pertained to the experiences of school principals in relation to their involvement in the school development project. Notwithstanding the presence of other education stakeholders, the scope of the research was limited to secondary school principals, exclusively.

5.8 CONCLUSION

The major objective of this study was to investigate the experiences of principals regarding the implementation of a school-development programme in secondary schools. The aims of the study were transformed into thematic categories, which were further subdivided into specific research inquiries. The responses provided by the participants for each question were considered as themes, and sub-themes were subsequently derived to enhance the rigour and organisation of the data analysis and presentation. The researcher employed a pre-existing framework and included relevant educational theories to conduct an analysis of the interview transcripts during the data-analysis process. The responses for each subject were systematically organised according to the participants, and then, the significance of each theme was determined by analysing reasons that supported or opposed each answer, drawing upon relevant educational leadership theories. The principals' comments suggest that they are in need of substantial assistant to enhance their capacity to improve the quality of outcomes in schools.

Schools assert that the DoE, specifically the District Office, fails to offer any form of support to them. The lack of sufficient tools for the DoE to effectively monitor the implementation of its policies is the underlying factor responsible for this situation. This implies that the lack of attention given to the areas for improvement mentioned by the principals will hinder the progress of schools, particularly those in impoverished rural areas.

Furthermore, this study focused on five schools within the Umkhanyakude district. This subset of the principals' target audience is evidently limited in scope and does not encompass all the schools within the district, where principals have demonstrated success in enhancing academic achievement despite encountering various challenges. The researcher would like to reiterate that her objective was never to create generalisations beyond the five principals and

schools. Consequently, this limitation prevents the presentation of authentic findings beyond the specific schools included in the study. Notwithstanding the aforementioned statement, it does not necessarily imply that the outcomes are less dependable, as qualitative research employs its own methodologies to ascertain the validity of the findings. The aforementioned concerns are emphasised in the preceding sections on implications, which additionally indicate the potential advantages that the research could derive from doing such a study. To ensure the generalisability of the findings, the researcher has underscored the necessity of doing a comparable study on a larger scale. This assertion is made based on the understanding that case studies lacking generalisability to the broader education system possess less utility compared to research that encompasses all educational systems, both at the local and global levels. The research has, nonetheless, yielded novel perspectives on the strategies that school principals can employ to effectively navigate the challenges presented by both internal and external factors. This assertion has been previously expounded upon in the present report. Furthermore, this study has investigated the strategies employed by school principals to enhance the academic outcomes of their institutions amidst difficult and volatile conditions.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANC

UNISA university of south africa

UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2022/08/10

Ref: **2022/08/10/46364064/12/AM**
Name: Ms NN MWELASE
Student No.:46364064

Dear Ms NN MWELASE

Decision: Ethics Approval from 2022/08/10 to 2025/08/10

Researcher(s): Name: Ms NN MWELASE
E-mail address: 46364064@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 073 906 7571

Supervisor(s): Name: DR. SJ RAPETA
E-mail address: rapetsj@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 073 395 6162

Title of research:

THE PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES IN IMPLEMENTING THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

Qualification: MEd EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2022/08/10 to 2025/08/10.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2022/08/10 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

E

3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2025/08/10**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **2022/08/10/46364064/12/AM** *should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,

Prof AT Motlhabane
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
motlhat@unisa.ac.za

Prof Mpine Makoe
ACTING EXECUTIVE DEAN
qakisme@unisa.ac.za

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

Annexure B: Permission Letter to Department

Enq: Mwelase NN

Contact: 073 906 7571

Email: mwelasenozipho@gmail.com

The Head of Department

Department of Education KwaZulu-Natal

Pietermaritzburg

3201

P.O. Box 1229

Mtubatuba

3935

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for permission to collect data in your schools

I am a Masters student at UNISA researching on the topic: **THE PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES IN IMPLEMENTING THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.**

I will use observations, interviews, focus group and document analysis to collect data. My participants in this study will be 5 principals who were part of school improvement programme Interviews of principals will be conducted at schools and at the participants‘ convenience time after school ensuring that the process does not interfere with the daily duties of participants. The interviews would last between 30-40 minutes per interview. In this study, I will consider ethical dimensions such as confidentiality, anonymity, privacy and freedom of participation. It is vital to obtain the participants‘ informed consent in order to protect them from any harm.

