

School principals' ability to influence the improvement of learner performance in selected rural schools in Limpopo

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study was on school principals' ability to influence the improvement of under-performance in rural schools. The effectiveness of school leadership lies within the principal's competency in management, knowledge, his/her capacity to manage teaching, learning and school discipline. School leadership is regarded as an important tool for guiding schools out of their under-performance. Bourdieu's theory of habitus and field was used to contextualise effective school leadership and to explore how principals can make use of capital and power to improve schools' under-performance. A detailed literature study was undertaken to understand what effective school leadership is and how it can be used to improve learner performance. The literature was also used to explore how contextual and individual factors influence leadership for the sustained improvement in rural schools' performance.

The researcher used a qualitative, phenomenological approach embedded in interpretivism to examine the ability of principals to influence the improvement of performance in under-performing schools in rural areas. Purposive sampling was used to select participants to gain insight into the challenges and difficulties in improving under-performance in rural areas. The interview schedule was used to guide the researcher in conducting individual interviews with selected principals to generate the empirical data. Trustworthiness of the study was ensured in the collection and interpretation of data. Collected data was transcribed, analysed, and interpreted. The data was also arranged according to themes using content analysis.

Findings in the research include the following:

The literature revealed that effective school leadership means that the principals must demonstrate the ability to effectively carry out mandated administrative duties aimed at achieving the school's goals and objectives. Effective school leadership was also explained as the principal's capacity to manage groups of people. The theory of habitus and field identified the effective use of a principal's habitus, capital, field, and power in leadership. The literature regards effective school leadership as an important tool in guiding schools out of under-performance and dysfunctionality.

Bourdieu's theory explained that people in leadership positions have the legitimate power to influence the improvement of under-performance. Literature emphasised that principals have the power to influence, which is the ability of the principal to convince and inspire people to work towards achieving the vision of the school. The findings emphasised on principals deliberate and conscious practice or exercise of power. The non-usage of power by principals of under-performing schools hinders their ability and strength to persuade people to do what the principal believes to be right and beneficial for the school. Data proved that principals of under-performing schools do not have power to influence, convince and inspire people to work towards achieving the vision of the school. Findings outline that the following powers were unavailable to principals of under-performing schools, expert power, referent power, charismatic power, information power, as well as Legitimate power:

Both data and literature outlined factors that pose leadership challenges to principals in under-performing schools in rural areas. These factors were found to be within the immediate school environment and in the larger school environment. Factors within the immediate school environment include the quality and attitude of educators towards their work, educators' low motivation, overcrowded classrooms, the lack of adequate facilities (i.e., libraries and laboratories), a shortage of textbooks, conflicts and power struggles and inadequate financial resources. Factors in the larger school environment were identified as ineffective support by stakeholders and socio-economic factors.

The data also revealed that principals do not have the skills to resolve power struggles and conflicts. Furthermore, literature indicated that leadership challenges in under-performing schools are a result of the inability of principals to use power and capital in leadership. Principals of underperforming schools fail to correctly implement policies in the field to address issues in the school. The findings also identified socio-economic factors in rural areas; it was, however, noted that there are little principals can do to address these challenges. Principals can only be given the capacity to manage schools amid such challenges.

Principals of under-performing schools in rural areas expressed difficulties in improving under-performance. Factors making it difficult for principals to improve low academic performance were found to be in twofold: the field factors which included ineffective feeder schools; inadequate resources; the lack of parental involvement; the lack of educator development; ineffective SGBs and other community structures; low levels of learner-motivation; poor policy implementation and management; poor monitoring and control; and the habitus factors which involved lack of consistency; lack of decisive leadership; ineffective communication practices; lack of problem solving skills.

Bourdieu's theory explored the ability of principals to improve learner performance in under-performing schools in rural areas. The theory emphasised on the effective use of habitus (personal traits and characteristics), capital, and power in school leadership. Bourdieu's theory also identified the field of power that influence principal's leadership in the school. Findings indicated that all schools in rural areas experience the same field factors. Therefore, principal's habitus contributes largely to the way they exercise leadership in the school. Bourdieu's theory recognises the issue of power in leadership. Principals' power is legitimised by legislation. Principals possess hierarchical power which is delegated power by the Head of Department to make informed decisions to improve learner performance. Principals are in a rightful position – through this power – to influence change in schools. Various forms of power were discussed and were found lacking in under-performing schools; legitimate, reward, charisma and coercive (positive or negative) power.

The findings revealed the need for strategy development. The strategy is aimed at assisting principals to improve their under-performance in schools. The strategy clearly pointed out on how principals can employ their habitus, capital, and power to improve under-performance in rural schools. Actions to be taken by principals to improve learner performance were clearly outlined. The strategy also revealed the potential capital and power that can be employed by principals to improve learner performance.

Keywords: Ability, influence, principals, under-performance, secondary schools, rural areas, strategy.

OPSOMMING

Die fokus van hierdie studie was op skoolhoofde se vermoë om die verbetering van prestasie in landelike skole te beïnvloed. Die doeltreffendheid van skoolleierskap is gesetel in die skoolhoof se bevoegdheid rakende bestuursvaardighede, kennis en kapasiteit in die bestuur van onderrig en leer sowel as die effektiewe bestuur van skoordisipline. Skoolleierskap word beskou as 'n belangrike instrument om skole uit lae prestasie te lei. Bourdieu se teorie van habitus en veld (*habitus and field*) is gebruik om effektiewe skoolleierskap te verstaan en om te verken hoe skoolhoofde van verskillende soorte kapitaal en mag gebruik kan maak om skole se lae prestasie te verbeter. 'n Gedetailleerde literatuurstudie is onderneem om te verstaan wat effektiewe skoolleierskap is en hoe dit gebruik kan word om lae prestasie te verbeter. Literatuur is ook gebruik om te verken hoe kontekstuele en individuele faktore leierskap vir volgehoue verbetering in landelike skole beïnvloed en bydra tot skole se prestasie.

Die navorser het 'n kwalitatiewe, fenomenologiese benadering, ingebed in interpretivisme, gebruik om die vermoë van skoolhoofde te ondersoek om die verbetering van prestasie in lae presterende skole in landelike gebiede te beïnvloed. Doelgerigte steekproefneming is gebruik om deelnemers te selekteer ten einde insig te verkry oor die uitdagings en probleme om lae prestasie in landelike gebiede te verbeter. 'n Onderhoudskedule is gebruik om die navorser te lei oor die voer van individuele onderhoude met geselekteerde skoolhoofde om data te genereer. Vertrouenswaardigheid van die studie is verseker in die insameling en interpretasie van data. Ingesamelde data is getranskribeer, ontleed en geïnterpreteer. Data is ook volgens temas gerangskik deur inhoudsanalise te gebruik.

Bevindinge in die navorsing sluit in:

Literatuur het aan die lig gebring dat effektiewe skoolleierskap beteken dat die skoolhoof die vermoë moet toon om toegewysde administratiewe pligte effektief uit te voer wat daarop gemik is om die skool se doelstellings en doelwitte te bereik. Effektiewe skoolleierskap is ook aangetoon as die skoolhoof se kapasiteit om die vermoë te demonstreer om groepe mense te bestuur. Die teorie van habitus en veld het die effektiewe gebruik van skoolhoof se habitus, kapitaal, veld en mag in leierskap geïdentifiseer. Literatuur beskou effektiewe skoolleierskap as 'n belangrike instrument om skole uit lae prestasie en disfunksionaliteit te lei.

Die teorie van habitus en veld het aangedui dat mense in leiersposisies wettige mag het om die verbetering van lae prestasie te beïnvloed. Mag behels die vermoë van die skoolhoof om opvoeders te oortuig om die visie van die skool te aanvaar en te volg. Skoolhoofde in hul professionele hoedanigheid gebruik hiërargiese mag om opvoeders te beïnvloed om hard te werk om lae prestasie te verbeter. Effektiewe skoolhoofde gebruik hul vermoë en krag om mense te oortuig om te volg wat die skoolhoof dink reg en voordelig is vir die skool. Verder het literatuur beklemtoon dat skoolhoofde mag het om te beïnvloed, wat die vermoë van die skoolhoof is om mense te oortuig en

te inspireer om te werk aan die verwesenliking van die visie van die skool. Die bevindinge beklemtoon op skoolhoofde daadwerklike en bewuste praktyk of uitoefening van mag. Die nie-gebruik van mag deur skoolhoofde van onderpresterende skole belemmer hul vermoë en krag om mense te oorrede om te doen wat die skoolhoof glo reg en voordelig vir die skool is. Data het gewys dat skoolhoofde van onderpresterende skole nie die mag het om mense te beïnvloed, te oortuig en te inspireer om te werk om die visie van die skool te bereik nie. Die volgende magte is uitgelig as onbeskikbaar vir skoolhoofde van onderpresterende skole, kundige mag, verwysingsmag, charismatiese mag, inligtingsmag sowel as Wettige mag:

Beide data en literatuur het faktore uiteengesit wat leierskap-uitdagings aan skoolhoofde in swak-presterende skole in landelike gebiede stel. Daar is gevind dat hierdie faktore binne die onmiddellike skoolomgewing en in die groter skoolomgewing voorkom. Faktore binne die onmiddellike skoolomgewing sluit in die kwaliteit en houding van opvoeders teenoor hul werk; lae motivering van opvoeders; oorvol klasse; gebrek aan voldoende fasiliteite (biblioteke en laboratoriums); tekort aan handboeke; konflik; magstryd en onvoldoende finansiële hulpbronne. Faktore in die groter skoolomgewing is geïdentifiseer as oneffektiewe ondersteuning deur belanghebbendes en sosio-ekonomiese faktore.

Data het aan die lig gebring dat skoolhoofde nie die vaardighede het om magstryd en konflik op te los nie. Hierdie konflik en magstryd gebeur meestal tussen opvoeders, opvoeders en skoolhoof, SBL en die skoolhoof sowel as tussen die gemeenskap en die skoolhoof. Bowenal het literatuur aangedui dat leierskapuitdagings in lae presterende skole die gevolg is van skoolhoofde se onvermoë om mag en kapitaal in leierskap te gebruik. Skoolhoofde versuim ook om beleide in die veld korrek te implementeer om probleme in die skool aan te spreek. Bevindinge het ook sosio-ekonomiese faktore in landelike gebiede bevestig, maar daar is egter opgemerk dat daar nie veel is wat skoolhoofde kan doen om hierdie uitdagings aan te spreek nie. Skoolhoofde kan slegs bemaatig word om skole te bestuur te midde van sulke uitdagings.

Skoolhoofde van swak presterende skole in landelike gebiede het aangedui dat hulle dit moeilik vind om lae prestasie te verbeter. Daar is gevind dat faktore wat dit vir skoolhoofde moeilik maak om lae akademiese prestasie te verbeter, tweeledig is: die veldfaktore wat oneffektiewe voederskole ingesluit het; onvoldoende hulpbronne; die gebrek aan ouerbetrokkenheid; die gebrek aan opvoederontwikkeling; ondoeltreffende SBL'e en ander gemeenskapstrukture; lae vlakke van leerdermotivering; swak beleidsimplementering en bestuur; swak monitering en beheer; en die habitusfaktore wat 'n gebrek aan konsekwentheid behels het; gebrek aan beslissende leierskap; oneffektiewe kommunikasiepraktyke; gebrek aan probleemoplossingsvaardighede.

Bourdieu se teorie het die vermoë van skoolhoofde om leerderprestasie in onderpresterende skole in landelike gebiede te verbeter, verduidelik. Die teorie het klem gelê op die effektiewe gebruik van habitus (persoonlike eienskappe en kenmerke), kapitaal en mag in skoolleierskap. Bourdieu se teorie het ook die magsveld geïdentifiseer wat die skoolhoof se leierskap in die skool beïnvloed.

Bevindinge het aangedui dat alle skole in landelike gebiede dieselfde veldfaktore ervaar. Daarom is skoolhoof se habitus wat die wyse is waarop skoolhoofde dink, optree en hulself gedra, grootliks bydra tot die manier waarop hulle leierskap in die skool uitoefen. Die habitus van die skoolhoofde – dit wil sê die karakter, moed, vorige ervaring, opleiding en blootstelling en selfvertroue (persoonlikheid) – speel 'n belangrike rol in die verbetering van lae prestasie. Die skoolhoof se karakter en oortuigings speel ook 'n belangrike rol in die manier waarop hulle beleide in die veld implementeer.

Vanuit Bourdieu se teorie is kapitaal gebruik om te verstaan in watter mate skoolhoofde die verskillende beskikbare kapitale (sosiaal, kultureel, ekonomies en simbolies) effektief kan gebruik in ooreenstemming met hul eie habitus. Die verskillende soorte kapitaal is beskryf as instaatstellers vir hoofleierskap, en wanneer hierdie kapitaal geharmoniseer word met wat van waarde is in die skool as 'n instelling, word dit maklik om doeltreffend te bestuur. Verder erken Bourdieu se teorie die kwessie van mag in leierskap. Skoolhoofde se mag word deur wetgewing gelegitimeer. Skoolhoofde beskik oor hiërargiese mag wat gedelegeer word deur die Departementshoof om ingeligte besluite te neem om leerderprestasie te verbeter. Skoolhoofde is in 'n regmatige posisie - deur hierdie mag - om verandering in skole te beïnvloed. Verskeie vorme van mag is bespreek en daar is gevind dat dit ontbreek in onderpresterende skole; wettige, beloning, charisma en dwingende (positiewe of negatiewe) mag.

Die bevindinge het die behoefte aan strategie-ontwikkeling aan die lig gebring. Die strategie is daarop gemik om skoolhoofde te help om hul onderprestasie in skole te verbeter. Die strategie het duidelik uitgewys hoe skoolhoofde hul habitus, kapitaal en mag kan aanwend om onderprestasie in landelike skole te verbeter. Aksies wat deur skoolhoofde geneem moet word om leerderprestasie te verbeter, is duidelik uiteengesit. Die strategie het ook die potensiële kapitaal en mag aan die lig gebring wat deur skoolhoofde aangewend kan word om leerderprestasie te verbeter.

Sleutelwoorde: Vermoë, invloed, skoolhoofde, lae prestasie, sekondêre skole, landelike gebiede, strategie.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EI- Emotional intelligence
PD- Professional Development
SMT- School Management Team
QMS - Quality Management Systems
LTSM – Learner-Teacher-Support-Materials
SGB – School Governing Body
UP – Under-performing schools
P- Performing schools
PAM – Personnel Administrative Measures

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1 Introduction and background

After 1994, the focus of the South African government was to achieve equity, quality, and access to basic education (Department of Basic Education, 2015). The government has not only been successful in providing accessible education opportunities for its citizenry but also ensured equal education for all, which enhanced the matric completion rate among black learners from 37 per cent in 2008 to 65,7 per cent in 2015 (Jeynes, 2016; Department of Basic Education, 2017a). Despite all the above-mentioned achievements by the government, studies continue to show that dysfunctional schools in rural areas are still experiencing poor performance in this regard (Alexander, 2017).

The Department of Education in 2004 developed the National Strategy for Learner Attainment (NSLA), which was aimed at introducing new intervention strategies containing both short- and long-term goals to improve learner performance while making sure there are improved quality learner results in all South African schools. This programme had three strategic priorities: (1) training, development, and the retention of educators; (2) the provision of learning and teaching support material; and (3) increasing contact time (Fleisch et al., 2007). The NSLA integrated national and provincial initiatives into a mission directed programme, which is used as an intervention strategy to tackle low performance in schools. Despite the NSLA initiative, there is still a concern that very little has changed as the same schools continue to be dysfunctional and underperforming (Van der Berg et al., 2011; Department of Basic Education, 2016a). Moreover, research still indicates that 8 out of 10 learners in Grade 6 – in rural areas – cannot read for meaning (Kodisang, 2015). Therefore, the problem persists in the early years of secondary school where most of these learners cannot pass Grade 9 (Department of Basic Education, 2017b).

The provincial Member of the Executive Committee (MEC) for education – in his matric results announcement – indicated that rural secondary schools in the Limpopo province are largely characterised by grade repetition; most underperforming schools in rural areas are considered to have numerous social impediments instigated by the social environments where they are situated in (Kgetjepe, 2017). He further indicated that for three years – from 2014 to 2016 – the Limpopo province has recorded a steady number of under-performing schools of 34, 1 per cent; 37,6 per cent and 34,4 per cent respectively. These numbers clearly indicate that schools in this province continue to underperform despite the introduction of several interventions by the Limpopo Department of Education.

This study sought to investigate the ability of school principals to influence the improvement of learner performance in rural areas. The ability of principals was investigated using Bourdieu's theory of habitus, field, capital, and power and/or influence in the ability of principals to improve learner performance. This study aimed to identify contextual (field) and personal (individual) factors (habitus) that contribute to the ability of principals to influence the improvement of under-performance in rural schools. During the process to improve the learner performance, principals should be able to use the different capitals which may provide them with power to be potentially successful in this endeavour. Taking the aforementioned into account, strategies were developed to enhance the ability of principals to influence the improvement of under-performance in rural schools. In this chapter, the researcher discussed the problem statement of the study, which included keywords clarification followed by the research questions of the study. Furthermore, the theoretical framework and the research methods used together with the sampling strategy and the method of data generation are also discussed including the trustworthiness of the research and the ethics of the research.

1.2 Problem statement

For any school to function effectively and successfully, there must be effective school leadership; for among other reasons, when a school performs very poorly or below the required standard there is several contextual and personal issues that may hamper the ability of the principal to provide effective leadership (Joubert & Van Royen, 2012). Previous research indicates that effective schools depend on the leadership skills and ability of the principal to find the right path and to motivate others (Straus & Miller, 2016). In the South African context, a secondary school is deemed under-performing when it scores an overall pass rate of less than the national and/or provincial standard of 65 per cent in its national senior certificate (NCS) (Department of Basic Education, 2017a). A school is classified as under-performing when it falls short of attaining the genuine purpose of teaching and learning – for which it is meant – because of abnormalities in its functioning (Bipath, 2012; Modisaotsile, 2012). A school is also regarded as under-performing when among other factors; the principal and the school management team (SMT) are unable to perform their duties effectively (The Economist, 2012). Under-performance, among other things, is exhibited through the following features: management conditions that are ever-changing, a lack of leadership, being visionless, an unhealthy school climate and culture and depleted staff and low learner morale (Jansen, 2016).

The primary focus and expectation from society are that all learners who go to school will achieve academically. It is therefore a call for concern when learners in rural areas demonstrate under-proficiency in reading, writing and numeracy. Learners attending schools – previously regarded as Model C schools – attain academic results like the standards of developed countries (Westaway, 2015; Statistics South Africa [Stats SA], 2017). Although black and coloured middle-class children are increasingly migrating to the former 'only white, coloured and Indian' schools, those who remain

in the rural areas continue to perform below the national standard (Spaull, 2017). Research has indicated that learners in South Africa's urban schools, which account for 25 per cent, outperform learners from rural schools, which account for the remaining 75 per cent (Spaull, 2013; Westaway, 2015).

The minister of basic education agrees that the quality of education in rural areas is substandard and indicated that it is indeed a worrying factor since there are no signs of improvement (Department of basic education, 2014a; Kgetjepe, 2017). Moreover, the Department of Basic education in South Africa is failing to reverse the unacceptably low pass rate of Grade 12 learners in townships and rural areas. The press statement released by the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, agrees with the results from the South and Eastern Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ), which stated that the quality of education has remained very poor, meaning that the output has not improved (Spaull, 2017). In the process of analysing the results from SACMEQ, the minister indicated that learners from rural schools lack a proper foundation; hence, there is no outcome in Grade 12.

Further results from international assessment bodies such as Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) confirm that learners in rural public schools perform worse in languages, mathematics and science when compared to their urban counterparts (Makgato & Mji, 2008; Spaull, 2017). Other results for literacy and numeracy assessments, extracted from the National School Effectiveness Study (NSES), reveal that Grade 5 learners in historically black schools perform, on average, worse than the Grade 3 learners in the previously white schools (Taylor, 2011). This means that by early primary school the amount of uncovered educational work the learners – in the previously black schools – have is almost equal to two years of learning.

The poor annual Grade 12 pass rate in provinces such as Limpopo, Kwazulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape can be attributed to, among other things, the failure of school leadership in the area of control and monitoring, and weak school governing bodies (SGBs) (Bloch, 2009; Pretorius, 2014). Irrespective of South Africa being reported as having a high-cost education system, the performance remains very low compared to other African countries such as Tunisia, Mauritius, Malawi, Zambia, and Senegal (Ananga, 2010). This warrants that quick attention to issues of effective school leadership which will focus on improving quality at primary school level and even in Early Childhood Development (ECD) be given. Therefore, it is imperative that there is effective and efficient leadership in schools to make sure that educators honour their classes diligently; those parents show an interest in the education of their children and that learners too should take their education seriously (The Economist, 2012).

Research on effective education systems pointed out that it is impossible for the quality of the school system to be able to exceed the quality of its teaching force (Modisaotsile, 2012). Low educator effort and inefficient, or improper, monitoring by the principal and his/her management team is usually regarded as one of the most serious challenges in South African schooling – possibly even more serious than weak educator content knowledge and weak pedagogical skills to teach the curriculum successfully (Bipath, 2012). A closely related matter is the failure of principals in under-performing schools to manage the issue of educator absenteeism. Research has proven that 11 per cent of teaching time is lost due to educator absenteeism (Legotlo, 2011). In schools with low pass rates cases such as one-day leave are visibly more prevalent on Mondays and Fridays compared to other days of the week pointing to a misuse of the leave measures to stretch out weekends by both educators and learners (Makgato & Mji, 2008).

Few studies that have been conducted recently has called attention to the improper influence on the recommendation of correcting individuals such as principals, by the SGBs, in rural areas and the weak principals' induction by the department (Modisaotsile, 2012; Baloyi, 2017). Notwithstanding the piling evidence, it is unclear what can be done about their leadership skills and poor knowledge. The Department of Basic Education's (DBE) current strategy of short capacity building courses does not appear to be as effective as intended (Spaull, 2013). Short induction workshop courses lasting approximately 1 to 2 days yield little impact. It is becoming clear that intensive in-service capacity building, for a period lasting more than one week per year, is needed to equip school leaders of under-performing schools with the knowledge they need to manage effectively (Taylor, 2008).

Ineffective school leadership in South Africa's under-performing schools has been identified as the result of ineffective training, which has traditionally centred on the training of individuals rather than collective capacity building. For instance, the interactive sessions provided in the Advanced Certificate in school leadership for principals were largely unsuccessful (Bush et al., 2011). Hence, schools need sustainable leadership that will look beyond individual leaders by building capacity not only in principals but in all stakeholders in the school also. International research conducted in Georgia, (in the United States of America [USA]), indicated a great success in collective development (Fullan, 2010). The research further indicated that collective development has assisted school leaders in collaborating with all stakeholders within the school and with other principals. If South Africa is determined to change the status of education in rural areas, it will, therefore, require a paradigm shift in education management and leadership training (Statistics South Africa (STATS SA), 2015).

Developed countries have also shown outstanding results in the system of collaboration where principals work together with fellow school leaders with mutual understanding and trust by building relationships and by relying on one another (Punt et al., 2008). Collaboration is a prospect for learner improvement in under-performing schools. From the perspective of system theory, developing

school-leadership links between schools is crucial to advancing systemic change (Bipath, 2012). However, principals in under-performing schools in South African rural areas have indicated a lack of interest in the system of partnership and collaboration (Jansen, 2016).

Previous research indicated that school principals of under-performing schools have constantly been using the same – and only – type of supervision, which is highly unlikely to fit in with the requirement of all situations (Bloch, 2009; Ipata, 2011). Due to poor supervision in under-performing schools, principals are unable to control and/or monitor time management and absenteeism by educators and learners (Christie, 2010). The lack of time management in under-performing schools is one of the most important indicators of ineffective school leadership (Spaull, 2017). Studies have labelled the issue of ineffective time management by principals as the most contributing factor in dysfunctionality wherein the majority of educators and learners in under-performing schools in rural areas do not report to school on the opening day; most educators write their schemes of work when schools re-open and then go to class without planned lessons, and a lack of regular staff meetings and morning assemblies that take longer to adjourn, which consumes classroom time (Westaway, 2015).

An experiential learning study undertaken in Guinea and India discovered that under-performing schools have school principals who are poorly trained in monitoring and evaluation techniques (Kimbui, 2012). For schools to achieve their own set targets, there should be a continuous process of monitoring and evaluation. The above-mentioned study further indicated a lack of capacity, foresight, and no mechanisms for monitoring the performance of both educators and learners; hence, there is no early detection for remedial action (Ananga, 2010). Research conducted globally has pointed out that under-performing schools have low expectations for student achievement while pitching high targets with the assumption that learners will attain them on their own (Ananga, 2010). The research further indicated that in developed countries, educators and authorities expect almost half of the learners to drop out of the education system or to fail. On the other hand, schools that are prioritising student learning promulgate their expectations clearly by giving learners regular tasks, monitoring learner outcomes and offering learners the opportunity to engage in and take responsibility for various school activities (Mobegi et al., 2010).

Another identified aspect of ineffective school leadership in under-performing schools is the failure of school principals to hold the deputy principal and the departmental heads (at a school level) accountable for their work in the effective control and monitoring of curriculum management in the school (Taole, 2013). Therefore, principals in under-performing schools feel that the responsibility lies solely with their departmental heads (Vilakazi, 2016). With this being the case, instructions become weak and ineffective because educators become lax and underperform, which ultimately results in learner underperformance (Bush et al., 2011).

An effective principal can create a plan for all educators to follow by communicating the expectations of the school and the department to them (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009). Research indicated that a lack of motivation and determination by principals of under-performing schools to create a plan for educators to follow, to let them know what is expected on classroom management and learner behaviour and to capacitate educators on how to handle misconduct and ill-disciplined behaviour from learners is what separates effective and functional schools from under-performing schools (Parr & Timperley, 2010). Research further proved that educators do not know which cases to handle themselves and which ones to refer to the principal; in most cases, the principal deals with all cases of discipline on his own (Alexander, 2017). Every principal as a leader needs to make sure that the staff members collaborate to attain the common goals and objectives of the school. Therefore, no manager can successfully steer an institution without authority. The power of the principal is legitimised by legislation stating that he/she may take actions in line with guidelines or policy against those who intentionally work against the rest of the staff to achieve set goals (Bush et., 2011). The South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996 Section 16A states that school principals have been given authority by the Head of Department (HOD) to delegate authority to subordinates. The principal of a school has legal powers to act on behalf of the HOD and to make independent decisions guided by broad guidelines of relevant legislation and departmental policies.

Principals of secondary schools in the Limpopo Province are expected to give an account to the HOD for their schools' under-performance at the beginning of each year (Kgetjepe, 2017). It is their duty to give an account of their under-performance in terms of their responsibilities, as set out in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 Section 16A. Principals are accountable on issues related to the professional management of the school, the curriculum, administrative affairs, and infrastructure (Bipath, 2012). Despite this effort by the department, little or nothing has changed to improve the results of under-performing schools in rural areas. Principals are also expected to submit their strategies for improving results, but no follow up has been recorded by the department to check on the implementation of these strategies (Department of Basic Education, 2017b).

Principals (by virtue of their position) are in a position of power and authority to command, give orders and influence others to respond to their requests and orders (Fobosi, 2013). Principals are expected to use their power of influence, given to them by the legislation, to ensure effective and sustainable quality education. However, research indicates that principals in under-performing schools in rural areas are not able to enforce school discipline (Jeynes, 2016). These principals instead exercise their power and authority by drafting school policies, which in most cases are just acting as 'white elephants' and are not communicated and/or implemented by the relevant structures (Bloch, 2009). Therefore, the issue of a lack of discipline becomes not only a school problem but also a societal issue wherein these under-performing schools are situated (Jansen, 2016).

A school's ability to improve quality results through quality curriculum delivery is largely inspired by the leadership of its principal. However, in most cases, the role of the principal in this matter is constrained by the socio-economic conditions that surround the school (Alexander, 2017), some of these socio-economic issues are extremely difficult to overcome, such as child-headed families, absent parents (due to work), lack of electricity, lack of running water, unemployment (families depending on social grants only) and immigrant families (Bipath, 2012). However, there is little to nothing that the principal or the school can do about these issues, and yet they impact directly on school attendance and learner performance (Christie et al., 2010; Kotze', 2015). Therefore, since the problem of under-performance in rural schools has been in existence for a long time with no clear strategy to fix the problem, this study sought to investigate the ability of school principals to influence the improvement of under-performance in secondary schools in rural areas.

Research has proven that schools in rural areas are struggling to manage external and internal factors, which directly influence the quality of teaching and learning, such as the bad influence of the society or neighbourhood that disturb the curriculum (e.g. service delivery protests), the racial mix and the place where the school is situated (Spaull, 2017) as well as other internal factors such as educators' behaviour and conduct, educators' qualifications, resources, work ethics, educators' unions. Hence, Bourdieu's theory was used to investigate how principals can use various capitals and power to effectively manage these external and internal factors to improve learner performance. Moreover, this study also looked at the various abilities of the principal to influence the improvement of learner performance, such as thinking ability, communication ability, interpersonal ability, and the power to influence subordinates.

Bourdieu's theory (discussed in detail in chapter 2) was used to further explore whether the habitus of the principal can have influence in improving learner performance in the field in which the schools is located, namely rural, low socio-economic deprived communities. While other contributing factors of learner performance as well as developing strategies to improve the leadership capacity of school principals in these under-performing schools since the accountability strategy, by the department, does not seem to be yielding positive results or improving schools. Most township and rural schools in the Limpopo province share similar traditional limiting factors and impediments to student learning, which are, poor family background, few material and human resources, learners whose home language is not English, semi-illiterate parents (parents with less than high school education) and child-headed families (Kgetjepe, 2017). However, very few of these schools' learners who are found in rural areas are experiencing the same low socio-economic circumstances that produce excellent academic success irrespective of society's difficulties. One may ask what alternative strategies these schools are executing that most schools within the same area cannot.

1.3 Keywords and clarification

1.3.1 Under-performing school

In the South African context, a school is regarded as under-performing if it fails to reach the national and provincial target or pass rate (Kgetjepe, 2017). Consequently, the results obtained in the Senior Certificate Examination (SCE) identify a school to be functional – or otherwise (Department of Basic Education, 2019). The SCE is administered to all Grade 12 learners in South Africa in both public and private schools. Schools with an average pass rate of 70 to 100 per cent in the SCE are considered effective and functional whereas schools that achieve a pass rate of less than 65 per cent are under-performing schools (Taylor, 2008). This study used the terms low performing, underperforming and/or dysfunctional when referring to the situation where schools are not performing at the expected academic level.

1.3.2 Leadership

Leadership is defined in an authoritative manner as the integrated and dynamic implementation of skills to persuade, encourage and bind and guide followers to become fully aware of their common ideals (Van der Westhuizen, 2015). It is further described as the process of collaborating with other people to meaningfully identify and achieve shared goals (Christie et al., 2010). Leadership is the most important element in any organisation; therefore, without the ability to lead, the principal will not be successful even though he/she may be an extremely learned or qualified person. Furthermore, leadership can further be explained as a formal or informal control directed towards outcomes or goals (Christie, 2010). While leadership is often expressed in terms of individual attributes, it is even more useful when it is framed in terms of powerful social relationships by which some may influence others. Meanwhile, the core foundation of leadership is the ability of the leader to lead by influence and consent rather than coercion (Fullan, 2010).

1.3.3 Rural areas

Rural areas are referred to as those areas in the countryside that have no access to public services; they are also characterised by inadequate infrastructural facilities, low income, insufficient access to clean water and have limited access to healthcare facilities (Fobosi, 2013). Rural areas impair the ability of most people to obtain food and personal hygiene; it also hampers people from living or staying in an environment that is clean (Mayende, 2010). Furthermore, rural areas are large, remote, and isolated areas with a low population density. It is generally divided into tribal areas and agricultural farms (Simandan, 2017).

1.3.4 Principal

A principal(ship) is a systemic role, carrying with its obligations and accountabilities. The principal is the most senior position in the school and his/her responsibility is to manage all functions of the school, i.e., professional, academic and governance issues (Bloch, 2009). Principals are legally responsible for all the activities and the school's performance. The principal formally acts on behalf of the school and is legally responsible for symbolic procedures, such as assemblies and ceremonies (Christie, 2010). Although the power of a leader is demonstrated by means of influence, the strength of the manager – who in this case is the principal – may officially go beyond permission and influence on compulsive control (Habegger, 2008). Principals, as they hold structural positions in the school, subscribe to the mission and goals of the school and the primary tasks of the school, and, therefore, their achievement and shortcomings are measured in this regard (Bloch, 2009).

A principal is appointed in a post that is predominantly a managerial position. However, by virtue of the position of leadership in schools, the principal is also expected to be a leader. Thus, it can become difficult to separate leadership and management for the person in the post. However, the personnel administrative management (PAM) document and the standards for principalship require the principal to carry out managerial duties; in PAM there is limited reference to leadership activities of the principal as it often relates to management tasks.

