

**A strategy to scaffold principals as instructional leaders:  
A case of underperforming secondary schools at  
Amajuba District**

**By**

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## **Declaration**

I declare that the dissertation, **A STRATEGY TO SCAFFOLD PRINCIPALS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS: A CASE OF UNDERPERFORMING SECONDARY SCHOOLS AT AMAJUBA DISTRICT**, hereby submitted by Mfanimpela Hendry Nkosi (Zembethe) for the qualification of Master's of Education at the University of Zululand is my own independent work and that I have not previously submitted the same work for a qualification at another University. I furthermore cede copyright of this dissertation to the University of Zululand

MH NKOSI

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**MAY 2020**

## Ethics Statement



MH NKOSI  
Corrected Ethical Cle

## Language editing

### Acknowledgment of Language Editing

Date: Tuesday, 11 May 2021

This is to certify that I have conducted Language Editing on the following:

*A strategy to scaffold principals as instructional leaders: A  
case of underperforming secondary schools at Amajuba  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aims at scaffolding secondary school principals as instructional leaders, guided by specific objectives to understand the need for a strategy to scaffold them as instructional leaders; to explore strategies to support them as instructional leaders; to investigate existing strategies supporting them as instructional leaders; to anticipate the threats to emerging strategies; and to indicate what are the best practices. Framed within critical social theory (CST), with its agenda of emancipation, empowerment, liberation and social justice, it is informed by the qualitative research method, applying participatory action research (PAR) as an approach to addresses power sharing, emancipation and working with real challenges to bring about change in the community. Participants were able to work collaboratively in finding solutions to the challenges principals encounter, with data generated through focus group discussions and subjected to critical discourse analysis (CDA). The empirical analysis, interpretation of data and discussion, and the findings resulting from interventions were conducted using CDA. In the first part reflections are made through PAR, looking at the challenges faced by principals as caused by absence of a dedicated instructional leadership team. The second part identifies the components of the solutions as strategies to be used to counteract the challenges. In conclusion, the study argues that underperformance can be undone not by an individual but rather by working as a team having a collaborative relationship, with all stakeholders engaged and able to partake in decision-making and being involved collectively. It presents a strategy that can respond to challenges faced by principals of underperforming secondary schools.

**Keywords:** *Strategy, scaffold, principals, instructional leaders, underperforming.*

## DEDICATION

This piece of work is dedicated to the following:

God almighty who healed me of COVID-19. As I was making final touches to this manuscript I was infected by the virus and hospitalised for 10 days. However, I believe the hand of God was over my family and me.

My dear wife: Nokuthula Nkosi for her prayers and amazing support through my work. She pushed and encouraged me when it was difficult. *Ngithi nje: SJADU, ZIZI. Ume njalo.*

My four sons: Akhona, Aphiwe, Khaya and Thobani for backing me all the way. They really believed in me. *Nime njalo bo: Mphazima kalanga nemisebe yalo; Mabuya Zembethe ugogwana.*

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## **List of acronyms and abbreviations**

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| ACE     | Advance Certificate in Education  |
| AG      | Auditor General   |
| ATP     | Annual Teaching Plan  |
| BA      | Bachelor of Arts  |
| Bed-H   | Bachelor of Education: Honours  |
| BPAED   | Bachelor of Pedagogics in Education                                       |
| CDA     | Critical Discursive Analysis  |
| CPTD    | Continued Professional Teachers Development                               |
| CST     | Critical Social Theory  |
| DBE     | Department of Basic Education   |
| DCES    | Deputy Chief Education Specialist   |
| DH      | Departmental Head   |
| DoE     | Department of Education   |
| EEA     | Educators' Employment Act 76 Of 1994                                      |
| EFAL    | English First Additional Language   |
| ESSA    | Every Student Succeed Act   |
| FET     | Further education and training phase                                      |
| FSS     | Full-Service School   |
| GBA     | Grade Point Average   |
| HL      | Home Language   |
| IE      | Inclusive Education   |
| ILT     | Instructional Leadership Team   |
| ISPFTED | Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education Development |
| KZN     | KwaZulu-Natal   |
| LDP     | Leadership Diploma Program  |
| MKO     | More Knowledge Other  |
| MSN     | Model Schools Networks  |
| NDP     | National Development Plan   |
| NECT    | National Education Collaboration Trust                                    |
| NEEDU   | National Education Evaluation and Development Unit                        |
| NEPA    | National Education Policy Act 27 Of 1996                                  |
| NSC     | National Senior Certificate   |
| NSLA    | National Strategy for Learner Attainment                                  |

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| NSLE  | National School for Leadership in Education            |
| OCED  | Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development |
| PAR   | Participatory Action Research                          |
| PD    | Professional Development                               |
| PGDSL | Post Graduate Diploma in School Leadership             |
| PL1   | Post Level 1   |
| PLC   | Professional Learning Communities                      |
| PQP   | Principals Qualification Program                       |
| SACE  | South African Council for Educators                    |
| SADC  | Southern Africa Development Community                  |
| SASA  | South African Schools Act 84 OF 1996                   |
| SES   | Senior Education Specialist                            |
| SGB   | School Governing Body                                  |
| SMT   | School Management Team                                 |
| STD   | Secondary Teachers Diploma                             |
| SWOT  | Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats       |
| USA   | United States of America                               |

# CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study was to design a strategy to scaffold principals as instructional leaders in a case of underperforming secondary schools at Amajuba district in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). According to Zakaria, (2016:148) scaffolding is supporting the teachers' development and providing support structures to reach the next stage or level. Zakaria (2016:148) argues that one of the important aspects of scaffolding instructions is temporary in nature, and scaffolding is the role of district officials in supporting principals' development. Hartman (2002:136) argues that the goal of using scaffolding instructions is usually to produce an independent and self-regulating principal and problem-solver. This is in line with the study as it aims to design a strategy to scaffold principals as instructional leaders. According to Manyuchi (2016:8), scaffolding in education is used to describe the temporary assistance and guidance employed by a 'more knowledgeable other' (MKO) to complete an activity that is otherwise beyond his/her competence.

Bodnarchuk (2016) describes the roles of principal as perhaps one of the most dynamic, influential and expansive roles in education, having evolved dramatically over the past several decades and been dominated by discourse around school improvement and effectiveness. As Bodnarchuk argues, this context has shaped the education landscape, not only on an academic level but also on political and legal ones. Policy has been written worldwide with the intent of supporting school improvement through the accountability framework (Bodnarchuk, 2016:5). In agreement, Lumadi writes that principals are expected to have an in-depth knowledge of the new curriculum so that they can guide their teachers through the implementation thereof (Lumadi, 2014:663).

Ismael, Don and Khalid, (2017:137) define 'instructional leadership' as an approach used by school leaders to focus on teachers' behaviour in certain activities which indirectly impacts students' academic achievement. According to Billingsley, McLeskey and Crocket (2017:89), principals as instructional leaders, are expected to be goal-oriented and engaged in strategic action to "align the school's academic mission with strategy and action". Although leading for learning has received a great deal of emphasis in the leadership literature, instructional leadership is not always a

priority for principals (Billingsley et al.). Underperformance or poor performance is defined as a consistent failure to meet specified standards and levels of performance ([www.inspiring leaderstoday.com](http://www.inspiringleaderstoday.com)).

According to the Department of Basic Education, circular D2 of 2017, a high school is deemed underperforming if learners' performance in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) is below 60% and produces fewer than 30% of bachelors and diploma passes. It was therefore important to design a strategy to eliminate underperformance in schools, particularly by developing principals as instructional leaders.

## **1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY**

This study is couched in critical social theory (CST), which constitutes an effort to rethink and reform Marxist social criticism. It characteristically rejects mainstream political and intellectual views, criticizes capitalism, promotes human liberation, and consequently attempts to expose domination and oppression in their many forms. The extent to which science and technology may be associated with domination and oppression has been one of its major themes.

Critical theory originated from Frankfurt University, Germany, in 1923, otherwise known as the Frankfurt School. When the rise of National Socialism (Nazism) forced Institute members into exile in 1933 the Institute became affiliated with the Studies in Philosophy and Social Science program at Columbia University in New York City in 1935. The original school was re-established in Frankfurt in 1953, a multidisciplinary group that included philosophers, sociologists, economists, political scientists, legal theorists, psychoanalysts, and others. Key members of the first generation were Max Horkheimer (1895–1973), Theodor Adorno (1903–1969), Erich Fromm (1900–1980), Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979), Leo Lowenthal (1900–1993), and Franz Neumann (1900–1954), with Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) as a close associate. Important members of second and third generations included Jürgen Habermas (a student of Adorno), Axel Honneth, Andrew Feenberg (a student of Habermas), Douglas Kellner, Steven Best (a student of Kellner), Albrecht Wellmer, Claus Offe, Nancy Fraser, and Martin Beck Matustik. Distributed now among institutions in the United States of America (USA), Kellner is at the University of California in Los Angeles, Best at the University of Texas in El Paso, Fraser at the

New School in New York) and Canada (Feenberg is at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia), as well as Germany, critical theorists have continued to include as part of their engagements with contemporary issues a critical dialogue with the works of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), Karl Marx (1818–1883), Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), Max Weber (1864–1920), Gyorgy Lukács (1885–1971), and Sigmund Freud (1856–1939).

The key method of critical theory is *immanent critique*, which focuses on the internal tensions of the theory or social form under analysis. Using immanent critique, critical theorists identify the internal contradictions in society and in thought, with the aim of analysing and identifying (a) prospects for progressive social change and (b) those structures of society and consciousness that contribute to human domination. Critical theorists aim to aid the process of progressive social change by identifying not only what is, but also identifying the existing (explicit and implicit) ideals of any given situation, and analysing the gap between what is and what might and ought to be. When applying immanent critique to science and technology, critical theorists identify both oppressive and liberating potentials.

CST determines how individuals do things, who and what they are. Development transforms what it is to be human. It is appropriate for this study because it encourages independence, empowerment, and social justice and brings hope. Formats of this theory include elements of community, dignity, interdependence, solidarity, responsibility and ideals, gender equality, disability, race, socio-economic status and religion, which is in line with a study to scaffold principals for instructional leadership in schools.

In KZN Province it was evident that most of the schools were underperforming because they did not adhere to notional time allocation prescribed in the curriculum, and showed poor time management and early commencement of mid-year and end-of-year examinations (Papay, Taylor, Tyler & Laski, 2016:2). This painted a picture of poor leadership on the part of school principals in terms of curriculum management, hence a critical need to develop principals as instructional leaders.

The epistemological stance of the CST is multi-layered and has multiplicity in understanding the knowledge, starting with those who possess knowledge of the situation at hand (Delanty, 2006:26). Those who are marginalized and relatively

invisible from the point of the epistemically privileged become conscious of their social situation with respect to socio-political power and oppression, and begin to find their voice (Nkoane, Mahlomaholo & Ambrosio, and 2013:48).

According to AlDahdouh, Osorio and Caires, the theory seeks to go beyond analysing and describing the role played by social location in structuring and shaping knowledge, and examines how power relations that infect knowledge need not be understood as bias that threatens their neutrality. Rather, socially-situated knowledge can be properly objective (AlDahdouh, Osorio & Caires, 2015:10). The researcher would share knowledge with the participants, and they would gather knowledge or data collaboratively. The researcher would also report to the team. In the study the participants experienced daily challenges associated with their roles as principals and observed what was happening in their schools. Language of respect, equity, humility, sharing and caring were be used to make the participants feel included in the study. It was thus imperative to design a strategy to scaffold principals as instructional leaders.

### **1.3 PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

In the USA, the state of Connecticut, key challenges facing underperforming schools are changing families and instructional practices that do not respond to the increasing knowledge necessary for success in the context of ever changing society (Houle, 2016:144). In Tanzania, Nyandwi (2014:13) found that challenges facing underperforming secondary schools included lack of proper resource management, weak infrastructure, poor availability of teaching and learning material, and a curriculum that lacked relevance. Teachers were seriously demoralized and poorly motivated by their employers (Nyandwi, 2014:13). Education in Africa, particularly the Sub-Saharan region, faces challenges of poverty, diseases such as HIV/AIDS, poor or non-existent infrastructure, low levels of investment in secondary schools and economic problems (Nyandwi, 2014:12). The challenges facing underperforming secondary schools in South Africa, according to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZN DoE, 2014:6), are lack of monitoring by principals, poor time on task, and poor supervision by principals.

In terms of solutions, Connecticut sought professional development for urban secondary school principals, shifting their roles from management to instructional leadership, introducing accountability and technical assistance to the school on the development of school improvement plan (Houle, 2016:184). Nyandwi suggests solutions for Tanzania as ensuring effective mentorship for trainee teachers as part of resource management, increasing funding for teaching and learning materials, and improving infrastructure facilities, strengthening in-service courses and professional development of secondary school teachers (Nyandwi, 2014:16). According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE), the quality of leadership provided by principals has a direct bearing on successful curriculum delivery. They are also responsible for setting a school vision, planning the instruction that will be offered at the school, managing the buildings and human resources requirements of the school, and evaluating and developing teachers' abilities (DBE, 2018:1). It can be argued that the primary responsibility of a 21<sup>st</sup> century principal is instructional leadership.

Solutions for Sub-Saharan Africa include improving facilities and system of care for principals, teachers, non-teaching staff and learners affected by HIV/AIDS, and for teaching and learning, improving provision of water and sanitary facilities for secondary schools (Nyandwi, 2014:16). In particular, solutions to the challenges in South Africa were addressed by the DBE to mediate the policy of the South African Standard for Principals. Newly appointed principals are to be taken through a year-long induction programme before they take up a post at school and further conduct training on curriculum management and instructional leadership for old and new principals (DBE, 2014:7)

Connecticut introduced accountability legislation for principals to create conducive conditions for improved performance in underperforming secondary schools (Houle, 2016:151), whilst in Tanzania the total number of teachers in secondary schools more than doubled between 2007 and 2011, from around 23,000 to 52,000, as part of improving performance. This alleviated the problem of overcrowding and principals having to manage classes corresponding to the number of teachers (Nyandwi, 2014:15). Botswana revised its curriculum in response to the needs of the country as outlined in the Revised National Policy on Education, 1994 (Onen, 2015:22). In South Africa, amongst the conditions conducive to assisting principals of underperforming secondary schools, the DBE commissioned a study for the National

Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU), titled “*Schools that work II*,” which provides practical ways on how principal, parents and the community can work together to ensure that schools are safe and secure spaces for quality teaching and learning, with accountable leadership, management and governance to help fuel continuous improvement and share good practices (DBE, 2018:10).

Threats to the progress of the study may be reluctance to participate or give views and opinions for fear of victimization. Power relations and fear of being exposed at school level can also pose serious threats. It was possible that some principals might be reluctant to partake in the study, so attendance could not be guaranteed for all participants. There was evidence that the DoE was assisting underperforming schools through various interventions. For instance, districts were exercising oversight roles, holding principals accountable for the performance of their schools, achieved mainly through school visits (Government Gazette notice 300, 2013:12). In addition, principals were expected to draw up a school academic performance improvement plan and school self-evaluation reports, as directed by circular D2 of 2017.

#### **1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The apparent lack of support for principals as instructional leaders has led to academic underperformance of learners in schools, some of which are in peri-urban areas (Report on the National Senior Certificate: KZN: NSC, 2018). According to Romanowski, Sadiq, Abu-Tineh, Ndoeye and Aql (2019:2), research indicates that principals were critical in school reform, since the implementation of policies and practices is to a large extent determined by the role that principals play in educational change. Gale (2017) contends that educational leaders are charged with many responsibilities within their schools. Chief among these responsibilities is ensuring that students are learning the curriculum, and achieving their academic potential. The challenge was to identify how principals influence student learning then help them to develop these leadership behaviours effectively (Gale, 2017:3).

It is evident that many educational researchers have sought leadership behaviours and factors that describe how principals can significantly influence learner academic achievement, however, principals themselves have been largely left out of the

conversation. It is therefore important to design a strategy can then be employed to scaffold principals as instructional leaders, as high school principals' experiences and efforts maintain safe schools, connect communities, foster citizenship, and prepare students for colleges and careers. There is a need to scaffold principals of schools so that they can meet the demands placed on them.

## **1.5 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of the study was to design a strategy to scaffold principals as instructional leaders of underperforming secondary schools in Amajuba district.

The objectives of the study were to:

- explore the need for scaffolding principals as instructional leaders in Amajuba district
- discover strategies to support principals of secondary schools as instructional leaders in Amajuba district
- investigate whether interventions by education department were making any positive impact and conditions that enable these strategies to work
- anticipate threats to emerging strategies aimed at scaffolding principals of underperforming secondary schools, and to formulate a risk management system
- formulate indicators of success/best practices in designing a strategy for scaffolding principals of underperforming secondary schools.

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Based on the above, this study seeks to answer the following **main research question**:

What can be done to scaffold principals of underperforming secondary schools at Amajuba District?

To answer the above question, the following **subsidiary questions** were addressed:

- What are the needs for scaffolding principals as instructional leaders?

- What other strategies existed to enhance the support given to principals and teachers in underperforming secondary schools?
- What conditions existed that enable these strategies to work?
- What plausible threats existed to emerging strategies that need to be anticipated?
- What were the indicators of success to the strategy in scaffolding principals of underperforming secondary schools?

## **1.7 INTENDED CONTRIBUTION TO THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE**

This study was important as it was intended to identify strategy for scaffolding principals of identified secondary schools. It provided a strategy that could be used to improve performance of the schools. The DoE in particular benefited from this study as it is intended to contribute to eliminating underperforming secondary schools. The country would also benefit from having a competent and educated citizenry.

## **1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The researcher employed qualitative methods and participatory action research (PAR).

### **1.8.1 Qualitative Methods**

Qualitative research is one of the commonly used methodology in the social sciences (Chandra & Shang, 2019:9). Primarily or exclusively it uses non-numerical data, and is defined by Patton (2014:13) as the study of things, individuals and organizations, their reasons, opinions, motivations and beliefs in natural settings. It involves an observer, usually the researcher, who is in the field with an aim of transforming the world into a series of representations, such as field notes, interviews, conversations and recordings.

The researcher used PAR to address sharing and working with real challenges that principals face in their work (McTaggart & Thorpe, 2013:32). According to Macdonald

(2012:36), principals would be sharing their daily experiences and working together to achieve a common goal, in this instance to improve performance in their schools. The principles of PAR would be used since this approach was emancipatory and took place between the community and the researcher (Marshall & Rossman (2014:69-70), in line with this study, as it sought to develop principals of underperforming schools. According to Macniff and Whitehead (2006:26), PAR encourages change and action when the participants share a common vision and goals. Principals as participants would be empowered for the schools to have a common vision since they were from the schools that were underperforming. As a qualitative technique it accesses unquantifiable evidence, allowing the researcher to share in the understanding and perceptions of people who were exposed to challenges, and to explore how they structured and gave meaning to their daily lives by emphasising participation and action (Ferguson, Nielson, Cragin, Bandrowski & Martone, 2014:45). This was why principals needed a strategy for scaffolding as instructional leaders in underperforming schools. Respect, social justice, equity, hope, peace and togetherness were taken into consideration.

The focus group discussion was used as the research instrument to collect data, and to ensure effective co-ordination participants were selected from five different high schools. Sampled from underperforming secondary schools were three principals and five school governing body (SGB) members. The other participants were from high performing secondary schools, that is, two principals and five SGB members. In total, there were 12 participants, all informed beforehand by the researcher of the nature of the discussions in order to make them feel comfortable and make constructive contributions. They were informed about the venue for meetings, with a focus group discussion forum in a common venue on Saturdays, which was a convenient day for all for a period of nine months. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017:20), it is important to target a specific group to avoid generalization of results. The purpose of this exercise was for the participants to achieve a common vision.

A tape recorder was used to record the discussion, with a scribe recording notes and minutes, to be kept in a safe place. The first meetings were held with all of the participants, revolving around the challenges and experiences encountered by principals. A researcher looks for solutions to problems (Strydom, 2013:1), thus engaging in a qualitative study within an interpretive paradigm. Qualitative research

involves studying phenomena in their natural settings, making sense of or interpreting in terms of the meaning people bring to them, hence some of the research activities were taken place in schools (Yin, 2017:3). A qualitative study was best suited for exploring issues to gain in-depth understanding, which makes it relevant for this study into the everyday life experiences of teachers and principals.

### **1.8.2 Data analysis**

Mullet (2018) defines Critical Discursive Analysis (CDA) as a qualitative analytical approach for critically describing, interpreting, and explaining the ways in which discourses construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities. CDA rests on the notion that the way people use language is purposeful, regardless of whether discursive choices are conscious or unconscious. It takes a number of different approaches and incorporates a variety of methods that depend on research goals and theoretical perspectives. The team used it as a strategy to make sense of the data collected from the text-orientated discourse analysis, discursive praxis, and social structural levels (Van Dijk, 2009:65).

With the consent of the participants, the information gathered was tape-recorded, and written down. The recorded data was transcribed and analysed to give it meaning and structure. The data is discussed on the bases of the five objectives of the study, its analysis following what the literature describes as good practices. Data from the field was compared to the expectations outlined in the literature, confirming or refuting it. The same criteria were used as a basis for determining whether or not the intervention was working and the extent to which they had been useful in organizing it.

### **1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

All of the directives outlined by the University of Zululand in terms of the research were observed. The researcher applied for ethical clearance from the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Education and permission was sought from the KZN DoE to conduct research at the identified schools. The principals and SGB members were informed of the nature of the research and were asked to participate in it. All participants sign informed consent forms, assuring them of the confidentiality of the

information they would share and the steps taken to ensure anonymity, including the use of pseudonyms. They were informed of their right not to respond or to withdraw from the study at any time if possible. Participants would be treated with respect at all times.

## **1.10 CHAPTER DIVISION**

### **CHAPTER ONE: Orientation of the Study**

This chapter will have presented the background, statement of the problem, aim and objectives, definition of operational concepts and a synopsis of the study.

### **CHAPTER TWO: Theoretical Framework and Review of Related Literature**

Chapter 2 will provide conceptual and theoretical frameworks for the study, based on selected and relevant literature.

### **CHAPTER THREE: Research Design and Methodology**

This chapter will intensify the research design, methodology, and hypothesis of the study.

### **CHAPTER FOUR: Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

Chapter 4 will comprise a detailed presentation of data analysis and interpretation.

### **CHAPTER FIVE: Findings, Recommendation, Conclusion, Suggestions for Research**

This chapter will give a synthesis of discussion and findings, make recommendations and present a summary of the study.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The study intended to devise a strategy for scaffolding principals of underperforming secondary schools as instructional leaders in Amajuba district. The theoretical framework that the researcher would be using in this study was Critical Social Theory (CST), the origin and objectives of which were discussed. In addition, the researcher indicated reasons this theory was chosen and how it responds to the research question. The chapter explores the relevance of CST as a theoretical framework through its' origin, objectives, formats, epistemology, ontology and axiology, as well as how theory informs the role and relationships between the researcher and participants, the rhetoric used and definition of terms.

This chapter also reviews literature on the topic for the purposes of providing contextual and conceptual basis for the study. A broad scholarly review provides further insight, as a demonstration of the epistemological views in relation to objectives informed by best practices internationally. Specifically Africa, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and South Africa were examined as a basis for emergent strategies.

### **2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY**

The theoretical framework defines the key concepts in research, proposing relations between them and discussing relevant theories and models based on a literature review. The term “theoretical framework” comprises two concepts, “theory” and “framework,” and it is important that the two be defined. A theory is a set of interrelated constructs, definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables with the purpose of explaining and predicting them. It can be used to make predictions and this predictive power can help guide researchers to ask appropriate research questions (Shotter, 2016:1).

Grant and Osanloo contend that, a framework provides structure within which the relationships between variables of a phenomenon are explained. The overall aim of this framework is to make research findings more meaningful, acceptable to the

theoretical constructs in the research field and ensure generalizability. It assists in stimulating research while ensuring the extension of knowledge by providing both direction and impetus to the research inquiry. It also enhances the empiricism and rigor of research, being a 'blueprint' or guide (Grant & Osanloo, 2016:7). For Mertens (2014:7), the theoretical framework as containing assumptions that guide and direct the thinking and actions taken by the researcher and participants. The researcher would use it to define the broader strategy and give directions to the research.

### **2.3 HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY**

According to Thompson, origins of CST can be found in the aftermath of the Russian revolution and the movement in the first decades of the twentieth century (Thompson, 2017:3). Fuchs contends that it is an approach that studies society in a dialectical way by analysing education, political economy, domination, exploitation, and ideologies. It is a normative approach based on the judgment that domination and exploitation are problematic. Connected to struggles for a just and fair society, it is an intellectual dimension of struggles that provides a self-understanding of a society's struggles and wishes. CST can help explain the causes, conditions, potentials, and limits of struggles, rejecting the argument that academia and science should and can be value-free (Fuchs, 2015:8). It holds not only that theory is political but also that it should develop analyses of society and concepts that assist struggle against interests and ideas that justify domination and exploitation. Giroux contends that it is oriented toward critiquing and changing society as a whole, in contrast to traditional theory oriented only to understanding or explaining it. Its aim is to dig beneath the surface of social life and uncover assumptions that keep people from gaining a full and true understanding of how the world works (Giroux, 2019:23).