The study could identify challenges faced by school principals in school improvement programmes, but it could also offer possible solutions that could contribute to a more effective implementation and administration of the school improvement programme. The findings from the study could help policymakers at the Department of Education consider revision to the school improvement plan to ensure effective implementation in schools, particularly those in rural areas where it could help these schools to improve learners‘ performance.

Looking forward for a green light to conduct my study in your institutions, I will always rely on your positive response. Yours faithfully

Mwelase NN

ANNEXURE C: PERMISSION LETTER TO DISTRICT

Enq: Mwelase NN

Contact: 073 906 7571

Email: mwelasenozipho@gmail.com

P.O.Box1229

Mtubatuba

3935

The District Manager

Department Of Basic Education

UMkhanyakude District

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for permission to collect data in your schools

I am a Masters student at UNISA researching on the topic: **THE PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES IN IMPLEMENTING THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.**

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Looking forward for a green light to conduct my study in your institutions, I will always rely on your positive response. Yours faithfully

Mwelase NN

ANNEXURE D: PERMISSION LETTER TO CIRCUIT

Enq: Mwelase NN

Contact: 073 906 7571

Email: mwelasenozipho@gmail.com

P.O.Box1229

Mtubatuba

3935

The Ward Manager

Department Of Basic Education

Ingwavuma Circuit

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for permission to collect data in your schools

I am a Masters student at UNISA researching on the topic: **THE PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES IN IMPLEMENTING THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.**

I will use observations, interviews, focus group and document analysis to collect data. My participants in this study will be 5 principals who were part of school improvement programme Interviews of principals will be conducted at schools and at the participants‘ convenience time after school ensuring that the process does not interfere with the daily duties of participants. The interviews would last between 30-40 minutes per interview. In this study, I will consider ethical dimensions such as confidentiality, anonymity, privacy and freedom of participation. It is vital to obtain the participants‘ informed consent in order to protect them from any harm.

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Looking forward for a green light to conduct my study in your institutions, I will always rely on your positive response. Yours faithfully

Mwelase NN

ANNEXURE E: PERMISSION LETTER TO PRINCIPAL

Enq: Mwelase NN P.O.Box1229

Contact: 073 906 7571 Mtubatuba

Email: mwelasenozipho@gmail.com 3935

The School Principal

Department Of Basic Education

UMkhanyakude District

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for permission to collect data in your schools

I am a Masters student at UNISA researching on the topic: **THE PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES IN IMPLEMENTING THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.**

I will use observations, interviews, focus group and document analysis to collect data. My participants in this study will be 5 principals who were part of school improvement programme Interviews of principals will be conducted at schools and at the participants' convenience time after school ensuring that the process does not interfere with the daily duties of participants. The interviews would last between 30-40 minutes per interview. In this study, I will consider ethical dimensions such as confidentiality, anonymity, privacy and freedom of participation. It is vital to obtain the participants' informed consent in order to protect them from any harm.

The study could identify challenges faced by school principals in school improvement programmes, but it could also offer possible solutions that could contribute to a more effective implementation and administration of the school improvement programme. The findings from the study could help policymakers at the Department of Education consider revision to the school improvement plan to ensure effective implementation in schools, particularly those in rural areas where it could help these schools to improve learners' performance.

Looking forward for a green light to conduct my study in your institutions, I will always rely on your positive response. Yours faithfully

Mwelase NN

ANNEXURE F: CONSENT LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

Dear Principal

PARTICIPATION IN STUDY ON SCHOOL IMPRVEMENT PROGRAMME

I am a Masters student at the University of South Africa where in I am required to complete a research project in order to be awarded a degree in the field of Education.

The title of the study: **THE PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES IN IMPLEMENTING THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.**

As this study implies, the study will be concerned with the experiences of principals in implementing the school improvement programme in secondary schools. It is therefore my great honour and privilege to invite you as principal to become a voluntary participant and share with me your experiences.