1.3.5 Strategy

A strategy is regarded as a high-level plan or tactic aimed at achieving organisational goals under serious constraints and uncertain circumstances (Rumelt, 2011). The importance of a strategy is that the available resources to achieve organisational goals are usually scarce or limited and any organisation, including a school, needs to set goals to determine actions aimed at achieving set goals and to organise resources to implement actions (Freedman, 2013). A strategy explains how the scarce and/or unavailable resources can be used to achieve desired outcomes; it includes how activities such as strategic planning and strategic thinking can be conducted.

A strategy can be further described as a human attempt to shape the future (Freedman, 2015). It is also referred to as a method of discovering, formulating, and establishing a doctrine, which if followed correctly and faithfully will guarantee long-term success (Simandan, 2018). The strategy usually requires two main formulation processes and execution. Formulation involves the evaluation of the environment, defining the condition and monitoring the situation, doing a diagnosis, and finally designing guiding policies while implementation refers to the action taken to implement goals set out by the guiding policy (Freedman, 2015).

1.3.6 Ability

Ability refers to the combination of a person's natural talent and the possession of a skill to perform a particular task (Simandan, 2018). It includes the mental and/or physical power of an individual to do something (Taole & Ramorola, 2014). Taole and Ramorola (2014) further explained ability is also defined as "an inborn ability and power of a person to perform a particular function or task. In this study, the term ability has been used in reference to the aptitude, personal intelligence, knowledge, and intellectual giftedness of school principals to perform their professional duties. It further refers to the ability of the principal to follow logic, to perform abstract thinking, to be self-aware of personal level of knowledge and wisdom and to be able to influence people or events (Bipath, 2012).

1.3.7 Influence

Influence can be regarded as the ability to inspire people to follow a certain cause or direction (Sammons & Day, 2014). It is the capacity of a leader to have a compelling force on the actions, behaviour, and opinions of subordinates (Hoff, 2016). Influence in this study refers to the ability of the principal to persuade people to work towards the established and shared vision and values, and to inspire commitment from every team member (Mitchell, 2015).

1.4 Research questions

The study was guided by the following main and sub research question:

The primary research question was: What is the ability of school principals to influence the improvement of learner performance in rural areas in Limpopo?

The sub research questions were:

- What does effective school leadership entail?
- How can effective school leadership improve poor academic performance or sustain high academic performance?
- What are the challenges experienced by principals in rural schools that lead to low academic performance?
- Why do school principals find it difficult to influence the improvement of low academic performance?
- How can Bourdieu's theory be used to explain principals' ability to influence learner performance in rural schools?
- Which strategies can school principals employ to improve low academic performance levels?

1.5 Research purpose and objectives

The main purpose of the study was to establish the ability of school principals to influence the improvement of learner performance in rural areas in Limpopo.

The following research objectives were therefore identified:

- To determine from relevant literature what effective school leadership entails.
- To determine how effective school leadership can improve poor academic performance or sustain high academic performance.
- To identify what the leadership challenges experienced by principals in rural areas are.
- To examine why school principals find it difficult to influence the improvement of low academic performance.
- To explore how Bourdieu's theory can be used to explain principals' ability to influence learner performance in rural schools.
- To formulate strategies that can be employed by school principals to improve learner performance in schools.

1.6 Theoretical framework

This study used the theory of habitus, field, capital, and power – as developed by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's theory emanates from his work on the analysis of French society. This theory is now applied and used to understand leadership in education. The theory consists of the following main concepts:

1.6.1 Habitus

Habitus comprises of socially engrained habits, skills, and dispositions. It is viewed as the way people perceive the social world around them to react to it. The habitus represents the way group culture and personal history shape the body and the mind. as a result it shapes actions of individuals (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu (1986) further explains that habitus consist of hexis (the tendency to hold and use one' s body in a certain way such as posture and accent) and more abstract mental habits, schemes of perception, classification, appreciation, feeling and action. In other words, Habitus is regarded as the way in which a society becomes deposited in a person in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them. Moreover, Habitus is neither a result of free will, nor determined by structures, but created by a kind of interplay between dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures, and that shape current practices and structures and, importantly, that

condition our very perceptions of these. In this sense habitus is created and reproduced unconsciously, 'without any deliberate pursuit of coherence and without any conscious concentration'.

1.6.2 Field

Bourdieu refer to the field as “a structured system of social positions that either individuals or organisations can occupy” (Bourdieu 1985; Chepp, 2013). Bourdieu further described the field as a system of objective relations and a space of possible actions and struggles aimed at preserving or transforming the field (Bourdieu, 1984). In this case, the “field” refers to the school. The school, as a field, is complex with shifting boundaries that involve social and economic conditions and any subsequent struggles for power and/or control (Riley, 2017). In the case of this study, the emphasis was mainly placed on the role and activities of the principal and the ways in which principals engage in the education field. Bourdieu’s “thinking tools” enabled the researcher to investigate the principal’s ability to address learner performance, how their experiences inform and mould their efficiency, how the habitus of the principal has led them to a leadership role – either consciously or otherwise – and how do they cope in these specific roles.

1.6.3 Power

Bourdieu’s theory recognises the issue of power and capitals. Bourdieu perceives power as culturally and symbolically generated. People also perceive power differently depending on the field they find themselves in at a particular time (Bourdieu, 1985); hence, context and environment are important influences on habitus. Bourdieu further explained that conflicts and inconsistencies occur when people interact in various ways or contexts. His theory can be used to understand the way in which people, in an organisation, can counter and endure power in one field and express complicity in another. Fields helped to demonstrate the various powers that school principals possess in both public and private structures.

Bourdieu explained power by referring to the concept of “doxa”, which is the combination of orthodox and heterodox, which refers to the person’s norms and beliefs (Bourdieu, 1984). Doxa usually occurs when people in an organisation forget the limits of “the powers that be”, and it often give rise to unequal divisions and misunderstanding. Bourdieu further explained two types of power, i.e., “invisible power”, which may refer to the hierarchical power within the system itself and “power within”, which recognises one’s own biases, beliefs, and assumptions in the act of sense-making (Bourdieu, 1986). This study used the habitus and field theory to determine the application of power by principals to influence the improvement of learner performance in schools.

1.6.4 Capital

Capital is explained as the accumulated labour in its materialised, incorporated, and embodied form which when correctly applied provide social energy in the form of reified or living labour (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu (1984) and Chepp (2013) further explained the four categories of capitals: economic, symbolic, cultural, and social. As principals enter the field of education, other capitals – inherited from the past – become enablers, and when these capitals match what the school values most – as an institution – it then becomes easy to manage it effectively.

1.6.4.1 Cultural capital

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital refers to the compilation of the symbolic components of the principal, such as expertise, skills, mannerisms, and the credentials that he/she accumulated by becoming a member of a specific social class (Bourdieu, 1985). Cultural capital refers to how and when the principal knows what to do (Bourdieu, 1984). It further reflects on the qualities of the principal and the level of preparedness to occupy the principalship post. Riley (2017:5) explained the Bourdieu cultural theory in the following three forms: embodied, objectified, and institutionalised.

- **Embodied cultural capital** consists of the principal's knowledge, which is consciously gained and/or passively inherited by means of social interaction and tradition. It usually comes in the form of long-lasting mental and bodily dispositions. This type of capital is not transmissible but is rather acquired over time as it is impressed upon the principal's habitus, which is his/her character and his/her way of thinking, which eventually becomes more receptive to common cultural stimuli.
- The embodied cultural capital can also be the principal's means of communication and self-presentation, which may be obtained from the national culture.
- **Objectified cultural capital** comprises the school's property, which can be exchanged for economic gain – via buying and selling. It refers to the ability of the school to acquire and maintain property. In this case, objectified capital can be pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, and machines found in the school.
- **Institutionalised cultural capital** comprises an institution's formal acknowledgement of the principal's academic and professional qualification. It includes formal qualifications, such as degrees and titles, which represents the integrity and competence of the principal.

1.6.4.2 Economic capital

Economic capital refers to access to financial resources, such as money, property, and other assets in the school (Bourdieu, 1986; Chepp, 2013). It also speaks to the ability of the school principal to properly manage the school funds.

1.6.4.3 Symbolic capital

Symbolic capital refers to the way the principal's status, reputation and respect are held (De Vos et al, 2011). It includes the widespread respect and admiration that the principal holds in the public or community (Ihlen, 2018).

1.6.4.4 Social capital

Social capital refers to the social networks (i.e., who the principal knows and associates with) of potential influence, and the support structure of the principal from his/her family, community, and staff (Chepp, 2013). It also draws back to the guidance and motivation that the principal received before choosing a profession. This also extends to the kinds of relationships among faculty staff members, including any social activities outside of school. The amount of social capital that the principal owns is based on the size of the network connections that he/she can successfully mobilise and on the amount of capital that is possessed by all those he/she is connected to.

1.7 Paradigm, research approach and design

This study was underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm with the interest of reflecting on the meaning of participants in their natural setting (Babbie, 2011). Interpretivism deals with the subjective internal reality as seen by the principals of under-performing schools in rural areas. The interpretivist view is that the complexity of the social phenomena cannot be explained by simple fundamental laws (Blumberg et al, 2011). Hence, Interpretivists claim that it is impossible to observe the social world merely as it has meaning for humans and that it is constructed by intentional behaviour and actions. Therefore, the interpretivist stance in this study was aimed at interpreting the meaning, experiences, and perceptions of principals in terms of their ability to address under-performance.

Denscombe (2010) explained the four basic principles of interpretivism as follows:

- People construct and give meaning to the social world. The ability of school principals to address under-performance can only be understood from their own perceptions and interpretation. This refers to the way principals make sense of their ability to address under-performance in their own schools.

- People are conscious beings, and their behaviour is affected by the knowledge of their own world; principals' actions and the execution of their tasks are also affected by what they know about their roles as principals.
- The researcher is always part of what is observed: in this case, the researcher was within the education system observing the ability of principals to address under-performance in rural schools.
- The research was also driven by the interests of the researcher to identify, investigate and explore the ability of the principal to address under-performance in rural areas.

The researcher, in this study, preferred a qualitative approach since the main aim of the study was to gain an understanding of a process or phenomenon (Gaber & Gaber, 2017). This researcher used a qualitative research approach by means of a phenomenological study. Qualitative research is a form of social enquiry that reflects on how people view and make sense of their own experiences and the world they live in (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This qualitative research study focuses on the principals' perspectives while stressing the importance of their individual perceptions and beliefs.

Qualitative research data, in this study, includes textual materials from interviews with participants. In this study, the researcher collected, organised, and interpreted factors contributing to the ability of school principals to influence the improvement of learner performance in secondary schools. The qualitative study, therefore, involved fieldwork (Kuckartz, 2014); the researcher went to sampled secondary schools and met with the participants. Data in this study were collected verbally during interviews as it focused mainly on understanding the ability of principals from their own views and experiences.

Qualitative research studies deal with words instead of numbers; it is rich with quotations, descriptions, and narration (Trotter, 2012). Qualitative researchers strive to capture conversations, experiences, perspectives, voices, and the meanings of participants (De Vos et al., 2011). Therefore, this research study solely depended on the views, experiences, and perspectives of school principals in terms of what they perceive as factors that hamper their ability to address under-performance in their schools. This research study resonated with the views of Creswell (2009:175-177) and Leedy and Ormrod (2010:94-97) when they explained the characteristics of qualitative research as follows:

- Qualitative research is normally conducted in the natural settings of participants. This research study was conducted in schools where participants were familiar with the environment.
- Qualitative researchers describe a phenomenon with words; as such, school principals gave their opinions, ideas, and experiences rather than using numbers.

- The emphasis of this research study was based on the process of addressing under-performance in schools rather than the results.
- This study was also based on inductive logic, which went from the specific to the general.
- Qualitative research presents an evident search for meaning on how principals made sense of their ability to address under-performance in schools.

This study employed a phenomenological strategy of inquiry. A phenomenological study explores the implications of various individuals' perceptions of a phenomenon, subject, or concept (Babbie, 2011). This approach was aimed at understanding principals' lived experiences as they perceive, construct, give meaning to, describe, explain, and streamline daily actions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Phenomenology is aimed at explaining events or phenomena from the viewpoints of those who encounter those (Gaber & Gaber, 2017). In particular, the main purpose was to understand the principals' experiences, knowledge and how this added meaning to their daily experiences and observations, and to grasp the nature of a phenomenon as they experience it. It was through phenomenological enquiry that the researcher sought to understand the ability of the principals to address under-performance in schools.

Through a phenomenological study, the researcher attempted to understand the perceptions, perspectives, and views of school principals of under-performing schools in terms of what hinders their ability to address under-performance. The researcher attempted to look at multiple perspectives to generalise from an insider's perspective. The phenomenological approach was aimed at understanding and interpreting the meaning that participants gave to their everyday life. Phenomena usually focus on investigating the dynamics of social phenomena in order to obtain understanding (Babbie, 2010). The aim of this study was therefore to understand, analyse and interpret daily the experiences of the principal and the phenomenal values that the principal attaches to the phenomena. The researcher believes that social truth is empirical and subjective since it is shaped by the principals' experiences – as participants – as well as the researchers' values and aims.

1.7.1 Population and Sampling

The population for this study included principals of secondary schools in rural areas in Limpopo Province. A purposive sampling strategy was used in this study. This type of selection assisted the researcher to purposefully identify participants to be included in the study sample based on their characteristics (Trotter, 2012). A common feature, on which the selection of schools was based, was on their academic performance within the same geographical area. A purposive sample was chosen in a deliberative and non-random manner to achieve a specific goal (Cohen et al., 2013). Participants in this study were chosen based on their distinctive features and ability to provide the much-needed

information. Purposive sampling is tailored to the interpretive paradigm because a small sample was used, which focused on depth rather than breadth (Mouton, 2011).

The sample consisted of ten secondary school principals. These schools were meticulously selected because of their performance. Five of the selected schools either performed below the national standards of the 65 per cent matric pass rate (Kgetjepe, 2017) for the last three years, or they remained at the bottom of the list of achieved schools within the district for the past three years showing little or no improvement. The remaining five well-performing schools either achieved a matric pass rate above 80 per cent for the last three years, or they have shown improvement towards a pass rate of above 80 per cent in the last three years. Therefore, it was important for the researcher to identify the underlying factors behind the ability of some principals to maintain the standards within the same geographic area and the same socio-economic environment, and the inability of the other principals to improve the under-performance in their schools. The schools were purposefully selected from the same district and the same environmental and social conditions.

In each selected school there was an in-depth individual interview conducted with the principal. All the ten selected schools are located within the Limpopo Province. A common feature in these schools is that they are all largely characterised by poverty, high levels of unemployment, orphaned children, child-headed families, and poor basic services. However, the sampling of these schools was motivated strictly by their matric pass rates.

1.7.2 Method of data generation

The main data generation technique used in this study was individual interviews. Interpretive researchers attempt to derive their data through direct interaction with the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2009). Individual interviews were the only method used for the collection of data. An interview is a two-way dialogue in which the interviewer asks questions to the interviewee in order to gather evidence and learn about the participants' attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, and viewpoints (Mouton, 2011). An individual interview was used wherein the interviewer posed questions to each of the participants. It was through these interviews – of the principals of the sampled schools – which the researcher came to understand the principals' ability or inability to address under-performance in schools. The researcher had direct contact with participants in their respective schools by conducting individual interviews to gather information verbally using a series of questions that were written down beforehand. Interviews are very productive since they deal with real problems that can lead to informed and constructive recommendations and suggestions (Seidman, 2013). The researcher used interviews because of their distinctive advantages, as explained by Seidman (2013):

- a. They give the researcher a direct contact with participants.
- b. It provides detailed information about the topic under study.

c. It only requires a limited number of participants to gather detailed and comprehensive data.

The researcher used semi-structured interviews to collect data. Semi-structured interviews use a set of predetermined questions, which are clearly worded (Cohen et al., 2013). Semi-structured interviews are considered in-depth interviews because they are not as linear as formal or structured interviews (Babbie, 2010). The researcher in this study preferred semi-structured interviews as it allowed for further the researcher to ask additional questions for clarity (Denscombe, 2010). The researcher's goal in this study was to explore the topic in detail by allowing participants to voice their ideas and opinions freely and in their own words. In most cases, these questions were not entirely closed and, therefore, they did not require precise answers; rather, the researcher probed for more answers. This type of interview was easy to conduct as the same questions were asked to all the participants (Cloete et al., 2015). The researcher made field notes during the interview process to record non-verbal gestures and other useful information and actions.

1.7.3 Method of data analysis

Data were analysed in this study by reading the interview transcripts repeatedly in search of meaning (Cloete et al., 2015). The collection of data through individual interviews were analysed by means of breaking them up into small and manageable themes by coding them, then synthesising them and then searching for patterns, trends, and relationships to understand and make sense of them (Mouton, 2011; Saldanha, 2016). Data were further analysed using content analysis (CA). CA is a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis (Krippendorff, 2013). Through CA, the researcher was able to summarise and identify message content. The researcher used the process of CA to code raw messages according to a classification scheme (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). During the analysis process, the researcher manually organised and transcribed the data. The transcribed data were coded manually, classified, and then transformed into understandable information. The coding process included the arrangement of communication content, which helped the researcher to define, index and retrieve information related to the primary research question (Cloete et al., 2015). Data in this study were reduced by grouping various codes together in categories with the aim of identifying themes related to the primary research question.

1.7.4 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research studies involves the correctness and appropriateness of the data collected (Gaber & Gaber, 2017). In this study, the following methods were used to ensure trustworthiness – as adopted from Creswell and Creswell (2017:142):

- A voice recorder was used to record the interviews.
- An interview schedule was developed to assist the interviewer not to repeat or miss questions, and to make sure the same questions were asked to all the participants.

- The researcher addressed the accuracy of the report by seeking the expertise of an external auditor.
- Participants were allowed to do member checking as they were given an opportunity to review the researchers' report.

The trustworthiness of this research study also included ensuring credibility. Credibility is the way in which the researcher is confident about the truthfulness of the research study findings (Babbie, 2011). The researcher ensured credibility by posing the same questions to all the interviewees (Kuckartz, 2014). Participants were given an opportunity to review the data that were collected from them and to view the researcher's interpretation thereof. Member checking was used as the primary method for addressing credibility. Some of the methods that were used to ensure credibility in this study were prolonged engagements with participants and peer debriefing.

The researcher ensured confirmability by showing a degree of neutrality in the research findings. The findings of this research study were based on the responses of participants only, and not on any other elements of possible biases, personal views, or motivation on the part of the researcher that may skew the interpretation of participants in order to fit a particular narrative. The researcher ensured dependability of this study by taking note of every detail of the research study. Therefore, the research process was, logical, traceable, and clearly documented in a reflexive manner by taking care of all necessary information while giving a detailed account of the whole research process (Creswell, 2015). This research study also ensured transferability which involves the degree to which the results of this study can be generalised or transferred to other similar context of rural secondary schools (Trochim, 2022). Further details of the trustworthiness of the study are discussed in chapter 4.

1.7.5 Ethical considerations

Ethics are regarded as codes or rules that govern good practice in research and they give instructions on the proper management of information from participants or informants (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). For this research study, ethics was used as a principle of socially and morally appropriate values that are constitutionally applicable to everyone concerned. Ethical considerations are very critical in any research study as they explain the norms, standards, and procedures for conduct (Maxwell, 2012). This conduct prohibited the researcher from doing what is wrong and what is perceived as unacceptable. The researcher, in this study, adhered to ethics for the sake of the integrity and reliability of the study.

Ethics also refer to the researcher assuring participants of their safety and the protection of their human rights (Agllias, 2011). Ethics in this study addressed issues pertaining to honesty, objectivity, confidentiality, and respect. Ethical principles in qualitative research are primarily centred on the protection of participants. Bricki and Green (2018:78) explained the core ethical principles as follows:

- Respect for people: respecting their human rights and dignity of participants.
- Beneficence: minimising all the risks (physically, socially, and psychologically).
- Justice: only the group of people expected to benefit from the research were selected.
- Respect for the values and interests of the community and to protect them from any possible harm.

As part of ethical considerations for this study, the researcher sought permission from the relevant authorities, such as the Vhembe east district office of the Department of Education, the circuit offices and the selected secondary SGBs. This study further took note of the following:

- The researcher sought clearance and approval from the North-West University (NWU), Faculty of Education Sciences, and ethics committee. The ethics approval number is NWU-01647-19-S2. The researcher also submitted the interview schedule for approval to the committee.
- Participants were informed before the beginning of the interview session that their participation was of their own free will. Therefore, participants were asked to sign a consent form before participating in the interview and if, for any reason, they no longer felt comfortable to participate in the interview they were free to withdraw.
- Participants were notified about the principle of confidentiality and anonymity. Moreover, information would never be shared between participants. The names and identities of the participants were not to be revealed to anyone.
- Participants were given time to decide if they want to participate or not.
- Participants were also ensured of their safety from any possible harm and would not be exposed to any mental or physical harm (Cloete et al., 2015).
- The researcher gave participants an opportunity to read the data collected from them before the submission of the final draft (Blumberg et al., 2011).

1.8 Contribution of the study

This study focused on the leadership of school principals and their ability to influence the improvement of learner performance in schools within the rural context. This study also contributed to the existing and broader knowledge of school leadership as it examined the various abilities of principals and factors that contribute to their ability or inability to influence the improvement of under-

performance. It also sought to develop strategies to assist school principals to influence the improvement of learner performance in schools. However, there was limited evidence on the ability of principals to influence the improvement of learners' performance in schools in rural areas.

The contribution of this study is based on the application of Bourdieu's theory of habitus, field, capital, and power to explain principals' ability to improve learner performance. Bourdieu's theory has not been applied in other studies in South Africa for rural deprived secondary schools to explain principals' ability to improve learner performance in secondary schools in rural areas. Although this theory is based on his observation of the French society which is different from the deprived rural context of South Africa, this thesis contributes a new application and understanding of the theory in a different context. Although it may be different from the original French society, the deprived rural contexts also constitute a society with people and the habitus as well as the specific field in which they function, and the different capitals at their disposal as well as how they choose potential power to achieve certain goals.

Few research exists on school leadership; however, the focus of this research was on the habitus of the principal as well as the application of capital and power in the field to assist the principal to improve learner performance. Bourdieu's theory was used as the lens in which the researcher identified various challenges in principals' ability to improve learner performance. Using Bourdieu's theory adds new insight on explaining and understanding principals' ability to improve performance of learners in secondary schools in rural areas. Using Bourdieu's theory of habitus, field, capital, and power also assisted the researcher to develop strategies to assist principals to effectively apply habitus, power, and capital in the field of education to improve learner performance. This study further looked at various ways to enhance the ability (personal or systemic) of school principals in rural areas to address learner performance. To ensure practical and thorough clarity for policymakers and education specialists, it was important that the ability of the principal to influence the improvement of learner performance be explored and that strategies be developed, communicated, and implemented in under-performing schools in rural areas.

1.9 Summary

This chapter indicated the necessity of the research in exploring the ability of the principal to improve learner performance in under-performing schools in rural areas. It also gave an indication of the methodology used in the research process. The introduction and background for the study was given followed by the problem statement. Keywords used in the research were outlined and explained. Then the research questions and purpose of the study indicated the direction of the research. This chapter also indicated the theoretical framework used in the study. Followed by the research paradigm and design used. Issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations were highlighted.

The contribution of the study concluded the chapter. The following chapter focusses on Bourdieu's theory and school leadership for improvement of learner performance.

CHAPTER 2

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK: BOURDIEU'S THEORY AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP FOR IMPROVEMENT OF LEARNER PERFORMANCE

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter One, it was indicated that the study sought to establish how effective school leadership can improve learner performance in rural schools. Chapter One further indicated that the aim of the study was to establish why school principals find it difficult to improve learner performance in schools. With the above in mind, the current chapter – through Bourdieu's thinking tools of habitus and field – explores the ability of the principal to change underperformance. It is through the above-mentioned theory that the study examined the effective use of capital and power – by the principal – in an endeavour to improve learner performance in rural schools. Noting the fact that schools in rural areas are faced with complex challenges such as high levels of under-performance when compared to schools in urban areas (Spaull, 2013), the focus of this study was on the leadership of the principal in the school. The concept of habitus, field and power directly relates to the main theme of this study of leadership and change in underperforming rural schools.

School leadership has been regarded in previous studies as an important tool for guiding schools out of under-performance and dysfunctionality (Bloch, 2011). Schools, irrespective of the area or environment they are situated in, are expected to correctly implement curricular mandates, ensuring that all learners perform according to the set standards. While looking deep into effective principal leadership, in this study, the theory of habitus and field was used to explore and understand effective school leadership and its ability to improve learner performance in schools. The theory of habitus and field was also used to identify the field of power that influence the principal's leadership in the school. By using this theoretical perspective, one would be able to explore and understand the complexities of school leadership in rural areas that compromise quality education and learner performance.

2.2 School principal and school leadership

The state of South African education has been described by researchers as “disheartening”. About 80 per cent of schools have been identified as not functional; hence, the overall learner performance has remained very low (Spaull, 2013). Most of these schools are in rural areas. The conclusion drawn over the years from these statistics is that learners from rural areas perform worse than their counterparts elsewhere. Moreover, the above-mentioned statistics necessitate probing the leadership practices of principals in managing these under-performing schools. Meanwhile, there has been a wide range of school-effectiveness research (SER) conducted over the past three decades, which mainly outlines the characteristics of effective and functional schools. However, ineffective, dysfunctional and/or under-performing schools are not widely studied in educational

leadership. Hence, little coverage in the current literature regarding the specific characteristics of under-performing schools and ineffective school leadership exists today (Hoadley, 2012). This is because the SER focuses mainly on schools that are functional and effective rather than those that are under-performing and ineffective.

Previous research blames school ineffectiveness on the fact that there has been a significant change in the principal's role, from the actual teaching of learners to a new role that is mainly characterised by administrative duties (Pretorius, 2012). As a result, principals have lost touch with the realities of the classroom – in the context of teaching and learning – and the pedagogic improvement that is necessary for educators to assist learners to achieve their best results. Most principals in schools no longer teach since the current scope of work has increased; the focus currently is mainly on school effectiveness and accountability, which is now a global trend (Sibanda & Baxen, 2016). Moreover, the global expectations and demands from principals have shown a significant shift from principals mainly being instructional leaders to becoming an educational leader who, among other things, is able to foster continuous staff development, parental involvement, and community support and student growth. While previous studies have suggested that the closer principals are to the day-to-day business of teaching and learning the more chances schools must improve learners' academic performance (Spaull, 2016).

Previous studies acknowledge that the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of school leadership lies within the principal's competencies in areas such as management skills, knowledge and capacity, the management of teaching and learning and effectively managing school discipline (Pretorius, 2012; Holmqvist, 2019). In South African schools, principals are not appointed because of their competency and qualification but rather on the recommendations of the SGB. Previous research indicates that principals – and the rest of the school management team – are not well prepared or capacitated prior to their appointments (Bush et al., 2011; Masondo, 2014). Principals, deputy principals and heads of department (HODs) do not undergo any preparatory training as managers or members of the school management team (SMT). Therefore, this poses leadership problems since managers are not knowledgeable on leadership models and styles that can be used to bring the best out of their educators and learners (Pretorius, 2014).

School leadership is regarded as a field of practice wherein the outcome is measured by means of the school's performance (Bloch, 2011). Moreover, in the South African context, the effectiveness of school leadership is measured in terms of the end-of-year Grade Twelve results. Literature indicates that the principal's leadership has indeed an effect on student outcomes (Masondo, 2014; Organisation for Economic co-operation and Development (OECD), 2018). Scholars in education research have found that school leadership is at the centre of school reform. However, previous studies have shown that the education fraternity has seen a swift change in education administration – from principals as managers to principals as leaders in the school (De Luca, 2017). Principals' roles in school administration made sense to a certain degree since they were bureaucratically

governed by policy frameworks and educational systems were more hierarchical. Hence, the balance between leadership and management came forward in the restructuring of systems towards the new theory of management, which achieved the desired systemic objectives given to schools. With this note, this study used Bourdieu's notion of habitus and field, which guides the behaviour and thinking of people in leadership. The habitus and field theory were used to explore and understand the principal leadership within the context of the school. Furthermore, Bourdieu's notion of habitus and field helped to identify the field of power that influence the leadership of the principal with the view of achieving a deeper understanding of why schools in rural areas perform the way they do, and what can be done to improve learner performance.

School principals are expected to lead schools by creating a clear school vision, planning effective staff developments, motivating, and mentoring educators and many other details associated with school administration and supervising (Ramrathan, 2017). It is through the theory of habitus and field that effective school leadership is explored in detail and how effective school leadership can improve poor performance and sustain high academic performance. In this case, the study also refers to the field of education wherein school principals operate. Education as a field is broad and ever-changing with flexible parameters comprising social and economic conditions and any resultant power struggles (Riley, 2017). Hence, in this study, the centre of interest was on the principals' position and activities in the school and the manner in which principals are involved with the education domain. A detailed exploration of the theory of habitus and field was necessary as a theoretical framework for this study.

2.3 Habitus, field, capital, and power

This study used Bourdieu's theoretical framework to focus on the influence of habitus and field in school leadership and how the principal can make use of capital and power to improve the school's under-performance. Pierre Bourdieu – in 1984 – developed a theory around the concept of habitus, field, capital, and power. Bourdieu's theory was used in this study to provide a deeper understanding of the potential influence of principals to improve the learner performance, or why the principals are not able to improve the learner performance.

The theory of habitus and field can be further explained by means of a simplified diagram. Figure 1.1 shows the relationship between habitus, field, power, and capital. Figure 1.1 also indicates how habitus and field relates to professional development, motivation, and emotional intelligence. It indicates that the correct application of capital enables the principal of the school to use motivation and emotional intelligence to improve learner performance. The theory of habitus and field also links professional development with cultural capital. Cultural capital refers to the ability of the principal to accumulate symbolic elements, skills, and knowledge, which can be employed to improve learner performance. There are many other factors that the principal can use to improve learner performance; however, for the purpose of this study, only these three (habitus and field, capital, and

power) are discussed. Thus, hierarchical power and professional development empower the principal to improve learner performance. Power relations are regarded as inherent to both the habitus, field, and capital. The correct and effective application of power within the field of education is essential. Therefore, these concepts are inseparable. Power will be further discussed in Section 2.8.

The relationship shown in Figure 2.1 can also be regarded as a cycle where one informs the other. The principal's habitus enables him/her to work effectively within the field of education. Moreover, power (both hierarchical and personal) also enables him/her to effectively use capital in school leadership. The theory further indicates how the principal's emotional intelligence, motivation, and professional development within the field of education can improve learner performance in rural schools. All the aspects shown in Figure 2.1 will be further discussed in detail.

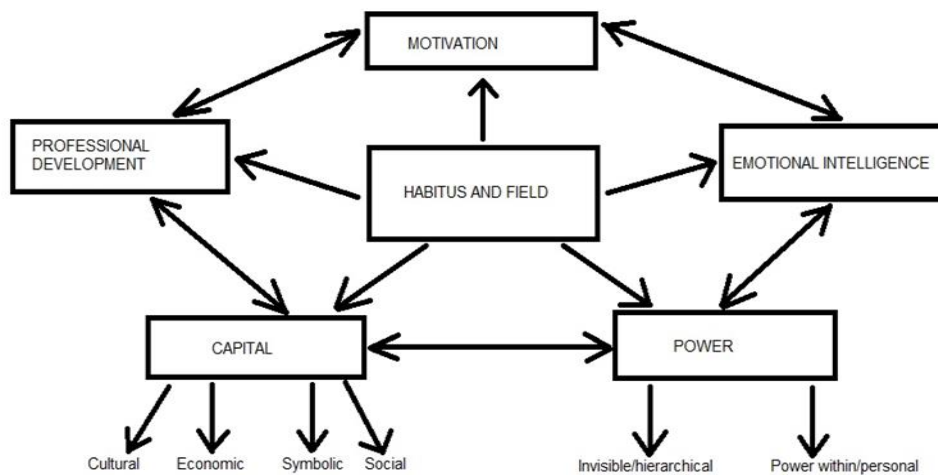


Figure 2-1 Habitus and Field
Source: Own compilation (2021)

2.3.1 Habitus

Bourdieu's theory explains habitus in its embodiment, which indicates that the function of habitus is not only limited to the level of clear, periphrastic awareness but it also functions through the internal structures of the system that it becomes embodied in, and works in a practical, deeper, and usually in a contemplative way (Ramrathan, 2017). Bourdieu referred to habitus as the underlying, profound, intellectual, and unconscious beliefs and values, which is unequivocally taken as personal evidence that generally instructs the actions, thoughts, and behaviour of the person (leader) within a particular field (Bourdieu, 1987; Kamin et al., 2013). Habitus is made up of a set of historical relations

embedded inside people that appear or manifest in the form of mental and physical patterns of viewing things and in the recognition of and how to act (Leon, 2010). He explained habitus as all those factors that consciously – or unconsciously – influence the conduct, character, and behaviour of the leader in the leadership position (Bourdieu, 1986). The education field for instance can be defined as an institution that is managed by a set of rules and regulations, and these rules influence the behaviour and actions of school principals. Hence, the difference between the field and habitus is that the field operates within the institution whereas the habitus is within the individual.