Critical Theory emerged out of the Marxist tradition and was developed by a group of sociologists at the University of Frankfurt in Germany in 1923 who referred to themselves as the Frankfurt School.' The rise of Nazism forced Institute members into exile in 1933 and it became affiliated with the Studies in Philosophy and Social Science program at Columbia University in New York City in 1935. The original School was re-established in Frankfurt in 1953.

A multidisciplinary group, it included philosophers, sociologists, economists, political scientists, legal theorists and psychoanalysts. Key members of the first generation were Max Horkheimer (1895–1973), Theodor Adorno (1903–1969), Erich Fromm (1900–1980), Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979), Leo Lowenthal (1900–1993), and Franz Neumann (1900–1954), with Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) as a close associate. Important members of second and third generations include Jürgen Habermas (a student of Adorno), Axel Honneth, Andrew Feenberg (a student of Habermas), Douglas Kellner, Steven Best (a student of Kellner), Albrecht Wellmer, Claus Offe, Nancy Fraser, and Martin Beck Matustik. Distributed now among institutions in the USA, (Kellner is at the University of California in Los Angeles, Best at the University of Texas in El Paso, Fraser at the New School in New York) and Canada (Feenberg is at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia) as well as Germany, critical theorists have continued to include as part of their engagements with contemporary issues a critical dialogue with the works of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), Karl Marx (1818–1883), Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), Max Weber (1864–1920), Lukács (1885–1971), and Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) (Ashley Crossman, 2019:1).

Following in Marx's critical tradition, Hungarian Lukács and Italian Antonio Gramsci developed theories that explored the cultural and ideological sides of power and domination. Both Lukács and Gramsci focused their critique on the social forces that prevent people from seeing and understanding the forms of power and domination that exist in society and affect their lives. Shortly after the period when Lukács and Gramsci developed and published their ideas, the Institute for Social Research was founded at the University of Frankfurt, and the Frankfurt School of critical theorists took shape. It is the work of those associated with it, including Horkheimer, Adorno, Fromm, Benjamin, Habermas, and Marcuse, that is considered the definition and heart of critical theory. For instance, Horkheimer stated that a theory can only be considered truly critical if it is explanatory, practical, and normative, meaning that it must adequately explain the social problems that exist, offer practical solutions for how to respond to them and make change, and clearly abide by the norms of criticism established by the field.

Critical theory challenges what is frequently taken for granted socially and culturally, asking questions of things that are otherwise considered to be “common sense” or

“self-evident.” This is in line with the study as it aims to scaffold principals of underperforming secondary schools. With its roots in Hegel and Marx, ‘ideology critique’ or ‘immanent critique’ “proceeds through forcing existing views to their systematic conclusions, bringing them face to face with their incompleteness and contradictions, and, ultimately, with the social conditions of their existence” (Young, 1990:18). This is partly achieved through the ‘historicizing’ or ‘denaturalizing’ of ideological claims, asserting the difference between that which is claimed and that which is evident from historical and social references.

Kellner claims that a critical theory of education must be rooted in one of society, and should be central to social critique and transformation. Therefore, it should have a normative and even utopian dimension, dealing with issues of democracy, equality and social justice (Kellner, 2019:56). The application of critical theory in education generally rejects idealist, elitist, and oppressive elements of pedagogy, frequently taking the critical viewpoint that modern schooling is largely curriculum-driven and fragmented by discipline, having abandoned older, traditional moral and ethical pedagogical practices. Wang and Torrisi-Steele (2015:5) suggest critical theorists relate modern social crises, such as may be found in education, to dominating ‘means-ends’ philosophies that tend to be rational, that is, scientific, analytical or technological, and instrumental. These, they argue, detract attention from inherent moral perspectives and social concerns.

CST constitutes an effort to rethink and reform Marxist social criticism, characteristically rejecting mainstream political and intellectual views, criticizing capitalism, promoting human liberation, and consequently attempting to expose domination and oppression in their many forms. Honneth, (2014:4) argues that the ideal of the enlightenment is an ever-larger rational conversation about goals, values, and desires that expands the realm of human knowledge and action. Thus, social critical theorists believe, enlightenment is an effort to increase human freedom and self-determination, hence this study aim to design a strategy for scaffolding principals of underperforming secondary schools. According to Tachizawa and Wong (2014:1), CST is a set of epistemologies that seek human emancipation, and it provides the descriptive and normative bases for social inquiry aimed at decreasing domination and increasing freedom in all forms.

## **2.4 OBJECTIVES OF CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY**

There are several objectives of social theory, as outlined in this section.

### **2.4.1 Social transformation**

Social transformation refers to the process of change in institutionalized relationships, norms, values, and hierarchies over time. It is the manner in which society changes due to economic growth, science, technological innovations, education and war or political upheavals. Social transformation affects people's interactions and lifestyles, whilst regarding individuals it refers to the process of altering the social status of one's parents (Delanty, 2020). During this process of transformation, one moves from an ascribed status to an achieved status, that is from the one into which one is born. For instance, some are born into wealthy families while others are born into families with low-incomes. An achieved status refers to what one acquires as a result of education, skills, merit, and abilities. Examples of achieved status include doctors, professors, criminals, and researchers (worldatlas.com:2018). This study explored potential transformation of principals in the selected district through a strategy of scaffolding.

### **2.4.2 Social justice**

According to Pachamama (2017), social justice as a concept arose in the early 19th century, during the Industrial Revolution and subsequent civil revolutions throughout Europe which aimed to create egalitarian systems and remedy capitalistic exploitation of human labour. Because of the stark stratifications between wealth and the poverty during this time, early social justice advocates focused primarily on capital, property and the distribution of wealth.

Social justice is a political and philosophical theory that asserts that there are dimensions to the concept of justice beyond those embodied in the principles of civil or criminal law, economic supply and demand, or traditional moral frameworks. It tends to focus more on relations between groups within society than the justice of individual conduct or justice for individuals (Chappelow, 2019). Social justice had expanded from being primarily concerned with economics to include other spheres

of social life, including the environment, race, gender, and other causes and manifestations of inequality. CST aims to show that a good life for all is possible and that domination and exploitation alienate humans from achieving such a society. In deconstructing alienation, domination and exploitation, it also makes demands for a self-determined, participatory, and just democracy.

### **2.4.3 Power relations**

Foucault in Olssen (2016) considered it erroneous to consider power as something that institutions possess and use oppressively against individuals and groups, so he tried to move the analysis to examination of how power operates in day-to-day interactions between them. In the first volume of *Histoire de la sexualité* he argues that:

...we must overcome the idea that power is oppression, because – even in their most radical form –oppressive measures are not just repression and censorship, but they are also productive, causing new behaviours to emerge Olssen (2016).

Usually, power is understood as the capacity of an agent to impose his or her will over that of the powerless, or the ability to force them to do things they do not wish to do. In this sense, power is understood as possession and something owned by those in power. However, in Foucault's opinion it is not something that can be owned, but rather something that acts and manifests itself in a certain way:

Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or as something which only functions in the form of a chain. Power is employed and exercised through a netlike organization, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application Ball (2012).

This study emphasised the scaffolding of principals in underperforming schools to decentralise power.

#### **2.4. 4 Emancipation**

According to Susen, emancipation refers to an entity's liberation from control, dependence, restraint, confinement, restriction, repression, slavery, or domination. In modern English, the term “emancipation” commonly describes the transition from heteronomy to autonomy, from dependence to freedom, or from alienation to self-realization (Susen 2014:1). Merriam-Webster.com defines emancipation as meaning to free from restraint, control, or the power of another, especially to free from bondage or any controlling influence, such as traditional mores or beliefs.

The concept of emancipation of school principals is important for this study in terms of scaffolding. CST suggests emancipation through the democratization of control and decision-making, while drawing attention to communicative processes and how certain ideas have been created and sustained. Principals’ ability to make decisions that improve the running of their schools can be realized if emancipated.

#### **2.4.5 Enlightenment**

A definition of ‘enlightenment’ is the consistent movement away from conditions of “immaturity,” a context in which humans are afraid of autonomous forms of understanding and reasoning. This implies, for Kant, and the historical era of the “Enlightenment,” a resolute posture of daring to know and striving to think for oneself, thus critically engaging in debate and discussion without feeling hemmed in by the reigning ideologies and authorities. In this way, true enlightenment practices can flourish only when the public has civic freedom, and thus, as may be expected, there is an intimate connection between the conditions of reason and freedom, the latter theoretical and practical matrix being a hallmark of forms of critical theory. For Foucault (2016), the philosophical ethos of the enlightenment is a “permanent critique of our historical era” and a “reflective relation to the present.” From this a “critical attitude” is associated with the Enlightenment,

Critical theory has seemingly become a term associated with any critical appraisal of social and cultural life, raising questions about the specificity of this particular form of political theory. Interestingly, in this multiple sense it can be seen to have its genealogy in the extremely important developments associated with the

Enlightenment, which took hold in the West from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onward, and represented an attempt to apply human reason to political, social, and cultural practices in order to organize more rationally human everyday life for the sake of autonomy and the flourishing of potentiality. This was an attempt to militate against the reigning superstitions, traditions, and practices, be they related to science, politics, morality, or religion, that stood in the way of clearly instituting rational forms of human life. As Jürgen Habermas noted succinctly:

CST can be employed without limit, to seek alternatives to the dominance of technical reason, disciplinary modes of power, and false consciousness that govern our contemporary everyday lives, addresses social justice, social change, liberate and bring hope to the powerless (Ludovisi, 2019:1).

## **2.5 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE CHOICE OF CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY**

CST is concerned with inculcating critical thinking and analysis, emancipation of the powerless and generation of forms of knowledge. In this study, emancipation of principals to effectively lead and manage schools efficiently with little dependence on district education is central. In simple terms. CST seeks not only to ‘critique’ but also to generate emancipatory forms of knowledge to provide alternative and progressive ways of looking at the world. Banifetemah, Shields, Golabi, Qoureishi, and Bayani (2019) contend that knowledge occurs in two contexts of work and communicative interaction, work being a central phenomenon for understanding human development and growth or self-changing. Further, human beings are able to change themselves when they change their social and natural environment. They are practically changing the forces and situations that make the characteristics of a society and its people. This self-changing is fulfilled through such activities as understanding the meaning of symbols, contracts, concepts, images, rules and actions (Banifetemah et al.).

Ludovisi (2019:1) argues that CST can function both as a means to better understand the complexities of the twenty-first century and as set of tools by which to carve out alternative ways to envision educational praxis. CST is understood as a critique of society, important for this study as a critique to underperformance and what strategy can be designed to scaffold principals of secondary schools.

Stahl, Doherty, Shaw and Janicke (2014:1) contend that the main basis for the theory is that it provides a coherent framework for better interpreting the meaning of human behaviour in organizations in terms of its overt and covert purposes. The second benefit is that CST helps to understand better the limits of current information systems that are marketed with the claim of improving organizational decision-making and communications. CST is well suited in this study as it aims to scaffold principals tackling underperformance in secondary schools.

## **2.6 EPISTEMOLOGICAL STANDPOINT OF CST**

Samarji and Hooley (2015:13) define epistemology as the philosophical questioning of knowledge, the assumptions upon which it is based and therefore questioning what we “do know” and “can know”. Stroll and Martinich define it as the philosophical study of the nature, origin, and limits of human knowledge. The term is derived from the Greek *epistēmē* (“knowledge”) and *logos* (“reason”), and accordingly the field is sometimes referred to as the theory of knowledge. Epistemology has a long history within Western philosophy, beginning with the ancient Greeks and continuing to the present. Along with metaphysics, logic, and ethics, it is one of the four main branches of philosophy, to which most great philosophers have contributed (Stroll & Martinich, 2019:1)

Moser defines epistemology as the theory of knowledge, the philosophical study of the nature, origin, and scope of knowledge (Moser, 2015:1), whilst Fuchs (2015:2) agrees, adding that it deals with how the very concepts that constitute a theory are constituted and organized. The epistemological stance is that the knower and the known are interactive and inseparable, with social critical theorists acquiring knowledge from society. What Habermas calls cognitive interests are the general orientations or strategies that guide how people acquire and use knowledge to pursue their interests in all walks of life, including their occupations (work). In modern societies, many of these interests become institutionalized in education, the economy, political institutions, armed forces and the government.

Al-Saadi (2014:2) argues that epistemology includes assumptions about the kind or the nature of knowledge or how it is possible to find out about the world. It is a way of looking at the world and making sense of it, necessarily embodying a certain

understanding of what that knowledge entails. It also deals with the 'nature' of knowledge, with classical and contemporary epistemologists having debated knowledge justifying true belief, based on sensory experience and/or pure reason. The extent of knowledge is objective, with conceiver-independent evidence, as well as subjective, conceiver-dependent evidence.

For Aliyu, Singhry, Adamu and Abubakar (2015), the epistemological question is what is the nature of the relationship between the knower and would-be knower and what can be done? The research also acknowledges that the knowledge is not socially constructed through interpretation of different estate surveyors and valuers as well as participants who are involved in the research. Sandouk (2015) argues that epistemology refers to the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known. Orthodox science, because of its belief in a "real" world that can be known, requires the knower to adopt a posture of objective detachment in order "to discover how things really are." There is a presumption that the knower and the known are separate and independent entities that do not influence one another. There is a search for the "truth," for the "facts" in objective and quantifiable terms, which holds empirical data in the highest esteem. In contrast, community-based research rests on an extended epistemology that endorses the primacy of practical knowing. In community-based research, the knower participates in the known and that evidence is generated in at least four interdependent ways, experiential, presentational, propositional and practical.

Lynch (2018) concurs in writing that epistemology is the branch of philosophy that considers how people come to learn what they know. In this study, the principals of schools that perform well would come together with those that underperform to impart knowledge. Derived from the Greek word *episteme*, meaning knowledge or understanding, epistemology refers to the nature and origin of knowledge and truth. It proposes four main bases of knowledge, namely, divine revelation, experience, logic and reason, and intuition. These influence how teaching, learning, and understanding come about at school.

Thaxton (2018:34) views epistemology as the study of knowledge acquisition, involving an awareness of certain aspects of reality and seeking to discover what is known and how it is known. It is considered as a branch of philosophy which addresses cognitive sciences, cultural studies, and the history of science. Moreover,

it explains why minds relate to reality and how these relationships are either valid or invalid, necessary to distinguish between the truth and falsehood as one obtains knowledge from the world.

According to Nguyen (2017:13) epistemology encompasses the construction of concepts, the nature of conditions and the validity of the senses, enabling one to think about the way one thinks. It is a useful method for evaluating the world, without which human beings would have no reason to believe in their thoughts and actions. Principals would have no reason to accept test results as they are without authenticity because there would be no difference between truth and error. Epistemology is necessary in order for one to accept reality and live life in successful pursuit of truth.

Roos and Von Krogh (2016:2) argue that one of the major questions that CSTs ask is where does knowledge come from? Many philosophers argue that it from reason, thus, humans have the ability to reason, and therefore the power to know. Conversely, other philosophers have contended that humans only become knowledgeable when they experience life situations. As this study is dealing with concept of scaffolding, to understand this concept and effectively implement it, it is important to understand experiences of principals of underperforming secondary schools. This again is crucial in understanding leadership style of principals since it may play a role as to how a school is led.

Kinsella (2016:3) contends that there are three main examples or conditions of epistemology, namely, truth, belief and justification. Truth occurs when false propositions cannot be discerned, consequently, in order for something to be considered as knowledge it must be true in nature. In addition, the truth must originate from reliable sources and be based on fidelity to the standard. For example, a lie cannot be truth because it is not factual or false.

CST's views and standpoints on epistemology focus on inquiry about the concept of knowledge, which constitutes best practice for a principal, who should be viewed as producer of knowledge that can bring about social change and transformation in communities.

## 2.7 ONTOLOGICAL STANDPOINT OF CST

According to Al-Saadi, ontology is the study of 'being' and is concerned with 'what is' the nature of existence and structure of reality, or what it is possible to know about the world. It is concept concerned with the existence of and relationship between, different aspects of society such as social actors, cultural norms and social structures (Al-Saadi, 2014:21). According to Busse (2106:2), ontology is the "science of being" and the most comprehensive of all sciences, insofar as it covers everything that exists. Tsiga and Bhadmus (2016:64) concurs that ontological question is the form and nature of reality and therefore, what is there that can be known about? Some researches favour more towards realism, this is because the nature of this research is to seek understanding of the performance whether it is tangible evidence attributes to reality that justifies the sampling of these schools as researchable on scaffolding of principals of underperforming schools. The reality is that effective leadership is a prerequisite for a high performing school.

According to Robson (2016:23), the understanding of different participants' interpretations considering reality, for example, if a real world is assumed then what can be known about it, is how things really are and how they really work. Then only those questions that relate to matters of real existence and real actions are admissible, not other questions, such as those concerning matters of aesthetic or moral significance.

Aliyu (2015:1) contends that ontology is the study of being or existence, with specification of a conceptualization used to reason about the objects within that domain. For Kiouпкиolis and Katsambekis (2016) it asked fundamental questions of being, and thus, in everyday parlance, one could say that it studies the nature of reality. One needs to know what is or what exists in order to research it, with the form and nature of reality and what can be known about it. School-based research is thus interested in investigating the principals' understandings and meanings as experienced in their schools (Sandouk, 2015:1). It is evident in this study that schools that are underperforming require a strategy for scaffolding principals of secondary schools (Jemna, 2016:150). According to Aliyu (2015:6), ontological assumptions form one of the most important building blocks of our worldview and are so fundamental that we rarely question them. They are therefore of central importance

to research in any discipline, one need to know what is or what exists in order to research it.

CST used ontology to inquire into the being and identity of a school principal and the associated perceptions. As it also focuses on the lenses through which we see and experience the world, CST helped in understanding how principals see and experience schools. That was why the researcher aimed at understanding what strategy could be used for scaffolding principals.

## **2.8 AXIOLOGICAL STANDPOINT OF CST**

Lynch (2018:1) defines axiology as the branch of philosophy that considers the study of principles and values, divided into two main kinds, namely, ethics and aesthetics. The former is the questioning of morals and personal values, the latter the examination of what is beautiful, enjoyable, or tasteful. In axiology, education is more than just about knowledge but also quality of life. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1993), the term Axiology, (from Greek axios, “worthy”; logos, “science”), also called ‘Theory of Value, is the philosophical study of goodness, or value, in the widest sense of these terms. Its significance lies in the considerable expansion that it has given to the meaning of the term value, and in the unification, it has provided for the study of a variety of economic, moral, aesthetic questions, even logical ones that have often been considered in relative isolation.

Diehl, Meehan, Bradford, Brush, Dahdul, Dougall and Van Slyke argue that the axiological question in CST is: how does a principal as inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known? The answer that can be given to this question is constrained by one already given to the first two questions, that is, not just any methodology is appropriate. The schools under study are not interpreted within a context through direct interaction within the different levels of critical thinking (Diehl, Meehan, Bradford, Brush, Dahdul, Dougall & Van Slyke, 2016: 44). Axiology deals with the nature of value and captures the valued question of what is intrinsically worthwhile, and puts in issue "values of being, about what human states are to be valued simply because of what they are" principals in this study will be valued for who they are and what their roles are in education society (Topps, Wirun & Ellaway 2019:25).

CST addresses this axiological question in terms of principals flourishing, viewed as a process of social participation in which there is a mutually enabling balance, within and between other principals, of autonomy, co-operation and hierarchically, is conceived as interdependent with the flourishing of the schools. (Kelly, Ellaway, Reid, Ganshorn, Yardley, Bennett & Dornan, 2018: 23)

The concept is valued as intrinsically worthwhile, as participatory and is seen as a means to an end that involves principals in their own decision-making in any social context. This was in line with the scope of this study.

## **2.9 HOW CST INFORMS THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER AND PARTICIPANTS**

Critical social theorists recommend a two-way relationship between the researcher and participants, which is based on human relationships, trust, honesty and respect. CST is based on human interaction that involves the building of human relationships between the researcher and participants (Fuchs, 2017:450). In this study, some of the participants were principals of underperforming schools and some of performing schools. Relationship is central in qualitative research, often involving in-depth discussions and responses to personal questions. The process of conducting an enquiry based on relationships introduces issues of power in which the researched relationship is also guided by larger social structures. The relationship between a researcher and participants is integral to the quality of the output. Identification of appropriate participants and securing their agreement to be part of the research project is one of the first steps in establishing a working relationship (Algeo, 2012:1).

Informed consent is a concept which attempts to capture and convey what is regarded as the appropriate relationship between researcher and research participant. The establishment of trust can be formalised using documented consent forms and codes of conduct, through informal behaviours and reassurances of the confidentiality and anonymity of the participant's involvement in the research project (Boulton, 2014:1). Informed consent represents a cornerstone of the endeavours to make research ethically acceptable (Ruyter, 2014:6).

CST requires the researcher to provide information and transparency with regards to the purpose and intended outcomes of the research, with procedures in place to

protect the anonymity and confidentiality of participants, as well as clearly communicating to participants the risks or benefits of the research. All these measures are designed to enable participants to give informed consent (Fuchs, 2017:450). Transparency regarding techniques and strategies used by performing schools are important to ensure that the designs and purposes do not assess, analyse or reinforce negative stereotypes and research outcomes are not used for the control of minority groups that results in their repression. It is critical for researchers to remain alert as an instrument of data collection, mediating data through this human instrument, whilst keeping and explicating personal reactions and reflections (Hargreaves, 2017).

Simon argues that the researcher also explains and ask probing questions, then listen, think, and ask more probing question to reach deeper levels of the conversation. This can only be achieved when there is trust between the researcher and participants, thus there is a close relation between the researcher and the research participants and the setting in which research is conducted. The researcher interacts with the participants to understand their social constructions, and furthermore represents this understanding which represents collaborative construction (Simon, 2015:1).

The researcher is expected to feel personally involved in every step of the research process, because each consideration and decision has to be based on entirely personal grounds. The result is that the researcher often experiences a close relationship with the participants and probably feels obliged to protect data from such "outsiders" as other researchers (Fink, 2017).

Another aspect is anonymity of participants to ensure loyalty towards participants. Therefore, due to the technique of data collection, the researcher is more obliged to protect data. Based on the power dynamics in a school, informed consent may be sought in formalistic ways that legitimize the researcher's activities without taking into account sufficiently the participants' changing perception of the situation (Ruyter 2014:2). Through negotiation, the researcher and the participants have a clearer understanding of what they have agreed to deliver within the constraints of the environment in which the research is to be conducted. These may include the requirement for the research project to be reviewed by an independent ethics committee and adhere to codes of ethics stipulated by professional associations.

Kendall contends that rapport and friendship tap a common affective vein, drawing on attributes such as approachability, warmth, interest, trustworthiness and concern among principals (Kendall, 2016:38). Thus, De Laine's (2017:47) assertion that "researchers experience ethical dilemmas with an immediacy and personal involvement that draws on intuition and empathy, feelings and emotion" is apt. Developing attachments to research participants in qualitative projects is not uncommon, even for experienced researchers. The relationships are often built in the context of the researcher using rapport-building techniques that create an unstructured, informal, anti-authoritative and non-hierarchical atmosphere conducive to the sharing of experiences. Research environments and relationships of this nature can aid researchers in confronting issues that are deep, personally challenging and potentially painful. At the same time, they offer a therapeutic opportunity for principals to revisit and reorder past experiences (De Laine, 2017:47). The dyadic interaction between researcher and participant can also trigger the researcher's lived experience as part of the research process. Reciprocal sharing of personal stories is an effective way to gather rich, descriptive data, yet it can also make the researcher feel vulnerable and emphasise the two-way vulnerability between the researcher and the participants (Kendall, 2014:1). Self-disclosure such as this is suggested to be good research practice, as a way of "levelling the field" and nurturing a more egalitarian interaction. Researchers must be aware that they may need to support the participant in accessing other forms of support, or consider continuing to provide support themselves.

## **2.10 RHETORIC USED IN THE STUDY**

A more contemporary definition for rhetorical literacy refers to skills on understanding the audience roles in shaping discourse, identifying and responding to the audience in terms of writing situation and being aware of one's own ideological stance and that of the audience (Chrimes & Cook, 2017). Rhetorical literacy skill refers to the skill to understand, analyse, evaluate and employ various writing strategies based on their comprehension of the audience, purpose, writing situations, research methods, genre, style and delivery techniques and media. It has been argued that any research

that involves humans avoids a language that tends to use connotations of reducing people into objects, numbers or sub-humans (Qhosola, 2016:38).

CST respects indigenous people and their language in research, but where necessary an interpreter may be employed for the smooth running of meaningful conversations (Strickland, 2016:57). The benefit derived from this type of treatment is that the participants take ownership of their problems and together work towards finding solutions to underperformance. Drawing from the Enlightenment tradition, CST considers social science to be tasked with liberation from unnecessary restrictive traditions, ideologies, assumptions, power relations, identity formations, and so forth, that inhibit or distort opportunities for autonomy, clarification of genuine needs and wants and therefore greater and lasting satisfaction. CST argues for social change, eliminations of domination through emancipation and enlightenment. It is about bringing hope to the downtrodden, important for this research in that principals of underperforming secondary schools needed to be given hope, enlightenment and emancipation.