I am intending to gather information in this research study by means of semi-structured individual interviews. Each interview will not exceed 1 hour and will be conducted on a date and at the venue and time of your own choice. With your kind permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis.

Please understand that your decision to participate is entirely voluntary and that your choice to participate or not will in no way affect your relationship with your employer or my University. Again, I want to assure you that the data gathered during this research study will be treated confidentially, and that no one will have access to obtain the raw data collected during interviews. At no time will you as an individual be mentioned by name or indeed be allowed to be identified by any manner or means whatsoever in the research report.

In order to ensure that you are comfortable with the information you give, you will be provided with a confidential written transcript of your own interview for which you will then be required to provide final approval of both content and the accuracy of information. You will also be allowed to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences for you personally. At the end of the research study you will be provided with a copy of the research report containing both the findings of the study and recommendations based on these findings made by the researcher.

If you decide to participate in this research study, kindly indicate this by completing the consent form found on the final page of this invitation and returning it to me.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours faithfully Mwelase NN

ANNEXURE G. CONSENT FORM: VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH STUDY ENTITLED

I, ……., hereby voluntarily and willingly agree to participate as an individual in the above-mentioned study introduced and explained to me by Miss NN Mwelase, currently a student enrolled for a Masters at the University of South Africa. I further declare that I understand, as they were explained to me by the researcher, the aim, scope, purpose, possible consequences and benefits and methods of collecting information proposed by the researcher, as well as the means by which he will attempt to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the information he collects.

……

……

Signature Date

……..

Name and Surname

ANNEXURE H: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS

This is a study of the principals' experiences in implementing the school improvement programme in secondary schools.

1. What are your experiences in the implementation of school improvement programme in your school?

How do educators respond to the implementation of this programme in your school?

---

3. What are your roles as principal in implementation of school improvement programme in your school?

---

4. What leadership approaches were applied in the secondary schools to bring future focused change in the school improvement programme?

---

5. To what extent does the school principal provide supervision and support department heads and teachers to meet the purposes of the school improvement (instructional leadership)?

---

6. How do you rate the involvement of the school improvement committee in the school selfassessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation?

---

7. Any suggestions other information that I did not ask, but important about school improvement programme.

ANNEXURE I: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE OF FOCUS GROUP

1. What is experience in the implementation of school improvement programme?

   ---

2. How do you feel about this programme?

   ---

3. What other school improvement measures will you suggest to more effective the existing implementation of the school improvement programme?

   ---

4. To what extent do the school leadership and management team in the school run the implementation of the school improvement programme?

   ---

5. How do zone education offices and district education offices provide technical assistance to secondary schools to carry out secondary school improvement programme initiatives?

   ---

6. What leadership and management strategies were applied in your respective secondary schools to bring future focused change in the school improvement programme?

ANNEXURE J: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Name of the observer: Mwelase NN Place: School Duration: 30h00 minutes

Time **13h00 – 15h00**	**Area Observed**	**Descriptive field notes of observed activities**
	Role of principals	Responsibilities of principals
	Role of educators	Responsibilities of members educators
	Guidelines documents	Each member had guideline document.

ANNEXURE K: PERMITION LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN KZN D oE INSTITUTIONS

KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Tel: 033 392 1063
Email: Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Phindile Duma
Ref.:2/4/8/4121

Miss NN Mwelase
PO Box 1229
MTUBATUBA
3935

Dear Miss Mwelase

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"THE PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS",** in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