The Habitus, of the principal in this context, is linked to the field of education, which guides the behaviour, practices, and perceptions of the principal. The principal, within the education system is guided by the principles and policies within the system. Principal's habitus encompasses all the past experiences which shaped his/her dispositions as experienced and determined through circumstances which then determine how the principal engages with their current contextual conditions.

2.3.2 Field

This theory also refers to the field as a well-managed, controlled system of social positions, which can either be occupied by a person or an institution (Chepp, 2013). A field is an important concept in Bourdieu's theory; in this theory, Bourdieu explained the field as the various institutional and social platforms wherein people communicate and reproduce their personal inherent qualities of mind and character and wherein, they strive for the distribution of various kinds of capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Abel & Frohlich, 2012). Bourdieu also explained the field as different positions that social actors can occupy (Bourdieu, 1987). In the context of this study, field can be the education system and can also be the school within which the principal operates. The field need to be stabilised with rules to curb for unhealthy competition within the field which may take destructive forms. Bourdieu emphasises that stable fields rarely emerge on their own, but must be constructed by skilled leaders (Bourdieu, 1986). Principals must therefore be able implement rules in the field to minimise conflicts. He also regarded a field as a network, a structure, or a set of relationships, which may be intellectual, religious, educational, cultural, etc.

People in leadership positions usually experience power differently depending on the type of field they are in at any given moment; therefore, context and environment are regarded as key influences (Bourdieu, 1986; Song, 2013). It can be said that there is a close link between habitus (person's background and behaviour) and field (education system and its policies) in school management. As much as policies influence the conduct and practices of the principal, his/her character, and personality (the way the principal behaves) also influences the way he/she conducts the formal business of managing the school. Habitus and field cannot be separated from each other, i.e., what

the principal consciously or unconsciously carries to work eventually influences the way the principal responds to issues in school.

A field is the contexts within which the habitus operates. Bourdieu referred to the field as a “power arena” within which we understand the power relations within the field (Chepp, 2013). Bourdieu also explained fields as the various social institutions such as education, politics, and others, which experience a never-ending scuffle for power, status, and position to maintain these positions (Bourdieu, 1987). In his formulation, regards a field as a setting in which leaders and their social positions are located. The position of each leader in the field is a result of interaction between the specific set rules of the field. Therefore, the leader's habitus and capital may be defined by rules of the field. For the purpose of this study, our focus was on the education system as well as the school as the field. This field is comprised of the sets of goals to be achieved and a history of how positions – and the power that goes with them – relate to each other (Claridge, 2015).

The education field for instance can be defined as an institution that is managed by a set of rules and regulations, and these rules influence the behaviour and actions of school principals. Hence, the difference between the field and habitus is that the field operates within the institution whereas the habitus is within the individual.

2.3.3 Power

Power in this instance refer to the capacity of the principal to accomplish goals despite significant resistance by stakeholders in the school (Elmazi, 2018). There are several forms of power explained in school leadership: coercive power - the ability of the principal to make educators and learners in the school to comply with orders. It directs educators and learners in the school to act a certain way. Coercive power only has a short-term impact on subordinates and typically results in negative consequences including fear, retaliation, prohibition, and estrangement (Sears, 2020). The basis of coercive power is the target's belief that the source has the power to punish the target as desired. It is primarily brought on by how subordinates see their superiors.

Reward power targets a particular behaviour. Performance of educators in the school may directly be impacted by reward power in the short run. Reward power is established when the principal who in this case is the power holder has the ability either to reward target's compliance with something positive or to remove something undesirable (Allison & Grimsley, 2021). Reward power is an important tool to reward effective and high production of both educators and learners in the school. Principal use reward power as a kind of reinforcement.

Expert power refers to a situation in which subordinates are compliant with the power of the leader because they believe leaders have superior knowledge (Thomas, 2021). Expert power depends on the principal's individual perception of having expertise or knowledge on specific domain. Educators

believes that the principal is so knowledgeable and skilled compared to everyone else at the school (De Luca, 2017). Since expert power is based on specialised knowledge and expertise, it may be easier to internalise and fulfil than power from other sources.

Referent power - typically inspires a sense of confidence in the subordinates as well as loyalty, compliance, and responsibility toward the leader (Girling, 2016). Referent power is based on the characteristics or attributes of the principal as the leader (Goncalves, 2013). It is established when people in the school identify themselves or have a feeling of unity with the leader. Referent power implies attraction that a leader has with his characteristics on the side of subordinate.

Charisma power - is the capacity of the leader to attract followers through influence and motivation (Hoff, 2016). A leader's ability to captivate followers relies on unique personal attributes. Charisma power is based on special personal qualities to attract the attention of followers (Lunenburg, 2012). If charisma power is not sustained by a continuous success, coherence, trust and ideal it then becomes routinisation which is coupled with will repetition, dissatisfaction and institutionalisation (Kellerman, 2010).

Legitimate power - is that which is invested in a position. It stems from a position of hierarchy (Eatough, 2021). Legitimacy comes from a higher power usually results in acceptable behaviour. It is when the principal has a legitimate right to make decisions and subordinates have an obligation to comply. Legitimate power differs from the domineering use of power. It depends on legitimacy and hierarchy which flows down through the organisational hierarchy and formal rules promulgated and enforced by those in authority to ensure that organisational behaviour is directed to the attainment of established organisational goals (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2021). Legitimate power occurs when the principal has the legal authority to decide, and the subordinates are required to abide by those decisions. Since it depends on legality and hierarchy that descends through the organisational structure.

Power is viewed as a tool used by leaders to sway subordinates towards the collective achievement of goals. Good leadership requires the capacity to lead through persuasion and influence, and this behaviour is a necessary component of effective leadership. Scholars contend that a variety of factors, including organisational and personal resources, institutional and moral restrictions, as well as an individual's past experiences and personality, influence their ability to use power (Hoff, 2016; Allison & Grimsley, 2021). Power is an important component in the field. Since there is always a struggle for power (Bigo, 2011), principals must use their power to influence subordinates to improve their work. Influence implies motivation and motivation can be a form of power, which principals can use to influence other people. Further detailed discussion on power is found in 2.6.

Bourdieu's "thinking tools" enabled the researcher to investigate the principal's ability to address under-performance and how their experiences inform and shape their functionality. It further explored the way the habitus of the principal has consciously – or unconsciously – led them to a leadership

position and how they cope with these specific roles. Bourdieu further explained his theory of habitus and field using four categories of capital: economic, symbolic, cultural, and social, which will be further discussed below.

2.3.4 Capital

According to Bourdieu, capital is the collected effort in its imbodyed or realized form (Bourdieu, 1986). According to Bourdieu, capital is an individual leader's possession rather than the result of a group effort. It primarily stems from one's socioeconomic standing. Capital is defined as resources that are acquired, accumulated by leaders and are of strategic value in particular situations (Pinxten & Lievens, 2014).

2.3.4.1 Types of capital in habitus and field influencing leadership

As principals enter the field of education, specific capitals that come from the past now become enablers, and when these capitals are harmonised to what is of value in the school as an institution, it becomes easy to manage it effectively (Chepp, 2013). This study centres around four forms of capital as the basis of effective school leadership. The following discussion analytically explains the above-mentioned forms of capital individually.

2.3.4.1.1 Cultural capital

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital refers to the collection of the figurative components of the principal, such as expertise, skills, attitude, mannerism, and the credentials that the principal has accumulated by being part of a particular social class (Courtney, 2017). Cultural capital refers to how and when the principal knows precisely what to do (Thomson, 2010). It further reflects on the qualities of the principal and the level of his/her preparedness to occupy the principalship post (McDonough & Polzer, 2012). Riley (2017:5) explained Bourdieu's cultural theory in the following three forms, i.e., embodied, objectified, and institutionalised.

- **Embodied cultural capital** comprises the knowledge that the principal has consciously acquired and passively inherited, by socialising in cultural and traditional events in their work as well as their private life. It usually comes in the form of inherent conscious or individual qualities of the mind and body. This type of capital is not transferable, but it can be gathered over time and can make a mark on the principal's habitus, which refers to their character and the way they think and performs their duties and can be influenced by cultures around them (Gunter & McGinity, 2014). The embodied cultural capital can also refer to the principal's way of communication and personal presentation, which can be accumulated from the common national culture. It, therefore, impacts the way the principal communicates and addresses issues in the school.

- **Objectified cultural capital** comprises all the property in the school, which can be transferred into financial capital (Courtney, 2017). It is also the ability of the principal of the school to acquire and maintain the school's property. In this case, objectified capital can refer to pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, and machines found in the school.
- **Institutionalised cultural capital** makes up an institution's ceremonial acknowledgement of the principal's academic and professional qualifications. It includes the principal's academic credentials and qualifications, such as degrees and other academic titles that may represent professional authority and the competence of the principal (Thomson, 2010).

2.3.4.1.2 Economic capital

Economic capital refers to the access to financial resources, such as money, property, and other assets in the school (Chepp, 2013). It further refers to the ability of the school principal to properly manage the school funds. Economic capital – in this instance – refers to all the school's material assets that are available at the school for the realisation of important school goals and objectives, which may instantaneously be converted into money and may be incorporated in the form of property rights (Abel & Frohlich, 2012). Economic capital includes all types of material resources, such as financial resources and property ownership that are acquired and used to improve and maintain the quality of education that is offered in schools (Carrie & Frits, 2014).

Previous studies distinguished between two pathways in explaining the impact of economic capital on the principal's ability to improve the performance of the school. The materialist interpretation indicates the number of available material resources that positively relates to the improvement of the school's performance (Carrie & Frits, 2014). Following this explanation, the real difference in material resources suggests that there is a probable chance that an individual principal may encounter issues or challenges, which may ultimately lead to stress and the inability to improve the school's under-performance (Leon, 2010). The psychosocial understanding stresses the social importance of disparities in the amount of economic capital available. In this respect, owning little economic capital for principals causes them to experience more stress and a feeling of helplessness, which adversely influences the principal's ability to improve performance in the school (Carrie & Frits., 2014).

Finally, as indicated above, economic capital includes, among other things, school finances, and other tangible assets and/or resources such as textbooks and computers. The principal's ability to manage and administer the economic capital involves his/her level of knowledge, skills, and expertise, which may be acquired through the development of skills and capabilities that enables him/her to effectively perform his/her duties properly and efficiently. An appreciation of the principal's economic capital is based on their expertise as the person (Veenstra & Patterson, 2012). Previous

studies indicated that followers value the leader's expertise in managing economic capital as it is also said to be the basis for the construction of effective leadership (Bigo, 2011).

2.3.4.1.3 Symbolic capital

One of the forms of capital that is central to Pierre Bourdieu's work is symbolic capital. He explained it as "honour" or "prestige"; it is important to remember that the "honour and prestige" acquired in symbolic capital is regarded as the result of the abolition of all other types of capital (Pinxten & Lievens, 2014). Bourdieu defined symbolic capital as "the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognised as legitimate" (Song, 2011: 480). Hence, in Bourdieu's work, symbolic capital exists together with all other forms of capital; not as a separate type of capital, but it is seen rather as the legitimate and acknowledged form of the other capitals. Moreover, symbolic capital also refers to the way the principal's status, reputation and respect are held (De Vos et al., 2011). It includes the widespread respect and admiration that the principal holds in the public or community.

Theorists claim that symbolic capital is mainly generated through the fulfilment of social responsibilities, which are rooted in reputation capacity (Lawler, 2014). Symbolic capital, unlike financial capital, is viewed as rational because it can be openly transformed to leverage an advantage within the political and social realms. Moreover, symbolic capital is not without boundaries, and its importance is limited or glorified by the previously accumulated context (Chepp, 2013). Quality resources in the school are abstract representations of the school's environment and culture (Leon, 2010), and it possesses symbolic capital. This capital may be embedded in the way people view the school as a symbolic representation of that school's cultural value. For example, schools that usually achieve great results usually have symbolic value and utility (Carrie & Frits, 2014). They become outstanding precisely because of their symbolic capital.

Symbolic capital encompasses the principal's combined expertise, qualifications, abilities, skills, and knowledge gained through formal education and through day-to-day work experiences. For several years, the symbolic capital of the principal has been assured through the combination of certificates and degrees acquired through formal education and continuous professional development. Hence, building the principal's symbolic capital is an individual endeavour undertaken by themselves (Carrie & Frits, 2014).

2.3.4.1.4 Social capital

Social capital refers to the social networks (who the principal knows and associate with) of potential influence and the support structure of the principal's family, community, and staff (Chepp, 2013). It

also draws back to the guidance and motivation the principal received before choosing a profession. It extends to the kinds of relationships among staff as well as any social activities outside of school. The amount of capital that the principal possesses is usually based on the number of network connections that the principal can mobilise and on the amount of capital owned by those he/she is closely connected to (Song, 2011). Social capital is further defined as the resource that is developed because of connections among individuals within social networks that facilitate the development of trust and the achievement of mutual obligations and expectations through shared communications and goals (Brown, et al., 2016).

Social networks are informed by the amount of social capital the principal possesses. It is about the relationship among all individuals in the school. These networks originate from the universal norms of professionalism, such as trust, collaboration, and a sense of obligation. Social capital, however, is not only a characteristic of the individual school principal but also resides in the relationships that the principal builds among educators, parents and all the other relevant stakeholders within the school community (Veenstra & Patterson, 2012). Hence, the distinction between effective and ineffective principals refers to the way they build their support structure. If the principal encounters problems, he/she will know where to go for information, advice and/or support. Previous research indicates that effective school principals seek information and advice on how to do the job more effectively from the support structure that they have built (Bigo, 2011).

Bourdieu's social capital is not seen as a collective effort but rather as the individual property of the principal (Carrie & Frits, 2014). It enables the principal to exert power on people who mobilise the resources of the school. According to Bourdieu's theory, social capital is not automatically available to every staff member in the school but is rather available to those individual principals who make efforts to gain it through the acquisition of power and prestige and by developing goodwill. Moreover, social capital for Bourdieu is not limited to a particular level, class, or any other type of stratification that, as a result, is related to other types of advancement or benefit. Bourdieu – in his theory – framed social capital as “accrued actual or virtual resources acquired by individuals or groups through the possession of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Leon, 2010). Social capital remains within the principal because of the investments that an individual principal had made. Hence, social capital does not include properties for collective engagements, which Bourdieu referred to as cultural capital. Therefore, Bourdieu's social capital does not in any way complicate the degree of perception, which is a common issue with other approaches.

Social capital, like other forms of capital, has recently been receiving a notable and remarkable amount of attention in education during the past decades. Theorists explain social capital as a network-based resource that is available in the relationships that principals create and maintain within the school community (Mills, 2013). Social capital relates to the social identity theory of leadership, which believes that effective leadership is well displayed by those leaders who do not

only lead in isolation but also become active members of social groups (Hogg et al., 2012). It further indicates that leadership processes are enacted in the context of the shared membership of a group. Daly et al., (2015) suggest that social capital is closely connected to trust. They explain trust as important for schools that operate in turbulent external environments that depend heavily on information sharing between colleagues.

The social identity theory of leadership posits that leaders constantly ask fellow group members – or their followers – to exert themselves on behalf of the collective (Islam, 2014). Hence, the emphasis of the social identity theory of leadership is that the leader also belongs to a group. Moreover, group membership plays an important role in shaping the social life of the leader. It attempts to show the relevance of the social group to various issues and processes (Agunloye, 2011). In addition, social group interaction shapes the behaviour of the individual leader at the expense of considering the group to which the leader belongs (Islam, 2014). The principal's ideas and views are shaped by the way they interact with other people in the group. Hence, education research uses social capital in a two-fold manner, i.e., as a collective element and as a network-based approach.

In Bourdieu's theory, social capital differentiates between two conjoined elements of social capital: the social capital network that consists of both cognitive (trust) and systemic (formal and informal networks) elements (Allington, 2013). In addition, social capital resources – or benefits – come because of good infrastructures, such as social security and social cohesion. In applying the framework of Bourdieu's theory to develop a community or neighbourhood resource-based theory of social capital, it differentiates between systemic context, which includes the social or ethnic composition of a community (the surrounding and support base for the school principal), social cohesion and social capital (Claridge, 2015). Bourdieu – in his theory – further described four types of social capital that is available to the principal as the leader in his/her social networks: social support, social leverage, informal social control, and community organisation participation. Contrary to this, Song (2011) specifically uses the word social capital for the available resources or tools that are found in a social network.

Other researchers argued that social capital has remained a superior concept to social integration, social cohesion, and social support although at times these concepts may be used interchangeably (Liou & Daly, 2014; Belton et al., 2016). Furthermore, social capital theorists share the understanding that social capital resides in the resources that are inherent in social relationships rather than possessed by individuals (Daly et al., 2012). Capital is something invested in with expected returns or reproductions of the investment process. In other words, investing in interpersonal relationships can increase social capital that can be used for meeting individual and collective goals. Brown et al. (2016), explains that strong networks of communication have also proven to contribute to the effective functioning of schools by building school's capacity for exchanging resources. Schools with dense network structures within and between its units or departments generally achieve levels of

performance higher than those with inadequate connections (Daly et al., 2016). Liou & Daly, (2014) stresses that in an ever-changing system, the most powerful kind of social capital is often not the ability to work under formal authority in established structures, but it is the capacity of the principal to create new associations as platform to sharing best practices (Gross, et al., 2015).

From the above discussion, we may conclude that the theory of habitus and field assisted in explaining parts of school leadership. It is important to note that the theory places an emphasis on the effective use of both power and capital in school leadership. The effective use of habitus by principals in the school eliminates division and misunderstandings and promotes teamwork. On the same note, the following paragraph discusses effective school leadership that speaks to the leadership skills and abilities of the principal to improve learner performance in a school. It seeks to understand the connection or link between habitus and field and school leadership and how the principal uses or applies capital and power in school leadership.

Finally, through the lens of habitus, field, capital, and power, we can conclude that for a principal to effectively manage a school, he/she must internally carry certain powers and capital. The theory of habitus and field indicates that the principal possesses two types of power: the invisible or hierarchical and personal power, which legitimises his/her authority in the school. The hierarchical power gives the principal legitimate authority to make crucial decisions while implementing policies while the personal power is the power that is carried through the personality and character of the principal; it emphasises that there are different capitals influencing the leadership of the principal. With power, it becomes easy for the principal to effectively use all the capital in his leadership. Moreover, as we can see in Figure 2.1, no capital stands alone, but it is important that the principal possess all the four capitals in school leadership. Hence, Bourdieu emphasised that it is the effective application of capital and power that yield positive results. Figure 2.1 illustrates a never-ending cycle where one influences the other.

2.4 Effective school leadership (as seen through the lens of habitus, field, and capitals)

The effectiveness of school leadership in the South African context is measured in terms of school leaving (Grade 12) results (Spaull, 2013). The focus here is under-performing secondary schools situated in rural areas. Schools need strong leadership for optimum effectiveness (Joseph, 2011). The focus of school leadership in this study is on the leadership of the principal. The principal – by virtue of the appointment in the management position – is regarded as the leader to lead the improvement where and when needed.

Leadership is defined as a trait that is both inbuilt and can be acquired (Amar et al., 2009). Effective school leadership places an emphasis on developing relevant leadership skills and abilities to manage the school and the potential of the principal to face the hard times and still grow (Johnson,

2011). Habitus and field place an emphasis on the ability of the leader (principal) to use various kinds of capital in his/her leadership. The leadership of the principal becomes effective when he/she shows the potential to manage individual educators as well a group of educators (Amar et al., 2009). Hence, social capital is critical for the principal in creating the correct networks to have more influence in the school. The work of principals is closely linked to Habitus (character, background, and experience) and Field (the school and also the education system) since the actions of the principal always depend on the factors within the field. Moreover, the relation between the principal and the field is a two-way process: it is a relation of conditioning, where the field structures the habitus of the principal, and it is also a relation of knowledge, with the principal's habitus helping to constitute the field as a world that is endowed with meaning and value. The principal's habitus enables them to effectively carry out rules in the field of education as well as effective possession of capital that acts as enablers to exercise power within the field.

The leadership of the principal is deemed effective if the principal shows the ability to effectively perform mandated administration duties related to the following, i.e., effective teaching and learning, internal relations in the school, school management and administration, learners' performance and relationships between the school and the society – in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the school (Goncalves, 2012). Bourdieu's theory reflects on the knowledge and ability of the principal to carry out their above-mentioned expected duties. Moreover, Bourdieu's cultural capital also includes the ability of the principal to coordinate both the human and material resources that are available and to use them systematically for the achievement of educational objectives (Bottery, 2016). An ideal effective principal who possesses cultural capital do not dominate over others but effectively gives guidance to subordinates by giving them a sense of direction to achieve the collective or common goals successfully, empathetically understanding the needs of all the staff members and managing the actions of the whole group (Mestry, 2017).

Effective school leadership includes the leadership of the principal who possesses social capital, is highly ambitious, self-confident, intelligent, has a thorough knowledge of the job and is honest and flexible (Legotlo, 2011). These are individuals who learn how to develop their teamwork skills and competencies, constructive communication, dispute management and group problem-solving abilities. Social capital assists school principals to clearly communicate the school's mission, vision, and policies; build staff morale; ensure efficient daily school operations; and help educators to develop professionally while positively contributing towards the mission of the school (Spaull, 2013). Spaull (2013) further indicated the character of an effective school principal is that of one who can lead himself before leading others and is committed on a personal and professional front; he/she is a role model for others and sets a good example for them; boosts the morale of educators and motivates them to be committed to achieving the school's goals; he/she is well acquainted with

everyone and encourages them to take initiative. As a result, educators become more efficient and effective, which ensures the school's success. Bourdieu's theory on social capital places an emphasis on the principal (as the manager of the school) not as a sole player but as a team member where he/she supports fellow team members and respects each of them, is never too bossy and does not consider him/herself as the supreme authority but rather as a part of the organisation (Danzing, 2014). Hence, the principal is expected to set up a network of connections (social capital) in the school and build strong teams.

Effective school leadership also involves the availability of social capital in the leadership of the principal, which includes all procedures and possible outcomes leading towards the development and realisation of the goals and objectives of the school (Berliner, 2009). It involves the ability of the principal to work with educators and to involve them in critical decision-making processes in the school as well as effective listening and strategic communication with educators.

The main focus of social capital is the manner in which the principal creates and maintains good networks. Scott (2015:37) explained that the leadership of the principal becomes effective in schools if principals work as part of a team and strive to develop all the members of the team. Furthermore, good networks and good support structures yield a positive result in the endeavour to promote quality and eventually achieve better outcomes (Bottery, 2016). Noting the fact that this study focuses on the ability of the principal to improve learner performance, it needs to be understood what under-performing schools are and what makes them perform poorly. Literature has revealed some of the reasons for under-performance. A study conducted on under-performing schools blames poor performance on – among other things – inadequate supervision, a lack of instructional guidance and monitoring, poor teaching that is usually unfocused and intellectually unchallenging with improper content coverage (The Economist, 2012). Furthermore, under-performing schools lack discipline and poor understanding of rules (Hoadley, 2012). Learners in these schools usually underperform during formal assessments. A significant number of learners in rural areas finish compulsory education without acquiring the skills needed to enter a competitive labour market (Scott, 2015). The result for these learners is unemployment and/or working in under-income jobs. Further discussion on the characteristics of under-performing schools will follow below.

2.5. Leadership and Power

Leadership in this study is regarded as a deliberate or subconscious practice that individuals exercise (Berliner, 2009). The theory of habitus and field confirms that people in leadership positions have both invisible power and power from within, which occur in both social and formal contexts. Leadership can further be defined as an act of choice and not necessarily a rank (Boyatzis &

Cavanagh, 2018). Leadership can also be described as an act of looking out for others and is not just a one-person effort (Bloch, 2011). A close relationship exists between authority and power. The principal as the senior in the management position is accountable to all stakeholders in the school. Therefore, by virtue of the position, it is expected that he/she must exert all authority and power as will be discussed below.

Authority refers to the ability of the principal to make crucial decisions for the improvement of the school (De Luca, 2017). Power is the strength of the principal to influence people in the school to work towards the schools' vision and mission (Goncalves, 2013). Power is also the ability of the principal to persuade people to follow what he/she thinks is right and beneficial for the school and everybody around (Colonnese, 2017). The power of the principal to influence is also regarded as the ability of the principal to convince and inspire people to work towards achieving the vision of the school (Fries, 2018). Bourdieu's theory of habitus, field and power does not necessarily speak about the authority of the leader in the leadership position; however, for the purpose of this study, we view the principalship as a managerial position that highlights the ability of the principal to make decisions that would improve learner performance in the school.

We can finally acknowledge that for the principal to improve learner performance, there should be a clear understanding of the authority and powers of the post or position he/she occupies. Bourdieu's theory acknowledges power as the basis for effective leadership. Principals by virtue of their position possess hierarchical power and personal power (power within) in school leadership. Hierarchical power enables the principal to be consciously aware of the good practices as per the personnel administrative measures (PAM) (Department of Basic Education, 2016). It is the correct use or application of power that will eventually assist the principal to improve learner performance. Moreover, instead of the principal using authority alone, which has been described as the power to give orders, he/she may also use the "power within", which is the ability to influence the behaviour of everyone in the school. The ability of the principal to influence staff into achieving the goals, vision and mission of the school lies within the correct application of both powers. Furthermore, the principal also has the power (power within him/her) to influence everyone in the school to accept the responsibility of turning the school around – from an under-performing to a functional school. The principal's ability to positively influence people in the school will further be discussed below in detail:

Bourdieu's theory explained that anyone in a leadership position possesses power and capital (Allington, 2013). The principal – as the school manager – also possesses symbolic power in both public and private structures, which can also be used as an important factor to improve learner performance in schools (Brinia et al., 2014). The symbolic capital of the principal, which includes

his/her knowledge, ability and skills that were acquired through formal education and work experience that can assist in improving learner performance. The principal – according to the theory of habitus and field – uses power according to his/her own norms and beliefs. The principal – by virtue of the position – has both power (hierarchical) and authority to improve learner performance. This power is aligned to the duties and responsibilities of the principal as outlined in the PAM (Bloch, 2011).

Authority refers to the power of a leader to give orders and to make crucial decisions (Amar et al., 2009). Bourdieu referred to this type of power as the hierarchical power; in this instance, the hierarchical power is firmly rooted in the PAM where the principal implements what the policy prescribes meaning that the PAM authorises and legitimises the work of the principal within the school. Authority enforces obedience – especially because of the existing hierarchy of leadership of the principal. The hierarchical power gives the principal the legal and moral right to control a group of people as well as the legal right to exercise authority (Berliner, 2009). By virtue of the principalship position, a principal is in a position of authority and has the power to determine and adjudicate on issues within the relevant jurisdiction (Taylor, 2011). A principal's authority is often regarded as the lawful delegation of power by the education department. The truth is that principals are in a position of authority and the only difference is how they use it (Bottery, 2016). That is because, with authority, a principal has the right to give orders or directives.

The principalship position gives the principal authority while leadership is the character of the person assuming the leadership role (Lunenburg, 2012). Authority alone does not grant the principal automatic success, nor does it inspire educators and learners in the school. It simply lends the principal the power to give orders (Patillo, 2012). Therefore, a successful principal realises that the role itself requires more than just giving orders and observing performance. Good principals lead above all by providing a good example because they are in the centre of action and effort. They strive to encourage their colleagues to work even harder; these principals are also working hard to bring solutions to issues related to the work while accepting responsibility for the mistakes of fellow colleagues (Bigo, 2011). Moreover, good principals advocate for their team when people stand to criticise their work ethics and abilities for managing the school (Leon, 2010). They themselves bear the responsibility of a failed mission (Amar et al., 2009).

The authority and leadership of the principal become effective when the school principal understands the embodied cultural capital of the position that he/she occupies. This type of capital refers to the knowledge the principal has regarding the roles of the position he/she is occupying. The knowledge hereof is not easily transferred as it is accumulated over time and it is the outcome of the principal's

personality (*habitus*), character and way of thinking. The embodied capital emphasises the effective communication of the principal to his/her staff. Hence, effective principals do not just give orders but rather ask if they can help to shoulder the load. They do not passively observe educators working rather they use their knowledge to inspire them and not oppress them. They take their time building mutual relationships (social capital) within and outside the school; hence, it becomes easy to direct with authority and to act (Bush et al., 2011). An effective principal – as a leader – has the best interests of his/her subordinates at heart by doing everything within reasonable powers to achieve a collective goal. They do not lead because they have the title, but they throw away their title to work alongside their colleagues by using the power to influence educators to work towards a specific goal (which can also be linked to social capital). It is understood from previous studies that authority alone has yielded little fruit in school leadership. Principals who improve their schools' performance have better ways of including people to improve their participation and engagements and by developing long-lasting partnerships.

Social capital stresses that the volume of the network the principal possesses depends on the size of the effective network relationships he/she makes. Moreover, the social identity leadership theory emphasises the ability of the leader to influence the behaviour of the group while being a member of the group. For good relationships and the building of trust and cooperation as discussed above, the principal needs to know how to use both authority and the power to influence educators and all other stakeholders in the school.

2.6 Power of the principal

The previous section outlined the relationship between authority and the power of the principal to influence the improvement of under-performance. This section focuses specifically on the power of the principal to improve learner performance. Bourdieu regarded the power of a leader to influence as the essence of leadership (Bigo, 2011). Power involves the ability of a principal to convince educators to accept and follow the vision of the school (Avgar, 2015). Influence focuses on having an impact on another person's character, development and even the way in which they think. Usually, people in an organisation address problem by looking up to the leader. Therefore, if things go wrong, it is easy to blame the leader. This is due to the hierarchical power that comes with the principal's position. In cases where the under-performance does not improve, the principal is accountable to the department of education and various stakeholders within the school. Effective leadership in schools is measured in terms of the ability of the principal to solve problems and to affect progress (Bloch, 2011). Moreover, progress is regarded as the measure of how effective the leadership of the principal in the school is. Research indicates that a principal is influential if he/she empowers people in the school to collectively solve problems together (Bottery, 2016).

According to Chepp (2013), the theory of habitus and field recognises the issue of power and capital. Bourdieu sees power as being culturally and symbolically created. People often experience power differently depending on the field (and their position in the field) they find themselves in at a specific time. Situations and climate are therefore main influences on the field. Bourdieu further stated that when people interact and are confronted by various situations, conflicts and inconsistencies can arise. Therefore, his theory can be applied to understand how people in an organisation (which in this case refers to the school) can oppose authority and control in one field while demonstrating complicity in another. The principal in his professional capacity may use hierarchical power to influence educators to work hard to improve learner performance. On the other hand, educators (individually or as a group) can resist the authority of the principal by ignoring all the efforts of the principal to improve learner performance.

Fields help explain the differential power that school principals possess in both public and private structures. Bourdieu further explained power by referring to the concept of “doxa”, which is the combination of orthodox and heterodox, which refers to the person’s norms and beliefs (Chepp, 2013). Doxa usually occurs when people in an organisation forget the limits of the powers that be, and it often gives rise to unequal divisions and misunderstandings (Allington, 2013). Bourdieu further explained two types of power, i.e., “invisible power”, which refers to the hierarchical power within the system itself and “power within”, which recognises one’s own biases, beliefs, and assumptions in the act of sense-making (Chepp, 2013).

By virtue of being principals, they are expected by everybody within and outside the school community to possess the ability to exert influence on educators, parents, and learners to achieve a desired goal (Brinia et al., 2014). Basically, principals need power to influence, develop and enable educators in the school. According to the theory of Bourdieu, power is the basic strength of any leader in an organisation. Therefore, principals use their own norms and beliefs (doxa power) to positively influence educators. This is fundamental if the principal is aiming at improving the quality of education in the school. Moreover, power goes hand in hand with authority and rank. Power, authority, and control are used interchangeably in this study as they are pillars to ensure that a specific task is completed, or an aim is achieved. Power refers to the ability of the leader to employ all means necessary to complete a particular task (Goncalves, 2013) and the ability to influence others to get things done (Zogjani et al., 2014). Authority means the legitimate position of the principal to give orders, make decisions and enforce obedience from everyone in the school (Avgar, 2015); it is the formal legal rights that are given to a person who occupies a particular position (Zogjani et al., 2014). Control is the monitoring of systems and assessment of the efficient completion of tasks (Amar et al., 2009). Control is also linked to the power to influence or direct people’s behaviour and understanding. By controlling the principal can influence the behaviour of people in the school and supervise events in the school (Bottery, 2016).