## **2.11 DEFINITIONS OF OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS**

The following key concepts are clarified in terms of how they are understood and used in this research.

### **2.11.1 Strategy**

A strategy is defined as a plan, master plan, grand design, game plan, plan of action, plan, policy, proposed action, scheme, blueprint, programme, procedure, approach, schedule of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim (Dictionary.com). Some of the definitions for the term are that which top management does that is of great importance to the organization; the basic directional decisions on purposes and missions; and the important actions necessary to realize these directions. Strategy answers the question: What should the organization be doing? and strategy answers the question: What are the ends we seek and how should we achieve them? (Nickols, 2016:3). This fits well into the study in that the most important responsibility of a

school principal is to ensure that purpose and mission of a school, in terms of learners' outcomes, are achieved.

### **2.11.2 Scaffolding**

Scaffolding is defined as carefully calibrated support that creates opportunities for principals to achieve goals beyond what would be possible through their unsupported efforts (Belland, 2017:309). It helps principals in the process of finding and solving problems in a guided manner, therefore, activities carried out by principals in this study are expected to minimize underperformance. Scaffolding is an effective method used to minimize challenges faced by principals of underperforming schools.

Zakaria (2016:148) describes scaffolding instruction as the role of district officials and others in supporting the principals' and teachers' development and providing support structures to get to that next stage or level. During the early stage of learning, a principal may need full support from the district officials. However, responsibility is gradually shifted to the principal whilst the district official slowly withdraws the support provided. One of the important aspects of scaffold instructions is that they are temporary in nature.

Reynolds and Goodwin (2016:60) assert that the goal of using scaffold instructions is usually to produce an independent and self-regulatory principal and problem-solver. Several uses of scaffold instructions are models, cues, prompts, hints, partial solutions, think-aloud modelling and direct instruction. Similar to the scaffolding used in construction to support workers on a specific task, instructional scaffolds are temporary support structures put in place to assist principals in accomplishing new techniques and strategies they could not typically achieve on their own.

Lazenby, McCulla and Marks (2020) argue that scaffolding is a method of supporting principals using strengths, previous knowledge and special motivational techniques for the new information. As principals master the assigned tasks, support is gradually removed. As and when principals of underperforming secondary schools master new tasks they take complete control of their situations. Gradually, when the principals are ready, support is withdrawn until they are able to stand on their own.

The reason scaffolding is chosen in this study is because principals will begin to demonstrate techniques and mastery the assistance or support is decreased gradually in order to shift the responsibility for learning from other performing principals. Those who share the responsibility of teaching and learning through scaffolds that require them to move beyond their current skill and knowledge levels are able to take ownership of the learning event.

### **2.11.3 Underperformance**

Setlhodi (2017) argues that South Africa continues to battle the challenge of underperformance in schools that are predominantly situated in socioeconomically unfavourable settings. Performance improvement remains high on the agenda, particularly at grade 12 senior certificate level. Underperformance is problematic mainly in previously disadvantaged schools that serve learners from predominantly poor communities. The Department of Basic Education Circular D2 of 2017 deals with identification, management and support of underperforming schools, that is, those deemed to have a pass percentage in the National Senior Certificate examination below 65%, and to have produced less than 30% bachelor and diploma passes, combined. The DBE further identifies them chronologically, as having underperformed for three consecutive years and failed to meet their own community and departmental criteria for success (DBE, 2018:4).

According to Leepo (2015:67), underperformance is experienced whenever teachers work to a standard that is below their capability. This is characterized by teachers not marking books according to the required standard, poor assessment results, and uncharacteristically poor quality of work given to learners. It is discernible in lack of engagement in classroom instruction, lack of motivation by learners to succeed, culturally insensitive approaches to instruction and a school climate contributing to learners' disengagement. The teaching and learning culture are not conducive to quality learning. This type of underperformance is called 'academic underperformance' or 'poor scholastic performance.'

For the purpose of this study the above definitions are all applicable, and encompass schools that present poor learning outcomes, poor quality of results, weak school leadership and low expectations of learner performance in general. The DBE (2018)

in its strategy to improve school management and governance in schools argues that the main contributor to underperformance and dysfunction is lack of leadership on the part of the school principal.

#### **2.11.4 Principal**

The DBE (2018) defines principals as the managers of schools and key delivery agents in the education system, constituting the most important partners in education. In terms of the South African Schools' Act (SASA, 1996), a principal is an educator appointed or acting as the head of a school, a teacher who is in charge and who is the first or highest rank at school (Dictionary.com). He or she takes an authoritative part, directing the school, establishing a culture of high expectations and sense of belonging for every child, as well as staff members and parents. The principal must be able to use visionary, instructional and managerial leadership to support change ([www.childeducation.org](http://www.childeducation.org)). According to Mokoqo (2013), he or she is a teacher with expert knowledge and charismatic leadership who provides guidance by articulating a vision which incorporates the assumptions, beliefs and experiences of the leader and the staff. The principals in this study were concerned with framing and communicating clear school goals.

The principal works cooperatively with the staff to develop measurable goals, tailored to enhancing the effective teaching and learning process and promoting academic performance of the learners at a specific school. Working with teachers, the principal also advocates the acceptance of the goals. Eight keys interdependence areas constitute the core purpose of the principal in any South African context:

- leading teaching and learning in the school
- shaping the direction and development of the school
- managing quality and securing accountability
- developing and empowering self and others
- managing the school as an organisation
- working with and for the community
- managing human resources (staff) in the school;
- managing and advocating extra-mural activities

(Hallinger, Walker, Nguyen, Truong & Nguyen, 2017)

According to Young, Jean and Mead (2019:23), a principal is responsible for budgets, discipline, assessment, observation and evaluation, engaging with families and the community, as well as a host of other items. However, those are merely the tasks that fall under the job title. To inspire others, principals must connect the work to what they and why, that being their sense of purpose.

### **2.11.5 Instructional leadership**

Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach argue that instructional Leadership is an approach used by principals to focus on teachers' behaviour in certain activities which indirectly impacts students' academic achievement (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 2000). According to Drake and Roe (2005), the school administrator's main task is to apply instructional leadership because this style is related to the implementation, promotion and improvement of student learning innovation programmes. In addition, according to Boe Lahui Ako (2008), instructional leadership is closely related to the role and duty of a principal, such as developing and disseminating school aims, setting targeted standards, coordinating the curriculum, supervising and evaluating teachers' classroom instructions, encouraging students to study, and increasing teachers' and administration staff's professional development (Ismail, Don, Husin & Khalid, 2018:137).

Wieczorek and Lear (2018) believe principals should include practices that reflect their shared instructional leadership, whilst Lumadi (2014:1) suggests that there is new role for principals as instructional leaders, that is, being collaborative and building upon the existing capacity of the organization to create a cohesive professional culture. One model of instructional leadership that reflects these contemporary dimensions of effective instructional leadership is leadership for learning. The instructional leader is a critical, visible presence who is tasked with responding to the school's and community's needs (Wieczorek, 2018:4). According to Ismael et al. (2017), instructional leadership is an approach used by principals to focus on teachers' behaviour in certain activities which indirectly impacts students' academic achievement.

Empowering principals as instructional leaders is part of the solution. Hallinger Adams, Harris and Jones (2018) describe them as strong, directive leaders who had

been successful at “turning their schools around.” There were relatively few descriptions of effective instructional leaders working in typical schools, yet schools differ widely in terms of their needs and resources, or in the type of leadership required to move them forward. Instructional leaders were viewed as culture builders. Millar (2014) offers a summary of the most popular conceptualisations of instructional leadership as follows:

- focus on coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction in the school
- unitary role of elementary principal
- strong, directive leadership, goal-oriented focus on the improvement of pupils’ academic outcomes
- a combination of expertise and charisma, with hands-on, ‘hip-deep’ in curriculum and instruction, and unafraid of working with teachers on the improvement of teaching and learning
- cultural building to create an academic press that fosters high expectations and standards for pupils and teachers.

## **2.12. SCAFFOLDING PRINCIPALS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS**

Research by Johnson and Sessions (2015) on leadership in urban school systems emphasized the need for a leadership team, led by the principal and including assistant principals and teacher leaders, and shared responsibility for student progress. Effective principals studied by the University of Washington urged teachers to work with one another and with the administration on a variety of activities, including instructional practices, and participating in peer observations. These leaders also looked for ways to encourage collaboration, with backing from Minnesota-Toronto researchers. They found that principals rated highly for the strength of their actions to improve instruction were also more likely to encourage the staff to work collaboratively.

### **2.12.1. No dedicated instructional leadership teams**

There are no dedicated instructional leadership teams in many schools, and as pointed by Pukken and Kanervio (2015), lack of professional leadership communities (PLCs) or non-functionality affects learner outcomes in many instances. Turner (2017:38) concurs that some schools in the USA had no dedicated instructional teams to drive them that would be effective vehicles for teacher learning and instructional improvement. In Ghana, according to Aggrey-Fynn (2020:34), the challenging nature of being an effective instructional leader was expressed by novice principals who had no mentors or peers to help them. They could feel the pressure of expectations to champion academic standards whilst administrative issues were a hurdle and they felt lonely in their new positions.

Hangula, Chirimhana and Kaundjwa (2019), found from a study conducted in Namibia that some principals still lacked most of the skills of instructional leadership. According to Nkengbeza and Shava (2016), some secondary South African schools' principals work in isolation and lack knowledge of instructional leadership and quality skills to lead schools. Isolation and lack of support mean that they remain vulnerable and fail to meet the requirements.

### **2.12.2. Inadequate recruitment and selection policy for school principals**

Viennet and Pont (2017) contends that in the past the policy focus was on the provision of education, but today it is on school leadership recruitment and learning outcomes, so principals need to be capable not only of adapting but also of learning and growing, whilst positioning and repositioning themselves in a rapidly changing world. These changes have profound implications for teachers, teaching and learning as well as for the leadership of schools and education systems (Viennet & Pont, 2017:27).

In Vietnam, according to Hao (2020), appointment of principals is based on the outcome of a candidate's application. Criteria are for teachers who reach professional standard (intermediate pedagogy diploma), vice principals or former principals who have just ended a five-year tenure, at least three years of teaching experience in schools or at least one year of experience as school vice principal, completing a training programme for administration cadres (short-course training),

positive outlook in political views, ethics, lifestyle, qualified managerial competency, and being in good health.

According to Ibara (2014), Nigeria is like many countries in using years of teaching experience as a major yardstick for the appointment and selection of principals, but this has negatively affected learning outcomes. Olayiwola (2014) concurs that school administrators in Nigeria are appointed to principalship without a well-regulated procedure or plan for quality and effective school leadership. This educational situation calls for a new policy model.

Donkor (2015) reports that the educational system in Ghana does not have a uniform or well-defined criterion for appointing principals, which creates a power struggle and animosity among teachers, negatively affecting learner outcomes. In South Africa, aspiring principals are considered for principalship positions if they merely complete a teacher's qualification and have at least seven years of teaching experience (Mestry, 2017). Principals are appointed on the basis of their teaching record rather than leadership potential. The lack of stringent criteria and absence of explicit leadership and management qualifications have resulted in many underperforming and making schools dysfunctional. As it was clear that some principals were appointed to their positions even if they did not possess much knowledge on the expectations of the positions, the need for scaffolding is reinforced.

### **2.12.3 Inadequate in-depth training and development**

As more countries require better achievement from their schools and grant greater autonomy to them in designing curricula and managing resources, the role of the principal has grown far beyond that of administrator. Developing them requires clearly defining their responsibilities, providing access to appropriate professional development throughout their careers, and acknowledging their pivotal role in improving school and student performance. Developing effective principals as instructional leaders had become more important to improve learner outcomes.

Hao (2020) argues that Vietnamese school principals need to be trained in a formal principal preparation programme for their professional development. The current recruitment process is ill-suited to the development and employment of qualified leaders. In-service training programmes in universities do not adequately prepare

aspiring administrators for the complexity of principalship, thus, they were good at teaching professionals but lacked knowledge and skills in educational administration.

Olayiwola (2014) argues that apart from the problem of poor educational outcomes, successful implementation of an educational policy implies that principals need to be equipped with knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively handle the educational policy. They do not possess adequate and required skills, attitudes, and knowledge for effective school administration, being appointed without specialized training. In Nigeria, Shina (2014) and Olayiwola (2014) found principals themselves acknowledged that poor academic performance of students was as a result of their low competency level in school administration and leadership.

Gurmu (2019) reveals that the processes of Ethiopian school principals' selection and training for professionalising principals is inadequate. Findings of the study show that the denial of principalship to professional graduates and a political affiliation lens are scenarios that inform principals' selection for leadership positions. Selection criteria that emphasise university degree Grade Point Average (GPA), teaching experience and performance, are deciding who is selected for a postgraduate diploma in school leadership (PGDSL) training. These indicate the gap the selection processes have in selecting competent leaders for training. The study also shows that the duration of the training is short, with the curriculum lacking depth and breadth. Though the training does help trainees to be familiarised with school leading, it is deficient in instructional leadership. The Ministry of Education, therefore, needs to revisit the selection and training processes so that proper criteria and procedures inform the selection and training of competent professionals needed in the area.

The DBE NEEDU 2018 report found no formal preparation for aspiring or practicing principals taking on leadership and management positions, and very few in-service professional development programmes available in South Africa. There is lack of in-depth training of principals to lead and manage schools, with no overarching principal preparation or certification programme, and there is rarely any formal leadership training. According to Taylor, van der Berg, Reddy and Van Rensburg (2015), the school principal, in combination with the school management team (SMT), has a particularly challenging yet crucial role to play. On the one hand, principals who have been trained and have gained experience as teachers must now effectively manage

large and complex institutions. On the other hand, a purely managerial and administrative focus can distract principals from leading the school in its central task of teaching (Taylor et al., 2015:254).

#### **2.12.4 Lack of support**

Balfanz, Bridgeland, Fox, DePaoli, Ingram and Maushard (2014) consider lack of support for learners and teachers' statistics that show nearly 7,000 students drop out of high schools in the USA every day, and every year approximately 1.2 million teenagers leave the public school system without a diploma or an adequate education. There are 2,000 high schools in the USA, in which fewer than 60% of students graduate within four years of entering ninth grade. The situation is not much brighter for students who do earn a high school diploma, and enter a two-year or four-year course. In community colleges, approximately 40% of freshers, and approximately 20% in public four-year institutions, are in need of basic instruction in reading, writing, or mathematics before they can perform in college-level courses. It is vital that this study aims at designing a strategy to scaffold the principals as instructional leaders to speak up for these students and provide leadership to reverse this poor educational outcome.

According to Rueckert (2019), in Malawi there are an average of 130 children per classroom in first grade. It is not only a lack of classrooms that is the problem, but also all the basic facilities one would expect a school to have, such as running water and toilets. Outdated and worn-out textbooks are often shared by six or more students in many parts of the world. Rueckert argues that a child cannot learn without the right environment. Children in many countries in SADC, such as Tanzania, are often squeezed into overcrowded classrooms that are falling apart, or learning outside. They also lack textbooks, school supplies, and other learning tools.

In the Education Sector Report for 2015-16, South Africa, the Auditor General suggests that infrastructure in the education sector should provide a safe environment for effective teaching and learning. The South African education landscape is marked by unequal provision of infrastructure among and within provinces, especially in rural areas. Some schools still experience historical backlogs in respect of buildings, facilities and access to basic services such as water,

electricity and sanitation, which negatively affects teaching and learning (Education Sector Report for 2015-16, South Africa, Auditor General Report).

#### **2.12.5 Inefficient use instructional time**

Adams (2019) indicates that in the USA some of the students and teachers do not have good time management skills, thus negatively affecting learner outcomes. Time management plays a vital role in improving student's academic performance and achievements and each one should have such as ability as setting goals and priorities, using appropriate mechanisms and being organized in using time.

Goetsch and Davis (2014) argue that punctuality needs to be observed not only by students but also by teachers, principals and non-teaching staff in an educational institution, as part of the efforts toward academic excellence. Ehiane (2014) further opines that success can be achieved in school when teachers show a good example of time management, though the practice in most of the secondary schools is that school activities seem not to respect the designed timetable. According to Armah (2017), despite decades of reform efforts in Ghana many critical issues still need to be addressed, particularly those of access, time management, retention and success in basic and secondary schools, and lifelong learning generally. In recent times, however, official reports have specifically identified three fundamental weaknesses of the education system, namely, fragmented and overloaded curriculum, unequal access to education and lifelong learning, and lack of time management (Armah, 2017: 23). In Ethiopia, Tsegaye (2018) found the majority of principals indicated the level of disempowerment as a major factor in the alarming shift of principals' roles, to the extent that most spent a great deal of time each workday dealing with student discipline, parental complaints, personnel issues, and bureaucratic paperwork.

Taylor et al. (2015) found that many principals do not spend the majority of their time on aspects of instructional leadership, whilst Bhengu, Mchunu and Bayeni (2020) found that the majority of South African principals did not regard the oversight of curriculum and teaching as their main task, but felt that responsibility for this lay with subject heads. Perhaps because of this perception, principals did not spend the majority of their time on aspects of instructional leadership but rather on administrative duties and learner discipline.

## **2.13 STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT PRINCIPALS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS**

There are a number of strategies to support principals as instructional leaders.

### **2.13.1 Formulation of dedicated instructional leadership teams**

The Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OCED, 2020) contend that principals are expected to collaborate and work in teams, as well as with other schools and parents, to set common goals, and plan and monitor the attainment of those goals. Austin, Anderson-Davis, Graham and White (2018) defined an instructional leadership team (ILT) as comprising leaders who collaborate to focus on improvement, in this case of teaching and learning. This theory of action guided our work, such that if the principal had an ILT to collaborate with when identifying teaching and learning challenges, and to support teachers in solving them, the teachers would be better able to improve their instructional practices.

Stima (2020) found in Malawi that apart from managerial duties of instructional leaders, leaders have shifted focus onto prioritizing teaching and learning in order to improve quality education. Similarly, Malikebu (2019) found that when a teacher has been promoted to be a head teacher, s/he becomes a leader of teachers who are also leaders. As such, s/he is a leader of leaders, hence the need to be competent in instructional leadership and administration.

Huusela (2020), writing of Ghana, noted that in a professional learning community (PLC) it is expected that colleagues meet and observe each other, provide feedback for one another and, if needed, assist each other in student learning. Similarly, Huusela (2020) refers to genuine and powerful collaboration as a process, in which teachers are working together to analyse and enhance their classroom practices. Powerful collaboration means that they work as a team and engage in discussion and reflection on questions related to their practices.

In South Africa, according to Tsakeni, Munje and Jita (2020), a multidimensional instructional leadership approach has led to reported improvement in Physical Sciences and Mathematics. In addition, they assessed the impact of distributed leadership on school improvement and growth in learner achievement, concluding that distributed leadership has a direct effect on a school's academic capacity, which in turn has an indirect effect on mathematical achievement.

### **2.13.2 Recruitment and selection policy development for principals**

According to Bush (2019), recruitment policy development is of utmost importance, which Canada, to meet its goals, had to develop a coherent leadership strategy and school boards overtly plan for leadership succession. The process of attracting and preparing the right people begins before there is a vacancy as potential candidates for school leader must have an undergraduate degree, five years of teaching experience, certification by school level, two specialist or additional honour specialist qualifications (areas of teaching expertise) or a master's degree, and a Principal's Qualification Programme (PQP), offered by Ontario universities, teachers' federations and principals' associations, which consists of a 125-hour programme with a practicum.

The Northern region of Nigeria's government forum designed a system of conducting termly conferences, workshops, seminars for capacity building for principals and teachers in the schools for leadership and instructional effectiveness as part of recruitment of principals. Students' academic achievement was used as a mean for teachers 'promotion (Abdulrasheed & Bello, 2015.45).

Donkor (2015) recommended that policymakers and teacher training institutions in Ghana pay more attention to recruitment policies for school leaders. The principals need to be equipped with knowledge and skills in management and leadership to enable schools improve in performance. In South Africa, the National Planning Commission (2014) called for change in the appointment process to ensure that competent individuals are attracted to become school principals. As in other senior management positions, candidates were to undergo a competency assessment to determine their suitability and identify the areas in which they would need development and support.

### **2.13.3 In-depth and adequate training and development of principals**

In-depth training for principals is a priority if schools have to improve learner outcomes (Flintham, 2015). There is an urgent need for education authorities to introduce compulsory training and development programmes for aspiring and practicing principals to lead and manage their schools successfully. According to Darling-Hammond (2017), there is mounting evidence of a link between leadership and learning outcomes and providing comprehensive training programmes for new principals. Singapore has good school leaders and young teachers are continuously assessed for their leadership potential, being given the opportunity to develop their leadership capacity. Future principals are chosen from successful teachers already in the education system.

Bouchamma, Basque and Marcotte (2014) contend that the training requirements for the position of school principal vary, depending on the context. In the USA, for example, a teacher becomes eligible for promotion to the position of principal when he or she has completed a Master's in educational administration, while in the United Kingdom teachers must climb the ranks to join the senior faculty or become deputy principals. They must assist the principal for a minimum of five years before being allowed to apply for the position of principals (Bouchamma, Basque & Marcotte, 2014:90).

Zanzibar has seen a rapid change in education with quality teaching a result of good leadership. The dynamic in education requires preparation and dynamic principals, whilst mentoring and coaching were also highlighted as useful skills. Principals need training in mentoring so they can learn how to support their teachers rather than use harsh language (Kitur, Choge & Tanui, 2020:7). In Kenya, teacher education and training should be structured to incorporate development of leadership knowledge and skills in instructional leadership. The training institutions should incorporate different models of leadership such as transformational leadership and instructional leadership. There is a need for retraining of practicing principals to match the changing trends in modern society (Choge, 2015:46).

In South African PLCs the best districts have developed a collaborative lattice approach between the central office and school, which entails districts providing good principals with the support they need to enable their schools to succeed. When

given the space by the district to focus on improving their schools, principals can then support their teachers to do the same. The focus of districts must be on raising standards and achievement, and improving instruction by supporting and enabling principals to develop their ability as instructional leaders (Bush & Glover, 2016:34).

#### **2.13.4 Creation of supportive environment**

In the United Kingdom, principals know that schools are in the neighbourhood and generally are seen as part of society. It is therefore necessary for them to appreciate that no school is an island, and encourage involvement of all stakeholders, particularly in surrounding communities, as crucial for improvement of learning outcomes (Agi, 2017:56).

Benner, Boyle and Sadler (2016) found that parental educational involvement in USA secondary schools is strongly linked to students' academic success. Parents' academic socialization seemed to promote the academic success of more youth, suggesting that academic interventions and support could be carefully targeted to support the educational success of all young people (Benner, Boyle & Sadler, 2016:43).

Amponsah, Milledzi, Ampofo and Gyambrab (2018) found that relationships between parental involvement in education and academic performance of high school students in the Ashanti Mampong Municipality of Ghana were significantly positive in terms of parental involvement and academic performance. Poor home environment and vulnerable households do not encourage children to perform well academically. Enemu and Onyenwe (2020) argue that parental and community involvement, like many other variables such as the pupils, teacher and school, are important determinants of academic performance. Parent involvement in children's education has become an important factor for building these parent-child relationships and improving children's path to educational success. The two most influential settings in which children learn and develop are the home with their parents and school with their teachers. Jaiswal and Dhar (2017) concur that the home and school create overlapping spheres on children's development and academic performance and the collaboration between these two spheres can greatly influence the educational outcome of the children.

In South Africa, Mutodi and Ngirande (2014) contend that parental involvement in schools affects the academic performance of students in mathematics. Results further indicate that home and family support is the most significant factor that determines a learner's performance. Thus, it may be concluded that by staying involved with their children's education, parents do impact positively on their academic achievement. It was evident that for schools to improve learning outcomes communities and parents were critically important. The study suggests that home environment factors help explain the learning outcomes of children, leading to empowerment and social change.

### **2.13.5 Efficient utilisation of instructional time**

Sanchez, London and Castrechini (2015) state that chronic absenteeism by learners and teachers as well as principals not spending time on instructional leadership reduce achievement outcomes, impairing educational engagement, and decreasing social engagement. Hence, there is a need to use teaching and learning time efficiently by eliminating absenteeism. According to Gottfried and Kirksey (2017), approximately 5 to 7.5 million children in the USA are missing at least one month of school, so educational stakeholders and policymakers are increasingly engaging in discussions surrounding monitoring and reducing student absenteeism. There are raised concerns that students with greater absences have lower academic performance so this initiative calls on schools and communities across the country to take immediate action by better tracking absence data and reducing chronic absenteeism (Gottfried & Kirksey, 2017:34).

Robert (2020) notes the negative impact of alcohol intake, hangovers at work, absenteeism, missing lessons and inability to complete syllabus by some teachers in the Builsa North District of Ghana. Robert recommends that to improve learner outcomes, principals must ensure they reduce teacher absenteeism and enforce efficient use of teaching time. Similarly, a study by Mlambo and Adetiba (2020) found teacher absenteeism in South Africa has long been associated with the underperformance of learners. In 2012, teachers, including principals, were absent for close to 7.5 million schooling days. In North West province alone, teachers only taught 52 of the prescribed 140 daily lessons for the year, with teachers being absent

more than learners, and also coming to class late after lunch breaks. Kirori and Dickinson (2020) assert that due to increased interest in educational leadership in the 21st century, both locally and internationally, and greater accountability on principals, there has been a great increase in efficient use of teaching time in the number of secondary schools.