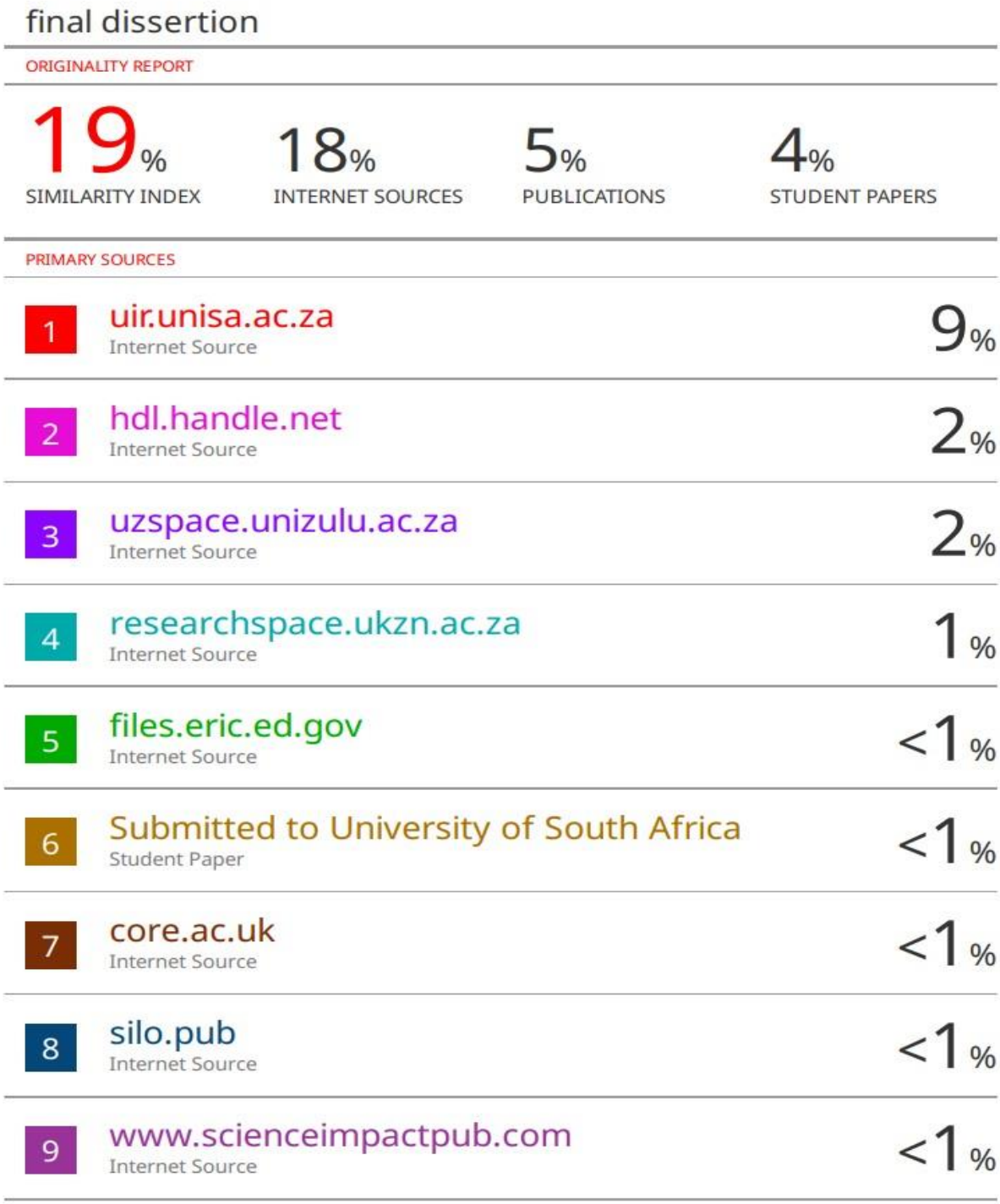
1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 29 August 2022 to 31 August 2025.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT

Mr GN Ngcobo
Head of Department: Education
Date: 30 August 2022

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

ANNEXURE L: TURNITIN REPORT



final dissertion

ORIGINALITY REPORT

19%	18%	5%	4%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	9%
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6	Submitted to University of South Africa Student Paper	<1%
7	core.ac.uk Internet Source	<1%
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ANNEXURE M: PROOF OF EDITOR



Mrs J Kalamer (LLM & Certificate in Editing)
CatchPhrase Editing and Proofreading
PEG Membership no. KAL003
SAFREA Membership no. SAF000891
Cell number: 083 4433434
Catchjeanne@gmail.com OR
Jeanne.kalamer@gmail.com

9 January 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I hereby confirm that I, the undersigned, have edited the thesis to be submitted for the degree MASTERS OF EDUCATION at the UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA, entitled,

The experiences of secondary school principals with regard to the implementation of School Improvement Programmes

by

NTOMBIFUTHI NOZIPHO MWELASE