Principals – as school managers – need power to influence educators in the school for the effective realisation of the school’s vision and mission. Principals should be aware of both forms of power as explained in Bourdieu’s theory. Principals need to positively apply both invisible power (hierarchical power) and personal power (power within) in their leadership. Effective leadership in schools is achievable only through integration and effectively using both power and authority (Girling, 2016). From the above definition, we can conclude that power alone does not automatically follow a position; as a result, when power is exerted without the support of authority, problems often arise. Schools also become ineffective when individuals in the position of authority are helpless and cannot influence the behaviour of educators and learners. Leadership and power are developed, but to be effective, principals need to know and be able to differentiate between various forms of power and choose the one most suitable according to the situation (De Luca, 2017).

Power is a tool used by principals every day in schools; therefore, schools would not exist without power relations (Wohlfahrtstaetter, 2012). To get things done in schools, principals need to influence educators. Moreover, the principal’s symbolic capital (status, reputation, and respect) enables them to be able to influence educators towards the betterment of the school. Influence is regarded as a very important tool in achieving a school’s goals and objectives. Principals become effective when they start to recognise their power to influence and then use it effectively. Principals in schools use their power to marshal human, informational and/or material resources to get work done. Power gives principals the opportunity to build the type of school they want to lead. Principals – by virtue of their position – have power over their subordinates to an extent that they can persuade them to do something that they would not otherwise do (Kellerman, 2010). However, effective leadership is not only based on having power but also on how the principals use power. An effective principal is aware of the invisible (hierarchical) power that he/she possesses. It is this power that enables the principal to know what to do and how to react to specific situations. Moreover, power plays an important role in school leadership practices. It is not possible for principals to effectively lead schools without power (Courtney, 2017).

To improve the under-performance of schools, it is necessary for principals to learn how to use power without necessarily harming the effective functioning of the school and educators. Principals who neglect to increase their personal power, persuasiveness and expertise are often ineffective in leadership positions (Goncalves, 2012). The theory of Bourdieu emphasises the importance of the personal power (or power within) of the principal. Thus, power becomes effective if principals are aware of their own strength or power from within. This means that principals can use their own instinct, biases, beliefs, and their own assumptions to make important decisions in schools. Principals who are aware of their personal power do not exercise authority over others with insensitivity, dominance, or threats (Azganye, 2012); they further do not show elements of cruelty or insensitive behaviour, which can cause them to under-utilise employees’ skills and talents. However, they improve their personal power by capacitating others in the school. They use their

expertise and personality to positively shape and influence educators and improve their usefulness (Bottery, 2016). Principals who are not effective and who do not produce the desired results are referred to as those who desire power to gain large sums of money, yet the results are not improving (Yulk, 2013). Such principals do not have the individual capacity or personal power to move, convince or inspire others to achieve specific goals. They do not have the ability to impact and encourage people. Previous research emphasised that ineffective school managers cannot influence the actions of educators and learners (Boyatzis & Cavanagh, 2018). These principals lack the potential to influence people under their leadership.

Ineffective principals lack social power, which has the potential for changing attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of both educators and learners. This is due to the lack of a principal's social capital, which is the ability to create networks that build strong relationships in schools. They further lack the capacity to persuade or influence educators to carry out directives. Power focuses on the successful way principals influence educators to produce desired outcomes. School principals, as managers, act within their capacity to influence educators to achieve individual and school goals (Amtaika, 2013; Maulod et al., 2017). The proper use of power is essential to effective leadership. Moreover, effective principals know when and how to use the various forms of power to influence educators in the school.

Bourdieu's theory speaks of powers that can be used by principals to enhance their leadership in schools and improve learner performance. Bourdieu sees power as strength for the principal (manager); hence, success is yielded if this power is used or applied correctly and efficiently. The following section will highlight the various types of management powers that school principals can use – either separately or combined. Furthermore, Bourdieu sees power as symbolically and culturally created. What makes people in leadership positions experience power in different ways? The application of various powers – as discussed below – can be influenced by either power (invisible power or power within) as explained in Bourdieu's theory. Moreover, Bourdieu explained that the effective use of power eliminates unnecessary tensions, conflicts, and contradictions. The most successful principals use more than one type of power simultaneously (Lunenburg, 2012) while others find themselves stagnating and remaining ineffective. Elmazi (2018), discuss the various powers that are used by school principals to influence effective leadership in schools. These kinds of power are specific kinds of power, which can and must be used in the broader context of power – as explained by Bourdieu.

2.6.1 Expert power

This type of power does not depend on formal positions but rather on people who have technical information and knowledge, particular skills, specific knowledge, and expertise (Johnson, 2011).

These are professionals who are respected by others, and because of their special or specific skills are promoted into executive or managerial positions. Unless these professionals learn the trick of how to exercise power to influence subordinates it is not easy for them to become the leaders or managers they aspire to be. Principals who fall in this category continue to specialise in the field, but do not gain the necessary honour and respect they deserve to manage effectively (Avgar, 2015). Expert power specifically relies on the principal's expertise in a specific area. With sufficient preparation, any principal can acquire expert power (Lunenburg, 2012).

2.6.2 Coercive power

Coercive power is present everywhere; it is found in all organisations. However, some studies argue that coercive power can be either a negative or a positive form of power. A negative form of power is when the principal influence subordinates by instilling fear in them (Danzing, 2014). The negative side of coercive power is that it does not encourage or motivate the desired performance; it merely focuses on discouraging undesired actions (Girling, 2016). Principals who adopt this type of power specialise in instilling fear in their subordinates (De Luca, 2017). As a result, the output is usually very low (Danzing, 2014). Nonetheless, some principals use coercive power to instil fear in their staff by threatening and intimidating them with "if-then" statements and an endless list of consequences such as being charged, fired, demoted, been given bad reviews and so on (Goncalves, 2013). Other studies see coercive power as relevant to improving under-performance. Coercive power is seen as the kind of power that is used to push educators to do their best and produce the desired outcomes (Boyatzis & Cavanagh, 2018). The positive side of coercive power is that it can serve as the motivating factor for educators to do their work. For example, educators may be forced to go to classes because they would like to avoid disciplinary hearings. Principals can use it to achieve their long-term goals. Coercive power is understood as the kind of power that is used to make educators aware of the consequences of continuous under-performance, such as a drop in learner enrolment, which could eventually lead to a school being closed or merged with other schools; educators could also be redeployed to other schools.

2.6.3 Reward power

This is the type of power where the principal gives reward to an educator or a learner as a means of positively encouraging hard work and commitment (Sekhu, 2011). The giving of rewards is another way of motivating educators and learners to work effectively towards the achievement of a collective goal. This kind of motivation can also be found in the content motivation theory of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The principal has the power (hierarchical) to motivate both educators and learners in the school. Maslow condensed five basic categories of needs, which are psychological, safety,

belonging and love, esteem, and self-actualisation. For the purpose of this section, we will concentrate on the esteem need, which refers to the individual need for being respected and acknowledged as a useful and honourable human being (Chand, 2016). Moreover, this type of motivational need makes people feel valued when their work is recognised and appreciated.

Maslow further divided the esteem needs into two versions: the lower version and the higher version. Educators fall within the lower version. The lower version explains that people work even harder when they know that someone pays attention to their hard work. We can therefore say that they are motivated by attention, prestige, rewards, and consideration for their opinion. Therefore, the principal may use rewards in many different forms: tangible or intangible. Although, the result of this type of power is that educators tend to do only what is expected of them because of the desire to earn benefits or rewards (Avgar, 2015).

Rewards may include appraisals, compensation and/or a promotion. Unfortunately, the quality of work is compromised because sometimes people work hard if they expect something (Courtney, 2017). In this instance, power then becomes the ability to give people what they want while at the same time asking them to do things you want them to do. Meanwhile, principals may use reward power effectively to reward or punish educators and learners by giving them a reward or withholding rewards in response to their performance (Avgar, 2015). The reward power can also be linked with the McClelland motivation need for achievement. It explains that the need for achievement is a motivation itself. Educators need for achievement influence them to demonstrate competence and mastery of the task (Colonnese, 2017). This type of need is influenced by the intrinsic (the internal drivers for action) and the extrinsic factors (the pressure exerted by the expectations of others) (Chand, 2016). Therefore, educators with a greater need for success are always looking for regular feedback on their given tasks (Colonnese, 2017). Reasons for a strong need for achievement may be praise or the recognition for success, goal setting skills, abilities and rewards or incentives.

2.6.4 Referent power

Referent power is the principal's ability to influence by means of role modelling and being considered by the members of the staff as admirable and honourable (Goncalves, 2013). Principals with referent power are influential in the school, hence they attract many people (stakeholders) to positively work towards attaining the set goals. Most influential principals do not possess an extroverted personality, but they can inspire their fellow colleagues and everyone around the school (Agunloye, 2011). This type of influence creates a higher level of commitment than compliance that may be generated through rewards and punishment. This power is gained specifically by the association between the person who exercises power and someone who is of great influence in the community or even in the organisation itself (Hallinger, 2012). For example, if someone has applied for a job, that person

may manipulate the chance of being employed by mentioning that they know the chairperson of the SGB and in some instances, the chairperson may recommend that a person be hired based on some type of relationship that may exist (Sekhu, 2011). In some schools, principals are hired because they reside in the community and are, therefore, well known to the members of the SGB who then disregards the level of competency. Those with referent power also use it for coercion; knowing fully that people fear social exclusion (Avgar, 2015). This type of power involves the respect and admiration of a leader, which typically produces a subordinate's acceptance. It behaves like role model power. This form of power is based on respect and high regard for another person (Bipath, 2012).

2.6.5 Charisma power

Principals also use charismatic power to exercise control by forcing character on others and pushing them to do as they want (Wengrzyn, 2015). Principals lead by displaying their self-confidence, attitude, calmness, and leadership. Charismatic leaders achieve positive reactions from others by utilising conscientious acts and considerate tolerance to get things done (Danzing, 2014). Charismatic power can also be linked to the power within (personal power) of the principal (as explained in Bourdieu's theory), whereby the principal uses his confidence and instincts to lead educators in the school.

2.6.6 Information power

Principals influence stakeholders in the school by displaying a high level of knowledge (Girling, 2016). Principals in their capacity possess the ability to strategically influence the attitudes, behaviour, and values of other people in their favour. Information power depends on the leader's persuasiveness and the content of communication (De Luca, 2017). Principals can influence stakeholders in the school based on the way they disseminate crucial information. Information power can also help the principal to build partnerships for effective learning (Courtney, 2017). Information power links with social capital, which is concerned with the relationships the principal build with other colleagues at work.

2.6.7 Legitimate power

Legitimate power is the authority of a formal role deriving from the concept of ownership or exclusive rights (Salicru, 2015a). Bourdieu's theory sees power as legitimate when the person occupying the position has fulfilled all the required obligations – be it academic or otherwise. These obligations are fixed for potential prestige and can be used in social, professional, and political spheres (symbolic capital). Many principals commonly assume that their power automatically comes when they are

promoted through the ranks. However, without the personal power to influence, legitimate power becomes diluted since it has its limitations. Moreover, legitimate power lies in the position of a person rather than the individual in question. This kind of power depends on bureaucratic or hierarchical positions in an authority hierarchy (Girling, 2016). People follow leaders who exercise their legitimate power. They respect the position irrespective of the person holding that position (Ngado, 2011). Leaders in any organisation rely on their legitimate power to influence subordinates. Therefore, principals who hold legitimate power are trusted in their judgement and are respected for their expertise and integrity (Goldsmith, 2016).

2.7 The importance of using power in school leadership

In the above section, the effective use of powers for the principal to improve learner performance was discussed. There needs to be a creation of a healthy work environment that involves the ability of the principal to select the most effective compliance-gaining strategies that will ultimately result in greater job satisfaction. An informed choice of power produces the greatest satisfaction while the wrong choice of power has the opposite effect. Effective principals combine the various types and sources of power and use them correctly and efficiently as situations require (Du Plessis, 2017).

An effective principal seldomly relies on a single form of power. Principals become more effective and gain more trust from the school community when they start to acknowledge the significance of creating their own power. Studies indicate that effective principals have stopped trying to control educators merely by giving instructions and directives on the grounds of their authority aligned with their role – as it seldomly works (De Luca, 2017). Few educators passively submit to authorities who continuously give orders just because they are in the highest post in the hierarchy and are playing the role of the boss (Salicru, 2015a). However, in my opinion, this type of power can work well with coercive power where both principal and the staff are working towards a collective goal. There are times when educators need to be directed on what to do and how to do it. Bourdieu's theory of power indicates the importance for school principals to develop the type of power most suitable to them; it also emphasises the importance of teamwork or good working relationships. Therefore, when the principal fails to recognise the need for the development of power in school leadership, they are most likely to increase a subordinate's resistance to change (Salicru, 2015c).

Principals who effectively use power perform tasks in the school at ease without depending on their title or position. They depend more on personal power than on the job title to coordinate resources, inspire innovation and trust among educators (Girling, 2016). They empower others and work with educators as colleagues. They also rely on influence, respect and relationship building. They recognise and compensate people for their hard work, successes, efforts, views, and ideas. They always promote involvement, solicit feedback, and allow people to participate in decision making by

giving credit when it is due. They reward educators who have the greatest effect on organisational goals and objectives; they reward outcomes rather than processes. However, effective principals guard against the unethical use of power as it may only help in achieving short-term results, but in the long run, this behaviour leads the leader to become counter-productive, which is detrimental to the school as an organisation and leads to a low or decline of output (Amar et al., 2009).

From the above discussion, it is apparent that authority alone without the power to influence will rarely change people's level of commitment and their way of thinking and/or behaviour. People follow leaders who exercise their legitimate power (Hallinger, 2012). They respect the position regardless of the person in the position. Leaders in any organisation rely on their legitimate power to influence subordinates (Hallinger, 2012). Moreover, a good principal inspires educators through an exemplary lifestyle and positive motivation. Influential leadership shows greater success in addressing people's attitudes and behaviours (Johnson, 2011). Exercising authority may at times limit methods of solving issues and problems while leadership inspires people to look beyond what is obvious and think creatively and innovatively and eventually come up with lasting solutions. Effective principals master various ways and strategies of gaining power in the school and the correct way of using it in managing the school. Often the leadership of a school is at risk when little or no consideration is paid to how power is used as an instrument to control subordinates and peers. Unsuccessful school principals remain ineffective – regardless of the number of advanced degrees they possess – if they still neglect the art and science of influencing people (Salicru, 2015b).

The difference between authority and influence is that authority is the power – or the right – that is bestowed upon a person in a leadership position to give orders and make decisions while influence is the ability to affect ideas and actions (Colonnese, 2017). Motivation is also linked to influence and power. The principal can use either all, or some, forms of power (as discussed in Bourdieu's theory) to influence and motivate people in the school to work towards the improvement of under-performance. Within the setup of the school, principals exercise their authority over their subordinates by synchronising their words and actions; thus, the entire structure and process of the school conform with it creating a stable, vigorous, and transparent school culture. On top of influence, the results of a study previously conducted in rural secondary schools in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa indicate that principals and educators of under-performing schools are demotivated (Sekhu, 2011). Therefore, influence alone without motivation becomes ineffective.

Synthesis

Within the principalship position, it is not easy to separate one type of power from the other. All types of power are important for the principal to improve learner performance. Principalship is more than a job title where people are just promoted into a position. Principals are expected to use both their

personal and positional power to influence and motivate educators in the school to work towards achieving the school's goals and objectives. Principals who hold power based on the job title but cannot motivate people in the school are regarded as dangerous leaders (Du Plessis, 2017). Below is a further discussion on the relationship between leadership and motivation.

2.8. The ability of the principal to improve learner performance using motivation

The previous section discussed in detail the power of the principal to influence educators and learners. It is understood that principals use their "doxa" power to positively influence educators and learners towards the accomplishment of a common goal. This section specifically focuses on the ability of the principal to motivate educators and learners in the school to improve learner performance. Bourdieu's theory of habitus and field explains habitus as the character and the way of thinking of the principal. It further indicates that the way the principal thinks, behaves and conducts him/herself contribute largely to the way he/she exercises leadership in the school. A principal influences subordinates through motivation. In an endeavour to improve learner performance and the quality of education in the school, the principal – through motivation – communicates effectively with members of the staff (Christie et al., 2010). The principal is, therefore, expected to motivate educators and raise their morale. Moreover, the principal is also expected to motivate educators by using hierarchical power and the power within as explained in the habitus and field theory.

Motivation is explained as the internal and external factors that activate the desire and the energy of people to continue being interested and committed to their job (Fries, 2018). Motivation is explained as goal-oriented and regarded as the best tool to assist principals to achieve a school's objectives (Mendels, 2012). Authority and power (as explained in Bourdieu's theory) can be used as motivational tools to improve learner performance. Through motivation, people are moved to work hard to achieve common organisational goals. However, there is no clear or perfect system of motivation, but educators can work more effectively if motivated (Chand, 2016).

Social capital connects with motivation theories. Social capital assists the principal in identifying the need for motivation and unhealthy social relationships among colleagues. Motivation theories emphasise the importance of continuously motivating people in the workplace. The Herzberg motivation theory, for instance, indicates that some people's level of motivation is usually very low (Chand, 2016). It then becomes difficult or impossible for that person to work effectively and yield good results. Herzberg's motivation theory proposed a new theory that builds up to Maslow's hierarchical needs; he indicates that there are two factors of motivation that motivates people in the workplace. In his theory, he indicated there are some factors (motivational factors) that causes job satisfaction, such as when people are appreciated for a job well done (recognition), rewards, appraisals, and the need for personal growth (Colonnese, 2017). The other factor is called the hygiene factor, which causes job dissatisfaction via the level of salary, working conditions and the

need for a safe environment. Herzberg reported that good feelings are generally associated with job satisfaction; people perform their best when they are happy whereas bad feelings are associated with job dissatisfaction.

Effective motivation takes place in a school when the principal can cooperate harmoniously with all the stakeholders in the school. Good principals ensure that educators have the same moral and ethical values, which are aligned to the schools' vision and mission of the school (Hussin & Al Abri, 2015). A principal who has an open outlook on human nature and know the diverse needs of each staff member creates a situation where the decision-making process becomes easier. Moreover, an effective leader has a detailed understanding of motivational strategies to be employed in the school for various situations and conditions (Maas & Lake, 2015). Hence, leadership is deemed effective when used as a means of motivating others. Motivation can also be divided into two factors: intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic factors are those that come internally and are regarded as the personal motivation of the principal (Chand, 2016). Intrinsic motivation is believed to be more sustainable as it comes from within the person. Positive results are seen when a person is highly motivated (Fries, 2018). However, the principal in the school is seen as the extrinsic motivation for the learners and educators. The principal has an external influence on both learners and educators. In this study, we can also establish why the principal – as the external motivating factor – is unable to improve learner performance.

A motivated principal can harmonise and match the school's and educators' needs by ensuring that both have the same morals and ethics. Educators are, therefore, encouraged, and motivated to work towards the fulfilment of the goals and objectives of the school (Goldsmith, 2016). Moreover, an effective principal uses the key motivational factors of appreciation and rewards to influence educators to achieve desired goals. Hence, good, or outstanding conduct is rewarded with little or small recognition as a token of appreciation.

Motivation itself assists the principal in setting a good example for educators while becoming a good role model. Moreover, motivated educators are encouraged to get involved in the planning and resolution procedures of the school. This makes communication in the workplace unambiguous. Thus, motivation develops high morals and team spirit in the school and has a key impact on the well-being of the school (Juneja, 2017). Principals know that their daily actions and decisions directly affect the morale of their educators in the school. Therefore, the actions of the principal in the school can either motivate or demotivate educators (Cliffe, 2011). Hence, good principals are always aware of their decisions and actions (Hussin & Al Abri, 2015).

Principals who know educators well may be able to constantly motivate their subordinates in the school. Therefore, it becomes easy to empathise with them and make them feel comfortable in difficult times (De Luca, 2017). They step into the shoes of educators and view things from the educator's perspective. At the same time, educators who accomplish a meaningful and challenging

task have a sense of achievement. Good principals know when to involve subordinates in performing important tasks for the well-being of the organisation. It is, however, important to note that motivation within the organisation starts from within the principal (Ikemoto et al., 2014). Self-motivated principals understand their identity and needs; they have a strong desire to inspire and motivate people to achieve their goals and match their personal goals with the common goals of the school.

Schools need principals who are emotionally intelligent and can realise the need for motivation and a morale boost of educators (Cliffe, 2011). The emotional intelligence (EI) of the principal determines the type of motivation the principal gives to subordinates (Emotional intelligence will be further discussed in detail in chapter 3). A good motivator with high EI can predict what the future of the school will look like (Goncalves, 2013).

2.9 Summary

This chapter used the theory of habitus and field to investigate the leadership of the principal in improving under-performance. The decline in learner performance in schools is usually used as a measure of leadership ineffectiveness. However, previous research states that the decline in the overall performance of schools may not be triggered by only one factor, but by a combination of many different factors – both from inside and outside the school (OECD, 2010; Joseph, 2011). Hence, the theory speaks to the ability of the principal to effectively use capital and power in his/her leadership in the school. Bourdieu indicated that all forms of power are necessary as they support each other. He explained two types of power: invisible power, which explains the hierarchical power within the education system itself and power within, which recognises the principal's own biases, character, assumptions, and beliefs in the act of sense-making. These powers are regarded as information that is self-critical and reveals the principal's source of power and exposes the reason for social imbalances and hierarchies. This chapter further looked at the ability of the principal to use motivation, authority, and power to improve learner performance in the school. As part of the broader discussion, the next chapter will look at contextual and individual factors influencing leadership for sustained improvement in rural schools.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK AND INDIVIDUAL FACTORS INFLUENCING LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT IN RURAL SCHOOLS

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter Two, effective school leadership was viewed through the lens of I Bourdieu's theory of habitus, field, capital, and power. This theory emphasises the use of various forms of capital and power in school leadership. The discussion in Chapter Two also explored the application of motivation to improve learner performance. This chapter will, expose the characteristics of under-performing schools in rural areas as well as to explore factors within and outside the school that may have an influence on the academic performance of learners in secondary schools in rural areas. The main areas that have been considered in this section – for the purpose of this study – is the contextual factors that influence school leadership for the sustained improvement of the school's academic performance. Believing the fact that these factors, if not effectively managed can contribute to under-performance.

In this chapter, it is assumed that the effective leadership of the principal – as discussed in Chapter Two – can lead the school to sustain good performance (Hallinger, 2012). The contextual factors need to be monitored and managed by the principal and the entire SMT for them not to interfere with school performance. Noting the fact that the primary role of the principal in a public school as outlined in the Education Laws Amendment Act 31 of 2007 Section 16A, and the personnel administration measures, is to effectively manage the school and meet the expectation of both the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and all other stakeholders. It is through the effective use of the departmental rules, policies, and legislation that principals are expected to improve a schools' under-performance notwithstanding the fact that learners in rural areas found themselves living under difficult conditions that affect their academic development.

Principals in rural areas operate in a complex, difficult and turbulent environment. Amid many reasons and factors that may contribute towards under-performance, the school community continues to hold the principal responsible for effectively implementing regulations and meeting expectations. This chapter explores factors influencing the effectiveness of school leadership for the sustained improvement of learner performance in rural schools. It must be highlighted that principals have to strictly operate within a complex and dynamic policy framework and be able to justify their decisions to both local and national constituents.

Arguments in this chapter partially assist in answering the two research questions as outlined in Chapter One which are (1) what are the challenges experienced by principals in rural areas with

regard to the low academic performance and (2) why do school leaders find it difficult to influence the improvement of under-performance? The final findings will also incorporate data generated from participants. The above-mentioned challenges – referred to in the first question – have been divided into two parts, namely the contextual and internal factors in the school that can influence the school's performance and the factors within the principal's habitus that can influence the school's performance.

3.2 The contextual factors that influences leadership in rural schools

Many black-learner schools in the rural areas of South Africa – 25 years after apartheid – still have inequalities. This is because of the location or areas in which the schools are situated. These areas are characterised by high levels of unemployment and crime as well as poor health conditions and a lack of proper housing. Despite efforts to reform, education in South Africa remains unequal. The overwhelming majority of black-learner schools in rural areas has shown little academic improvement (Carelse, 2018a). The extent to which our rural schools' quality of education is low and in crisis cannot be overemphasised (Spaull, 2016). Over the years, a notable and continuous underfunding of the township and rural schools has without a doubt contributed to the poor performance. What is indeed more exasperating is the ceaseless cycle of under-performance in our numerous poor rural schools. (Hlalele, 2012). Subsequently, it is critical to recognise that there are a huge number of other causes that contribute to the under-performance of schools in rural areas – of which some are just a set of societal factors.

Spaull (2013) indicated that rural areas are mostly characterised by children whose lives are challenged by households and community savagery every day; whose inspiration for good education is continually undermined by their day-to-day perceptions that high school, college and university graduates lack employment opportunities; whose packed, overcrowded and noisy household environment makes studying usually difficult and, to some extent, practically impossible since most of these homes are selling traditional beer and are open for long hours of the day (Masondo, 2014). These societal factors are important even though there is very little the education system can do to alter these issues in the short and medium term. It is believed that external factors to the education system carry the major responsibility for the schooling crisis (Spaull, 2017). Nevertheless, the internal factors also deserve interventions to raise the quality of education provided to black rural children in South Africa.

Research also confirms that another contributing factor to schools' – in rural areas – under-performance and the number of learners who leave schools (drop out) is the high rate of liquor use among both young children and adults (Visser, 2012). As a result, parental engagement in school

matters is usually low since parents do not contribute to the school's activities. In rural areas, there are also several households that are headed by children and single mothers (Westerlund et al., 2013). Classes in rural areas generally have large numbers of learners that – in some cases – can be 60 to 80 in a class (Spaull, 2016). Spaull (2013) explained that most rural schools have limited teaching and learning resources; learners must share textbooks and other educational resources. Thus, in many schools in rural areas, there is a weak or non-existing culture of teaching and learning (Masondo, 2014). Nevertheless, despite numerous deprivations, some schools within the same area and the same environment as under-performing schools perform extremely well, academically. Therefore, it can be assumed that it is the leadership of these schools that matters. But leadership alone, without the complementary role of the rest of the members of the management team, may not be sufficient to affect change. Hence, we also look at various factors that may hinder school leadership to sustain good performance in these schools. For the purpose of this section, contextual factors are divided into two factors: internal and external factors.

3.2.1 Internal factors in the school influencing performance

Internal factors are factors that emanate within the school, which the principal and the DBE can identify with, solve, and manage and external factors are those factors that emanate outside the school and yet – if not properly managed – can cause continuous poor or low school performance. These external factors are important even though there is very little the principal or the DBE can do to alter them in the short or medium term. Spaull (2017) believes that factors outside the school are the ones carrying the major responsibility for the schooling crises. Although the internal factors also deserve intervention to raise the quality of education provided to black rural children of South Africa, the following discussion looks at the internal (school) factors that could cause poor performance in the school.

3.2.1.1 The unavailability of learning and teaching materials in rural schools

Rural schools in South Africa still experience no – or late – deliveries of workbooks and textbooks (Louw, 2013) where learners still go to school without adequate learning materials or textbooks. This contributes to primary school learners proceeding to higher grades without the basic educational foundation needed for secondary education (Masondo, 2014). As a nation without the basic foundations of literacy and numeracy, we will never obtain the high level of skills we seek, nor will we be able to address poverty and inequality for development and growth. Schools in rural areas are mostly no-fee schools; these schools are also referred to as quintiles 1-3 schools. Schools under this category are not supposed to charge mandatory school fees (Du Plessis, 2014). They only depend on the government for funding. Without aid from donors, it becomes difficult for schools to

supplement their funds – to provide the learning and teaching materials. Rural areas have only a few businesses that are willing to invest in schools (Visser, 2012). It is the responsibility of the principal as per Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (as discussed in chapter two), to effectively manage the school. The principal is responsible to make submissions to the department for the required number of learning and teaching materials on time. It is also the responsibility of the SGB to raise funds to supplement the school's funds and buy the necessary learning materials. Educators should always make learners aware of their responsibility to take care of their learning material to keep it for a longer period.

3.2.1.2 Poor infrastructure

In their report, Spaul (2016) and Modisaotile (2012) detailed the poor conditions that rural schools are operating in; they indicated that 3 600 schools in rural areas have no electricity; 2 444 of those schools have neither running nor clean water; 11 231 schools – even now – are still utilising pit-latrines; only 11 per cent and 3 per cent of rural schools have library and computer facilities respectively; the DBE explained that 6 619 rural schools had multi-grade classes in 2013 – among those only 1 209 schools could accommodate an average size of above 70 learners in 2012 (Corruption Watch, 2012; Equal Education, 2019). The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) discovered that almost 80 per cent of schools in South Africa are basically dysfunctional of which 60 per cent are situated in rural areas (Louw, 2013). The disparities, therefore, between schools in rural and urban areas are also damning. Schools cannot function effectively with no proper infrastructure. As much as the South African Constitution speaks about the basic right to education, poor infrastructure compromises this basic human right.

The lack of proper infrastructure in rural areas always results in classes that are overcrowded and with poor discipline, and it eventually compromises the basic right of learners to basic education (Equal Education, 2019). The issue of poor infrastructure has always led to overcrowded classrooms. This is also important as when learners are cramped into one class, it has a direct impact on the quality of education offered to them (Carelse, 2018b). This – as a result – has the potential to undermine the learner's right to quality education. The Bourdieu economic capital theory speaks to the ability of the principal to properly manage the school's facilities and infrastructure to improve learner performance. It also speaks to the ability of the principal – through economic capital – to acquire and manage funds given to the school either by the government or by donations. The economic capital theory stresses that the value of the expertise of the principal in money and facility management is the basis for effective school leadership.

The South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996 Section 34 provides that the state has an obligation to fund public schools. Infrastructure management is, therefore, made possible by the

availability of such funds. However, schools still experience underfunding as well as late funding by the government (Corruption Watch, 2012). Moreover, the above Act makes provision that the SGB should look for ways to supplement the school funds. Schools in rural areas still experience the problem of a lack of financial sponsors since their environment cannot attract many businesses (Danzing, 2014). It must be noted that schools in rural areas are regarded as no-fee schools. Therefore, the principal and the SGB cannot charge school fees to parents who are already living in poverty. However, for normal schooling to take place, the school facilities need to be maintained and more learning resources need to be supplemented.

3.2.1.3 Overcrowding classes

Overcrowding classes are a common factor in rural areas and is mostly found in under-performing schools (Spaul, 2016). This has been found to be among the most important contributing factors to low learner turnout. Overcrowded classes have a direct impact on the performance of those learners. These overcrowded classes have the potential to undermine the learners' educational needs and rights (Mestry, 2017). Mestry (2017) further explained overcrowding in rural areas as being twofold. Overcrowding refers to many learners in the class; however, the educator-learner ratio is usually ignored; learners are overcrowded in classes wherein the high, average, and less gifted learners are given the same amount of attention by educators. Through observation, it is very difficult for novice educators to maintain order and discipline in the class if it is overcrowded. It is also an impossible task to give learners individual attention as learners' needs are different. Mestry (2017) indicated that classes that are overcrowded usually have a problem of under-performance.

3.2.1.4 Poor school management

Poor school management in under-performing schools is evident in various ways. Vilakazi (2016) reported that principals in rural areas' under-performing schools are reported not to be visible in the school within the teaching and learning hours; they do not move around to see if all educators are in class on time and teaching. Moreover, the principals of under-performing schools are always seated in their offices, or habitually out of school to run errands or claiming to be attending urgent or pressing issues at the circuit or district office (Hebert, 2011). Therefore, people in the school do as they please or wish. Other research indicated that rural schools that are not performing well are also characterised by a lack or poor communication between the principal and all the other stakeholders (Scott, 2015); learners who do not respect each other and also do not respect educators; there is also evidence of the abuse of school's assets and financial resources; SMT and educators not respecting time as well as non-honouring of the deadlines of submissions (Vilakazi, 2016). Furthermore, the environment itself does not make it possible for effective teaching and learning to

take place. Poor school management is evident in the school by, among other things, papers and dirt that are all over the school, classes and toilets that have broken windows and doors, no proper gates and, to some extent, no toilets, and a lack of concern for what is happening within the school.

3.2.1.5 Vandalism

Vandalism of school property is described as purposefully damaging or destroying property without getting any personal gain from it. Vandalism can also be explained as deliberately damaging, infringing, deforming, destroying, or demolishing school property by people who do not have ownership of the property (Macupe, 2019). Vandalism is also described as the wilful act or malicious destruction of property. Vandalism of property in rural areas is a serious cause of under-performance. It is usually caused by learners who simply have a strong desire for revenge against their educators or other persons in the school (Javier, 2019); hence, it is regarded as purposeful damage of school property.

Vandalism to school property and other important community resources is rife in rural areas (Corruption Watch, 2012). This, therefore, leaves learners in rural areas to learn in an environment that is vandalised and dilapidated. Thus, if the school property is vandalised and not taken care of, learners' education is threatened by the lack of resources and proper infrastructure; hence, the performance in such schools remain very low (Equal Education, 2019). Apart from the communities and families, schools serve as a key socialising beacon in the African culture, which embraces collective responsibility. Educator-learner relations are important in establishing a common understanding of educational values. Without proper infrastructure, it is difficult for schools in rural areas to realise their academic and social outcomes. Many children who display violent behaviour at school by vandalising school property are usually vulnerable to acts of violence outside the boundaries of the school (Masondo, 2014).