## **2.14 STRATEGIES THAT FOSTERS SCAFFOLDING IN UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS**

This section discusses the conditions conducive to strategies that foster scaffolding principals of underperforming schools. PLCs are a systematic method for improving teaching and learning performance through designing and building professional learning communities. This overcomes a culture of isolation and fragmentation of the work of educational supervisors. Numerous studies (Nkengbeza and Wang) show that constructing and developing strong professional learning communities, focused on improving education, curriculum and evaluation, will lead to increased cooperation and participation of educational supervisors and teachers, as well as increases in the application of effective educational practices in the classroom.

### **2.14.1 Sustainable instructional leadership teams**

According to Wang (2016), in Northeast China teachers participated in school-based communities of professional learning. While the term professional learning community (PLC) was not commonplace, the actual practices of PLC characterized by collective enquiry and collaborative learning became the norm in schools. School leaders demonstrated strong instructional leadership and visionary stewardship for continuous improvement, and played a critical role in developing and communicating a shared vision, shaping a culture of trust, supporting and monitoring collegial learning. Teacher leadership was evident in collaborative teams and expertise leadership was acknowledged. Emotional bonds and shared responsibility in these teams strengthened professionalism. Concerted efforts were made to create aligned structures and processes that support collective enquiry, and to develop a culture of collaborative learning that builds collective capacities. Developing and sustaining the

embedded PLC process within a school seems to provide a promising infrastructure for supporting school improvement in the Chinese school context.

Nkengbeza (2014) found that, in Liberia, PLCs need strong leadership and that the requirements include a visionary principal who serves as a role model and steward, a commitment to involve and empower teachers in decision-making responsibilities and the necessity for negotiating a vision that staff understand and share. The school leader should also assist the staff with learning to share different opinions, and all staff should learn to give and receive constructive criticism. The principal should equally create a conducive and better environment for discussion about everything, including a broader reform vision. In Ghana, Huusela (2020) found that teachers, including principals, were essential resources for any school or other educational facility, and central figures in providing quality education for children. Therefore, it is vital to provide them with opportunities to develop professionally and to enhance high-quality teaching. A PLC) brings professional learning to the school context and emphasizes teachers as active and self-developing learners. Principals should have agency in their own professional learning and an opportunity to take responsibility for their development, rather than simply being recipients of predetermined professional development training.

The DBE (2015) in South Africa, in its research on teacher development, points to the importance of teacher professional learning communities in promoting teacher development. One of the provisions in the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education Development (ISPFTED), therefore, is the establishment of PLCs to strengthen teacher professionalism and promote collective participation in professional activities for professional development. Key to these is the establishment of PLCs for principals of schools.

#### **2.14.2 Implementation of recruitment and selection policies**

In implementation of recruitment policies, Eger, Pisoňová and Tomczyk (2017) in Slovakia, contend that candidates for the position of head teacher in Slovakia should meet the requirements stipulated by law, namely, a Master's degree, which allows them to work in the teaching profession, and have completed teaching attestation, with at least five years of pedagogical experience. Continuing education is now an

important part of professional development for teachers. The aim of school leadership courses for pedagogical staff and professional employees is to provide professional competencies necessary for the performance of their management duties. Principals in Slovakia are required to undertake mandatory education within the two years of attaining their headship.

The NDP (2014) directs that South Africa needs to improve the quality of teacher training, recruit higher calibre candidates, implement an entry qualification for principals, and change the appointment process to ensure that competent individuals are attracted to the post. As in other senior management positions, candidates should undergo a competency assessment to determine their suitability and identify the areas in which they would need development and support. In terms of the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act of 2017, the country intends to effect changes of appointment of principals in particular. The amendments that are proposed are to limit the powers of the SGB in regard to recommending candidates for appointment in promotion posts, and the post levels for which it may recommend candidates to the HoD. Any appointment, promotion or transfer to a promotional post on Post levels 2 to 4 on the educator establishment of a public school is to be made from amongst candidates identified by the HoD, and educators on these post levels will be appointed directly by the HoD, with appointments to a promotional post made on probation

### **2.14.3 Continuous training and development of principals**

Bush and Montecinos (2019) found that a majority of principals in Chile described their leadership role as very difficult or difficult, citing problems such as dealing with multiple tasks, feelings of unpreparedness, unanticipated events, and excessive time on administrative duties. As part of developing these challenges, Chile funded development programmes for educators who were aspirant principals to pursue specialised preparation in school administration, management and leadership, with emphasis on instructional leadership. Once they complete their studies, over a five-year period, they must apply for three open positions.

Hervie and Winful, (2018) argue that although the blame for the decline in learner performance can partly be attributed to the lack of educational infrastructure and

teacher motivation, much of the problem is due to the lack of regular in-service training for principals. In recent years, Ghana's Ministry of Education has shifted focus from providing in-service training to teachers, especially senior high schools teachers, to providing infrastructure, failing to recognize that this is useless without the availability of competent trained teachers to use it. The authors recommend school leadership development programmes for in-service and newly appointed principals to improve by conducting intensive leadership training and professional development in all aspects of school management, especially instructional leadership.

According to Mestry (2017), many nations around the world have undertaken wide-ranging reforms of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment, with the intention of better preparing principals for the educational demands of life and work in the 21st century. In South Africa, specifically, changes in the new system of governance in schools have unfortunately resulted in principals being unprepared for their new role in the new educational dispensation, which needs a balance between instructional leadership and management. It is thus crucial that the South African education authorities attract and select prospective principals with the right leadership and management qualities to lead public schools. Prospective and practicing principals should be afforded the opportunity of participating in formal professional development programmes so that they can effectively adapt to their roles and responsibilities, which are changing radically. Mestry further argues that South African principals require development in supporting networks, policy issues and interpersonal skills, and place a strong focus on their administrative, financial and human resource management role.

#### **2.14.4 Conducive and supportive environment**

Nishimura (2017) argues that a conducive and supportive environment is critical in addressing the issues and problems of school management. It becomes the main actor in development, not the recipient, with participatory approaches in learning. Empirical evidence is cited, mostly from Latin American countries such as Chile, for the impact of a supportive environment on the increased attendance of pupils and teachers and of pupils' learning outcomes.

Salifu and Agbenyega (2016) argue that Children from severely dysfunctional families in particular in Ghana face enormous adjustment problems at school, therefore, the role the society plays in children's lives is sometimes more influential than that of the school. Taniguchi and Hirakawa (2016) found that school management in many sub-Saharan African countries has been enhanced through community participation in an attempt to improve education quality. In Malawi, for example, high-achieving schools, but not in low-achieving schools, communities and parents were actively involved in events aimed at improving student outcomes.

The South African DBE, through NEEDU (2018), reports that schools that recognise and appreciate that education takes place most efficiently and effectively when schools, parents and communities work collaboratively, tirelessly and continuously to establish partnerships with different structures in the community. These structures include the former students, business sector, government departments, community leaders and faith-based organisations.

#### **2.14.5 Protection of instructional time**

Bauer, Liu, Schanzenbach and Shambaug (2018) argue that Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; 2015) was enacted in the USA to curb absenteeism to protect instructional time, which resulted in improved academic outcomes. Salifu and Agbenyega (2016) state that school indiscipline reduces teaching contact hours as more time is devoted to managing misbehaviour rather than on teaching. This appears to be the case in many senior high schools in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana in particular, which are grappling with challenges from student disrespect for school authority, cultism, examination malpractices, stealing, lateness to classrooms and absenteeism.

According to Hipondoka (2017), teacher absenteeism due to various reasons was the main cause of underperformance in underperforming Namibian secondary schools. Nkosi and Farhangpour (2017) state that many secondary schools are underperforming in South Africa due to inefficient use of teaching and learning time because of late coming by both learners and teachers.

## **2.15 THREATS TO EMERGING STRATEGIES AIMED AT SCAFFOLDING PRINCIPALS OF UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS**

A number of threats exist to the emergence of strategies for scaffolding principals of underperforming schools.

### **2.15.1 Reluctance of participants**

Principals who have little or no interest in working together may block each other's achievement, communicate and coordinate poorly, mislead and confuse each other, loaf, and look for an easy pathway that results in not meeting the potential of individual members (Koutsellini, 2009). When principals as participants are reluctant it becomes difficult to initiate scaffolding in underperforming schools.

### **2.15.2 Power relations among participants**

The concept of power implies hierarchies in which some individuals have greater influence than others in a given situation. It is important to consider that power may act to influence or bias people that possess it (Gibson, Medeiros, Giorgini, Mecca, Devenport, Conely & Mumford, 2014). Participants will be reluctant to participate because of power relations, feeling they are unable to voice their concerns freely for fear their positions will be threatened. Power differentials may act to constrain or enhance people's ability to make good ethical decisions (Gibson et al., 2014). Many organisations, including academics, are ordered in hierarchical fashion, with some positions having authority over others, such as the relationship between supervisors and subordinates, which may create role boundaries in this study.

### **2.15.3 Lack of knowledge on instructional leadership**

A threat arises from lack of knowledge of instructional time management in a school system by the principal in deciding what activities are most important, less important or optional. Also problematic is mapping out appropriate strategies in performing identified tasks to achieve the expected results. Insufficient instructional leadership may result in less inspiration, as with poor monitoring of

teachers to pursue institutional vision and educational goals through proper planning of lesson notes. There should be appropriate utilization of instructional materials, classroom management, and students' engagement, continuous assessment, marking of students' exercises, performance feedback, instructional review, and no time-wasting (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018).

Some principals do not understand that instructional leadership strategies involve the need to get the best out of the human element within the available learning duration. This makes the concept of principals' instructional management strategies essential in secondary schools if learner outcomes are to improve (Boyce & Bowers, 2018). According to Ayeni (2020), a persistent concern of stakeholders in the education sector over the dwindling academic performance of students in Nigerian secondary schools could be attributed to the perceived inadequacies in instructional leadership. Learners' academic performance seems to increase when instructional time is well managed.

Donohoo, Hattie and Eells (2018) state that principals and teachers believe that it is their fundamental task to evaluate the effect of their practice on students' progress and achievement. They also believe that success and failure in student learning is more about what they did or did not do, and they place value in solving problems of practice together. It is essential, therefore, to help principals make the link between their collective actions and student outcomes. Principals play a key role in creating non-threatening, evidence-based instructional environments. By promoting a culture of collaboration focused on "knowing thy collective impact," leaders have the potential to support school improvement in ways that positively influence teachers' collective efficacy beliefs and thus promote student achievement.

The European commission (2018) contends for a clear vision for quality in education with shared values concerning school, teacher and learner development. Policies that support highly competent and trusted professional communities are recognising teachers and principals as key change agents, promoting shared leadership, collaboration and innovation, and investing in capacity-building that will motivate their continued development to ensure high quality teaching and learning.

Gase, DeFosset, Perry and Kuo (2016) researched Ghanaian youths' perspectives on factors underlying school truancy and opportunities to improve school attendance.

The Qualitative Report, 21(2), (299) recommended teachers be aware of and attempt to understand students' personal struggles. They should respond to problematic behaviour in a way that is empathetic and solution-focused. Teachers should work to establish positive personal relationships with all students (NEEDU, 2018). In schools that work, instructional leadership resides with a team of leaders, that is, deputy principals and HoDs, of which the principal serves as A "leader of leaders."

#### **2.15.4 Lack of support by school district**

According to Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019), there were several factors associated with higher turnover rates, including lack of administrative support for principals by school district which affect performance of schools in poor communities in the USA. Bolaji, Campbell-Evans and Gray (2019) contend that lack of support by school district and inadequate infrastructure facilities to support teaching and learning were major challenges for managing education for principals of schools in Nigeria.

In Ethiopian, Afework (2020) argues that the support provided to principals from stakeholder, such as school district, to strengthen their instructional leadership practices using a distributive approach is also low. In addition, lack of knowledge and skill of principals to understand the recent school leadership theories leads them not to practice instructional leadership via a distributive approach effectively or efficiently. Moreover, low commitment at district level to take instructional leadership roles and activities, lack of adequate support from stakeholders to principals and lack of instructional materials and qualified personnel were the major challenges of principals in practicing instructional leadership.

Bantwini and Moorosi (2018) argue that the role of education districts is central to the success of schools as they are mandated to work collaboratively with principals, giving guidance and professional support. Their findings show principals' dissatisfaction with their district's low levels of support in provision of resources, lack of consultation in key decisions involving their schools, and district officials' lack of visibility in schools and responsiveness to change.

### **2.15.5 Lack of resources**

Teachers are an important resource for any school to succeed. Principals as instructional leaders cannot perform optimally without this resource. Podolsky, Bishop, and Darling-Hammond (2016) argue that one of the most pressing issues facing policymakers in the USA is how to staff classrooms with a stable teaching force responsive to complex student needs and the growing demands of the knowledge economy. Recurrent teacher shortages and lack of resources for teaching and learning, especially in low-income schools, undermine student achievement and school improvement efforts.

According to Kamwendo (2019), the available resources are too inadequate to lead to a successful teaching and learning in the non-English-dominant Malawi. It is recommended that Malawi channel adequate and enabling resources to improving the teaching and learning. In sub-Saharan Africa many lack textbooks, school supplies, and other tools they need to excel. In Malawi, for example, there are an average of 130 children per classroom in first grade. It is not just a lack of classrooms that is the problem, but also all lack of basic facilities one would expect a school to have, such as running water and toilets.

Tapala, van Niekerk and Mentz (2020) contend that lack of resources, logistical barriers and competing priorities were the main causes of underperformance in peri-urban schools of South Africa.

## **2.16 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter discussed CST as it relates to enlightenment, empowerment, liberation and social change, which would enhance principals as instructional leaders to be able to work collaboratively with other principals, and the literature echoes the importance of social learning among school leaders with an aim of improving learner outcomes.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of the study was to design a strategy for scaffolding principals of underperforming secondary schools as instructional leaders at Amajuba district using SCT. This chapter focuses on the methodology and design used in generating data with the participants to formulate strategy for scaffolding principals as instructional. This chapter integrates the theoretical concepts developed in Chapter 2, and attempts to answer the research questions, using PAR as an approach. The challenges facing principals will be explored and, together with participants' inputs, solutions will be sought while considering suitable conditions for implementing the plan to be successful. It will justify the research design and methodology used to achieve the aim and objectives of the study. In this chapter, I examine PAR as a methodology by taking into appropriate topics.

### **3.2 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH AS AN APPROACH**

A powerful approach, participatory action research (PAR) has also been called "participatory research," "participant-based research," "participatory research" and other forms of "participatory inquiry" (Stack & McDonald 2014:34-35). Chevalier and Buckles (2019) argue that it provides new theoretical insights and many robust tools that will guide researchers, professionals and learners from all disciplines through the process of conducting action research 'with' people rather than 'for' them or 'about' them. PAR is collective reasoning and evidence-based learning focused on social action. It has immediate relevance in fields ranging from participants' development to education, health, public engagement, environmental issues and problem-solving in the workplace. This new edition has been extensively revised to create a user-friendly textbook on PAR theory and practice, including updated references and a comprehensive overview of different approaches to PAR, whether pragmatic, psychosocial or critical. Emphasis is on the art of process design, especially in complex social settings characterized by uncertainty and the unknown. There are developments in the use of collaborative tools and digital strategies to support real-time data gathering and processing, with updated examples and stories from around the world, in a wide range of fields. Critical commentaries are given on

major issues in the social sciences, including stakeholder theory, systems thinking, causal analysis, monitoring and evaluation, research ethics, risk assessment and social innovation.

Used as a means to obtain information, according to Creswell and Poth (2017), PAR is a qualitative inquiry that is equitable, emancipatory, democratic, liberating and life-enhancing (Creswell & Poth, 2017:2). Thus, as a philosophy it examines the concept that people have the right to determine their own development, and recognises the need for local people to participate meaningfully in the process of analysing their own solutions, which they share and over which they have power and control, in order to achieve sustainable development (Mårtensson, Fors, Wallin, Zander & Nilsson, 2016:498). MacDonald (2012:37) defines PAR as an action for change, a process of fact-finding, action, reflection and leading to further inquiry. Reka and Ramesh, (2016) state that PAR is a dynamic approach to social investigation and taking action to redress a problem or engaging in social action. It focuses on knowledge development with its mandate to remain a collective reflective inquiry for improving a situation. The main goal, since it is participatory, is to interpret and document the entire phenomenon from an individual's point of view. Hatim (2014:17) explains that PAR is from the people who experience challenges similar to those of principals of underperforming secondary schools. Consequently, it aims to discover a deeper truth while aiming to study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning that people bring to them.

Stack and McDonald (2014:34-35) believe that PAR focuses on the whole human experience and meaning-making process, permitting information-sharing between the researcher and participants, thus giving them both the opportunity to share and collaborate. Its use may lead to the formation of public spaces in which participant and researcher can reshape their knowledge of how political, social, and economic factors can be influential in redressing a problem or two, especially in communities in which the impact is felt in daily life.

According to Sadowska and Laffy (2015), its importance lies in the roles played by the researcher and participants in PAR. As action research it involves the systematic collection and analysis of data for the purpose of taking action and bringing about change by generating practical knowledge. Action research seeks full collaboration by all participants engaged in socio-political changes by maintaining commitment to

local contexts rather than a quest for the truth. Furthermore, PAR liberates research from conventional prescriptive methods and seeks to decentralise traditional research. When comparing it with functionalism, principals whose schools have been performing at the highest level for more than ten years will be sharing their experiences with other principals whose schools are underperforming and with other participants.

The aim of collaboration is to share and learn from one another with the intention of scaffolding principals of underperforming secondary schools as instructional leaders, using SCT. This should cascade into others who will share good practices as well as their expertise. The main focus of collaboration is on experiences, knowledge and coming up with solutions, as well as formulating strategies to enhance principals' knowledge.

### **3.2.1 Participatory Action Research**

According to Forchuk and Meier (2014:88) Participatory Action Research (PAR) is an approach that involves maximum participation by stakeholders, especially those whose lives are marginalised, with the purpose of taking action and bringing about change. On the other hand, the functionalist approach proposes that the poor and the oppressed need not be changed for the better (Zinn, Eitzen & Wells, 2015:3). The poor and the oppressed need opportunity rather than power, and there must be co-operation between the “haves” and the “have-nots”. Thaker (2019:97) emphasises that PAR aims at mobilising oppressed people in order to create societal-level change. In other words, the “haves” must only provide opportunity determined by existing power-holders. According to Zhu (2019), PAR is an approach to enquiry which has been used since the 1940s. It involves researchers and participants working together to understand a problematic situation and change it for the better. There are many definitions of the approach, which share some common elements. PAR focuses on social change that promotes democracy and challenges inequality, is context-specific and often targeted on the needs of a particular group. It is an iterative cycle of research, action and reflection and often seeks to ‘liberate’ participants to have a greater awareness of their situation in order to take action. PAR uses a range of different methods, both qualitative and quantitative (Zhu,

2019:1). There is a social aspect of action research that aims to solve real-life problems of the participants by giving them control of the research process and appreciating their values (Sadik 2019:23).

Emancipation of participants is a foundation principle of PAR. Since my topic deals with designing a strategy for scaffolding principals of underperforming secondary as instructional leaders at Amajuba district, PAR was considered more relevant because it is about capacity-building and development, emancipation and liberation of people. Thus, it emphasises cooperation in seeking change, as outlined by Clark (2014). PAR is a qualitative inquiry that is considered to be democratically transformative, liberating and life-enhancing.

### **3.2.2 Historical origin of PAR**

The first advocate of action research was social psychologist, Kurt Lewin (1946), who described action research as proceeding in a spiral steps, composed of planning, action, observation and evaluation of the results of the action. This is the first generation of PAR, begun as an Action research in Europe and the USA between 1940 and 1950. According to Loewenson, Laurell, Hogstedt, D'Ambruoso and Shroff (2014:16), the origin of PAR emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War with the work of Kurt Lewin in 1948. The Industrial Democracy tradition and the Human Relation Movement were also part of this philosophy. Action research is used as a pragmatic approach where knowledge about or perspectives on a social or organisational system were gained by acting on that system through iterative cycles of problem definition, namely, planning, acting and evaluating. Action research allows both researchers and participants to nourish the learning and inquiry process, and bridges the gap between theory and practice. According to Issa and Isaias (2014:4), action research uses the positivist approach. Perry and Zuber-Skerrit (2002:2) have established that action research is more appropriate for developing management competencies as compared to the employment of positivist research. The action research methodology was advocated to resolve practical social problems, being socially responsive and taking place in context. Knowledge gained through action research can liberate researchers and participants, and enhance learning, teaching and policy-making.

The co-founder, Eric Trist, who was a member of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London, was part of the second generation of PAR. According to Koch and Kralick (1998:24), it emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century with the work of Paulo Freire, with the aim of empowering countless impoverished and illiterate children. Action research addresses problems of segregation and discrimination, assists people in resolving issues and initiates change while studying the impact of those particular changes (Stringer, 2004:122). Lewin suggests that it is different from traditional empirical-analytic and interpretative research (MacTaggart, 1994:35), and that it is a form of self-reflection enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality, justice, coherence, and satisfactory use of their own social practices, including their understanding of how these practices are carried out. MacDonald (2012:37) argues that the development of critical consciousness requires the individual to be knowledgeable and to understand politics, social and economic contradictions, and to take action to change the oppressive elements of reality, thus liberating oppressed individuals. This study analysed power relations on the basis of coming up with a strategy for scaffolding principals of underperforming secondary schools at Amajuba district. Working together to achieve change and to understand what it means to change, involves planning action, implementing these plans in their own action, observing this process systematically and evaluating their actions in the light of evidence as a basis for further planning and action through self-reflection (MacTaggart, 1994:317)

The third generation of PAR was more critical of action research, followed by the fourth generation, which emerged from the connection between critical emancipatory research and participatory action research, championed by Paulo Freire, Orlando FalsBorda and Rajesh Tandon. Participatory research (PR) is an alternative philosophy of social research associated with social transformation in the developing world, having its roots in liberation theology and neo-Marxist approaches to participants' development. According to Fisher (2016:856), PAR is an integrated activity that combines social investigation, educational work and action that originates with the participants or in the workplace. Its goal is to transform and improve the lives of those involved. The key features of PR include motivation, participation, emphasis on qualitative methods of data collection, a focus on collective analysis, networking among the have-nots, and its being an educative

experience for those engaged. According to Chow (2017:14), PAR and its ideology are mostly used by the voiceless, marginalised, poor communities and sexual minorities.

According to Jordan (2003:187), PAR originated in countries that were colonised in the early 1960s because they wanted to be liberated. PAR seeks to promote social justice by creating conditions that encourage empowerment (Langhout, 2010:2016). Gestettner and Altricher (1997: 48) from the University of Klagenfurt, postulated that action research has its origins in participants' activism, when they discovered that Moreno was crucial for personal and social change (McIntyre, 2007:32). Loewenson, Laurell, Hogstedt, D'Ambruso and Shroff (2014:1) claim that PAR has two features. Firstly, it transforms the role of participants, to subjects of research rather than active researchers and agents of change; and secondly, it involves developing, implementing and reflecting on actions as part of the researchers' knowledge generation process. Freire (2000:30) emphasises that PAR empowers the poor and marginalised members of society about issues pertaining to literacy, land reform analysis and participants. Freire further emphasises the importance of critical consciousness to social change relationships in education that were based on dominance and power. He also suggests that reflection is necessary for emancipation from oppressive social structures, whereas Tandon and Kak (2007:4) identify participatory knowledge as the basis of power and control. McIntyre (2007:24) and Mills (2003:6) declare that PAR has the goal of liberation through knowledge gathering. MacTaggart (1991:16) views PAR as a means for improving and informing social, economic and cultural practice that, in principle, is a group of activities in which individuals with differing power, status and influence, collaborate in relation to thematic concern. Milliler and Marguire (2008:1) explain that PAR has been shaped by three trends, which include the postcolonial re-conceptualisation of international development assistance, the reframing of adult education as an empowering alternative to banking education and critiques of positivist social science research, and its claim to supposedly value-free knowledge production. Kemmis and MacTaggart (2000:295) further state the key elements of PAR include planning a change, acting and observing the process and consequences, reflecting on these processes and consequences, followed by re-planning, acting and observing, with a cyclical process that continues (Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). Thus, PAR leads people

to have control over their lives and change. It is a social process, participatory, practical, collaborative, emancipatory, critical, reflective, and aims to transform both theory and practice.

### **3.2.3 Objectives of PAR**

According to Loewenson, Laurell, Hogstedt, D'Ambruoso and Shroff (2014:15), the main objective of PAR is to involve communities as participants to carry out qualitative studies, making them transformative as well as emancipatory. Consequently, PAR is influenced by change (Kemmis & MacTaggart, 2000:285). In addition, it helps participants to develop new capacities and is thus empowering. It is also critical because it helps people to interact with others and to investigate reality in order to change. According to Freire (2000:5), it facilitates the transformation of those who are excluded or not involved, uncovers vested interest and paves the way for the emergence of new and creative solutions. PAR tends to be life-enhancing, aiming at changing individual and collective practices, social structures and social media which maintain irrationality, injustice and incoherent and unsatisfying forms of existence (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000:498). It provides participants with useful knowledge, and frees the oppressed through collective efforts and equal participation. Its processes are democratic, liberating and life-enhancing. Gill and Johnson (2010:36) add that PAR is an approach taken to address problems, and liberates yet seeks collaboration by all participants. It values participants as social beings who are active contributors to research throughout, thus capacitating, empowering and developing them. The following PAR objectives helped me to fulfil my studies.

#### **3.2.3.1 Emancipation**

Hanson (2015) defines 'emancipation' as an act or process by which a person is liberated from the authority and control of another. Emancipation concerns critically analysing, resisting and challenging structures of power. It is evident that PAR assists researchers in recovering and releasing them from the oppression, injustices that hinder self-development and actions that prevent self-determination. This process enabled the researcher and participants to develop together, acquire better

knowledge from their experiences, and be in a position to free themselves from oppression because of lack of knowledge and exposure (Hanson, 2015:35).

### **3.2.3.2 Transformation**

The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2018) defines 'transformation' as a complete change in the appearance or character of something or someone, especially so that that thing or person is improved. According to Saatcioglu (2019), there are issues at the foreground of a transformative research agenda. As a researcher, I assumed that my relationship to the participants would change their lives for the better. PAR is seen as a transformative process in which researchers and participants co-create knowledge while developing a sense of participants, educating each other by negotiating meanings and raising consciousness Saatcioglu (2019:13).

### **3.2.3.3 Empowerment**

Hanson (2015) defines 'empowerment' as a concept that has been seen to involve people developing capacities to act successfully within the existing system and structures of power. According to Wallerstein (2000:30), to empower is a conscious activity practised by a social group for positive change in their lives. Empowerment as a concept has been defined as involving "people developing capacities to act successfully within the existing system and structures of power, while emancipation concerns critically analyzing, resisting and challenging structures of power and challenging structures of power" (Hanson, 2015).

According to Ferrada and Del Pino (2018), PAR is empowering as it promotes capacity development and building of those involved in the research. Participants contribute their ideas and opinions to the study, which, in turn, capacitates individuals to gain power and develop the ability to partake and work with others collectively and co-operatively (Ferrada & Del Pino 2018:35). Many researchers emphasise that it is aimed at empowering those with little to no power to control their lives, or to amplify their "voices" and expand their "choices" (Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall & Jackson, 2003:4). According to Ristock and Pennell (2006:5), PAR also gives participants an opportunity to become involved and make changes, which can lead to feelings of

empowerment. According to Duguay (2012:27), feelings of empowerment may influence the quality of life and allow participants to become more involved and proficient in their contributions to the PAR process.

#### **3.2.3.4 Life-enhancing**

PAR focuses on social change, which must be life-enhancing for the participants. According to Hyde and LaPrad (2015:2), democracy contains few basic principles that often create tension, which Malinowski (2015) describes as fundamental principles of democracy that include non-discrimination and an absence of repression. All of this implies that within PAR, participatory and associative democracy will be used. Thus, plurality, equity, patient attention, care for the self and others with the aim of reducing oppression, injustice and suffering were observed throughout the research process (Malinowski, 2015:7).

#### **3.2.3.5 Liberating**

According to Silverman and Patterson, (2014), PAR liberates the researcher from conventional prescriptive methods, and seeks to decentralise traditional research. Thus, it is considered an alternative approach to traditional social or scientific research when the researcher participates actively in the research with the intention of helping the co-researchers. It liberates the minds of the researchers by helping them to reflect on their situation and thus regain vital capacities (Silverman & Patterson, 2014:35).

#### **3.2.3.6 Equity and Capacity building**

According to Wassana (2017), the PAR process will translate into capacitating participants in their everyday lives. In turn, this will translate into supporting change based on their research findings. One of the aims of the process is to influence and create an awareness of the issues being studied so that the objectives of the study will be achieved (Wassana, 2017:9). While participating in the study the participants were treated fairly, as part of an inclusive process. This means that personal or socio-economic circumstances such as ethnic origin or family background will not be an

obstacle to the research process (Wallestein & Duran, 2010:42). Participating in the research makes active participants gain self-confidence and participants will learn appropriately by incorporating and re-interpreting the knowledge, thus new knowledge is gained and capacity built (Minkler, 2000:191). It also allows them to gain experience in communicating with a variety of people as this builds confidence and professionalism. Conducting this research would benefit the principals of underperforming secondary schools because they would have an opportunity to network with principals of highly performing schools.

### **3.3 ONTOLOGICAL STANCE OF PAR**

Dudovskiy defines ontology as “the science or study of being” and it deals with the nature of reality. Ontology is a system of belief that reflects an interpretation by an individual about what constitutes a fact. Aliyu et al. (2015) assert that an ontological question is “What is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about?” According to Murray and Ozanne (2009:12), society is a human construct to be critiqued and changed on the basis of a more-inclusive interest. Conveniently, PAR is subjective, co-created and observable through subjective experience and action. This is because PAR increases the relevance of research as it focuses on the problems in the participants. Research becomes meaningful and minimises challenges, yet empowers those involved. Thomson (2009:34) states that participatory action researchers are more hopeful that inclusive, power-sensitive, and reflective methodologies can lead to improvements in communities’ welfare. Using PAR as an approach in my study assisted me in achieving the objectives, in line with Gaventa’s (2003:4) claim that it heightens consciousness because participants may begin to challenge expert or dominant ideas and thus foster empowerment.

Feminist theorists believe that people have potential but are unaware of it, thus limiting their freedom. It is true that action research focuses on people who are marginalised and powerless. Unlike critical theory, in which reality is shaped by social, political, and economic factors, and can be clarified over time, participatory reality is subjective and co-created. Positivists believe that there is one objective reality which is observed by an inquirer. According to Maree (2007:53), the positivist

perspective is based on an ontological assumption that the social world is external to individual cognition, a view that describes society as being made up of structures, concepts, labels and relationships which can be investigated through scientific means. In contrast, PAR focuses on the social construction of people in that reality as portrayed by qualitative research tends to follow the constructivist cue, with researcher and participants being inseparable.

According to Napolitano and Jones (2006:20), PAR knowledge is subjective as it is built on the collective comparison of subjective, context-bound, normative, and importantly always political. Carr and Kemmis (2003:73) state that knowledge is built on the collective comparison of the subjective experience of reality by groups of people commonly exposed to acting on first-hand experiences of that reality. Since PAR focuses on social construction, it asserts that findings are created rather than discovered. Consequently, Pring (2004:54) perceives that the positivist and qualitative approaches are opposites.

### **3.4 EPISTEMOLOGICAL STANCE OF PAR**

Lynch (2018) defines epistemology as a branch of philosophy that considers how people come to learn what they know, whilst Thaxton (2018) views it as the study of knowledge acquisition. Epistemology looks at how reality is known, the methods for coming to know reality, and how one becomes aware of such reality, thus, a relationship between the knower and the known is important. Even though a positivist believes that knowledge can be revealed or discovered through the use of scientific methods, PAR enabled me to achieve the objectives of my study supported by the interpretative perspectives which assume that the research techniques applied would help me to understand how participants interpret and interact within their social environment. This exercise allowed us to gain insights into meanings and thus improved our understanding of the purpose of the study. In PAR, people are emancipated, and supported by critical theories that assume that social reality is created and produced by people and its related conditions of the status quo seek to emancipate people in societies. According to Herr and Anderson (2005:58), PAR researchers' knowledge is generated to provide solutions to problems and, as such, is negotiated among the interest of stakeholders with different power and resources,

unlike positivists who seek to generate nomothetic statements that can be generalised across time and context (Hirschman 2002:14). According to Yeich and Levine (2002:887), PAR focuses on useful knowledge, problem-solving and social change. The results are used to build socially-constructed knowledge for transformation, and all publications based on the research are owned by collaborators and accepted by participants.

### **3.5 THE ROLE AND RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND PARTICIPANTS**

The role of the researcher is crucial in the sense that, as a facilitator, he or she should be knowledgeable in order to balance indigenous and theoretical knowledge. The researcher and participants have to identify issues for study, with the former showing respect and being approachable and sensitive to diverse value systems in order to gain trust from participants. He or she has to work closely with the participants in several roles:

Facilitator: As a researcher, it is important to delegate power and responsibilities among participants, and to facilitate that process without forcing the participant, but doing so through consultation, using the democratic process.

Mentor and action-orientated: The researcher's role is only to focus on participants to solve practical problems that can lead to the generation of practical knowledge.

Mediator: Ormston (2014) states that, in qualitative research, the researcher is an instrument of data collection, which means that data is mediated through this human instrument. In this study my role was to take the findings and analyse them after asking probing questions, listening, thinking and mediating, using a variety of sources.

Interpreter and analyst: As a researcher, one has to interpret information from a variety of sources (Ormston2014:45). It is important for the qualitative researcher to keep a researcher's journal.

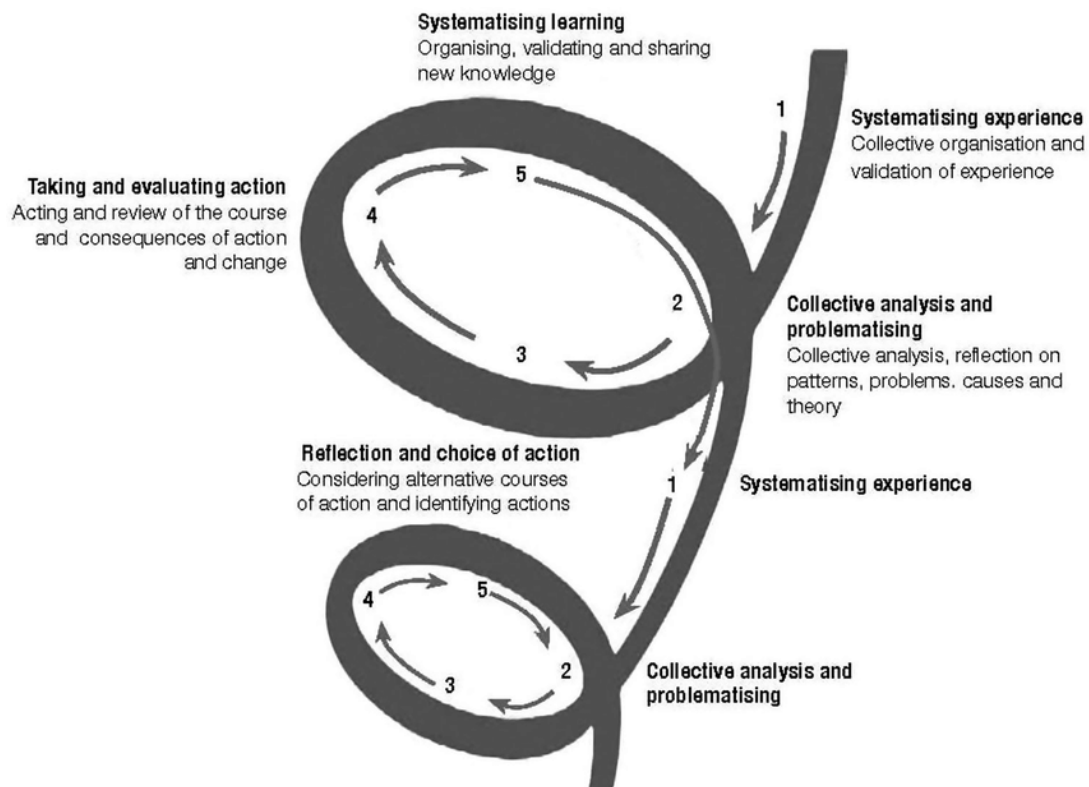
The relationship should be built on trust, respect and empathy. The participants own the study and the researcher provides them with a consent form which will clarify what the study is about and the procedures involved. This gives them an opportunity to voice their opinions freely, based on the study. Democracy is practised with everybody free to engage openly in the discussion without fear of reprisals. According to Whyte (2012:20), participants participate actively with the researcher throughout the process, from the initial stage to the final presentation of results. As a result, there must be a close relationship based on trust, respect and mutual understanding, notwithstanding that the researcher must be emotionally intelligent. Argyrus and Schon (2009:86) add that participants give and receive valid information to make free and informed choices, which generates internal commitment to the results of inquiry. Therefore, the researcher must be reliable, committed and treat participants as equal partners, as well as trustworthy and credible so that he/she gains the confidence of the participants and ensures that the data is authentic.

### **3.6 RHETORIC AND LANGUAGE USED**

The language used incorporates social justice, transformation, hope, knowledge, control and emancipation, freedom, self-understanding, liberate, empowerment and commitment. While engaged in the research process, the participants and researcher develop mutual understanding and gain the capacity to act on improving reality as well as obtaining knowledge to solve their problems. This also liberates the mind because it allows the participants to reflect on their situation, which assists them in regaining their capacities, analysing and examining their reality, and rejecting dominance by and imposition of solutions by outsiders. Being part of the study increases the sense of ownership in participants, thus they learn to take responsibility for their own learning. Participants are empowered in terms of personally developing a sense of self, individual confidence and an ability to participate, negotiating and influencing the nature of relationships and the decision made, and collectively working together to achieve an extensive impact. For this purpose, PAR is based more on critical theory and aimed at empowerment. Collaboration and co-operation through equal participation are some of the ways in which PAR can succeed.

### 3.7 INTERVENTION

As the first meeting with the participants in which introductions were made, intervention constituted a conceptual phase in which the problem was identified and tabled. Roles were clarified and ethical issues discussed, participants were heard, and inputs welcomed. The researcher was flexible and open-minded and during this preparation phase we became acquainted with one another's skills, knowledge and expertise.



**Figure 3.1: PAR spiral cycle (Kemmis, 2014)**

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001:9), the research process is cyclical. The steps of PAR are preparation, planning, implementation, reflection and research methodology. Each step includes aspects that need to be addressed. Preparation is the first step during which the team conceptualizes ideas through discussions, dialogues, negotiating meaning, debating issues, and using literature readings. During this step it is important that communication skills are emphasized, notably, listening, reading, speaking, and writing, including brainstorming. The second step entails planning, as the team collectively plan activities. The third step involves implementation, which entails collective feedback on the progress made with regard to actions and plans that have been agreed upon. During this step the team might

encounter challenges to be solved and negotiated in a democratic way. The fourth step requires the team to reflect on the project by examining its aims and objectives, coming up with plans, steps, and remedial actions to be undertaken. The PAR spiral cycle relates to the study as it addresses the concepts of teamwork and scaffolding.

### **3.7.1 Ethical considerations**

All the directives laid out by the University in terms of participants being treated with respect at all times were observed in accordance with permission form the KZN DoE for conducting research at the identified schools. The principal, SGB and subject advisors for mathematics and physical sciences were informed of the nature of the research and requested to participate in the study. All participants signed informed consent forms, assuring them of the confidentiality of the information shared and the steps taken to ensure anonymity, including the use of pseudonyms. They were informed of their right not to respond or to withdraw from the study at any time should they feel the need to do so.

After receiving a letter of permission from the KZN-DoE, the researcher then gained access to the schools by producing a letter to be signed by the principal and SGB of the selected school. A meeting with all principals and SGB members was held for the sake of clarity regarding all research issues, including ethical considerations. A date for the next meeting was set and the venue, time and agenda agreed upon.

### **3.7.2 First meeting**

As part of the initial planning process, the roles of participants were identified. They shared their roles and expertise, and were given an opportunity to deliberate on certain issues, such as how conflicts would be resolved.

### **3.7.3 Putting together the team**

The study consisted of 14 participants, made up of five principals, five SGB members, one senior chief education for physical sciences and chief education specialist for mathematics. We began the meeting by introducing one another and setting ground rules. I introduced the problem and participants were given time to

discuss problems and ways to assist in solving the challenges, including details regarding the venue and duration of each meeting, in smaller groups. They democratically elected a team leader, scribe and timekeeper.

### **3.7.4 Team members' credentials**

Principals were included because of their centrality to the study. The team consisted of 12 members, drawn from underperforming and performing secondary schools in Amajuba District.

(a) The principal of Bhuku Secondary School held a Diploma in Secondary Education and a BA degree in English and History. He had started out as an educator, departmental head for languages, and deputy principal and was currently the principal of the school, having recently completed a B.Ed. Honours in 2018.

(b) The principal of Ntoni Secondary School had commenced teaching at the school in 1992, located in a township. The learners were all African Zulu-speaking learners, with IsiZulu used as a mother-tongue language (HL) and English as the First Additional Language (FAL). The school started from Grade 8 and rose to Grade 12. Since its inception it had obtained a 100% matric pass rate, with the principal possessing a Higher Education Diploma, having recently received an Honours Degree in Education Management. He joined the school as a PL1 educator, being promoted to the position of Departmental Head mathematics, then deputy principal, and was currently the principal. He intended to complete a Master's Degree in 2019.

(c) The principal of Phandle Secondary School had obtained an STD, BA degree (Sociology, English, IsiZulu), and a B.Ed. Honours Degree in Leadership and Management. She had been the principal since 2015, having started out as deputy principal in 2000. The school was a mainstream school from Grades 8 to 12, high performing with numerous awards.

(d) The principal of Situlo FSS School possessed a B.Paed degree. Situlo was a Full-Service School in that it enrolled many types of learner, including those with minor physical barriers. The principal recommended the school become inclusive by including all learners, and had initiated diverse activities which embraced all types of ability. He was currently being recognised nationally as the best initiator, given that he was passionate and vocal about inclusive education.

(e) The principal of Kuphi High School held a B.Paed degree, majoring in mathematics and physical sciences. He also had an advanced certificate in education (ACE), specialising in education management and leadership.

(f) School Governing Bodies were included as governors, policy-developers and as the voice of parents. According to the South African Schools Act 84 (SASA, 1996), SGBs must promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners. They are expected to understand and value principles of inclusive education, and support its continuing implementation within schools.

(i) SGB chairperson of Bhuku Secondary School, Mr Zindela, also principal of a high school, possessed a BA and ACE, and had been a union chairperson.

(ii) SGB Chairperson of Ntoni Secondary School, Mr Zulu had been an educator, and was currently a subject adviser. He is knowledgeable with regard to education policies and supported school activities and initiatives.

(iii) SGB Chairperson of Phandle Secondary School, Ms Hadebe was a semi-skilled worker employed at a steel factory.

(iv) SGB chairperson of Kuphi Secondary School Mr Mfeka was employed as a domestic worker.

(v) SGB chairperson of Situlo FSS School, Mr Dlamini, was physically challenged, well-educated and had knowledge and personal experience regarding the treatment of people with disabilities.

(g) Deputy Chief Education Specialist (DCES) for Mathematics, Mrs Nkomo, possessed a BEd. in mathematics. She had six years' experience as subject advisor for mathematics in Amajuba District.

(h) Senior Education Specialist (SES) for Physical Sciences, Mr. Majola was employed as a subject advisor for physical sciences. He held a secondary teachers diploma in education, B.Paed degree, and BEd Honours, with 16 years' experience as subject advisor.

### **3.7.5 Information sessions**

In our meeting we aimed to establish a structure, which included myself as facilitator, principals, SGBs, senior education specialist, and deputy chief education specialist, from the identified schools. The meeting took two hours, with the first 15 minutes having been devoted to introductions and information on each person's profile, followed by area of expertise and experiences in the education sector. The research topic was explained to the participants, and the aim and objectives of the study clarified. Participants were given an opportunity to ask questions for the sake of clarity. An opportunity was given to decide whether or not they were willing to participate. The letter that gave me permission to conduct the study was shown and read to all, and each participant was given a copy. The participants were then given letters of consent to fill out, which clearly stated the participants' understanding of the study, expectations and other logistics. After the filling out and signing of the consent forms they were collected. The remaining hour was used for group discussions and brainstorming with regard to their understanding of school leadership and the role of principals.

### **3.7.6 Developing of mission and vision of the team**

According to Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon (2014) a researcher has to ensure that all participants have a common understanding of the goals of the research project and that these are attained collectively. Once a common understanding of the goals of the research was reached, we developed a vision and mission statement, identified outcomes and the strategy for achieving these. The team developed a vision and set about prioritizing our aims and objectives to achieve them (Kemmis, et al., 2014:35). The participants agreed that the vision and mission statements should "Empower principals on instructional leadership using Social Critical Theory". The next meeting was chaired by the elected chairperson who divided us into two groups of six. She wanted the two groups to produce a vision statement, and the other two groups the mission statement. Each group reported back, points were debated and consensus reached.

All participants who had returned their consent forms were present during the second meeting. We assigned portfolios democratically. The chairperson, deputy

chairperson, secretary, and deputy secretary were elected. It was agreed in the meeting that we needed a deputy for each portfolio in case members were absent. We agreed that members would serve in their portfolio for two months, after which we would have re-elections so that everyone would have a chance to be capacitated. The action plan was drafted, and all dates and times for meetings were set. In the meeting, aspects such as attendance, time-keeping, participants' conduct, respect, behaviour, and recording were agreed upon, and systems were set to address these. We all agreed that our meetings would be two hours long and would be held on Saturdays from 15h00 to 17h00 each month. The chairperson changed the groups, and teams were set, each tasked with examining its strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities, and of choosing a reporter, timekeeper and scribe.

For strengths, most participants were qualified and had a wide knowledge of education. The majority were familiar with issues affecting education in their schools. Weaknesses included Saturday not being ideal for most of the team members due to commitments beyond their control, such as family engagements and funerals. Some members either could not stay for the duration of the session or sometimes failed to keep to the specified time. Due to previous workshops that had been conducted, team members knew concepts but failed to put these into practise. Amongst the threats, for a variety of reasons and the invidious position of my team, some failed to express their opinions openly and felt intimidated. For example, educators exposed principals and principals exposed officials. Time was also a threat as we had a great deal of information to disseminate within a limited time. This was an area I would have to work hard to persuade participants to be free in discussing challenges facing their schools. Opportunities arose as members of the team could learn from one another's experiences and good practices. There was a change in attitudes towards stereotypical beliefs. Networking and sharing of resources, as well as capacity-building in the team became the order of the day.

Such engagements led to observing gaps and areas of concern. Such concerns were listed, ranked and prioritised by consensus.

The team set priorities and developed a strategic plan, followed by the research cycle which began by formulating a detailed action plan. An action plan detailing our five priorities on the effectiveness scaffolding of principals as instructional leaders, using the CST, was formulated as follows:

**Priority 1:** Our first priority was to train principals in their roles, which were facilitated by an official from the District. It was agreed that her talk should emphasise the ethos and social critical theory. An official from the Teacher Development Department took over and delivered a brief talk on the role and responsibilities of the school management team (SMT) in an inclusive school. Finally, there was a motivational talk from one of the SGB members on the role of SGBs in schools.

**Priority 2:** Our second priority focused on the support for teachers and school communities. The participants all agreed that institutional teams in a school should be members of school management teams, and the principal must take the lead. Members of SMT should divide roles accordingly, such that there must be an educator who will support educators by concentrating on their development, capacity-building, providing continuous support, and motivation.

**Priority 3:** The next priority centred on the collaboration of stakeholders and teamwork. During the meeting I addressed the team about the importance of working in collaboration.

**Priority 4:** The fourth priority focused on the training programme: unpacking the concept of scaffolding and instructional leadership

**Priority 5:** The fifth priority focused on the principals as instructional leaders, accomplished by putting theory into practice through giving principals of underperforming secondary schools case studies to work on. It was agreed that there would be continuous development.

### **3.8 DATA GENERATION**

The chairperson shared with the team different ways of data generation as recommended for PAR. The main emphases were on emancipating, empowering, and achieving social change while promoting equal participation for all. Instrumentation methods and techniques used in generating data were taking notes in all sessions, recording all proceedings and capturing non-verbal cues. The collaboration established appropriate methods of data generation which addressed issues to be included in the findings. The team agreed to the use of an appropriate method and met to reflect on an action cycle and to evaluate its effects in turning

around performance of underperforming schools using social critical theory. During this process we focused on the following areas of concern:

A major area of interest to this study is to create a community learning approach specifically about challenges and problems faced by principals of underperforming in selected secondary schools at Amajuba district.

- What are the important aspects of the strategies which can be used to help them overcome these challenges?
- What contextual factors are needed for the strategies to be effectively implemented?
- What risks need to be mitigated for the emerging strategies to be implemented effectively?
- How will we know when the strategies work effectively in response to the challenges?

### **3.9 DATA ANALYSIS**

As a researcher, the researcher accepted the responsibility of analysing data that had been generated, using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Van Dijk. Information was generated in the form of voice recordings, social networks, and minutes of meetings, SMSs and emails. According to Wodak and Meyer (2015), qualitative research is carried out in a real-life situation, not in an experimental situation. Voice recordings were transcribed into verbatim.