School vandalism has its consequences; in rural schools, it brings about – among other things – negative economic, psychological, and educational effects (Furlanger, 2018). It deprives learners in rural areas of top-class school amenities, furniture, and equipment, including clean toilets, which provided a helpful opportunity for a healthy teaching and learning environment (Du Plessis, 2014). It further deprives learners of the right to be taught in tidy and clean school buildings. However, the principals' role is to manage the school amid such challenges of vandalism. Moreover, principals – in rural schools – are not equipped on how to deal with t acts of vandalism (Furlanger, 2018). Hence, vandalism becomes difficult to manage in a school without resources and proper facilities.

Vandalism is a learned phenomenon in schools and adjoins residential areas. It stems from the behavioural problems of learners and young adults within the community. Javier (2019) indicated that the main causes of vandalism in rural schools are issues related to substance abuse, poor economic conditions, and crime. Vandalism puts an overwhelming burden on the budgets of both the DBE and schools. Reports indicate that in 2015 alone, acts of vandalism in schools have cost the DBE R50 million and R58 Million in the Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal provinces respectively (Equal Education, 2019). Teaching and learning in rural areas are often interrupted as school programmes are halted to channel the school's finances to repair vandalised structures. The Minister of Basic Education, Ms Angie Motshekga, indicated that the crime of vandalism has left educators and learners with fear, a sense of uncertainty and the feeling of powerlessness; as a result, this leads to the destruction of "the basis of a learning community" (Department of Basic Education, 2016a).

The money that is reserved for building new schools is often utilised to replace or repair vandalised buildings and other important resources, facilities and/or equipment. Furthermore, principals in rural areas use a reasonable amount of money for school maintenance rather than for addressing the educational needs of learners in the school (Department of Basic Education, 2016b). Mostly, rural schools experience vandalism on things such as windows and doors in classrooms, toilets, the drawings in the walls and furniture. Some learners in rural areas deform, damage, and destroy their own school's property up to a level where effective teaching and learning collapses; therefore, teaching and learning in such an environment poses a health risk to both educators and learners (Du Plessis, 2014).

Vandalism of school property is closely connected to drug and alcohol abuse among learners, and the former South African minister of police, Nathi Mthethwa, acknowledged that there is a close connection between these acts of savagery and alcohol and drug abuse among young people. Therefore, a weak style of school management, poor relationships between educators and learners, poor school discipline and learners' low academic performance often give rise to learner vandalism (Equal Education, 2019). Although research emphasises that school-related causes of vandalism are commonly a result of *laissez-faire* management styles, poor school leadership, inconsistent school control measures and vague or unclear school rules and disciplinary procedures (Costa & Faria, 2017).

It is important that all the role-players, i.e., family, the principal, educators, parents, and learners play a bigger role in fighting vandalism in schools. The internal and external role-players and societal leaders need to collaborate as vandalism is not an in-school problem only. The safety of the school classes, furniture and other important resources is in the hands of all those who use them. Learners should be constantly engaged on how to keep vandals and vandalism away from the school since the minister of police also agreed that drug and alcohol abuse is one of the causes of school

vandalism in rural areas. The police can also play the important role of interacting with learners and engaging them on the dangers and consequences of vandalism as an act of public violence.

3.2.2. Stakeholders in the school

Stakeholders have an obligation as partners in education to establish and build upon any available opportunities and communication channels with the aim of improving the educational and academic success of learners in rural areas. Visser (2012) demonstrated that a breakdown of interest in education – in many learners – in rural areas is the result of a breakdown in the protective powers or forces within the rural communities. The values that are traditionally held in African homes such as community trust has weakened over the past few decades. To find a permanent solution for the rural school crisis, stakeholders, together with educators, must develop an atmosphere of trust by building a relationship that will encourage change in the long run and the academic success of learners in rural communities (Vilakazi, 2016). Westerlund et al. (2013) stressed that should all stakeholders in education work together to challenge and tackle issues that have meddled with the academic achievement of learners, rural learners would be more likely to realise their academic success.

The academic success of learners depends on the conviction and attitudes of all stakeholders within the school (Masondo, 2014). Therefore, if learners are convinced that their parents care and are also made aware of the parental plan and home or family support structure, they will perform well in order not to disappoint their support structure (Hlalele, 2012); as much as if learners believe that their educators care and work tirelessly to guarantee a viable education, they will proceed to perform better. The success of the school rests upon all the stakeholders within the school. The following discussion looks at educators, learners and the SGB as stakeholders in the school. (Parents will be discussed in the external factors).

3.2.2.1 Educators

Educators in rural schools have made obstructions that must be removed to set up a long-lasting relationship with parents (Masondo, 2014). It is also important for educators to reach out to their school community. Park and Holloway (2018) argued those educators, guardians and parents and everyone within the school community are crucial resources for educational partnerships. The argument of Park and Holloway (2018) further indicates that under-performance in schools also depend on the quality of the educators that the school has and their attitude towards the parents and children. They indicated that some educators are not willing to walk the extra mile with learners, are not friendly with learners, are not communicating with parents regarding the performance of their

children and are always in a hurry to finish the syllabus. The success of the school depends on the quality of educators the school has, the attitude of educators towards their profession, the parents, the learners, and the content knowledge of the educator. A further discussion on educator quality, attitudes and knowledge follows below:

3.2.2.1.1 Educator quality

To solve the crisis of failing learners, especially in rural areas, the DBE should employ quality educators. Park et al. (2017) inferred those parents and policymakers have placed their faith in educators. They consider educators as part of the solution to the problems of poor academic performance. Sadly, there has not been sufficiently valid information or data as proof to suggest that the hiring policy of the government can identify quality educators in rural schools. Educator quality is driven by essential elements that are exceptionally difficult for SGBs to measure the competency of the educator (Mestry, 2017). Previous studies argued that educator qualifications or credentials cannot determine whether learners will eventually move towards positive academic achievements or not. Some studies indicate that educator credentials are less important for deciding whether learners will be successful or not in the classroom. While people external to the education community and policymakers, noted the fact that an educator's credentials do influence learners' achievement (Hoadley, 2012).

Looking at the environment in which rural schools operate, it is not shocking to see that numerous newly qualified educators are not interested in working in rural areas as they are usually characterised as having high poverty rates and limited resources (Danzing, 2014). The academic achievement of learners in rural areas is also dependent on the educator who is assigned to rural areas. The setting in rural schools creates many challenges that prove difficult for novice educators. Universities do not, however, prepare teaching students for environments such as rural schools. Park et al. (2017) inferred that there is a lack of interest from teaching students to teach or work in rural schools. Moreover, the lack of empathy from educators concerning the private histories or background of learners continues to produce under-performance (Sunbreenduth, 2013). According to Sunbreenduth (2013), the academic potential and achievement of learners in rural areas are significantly affected by the type of educators the learners have. Educators' academic qualifications are not automatically included in their credentials. The cooperation, drive, and eagerness of an educator to make sure that learners are successful are connected or linked with rural academic achievement (Maestry & Ndlovu, 2014). Giving learners clear goals and expectations eventually improve their academic achievement. Once learners come to understand their educators' goals and expectations, it becomes easier for them to achieve academically.

3.2.2.1.2 Educator attitudes

An educator's attitude plays a critical role in learners' performance. The school may have all the necessary resources, but attitude is one of the most critical resources within the educator, and if not tapped into, academic progress will not be achieved (Smith, 2012). Classes do not only need the physical presence of educators but also the willpower to drive academic achievement. The educator must be ready and willing to see learners achieve their best results. The educator's mental readiness is key to learners' achievement. Mental readiness involves the educators' ability to assess his/her own method of teaching as well as learners' poor performance (Hlalele, 2012). The educators' beliefs and attitudes have a significant effect on the morale and the overall learner success. Therefore, whether in rural or urban areas, the classroom environment has an impact on what educators teach and how they perform in class.

If educators are not enthusiastic about coming to school every day, it eventually will have an impact on the overall school performance. Due to the lack of sufficient funds, many schools in rural areas cannot afford to spend time on the educators' morale (Danzing, 2014). The focus of many schools – in rural areas – is mostly based on policy and procedure and, therefore, neglects the climate (Hebert, 2011). Park and Holloway (2018) noted that changing the school's culture and the attitudes of educators is not like changing the décor but rather like altering beliefs. Expectations and habits that have gone largely unexamined for many years is a complex, messy and challenging task, which schools need to consider if they want good results. The comfort and the way the school looks yield the desired results.

If rural schools want to produce positive and effective citizens, they must foster an environment that is positive and effective (Corruption Watch, 2012). Changing the attitudes of educators and creating a learning climate is not easy. Both principals and educators must put in a united effort to discuss ways to establish and develop a positive environment favourable to learning (Hebert, 2011). Schools lack basic comforts for both learners and educators, and they are often distracted or deterred from student learning. Maestry and Ndlovu (2014) suggested that schools create both mental and physical models in which educators and learners practice shared values. Moreover, under-performing schools are also characterised by high educator absenteeism, which eventually limits teaching time (Masondo, 2014).

3.2.2.1.3 Educator absenteeism

Educator absenteeism in under-performing schools is widely recognised as a serious problem; it is also found particularly in rural and/or disadvantaged areas (Kubheka, 2018). Educator absenteeism

is explained as a failure of an educator to report for duty and the failure to honour teaching time or scheduled classes (Maromo, 2019). Modisaotsile (2012) defined absenteeism as a periodic non-appearance of educators in schools for one or more days – whether justified by a medical report or not. The habitual absence from work for one or more days may usually be justified by a medical certificate, which is usually because of personal interests and poor sense of duty. Generally, research argues that the reasons for educator absenteeism in under-performing schools are mainly private individual matters of educators. While the absence of educators in schools is an individual matter, there are various factors that lead to educator absenteeism, such as institutional (school), structural (social environment) and economic. These factors, if not properly managed, can also contribute to the school's under-performance. The effect of educator absenteeism weighs heavily on learners' performance (Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education, 2014).

The research findings reveal that the under-performing schools have insufficient measures to curb educator absenteeism due to insufficient policy measures (Houchens, 2016). The problem of educator absenteeism is rampant and may, therefore, manifest in various forms. Reducing educator absenteeism implies the improvement of the final outcomes of learner achievement. This, therefore, ensures a good relationship between inputs (education investment) and outputs (learner performance). Azganye (2012), concluded that improving educator attendance eventually increases productivity in schools.

Educator absenteeism is problematic because it has the potential to disrupt effective teaching and learning in the school (Bipath, 2012). Other than educators being absent from schools, rural and/or under-performing schools also suffer from a lack of time management from educators; they arrive late at schools, finish early, and leave their classes unattended during the day (Blackwell, 2017). This type of behaviour also seriously reduces instructional and/or contact time. Like South Africa, some developing countries also suffer from the same problem of educator absenteeism. Educator absenteeism is a serious problem in South Africa and seems to be the latest target of Minister Angie Motshekga. According to the recently released statistics by the minister of basic education, the percentage of educator absenteeism has risen from 8 per cent to 10 per cent (Kubheka, 2018). The report also indicated that 77 per cent of the sick leave taken by educators is the one to two-days leave of absence, which does not require a medical report or certificate from a doctor.

According to Azganye (2012), there are two types of educator absenteeism: the educator is either absent from school or from class. Absenteeism of educators from school is explained as the total number of educators who do not avail themselves for duty on an ordinary school day for any reason. Be that as it may, the absence of educators in the classrooms is explained as the total number of educators who – although they came to school – are not attending to their classes, teaching. Amtaika

(2013) contended that effective teaching time is not only lost when the educator does not report for duty but also when the educator does not honour teaching time as expected. There are various factors that may affect an educators' ability to attend to work, such as family commitments, transport problems, ill health, injuries, accidents, disinterest etc. To explain the high level of unauthorised educator absenteeism in under-performing schools, a study was conducted in rural areas wherein various scholars emphasised the issue of demotivation of educators as one of the main reasons for educator absenteeism (Amtaika, 2013; Avgar, 2015). This has been a result of – among other things – classes that are overcrowded, a lack of proper infrastructure, posts that are not filled, large workloads on informal tasks that also need to be conducted (Paxton, 2015), a lack of training on how to deal with classes that are multilingual that have learners with multiple abilities, the profession of teaching, which has since declined in social classes, a wide gap of social difference that keeps on increasing between educators and their clientele from public schools, a lack of parental involvement, learner ill-discipline, a lack of community support, a high educator-learner ratio and heavy workloads and stress (Azguanye, 2012; Andrews, 2018).

3.2.2.1.4 Educator professional and content knowledge

The educator's professional knowledge comprises three important elements: disciplinary knowledge, knowledge of the subject or teaching content and educator competency (for classroom management). Research findings indicate that these three aspects are inseparable. Therefore, a good educator is well balanced in terms of the three above-mentioned elements. With regard to content knowledge, it is the methods of teaching that matter in the classroom and the ability of the educator to teach content in the class (Sephton, 2014). In any lesson, sound disciplinary knowledge is a prerequisite for making progress. However, effective learning takes place because of the ability of the educator to manage the classroom. Without classroom management, it is not easy for effective teaching and learning to take place. Whichever teaching methods educators may employ, they will not yield results in a disorderly class; educators in under-performing schools find it difficult to transmit their knowledge to their learners due to class ill-discipline (Seroto, 2012). Research also indicates that in rural areas schools perform low due to the educators' pattern of knowledge being impeded. Further research done on under-performing schools in rural areas found that the content knowledge of educators was high ($\geq 75\%$), but learner scores were low ($< 40\%$) (Taylor, 2011). The conclusion made was that the learning barrier is due to the inability of the educator to pass on the content knowledge that they have acquired.

3.2.2.1.5 Teaching and learning

Educators have the legal right and authority of managing and directing classroom activities and to manage effective learning. It is, therefore, important for them to be professional and conscientious

about their work. Educators need to master the art of being approachable, be able to give careful attention to issues and become part of solutions to all the problems as presented by learners in the classroom (Hebert, 2011). In rural areas, the process of teaching and learning is mostly affected by a lack of adequate learner-educator support material (LTSM) and other resources. However, it must be noted that there are schools that are without adequate resources and yet educators with a good attitude and motivation do produce the desired outcomes. On the other hand, educators who depend solely on the availability of resources do not have the necessary knowledge and, therefore, lack information on the content they are teaching, are unable to use technology and are unable to improvise as per the modern and innovative ways of teaching (Hlalele, 2012). Rural schools have been identified as having high rates of poverty, which has turned many people to commit crimes, however, educators – in rural areas – need to be given capacity in managing discipline in the school, managing all the activities of the school, and administering effective classroom learning in an organised manner (Hoadley, 2012). The main objective of educators in the school is to enhance learners' academic performance that leads to their effective development. Effective teaching and learning in rural areas are usually disturbed by learners who are found to be high on substances, lack discipline, are pregnant, are absent and habitually come late (Kraus, 2018). Bayat et al. (2014) indicated that learner ill-discipline and gangsterism prevents effective teaching and learning in schools; hence, there is under-performance. Previously, the issue of gangsterism was associated with urban and township areas; however, it is now proven that rural areas are also affected by this problem.

Another factor that hinders effective teaching and learning in rural areas is poor classroom instruction (Seroto, 2012). The basic classroom-level instruction in under-performing schools is often weak and ineffective (Taylor, 2011). In under-performing schools, classrooms are frequently marked by uninteresting, educator-driven education that is not tailored for learners' readiness levels (Department of Basic Education, 2019). Learning tasks that are given in classes suggest that educators have consistently low expectations for what their learners can do and what they can achieve. Most educators in under-performing schools do not plan their lessons and have no targets, and those who do have lesson plans do not appear to be organised into a logical framework of progressions that can be used to effectively guide assessment (Du Plessis, 2014). Data from the formative assessment do not always lead to meaningful, explainable, and remedial work that aims to assist learners to improve their performance. Educators in formative classroom assessment data rarely lead to meaningful and descriptive feedback that could help a student to improve their performance (Kraus, 2018).

Taylor (2011) found that educators in under-performing schools – in rural areas – do not have the ability to identify and/or support under-performing learners in their schools. Therefore, educators are not accountable for their failing learners. A study conducted by Bayat et al. (2014) indicates that

educators in rural under-performing schools think that their teaching methods are good since they have not seen other methods, or they are adamant that no other teaching method can work on their learners. In every under-performing school, of course, there are a small number of good educators – but they are minimal. These educators normally work alone; isolated from their colleagues with minimal recognition, appreciation and/or support from their principals.

A. Learners

Learners have the most important part to play in their own education. Educators are only willing to teach if the learners are keen to learn. Although the educator has a lot to do in education, most of the success is related to the efforts of the learners themselves. The role of learners is to be actively engaged in the learning activities in the school. Learners are more successful with thy are learning by being responsible, participating and having a positive attitude (Fletcher, 2014). The process of learning is coupled with the participation of learners in the class: the attitude of learners towards their own education and educators; the learner's responsibility and accountability and the learner's awareness of keeping the school's property and infrastructure safe for future use (Newman, 2019). Both identified issues are discussed below:

B. Learner Participation

Learners are expected to participate in classroom activities in an orderly manner (Mehra, 2016). Learners who contribute to classroom discussions and group activities do not only help themselves but also help other learners as well. Learners' participation has been found to be minimal in learners whose performance is below standard (Newman, 2019). Learners in under-performing schools usually disturb themselves and others by not cooperating in class. Moreover, Fletcher (2014) found – through observation – that learning in under-performing schools suffers due to too much noise and absenteeism (Fletcher, 2014). These learners do not have an interest in participating in school and/or community programmes (Carelse, 2018b).

C. Learners Attitude

Learner attitude involves the way in which learners in under-performing schools – in rural areas – think and feel about their education as well as knowing and understanding the expectations of the school, parents, and the community (Jamieson et al., 2014). Learners in rural areas have been found not to have the ability to develop positive attitudes towards schooling or be cooperative and considerate (Fletcher, 2014). Furthermore, Paxton (2015) explained that it is increasingly common to find unmotivated learners in rural areas; hence, there is a lot of grade repetition. Bad attitudes towards educators and learning have led to many dropouts in rural areas (Mehra, 2016). Shore (2015) also confirmed that there is a positive relationship between learners' academic performance and their attitude.

Effective learning in the school is not only created by educators but is also created by learners in the school with the main intention of building a vibrant and lively classroom. The Department of Basic Education (2018) has provided some insights into best practices for educators to achieve active learner engagement in the class. It emphasises a critical component of creating a sense of belonging and encourages active learner engagement. Just as the educator is responsible for facilitating the joy in learning, learners are responsible for their own participation.

Research conducted in under-performing schools in rural areas indicates that learners in under-performing schools do not have a positive attitude towards school and learning (Seroto, 2012). Under-performers also tend to have less perseverance, low motivation and low self-confidence in content subjects and mathematics when compared to better-performing learners in schools (Condy & Blease, 2014). These learners – in rural schools – usually skip classes or days of school due to many social reasons. Learners who skip school are almost three times more likely to be under-performers when compared to learners who do not (Department of Basic Education-Western Cape, 2015).

D. The responsibility of learners in the school

Being active participants in a class is regarded as one of the main responsibilities of (Condy & Blease, 2014). They should come to school well prepared and be ready to participate. Learners in under-performing schools do not realise that class engagement maximises the opportunity for learning and sets the tone for a positive competition in the classroom (Phakathi, 2015). These students do not participate in lessons, they do not ask or answer questions, they do not complete in-class assignments and they consistently do not align behaviour to classroom norms (Nkosi, 2013). It is the responsibility of learners to arrive at school on time for their classes and to be prepared to learn in an orderly and disciplined manner (Department of Basic Education, 2019). Nkosi (2013) found that most learners in rural areas go to school having not done or completed their homework, and without resources such as textbooks. Furthermore, learners in rural areas lack the ability to organise their time (Carelse, 2018a). These learners – in rural schools – do not see the need to participate in extramural activities or other activities beyond their normal school hours (Seroto, 2012).

E. Learners' personal accountability

Learners are also a part of a learning community. Each learner is responsible for taking ownership of his/her actions in a way that value and build a safe and positive classroom environment (Cucchiella & Ranieri, 2014). Learner accountability is seemingly not encouraged in under-performing schools.

Hence, performance and academic achievement remain very low. Learners – whether in rural or urban areas – are responsible for their own behaviour and academic performance. If learners are not doing well academically, they do not only frustrate themselves but also the school community at large (Azguanye, 2012).

The lack of accountability in learners in under-performing schools is shown by many over-aged learners in the school and by a high percentage of grade repetition (Westaway, 2012). Learners who are overaged for their grade perform even worse than their other classmates (Department of Basic Education, 2018). The repetition of grades in rural areas leads to poor outcomes. Most learners in higher grades in under-performing schools in rural areas cannot read for meaning (Department of Basic Education-Western Cape, 2015). Learners who read for meaning and understand the content perform significantly better than those who do not. These conclusions have a very clear message for principals in under-performing schools: under-performing schools should stimulate the use of English in and outside the classroom by both educators and learners (Evans & Pilyoung, 2013). Research done in rural areas has concluded that language proficiency affects performance in schools. Moreover, the ability to read with understanding improves the quality of thinking required of school learners (Taylor et al., 2014). Most critically, reading and the ability to write are the most important factors for the development of the higher cognitive skills that are needed in a particular grade. While writing helps learners to remember and better understand language terminology and subject concepts, learners who do not read for meaning and who do not understand or speak English lack skills for writing essays (Westaway, 2012), summaries and analytical essays, which demand a higher level of processing rather than filling in the missing words and short questions (Du Plessis, 2014).

Learners in rural schools – in South Africa – are systematically deprived of opportunities to access information due to the lack of textbooks and library facilities; this, therefore, has negatively impacted their ability to express themselves in writing and reading (Nkosi, 2013). The problem stated above does not only hinder effective learning but also the innate desire or curiosity of learners when it comes to reading and writing. South African learners in under-performing schools are not doing much reading and writing to keep away from grade failing.

F. Overaged learners

A study conducted in rural areas indicated that most learners in rural areas are over-aged for their grades. Children who are over-aged for their grades in secondary schools are experiencing a notable challenge within the education system of South Africa, which presently possesses a challenge for

the recent government policy on enrolment age (Carelse, 2018b). Male learners – in rural areas – in under-performing schools constitute most over-aged learners who are also repeating a grade from Grade 9 to 11 while few of them reach Grade 12 (Phakathi, 2015). In farms and rural areas boys repeat grades more frequently than girls. As a result, these learners from poor communities are most likely to be above the required age in their grades.

Over-aged learners are commonly a result of grade repetition. It is estimated that about 15 per cent of learners in secondary schools – in rural areas – are older than the appropriate age (Sephton, 2014). Repetition is a significant problem in under-performing schools and data collected in rural areas indicate that one out of every three learners (almost 37 per cent) has repeated a grade at least once by the time they arrive in Grade Nine (Fletcher, 2014). Grade repetition is not serving learners in under-performing schools – in rural areas – well since over-aged learners perform worse when compared to appropriately aged learners – in both content and skills assessed subjects (Amtaika, 2013). As a matter of fact, the gap in academic achievement, of these learners, continues to grow as they move through the grades (Westaway, 2012).

Under-performing schools also experience a shortage – or lack – of adequate resources due to the vandalising of the school's property and infrastructure (Shore, 2016). This problem is less eminent in urban schools where there is adequate security (Corruption Watch, 2012). Rural schools do not have security personnel to look after the school's property. The money for norms and standards does not cater for the security personnel in the school. Therefore, the responsibility is left in the hands of the SGB to raise funds for the school. Learners in the school who are frustrated about various things in the school can also vandalise the school's property (Department of Basic Education, 2016). Vandalism can either be an internal or an external factor since various people from different backgrounds can also vandalise the school if there is no proper security. A further discussion on the vandalism of school property follows below.

G. The school governing body

The SGBs involvement in the school is mandated by the South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996. SASA gives SGBs the responsibility to look after the best interest of the school. This puts the SGB in a position to encourage parents to play an active role in the education of their children. The SGB comprises different stakeholders in the school of which parents are the majority. These parents are, therefore, expected to play an important role in promoting the best interest of the school as well as improving the interest of education in the school. The SGB is in the best position in the school to encourage parental involvement in school. Parental involvement in under-performing schools helps learners to succeed academically as well as be motivated to attend school (Costa & Faria, 2017).

Danzing (2014) emphasised that under-performing schools should begin to understand the impact that parents – as stakeholders – have on learners' academic success. A good relationship between educators, parents and the SGB – as stakeholders in the school – benefits learners and assists them to achieve their academic success. The networks around learners do not only rest within their own families but should also extend to the entire school community (Furlanger, 2018). Learners can also form relationships with adults within the school community; thus, benefiting from social capital.

The impact that parental influence has on rural learners depends upon the social investments that SGBs have. The academic achievement of learners in rural areas is solely based on the amount of time that parents invest in their children's education. Rusznyak (2014) discovered that if parents in rural areas desire to make sure that their children perform well in class, they must fully support them and build a strong relationship with them. Most learners in rural areas are products of large families. As a result, parental supervision is poor (Costa & Faria, 2017). Therefore, SGBs play a critical role in educating parents about the importance of their involvement in the school. It is the responsibility of the SGB to encourage parents to develop an interest in the education of their children. Believing that parents play an important role in the lives of their children; academically or otherwise. Moreover, noting the fact that many families in rural areas still live in communities with high levels of poverty and unemployment and low levels of education (Fleish, 2018). As a result, these parents are known to employ fewer education-oriented practices with their children due to the factors listed above. Despite these factors, parental academic involvement has been shown to have a strong effect on children living in disadvantaged localities. Moreover, the low academic achievement that has been brought about by deprivation can be improved by parental involvement in the academic issues of their children (Carelse, 2018a).

3.2.3 Resources

Due to high levels of poverty, schools in rural areas lack adequate resources, and SGBs – due to various reasons – are unable to adequately supplement the funds of the school (Vilakazi, 2016). Learners in rural areas generally do not have the social and/or financial capital found in suburban areas (Carelse, 2018b). As a result, considering the lack of financial resources, the community do not assist in challenging the behaviours and/or mentalities that combat education in rural areas. To achieve academically, schools must build relationships, which have otherwise been a barrier to a positively nurtured relationship between the rural community and the school to bring about real change (Scott, 2015).

In all schools, irrespective of the environment, there must be a collaboration of resources and dialogue amongst the parents, the community, and the school. Teaching and learning – especially among historically disadvantaged and/or rural schools – is characterised by poor resources. It is acknowledged, however, that some schools from similar areas have indeed produced good results without adequate resources (Du Plessis, 2014). However, learning in rural schools is disturbed by several factors; among these factors is the lack of resources or the late arrival of learning materials (Corruption Watch, 2012). It is critical too that the necessary equipment such as books, laboratory equipment and chemicals are supplied to schools in time for their use to be maximised.

Unfortunately, there are far more stressors and barriers to rural learner success when compared to urban learner success (Hlalele, 2012). As the gap between the rich and poor continues to increase, particularly within South Africa, many poorer people reside and study in rural areas where schools lack important educational resources such as libraries and laboratories – unlike in suburban areas. Only parents – in rural areas – who possess more financial resources, are successful in acquiring things that will serve the interest of their children (Hoadley, 2012). Thus, to close the gap between the rich and poor and to provide resources for all learners, policymakers and educational leaders must approach issues in the rural community that affect the school systematically. Learners attending public schools in rural areas do so without textbooks and libraries.

South Africa has become a country in which the socio-economic level of parents has a huge impact on the ability and academic progress of their children. Visser (2012) surmised that parents from a strong financial background have influence over political, curricular, and educational decisions that affect the welfare of their children. Whereas parents from poor financial backgrounds are ignored and fail in acquiring the political, curricular, and educational resources that will enable their children to be successful (Smith, 2012).

Sociologists of the self-perception theory argue that the way in which a person feels about themselves influences how well they will perform in life (Degol et al., 2017). Therefore, if learners do not have adequate resources, they lack confidence in their ability to pass. As a result, their self-perception becomes very low. Self-perception determines a person's general self-confidence. Another internal factor in the school is professional development as further discussed below.

3.2.4 Professional development of school principals

Principals' professional development (PD) refers to the process of school principals improving and increasing their capabilities through access to continuous education and in-training opportunities in the school (Satell, 2016). Bourdieu's cultural capital theory clearly states that the leader who refers

to the principal in the current study – should always have full knowledge of what to do (which is part of the training as stated above) and how to react depending on the situation at hand. Moreover, institutionalised cultural capital recognises the principals' academic and professional credentials as a symbol or as evidence of competency.

Professional development for school principals helps to build and maintain educators' morale and it also helps to retain high-quality staff (Amar et al., 2009). It further equips school principals with the skills and knowledge of school leadership. Professional development also encompasses various types of facilitated learning opportunities for school principals. Hence, Bourdieu stressed the importance of professional knowledge, which comes through PD. Professional development can assist principals in the way they interact and involve other stakeholders within the school community (i.e., social capital).

Previous research has indicated the need for PD since the role of the principal has changed into the chief executive officer responsible for strategic planning, budget, procuring the school's resources and managing instructions (Bush et al., 2011). These and other changes in the education system of school governance have also put enormous pressure on principals who have been in the system for a long period of time (Mestry, 2017). As a result, principals could not cope with their new roles. Principals still experience difficulties in managing the hype of administration work and the new communication channel. However, for principals, it is important to recognise leadership as a method or a process and to continuously engage themselves in PD. Moreover, the theory of habitus and field emphasises the ability of the principal to recognise and acknowledge the power of the position they hold. Continuous engagement in professional development makes the principal aware of the hierarchical power that lies within the principalship position.

3.2.4.1 The ability of the principal to improve learner performance through professional development

Ability refers to the strength or capacity of a principal to do or act physically, mentally, legally, morally, as well as financially (Merlo, 2021). It also refers to the competence of the principal in any activity or task based on training, and other qualification (Castillo, 2019). Many practicing principals lack basic management and leadership training prior to and into the principalship position (Mestry, 2017). They come into the principalship positions without proper training in preparation for their new role as school leaders. Therefore, they usually rely on common sense and experience. The embodied cultural capital indicates that the principal should have knowledge of the position and the responsibility attached to the position. Globally, research has proven that the poor academic standards at a school level could be because of many reasons, however, poor academic standards

are symptomatic of ineffective leadership and management in schools (OECD, 2010). The theory of habitus and field further indicates that the knowledge of the leader is acquired over time through formal and informal engagements. The formal engagements are referred to as the institutionalised cultural capital whereby the principal's academic and professional development symbolises the competence and authority of the principal. Research conducted at a national level indicates that many public-school principals lack the relevant knowledge and skills to effectively lead their schools, which results in under-performance (Joseph, 2011). This – as a result – has had a serious implication for learner achievement and performance (Legotlo, 2011). Thus, a serious need exists for the education authorities to continuously develop and support school principals.

Due to the increasing problem of under-performance in schools and the lack of principal's PD, the South African government has proposed – through the National Development Plan (NDP) – the need to strengthen policy framework that is aimed at increasing the effectiveness of school principals. The NDP's aim of strengthening the policy framework relates to the symbolic capital of the habitus and field theory. Symbolic capital stresses the knowledge, abilities, and skills that the principal has, which can only be accumulated through formal education and through work experience. Meanwhile, the NDP focuses on recruiting qualified principals based on competency and who will also work on performance-based contracts. The NDP's aim of improving the low quality of education in rural schools in South Africa – as compared to other developing countries (Republic of South Africa, 2012) – proposes policy improvements in the following three major areas.

- Improving the principal's appointment.

The NDP indicates that principals need to be subjected to competency-based testing before the actual appointment as a school principal. It further indicates the need to increase the minimum qualification requirements for principals, which include having an advanced certificate in education management and leadership (Department of Basic Education, 2014). In other words, the NDP concurs with the symbolic capital of the Bourdieu theory, which stresses the principal's cumulative abilities, knowledge, and skills, which can be acquired through formal education. Bourdieu's legitimacy of the principal is mainly based on academic or formal education.

- Managing principal's performance

The NDP also proposes the need for performance contracts for school principals. Such contracts will enable the Department of Education to replace underperforming principals with better ones. The management of the principal's performance is aimed at reducing the number of schools that are performing below the provincial and/or national target based on the Grade Twelve's results.

- Greater powers of the principal

The NDP further proposes more powers to the principal. This can be further explained using Bourdieu's theory as the "doxa power". The principal uses the doxa power to avoid divisions and misunderstandings in the school. Thus, the NDP gives the principal more autonomy in functional schools. Furthermore, the NDP gives the principal the authority to lay off incompetent educators in the school, which will eventually get rid of under-performance.