#### **3.9.1 Analytical Phase**

CDA was used to analyse the data generated, with written and spoken texts studied and analysed to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias (Van Dijk, 1993: 250). Fairclough (1993: 135) defines CDA as that which aims to systematically explore relationships of causality and determination between discursive practices, events and texts, as well as wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes. This is achieved mainly by investigating ways in which the utterance-type level and situated meanings are associated with social practices

(Gee, 2011: 68). Therefore, power relations are ideologically shaped and struggles over power tend to explore how the difficulty of the relationships between discourse and communication tend to reproduce existing unequal power relations (Fairclough, 1993:135). Thus, in this case, the focus of the study was for the researcher to empower to the participants. CDA primarily deals with the discourse dimensions of power abuse and the injustice and inequality that result from it (Van Dijk, 1993: 252). As such, it agrees with CST in that both strive to search for the origin of the problem at hand, thereby finding ways to alleviate it (Bloor & Bloor, 2007:12). The critical targets of CDA are the power elites that enact, sustain, legitimise or ignore social inequality and injustice. It also attempted to discover how those with knowledge or education banks, as stipulated by Freire, use their power to legitimise their acts, and in what ways those acts have been naturalised by the rest of the participants. The expectations and assumptions were that all the participants involved would collaboratively formulate a strategy to be tried and tested.

Fairclough's three levels of discourse analysis, as interpreted by Gee (2011:90) were used to treat the findings. According to Fairclough (1993:133), each of these dimensions requires a different kind of analysis. At the textual level (description), it involves linguistic analysis, while contextual analysis (interpretation) is the analysis of text production, distribution and interpretation. Lastly, at the level of social practice (explanation), analysis explores the extent to which the text upholds or reproduces hegemonic discursive or social practices, and how it stands in relation to certain prevalent conditions, which entail the way materials are used within social environments (Fairclough, 1993: 138; Gee, 2003: 89; Van Dijk, 1993: 250). In doing this, Fairclough attempts to establish a systematic method for exploring the relationship between a text and its social context.

### **3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter dealt with the collaborative way in which principals found solutions and formulated strategies to implement scaffolding of principals effectively, using social critical theory. Using PAR and CST in the study enabled me to be in the position of a learner, a participant, a facilitator and an analyst in the research process. The inputs of the participant would bring change to the lives of the underperforming

principals. The process was concretising, empowering, and life-enhancing to the participants as they gained knowledge and skills with regard to the importance of turning around performance of their schools using the CST.

## **CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

With the aim of the study being to formulate a strategy to scaffold principals as instructional leaders: a case of underperforming secondary schools at Amajuba district, this chapter analyses data and presents, interprets and discusses the results. It categorises data into five objectives as the starting point, then shifts focus to subheadings constituting each objective, namely the challenges. It subsequently repeats the process, with each of the remaining four objectives explained.

Each of the sub-headings, which unpack and constitute different challenges within the broad category of Objective 1, is identified from the empirical data collected and categorised under the challenges. Each is mapped against the constructs that emerged from the review of the literature in Chapter 2, so that appropriate subheadings are formulated and used for analysis in this chapter. An opening paragraph is then formulated, capturing what the relevant theories, responsive policies and supportive previous research, the literature, say, in order to advance the argument that the respective challenge is really a challenge and as such constitutes the respective objective of the study, namely challenges in this first instance.

From there, relevant extracts from the corpus of empirical data are cited to further support the argument made above. To deepen the meaning and discussion of the emerging findings the text of the extracts is used as the first level of CDA analysis, followed by an even deeper focus on the discursive practices informing the text. The social structural level of analysis was considered to conclude the understanding in the context of the challenges. The analysis was furthered by using CST to consider meaning and analyse and discuss the conceptualisation in terms of assessing how power differentials, empowerment, hope, social justice and emancipation relate to the problems identified. Finally, the findings were connected to the literature to determine the extent to which they confirmed or refuted it, and to suggest new insights against this backdrop. A summary looks at the findings of data generated and whether they connect with the literature review. Later observations were made that contribute to the findings of the study.

## 4.2 NEEDS TO DESIGN A STRATEGY

There were several needs to design a strategy to scaffold principals as instructional leaders.

### 4.2.1 No dedicated instructional leadership teams /PLCs

The establishment of PLCs has been put forward in the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, 2011-2025 (ISPFTED) as an instrument to strengthen teacher professionalism. The ISPFTED aims for the wide establishment of subject-based and issue-based Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) by 2017 (DBE, 2015). Policy on the country's principals is vital for them to be instructional leaders as they are required to lead the learners and ensure that the school is a professional learning community. They should also lead continuous improvement in curriculum implementation, foster the success of all learners, promote a culture of achievement for all learners by communicating and implementing a common vision and mission that is shared by all stakeholders, develop and implement an instructional framework that is data-driven, research-based, and aligned with the national curriculum, and empower staff to become instructional leaders who share the responsibility for achieving the mission, vision and goals that have been set. In addition, they must recognise good instructional practices that motivate and increase learner achievement, whilst encouraging educators to implement these practices (DBE,2015).

Instructional leadership includes all activities that indirectly affect learning, such as school culture and timetabling procedures. These might be considered as aspects of leadership that have an impact on the quality of curriculum and instruction delivered to learners. This conceptualisation acknowledges that principals as instructional leaders have a positive impact on learning but this influence is mediated (Bush & Ng, 2019:3). Instructional leadership is an approach used by school leaders to focus on teachers' behaviour in certain activities which indirectly impact learners' academic achievement (Khalil & Mehmood, 2018).

The following has been transcribed from discussion with participants:

**Zondo from Bhuku secondary:** *from the school where I am from we work in silos.*

**Hlatshwayo a principal from Ntoni Secondary:** *I have heard about instructional leadership but never seen the document.*

**Zikode from Kuphi high school:** *I have heard about it however in my eleven years of being a principal, I do not need other people to assist me. I am the only person appointed as the principal, I am the only one accountable.*

From Zondo's assertion that "we work in silos" and Hlatshwayo's having heard about "instructional leadership but never seen the document" it was evident that there was no dedicated team with a vision assigned to develop principals as instructional leaders. From the statement that "I do not need other people to assist me" it was evident that Zikode was authoritative, arrogant and regarded the role as being about himself, without the need for assistance from anyone. This indicated that they were from a community in which everyone did as he/she wanted, and they did not have a dedicated team to help them. If there was someone who had a vision to lead the principals they might be assisted.

CST emphasises empowerment and enlightenment, making it clear in these schools that principals were not empowered or enlightened so that they could become effective instructional leaders (Susen, 2014:1). According to Aziz, Muda, Mansor and Ibrahim (2018), in recognizing this need the policymakers emphasize the need for instructional leadership practices among school leaders to realize the major agenda of their respective education. They also argue that the role of instructional leadership is still influential and relevant in managing education changes in the 21st-century, in particular towards preserving the quality of education. Principals can act as instructional leaders who prioritize teaching and learning in schools (Aziz et al., 2018:18).

In conclusion, the team resolved that a platform be created so that there could be a culture of collaboration, sharing of information, developing trust and networking amongst themselves. Therefore, there was a clear need to scaffold principals as instructional leaders using sustainable PLC (team) with a clear vision and goals to improve learner outcomes.

#### **4.2.2 Inadequate recruitment and selection policy for school principals**

According to Mestry (2017), aspiring principals are considered for the position if they merely complete a teacher's qualification and have at least seven years of teaching experience as a recruitment policy. Olayiwola (2014) writes that in Nigeria, school administrators are appointed to principal without a well-regulated procedure or plan which may be needed for quality and effective school leadership. This educational situation calls for a new policy model for appointing school principals during the selection process (Olayiwola, 2014:4).

From Situlo FSS:

**Gasa:** *the main problem causing underperformance in schools is recruitment model, people who are not ready for promotional post get promoted simple on the basis of years of experience and a minimum qualification.*

**Zwane interrupted:** *Majority of members in the SGB who do the recommendations in many instances do not have a clue on education management.*

**Mfeka SGB from Kuphi high:** *all we are doing is in terms of the law that is how we are trained as SGB. It is impossible to identify a suitable candidate in thirty minutes interview whom you have not seen a track record. The other problem is the unions' influence during the interview processes.*

It was evident that there was a challenge with the present recruitment policy, therefore there was a need to amend the one on teacher recruitment for management positions, especially school leadership.

CST emphasizes that there must be an enlightenment on matters pertaining to leadership recruitment (Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2015). Literature reveals that the ideal of the enlightenment is an ever-larger rational conversation about goals, values, and desires that expand the realm of human knowledge and action. Thus, social critical theorists believe enlightenment is an effort to increase human freedom and self-determination (Honneth, 2014:4). This study therefore aimed for a strategy to scaffold principals of underperforming secondary schools as instructional leaders at Amajuba District.

### 4.2.3 Lack of in-depth training and development

In terms of DBE ACTION PLAN 2019, further initiatives in the coming years to strengthen school management stand out. Competency assessments for school principals will be rolled out across the whole public schooling system, partly to ensure that everyone who is appointed to a school principal post fulfils at least the minimum requirements for the job, and partly to provide a profile of the existing group of school principals, including capacity gaps that need to be addressed through training.

According to Clarke and O'Donoghue (2017), the principal should be someone with vision for the school who has both the competence and the charisma to support its staff. Accordingly, he or she should combine attributes of leader, manager, entrepreneur and coach (Clarke & O'Donoghue, 2017:34).

**Zwane:** *There is no induction for principals at all.*

**Khumalo:** *Many things that I have learnt I have acquired them through experience and observation.*

**Zondo:** *as a young principal, I desperately need induction and mentorship.*

From what was said by Zwane it was clear that there was no induction or mentorship which was sustainable and addressed their needs as school principals. They came from background in which there was no empowerment. It can further be deduced that participants needed this development and they showed willingness.

CST can be employed without limit, to seek alternatives to the dominance of technical reason, disciplinary modes of power, and false consciousness that govern contemporary everyday lives. It addresses social justice and social change, whilst liberating and bringing hope to the powerless (Ludovisi, 2019:1). Dvir and Yemini (2017) state that, since 2008, aspirant teachers and principals in the Netherlands have been able to enrol on a master's degree programme focusing on learning and innovation which specifically aims to develop competences for teacher leadership in schools. The support programme of the Dutch Teacher Development Fund (see the policy example in section 4.7) explicitly aims at strengthening teachers' leadership competences through coaching and peer networks. It aims to increase teachers' agency in implementing change within their schools and engage their colleagues and school leader in this process. In Slovenia, there is a specialised one-year mentoring programme for newly appointed school leaders.

It was the aim of this study to build capacity through scaffolding principals of underperforming secondary schools in Amajuba District.

#### **4.2.4 Lack of support**

Rueckert's (2019) argument was that a child cannot learn without the right environment and children in many countries in SADC, such as Tanzania, often squeeze into overcrowded classrooms or learn outside. They also lack textbooks, school supplies and other tools they need to excel. Aref (2019) argue that without community participation, there is obviously no partnership, no development and no programme, hence the lack of community participation in decision-making to implement educational development can lead to failure in the community development (Aref, 2019:1).

**Gasa:** ... *majority of parents do not come to meetings when called to discuss work of their children. And this leave teachers frustrated.*

**Hlatshwayo:** *I have observed steady improvement and parents who come to school and monitor their children in doing homework, we have seen improvement in the work of those learners.*

**Gumede SGB member from Ntoni Secondary:** *What is said by fellow members is true, parents and the broader community is reluctant to be involved in education of our children. But I believe it is something we can overcome.*

The meeting also noted existence of the problem and its impact on learners' outcomes. However, what was also noteworthy was a belief that things could be turned around and that it was possible to overcome the problem.

Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron and Osher (2020:67) argue that building strong relationships between the school and the family increases academic outcomes for students. A series of meta-analyses examining the impact of parent involvement found consistent positive effects of parent involvement on academic achievement for children from kindergarten through 12th grade.

It was important for team members as they identified the problem and came up with solutions as to how parents and the community could become involved and start to

partake in the life of schools. While there was no easy answer to this challenge it was clear that any lasting answer would require the involvement of different stakeholders, hence the aim of this study to scaffold principals as instructional leaders.

#### **4.2.5 Inefficient utilisation of instructional time**

National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 stipulates time allocation for the various school phases. The formal teaching time during the formal school week of 35 hours will be as follows: •Foundation Phase: Grades 1 and 2 = 22 h 30 min and Grade 3 = 25 h; •Intermediate Phase: 26 h 30 min; •Senior Phase: Grade 7 = 26 h 30 mm and Grades 8 and 9 = 27 h 30 min; and• FET: 27 h 30 min National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 (A-36). Section 4 of the Employment of Educators Act, 1998, states that all educators should be at school during the formal school day, which should not be less than seven hours per day, except for special reasons and with prior permission of the principal. The principal will exercise his or her discretion in this regard, based on provincial policy. The seven hours per day includes the breaks and period/s in which the learners are not at school.

Sanchez, London and Castrechini (2015) concur that chronic absenteeism by learners and teachers and principals not spending time on instructional leadership reduces achievement outcomes and educational engagement, and decreases social engagement. Hence, this study offers new evidence on how an under-measured aspect of missing school impedes students' attainment. Implications for policy and practice are discussed.

**Zondo:** *teachers leave school early for a number of reasons amongst, them attending memorial services, personal reasons and union activities.*

**Zlkode:** *teachers and learners return class late after break or in between lessons*

**Gasa:** *district office takes a lot of time calling meetings and making submissions to district office is not helping. We want to spent time in schools.*

From the discussion by the group, teachers leave school early and return late with many meetings, indicating that members know what the problem is, namely spending

less time on teaching and learning. The attitude of the members who were principals was clear, namely that they wanted to spend time at schools doing their work to support teachers and learners.

Chappelow (2019) contends that social justice in terms of CST had expanded from being primarily concerned with economics to include other spheres of social life, for instance the environment, race, gender, and other causes and manifestations of inequality. CST is used to show that a good life for all is possible and that domination and exploitation alienate humans from achieving such a society.

In the DBE NEEDU 2018, it is reported that time spent on non-instructional issues accounts for at least 30% of a 200-day school year in many schools. In some schools this figure climbs beyond 40% (Mlambo & Adetiba, 2020). Teacher absenteeism in South Africa has long been identified as a serious problem which is associated with the underperformance of learners. The basic education minister, Angie Motshekga, noted that in 2012 South African teachers were absent for close to 7.5 million schooling days (Mlambo & Adetiba, 2020:21).

The aim of this study was to scaffold principals of underperforming secondary schools as instructional leaders in Amajuba District, so that they understand that principals of schools are the custodians of instructional time.

### **4.3 STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT PRINCIPALS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS**

there are a number of strategies to support principals as instructional leaders.

#### **4.3.1 Formulation of dedicated instructional leadership teams / PLCs**

Minister Motsega argued that the establishment of PLCs would strengthen teacher professionalism in promoting collective participation in professional activities for professional development (DBE 2015). Tsakeni, Munje and Jita (2020) have explored a multidimensional instructional leadership approach and reported an improvement in physical sciences and mathematics.

While discussing Phandle principal:

**Zwane:** *I heard about PLCs from another province, they are using them for subjects as well as for principals.*

**Zondo said:** *Let's get more information on PLCs, and I strongly suggest that we start with PLC for principals and then identify PLCs for mathematics, physical sciences.*

**Mrs Nkomo said:** *myself and Mr Majola, am available as part of PLC for mathematics and physical sciences*

**Mr Zikode said:** *Hhayi, name angizukusala kanye nothisha bami. We want to be part of this initiative. Harambe!!! (besho bebambana ngezandla)*

It was evident that the participants here wanted establishment of teams (PLCs) for principals and mathematics and physical sciences teachers. There was also a sense of oneness, commitment and collaboration amongst their schools without completion. Furthermore, Mrs Nkomo believed in other people's strengths.

CST emphasizes that social transformation affects people's interaction and lifestyle. Regarding individuals, social transformation refers to the process of altering the social status of one's parents to resemble their current status (Cline, 2014). According to Donohoo, Hattie and Eells (2018), when a team of individuals share the belief that with true unified efforts, they can overcome challenges and produce intended results. They further state that schools in which educators believe in their combined ability to influence learner outcome have significantly higher levels of academic achievement.

In conclusion, it was clear that the participants wished to be enlightened and transformed, and a culture of collaboration was visible in this study since the aim was to scaffold principals of underperforming secondary schools as instructional leaders.

#### **4.3.2 Recruitment and selection policy development for principals**

According to the South Africa National Planning Commission (2014), change of the appointment process should ensure that competent individuals are attracted to become school principals.

Callaghan (2016) states that power can be *decentred*, meaning that it is not concentrated on a single individual or class, *multidirectional*, meaning that it does not

flow only from the more to the less powerful, but rather “comes from below,” and is non-egalitarian. Its *strategic* nature means it has a dynamic of its own, and is intentional (Callaghan, 2016:59).

**Mr Majola:** *we have currently Basic Education Laws Amendment Act of two thousand and seventeen before parliament which seeks to amend certain sections of the law dealing appointment of school leaders. I suggest that one of us seek information and workshop us on the proposed amendments, so as to eliminate any misconceptions.*

**Ms Zindela from Bhuku Secondary:** *whether the law is amended or not let us ensure that as SGBs, we have a clear succession plan and we recruit for the benefit of the school.*

**Zikode:** *thina sesiyazihamela, kodwa kufanele sishiye kunabantu abafanelekile ezikhundleni. (We are now exiting the system, but we must ensure that we leave suitable people to lead the schools).*

From what the participants said it was evident that principals and the SGB needed to be workshopped on this policy of recruitment. These principals were from the schools that were in urgent need of empowerment to ensure development and personal growth.

Fuchs (2015:13) argues that CST seeks to increase and maximize human happiness. It uses the Hegelian method of comparing essence and existence because in class societies an appearance is not automatically rational. This essence can be found in man’s positive capacities, such as striving for freedom, sociality, and cooperation, and it has the ethical implication that universal conditions should be created that allow all humans to realize these capacities. Instructional leaders lead from a combination of expertise and charisma. These were hands-on principals, steeped in curriculum and instruction and unafraid of working directly with teachers on the improvement of teaching and learning (Sezgin, 2002).

In conclusion, policies needed to be accessible and principals to be empowered in understanding and implementation of policies so that they could perform their duties effectively. There was a need for further development to meet current challenges in scaffolding principals as instructional leaders.

### **4.3.3. In-depth and adequate training and development of principals**

The National School for Leadership in Education (NSLE) coordinates the programme, and an experienced mentor accompanies each newly appointed principal. The programme is a combination of face-to-face meetings and workshops in which all participants and their mentors meet Dvir & Yemini (2017:23).

Mestry (2017:265) notes that South Africa's education system have been affected by radical social, political and economic changes. Although school principals play a pivotal role in improving student learning and attaining educational outcomes, they work under strenuous conditions to deal with multifaceted transformational issues. Principals experience great difficulty in coping with numerous changes, partly because they are inadequately prepared for their leadership position, or simply lack the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to lead and manage schools effectively and efficiently. Fundamentally, principals should be empowered to deal effectively with challenges facing them in the 21st century. Using qualitative research this study explored the importance of promoting a culture of professional development that will prepare principals to confront education challenges and obstacles facing them. Deitcher and Pomson (2012) also decried the shortage of qualified and talented school leaders, whilst Fox (2003) wrote of the lack of investment in pre-service education of principals or the in-service training of principals.

**Gasa:** *As Zondo indicated earlier on there is a need for empowering principals of schools, but not only the young even us because we are part of the system.*

**Khumalo:** *Let the training meet our needs and it be ongoing.*

**Nkomo:** *What if we begin starts with instructional leadership training as the most important step to start with?*

**Zwane:** *...ngiyavumela (nodding his head) no Mrs Nkomo, as the PLC/ team we just need a management plan.*

In terms of the discussion, it was clear that was there was a need for empowering principals, starting with instructional leadership training and a management plan. The team saw a need for empowerment and collaboration, and that they wanted to have a clear management plan showed they wanted something concrete which could be monitored.

According to Kelly, Ellaway, Reid, Ganshorn, Yardley, Bennett and Dorman (2018) CST views empowerment of principals as intrinsically worthwhile and participatory decision-making is seen as a means to an end “which enables principals to be involved in the making of decisions, in every social context, which affect their empowerment in any way” (Kelly, Ellaway, Reid, Ganshorn, Yardley, Bennett and Dorman, 2018:17). However, this cannot be achieved without a strategy to become instructional leaders, as the main aim of this study was to scaffold principals of underperforming secondary school in Amajuba as instructional leaders.

#### **4.3.4 Creation of supportive environment**

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 stipulates that an SGB must ensure that the school is governed in the best interest of all the stakeholders. The best interest of the school must be put before any personal interests, to ensure its development, help the principal, educators and other staff members perform their professional functions, encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff members whilst offering voluntary services and buying textbooks, educational materials and equipment.

Taniguchi and Hirakawa (2016) contend that school management in many sub-Saharan African countries has been enhanced through community participation in an attempt to improve education quality.

**Ms Hadebe SGB chairperson of Phandle Secondary:** *The climate has to be positive. No best teacher or principal in the world can be effective in an environment where there is no order and discipline.*

**Mr Dlamini SGB chairperson of Situlo FSS:** *It is our duty as parents and community to ensure that our schools are supported.*

**Hlatshwayo:** *We really need support by all stakeholders, with their support half the battle is won.*

**Zwane:** *Since some of the learners come from child-headed families, support by SGB and other stakeholders is very crucial for such learners.*

From the discussions it is evident that the climate has to be positive, the duty as parents and community being to ensure that the schools are supported, including learners from child-headed families. Also important is that the group is not limiting

support to parents but extending it to all stakeholders, including local leaders, business leaders, other government departments and community-based organisations. These SGB leaders are familiar with community engagements and sharing of ideas, in line with the adage, *injobo ithungelwa ebandla*, which roughly indicates that that the school is “not a one man’s show.”

The DBE NEEDU report (2018) states that schools that are successful recognise and appreciate that education take place most efficiently and effectively when schools, parents, and communities work collaboratively. If principals do not have supportive work environments for their improvement efforts, then even the most talented and best-trained individuals may be discouraged by the challenges they face on a daily basis. Having principals of underperforming secondary schools trained in instructional leadership alone cannot guarantee success without the support and involvement of other stakeholders in the education of learners. Conducive and supportive environment was crucial in scaffolding principals of underperforming secondary schools in Amajuba District as instructional leaders.

#### **4.3.5 Efficient utilisation of instructional time**

The National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 emphasises time allocation for the various school phases, whilst Section 4 of the Employment of Educators Act, 1998 states that all educators should be at school during the formal school day, not less than seven hours per day, except for special reasons and with prior permission of the principal. According to the SASA Act 84 of 1996 it is the responsibly of the SGB to determine school time in consultation with the teachers.

Chapman and Rupured (2014) argue that instructional time management strategies involve the need to get the best out of the human element within the available learning duration. This makes the concept of principals’ instructional time management strategies essential in secondary schools. Effective instructional time management strategies include: goal-setting, prioritizing tasks, scheduling time for each task, proper execution of tasks, accurate record keeping, monitoring, evaluation and review of instructional tasks, identification of time wasters, and avoidance of procrastination (Chapman & Rupured, 2014 :12).

**Zikode:** *We have strong internal controls and accountability. We are using period registers to check if teachers come to class on time and that they stay for the duration of the period. We can also check learners who are bunking classes.*

**Zondo:** *If teachers use every minute of the seven hours each day to teach they should be able to complete ATPs in time. They don't need afternoon, weekend and holiday classes.*

**Zwane:** *If we can have adequate support staff and necessary equipment as principals we can achieve even more. This will allow us to dedicate more time on instructional leadership, then doing all the admin work by yourself.*

It was evident that there were controls in some schools and that principals needed to spend more of their time at school rather than away attending to issues that could have been dealt with easily in terms of technology. Principals were aware that they needed to dedicate more of their time on instructional time management.

According to Banifetmah et al. (2018:65), CST seeks not only to critique but also to generate emancipatory forms of knowledge to provide alternative and progressive ways of looking at the world. They also argue that Knowledge occurs in the two contexts of work and communicative interaction. Work is a central phenomenon for understanding human development and growth or self-change, and human beings are able to change themselves when they change their social and natural environment.

Ayeni (2020) contends that principals are expected to manage instructional time carefully towards the achievement of the set educational goals. Organization's contract time must be scheduled within the authorized break periods, however, when it is necessary that visitors must be attended to in the office, such time spent on them must be made up outside office hours. Gossiping, chatting and unofficial conversations is time wasted (Ayeni, 2020:10).

Principals were required to play many roles, and fluidly manoeuvring from one to another requires sense of balance and effective instructional leadership that, hence the need for a strategy to scaffold principals of underperforming secondary schools in Amajuba District as instructional leaders.

## **4.4 STRATEGIES THAT FOSTER SCAFFOLDING IN UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS**

A number of strategies exist that can foster scaffolding in underperforming schools.

### **4.4.1 Sustainable instructional leadership teams / PLCs**

CPTD can record teachers' professional development journey, helping them organise and focus their professional development in order to achieve maximum benefit and recognition, and to ensure that external providers meet high standards. The CPTD will promote and recognise teachers' professional development. Firstly, teachers' own individual efforts to improve themselves as professionals will be encouraged and recognised. Secondly, what schools do to grow teachers' knowledge, skills, commitment and service will be encouraged and their teachers' school-based professional development activities recognised. Thirdly, external providers will be assisted by SACE to improve and maintain the quality, effectiveness and relevance of their programmes for teachers. Providers must be approved by SACE and their activities endorsed by SACE, as only these will carry CPTD points. Teachers' participation in such programmes will be recognised and their feedback encouraged. Poor quality activities will be identified and if sub-standard the providers will be excluded from the system (SACE, 2013).

The aims are to:

- strengthen the capacity of school administration to improve the relationship between teachers and principals and implement goals aimed at supporting and supervising the work of teachers
- firm up school-community relations by enhancing the flow of information through two-way communication between school staff and the local community, with school counsellors playing a key role to engage parents in the educational process
- support continuous professional development of principals and teachers by providing opportunities at both school and district levels for self-learning, workshops, action research, participation in ministry-led initiatives, and

engagement with the broader academic community (Christilo, Eter & Assali 2016:1).

From the discussion:

**Hlatshwayo:** *PLC must focus on continuous professional development for principals and teachers this must be teacher driven.*

**Zondo:** *Sustainable leadership and continuous development can only occur when there is collaboration among all team members.*

**Zwane:** *How are we going to ensure that this team is sustainable?*

**Gasa:** *Let's elect leaders for each PLC as way forward.*

**Mr Majola:** *He (PLC Chairperson) will circulate the guideline for professional development document electronically and hard copies by the next meeting, as well as elections of PLCs will be in our next meeting*

From what Hlatshwayo said about it being “teacher driven” indicates that it must not be a top-down approach but rather meet the needs, in terms of collaboration, networks, collective planning and team teaching.

Callaghan contends that CST, drawing from the enlightenment tradition, considers social science to be tasked with liberation from “unnecessary restrictive traditions, ideologies, assumptions, power relations, identity formations, and so forth, that inhibit or distort opportunities for autonomy, clarification of genuine needs and wants”, and therefore gives greater and lasting satisfaction (Callaghan, 2016:59).

Recognizing that the tendency of principals and teachers to work in isolation is one of the greatest obstacles to improving and sustaining student learning, MSN adopted a school-based strategy in which professional development for principals and teachers took place in concurrent face-to-face sessions and learning circles, clustered into networks of schools inside a given district. The centrepiece of professional development for MSN principals was the Leadership Diploma Program (LDP) (Christillo et al., 2016). This fits in with the aims of this study as outlined in chapter 1.

#### 4.4.2 Implementation of recruitment and section policies

According to Stewart (2014) to ensure that Singapore has the best school leaders, young teachers are continuously assessed for their leadership potential and are given the opportunity to develop their leadership capacity. Future school leaders are chosen from successful teachers already in the education system. All education leadership positions are part of the teaching-career structure, with potential school leaders able to serve on committees, be promoted to middle-level leadership positions, for example, head of department, and be transferred to the ministry for a period Stewart (2014:15).

**Zwane:** *There is a need that selection policy appointment of principals is amended.*

**Hlatshwayo:** *I suggest schools should have clear succession plan, so that there is continuity and stability in our schools.*

**Mfeka:** *I agree with what speakers before me said, we need stability in our schools, and having a clear succession with minimise instability, but also not every teacher is suitable to be a manager, so policies need to change.*

The discussion here indicated that the team was able to identify a gap in policy on selection and recruitment of principals of schools. To turn around school performance there is a need to change recruitment policies, thus ensuring there are people ready to be principals. The team agreed that the succession plan was of vital importance and would ensure that before a teacher is appointed as a principal that teacher would have gone through training as an instructional leader at the level of a deputy principal before becoming a principal, in line with what this study envisaged.

Ludovisi (2019:1) argues that CST can function both as a means to better understanding of the complexities of the twenty-first century and as set of tools with which to carve out alternative ways to envision educational praxis. CST is understood as a critique of society. Bush (2019) noted that Canada has developed a coherent leadership strategy, with school boards overtly planning for leadership succession. The process of attracting and preparing the right people begins before there is a vacancy to be filled. Potential candidates for school leader need to have an undergraduate degree, five years of teaching experience, certification at school level, two specialist or additional honour specialist qualifications (areas of teaching

expertise) or a master's degree, and completion of a Principal's Qualification Program (PQP), offered by Ontario universities, teachers' federations, and principals' associations, which consists of a 125-hour program with a practicum (Bush, 2019:25).

Leading by example can help another person as the succession plan allows growth. Instructional leadership is about influencing others, for instance, teachers, SGB and stakeholders, hence the study aims at scaffolding principals of underperforming secondary schools as instructional leaders.

#### **4.4.3 Conducive and supportive environment**

According to the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT, 2016), learning does not begin when children walk through the school doors nor end when they exit for the day. It takes place continuously and ubiquitously, throughout life. There is a pedagogic dimension to the links between schools and homes and localities as children bring to school their family and community beliefs, practices, knowledge, expectations and behaviours. Similarly, when they return from school they bring back to their homes and communities new forms of knowledge, practices, behaviours, attitudes and skills. Children are engaged in a continuous, dynamic process of bridging the world of school and the world of home and community. They learn from both worlds, facilitated by teachers, family members, neighbours and others. Linking schools and communities is widely recognised as good pedagogic practice.

Bukoski, Lewis, Carpenter, Berry and Sanders (2015:23) argue that effective school leaders build and sustain reciprocal family and community partnerships and leverage those partnerships to cultivate inclusive, caring and culturally responsive school communities. To build these community networks it is essential that school leaders are visible in their schools and community, develop trust and create a sense of transparency and shared purpose with parents, staff, community members and students.

**Dlamini:** *With supportive environments, our schools can excel.*

**Gasa said:** *We need everyone to create a safe, supportive and conducive environment. Communities and parents must come on board.*

**Zindela said:** *We must begin to engage and mobilise all stakeholders to take part in the education of our children.*

From what was said in the group it became evident that a safe, supportive and conducive environment was necessary. There was a need voiced to engage and mobilise all stakeholders to take part in the education of children. Zindela identified mobilisation of relevant stakeholders as important in supporting schools to improve on their performance.

According to Delanty (2020), one of CST objectives is social transformation, which is a process of change in institutionalized relationships, norms, values, and hierarchies over time. It is the manner in which society changes due to economic growth, science, technological innovations, educational and war, or political upheavals. Social transformation affects people's interactions and lifestyle. In this study relationships between schools and surrounding communities, change.

Durišić and Bunijevac (2017:13) contend that research confirms the crucial role that parents and communities play in their children's success. The positive impact of effective school- parent-community engagement on learning outcomes is well documented, as are the benefits for all role-players.

#### **4.4.4 Protection of instructional time**

DBE NSLA the value of safeguarding and maximizing contact time between educator and learner within a prescribed time allocation is significant as teaching and learning time is indispensable for syllabus coverage and eventual learner performance. If teachers and learners are on time and on task, teaching and learning success is more likely. The National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 states that time allocation for the various school phases. In terms of Section 4 of the Employment of Educators Act, 1998, all educators should be at school during the formal school day, which should not be less than seven hours per day, except for special reasons and with prior permission of the principal.

Mashaba and Maile (2019:23) recommend that costs in implementing the policy need to be balanced against the effectiveness of the policy. Reducing teacher absenteeism implies reducing the monetary cost of teacher absence and improving the education outcomes of learners. This ensures that the relationship between

inputs (education investment) and outputs (learner performance) is optimal. Improving teacher attendance will thus increase productivity in schools.

**Zondo:** *We need to make sure that every minute counts.*

**Zwane:** *Let us put an emphasis on dedication on time, teachers do not absent themselves without valid reason.*

**Dlamini:** *Every minute lost must be covered. Let us ensure that there is a recovery plan even when the teacher is absent.*

**Zindela** [interrupting]: *Teachers and learners need to honour all periods, no bunking of classes.*

**Gasa:** *We have to adopt the culture of time management. Let us be efficient with time in whatever.*

It was evident that time on task was of vital importance since the team here acknowledged that teachers and learners needed to be conscious of time for the school to be successful. They recognised that any minute lost had to be recovered.

Mlachila and Moeletsi (2019) in the context, state that improved teacher training will close a gap in knowledge, whilst improved school management and greater teacher accountability are some of the possible measures that have the greatest potential to improve educational performance in the long term. Teachers and learners need to be trained to honour time and the culture in school should have time well managed if it is to be successful in ensuring the scaffolding of principals.

## **4.5 THREATS TO EMERGING STRATEGIES AIMED AT SCAFFOLDING PRINCIPALS OF UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS**

### **4.5.1 Reluctance of participants**

According to LE VAN (2018) teachers' understanding of teaching and their insights into the way in which children learn has generally not been recognised as a valid form of professional knowledge that is worthy of respect. Teachers, therefore, have not been made to feel they do something that merits research and dissemination. Their working conditions militate against any activity that is not contributing to the 'hands on' work with pupils.

**Ms Zulu from Ntoni as an SGB:** *We do not want to participate as we are being judged on what we have said.*

**Hlatshwayo:** *What we are discussing ends here or what?*

**Zondo:** *Some of us fear to expose ourselves or being labelled.*

**Gasa:** *We signed the confidentiality forms at the beginning of these sessions*

**Majola:** *If we are reluctant to participate in such studies aiming to assist us, we won't be able to turn around our schools.*

It was evident that there was lack of trust among members, but Majola pointed out that schools would not turn around if people were hesitant to participate in activities intended for them.

Teachers' involvement in a collaborative research project on children's thinking has made it clear that anyone who has experienced the concentrated action a teacher faces daily will ask why a teacher would further complicate life by trying to collect information on a complex area of educational theory (Le Van, 2018:13). The experience the team acquired in this study was of vital importance because they would be able to empower others.

#### **4.5.2 Power relations amongst participants**

Ünlü (2018) argues that although people often trust themselves to be ethical in situations in which they have power they are less trusting of their peers. People may be suffering from an illusory superiority bias, with an inflated view of their projected selves. They believe they would act ethically in a hypothetical situation while being more pessimistic about how their peers may behave (Ünlü, 2018:23). According to Gibson, Medeiros, Giorgini, Mecca, Devenport, Connelly and Mumford (2014), a number of limitations should be noted. For example, there may have been response biases in the types of thoughts and stories participants were willing to share. It is possible that interviewees felt pressure to respond in a way that portrayed themselves in a positive manner, though this limitation did not seem evident.

**Hlatshwayo:** *As a principal, I have the final say in what happens in my school.*

**Zwane:** *Even though you are a principal we need to tolerate others and work together as a team in a school. "No man is an island."*

Many participants expressed open or blunt perspectives on power differentials, with their discussions possibly constrained by the use of pre-existing scenarios, that is, not fully representative of their own personal experiences with power abuses. This limitation should not be a significant problem, because the scenarios often led to deeper discussions of personal experiences similar to the scenarios. Along these lines, limitations should be noted in that participants did not discuss anything that related to power differentials. None expressed a fear that they were abusing their power, though it was common for them to make the point that they had seen abuses of power throughout their careers. They believed themselves to be above reproach on ethical issues, reflecting 'impression-management' on their part, that is, they did not wish to detail any misconduct of their own in an interview (Ünlü, 2018:23).

#### **4.5.3 Lack of knowledge on instructional leadership**

Neumerski, Grissom, Goldring, Rubin, Cannata, Schuermann and Drake (2018) argue that although policymakers and school district leaders have long expected principals to be instructional leaders, the ways in which this expectation has played out in practice has varied across districts and individual schools. Despite evidence connecting principal instructional leadership and school outcomes, any guidance about what principals should do as instructional leaders has often been unclear. Actions associated with principal instructional leadership are often broad or vague, such as having a visible presence, setting goals for the school, visiting classrooms, supervising instruction, providing feedback to teachers, and coordinating the curriculum. More detailed guidance around these behaviours, such as what principals should do as they visit classrooms, how they should supervise instruction, or how to establish the most effective visible presence, is largely non-existent. In practice, principals are largely left on their own to determine what it means to be an instructional leader, with large variation in how they enact the role. This may explain findings from the few large-scale studies of principal time-use that show no difference in student achievement growth in schools with between principals who spend more time on instruction and those of principals who spend less. Instead, time spent on

more specific areas of instructional leadership, such as coaching and evaluation, correlates with higher student gains, particularly when employed as part of a broader school improvement strategy.

According to Mestry most principals leading South African public schools lack a comprehensive understanding of their instructional leadership role, and this impacts negatively on learner performance and consequently, the institution's academic South African principals should be made to understand that instructional leadership is one of their pivotal functions, and that their administrative or managerial functions are subordinate Mestry (2017:28).

In our discussion

**Gasa:** *Where I first taught, the principal was doing nothing, only a manager in true sense of the word.*

**Zikode:** *We have not been prepared in the current environment as principals. We were only trained as curriculum managers.*

**Nkomo:** *School leaders of today are expected to be more on leadership, collaboration, develop others and efficient use of instructional time. We must adapt to changes as leaders.*

It became evident that principals needed to be agents of change since they need to develop and collaborate with others in order to improve learning outcomes and for the principals to be effective instructional leaders.

Backor and Gordon (2015) argue that a barrier to more effective instructional leadership is the adequacy of leaders' content knowledge. Those who are not confident of, for example, their theories of effective teaching, are likely to be reluctant to observe teachers or give them feedback. Even if they do engage in such activities, their chances of being influential are not high (Backor & Gordon, 2015:13). If increased instructional leadership is to make a difference to student outcomes, leaders' practices need to be informed by defensible and evidence-based understandings of how to improve teaching and learning.

#### **4.5.4 Lack of support by school district**

National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 states that roles and functions of a district office have one overriding purpose, namely, to help all schools to deliver education of high quality.

Moorosi and Bantwini (2016), in the study conducted on district support to schools, revealed prevalence of more authoritarian top-down leadership styles, which tend to have negative effects on school improvement.

**Gasa:** *District office does not give adequate support, and often it is reactive to situations at schools.*

**Hlatshwayo:** *District is using top-down approach in many instances.*

It was evident from the discussions that participants felt left behind and not supported by the school district. They wanted to play an active role in decision-making and solving problems.

According to McLennan, Muller, Orkin and Robertson (2017), district offices are mandated to work collaboratively with principals and educators in schools, with the vital assistance of circuit offices, to improve educational access and retention, give management and professional support and help schools achieve excellence in learning and teaching.

According to Bantwini (2019), to achieve social justice as espoused by CST in education, corrective measures should be premised upon an understanding of the social and contextual issues under which principals work. It would be difficult for them to improve learner attainment without deliberate and sustainable support and scaffolding by school districts.

#### **4.5.5 Lack of resources**

The DBE (2015) in Action plan 2019 has committed to improving the frequency and quality of the monitoring and support services provided to schools by district offices, partly through better use of e-Education. Facilitating ICT connectivity in all institutions within the district.

**Nkomo:** *Department of Education has to fund schools. Our school is not funded properly. Resources are scarce. Teachers cannot do science experiments because there is no science laboratory.*

**Majola:** *I concur with Nkomo in that our schools are behind in terms of technology. We not even behind, we just not there. That is why our children struggle at university because they see computer for the first time there.*

It was evident in the discussion that lack of resources was a challenge. The schools were not well-resourced and that had a negative impact on teaching and learning. (McLennan, Muller, Orkin & Robertson, 2017). However, there is a gap between these policy intentions and realities on the ground, as many districts lack the resources and capability to provide professional curriculum management support to schools.

Lack of resources posed a significant threat in trying to scaffold principals, leaving any attempt to develop principals of schools as unsustainable.

#### **4.6 BEST PRACTICES AND APPROACHES FOR DESIGNING A STRATEGY**

There are several best practices and approaches for designing the strategy being devised in this study.

##### **4.6.1 Accountability**

The DBE (2015) states that monitoring and evaluation of teacher professional development must be strengthened. The DBE should work closely with the South African Council for Educators (SACE) to ensure that basic procedures are in place for the principal to monitor teacher investment in professional development. Gradually, principals should be given more administrative powers as the quality of school leadership improves, including in financial management, the procurement of textbooks and other educational material, and human resources management tasks. These delegations ensure that principals are held accountable for their schools, and that they ensure teaching takes place as it should, according to the national curriculum. They should understand their role as leader with responsibility to promote harmony, creativity and a sound work ethic within the school community and beyond.

Watkins, Anthony and Beard (2020:35) argue that principals must account for their actions to multiple and conflicting sources, including those within the school system, particularly teachers, parents, students, and local community, as well as those external to the school system, such as government mandates. Accountability is both external and internal, the latter requirements originating from those outside of the school system with the ability to award and punish schools and principals. Watkins et al. (2020:35) further argue that principals perceive the motivation of external accountability requirements to be bureaucratic, market-driven, and/or political in nature. These requirements are standards-based and require reporting of school performance. Internal accountability requirements have three layers of internal accountability, namely, a sense of responsibility and expectations of administrators, teachers and learners.

**Zindela:** *As leaders we must know that as we are entrusted with these positions, we have to improve learning outcomes. If learning outcomes not improving, we must account. Why?*

**Zondo:** *How are we expected to account?*

**Zikode:** *Firstly, we set target and goals for the year for the principal, including SMT, subject teachers and SGB, and the goals are communicated to parents at the beginning of each year, and are further communicated to learners. Each and every quarter we account to all relevant structures.*

**Mfeka:** *I think that is what we need to do as leaders in our various capacities. This is a recipe for success.*

From what the team members articulated it was evident that their thinking has changed. They were more empowered and gained confidence, and trust had been developed through this study.

Bratton (2020:2) contends that in a world in which connection and collaboration are increasingly important, leaders also need to accept that they are accountable, and they should be willing to be held to account publicly. As part of developing a strategy to scaffold principals of underperforming secondary schools in Amajuba District it was crucial to inculcate element of accountability on their apart, and themselves as principals they extend accountability to other stakeholders, including teachers.

#### 4.6.2 Sound human relations

In terms of the SACE Act 31 of 2000 code of ethics for educators, an educator is expected to behave in a way that enhances the dignity and status of the teaching profession and that does not bring the profession into disrepute. He or she must refrain from undermining the status and authority of his or her colleagues, use appropriate language and behaviour in interactions with colleagues, avoid any form of humiliation, and refrain from any form of abuse (physical or otherwise) towards colleagues. He or she should conduct him/herself in a manner that does not show disrespect to the values, customs and norms of the community, recognise parents as partners in education, and promote a harmonious relationship with them.

According to Le Fevre and Robinson (2015), relational skills are required to build the trust needed to improve teaching and learning, whether that work involves engaging parents in new ways, integrating new instructional roles and responsibilities, challenging teacher culture, or addressing particular problems in teacher performance. One of the key determinants of trust is leaders' competence in dealing with perceived poor performance. Teachers and parents are unlikely to trust leaders who either avoid dealing with such issues or who deal with them ineffectively (Le Fevre & Robinson, 2015:13).

**Hadebe:** *We must collaborate and work as a team as this study has shown us that when we work together everything is possible (“akukho okungasehlula”).*

Here it is evident that “*working together as a dedicated team*” is viewed as significant. Underperforming schools can turn around their performance and be the best schools.

Jayavant (2016:24) posits that in establishing a “sense of their own agency and social responsibility toward and with others and the society as a whole,” educational leaders who aim for social justice and equity respond by valuing, identifying, taking responsibility, acting to correct injustices and implement new processes that embody social justice and equity for all in their educational context. Social justice includes elements of respect, recognition, redistribution of power, and correcting injustices within their context. Jayavan further states that the social responsibility begins with the active voice of a leader, which gives cause to explore and investigate the characteristics, behaviours and practices of effective leaders for social justice and

equity. To enact social justice and equity in highly diverse schools it is essential to explore other types of resource, such as social capital. This includes positive elements of linguistic, racial, religious, or cultural diversity. By building stronger communities and relationships, students' social capital becomes an educational asset holding potential for influencing learning.

According to Tenuto, Gardiner and Yamamoto (2016) individuals who reflect on and manage personal emotional intelligence are authentic and engage in open and trusting relationships when making decisions, as well as in ethical decision-making. To build capacity for students in educational leadership programmes, focus should be on managing emotion for ethical decision-making in supervision of personnel. Issues of confidentiality, politics, and the tension between educators' professional ethical principles and establishing a more laissez-faire school climate and culture. Principals are guided to consider the role of emotion in leadership and how self-reflection can be used as a process for managing interpersonal relationships and emotion (Tenuto et al., 2016:23).

Sound human relations are important for the health and success of any organisation and principals, as instructional leaders, are expected to ensure sound human relations at schools. The purpose of this study, to devise a strategy to scaffold principals of underperforming secondary schools as instructional leaders in Amajuba District, includes collaboration, but this cannot succeed if there are no sound human relations in school.

#### **4.6.3 Critical role of school management teams**

The DBE lists specific aspects that school management teams (SMTs) have to undertake when developing a school improvement plan. These include specific knowledge of the whole-school development process, and a willingness to share information with all the stakeholders involved. They also have to monitor the implementation of the school improvement plan.

According to Taahyadin and Daud (2018), ways in which school leaders lift student outcomes include broadening what counts for effective education beyond academic achievement to include student engagement, participation and self-concept, community social capital, and reconsideration of leadership as serving and enabling

others to lead themselves, celebrating difference in gender, ethnicity, experience, attitudes, and ideas, connectedness, and a questioning of the status quo. Organisational learning, or collective teacher efficacy, is an important intervening variable between leadership and teacher work. Improved student outcomes and early priority can then be given to supporting the development of organisational learning in schools and greater attention paid to the context in which school leaders operate, especially in relation to school size, and the home educational environments of its students (Taahyadin & Daud, 2018:18).

**Gasa:** *The SMT's role is very critical role in the whole school development, taking into consideration of individual strengths and collaboration amongst team members.*

**Zondo:** *There must be a clear delegation of duties aligned to individual capabilities and strength, with the principal leading and guiding the SMT. In that way we have a winning team.*

From this it was evident that the SMT led by the principal played a crucial role in improving learner outcomes.

Jayavant (2016:32) contends that educational leaders who aim for social justice and equity respond by valuing, identifying, taking responsibility, acting to correct injustices and implement new processes that embody social justice and equity for all in their educational context, thereby establishing a “sense of their own agency and social responsibility toward and with others and the society as a whole”.

Boerhannoeddin, Zainuddin and Bahrin (2014) argue that a positive relationship between the SMTs and teachers is important. Teachers perceive the SMT as providing good, established and trusted leadership in relation to progression towards teachers. This situation guides the teachers to a clear, consistent sense of the distinctive ethos and values defining their school, with a vision and sense of what their school is trying to achieve. The key success factor in a successful high performing school is leadership, which has frequently emerged in discussions and arguments as a significant catalyst of teacher attitude, such as job involvement and commitment. Past studies resulted in and supported a positive attitude of teachers as related to the leadership (Boerhannoeddin et al., 2014:37).

It was crucial for SMT members to allocate the necessary time and opportunity to reflect constantly on the improvements they implemented, evaluate the effectiveness thereof to reach the intended outcome, and put the required measures in place for the following cycle of action that needed to be implemented en route to whole-school development. In this way the SMT was able to allow for collaboration with teachers and other stakeholders, an important element in the strategy to scaffold principals of underperforming secondary schools as instructional leaders in Amajuba District.

#### **4.6.4 Empowerment of stakeholders**

The DBE (2015) noted the need to improve parent and community participation in the governance of schools, partly by improving access to important information via the e-Education strategy. Kouzes and Posner (2017) contend that instructional leadership is essential to an organization's success, therefore the ability to identify and define effective leadership is crucial. Conventional wisdom denotes technical expertise, superior performance and established experience translated into effective leadership. However, today, successful leaders are defined by inspiring and motivating others, promoting a positive work environment, perceiving and understanding emotions and fostering an organizational climate in which people turn challenging opportunities into successes (Kouzes & Posner, 2017:23).

**Mfeka:** *In our meetings the principal makes it a point that there is something new that we came out with ngifunde lukhulu kulesikhathi ngikwigo governing body.*

**Zindela:** *We need to sit down and empower each other as SGBs.*

**Hlatshwayo:** *It is clear that without empowering stakeholders, learner outcomes cannot be improved. These kinds of sessions are really necessary to us.*

From what the team said it was evident that empowering the stakeholders was of vital importance, and for this to happen the principals as instructional leaders were central. Empowerment of stakeholders improves involvement and learner outcomes.

Jayavant (2016) states that the relationship between education and social capital is important in social cohesion by creating a sense of belonging and a shared set of values. Therefore, school leadership practices demonstrate leadership effectiveness

when successful leaders in schools serving highly diverse student populations enact practices to promote school quality, equity and social justice. This is achieved through building powerful forms of teaching and learning, creating strong communities in school, nurturing the development of educational cultures in families, and expanding the amount of students' social capital valued by the schools.

According to Boerhannoeddin, Zainuddin and Bahrin (2014), association between leaders and employees has a positive impact on employees' attitude towards their organizations. Leaders play an important and irreplaceable role in retaining employees and promoting their organizational commitment. Based on the Leader - member exchange theory, it believes that when leaders have established close relations with some subordinates the latter become "in-group." Here, the leaders will give more trust and care to the "in-group," communicate consistently, lead and motivate the group. In return, the leader will receive more support and respect from their subordinates. In the process of mutual exchange, they tend to have more expressive communications. As agents of organizations, leaders are channels and connection between organizations and employees, therefore, employees' affection to leaders will be interpreted as emotional dependence and commitment towards organizations

The role of principals as instructional leaders was crucial as one of the key roles of principal to develop other stakeholders as part of building blocks towards improving learner outcomes. Empowering of principals of underperforming secondary schools as instructional leaders was important in that they would be ready to empower other stakeholders.