Professional development is, however, not a once-off experience; it is rather a continuous process that is aimed at promoting higher-quality instructions and a strong culture and climate in a school. A continuous process of PD allows the principal to master the field of education he/she is attached to. Moreover, the theory of habitus and field stresses that the effective knowledge of the field can positively influence the effective application of power by the principal in the school. Research indicates that school principals of under-performing schools lack effective leadership, which enable principals to train teams of people in a school to help in handling leadership responsibilities to better balance the load of demands (Hussin & Al Abri, 2015). The benefits behind training teams of people in a specific way of working are many and include training members of staff to conduct school operations adequately during the absence of the principal (Rowland, 2017).

3.2.4.2 Professional development and social capital

Professional development assists principals in accessing peer networks. These networks – according to the social capital in the Bourdieu theory – are the people whom the principal associate with, and they can have a potential influence on him. These peer networks eventually become the support structure on which the principal may lean for professional support. Social – or peer – networks allow principals to share ideas and problems with their peers at any stage (Avgar, 2015). These types of networks, together with continuous formal development programmes, help to combat the feelings of loneliness in case of a school's under-performance. International research indicates that principals' PD helps school principals of under-performing schools in setting their priorities and managing their time correctly (Rowena, 2014). This is done with the aid of developing mentorship programmes, which is regarded as the best way to start new principals out on the right path (Hussin & Al Abri, 2015).

Improving a principal's PD requires a new way of thinking, prioritising, and budgeting at the level of the state, province, and district (Du Plessis, 2017). Therefore, evidence shows the important role played by school principals in reaching the national goals of high success for all learners. Hence, when principals are given the right training and support, they act as strong levers for change. Research also shows that many school principals do not have exposure to professional learning, which illustrates what is currently happening in schools, such as the notable demographics shift,

significant reform initiatives, technological change, and the changing teaching strategies (Du Plessis, 2017).

Recent studies conducted in the UK – on principal's PD – indicate a great improvement in principal's effectiveness and the resulting decrease in principal turnovers (Ikemoto et al., 2014). However, there has been little research done on the duration of the training and what to put on the training manuals. Currently – in South Africa – there is no outright sign of professional training for school principals other than the induction workshops for the school management teams (SMT) (Mestry, 2017). Nevertheless, people do enrol in their own special programmes in various universities to further their studies on school management and leadership. However, having completed your advance certificate in education (ACE) and other related degrees do not give educators promotion to managerial positions since there is no outright specification on the requirement of the principalship post – other than the usual educator's diploma.

The results of the research conducted in the UK indicate a positive outcome in principal's PD (Bottery, 2016). Its analysis indicates a turnaround in under-performing schools. It further indicates that schools are rapidly improving their student learning and are becoming consistent in high-achieving results (Miller, 2014). It further indicates that school principals of such schools expect high achievement from all learners, promote curriculum and effective teaching, cultivate, and sustain a supportive and caring culture, recruit and retain effective educators and involve parents and community resources to meet learners' needs. The very same principals work long hours to keep up with administration work (Maas & Lake, 2015).

3.2.4.3 Professional development and school leadership

Previous research suggests that well-planned PD introduces school principals to effective leadership practices, which involves human capital management (both teaching and non-teaching), setting agendas, counselling, coaching and instructional leadership and effecting teaching and learning in schools (Bottery, 2016). Research also reveals that few principals actively participate fully in their daily duties as they also spend time on instructional leadership activities, coaching and educator assessment and support (Carrie & Frits., 2014). Rather, principals tend to focus most of their time on activities of administration, such as learner discipline and standards for compliance and the finances of the school. Hence, Bourdieu's theory emphasises the importance of the principal to possess all types of capital without which the functioning of the school is greatly compromised.

A study conducted in the United States of America indicated that principals who are professionally developed are also successful in employing the five main keys of management practices: they effectively and successfully shape the vision of academic success for all learners; they create a hospitable climate for both learners and educators; they cultivate leadership in others; they strengthen teaching; and they properly manage the people and data processes of school improvement (Du Plessis, 2017) It further indicated that under-performing public schools across the country solely focus on trying to manage the administration, budgeting and learner discipline while disregarding all other equally important issues (OECD, 2010).

In South Africa, there is a growing concern that the short induction workshops for school principals and the members of the SMT have been greatly ineffective as they have failed to change the level of under-performance in rural areas (Courtney, 2017) Previous studies indicate a desperate need for more PD of principals and an urgent need to offer support to principals in order to meet the demands of today; more specifically, quality teaching and the improvement of learner achievement (Bottery, 2016).

It is through effective PD that principals can increase capacity in all four capitals – as outlined in Bourdieu's theory. Principals who lack certain knowledge and/or skills (which can be linked to habitus and field) are not able to improve their schools' under-performance; hence, a great need for development exists. Typically, a successful principal is regarded as the most critical determinant in whether a school can recruit – or attract – and retain high-quality educators (Ananga, 2010). Meanwhile, several international studies report that mentored and coached principals are more effective and successful than their peers who have been provided with other forms of PD (The Wallace Foundation, 2013). Other reports suggest that PD initiatives for principals have had a significant effect on learner outcomes and staff turnover (Carelse, 2018b)

The traditional workshop style for PD for principals typically has a “one size fits all” content, which is delivered to all members of the SMT (Bush et al., 2011). The PD offered to principals usually does not align curriculum content with the personal needs of the principal, and it also fails to coordinate the process of learning with the needs and mission of the school and district (Mestry, 2017). It further does not leverage job-embedded learning opportunities, such as the application of new skills and techniques, working with a coach or team and focuses on a specific issue or problem of practice at the school (Miller, 2014). This clearly indicates that there is still much to learn about how to develop and implement principals' PD programmes to influence learner performance, the school climate, educator cooperation and the retention of staff. The absence of the above-mentioned knowledge, skills and techniques indicates a lack of symbolic capital of the principal, which indicates the

principal's cumulative knowledge, skills, and ability, which is continuously developed through formal PD and through experience.

Effective principal PD emphasises that principals become better equipped on issues of instructional leadership, which involves the ability of the principal to concentrate on successful and effective curriculum delivery, educator professionalism and integrated student development (Du Plessis, 2017). Principals are valued and regarded as the key persons in the school organisation as they assume the role of leadership and that they are very important in moulding professionalism in educators, school improvement and school performance (Department of Basic Education, 2014b).

The principal position is critical as it is theoretically believed that a good incumbent – or candidate – in such a position will eventually produce good educators and good academic achievement from learners. These are, therefore, seen as critical variables for the formation of a good school (Bottery, 2016). With continuous training and PD, it becomes easy for principals to know the organisational structures of the school and methods for strengthening each component and the evaluation items for each component. In South Africa, it is largely believed that a school's performance is centred only on the level of learners' development and learning performance (Department of Basic Education, 2014), and as a result, the principal's PD is simply neglected.

Analysis from previous research reveals that principals of under-performing schools essentially need more capacity on the issue of knowledge and competency in areas such as researching and determining the exact source and extent of problems that contribute to under-performance; identifying and defining these problems; devising alternative solutions to identified problems; arranging alternatives in order of priority; and the necessary or required action plan for tackling problems of under-performance (Sekhu, 2011). The theory of Bourdieu emphasises on the presence of symbolic capital in the leadership. Therefore, PD qualifies the principal in addressing the issues listed above. Hence, the success of the school is embedded in the principal's symbolic capital. Moreover, the honour or prestige that the principal has automatically becomes enablers in effective school leadership.

Research has also proven that due to insufficient PD, school principals of under-performing schools do not have the ability or the courage to involve educators, learners, and parents to share their thoughts and ideas on the school and neither to delegate responsibilities to various groups of people nor stakeholders in the school (Sekhu, 2011). It was further revealed that principals of under-performing schools need the skills and knowledge on how to proactively engage educators and

learners on their ideas on improving the school's performance. Bourdieu's theory emphasised on the issue of using social capital in leadership. Therefore, through Bourdieu's theory it was explored that an effective principal is one who can effectively use social capital in the school. Social capital involves the ability of the principal to effectively engage with all stakeholders in the school and communicate important school matters. Bourdieu's theory has a strong view on the ability of leaders to set up strong social relationships and networks within the school. It promotes interaction between all stakeholders.

Where PD is ignored and overlooked it results in ineffective school leadership coupled with poor communication (Goncalves, 2013). As a result, principals show a lack of commitment towards building teams in the school. The results of various studies show that principals of under-performing schools basically lack three important dimensions for creating team commitment: establishing a strong and supportive relationship between educators, learners, and parents; opening channels for constructive feedback and inputs; providing a successful framework for educators and learners to work in collaboration with one another (OECD, 2010; Danzing, 2014).

Professional development gives the capacity to school principals as group leaders to negotiate and articulate what exactly needs to be done to get the intended outcomes (cultural capital) (Hebert, 2011). Based on the results of previous studies, teamwork is the cornerstone for improving a school's under-performance on both learners' academic performance and educators' performance. The establishment of teams in schools is in line with Bourdieu's social capital; this capital becomes instrumental in the improvement of under-performance in the school. Usually, schools have teams, such as the language team, science team, sports team etc. each with a team leader. These are the teams that need to be involved in meetings to prepare and develop strategies of things to be done to reach the expectations and benchmarks (Maas & Lake, 2015). Professional development, therefore, enforces effective school leadership and enhances teamwork and commitment, which assists them in the realisation of ulterior moral purposes in the school vision. Surely, strong articulation of a higher moral intent and values stems from an effective principal's ability. Moreover, an effective principal ensures that there is consistent clarification on the vision, goals, solutions, strategies, requirements, and rules relevant to the primary business of education (Miller, 2014).

Research has identified many conflicts in schools that arise due to the lack of a principal's PD (Spaull, 2013; Avgar, 2015). Without effective PD, school leadership fails to manage conflicts in schools, which may arise from issues based on disparities in culture, interests, perceptions, workload allocation and disciplinary matters wherein some principals do not know how to effectively deal with a situation (Bottery, 2016). Meanwhile, PD improves a principals' capabilities in resolving such

conflicts amicably among people by turning a negative emotional climate into a positive one. Results of studies conducted on dispute resolution in under-performing schools suggest that weak or ineffective PD results in a lack of necessary knowledge and skills in managing conflicts by school principals (Joseph, 2011).

The research-based on the effectiveness of principals' PD is still emerging with no clear indication of how the appropriate content and quality of PD for principals would look like (Danzing, 2014). Currently, only non-profit and non-government organisations (NGOs) are training principals and undertaking research and reviewing policies on topics related to school leadership; this has identified several aspects as to what effective PD for school principals should look like (Taylor, 2011). It includes topics such as focusing on the ongoing opportunity for practice; offering high-quality inputs and feedback to principals on their actions and performance or regular practice; using content that is research-based; and that which is made or constructed to teach principals what they need to know at that career point (Du Plessis, 2017). The discussion below explores in detail the habitus of the principal in improving or sustaining learner performance.

3.3 Principal's habitus (factors within the principal)

In this section, we look at various factors within the principal (character and personality) that, if not dealt with, might contribute to low school performance. Principals are also human beings who are characterised by feelings and emotions. However, principals are expected to lead schools out of the under-performance. Moreover, the distinction between a functional school and a dysfunctional or under-performing school in South Africa is also determined by the type of leadership the principal presents (Du Plessis, 2014). Defining the role of the school principal in creating a culture that leads to school functionality is an effective strategy for promoting success in rural schools. The behaviour and character of the principal have proven to be of great influence in his/her leadership in the school (Du Plessis, 2014). Effective principals possess high emotional intelligence (EI); they have the mental ability to think logically and scientifically and can analyse problems accurately when they arise (Hebert, 2011). Moreover, good leaders display emotional stability and temperance with a high degree of tolerance. The following section discusses EI.

3.3.1 Emotional intelligence of the principal

Emotional intelligence is described as the ability of the principal to recognise and manage own emotions as well as the ability to manage various levels of emotions of other people in the school (Brinia et al., 2014). EI comprises of teachable soft skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills. The principal is expected to manage negative emotions which

can be toxic in the school. Emotional intelligent is also explained as the ability to understand own and other people's emotions and recognise the influence carried by emotions in the workplace (Martinez, 2017). The previous section outlined some key factors of PD, however a recent study argued that it takes an emotional intelligent principal to see and recognise the need for PD (Belton et al., 2016). There are other types of intelligence that are most relevant in school management and leadership such as social intelligence and EI. Social intelligence is regarded as a building block for developing and maintaining relationships (Belton et al., 2016). It is further explained as the ability to understand different people and to respond wisely in social interactions. It also refers to the capacity of the principal to get along with all other people and master the technique of interaction with them. There is a strong relationship between Bourdieu's theory of social capital as well as social intelligence. It all centres on creating and maintaining social relationships with all stakeholders in the school. It all centres on the principal's ability to relate well to other people; however, for the purpose of this study, we will concentrate on EI only. This section explores how a principal's EI can improve learner performance in schools. It further explores the relationship between EI and school leadership and between EI and school management.

School reform in the 21st century dictates school principals to transform schools into autonomous, systems-thinking organisations where everybody in the school thinks towards the goals and objectives of the school (Akech, 2016). Therefore, principals in the school need to be aware of their own emotions and everyone else's around them. Emotional intelligence in school principals refers to the ability of the principal to monitor personal feelings and emotions and those of everyone in the school (Berliner, 2009). Emotional intelligence is also regarded as the ability of principals to control their own emotions as well as build positive relationships with others (Nureni, 2014).

The focus of EI on school principals closely relates to Bourdieu's theory of social capital and habitus. Social capital refers to the ability of the principal to create effective social relationships and social networks within the school. Habitus relate to the inner ability of the principal to acknowledge own emotions and manage them as well as the ability to observe other people's emotions and manage them as well. The personal knowledge of one's emotions enables them to know how to react to situations and provide leadership as well.

Emotional intelligence notes, however, that relationships based on the effective existence of a network of connections are not just an obvious case, or socially given, but it is also effectively constituted. It is the product of an endless effort and the EI of the principal at the school to create useful and meaningful relationships that can secure material and/or symbolic profits (Allington, 2013). In other words, a good principal's IE is an outcome of a positive network of relationships and

the ability to invest in strategies that are consciously created with the intention of creating social relationships, which can be used directly in the short or long term (Claridge, 2015). EI assist school principals to recognise their powers – both hierarchical and power from within – that can be effectively used to improve learner performance in schools. It assists the principal to know how to use or apply effective leadership within the hierarchical structure that exists within the education system. EI and social capital dictate that the principal must know how to consider their own biases and beliefs. Furthermore, EI has strong links with motivation – as discussed above. EI indicates that before the school principal motivates educators and learners, they themselves must be motivated from within. It further indicates that EI assists principals in identifying areas that need motivation in the school (Avgar, 2015).

Syarif (2014) argued that schools are effective when the principal is aware of his/her own emotions and the emotions of others in the school. The author further indicated that EI is of paramount importance in the improvement of a school's under-performance. As a result, the restructuring and reorganising of schools require principals to have high EI (Avgar, 2015). EI is closely linked to the principal's habitus (character) and motivation. Principals with high EI are regarded as highly motivated. They know how to deal with their emotions; hence, they can also manage the emotions of educators. The principals with high EI will know when and how to uplift the morale of educators in the school and consequently deal with under-performance (Blackwell, 2017). Over the past number of years, numerous studies have stressed the importance of EI on school leadership. The results of such studies confirm that principals who have high EI are more likely to succeed than those who are simply using common sense and relying on their education (Nureni, 2014; Goldsmith, 2016). It further indicated that school principals who have high EI are 20 per cent more productive than those with low EI (Amar et al., 2009)

Studies identified EI as the most valuable predictor of job performance (Brinia et al., 2014). It explained that principals who have high EI are more skilful in influencing, inspiring, growing and developing their staff. Hence, Bourdieu's theory states that the principal's habitus influences him/her in the same way the principal influences and inspires fellow colleagues. Researchers have noted that if emotions are not well managed, it can be intense and disruptive; they in fact challenge the leadership abilities of any principal (Martinez, 2017). Hence, it is necessary for principals as school leaders to be skilful in dealing with emotions. Emotions are not just feelings but a source of information. Effective principals with high EI have the ability to consider and control their own moods and emotions and those of others in the school (Carelse, 2018a) Therefore, high EI is viewed by other researchers as a strong enabler of positive school performance (Cliffe, 2011).

Since all schools are made up of people, emotions automatically come into play. There is no school where educators (as emotional human beings) are just objective with no emotions. Moreover, the fact is that emotions alone are the biggest motivator or de-motivator of educators in schools (Rowena, 2014). As a result, emotions govern the performance and efficiency of educators. Therefore, schools as organisations also need emotionally intelligent principals to improve the school's under-performance. Emotional intelligence addresses four main competencies of a principal in the school – as explained in Rowena (2014):

- Self-awareness: the ability of a principal to know and be aware of his/her own emotions as they happen. Emotional intelligent principals are aware of their own emotions, and they positively respond to each situation and people (Brinia et al., 2014). Emotional intelligent principals are aware of all the hindrances leading to under-performance (Hebert, 2011).
- Self-management: the ability of the principal to positively react to situations in the school. Principals with high EI are aware of their own emotions and positively direct their best possible behaviour in response to those emotions (Syarif, 2014). Self-management simply relates to how the principal reacts in situations while at the same time continuing to interact with educators in the school.
- Social awareness: having the ability to positively identify with other people's emotions and to try to understand them (De Luca, 2017). Social awareness tests their ability to understand what other people are feeling and thinking. The principal's understanding of other people's emotions helps with the early detection of factors that may possibly lead to under-performance (Brinia et al., 2014).
- Relationship management or social skills: principals who have social skills and the ability to use the awareness of their own emotions and the emotions of other people to be able to manage healthy interactions in the school and to provide clear and effective communication and the effective or proper handling of conflict (Syarif, 2014; De Luca, 2017). Moreover, the proper handling of conflict prevents all unnecessary issues that may contribute to the school's under-performance.

Principals in the school influence educators' thinking and their level of motivation (Martinez, 2017). They have the potential to enhance educators' confidence and trust while leading them to positively resonate efforts (Cliffe, 2011). Moreover, principals with high EI are aware that they are always closely observed in terms of their non-verbal actions, such as body language and facial expressions in different situations (Hebert, 2011). It then becomes important for them to consider and be aware of their non-verbal gestures, which can have a positive or negative effect on everyone in the school. Therefore, emotional intelligent principals act as role models and support their statements, philosophies, and principles by taking effective actions (Cliffe, 2011).

3.3.1.1 The importance of emotional intelligence on school leadership

EI is regarded as a major factor in the domain of school leadership (Girling, 2016). Principals with high EI appear to perform at a higher level than their peers with low EI, and those that continue to improve on their EI surpass their peers who do not. Emotional intelligence assists principals to be calm (*habitus*) even when faced with high levels of stress (Belton et al., 2016). It further assists them to have good relationships with staff and are easy to implement an open-door policy while keeping high expectations for their work. Moreover, principals with high EI are regarded as those who are able to pause and consider all the facts and emotions involved before making critical decisions (Rowena, 2014).

Emotional intelligence gives principals a practical drive with problem-solving and provides them with opportunities to connect with their own purpose through self-reflection and to communicate their vision with shared language (Girling 2016). Moreover, emotional intelligent principals are clear on how and when to express the use of empathy to get everyone on board and identify a higher level of trust in their employees for collective responsibility. Thus, the development of EI skills on school principals offers them sufficient qualities of leadership to advance the school and achieve its priorities and objectives (Courtney & Gunter, 2015). In particular, the emotionally intelligent principal can encourage and promote a culture of self-consciousness and effective schooling by embracing values of self-awareness, confidence, trust, and effectiveness by means of combining emotions, beliefs, vision and values with calmness and flexibility.

There are numerous studies on school leadership where researchers have examined various spheres of principal leadership, the type of leadership, what they do and their behaviour in situational contexts (Naicker & Mestry, 2013; Mitchell, 2015; Minadzi & Nyame 2016; Riddell, 2020). This has resulted in an increase of theories about leadership, yet how and why leaders impact or affect their organisations positively remains an unanswered question (Maulod et al., 2017). In comparison, the bulk of leadership research focuses on leaders' cognitive skills and, therefore, provides absolutely no credence to the thoughts and feelings that leaders carry to work every day. Feelings and emotions are characterised as obstacles to rational thought and behaviour (Brinia et al., 2014). A recent study has published research results suggesting that leaders' feelings and emotions play an important role in what they do and the decisions they make (Martinez, 2017). It further indicated that a principal with high EI is equipped to lead a school to consensus without necessarily upsetting anyone. Emotional intelligence helps principals to manage their feelings and emotions while being aware and sensitive to other people's needs. Emotional intelligence includes not only the emotions of the principal but also the moods and feelings they exhibit during personal encounters with other

colleagues (Miller, 2014). The way in which the principal solves problems, makes judgments, and creates networks (social capital) become part of the system of his/her values and beliefs (Blackwell, 2017). Emotional intelligence gives a positive view that problems and issues in schools happen for a reason and that they provide an opportunity to engage positively in life.

Studies revealed that the moods, emotions, and feelings of educators as human beings are connected to their thought processes, behaviour, and conduct; hence, it contributes to learner achievement (Naicker & Mestry, 2013). In addition, EI does not mean that a person is always pleasant but there are times whereby confrontation is needed. Emotional intelligence, therefore, requires a great deal of positive responsiveness to other people's needs and is an inherent capacity upon which principals can depend to convey difficult messages without fear or favour. Principals with high EI learn to control emotions and feelings and convey them properly and accurately (Avgar, 2015). The principal's ability to control emotions is closely linked to habitus as this is a personal trait or character of the principal to control feelings while being able to convey them to people concerned. Despite misconceptions, school principals use EI to make and enforce decisions affecting their schools.

3.3.1.2 The effective use of emotional intelligence in school management to improve learner performance

School management is an important part of the education system. It involves numerous activities that are used to handle school tasks effectively and to provide learners with a better educational experience. Principals with high EI are successful in school management as they possess conflict management and resolution skills (Hallinger, 2012). Bourdieu indicated that the leader in any institution should possess social capital. Social capital involves the ability to interact with colleagues as social beings. It is the availability of social capital that allows principals to know and identify conflict as and when it arises. Emotional intelligence helps principals to get the most out of everyone in the school by attaining personal fulfilment. A basic understanding of emotions helps in knowing, managing, and using emotions to address personal and interpersonal problems. Research has proven that school principals with high levels of EI positively apply social skills to influence educators while creating strong relationships with everyone within the school community (Boyatzis & Cavanagh, 2018)

Emotional intelligence forms an integral part of the school management process; unless principals want to lead their schools in the right direction, they need to be capable of effectively dealing with emotions. Effective principals combine a sense of strong moral purpose with a clear understanding

of the dynamics of change as they relate with their fellow colleagues (Amar et al., 2009). Hence, this study stresses the importance of creating and maintaining sound relationships between the principal and his/her colleagues in the school (social capital). Moreover, secondary school principals with high EI are capable of shaping and understanding relationships and emotions and feelings of those they serve and lead. Emotional intelligence also helps the principal and educators to understand the lives and background of the learners they teach. This is because good leaders are sensitive to their own feelings making it easy to be sensitive to the feelings of other people in the school (Martinez, 2017). As a result, it becomes easy to provide clear instructions and effectively handle conflicts as and when they arise.

Studies indicate that principals face an increasing demand from society to improve learners' academic achievement (Cliffe, 2011). Therefore, EI plays an important role in the effectiveness of school management. The ability to work with different groups of people and manage their emotions serves as a skill for their effectiveness. Research that was done on the relationship between EI and school management confirms that empathy, as one of the main key aspects of EI, contributes to leadership effectiveness (Hebert, 2011). In addition, the self-reported accuracy of school principals in perceiving other people's emotions is positively associated with the job satisfaction of educators. As a result, it is important to note that leaders' use of emotions has beneficial effects on employees' motivation. In this case, principals' effectiveness usually raises or lowers educators' mood and morale in the school, which often relates to the school's performance (Nureni, 2014). It, therefore, relies on the high EI of the principal to improve learner performance in the school (Wohlfahrtstaetter, 2012).

Exemplary principals are distinguished by the mastery of their softer side: their people skills, taste, judgement and – above all – character (Rowena, 2014). Hence, previous studies stress a widespread belief among many researchers that a correlation exists between EI and management performance. It is important for principals to have EI as educators expect principals to understand their situations as it also affects their level of commitment and performance at work, and if neglected often results in under-performance (Syarif, 2014). Emotionally intelligent principals know the exact time for either giving a directive or when to delegate. Moreover, good principals are aware when team members are acting as a unit or otherwise (Satell, 2016). Therefore, in order to attract and retain skilled and talented educators who can work effectively towards setting and maintaining good standards in the school, principals need to brush up on their own people skills and develop their EI (Nureni, 2014). Schools need emotionally intelligent principals to effectively lead schools towards excellence and provide effective leadership in schools (Girling, 2016). Leadership is further discussed below.

3.3.2. Leadership

Effective school leadership has been discussed in Chapter Two. However, the issue of effective leadership is central to improving a school's performance. Most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a social influence process whereby an intentional influence is exerted by one person over another to structure the activities and relationships in a group organisation (Sonn, 2016). The leadership of the principal in the school involves his/her ability to influence educators, learners, and parents to work together towards the realisation of the school's vision as well as working together towards the achievement of a particular aimed outcome. The principal and the rest of the SMT are vested with the authority to implement the managerial functions of planning, organising, controlling, and directing the activities with the principal primarily having the right to make decisions. These decisions can be made either at one's own discretion or they may consult others and seek ideas and suggestions from educators and other staff members of the school. The major role of leadership aspects in influencing the academic outcomes of the school in rural areas is based upon the effective administration and management of the school (Kotze, 2013). School leadership plays an important role in the effective implementation of school rules and policies to improve learner performance. The school leadership also has the task of managing and developing educators' skills and abilities as educators have an imperative role in influencing the academic performance of learners in the school.

A large-scale study of effective school leadership provided clear indications that to improve a school's under-performance there should be some element of shared, collaborative, and distributed leadership as it is strongly associated with effective leadership in schools (Janse Van Rensburg, 2014) whereas in their absence the school fail. In other words, for school leadership to work, it is paramount for the characteristics of collaboration to be evident. School leadership researchers have argued that leaders have a responsibility to examine their leadership style to see how it affects the people with whom they work and lead (Hlalele, 2012; Lamb et al., 2014). Although leadership is critical in schools for all school functions, Carelse (2018a) illustrated how leadership has changed over the years and suggested that there are four critical levels of leadership that are apparent in our schools: autocratic, *laissez-faire*, democratic and bureaucratic. When these different levels – or approaches – to school leadership are scrutinised, it becomes clear that they permit varying degrees of participation by educators. In the current school context, South Africa uses a decentralised educational leadership and management framework (Hebert, 2011). However, for effective school leadership in rural schools, principals need to be equipped and be given the capacity in all four levels of leadership. The leadership of the principal in rural areas is determined by both the habitus, which is the character, and the rules of the field of operation. The field has a set of rules and policies to

enable the principal to improve and sustain school performance. School leadership is effective and successful if the principal can correctly implement these rules and policies. Furthermore, the principal leadership is effective if the principal implements decisive leadership as further discussed below.

3.3.2.1 Lack of decisive leadership

As researchers in the field of educational, leadership and management contend that leadership in under-performing schools is at least one of the major missing links within the dysfunctional schools in rural areas (Carelse, 2018b). Similarly, leadership is also regarded as one of the key answers to why some schools in rural areas of multiple deprivations perform well (Furlanger, 2018). Within a school – research has shown that – the principal’s role as a leader has positively influenced learner performance and educator effectiveness in the school (Naicker & Mestry, 2013). Although school leadership does not speak to the role of the principal alone but together with the SMT. However, the pivotal role of the principal in rural areas in improving and sustaining school performance cannot be ignored.

Bourdieu’s theory of social capital draws attention to the issue of the habituated activities of the principal through socialising. Conceptual resources are drawn from Bourdieu’s three theoretical tools: field, habitus, and capital. The field (school) has its own logic and rules and the principal in the school is guided by those rules and regulations. The field has rules to manage some of the discussed factors that may hamper school performance in rural areas. The principal’s compliance with the logic and rules of the field is important to establish legitimacy. The principal also can use his habitus to manage all those factors that emanate outside the field of education. Bourdieu suggested that to gain authority, power and influence, individual principals often internalise the habitus (the culture) of a field.

Bayat et al. (2014) indicated that principals of under-performing schools in rural areas do not have the courage to make decisions in favour of teaching and learning. They instead allow too many factors that take away learners contact time like staff meetings, athletics practice, choir practice etc. to be conducted during learning time (Corruption Watch, 2012). They also do not know how to tell educators who are not honouring their duties to do so, which is in the best interest of learners (Carelse, 2018b). They are afraid to make decisions that discipline both educators and learners.

3.3.3 Poor communication

A principal's poor communication in a school is defined as the inability of the principal to indicate what needs to be done in the school, by whom and when (Blackwell, 2017). It also includes the inability of the principal to monitor the correct implementation of policies (Ho, 2014). It is important for the principal to constantly communicate with all the staff members and other stakeholders in the school. Bourdieu emphasised the ability of the principal to use social capital to create relationships and to network with all the stakeholders in the school. Moreover, Bourdieu indicated that the habitus of the principal (his behaviour and background) contributes to the type of leader he/she is. This also involves his/her character and the way he/she communicates with colleagues. While most of the work done in the school is focused on educating learners, principals should realise the importance of improving and maintaining communication with educators in the school. Effective communication in the school makes educators feel more involved and willing to play a bigger part (Blackwell, 2017). Carelse (2018b) inferred that if the principal is a bad communicator, educators will use his/her actions to assume what needs to be done. Masondo (2014) indicated that most principals in under-performing schools – in rural areas – lack the ability to correctly interpret and implement policies.

Communication in the school can come in various forms, from verbal to written. The principal may have one-on-one meetings with educators to address urgent issues at hand, hold regular staff meetings to update educators on education matters and address stakeholders in the school on the state of the school's performance. Rural areas are characterised by poor wireless networks and internet facilities. Therefore, the principal may choose a mode of communication that is relevant to the rural environment (Carelse, 2018b).

Furlanger (2018) emphasised that what principals consistently pay attention to, communicates their own priorities, goals, and assumptions most clearly. If they pay attention to too many things, or if their pattern of attention is inconsistent, subordinates will use signals of their own experience to decide what is important; leading to a diverse set of assumptions and many subcultures, which may have a potential negative influence on the school's academic performance. Due to the inability of the principal to effectively communicate what needs to be done, by who and when, every educator tends to do what they assume is right at any given time.

3.3.4 Lack of clear priorities of the principal in the school

In a functional school, the principal pays attention to the discipline, punctuality and attendance of educators and learners, the management by the Heads of Department (HODs), the empowerment of the deputy principals and the functional role of the SGB (Furlanger, 2018). He/she ensures that parents are educated on their roles and responsibilities regarding their children's education. On the

other hand, research conducted by Kraus (2018) in under-performing schools – in rural areas – show that it is difficult to identify the priorities of the principal in the school. He further indicated that from the sample of under-performing schools in rural areas, principals generally showed a lack of commitment towards their work. They usually pay attention to attending meetings at the district, and they are usually out of the school premises on various errands. On the other hand, Du Plessis (2014) explained good principals as those who generally know that their own visible behaviour in the school has great value and impacts on communicating assumptions and values to educators. By words or actions, the principal inspires educators to be committed to the vision of the school.

3.3.6 Lack of trust

Principals in under-performing schools, which may include rural areas in South Africa, mostly believe that duties are best done by themselves (Danzing, 2014). They, therefore, do not delegate duties to other colleagues in the school. They believe that everyone in the school is against them and working towards their downfall (Du Plessis, 2014). They do not believe in the division of labour. This act denies educators the opportunity to maximise their potential as leaders. Schools where principals do not delegate duties to their subordinates lack staff development in critical areas (Furlanger, 2018). The motivational level of principals who lack trust towards their colleagues is usually very low. Therefore, they are not able to encourage and motivate others. An in-depth discussion on motivation is discussed in Chapter Two.

3.4 Factors external to the school that contribute to under-performance in rural areas

The following section discusses possible external factors that contribute to under-performance. These factors are particularly found in rural areas where the academic achievement of learners is very low. This study, therefore, sought to explore the relationship between a schools' under-performance and the lack of parental involvement and its socio-economic status.

3.4.1 Parents

Legotlo (2011) emphasised the lack of parental involvement as one of the contributing factors to under-performance in rural areas. Most parents in rural areas do not show any interest in the general well-being and/or the education of their children (Costa & Faria, 2017). Noting the fact that most learners attending school in rural areas grow up in poor communities that are typically characterised by high-density sub-economic housing and a lack of services; the environment itself is not conducive

to success, therefore, parents become the sole motivating factor towards the success of their own children (Kraus, 2018). Furthermore, due to various reasons, many poor households in rural areas are characterised by absent parents and child-headed homes. This, therefore, contributes to under-performance and the high rate of learner drop-outs in rural areas (Bayat et al., 2014).