#### **4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter dealt with analysis of the data, as well as the presentation and interpretation of results and findings on the strategy to scaffold principals of underperforming secondary schools as instructional leaders. It also focused on how the data was analysed, interpreted, presented and discussed. Data in the main was obtained from discussion sessions amongst the participants. The sessions took into consideration the conditions necessary to make the strategy work. Furthermore, risks to the strategy were identified. It was carried out in consideration of the objectives of

the study. Manaseh 2016 concurs with the discussions that ensued amongst the participants that a useful analytic framework for understanding the proper function of school management is provided by the notion of instructional leadership, which emphasizes the role of principals as instructional leader of curriculum coverage and teaching in the school (Manaseh, 2016:23). In these sessions participants indicated that there was an overriding need for the design of a strategy to scaffold principals of underperforming secondary schools as instructional leaders at Amajuba District.

## **CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH, LIMITATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of the study is to design a strategy to scaffold principals as instructional leaders: a case of underperforming secondary schools at Amajuba district. In this chapter the focus is on discussing the findings and making recommendations leading to designing of the strategy to scaffold principals as instructional leaders. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the findings, making recommendations for future research and acknowledging a limitation of the study.

### **5.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT, AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

There seems to be a lack of support for school principals as instructional leaders and this has led to academic underperformance of learners in some schools. Some high schools in peri-urban areas were underperforming. (Report on the National Senior Certificate: KZN: NSC, 2018). According to Romanowski, Sadiq, Abu-Tineh, Ndoye, & Aql (2019:2), research indicates that principals were critical in school reform since the implementation of policies and practices is to a large extent determined by the role that principals play in educational change. Gale (2017:3) contends that educational leaders are charged with many responsibilities within their schools, notably ensuring that students are learning the curriculum and achieving their academic potential. The challenge, then, was to identify how principals influence student learning then help them to develop these leadership behaviours effectively.

It is true that many educational researchers have sought to find the leadership behaviours and factors that describe how principals can most significantly influence learner academic achievement, however, principals themselves have been largely left out of the conversation. It is therefore important to design a strategy to scaffold principals as instructional leaders, based on experiences and efforts to maintain safe schools, connect communities, foster citizenship, and prepare students for colleges and careers. There is a need to scaffold principals so that they can meet the demands placed on them.

The research question was:

What can be done to scaffold principals of underperforming secondary schools at Amajuba District?

The aim of the study was to design a strategy to scaffold principals of underperforming secondary schools as instructional leaders for schools that were underperforming at Amajuba district.

Objectives of the study were to understand the need for designing a strategy for scaffolding principals of secondary schools as instructional leaders at Amajuba district; to explore strategies to support principals of secondary schools as instructional leaders at Amajuba district; to investigate existing strategies to enhance principals, and conditions that enable these strategies to work; to anticipate threats to emerging strategies aimed at scaffolding principals of underperforming secondary schools at Amajuba district; and to formulate risk management system;

### **5.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Critical social theory determines how individuals do things, who and what they are, and development transforms what it is to be human. It is appropriate for this study because it encourages independence and empowerment, and brings hope. Formats of this theory include elements of community, dignity, interdependence, solidarity, responsibility and ideals, gender equality, disability, race, socio-economic status and religion, which is in line with the study's aims.

### **5.4 METHODOLOGY**

The researcher used participatory action research (PAR) as methodology in this study as it addresses sharing and working with real challenges (McTaggart & Thorpe, 2013:32; Macdonald, 2012:36). Principals were sharing their daily experiences and working together to achieve common goal to improve performance in their schools. The principles of PAR were used since this approach is emancipatory and takes place between the community and researcher. It is in line with this study as it seeks to develop principals of underperforming schools as instructional leaders.

## **5.5. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

There were many challenges that the principals faced to effectively manage the curriculum to achieve the desired goals as discussed in this section, it being the aim of the study to formulate a strategy to enhance the role of female principals as curriculum managers.

### **5.5.1 No dedicated instructional leadership teams /PLCs**

It was discovered that there were no dedicated instructional leadership teams or PLCs. There was very little knowledge about instructional leadership. From the discussions with the participants, it was clear that they needed to be assisted. The need to establish instructional leadership teams or PLCs for principals was necessary for the improvement of learner outcomes.

#### **5.5.1.1 Recommended solution: establishment of dedicated instructional leadership teams/ PLCs**

It was recommended there be formulation of dedicated instructional Leadership teams / PLCs so that there was collaboration and teamwork. The PLC would be driven by principals themselves as they would identify areas of development. Since they would be organised into instructional teams it would be easier to implement scaffolding as a strategy. When principals were developed and empowered they would have knowledge and confidence to do the same as other stakeholders at their schools. There was also a need to review role responsibilities and levels of administrative support for principals to ensure that their priority was instructional leadership, for example, that they would be provided with time and space to become leaders, rather than plagued with bureaucracy, such as endless circulars and regulations. Considering the above, the solutions were based on the evidence that a team must be created in which all the members were equal, in line with the philosophy of PAR, which emphasises that all members be treated as equals.

### **5.5.1.2 Recommended condition: sustainable instructional leadership team/PLCs**

In order to have sustainable instructional leadership team/PLCs it was important that they be teacher-driven, have elected leaders for purposes of coordination, and have sufficient authority and flexibility conferred upon them to enable them to fully discharge their ever-challenging responsibilities, as stipulated in the Professional Learning Communities: Guidelines for South African Schools. PLCs create greater professional autonomy so teachers feel they belong and believe they are contributing to the success of their school and its students.

Leadership development for middle managers should become automatic, and part of a whole career framework for leadership development. It should ensure that developmental programmes for aspiring school leaders include skill of integrating external, school and personal values/vision, attention to encouraging participants to develop strategies for balancing work and other aspects of their lives, and more opportunities for team members to experience professional development as a team

### **5.5.2 Inadequate recruitment and selection policy for principals**

The current policies that were being used for recruitment and selection of principals were not adequate. There was a need to review school leader appointment processes and criteria to ensure they reflect the new demands being made on them.

#### **5.5.2.1 Recommended solution: recruitment and selection policy development for principals**

In selecting potential principals, selectors must ascertain if a candidate has the ability and time to build teams. Does the candidate believe in developing others as also a team player? What is the track record of the potential candidate? Does the candidate have a clear vision for the school? The insight in terms of education matters and school leadership is also an important factor. Furthermore, the candidate must show negotiating, communicative and diplomatic skills, one of the key requirements for today's school leaders, as the school environment is often unionised and politicised. Another important aspect of recruitment is the issue of succession. Leadership

development for middle managers should become automatic, and part of a whole career framework for leadership development. This requires developmental programmes designed for aspiring school leaders.

#### **5.5.2.2 Recommended condition: implementation of recruitment and selection policies**

Recruitment and selection policy needs to be amended. The DBE has tabled amendments to the current policy that would change the regime and the manner in which recruitment and selection of principals is conducted.

#### **5.5.3 Inadequate in-depth training and development of principals**

There had been no effective in-depth training and development of school leaders, and what development programmes there were had not been well coordinated. The developmental needs were not in the main identified by principals, for instance, instructional leadership development, transformational leadership and PLCs. Training on the concept of power and efficacy of collaborative teams was important.

##### **5.5.3.1 Recommended solution: in-depth and adequate training and development of principals**

In order to improve principals' practices, which in turn could affect school and teacher outcomes, including school climate and principal and teacher retention must be accompanied by deliberate in-depth and adequate training and development programmes. The programme aimed to improve several principal practices such as the instructional leadership support, principals' competence in providing feedback and the usefulness of the feedback they provided to teachers. In addition, principals must be trained in collaborative work and professional learning communities. One-on-one development and individualised coaching by a mentor is also important as part of scaffolding principals as instructional leaders. This kind of development should be spread over two years at least.

### **5.5.3.2 Recommended condition: continuous training and development of principals**

Professional development of principals must be tailored to their needs and continuous. The content of the development programme must be well-structured, taking into consideration of the context in which principals work.

### **5.5.4 Lack of support**

Schools that were underperforming were characterised by lack of support from key stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, business, communities and school district and government.

#### **5.5.4.1 Recommended solution: creation of supportive environment**

Successful schools forged partnerships with all stakeholders, particularly the surrounding community. Parental support and involvement were key to improving learner outcomes and it was important for the principal to reach out to all stakeholders. There must be planned interaction with key stakeholders.

#### **5.5.4.2 Recommended condition: conducive supportive environment**

Conducive and supportive environment was necessary for sustainable improvement of learner outcomes. When parents and other stakeholders were involved in the life of a school it was probable that academic performance of learners would improve.

### **5.5.5 Inefficient utilisation of instructional time**

Another finding about underperforming secondary schools is inefficient utilisation of instructional time. Here much time is spent on issues that do not enhance teaching and learning, that is, the classroom is not the centrepiece, but rather teaching and learning is not managed by teachers. Even the SMT does not monitor usage of instructional time.

#### **5.5.5.1 Recommended solution: efficient utilisation of instructional time**

Schools that were strictly adhering to efficient use of instructional time consistently show the greatest impact on academic achievement of learners. It is the key responsibility of any principal to ensure that instructional time is observed. Principals of underperforming secondary schools must increase the amount of instructional support they provide to teachers. This encourages principals to observe instruction inside the classroom more often and provide teachers with more frequent feedback. The classroom must be made a centrepiece by all. Harris, Jones, Adams and Cheah, (2019) contend that the expectation that principals should be instructional leaders is now deeply engrained in understanding of effective school leadership. Managing the daily operations of their schools is insufficient and present-day principals are expected to engage closely with teaching and learning.

#### **5.5.5.2 Recommended condition: protection of instructional time**

It is the responsibility of a principal to ensure that instructional time is protected. He or she must ensure that no instructional time was lost for whatever reason. The principle was simple, that all time lost, however valid the reason, must be recovered. If a teacher would be away for any reason he or she must devise a programme for recovering the work that would have been carried out when absent. Absenteeism must be dealt with in terms of a leave management regime.

### **5.6 BEST PRACTICES**

A number of best practices are considered.

#### **5.6.1 Accountability**

Schools that were performing excellently had strong and greater accountability which was accompanied by consequence management. It must be stated that before the principle of accountability and consequence management is applied it is important that support and development is given to principals. Subject principals of underperforming secondary schools require scaffolding in accountability and consequence management. Accountability measures must not be used to undermine

principals and their creativity innovation and confidence. It is important to ensure that school leadership is more about instructional leadership in the main, and less about management. Principals of high performing schools knew that they were accountable to parents, learners, society and government. All at school must be accountable for their performance, including learners.

### **5.6.2 Sound human relations**

Management of interpersonal relations had become critical in organisational leadership. In order for principals to lead successful schools they must master the art of interpersonal relationships. Managing group dynamics and emotional intelligence was found central to interpersonal relationships. In a school in which teachers and learners were happy, levels of commitment and collaboration were high. It is the responsibility of the school principal to manage and support the teachers, and to endeavour to create an enabling environment.

### **5.6.3 Critical role of the SMT**

Schools that displayed high level of academic performance of learners had SMTs that were committed to their work and understood they must support and develop teachers. They were strong on monitoring and evaluation, giving feedback to teachers, and they believed in collaborative work. In these schools the programmes were distributed and leadership devolved more evenly amongst the SMT members.

### **5.6.4 Empowerment of stakeholders**

According to Kouzes and Posner (2017), successful leaders are defined by inspiring and motivating others, promoting a positive work environment, perceiving and understanding emotions and fostering an organizational climate in which people turn challenging opportunities into successes. It was in the interest of all principals to empower stakeholders, particularly the SGB. If stakeholders were developed and empowered it was easier for the principal to lead the school. When stakeholders were empowered their level of involvement in school matters increased.

### **5.6.5 Effective communication of goals**

Effective communication is paramount, ensuring that all stakeholders are included with regular feedback. If everybody at the school understands the goals, commitment levels are higher. Effective communication improves working relations, which can in turn improve morale and efficiency.

## **5.7 THREATS**

A number of threats were found.

### **5.7.1 Reluctance to participate**

Principals were reluctant to participate in PLCs or instructional leadership teams owing to power dynamics or relations with their peers. There were even concerns of them being used as guinea pigs. It was also true that principals from performing secondary schools may have felt that their time was wasted in trying to work with those from underperforming schools.

#### **5.7.1.1 Recommended solutions**

The solution to this problem was to explain the importance of teachers including principals, in taking active roles on issues affecting them. Participating in research is key, with principals being critical role players. It was the responsibility of principals to influence the practices of the department, since principals were the implementers. It is an opportunity to influence policy through research.

### **5.7.2 Lack of knowledge on instructional leadership**

Many principals know little about the term 'instructional leadership.' According to Mestry (2017:28), most in leading South African public schools lack a comprehensive understanding of their instructional leadership role, and this impacts negatively on learner performance Mestry (2017:28).

### **5.7.2.1 Recommended solutions**

They agreed to identify their needs as principals, particularly in development, as instructional leaders by employing other training techniques such as coaching and mentoring. In our discussions as the team we identified the need to attend workshops and seminars that would develop us. We further agreed that those of us who could study further should do so, but focussing on what would grow us in our careers. The key recommendation was the establishment of PLC for principals.

### **5.7.3 Power relations**

Principals from schools that were underperforming may have felt that they were being unfairly judged or compared with their performing peers. The principals from underperforming schools may have had low self-confidence compared to those coming from performing schools. This created power dynamics within the group.

#### **5.7.3.1 Recommended solutions**

It is important to explain to participants the importance of diversity in views and the richness those views they bring to any research or debate. In addition, to deal with power relations roles must be clearly explained, with no insignificant participant in a research situation.

### **5.7.4 Lack of support by school district**

Research has shown that without support from districts schools struggle to improve learner performance.

#### **5.7.4.1 Recommended solutions**

The District can support schools by facilitating the establishment of PLCs. Secondly districts can support schools through multidisciplinary teams.

### **5.7.5 Lack of resources**

The schools that were participating in the study were not well resourced, and that was contributing to underperformance.

#### **5.7.5.1 Recommended solutions**

The DoE needs to review school funding policy. Schools may also raise funds on their own. In our discussion, participants suggested that principals should be trained in how to raise funds. What may seem an unattainable resource, principals can find a way to get it done.

## **5.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

As was evident in Chapter 3, the study was qualitative in nature, employing most principles of PAR. Participants were at times reluctant to participate, even though I clarified the aim of the study and the purpose of conducting the research. Some members were not always present and were complaining about their weekend commitments, since the study was conducted mostly on Saturdays.

Secondly, the findings of the study cannot be generalised because only five schools were involved.

## **5.9 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

I have discovered that one of the serious hindrances to improving academic performance of the learners is lack of capacity by some principals. This lack of capacity is a result of lack of deliberate and continuous development of principals by the school District. The support programme for underperforming schools was not yet fully addressing the needs of principals. It is recommended that the school District ensures that collaboration through establishment of PLCs is urgently attended to.

## **5.10 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

The aim of the study was to devise a strategy to scaffold principals of underperforming secondary schools at Amajuba District as instructional leaders.

The study demonstrated how CST as the theoretical framework that couched the study assisted in achieving the objectives of the study, using PAR as an approach. As a researcher I was involved in a series of discussions with participants, as they were the ones who experienced challenges as principals of schools. The study aimed to find evidence, take action, reflect, conduct further inquiry and bring about change. There is now a dedicated instructional leadership team/PLC with a vision to turn around the academic performance of underperforming secondary schools.

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# ANNEXURES

## ANNEXURE A: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

### INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

(Participant)

Project Title: **A strategy to scaffold principals as instructional leaders: A case of underperforming secondary schools at Amajuba District**

*Nkosi M.H* from the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

The purpose of the study is to come up with strategy for scaffolding principals of secondary schools at Amajuba District.

1. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
2. By participating in this research, I will be contributing to body of literature on underperforming secondary schools.
3. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

4. I will not be compensated for participating in the research.
5. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
  - a. the following risks are associated with my participation: emotional states of participants when we expose challenges that may be based in schools and homes where teachers are coming from with challenges.
  - b. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: counselling will be provided after the sessions.
  - c. there is a 5% chance of the risk materialising.
6. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of a journal/ dissertation. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
7. I will receive feedback in the form of telephonically/email and report regarding the results obtained during the study.
8. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Prof Nkoane
9. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
10. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Mfanimpela Hendry Nkosi have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfy action. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mfanimpela Hendry Nkosi', written on a light grey rectangular background.

Date: 20/05/2019

Signature of a participant

**ANNEXURE B: RESEARCHER'S DECLARATION**

**RESEARCHER'S DECLARATION**

I, Mfanimpela Hendry Nkosi declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to

Prof Nkoane

- requested him to ask questions if anything was unclear and I have answered them as best I can
- I am satisfied that he sufficiently understands all aspects of the research so as to make an informed decision on whether or not to participate.
- The conversation took place in English.
- I did not use an interpreter



20/05/2019

**Researcher's signature**

**Date**

**ANNEXURE C: ACCESS LETTER TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

University of Zululand

PO Box X1001

KwaDlangezwa

3886

The Principal

Date: October 1, 2019

Dear Ms/Mr

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

I am a registered Master's student in the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies at the University of Zululand. My supervisor is Professor MM Nkoane

The proposed topic of my research is: **A strategy to scaffold principals of secondary schools as instructional leaders: A case of underperforming secondary schools at Amajuba District.**

The objectives of the study are:

- a) Understand the nature of management in secondary schools at Amajuba District
- b) To get and understand the views of SGB and the principals
- c) To get opinions of educators, School management teams, SGB and the principals as to whether interventions by the education department are making any positive impact
- d) To provide recommendations with regard to strategy that can be used for scaffolding principals of secondary schools at Amajuba District.

I am hereby seeking your consent to be one of the team members in this project to assist you in reaching a decision, I have attached to this letter:

- (a) A copy of an ethical clearance certificate issued by the University
- (b) A copy the research instruments which I intend using in my research

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor. Our contact details are as follows:

**M.H Nkosi – 082 857 3521**

**Professor Nkoane MM – 0769826901**

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide you with a bound copy of the dissertation.

Your permission to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

**Signature:** 

**Name: M.H Nkosi**

### 1.1.2. ANNEXURE D:

### 1.1.3. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDs) SCHEDULE/

### 1.1.4. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Focus Group Discussions schedule: **A strategy to scaffold principals of secondary schools as instructional leaders: A case of underperforming secondary schools at Amajuba District.**

*Questions to read out are in **bold prompts** are also provided, to be read out if and when needed (for example, if participants do not understand a question, or to help encourage further discussion).*

### Running the Focus Group Sessions

Ideally two people to facilitate the Focus Group Discussion sessions - one to lead the session, the other to take notes and make sure the recording equipment is running properly and effectively.

The group session discussions will be recorded using audio recording device and/or note sheets used during that session.

It is important to seek to reach a group viewpoint as far as possible. Everyone will be involved in the discussion. This does not mean that everyone must have the same view, but the discussion should lead to some conclusions. You need to record both majority and minority views.

### Before the group assemblies

Recording equipment will be tested to make sure it is working properly and that the sound is recording at an acceptable level.

The facilitators or researcher will ensure that any paperwork is ready before the participants/participants arrive, e.g. notes, name badges, and Participation Consent Forms.

### **Preparing to start the session**

As participants /participants convene they will be welcomed.

Once participants or participants are settled, the researchers or facilitators will check with the group whether they all know each other. If not, start by going round the group and getting everyone to introduce themselves. It is important to establish that the group or all participants in the study know one another beforehand, or the researchers will develop it as the session proceeds.

I will read out the statement on **confidentiality clause**:

**Opinions expressed will be treated in confidence among project participants for the purpose of establish a base of evidence as to how research on a strategy to scaffold principals of underperforming secondary schools at Amajuba District. This study could be made a community learning approach. Guarantee that all responses will remain anonymous.**

I will make sure as a researcher that for **ethical reasons** participants/ co-researchers are asked to sign a **Participation Consent Form**, containing the following sections:

- *I have been given an explanation of the nature and purpose of the study.*
- *I understand what I will need to do to take part and my questions have been answered satisfactorily.*
- *I have the contact details for the staff involved.*
- *I understand that I may withdraw myself and my data at any time, without consequences.*
- *I am satisfied with the arrangements to ensure that it will not be possible for me to be identified when the results are made available.*

Go through this information with each participant and ask them to sign the form.

Check that there are no objections to the use of the audio recorder; then switch it on.

### Introduction to the session

I will start off by reiterating the purpose of the meeting. Use a statement such as:

**I'm very grateful to you all for sparing time to talk about your dissemination and citation behaviour. The purpose of this focus group is to establish a base of evidence as to how underperforming secondary school can be assisted to improve on their performance.**

**There are no right or wrong opinions, I would like you to feel comfortable saying what you really think and how you best think we could proceed with this kind of a study.**

**Discussion 1: CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS OF PRINCIPALS OF UNDERPERFORMING SECONDARY SCHOOLS.**

A major area of interest to this study is to create a community learning approach specifically about challenges and problems faced by principals of underperforming in selected secondary schools at Amajuba district.

**Q1 What are the main challenges and problems that principals of selected underperforming secondary school encounter when executing their duties?**

**(Prompt: this does not necessarily need to be research published findings, outputs, but might include your own feelings and experiences, etc.) and what is important?**(e.g. speed of communication, depth of communication, as wide as reach as possible etc.)

**Q1a) Thinking in terms of challenges and problems which are the most important to address? AND ..... to your school or district? AND ...to the other schools and Amajuba district?**

**Q1b) Do you feel that there are factors external to your school that might contribute to problems and challenges for underperformance?**

**Q2 Thinking about the community practices and the families they come from what do you do as a principal when you want to address problems and challenges facing teachers?**

**Prompt:2a For example, in terms of exciting all stakeholders both within and outside the school?**

**Prompt:2bHow can we make our school community be able to face the problems and challenges for underperformance?**

**Discussion 2: COMPONENTS OF INTERACTIVE LEARNING INITIATIVES THAT RESPOND TO PROBLEMS OF PRINCIPALS WHO UNDERPERFORM IN THEIR SCHOOLS**

This research is likely to have an impact on proposing the best components or features of that respond to problems in schools where principals underperform, and this study will build up components of responding to underachievement of these principals.

**Q5What are components of a strategy to scaffold principals of underperforming secondary schools at Amajuba District?**

**(Prompt: what are the features or characteristics of underperformance in the selected underperforming secondary schools)?**

**Q5a) Can we think of what leads to underperformance in the selected secondary schools?**

**Q5b) What initiatives do you think we could take to respond to problems of principals whose schools are underperforming?**

**Q5c Do you feel that it is important to respond to problems of principals whose schools are underperforming?**

**Q6 What are your main motivations for responding to problems of principals of underperforming secondary schools?**

**(Prompt: to demonstrate depth of knowledge).**

**Q7. Does our school have any initiatives that could respond to problems of underperformance?**

**Discussion 3: THE CONTEXT IN A STRATEGY IN SCAFFOLDING PRINCIPALS OF UNDERPERFORMING SECONDARY SCHOOL AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS AT AMAJUBA DISTRICT.**

Similar prompts and further clarifying questions to probe discussions will be made for **Discussion 3 or Session 3**

**Discussion 4: THE BEST PRACTICES THAT COULD INFORM THE FORMULATION OF SUCCESS INDICATORS TO SUPPORT PRINCIPALS OF UNDERPERFORMING SECONDARY AT AMAJUBA DISTRICT.**

Similar prompts and further clarifying questions to probe discussions will be made for Discussion 4 or Session 4

**Ending the session**

Finally, summarize the discussions and thank participants/participants for their time and co-operation.

I will then collect the Participation Consent Forms from the participants.

**ANNEXURE H: REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH KZN DoE**



**kzn education**

Department:  
Education  
KWAZULU-NATAL

## Application for Permission to Conduct Research in Kwazulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions

### 1. Applicants Details

**Proposed Research Title:** A strategy in scaffolding principals of underperforming schools as curriculum managers at Amajuba District  
Title: Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ Surname: Nkosi

Name(s)Of Applicant(s): Mfanimpela Hendry

Email: zembethe@gmail.com

Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: 082 857 352

### 2. Is the proposed research part of a tertiary qualification?

Postal Address: P.O Box 10747

If "yes" Newcastle

Name of tertiary institution: <sup>2951</sup>University of Zululand

Faculty and or School: Curriculum and Instructional Studies

Qualification: M Ed

Name of Supervisor: Prof Nkoane MM

Supervisors Signature \_\_\_\_\_

If "no", state purpose of research: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Have you applied for permission to conduct this research or any other research within the KZNDoE institutions?

If "yes", please state reference Number: 201974646

### 4. Briefly state the Research Background

The aim of the study is to formulate a strategy to scaffold principals of underperforming schools as curriculum managers at Amajuba District. There are lots of challenges that principals of underperforming secondary schools encounter when executing th