A home is referred to as the place where the foundation of learning and education begins (Hlalele, 2012). To produce good academic outcomes, it is important for parents – in rural areas – to show their involvement by encouraging learning. However, due to the low socio-economic status of parents in rural areas, it is not easy for them to provide financial support to their children. As a result, parents are not able to pay for their children's extra lessons in the subjects they struggle with most. Additionally, due to the parents' lack of education and high level of illiteracy, they are also not able to assist their children at home when they experience problems with certain subjects (Du Plessis, 2014). However, poor, or illiterate parents are their children's very first educators before formal schooling even starts (Masondo, 2014). Carelse (2018b) submitted that children are encouraged to learn based upon the beliefs and experiences of their own parents at home. Despite parents' socio-economic background, if parents are involved and have a great relationship with their children's school, the child will succeed (Du Plessis, 2014). Most parents in rural areas do not want to be involved in school activities; they just want their children to succeed (Furlanger, 2018). If schools exhibit a positive and respectful attitude towards parents, they will be able to reach out to them. The following section discusses the importance of parental involvement in the education of their children.

3.4.1.1 Parental involvement

Parents in rural areas who are involved in the education of their children have a better view of the overall school when compared with uninvolved parents (Lamb et al., 2014). In addition, due to their poor participation and lack of sufficient school efforts, parents of under-achieving learners – in rural areas – generally have an overall poor attitude toward the school and education (Furlanger, 2018). Often rural learners' parents are excluded from the school environment due to their unavailability and lack of interest in school. A study conducted by Smith (2012) indicates that under-achieving learners in rural areas had parents that were not involved in the education of their own children. In addition, parents of learners in rural areas do not have an interest in volunteering their services to the school. As a result, they are not able to establish essential connections with the school (Park et al., 2017).

Parents who are involved in school activities support the development of their children, build, and strengthen relationships with educators and with other parents (Furlanger, 2018), enhance the

school environment, maintain relationships with children, are good role models for their children and enriches their own lives (Carelse, 2018a). Parents of high-achieving learners realise that to ensure academic success, and ensure a better chance for their children, they must take an active part in the education of their children (Janse Van Rensburg, 2014).

Park et al., (2017) reported a positive relationship between the perceived parental involvement and the learners' academic achievement in rural areas. Elmazi (2018) also reported – in their findings – those parents have a distinct advantage over anyone else in that they can provide more stable and continuous positive influences that could enhance and complement what the school fosters in their children. Hence, in this regard, parental involvement is undeniably critical. Parental involvement cannot just be limited to participating in schools' functions or events, but parents can also show their involvement by buying the necessary school equipment (i.e., books and uniforms) and by volunteering their services to the school. However, regarding the context of families in rural areas with low socio-economic status and uneducated parents, many parents fall short because, in general, they do not possess the necessary level of education and, therefore, find it difficult to determine and understand what is done at the school (Sunbrenduth, 2013).

Spaull (2017) indicated that in rural areas the involvement of parents in the education of the children is a key factor in determining learners' academic success. Despite some common misperceptions, many unsuccessful rural learners derive from rural homes where parents have low (or no) expectations of their children, there is poor communication, there is low (or no) regard for literature and where children's media influences are not monitored; as a result, parents cannot maintain a structured home environment (Mthiyane et al., 2014). Although the rural areas are exposed to high poverty, crime, and violence, it is up to the parent and learner to survive the conditions that exist there (Du Plessis, 2017). To maintain healthy and successful learners, parents in rural areas must be aware of their external and internal environment. One institution (school) only cannot be fully entrusted to ensure learners' success. Thus, the actions of parents at home help to influence the development of many other social organisations (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Furthermore, parental influence is the entity that makes possible the achievement of certain goals that in their absence would not be possible (Pretorius, 2012). The relationships that are made amongst educational stakeholders are the glue that builds a strong educational foundation.

Learners' perceptions of the impact of their academic performance and their home environment – specifically their parents' expectations – are important as they relate to their self-image (Du Plessis, 2014). Hence, social capital is embedded in the investments that people make within each other. If parents, as stakeholders in the school, invest in learners as if they were investing in a business,

students would most likely fulfil their academic potential. The investments that parents in rural areas make in students not only affect the school performance but also the development of the community at large (Furlanger, 2018). If the school and parents' expectations are in sync, then learners will rise to meet the expectations of all educational stakeholders; therefore, achieving the goals of the school.

In rural areas, parents with large families simply do not have the time to ensure that each individual child has enough attention and individual support. Parents who invest the most time and energy in their children's education are most likely to develop a child who will also value education for the next generation (Du Plessis, 2014). Social capital consists of relations that are made among people with a common understanding. The time and effort a parent invest in a child's education are viewed as a determining factor in the success of their children. It is important that children in under-performing schools know their parents' and the community's expectations beforehand. Moreover, the physical time that parents – in rural areas – invest in learners is the structure to ensure their academic success.

Since the start of the industrial revolution, many rural families and communities have struggled with the actual time invested in their children (Rusznayak, 2014). As more parents in rural areas tried to seek work on farms and in cities away from home, educational accountability was placed in the hands of educators alone. In a rural school, there is hardly a connection between the parents, school, or community (Hoadley, 2012). As a result, it impacts greatly on the lives of children and in the process, it counteracts their academic success. A growing body of evidence has emerged suggesting that involving parents in the educational process enhances school success (Degol, et al., 2017). Educators in rural areas simply cannot accomplish the arduous task of educating African rural children alone. However, noting the fact that many parents in rural areas work in towns and on farms, they, therefore, leave very early for work and come back tired and late at night (Furlanger, 2018). As a result, their children's schooling activities become the last thing they would practically consider participating in.

In rural areas where schools lack sufficient resources, a learner's motivation to learn is largely affected by their parents' and family's influence. Rural learners are faced with many challenges, which average school learners cannot fathom (Du Plessis, 2014). Rural learners are challenged with horrendous school conditions, poverty, crime-infested neighbourhoods, and many problems outside of the classroom. These problems affect learners' motivation to learn and directly affect their academic achievements (Lamb et al., 2014). Rural learners' primary concern is not learning but surviving day-to-day. According to Maslow, if a person's basic needs or physical needs are not met, they cannot satisfy their social-emotional needs. Most researchers agree that rural schools are in a

deep educational crisis when compared to their counterparts in urban areas. Schools in rural areas are reported to lack parental involvement and poor communication between educators and parents (Corruption Watch, 2012). If schools are to improve the academic achievement for rural learners, there must be effective communication between educators, parents, and learners. The structure of the bond and relationship that is formed between parents and the school are the structure that mirrors the expectations of society at large. This bond allows parents to invest a considerable amount of time in children; as a result, it increases learners' likeliness of achieving success (Degol et al., 2017). Studies also indicate that parents' illiteracy levels are among the most common causes for their lack of involvement in the education of their own children.

3.4.1.2. Parental Illiteracy

The level of parental literacy in rural areas also has a great impact on learners' literacy and academic success (Carelse, 2018a). Parents with poor reading or comprehension skills lack the verbal and written skills to effectively advocate for their children (Lamb et al., 2014). Furthermore, parents' inability to read and write creates a perpetual cycle of illiteracy within the family. Usually, parents who cannot read and write are unable to monitor and create mutual relationships of trust and respect amongst educators (Masondo, 2014). Spaul (2016) confirms that in schools in rural areas where performance is low, parental illiteracy directly affects the relationships amongst educators, parents, and students; as a result, the academic success of students is severely affected as well.

When children from a poor background – in rural areas – with illiterate parents enter early education programmes in the public school system, their parents are unable to play an active role in performing the necessary duties and school related tasks at home that will support their child's educational development (Costa & Faria, 2017). Illiterate parents do not have the motivational experience to inspire their children to read and constantly do their homework; these parents cannot pass on the enjoyment of reading books to their children resulting in under-performance (Degol et al., 2017). Moreover – in rural areas – parental illiteracy subconsciously conveys a message to their children that reading is not important. Hence, those children often do not like to read and do not see why reading is important. Thus, once children fall behind in schoolwork, chances are good that – due to reading problems or a dislike of reading – they too might remain illiterate and drop out of school without graduating from high school (Wang et al., 2019).

Another cause of parental illiteracy in rural areas is perpetuated when young adults start having children (Park et al., 2017). This has got a huge impact on learners because they shift their focus from school to parenting; therefore, their schoolwork is no longer a priority, and it takes second place.

Carelse (2018b) infers that whether parents are educated or not, they are their child's first educator. Whatever happens at home, children imitate and take it as a way of life. Children who live in homes with books and regularly see parents, grandparents and other caretakers engaged in reading books, magazines and/or newspapers are more likely to pick up books and pretend to read or ask for a story to be read to them when compared to other children (Janse Van Rensburg, 2014). Moreover, parents who cannot read automatically place their children at a disadvantage when compared to middle-class families who gather resources to ensure that their children are able to read and write (Lamb et al., 2014). Apart from poor or lack of parental involvement, schools in rural areas experience a problem with child-headed families. In this type of family, there is no parental care or parental supervision at all. The absence of parents in homes – in rural areas – is caused by many important factors meaning that children have no choice but to take up the responsibility of looking after each other. In rural areas, child-headed homes have also been identified as a factor that contributes to under-performance.

3.4.1.3 Child-headed homes

In 2015, Statistics South Africa's general household survey showed that there are approximately 90 000 children in 50 000 child-headed households (Department of Basic Education, 2018). This is a cause for concern since child-headed households are at risk of having to cope without parental care or regular income and are in poverty-stricken areas where services are poor and scarce. For this study, members of the families who are headed by children, lack basic needs for survival and are living in circumstances with high risk and with poor health and development prospects are referred to as "vulnerable children" (Morengwe et al., 2016).

Vulnerable children are left to deal with emotional strain and are more likely to be abused and exploited within their communities. These children face challenges in the community, their family, and their school contexts, which bear devastatingly on their real-life schooling experiences (Evans & Pilyoung, 2013). Communities tend to stigmatise and discriminate against them because they associate vulnerable children with social ills like poverty and HIV and AIDS (Morengwe et al., 2016). This stigma becomes a burden to these children; hence, many of them do not do well in school.

In the school context, vulnerable children have real and important responsibilities in their lives that affect their study time (Mohllokwane, 2013). Since most children have become parents to their siblings, they must simultaneously address family responsibilities and meet schooling requirements at the same time (Evans & Pilyoung, 2013). Due to these complexities, these learners do not have functional family structures to support them through their years of schooling. These conditions

intensify the magnitude of vulnerable learners' life challenges in ways that leave them unable to comply with their schooling requirements, such as the completion of homework, assignments and arriving at school on time (Le Roux-Kemp, 2013). This, then, becomes a recipe for under-performance, failure and even dropping out of school.

Among the challenges those vulnerable children face is social exclusion as and when they try to fit into the school society (Department of Basic Education, 2018). The negative constructions that are held about them and their low social status render them susceptible to bullying and ridicule by their peers (Morengwe et al., 2016). In addition, due to a lack of understanding or appreciation of these children's life challenges and situations, schools do not have proper systems to support these learners; hence, they experience under-performance. Sometimes educators will yell at the vulnerable children for their failure to cope with their peers in the classroom without looking at the root causes (Mohlokwane, 2013). These children become frustrated in school particularly because of the minority social status that they possess in the power hierarchies of social relationships within the schools. All these factors converge to compound the vulnerable children's situation in ways that exacerbate and add to their schooling plight and frustrations.

3.4.1.4 Parental Involvement and community support

Ananga (2010) indicated that in rural areas the involvement of parents in the education of their children is a key factor in determining learners' academic success. Despite some common misperceptions, many unsuccessful rural learners derive from rural homes that have low or no expectations for their children, poor communication, low or no regard for literature and does not monitor media influences on the children; as a result, the parents cannot maintain a structured home environment (Mthiyane et al., 2014). Although the rural areas are exposed to high poverty, crime, and violence, it is up to the parent and learner to survive the conditions that exist there. To maintain healthy and successful learners, parents in rural areas must be cognisant of their external and internal environments. One institution (school) alone cannot be fully trusted to ensure learners success. Thus, the actions of parents at home help to influence the development of many other social organisations (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Furthermore, parental influence is the entity that makes possible the achievement of certain ends, which in its absence would not be possible (Pretorius, 2012). The relationships that are formed between and amongst educational stakeholders are the glue that builds a strong educational foundation.

Learners' perceptions of the impact of their academic performance and their home environment, specifically their parents' expectations, are important as this relates to their self-image (Du Plessis,

2014). Hence, social capital is embedded in the investments that people make within each other. If parents – as stakeholders in the school – invested in learners as if they were investing in a business, students would most likely fulfil their academic potential. The investments that parents make in students not only affect the school's performance but also the development of the community at large (Furlanger, 2018). If the school's and parents' expectations are in sync, then learners will rise to meet the expectations of all educational stakeholders; therefore, achieving the goals of the school.

3.4.1.4.1 Community support

Schools do not exist in isolation but are anchored within the communities they serve. Therefore, it is important that schools cultivate healthy relationships with all other structures within the community to promote the importance of education. Research indicates that high-performing schools develop partnerships with other structures and agencies within the school community, which then help to provide a coordinated set of key social and educational services to learners (Park & Holloway, 2018). Community stakeholders bring diverse individuals and groups to the school, including community-based organisations, youth development organisations, health and human service agencies, parents, and other community leaders to expand opportunities for learners and to create support structures that enable children and the youth to learn and be able to succeed (Park et al., 2017). This is in line with the Department of Basic Education (DBE), which is set to use schools as vehicles for promoting access to a range of public services among learners in areas such as health, poverty alleviation, psychosocial support, sport, and culture. (Department of Basic Education, 2019).

3.4.1.5 Overcrowded homes

Apart from overcrowded classes, learners in rural areas also find themselves in overcrowded homes where studying and doing homework in a quiet place is highly compromised and sometimes near impossible (Masondo, 2014). Overcrowding – as explained by Mestry (2017) – can also be referred to as the living space or conditions that learners in rural areas find themselves in. Overcrowding can be a very stressful situation; most households in rural areas accommodate a lot of people with various educational interests (Furlanger, 2018). Overcrowding is explained as the living conditions whereby the number of people exceeds the number of available rooms and beds (Blackwell, 2017). Learners in rural areas find themselves in situations where – in times of their studying – other members of the household may want to sleep, visit, and converse or watch television. Most homes in rural areas are also characterised by loud music, which also compromises learners reading environment (Masondo, 2014). Learners' rights to privacy in rural areas are also compromised if they are not able to wash or change in private, and their right to a healthy environment is undermined as communicable diseases spread more easily in overcrowded conditions. Overcrowding also puts

children at greater risk of sexual abuse, especially where members of the household share rooms and beds (Hlalele, 2012). Principals cannot do anything about overcrowded homes; however, principals in rural areas do have a task to improve and maintain good performance.

3.4.1.6 Socio economic factors

Socioeconomic factors have been identified in this current study as another crucial factor that has the potential to contribute to learners' poor academic performance. Issues related to the socioeconomic factors do not originate at the school, but their presence is felt in the school. Socioeconomic factors have the potential to disrupt schooling and may increase the number of learners who drop out of school. The relationship between a family's socioeconomic status and the academic performance of children in rural areas has been well established in sociological research. While there is still disagreement over how best to measure the socioeconomic status, most studies conducted in rural areas indicate that children from low socioeconomic status families do not perform as well at school as they potentially could have when compared to children from high socio-economic status families (Visser, 2012; Department of Basic Education, 2019). Most studies, however, compare children from across all backgrounds to reach the conclusion that low socioeconomic status adversely affects a range of educational outcomes.

Socioeconomic status can be defined as a person's overall social position that he/she attains in both the social and economic domain (Christie, 2012). When used in studies of learners' school achievement, it refers to the socioeconomic status of the parents or family. Socioeconomic status is further determined by an individual's achievements in areas such as education, employment, occupational status, income, and wealth (Janse Van Rensburg, 2014).

Several comprehensive reviews conducted by Shucksmith (2012) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) (2019) on the relationship between socioeconomic status and educational outcomes in rural areas make it clear that children from low socioeconomic status families are more likely to exhibit the following patterns in terms of educational outcomes when compared to children from high socioeconomic status families:

- They have lower levels of literacy, numeracy, and comprehension.
- They have lower retention rates and are more likely to leave school early and become dropouts.
- They have lower education participation rates and are less likely to attend university.
- They exhibit higher levels of problematic school behaviour such as truancy.

- They are usually more likely to have difficulties with their studies and therefore display negative attitudes towards school and educators (Lamb et al., 2014); and
- They have less successful school-to-labour market transitions as their low level of education makes it difficult for them to be professionally employable (Du Plessis, 2014).

These results have remained the same irrespective of how the socioeconomic status is measured and whether the studies are based on individual or aggregate-level data. Similarly, studies of children's educational achievements over time have also demonstrated that social background remains one of the major sources of educational inequality (Lamb et al., 2014). In other words, learners' educational success depends very strongly on the socioeconomic status of their parents.

Parents' socioeconomic status effects on their children's educational outcomes may be neutralised, strengthened, or mediated by a range of other contextual, family, and individual characteristics (Shucksmith, 2012). In some cases, parents in rural areas may have a low income and a low status occupation but may nevertheless transmit high educational aspirations to their children. What family members have as material resources, for instance, can often be mediated by what family members do as part of parental support and family cohesion. However, studies conducted in rural areas conclude that many parents in rural areas are economically-disadvantaged; therefore, they cannot financially sustain their families (Bayat et al., 2014). Shucksmith (2012) further argues that children from families where parents are disadvantaged socially, educationally, and economically also experience a lower level of achievement. They also lack the psychological support of their parents and families (Sonn, 2016). The issue of family support is further discussed below.

3.4.1.6.1 Learner-family support and academic achievement

Socio-economic status is also linked to the family structure as sole-parent families, on average, have lower levels of income (UNECA, 2019). Most families in rural areas are headed by single parents with a low level of education and are less likely to be in the labour force. Children from such families are likely to have lower educational performance. Other factors that are likely to adversely affect the educational outcomes of children in sole-parent families compared to those from two-parent families are said to include a parent who has less time to spend with children in terms of supervising schoolwork and maintaining appropriate levels of discipline (Fleish, 2018). The nature of parent-child relationships in sole-parent families may cause emotional and behavioural problems for the child. As a result, such children are likely to show poor academic performance (Carelse, 2018a).

Another challenge faced by children from low socioeconomic backgrounds in rural areas is low income. Low income is directly related to the poor economic condition of single-parent families and not only to parenting style (Wang et al., 2019). Poverty directly reduces the access and quality of resources, such as food, shelter, social and health services, and opportunities such as education and transportation. Indirectly, poverty affects the ability of parents in rural areas to provide consistent supervision and monitoring, adequate family management practices and a range of socially and educationally stimulating experiences (Thomson, 2018). Hussin and Al Abri (2015) explain the three mechanisms that operate to make poverty a common risk factor for both parents and learners in rural areas: few family resources, which include food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities; poor health care, which includes preventive care and routine care; and a poor home environment. Many homes in rural areas are associated with unsupportive, un-stimulating and chaotic home environments.

Children from under-income families are more likely – than their more affluent counterparts – to attend high-poverty and under-resourced schools that fail to provide learners with the necessary skills to participate in the economy (Schmidt et al., 2015). These learners are exposed to non-stimulating home environments and experience discordant parent-child interactions, a lack of parental supervision and poor role modelling. Due to financial constraints, learners in rural areas are exposed to medical illnesses and inadequate social support; they are also exposed to neighbourhood conditions that are characterised by high levels of crime, unemployment, low levels of resources and a lack of collective efficacy among the residents (Louw, 2013).

Family background is often used as a factor and a gauge to explain achievement differences in learners. Many researchers claim that learners from a low socioeconomic background tend to enter school academically worse or unequal when compared to learners from affluent areas (Bayat et al., 2014). Furthermore, learners from low socioeconomic backgrounds often do not have preparatory knowledge before going to a formal school since their parents – usually in rural areas – cannot afford to pay for such education (Costa & Faria, 2017). While examining socioeconomic backgrounds, it has been found that wealth provides the physical resources that children need to thrive and compete in the global market (Hlalele, 2012). Financial income helps to ensure that children have a place to study, tutorial assistance and money to maintain a stable residence.

In rural areas, parents' low socioeconomic status deprives children of their basic needs (Carelse, 2018a). If learners' basic needs are not met, they will find it hard to meet their needs of self-actualisation and intellect. Maslow's theory indicates that learners must first have food and basic comforts in their internal environment. According to Maslow, if learners do not have basic comforts

in their home, they cannot feel safe. In addition, if learners are in a perpetual state of physiological insecurity, then they cannot meet their needs or achieve some form of self-recognition.

3.4.1.6.2 Lack of resources due to low economic status

Learners from rural areas are more likely to have lower educational outcomes in terms of academic performance and retention rates than learners from urban areas. School children from these areas remain disadvantaged by many factors such as inadequate educational facilities, the costs of transport or the unavailability of scholarly transport (Jansen, 2016; Donachie, 2017). In addition, inequity exists regarding the quality of the education that rural learners receive often because of restricted and limited subject choice. Furthermore, learners from rural areas also have limited recreational and educational facilities within their schools and community (Degol et al., 2017).

The low socioeconomic level of rural communities also impacts children within those communities. Poor communities in rural areas usually have a lack of recreational facilities, do not offer educational and employment opportunities, and have a lack of preventative health care (Maestry & Ndlovu, 2014). Learners from these areas lack supportive adults and social organisations at the home, school, and community levels. Furthermore, most rural areas lack social amenities such as health care facilities, childcare services, job training opportunities, religious institutions and recreational facilities that provide for healthy human development (Degol et al., 2017).

3.4.1.6.3 Socio economic status and parental self-esteem

In the context of the socioeconomic realities of many communities in rural areas in South Africa, many parents do not have an interest in participating in school activities such as parent meetings and serving on the SGB (Louw, 2013). In fact, the report of the ministerial review committee (2012) cited difficulties related to the socioeconomic status of parents as a paralysis to how some parents show an interest and participate in school governance in rural communities. When educated and uneducated parents gather in the same meeting, the message of insignificance is often communicated. One effect evident in such gatherings is social tension, rejection, domination, and psychological stress (Pretorius, 2012). These effects often lead to the isolation of certain groups of individuals. Isolation is the antithesis to participation. In situations such as these, it is easy to push parents who do not meet the middle-class expectations implied in the SASA to the margin of school governance participation.

Based on the social identity theory, the low socioeconomic status may cause social tension, rejection, and psychological stress among some people within a particular group. These tensions are often evident when affluent and destitute parents gather for school events and activities (Christie, 2012). It, therefore, impacts the way these parents negotiate their identities and navigate their way into participating in school governance. This hypothesis represents one of the major exclusions in the existing reflections on the school governance debate in the country (Louw, 2013). The purpose of this section is to investigate the possible impact of the socioeconomic level of parents in rural communities as a contribution to under-performance in schools in rural areas.

Social identity also relates to a process of defining oneself with the shared characteristics of others within a group. If some parents within the same school community feel inferior due to their low socioeconomic status, they will isolate themselves from the rest of the group. Moreover, Hogg (2016) infers that social identity must first be scrutinised and approved by other people as acceptable norms of the social grouping within the society. Identity, then, is a bimodal phenomenon, which links internal self-perceptions with the perception of self as part of a social environment (Hogg, 2015). The construction thereof involves a distinction between the self and the other or between us and them. The bimodal view of identity also refers to identity formation, which is characterised by the tension between differentiation and identification.

The goal of education in South Africa is to ensure that everyone has an equal education despite the differences in socioeconomic status. Learner performance and success in school determine the success of learners in their adult life. The study conducted by the UNECA (2019) found that socioeconomic status has a significant impact on student academic success. It further confirmed that socioeconomic status affects the academic performance of learners in school since it is closely related to learners' cognitive skills. Moreover, learners who are products of parents with a low socioeconomic background do not have the same resources that learners with parents and families of a higher socioeconomic background have.

3.5 Under-performing schools in rural areas and their characteristics

Under-performance – in schools in rural areas – has a long history. Some literature describes under-performance as dysfunctionality (Agunloye, 2011). A range of other concepts such as ineffective schools, failing schools and underperformance are commonly used to explain under-performance in education. The term under-performance in the educational sense, like in other organisations, can mean various things, and may as well take various forms. However, previous studies indicate the signs of under-performance in schools remain similar across all schools (Hoadley, 2012). Researchers have identified a variety of “syndromes” or characteristics of under-performing schools

from the literature. Moreover, school practices and outcomes are influenced by the operation of the whole system of education at a national, provincial and district level and all the structures of society are also involved. Under-performing schools are, therefore, signs of poor operation and poor decisions in the entire education system (The Economist, 2012).

Research done on under-performing schools that are found in rural areas indicates that most educators in those schools have inadequate content matter and there is poor pedagogical knowledge in the school due to few financial resources and are not always able to outsource educators (Joseph, 2011; Ramrathan, 2017). It was also found that township and rural public schools' teaching time is usually lower than the former model C schools as educators in rural schools, on average, work 3,5 hours per day compared to the 6,5 hours per day of educators in the former Model C schools (The Economist 2012; Hoadley, 2012). Masondo (2014) indicated the critical issue of a lack of a culture of teaching and learning in under-performing schools. Furthermore, educators struggle to adequately cover all the facets of the curriculum content without disturbances. It further indicated that the morale of educators is generally low and that educators have become dispirited and demoralised because of the schools' performance being very low (Department of Basic Education, 2016). Under-performing schools show similar characteristics. In the following sections, attention will further be given to the characteristics of school performance.

3.5.1 Ineffective Management

Under-performing schools in rural areas are not effectively managed (Corruption Watch, 2012). There is poor implementation of the management functions of planning, organising, leading and control and the way all these functions relate to one another (Pretorius, 2014). They further lack "academic culture" and "ethos" – which constitute a well-balanced school atmosphere or climate – and an orderly and secure atmosphere that distinguishes a school as a centre of "serious teaching and learning" (Hebert, 2011).

Furthermore, under-performing schools – particularly in rural areas – are also characterised by a lack of adequate resources. Hence, the theory of habitus and field speaks to the ability of the principal to acquire and maintain school resources. Economic capital includes all the resources and materials needed in the school to provide quality teaching and learning. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the principal to make sure that the school is "well equipped with well-qualified educators and administrative staff" and to ensure that the necessary school resources such as learner-educator support materials and technological and technical equipment are available at all times.

3.5.2 An ineffective system of monitoring and assessment

Under-performing schools usually display ineffective systems of continuous monitoring and support, which ensures that all educators do as is expected of them while working towards achieving the set targets (Bush et al., 2011; Courtney et al., 2015). The field of education as explained in the theory of habitus and field have policies that govern it. It is within the rights and obligation of every principal employed in the department of education to monitor and effectively manage the process of teaching and learning in the school. The principal oversees the work of all stakeholders in the school and also manages the adherence to departmental policies in the school. If classroom teaching and learning is not effectively monitored, educators ignore the application of summative and formative strategies of assessment; therefore, corrective teaching measures and remedial teaching gets overlooked. Educators do not review or reflect on their teaching methods, i.e., to modify deficiencies and continuously refine their strategies of teaching (Masondo, 2014).

3.5.3 Lack of discipline

The concept of discipline in rural schools has become unfashionable due to freedom and human rights; however, no real teaching and learning can occur in a chaotic and unsafe environment. Fair and constructive discipline must be preserved as an integral feature of management for schools to be successful (Keddie, 2015). School discipline is guided by the policies found in the school (field); these are the same policies that can be effectively used to maintain school discipline and order. The behaviour and practices of both educators and learners in the school are outlined within the policies available in the education system. Under-performing schools are characterised by many rules and regulations but poor implementation (Vilakazi, 2016).

3.5.4 Uncommitted educators and learners

Due to poor leadership strategies emanating from poor leadership practices, under-performing schools are characterised by a lack of commitment from educators who are extremely unmotivated and are not willing to put in extra effort (Pretorius, 2012). In under-performing schools, the lack of commitment is seen through the high staff turnover and high level of absenteeism from both educators and learners. Generally, members of staff in under-performing schools are found not to exhibit passion and concern for the children they teach; as a result, learners are not self-confident and cannot compete in the job market (Bloch, 2011). These learners, therefore, lack the learning drive and commitment to achieve high standards. The theory of habitus and field indicates that the principal possesses certain powers. It is the principal's rightful position to use hierarchical power to

make educators work and to monitor their work. Hierarchical power gives the principal legitimate authority in the school.

3.5.5 Lack of time on task

One of the characteristics of ineffective under-performing schools in both urban and rural areas is a high level of inactivity, which constitutes time wastage (Joseph, 2011). Educators and learners are not punctual. Such schools do not make use of maximum teaching and learning time. This, therefore, compromises the development of basic skills and the formation of a positive attitude towards development. Moreover, educators use various techniques, which interfere with lessons (Sibanda et al., 2016). Administrative duties are conducted during classes, intercom disruptions, learners are brought out of classes for reasons not related to teaching and learning and all these are just means and ways of wasting time (Mestry, 2017). Therefore, the theory emphasises the ability of the principal to exercise hierarchical power to effectively manage the school while adhering to policies within the school (field).

3.5.6 Lack of programmes for educator development

It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that every educator performs his/her given tasks effectively and efficiently. Under-performing schools have been found not to have working plans for the continuing professional growth of their staff in place (Brinia et al., 2014). It is necessary for each school to prioritise professional development for educators as it informs the design of the general or overall school improvement plan. Hence, symbolic capital includes the way people view the school. The way the school performs or achieves good results is attributed to its symbolic value and utility. This is also attributed to the educators' abilities, skills, and pedagogical knowledge, which can be accumulated through formal training and continuous educator development.

3.5.7 High levels of non-involvement of parents and community

Effective schools are not only defined by dedicated educators and learners but also include committed parents and school communities (Masondo, 2014). It is understood that if the school performs well, the community is proud in every way. Bourdieu indicated that for leadership to be effective there have to be good social networks that link all stakeholders to the common purpose or goal. Good social networks among stakeholders are the backbone of effective schools. A feature, over the years, of schools in rural areas is that parents are always unavailable to be active partners with the school. They seldom attend parents meeting and usually do not avail themselves when

needed (Spaull, 2013). Furthermore, the home environment in rural areas is often not favourable to teaching and learning since accommodation is overcrowded; without electricity, no quiet place to study and learners are also pressured to perform several domestic chores. Learners' homework is rarely supervised by parents (Pretorius, 2012). This may be because of the parents' low level of literacy or parents being absent from home due to various reasons.

The availability of the principal's cultural capital, which prepares him/her to occupy the senior managerial office, is critical in the performance of the school. Cultural capital further speaks to the managerial skills of the principal in managing the school. Moreover, the theory of habitus and field indicates that principals have the hierarchical power to exercise authority in the school with the understanding that schools are centres for effective teaching and learning. Therefore, a school performs poorly because of irregular or defective functioning and when it fails to fulfil the true objective of teaching and learning, for which it was instituted, under-performance occurs. Hierarchical power is the legitimate power of the principal in a school. Principals are in the rightful position, through this power, to influence change in schools. For this study, the inability of principals to change the under-performance of rural schools despite their rightful position to use hierarchical power was also investigated.

Under-performing schools are described as those schools with dysfunctional management conditions, lack of vision, a lack of foresight, an unhealthy school environment and low morale for both educators and learners. In schools wherein the principal is ineffective, the staff continues to disregard institutional standards, rules, and policies or the internal principle standards required on the quality and quantity of work. The factors discussed above can be argued as the cause of poor principal leadership in the school. This is because of learners' and educators' high rate of absenteeism, the unauthorised extended breaks and lunchtimes and excessive socialising in the presence of the principal of the school. Furthermore, studies argued that if the principal leadership in the school is poor, educators relax and do not follow standard operating procedures (SOPs) and guidelines. There is also a lack of expectations as educators tend to only work the minimum amount of time and are not willing to go the "extra mile" while parents do not show any interest in the education of their children. Rural schools that are not performing well are also characterised by a lack of – or poor – communication between the principal and all the other stakeholders; learners who do not respect each other and who also do not respect educators. There is also evidence of misusing the school's resources; funds are also mismanaged, SMTs and educators do not respect time as well as the non-honouring of deadlines of submissions. In addition, the environment in the school is not favourable for teaching and learning; there is plenty of dirt and papers lying around; broken infrastructure (windows, door, and gates); no proper toilets; and no one cares what is happening in the school.

3.6 Summary

Several schools and classroom characteristics have been found to contribute to the academic performance of poor learners in rural areas. Rural schools with greater portions of under-income families usually lack the financial support to supplement their school funds from the government. As a result, they are more likely to have lower per-learner expenditure, lower educator quality, a less rigorous curriculum, lower expectations for academic performance, lower parent involvement in terms of volunteering at the school and low attendance of school functions by parents and the entire school community.

In the context of rural areas, there are few schools in multiple deprived areas that display high degrees of resilience and perform at levels comparable to first-class schools in terms of matric examination results. This study draws from a study based on the proposition that leadership is the greatest factor for explaining such performance. This study is then informed by a quest for knowledge regarding the contextual factors that hinder school leadership to sustain high school performance and to move away from under-performance. Such knowledge is needed as the country is fighting to turn around the many under-performing schools there are. Literature has revealed – in this study – that there are factors that contribute to a school's under-performance. These factors may arise from the internal structures or systems of the school; therefore, the principal together with the SMT may try to manage them. However, it has also been found through literature that there are other specific factors that arise outside the school system of which the principal and the DBE cannot do anything to solve but manage the conditions. If both internal and external factors are not properly managed, they both have the potential to create the under-performance. This chapter concludes by outlining the characteristics of under-performing schools. In the following chapter, the research design and methodology that were employed in this study is discussed in detail as well as the research approach that was used to gather information for this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH APPROACH, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

In Chapters Two and Three, the conceptual and theoretical framework – as well as the contextual and individual factors influencing leadership for sustained improvement in rural schools – was provided respectively. This chapter presents a detailed overview of the research design and methodological perspective of the research. It gives detailed attention to the research design and the methodology that were used in the research including the methods used to collect and analyse the data. This chapter further looks at the trustworthiness and the ethical considerations concerning the data generation prior to and during the research. The previous chapters formed a conceptual and theoretical framework for this research study while this chapter presents the research methodology. While keeping in mind the main purpose of this study, which is to determine the principal's ability to improve learner performance in rural areas, an interpretive paradigm was identified for the framework of this study.

4.2. Research paradigm

The term paradigm originated from the Greek word *paradeigma* and refers to a pattern. It is used to denote a conceptual framework shared by a community of researchers, which provided them with a convenient model for examining problems and then finding solutions (Toussaint et al., 2014). A paradigm is explained as an integrated cluster of substantive concepts, variables and problems that are attached to corresponding methodological approaches and tools (Ranjit, 2011). Bishwakarma (2017) uses the term paradigm to refer to a research culture with a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that a community of researchers has in common regarding the nature and conduct of research. A paradigm, therefore, implies a pattern, structure and framework or system of scientific and academic ideas, values, and assumptions. In this study, a research paradigm is used as the basic set of beliefs or assumptions that guides the researcher's inquiry into the ability of the principal to improve learner performance in rural areas.

A research paradigm implies that the researcher approached the research with a plethora of interlocking and sometimes contradicting philosophical assumptions and standpoints. Thus, Creswell (2014) indicates that the research design process starts with philosophical assumptions that the researchers make when deciding to undertake a study. Researchers bring into the study their own world views, paradigms and sets of beliefs to the research project; as a result, these inform the conduct and writing of the study. In concert with Creswell (2014), Bishwakarma (2017) indicated

that in defining one 's paradigmatic perspective as a researcher – i.e., the interplay between ontological and epistemological assumptions and the meta-theoretical underpinnings – the research questions and research methodology become more prominent.

This study was conceptualised within the interpretivist paradigm as it is about understanding principals' experiences and ability to improve learner performance in secondary schools in rural areas. For interpretivists, the world is too complex to be reduced to a set of observable laws (Creswell, 2016). Interpretivists view generalisability as a less important issue than to understand the real conditions behind the existing reality. Therefore, the main objective of the interpretivist researcher – in this study – was to understand the meaning and experiences of principals in their professional space and from their point of view (Saunders et al., 2012). Thus, researchers in this paradigm interprets events, understand the processes of meaning construction and reveal what meanings are embodied in people 's actions and views. Interpretivist's belief is that research will never be observed objectively from the outside rather it must be observed from the inside through the lived experiences of the people (Bishwakarma, 2017). Furthermore, the ability of the principal to improve learner performance in rural areas can only be understood through the principal's experiences. Therefore, the role of the researcher in the interpretivist paradigm is to understand and explain social reality through the eyes of various participants.

An interpretive paradigm – like the functionalist paradigm – belongs to the sociology of regulation whereby its purpose is to understand the world from the individual principal's viewpoint (Bell, 2014). Therefore, this paradigm is seen as nomothetic, antipositivistic, voluntaristic and ideographic since it uses the subjective first-hand knowledge of school principals. In this paradigm, researchers attempt to observe ongoing processes to understand individual behaviour. The social reality of the interpretive paradigm is, therefore, viewed as being constructed (Saunders et al., 2012), since it is based on a constant process of interpretation and reinterpretation of the intentional and meaningful behaviour of principals (Creswell, 2016). Thus, the depiction and interpretation of the social inquiry is a constructive process (Curran et al., 2012). As a result, the researcher cannot be isolated from the phenomenon being investigated.

According to Creswell (2016), the research process involves three major dimensions: ontology, epistemology, and methodology. A research paradigm is an all-encompassing system of interrelated practices and thinking that explains the nature of enquiry along these three dimensions. The ontological and epistemological aspects are concerned with a person's worldview, which has a significant influence on the perceived relative importance of the issues of reality (Creswell & Plano, 2011). The term ontology refers to a branch of philosophies, which are concerned with the

articulation of the nature and structure of the world (Bell, 2014). It specifies the form and nature of reality and what can be known about it. Hence, the researcher sought answers on the ability of the principal to improve learner performance in rural areas. For the purpose of this study, the researcher 's ontological beliefs are based on the nature of reality (the ability of the principal to improve learner performance), which is explored through the researcher 's answers to the problem. Therefore, answers include things such as the nature of the problem including social phenomena; if the reality of the problem is orderly and within the law; the existence of the natural social order; if reality is fixed and stable or constantly changing, and whether it is singular or plural; and if reality can be constructed by the individuals involved in the research situation (Curran et al., 2012)

Epistemology refers to the nature of the relationship between the researcher and what is being researched, and it denotes the nature of the human knowledge and understanding that can possibly be acquired through various types of inquiry and alternative methods of investigation (Creswell, 2014). The interpretivist paradigm of this study is about epistemology that advocates the necessity for the researcher to understand – through inquiry – the ability of principals to improve learner performance in rural areas based on their professional knowledge and experience as secondary school principals. From the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher sought to study the ability of principals to improve learner performance to correctly analyse and interpret the findings. Following an interpretive study, it is indicated that actions are only meaningful if the researcher can ascertain how principals view their ability to improve learner performance in rural areas. Methodology – on the other hand – refers to how the researcher goes about practically finding out whatever he/she believes can be known (Bell, 2014). The researcher used individual interviews with principals of secondary schools in rural areas to determine their ability to improve learner performance in these schools. The researcher 's epistemological beliefs are about what is possible for one to know. Hence, the relationship of the researcher to what is being currently researched (Varpio et al., 2015). Bell (2014) believes that the concept of ontology and epistemology can also be considered as the “rules of the game”, where researchers have different rules to adhere to. In order to deal decisively with said rules, the following paragraph explains in detail the manner in which the study is designed, planned, and structured.

4.3 Research approach and design

A research design is explained as a plan for a study, which provides the overall framework used to collect data (Varpio et al., 2015). It is also defined as a plan for selecting participants, research sites and data generation procedures to answer the research questions (Jamshed, 2014). The main goal of a sound research design is to provide results that are judged and found to be credible and acceptable. Oltmann (2016) explains a research design as a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution – or implementation – of the

research strategy. The research design for this study is a descriptive and interpretive study that is analysed through qualitative methods.

The methodological design is defined as the logic through which a researcher addresses the research questions and collects data for the study (Saunders et al., 2012). Jamshed (2014) defines research methodology as a theory of how an inquiry is to be conducted. It involves the analysis of the assumptions, principles, and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry. Methodologies define the kinds of problems that are worth investigating, i.e., what constitutes a researchable problem; what are testable hypotheses; how to frame a problem in such a way that it can be investigated using designs and procedures (Ranjit, 2011); and how to select and develop appropriate means to collect data (Creswell & Plano, 2011). Research methodology encompasses the complete research process and includes the following: the literature review, the research approach, the design, the procedures and data-collection methods and the data analysis used in the study (Creswell, 2016). Therefore, the aim of the research methodology is to understand the processes and not the product of scientific inquiry. On that note, a brief explanation of the specific approach underpinned by interpretivism is further discussed below.

4.3.1 Research approach

This study followed a qualitative approach, which is underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm. It sought to obtain the experiences of school principals and their ability to improve learner performance in rural secondary schools. Qualitative research is defined as a research approach aimed at the development of theories and understanding (Saunders et al., 2012). It is also defined as a situated activity that locates the observer in the world (Creswell, 2016). It involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. Qualitative researchers study phenomena in their natural setting and attempt to make sense of it while interpreting the phenomena in terms of the meanings people attach to them. The phenomenon under study is the ability of principals to improve learner performance in secondary schools in rural areas. Hence, the focus of this study is based on their experience and the way they perceive their role in improving learner performance. Moreover, qualitative research emphasises the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not examined or measured experimentally (Creswell, 2013). The researcher attempted to understand the phenomenon through the experience and meanings that principals assign to their role of improving learner performance in rural areas.

In concert with Creswell (2009), Oltmann (2016) also defines qualitative research as a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in their specific real-world settings. In this study, the

researcher sought to understand the ability of principals to improve learner performance in schools through their experience and knowledge while not interfering with their work, processes or functioning within the school. In qualitative research, the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest. It is that kind of research that produces findings that are not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or by other means of quantification but is instead the kind of research that produces findings derived from real-world settings where the phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

In this qualitative study, the researcher's inquiry was based on learner performance and the ability of principals to improve it. Therefore, the researcher attempted to make sense of – or to interpret – the phenomenon in terms of the meanings that principals attach to it (Creswell, 2016). This study intended to penetrate to the deeper significance of improving learner performance in secondary schools in rural areas as the subject of the research. It also involved an interpretive and naturalistic approach to the subject matter under discussion and gave priority to what the data can contribute to the research questions and current or existing information on improving learner performance (Jamshed, 2014). Qualitative research is characterised by its aims and objectives, which relate to understanding some aspect of social life and its methods, which generate words rather than numbers as data for analysis. The strength of qualitative research in this study is its own ability to provide complex textual descriptions of the experience of principals in rural under-performing schools. It further provides information about the principals' side of the issue. This includes their behaviour or conduct, beliefs, opinions or views, emotions, and relationships with other stakeholders.

A qualitative method produces a wealth of detailed information while using a smaller number of people and cases (Creswell, 2014). This increases the understanding of the cases and situations being studied although it reduces generalisation. Furthermore, the qualitative method permits researchers to study particular or targeted issues in detail and in depth (Ranjit, 2011). Korstjens and Moser (2018) indicate that the aim of qualitative research is to provide the researcher with the perspectives or views of a target audience through immersion in their own culture or situation and direct interaction with the people under study. As a result, the researcher sought answers directly from principals of both performing and under-performing schools in rural areas – as the target audience who are managing these schools. Therefore, this implied that in the qualitative paradigm, the researcher became an instrument of data generation. This qualitative research study focussed on promoting a better self-understanding of principals as well as increasing insight into their conditions and experiences as principals. Unlike quantitative research, which has as its objective collecting facts about human behaviour that will lead to verification and extension of theories, qualitative research emphasises the improvement or understanding of human behaviour and experiences (Creswell, 2016).

Qualitative methods include – amongst other things – direct observation, content analysis and overview, participant observation and open-ended semi-structured interviews with participants (Ranjit, 2011). These methods are designed to help the researcher have a better understanding of the meanings people assign to social phenomena and to enlighten the mental processes and underlying behaviours (Curran et al., 2012). However, for the purpose of this study, interviews were conducted to understand the views and experiences of principals in rural schools on their ability to improve learner performance. Saunders et al. (2012) characterised qualitative inquiry as a research approach that is generally conducted in natural settings by utilising the researcher as the chief instrument in both data gathering and analysis. Hence, interviews were conducted in schools. The school environment itself was not disturbed by the seeking of answers to the problem at hand.

The benefits of qualitative inquiry are embedded in its emphasis obtaining real, rich, and deep data, which illuminates everyday patterns of action and meaning from the perspective of those being studied (Brinkmann, 2014). This view, therefore, emphasises the importance of the voice of the principals and gaining from them first-hand information regarding their ability to improve learner performance. Qualitative inquiry also focuses on the social processes, experiences, views, and behaviour of principals. It also focuses on establishing valuable relationship between the researcher and principals – not just on outcomes or results (Creswell, 2013).

A qualitative inquiry involves using interviews and an inductive approach to data analysis; extracting its concepts from the mass of detail that constitutes the database. However, it must be emphasised that the strength of qualitative approaches – according to Bell (2014) – is that it generates rich and detailed data that leave the participant's perspective intact while providing a context for the phenomenon being studied. Therefore, a phenomenological strategy of inquiry was used to understand the views and experiences of principals in under-performing schools.

4.3.2 Phenomenological design

Phenomenology refers to the study of the structures of conscious experiences as experienced from the first-person point of view as well as the relevant conditions of perceptions and experiences (Creswell, 2013). Its focus is its intentionality, which involves the way it is directed through its content or meaning towards a certain object in the world. Phenomenological inquiry is best used when the research problem requires a profound understanding and interpretation of human experiences that are common to a particular group of people (Zahavi, 2012). Bell (2014) views phenomenology as the philosophical name for the method of investigating or inquiring into the meanings of people's

experiences as they live in them. Phenomenology gathers direct lived descriptions of an experience as lived through in a particular moment in time.

Phenomenology was used in this study to try to understand the experience of principals as participants. This (phenomenological) research tried to answer the questions of the study as posed by the researcher to principals. It focused on the phenomenon occurring in a natural setting in schools in rural areas. Thus, the researcher conducted a study in performing and under-performing schools in rural areas to make sense of or interpret the phenomenon in terms of the meanings that principals of these schools as participants bring. From a phenomenological approach, the researcher sought to understand how principals construct meaning regarding their ability to improve learner performance in rural areas. The focus of phenomenological inquiry in this research was based on the experiences and views of principals. The researcher – through phenomenology – looked at the way in which principals make sense of the world around them. In this sense, their views and actions became more important and meaningful (Brinkmann, 2014). Phenomenology – as a strategy of inquiry – was also used to discover and express essential characteristics regarding the ability of principals to improve learner performance in rural areas.

The objective of phenomenology in this study was to directly investigate principals' ability to improve learner performance; hence, this (phenomenological) inquiry is based on experiences that are made consciously. In other words, it sought to understand how principals construct the meaning of things that happen around them. Phenomenology was selected because of its essential characteristics as discussed below by Creswell (2013) and Garg (2016):

- It describes the meanings of the experiences that have been lived by principals in schools with respect to improving learner performance.
- It is not interested in too much explanation, but rather, it is concerned with the most essential or important aspects of the lived experiences of principals.
- It seeks to explain and describe what underlies the way in which principals normally describe their experiences as school managers.
- It seeks to understand how principals construct meaning to their experiences.
- It believes that the most important and critical truth about the existing reality is based on people's experiences. Therefore, this study mainly consisted of in-depth conversations with principals.
- In the phenomenological inquiry, the researcher and the participant are considered secondary participants.

The way a population and the sample for the study were chosen is discussed in detail below.

4.4 Population and sample

Population refers to the broader group of people to whom the researcher intends to generalise the results of the entire study (Creswell, 2013). It only includes people to whom the results will apply (Bryman, 2012). A population can further be explained as a comprehensive group of individuals with common characteristics that are in the interest of a researcher (Brinkmann, 2014). The target population of this research was principals of secondary schools in rural areas in the Limpopo.

Sampling procedures in qualitative research are not rigidly prescribed as in quantitative studies. The procedure is flexible, articulative, reflective and the willingness of sharing information with the interviewer (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative sample selection has a profound effect on the final quality of the research. For quality data generation in this study, the researcher chose purposive sampling as an appropriate method of data sampling. Purposive sampling is an informant selection tool widely used in qualitative studies. The purposive sampling technique is also called judgment sampling as it refers to a deliberate choice by the researcher based on the qualities the informant possesses (Crossman, 2019). It is a sampling technique in which the researcher relies on his or her own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in the study. It is also referred to as a non-probability sampling method. This type of sampling occurs when elements selected for the sample are chosen by the judgment of the researcher. Researchers often believe that they can obtain a representative sample by using sound judgment, which will save time and money (Stephanie, 2015). It is also regarded as a non-random technique because it does not need underlying theories or a set number of informants. Simply put, the researcher decides on what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the much-needed information by virtue of their knowledge and/or experience.

In purposive sampling, the researcher selected a sample based on their knowledge about the topic under study (Benoot et al., 2016). The sampling strategy used in this study was purposive as it was based entirely on the judgment of the researcher (Centre for Critical Qualitative Research, 2015). Ten schools in Vhembe East and West districts were selected, and the selection criteria were to select principals of performing and under-performing schools to explore their ability to improve or sustain learner performance. The selection of schools was based on the national and provincial benchmark as explained in Chapter One (refer § 1.7.2). Purposive sampling afforded the researcher the opportunity to purposively target principals of these schools because they are deemed to be useful for obtaining a deeper understanding of how the group perceives their ability to improve learner performance. Sampling of ten secondary schools was done simply because it was impossible

to test every single individual principal in the population. Therefore, it was also done for the purpose of saving time, money and effort while conducting the research.

Principals were selected based on the purpose and needs of the sample. The purpose of this study is to establish the ability of school principals to influence the improvement of learner performance in rural areas in Limpopo. Therefore, the most relevant participants for this study are school principals because of their senior position in school management. Although, this study sought to investigate the ability of principals to improve learner performance in under-performing schools in rural areas. principals of performing schools were also purposefully selected to explore their ability to sustain high learner performance. Purposeful sampling was therefore used in this study for its ability to identify and select information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources. This involves identifying and selecting principals who are especially knowledgeable and experienced in the phenomenon of interest.

In this study, the sample was carefully selected because of the following identified characteristics: they are secondary school principals, their schools are situated in rural areas, they are leading schools that perform high (performing schools) below (under-performing schools) the expected Grade 12 national and provincial benchmarks as indicated in Chapter One and they are within the same districts, which is also accessible to the researcher. The accessibility of the schools in this study should, however, not be mistaken as convenience sampling. As individual participants were purposefully selected because of their qualifying characteristics indicated above. The table below indicate the biographical information of participants:

Table 4.1 Biographical information

Principal	Gender	Age	Experience of the principal in the school	Previous managerial experience	Type of school	Five-year school performance as per matric pass percentages
P1	Male	53 years old	10 years	HOD; deputy principal (from another school)	Performing	98; 97; 98; 86; 93
P2	Male	55 years old	5 years	HOD (from the same school)	Under-performing	55; 78; 92; 72; 65
P3	Male	56 years old	9 years	Deputy principal (from the	Under-performing	60; 70; 62; 68; 70

				same school)		
P4	Male	51 years old	6 years	None (has never been in the managerial post before)	Under-performing	82; 84; 73; 61; 42
P5	Male	55 years old	7 years	HOD (from another school)	Under-performing	74; 57; 61; 62; 81.
P6	Male	50 years old	8 years	None (SMT co-opted) (same school)	Under-performing	70; 72; 32; 65; 58.
P7	Male	58 years old	8 years	HOD; deputy principal (from another school)	Performing	100; 100; 98; 100; 97.
P8	Male	54 years old	9 years	None (from the same school)	Under-performing	72; 55; 62; 64; 70
P9	Female	55 years old	8 years	HOD; deputy principal (from another school)	Performing	70; 72; 76; 85; 90
P10	Male	54 years old	5 years	Deputy principal (from the same school)	Performing	75; 72; 85; 92; 90.

Source: Own compilation (2022)

The above biographical data indicate the information of participants from both performing and under-performing schools as sampled. The performance of the school is based on the district and provincial pass rate for the Grade 12 examination. The school's performance is indicated – in the last column of Table 4.1 – by the percentages achieved in the Grade 12 examination during the past five years. Within the sampled district and circuits, only one female participant was recorded as there are no other female principals of secondary schools in the area. However, it must also be indicated that participation was strictly based on the principalship position and the performance of the school rather than the gender of the principal.

The researcher chose purposive sampling because of its distinct advantages. Below is a discussion on the advantages of using purposive sampling in this study as explained in Creswell (2013): purposive sampling is one of the most cost-effective and time-effective sampling methods because it uses a limited number of primary data sources that contribute to the study meaning it is the only appropriate method available; purposive sampling is also regarded as a sampling technique that is effective in exploring deep phenomenological situations where the findings can benefit the entire community with related or similar problems; purposive sampling makes it easier to generalise the sample selected compared to other types of sampling, such as random sampling where not all participants have the characteristic being studied.

In the careful selection of purposive sampling, the researcher was also aware of its disadvantages: purposive sampling is vulnerable to errors in judgment by the researcher (Benoot et al., 2016); purposive sampling is susceptible to a low level of reliability and high levels of researcher bias and selection error (Crossman, 2019). The idea that a purposive sample is created based on the judgement of the researcher is not a good defence when it comes to alleviating possible researcher biases. However, this judgemental and subjective component of purpose sampling is only a major disadvantage when such judgements are ill-conceived or poorly considered by the researcher (Palinkas, et al., 2015). This occurs when judgements have not been based on clear and open criteria – whether a theoretical framework, expert elicitation or some other accepted criteria was properly used – and the researcher is, therefore, unable to generalise the research findings (Creswell & Plano, 2011). The subjectivity and non-probability-based nature of purposive sampling selection mean that it can be difficult to defend the representativeness of the sample. In other words, it can be difficult to convince the reader that the judgement that the researcher used to select units to study was appropriate. For this reason, it can also be difficult to convince the reader that research using purposive sampling achieved its theoretical, analytical, and logical generalisation (Stephanie, 2015). After all, were various units selected, would the results and any generalisations have still been the same?

In the process of using purposive sampling, the researcher used the following steps as discussed in Saunders et al., (2012):

- Deciding on the research problem. In this case, the problem – as identified – is the ability of principals to improve learner performance.
- Determining the type of information needed from principals.

- Defining the qualities, knowledge, and experience of principals.
- Finding principals based on their defined qualities, knowledge, and experience.
- Keeping in mind the importance of reliability and competency in assessing potential participants.
- Using the appropriate data-gathering strategies or techniques.
- Always remember that purposive sampling is an inherently biased method. Therefore, this must be kept in mind in analysing data and interpreting results.

4.4.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The conduction of this research study required a systematic approach, which involved diligent planning regarding the selection of the characteristics of the principals to be included or excluded in the study. As a result, essential predefined aims and characteristics of the population were comprised – as will be discussed hereunder.

Once the target population (principals of under-performing schools) was identified, the researcher needed to assess whether it was possible to interview all the principals of under-performing schools in the rural area of the Vhembe East and West districts for the desired outcome. Usually, all the principals cannot be included (Jamshed, 2014); therefore, a study population was sampled based on their common characteristics (Garg, 2016).

The inclusion criteria are the characteristics that the prospective participants must have if they are to be selected or included in the study; while exclusion criteria are those characteristics that disqualify prospective participants from being included in the study (Moola, et al., 2015). Inclusion and exclusion simply mean that if a participant has certain inclusion criteria, they are in; if they have one or more exclusion criteria, they are out. The criteria used in this study include factors such as being permanently employed as the principal of the school, having sufficient experience, being a under-performing school in a rural area. The exclusion criteria, therefore, disqualify all acting principals, educators, and members of the SMT. This purposive sampling strategy in qualitative research also sought cases rich in information that can be studied in detail and in-depth. Hence, the selected principals are in the best position to provide their views, experiences, and challenges as to what contributes to under-performance in schools. The following paragraph will discuss the way the researcher collected and analysed the data.

4.5 Data generation

The main method used in this study to generate data was interviewing. An interview is a face-to-face meeting between an interviewer and the interviewee wherein the interviewer may gather information about the behaviour, problems, and experiences of the interviewee (Lechuga, 2012). It is also designed to assist the interviewer with planned questions to understand the participant's worldview. As there are various forms of interviews, the researcher chose to conduct individual interviews with school principals of secondary, under-performing schools in the Vhembe district. This is because these principals are the ones at the forefront of school leadership. Qualitative interviews give researchers an opportunity to explore – in an in-depth manner – matters related to the experiences of the interviewees (Robinson, 2014). It further allows insights into how different people experience and perceive phenomena of interest.

Through the interviews, the researcher attempted to understand the interviewees' subjective perspective on a phenomenon, which in this case is the ability of principals to improve learner performance rather than generating generalisable understandings from large groups of people. Korstjens & Moser (2018) indicated that when preparing for qualitative interviewing it is important for the researcher to be familiar with the data recording equipment being used. In this study, the researcher used a voice recorder to record the interviews. All the interviews were conducted in the schools of selected principals after the normal school hours as this was convenient, in a comfortable setting, free from any potential disruptions and/or noise. The duration of interview sessions with each principal was one hour to one and half hour while following COVID-19 precautions. Moreover, the length of the interview session depended on the probing questions that arose for the researcher to have a clearer and more focused answers.

The researcher used interviews to enter the principals' perspectives. As a result, it became easy for the researcher to develop thick descriptions of the given social world being analysed for patterns and themes (Brinkmann, 2014). In any research, interviews are useful for finding the story behind a participant's experiences. Through interviews, the interviewer pursued in-depth information about the ability of principals to improve learner performance as the main topic under study. In collecting the data, the researcher used individual (face-to-face) semi-structured interviews – as will be discussed below.

4.5.1 Individual interviews

A one-on-one interview was conducted with ten school principals of secondary schools in rural areas in the Vhembe East and West district to determine their ability to improve learner performance. The researcher used the following process for interviewing principals: obtaining a voice recorder, sitting down with the participant, and recording the interview and taking notes on nonverbal cues as the interview progresses. Individual interviews – in this study – were regarded as one of the best and most powerful tools that can be used to understand the behaviour and experiences of principals (Elliot, 2018). Interviewing – as a data-gathering method – was also used to determine the ability of principals in rural areas to improve learner performance as well as to investigate challenges faced by principals in rural areas that may have the possibility of hindering the sustainment of a school's performance. In order to obtain answers, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to gather more focused qualitative textual data. This method offered a balance between the flexibility of a semi-structured interview and the focus of structured phenomenological research (Syed & Nelson, 2015). The semi-structured interview method is often used to uncover rich descriptive data on the experiences of participants. The information gathered during semi-structured interviews can move the innovation process from general topics to more specific insights (Doody & Noonan, 2013). It can also be used to further develop a preliminary hypothesis, explain relationships, and create a foundation for further research.

The researcher – in this study – chose to use semi-structured interviews because of its advantages as discussed in Creswell (2015):

Questions in the semi-structured interview can be prepared ahead of time. This allowed the interviewer to be prepared and to appear competent during the interview process. Semi-structured interviews allowed principals the freedom to express their views and experiences in their own unique way as individuals. It provided reliable and comparable qualitative data. It encouraged two-way communication. It gave principals an opportunity to ask questions for clarity before they even attempted to give answers. Semi-structured questions confirmed what is already known but also provided an opportunity for further learning. The information obtained from the semi-structured interviews did not just provide answers but also the reasons for those answers. It is easy with semi-structured interviews to discuss sensitive issues. With semi-structured interviews, the interviewer could ask principals questions and assess their ability to improve learner performance in schools. The interviewer develops and uses an interview schedule. All the participants in the interview were asked the same questions as they appeared in the interview schedule. The interviewer in a semi-structured interview can follow topical trajectories in the conversation that would have strayed from the guide.

Semi-structured interviews were used in this study to achieve the following:

- To obtain information on the topic under study (Brinkmann, 2014).
- To clarify vague statements (Ranjit, 2011).
- To further permit the exploration of the topic; and
- To yield a deeply experiential account from the principals of the selected secondary schools (Creswell & Plano, 2011).

Interviews were conducted according to a semi-structured interview schedule (attached as Addendum A), which specified predetermined questions and sequences for the interviewer. The structured part of the interview was developed according to the research questions. In a semi-structured interview, the researcher prepares a list of questions or an interview schedule beforehand. These questions may not always exactly follow the sequence as outlined on the schedule. Additionally, questions that are not included in the interview schedule may be asked as and when the interviewer picks up on things said by the interviewee (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). However, all the questions were asked in a similar wording to all the interviewees.

During the interview, the semi-structured format allowed the interviewer to seek more clarity, probe, and crosscheck questions where the interviewer had the freedom to alter, rephrase and add questions according to the nature of the responses from the interviewees (McGrath et al., 2019). The semi-structured interviews provided opportunities for the recording of idiosyncratic movements and more free-flow responses (Stephanie, 2015). During the interviews, the researcher used the interview procedure as discussed below:

4.5.2 Interview procedure

The interviews were recorded through audio and note-taking. The writing of field notes during interviews served as an additional recording measure and as a backup procedure to understand the feeling, mood, and body language of the interviewees (Seidman, 2013). The recorded interviews took place in schools where participants are working. The interviewer was sensitive to the specific situation of each participant due to school-specific circumstances and work-related priorities (Kashyap, 2018). Interviewing skills are more than just a set of physical skills; hence the researcher used a high-order combination of observational, empathetic, sensitivity and intellectual judgement of the interview questions and person being interviewed (Irvine et al., 2012). Since the topic relates to the ability of the principal to improve learner performance, the aim was not to make participants feel

incapable or unable to produce good quality results in their respective schools. The initial task was to establish a friendly, secure, and cooperative relationship with the interviewees.

As part of the interview procedure, each participant was assured of the confidentiality of their participation in the interview (Wodak, 2014). They were also assured that their names will not be published – even in the future – without their knowledge. The aims and objectives of the study were explained to provide the interviewees with the relevant and necessary information about the research. The format and sequence of questioning were also explained before the actual interview. Each participant received a letter in advance, which explained the information about their willing participation and their right to withdraw from the interview if they felt like doing so. Participants were also notified that copies of the interviews would only be provided to them upon request.

In the field of education research, we sometimes engage with research topics involving human perceptions and experiences. Often, it is regarding personal experiences, which involve stress, failure, and the inability of stakeholders to correctly implement education policies. These and many other related topics may evoke uneasy emotions in the interviewee. Therefore, the interviewer was sensitive to the interviewee's reactions when sharing their experiences on the topic about their ability as principals to influence the improvement of under-performance in rural schools. The researcher did not want to create a negative feeling within participants about their personal inability in managing their schools but was visibly understanding of their experiences and challenges that may hinder schools to improve and sustaining the academic improvement of learners in schools.

4.5.3 Interview schedule

The interview schedule is regarded as a self-reporting technique, which provides considerable flexibility to the interviewer (Allen, 2015). The schedule is adaptable and capable of being used with all types of individuals. An interview schedule is used for semi-structured interviews, which are aimed at obtaining in-depth information from people as participants or respondents (Kashyap, 2018). Questions in the interview schedule were crafted to provide answers relevant to the topic under study. The purpose of an interview schedule is to answer the main question or topic of the research or investigation. It also assists the researcher in staying relevant and removing any irrelevant questions or those with answers that will not be of any use (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

The interview schedule approach – in this study – was intended to ensure that the same areas of information are collected from each interviewee; it provided a more focussed and quality interview (Brinkmann, 2014). The interview schedule – in semi-structured interviewing – was used since the researcher will not get more than one chance to interview each participant, and there were several participants from which information needed to be obtained. The semi-structured interview schedule

provided a clear set of instructions for the interviewer and provided reliable and comparable qualitative data (Cloete et al., 2015).

Questions were written down in the interview schedule before the interviews were conducted (see the attached Addendum A). The researcher started with a short descriptive introduction of herself and the topic under study. This process was aimed at breaking any monotony or rigid formality that could prevent the freedom of participation from interviewees (Creswell, 2015). During the introduction in each interview, participants were informed about the ethical issues of this study – as explained in their letters of permission (see addendum C).

4.6 Data analysis

Qualitative data come mainly in the form of written text. Therefore, the act of data analysis involves the deconstruction of the textual data into manageable categories, patterns, and relationships (Bricki & Green, 2018). Qualitative data analysis is also regarded as content analysis. After the data have been collected, the process of data transcription starts. The transcription of data is described as the process of reproducing spoken words from recorded data from interviews and converting them into a written form for the data to be analysed (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The most common form of transcription in qualitative interviews is verbatim transcription, which refers to a word-for-word reproduction of verbal data; where the written words are an exact replication of the audio-recorded words from interviewees (Creswell, 2013). Transcribing data from qualitative interviews is very time-consuming. Data transcription converts the spoken words into written words. Therefore, it is important for the interviewer to consider pauses, laughter and other cues offered by the interviewee as markers for important events in the interview (Cloete et al., 2015). These cues also need to be acknowledged during the transcription process. During the analysis stage, the researcher transcribed audio and field notes. The transcribed notes were, therefore, read repeatedly to obtain an overall impression of the content and context. Data were, therefore, arranged in codes (Brinkmann, 2014).

Coding is a universal process in qualitative research for analysing data. It is a process in which researchers break down their data to provide meaning to them (Harding, 2013). Coding is also referred to as a process of analysing qualitative text data by taking them apart to see what they yield before putting the data back together in a meaningful way (Creswell, 2015). Lichtman (2013) views coding as a process that can go remarkably undocumented with some honourable exceptions for a thorough exploration of the process.

Researchers use coding as a process to index or map data to make sense of the research questions (Saldanha, 2016). It is a way of tagging data that are relevant to a particular point. Through coding, the researcher identified places during the interviews where all the participants responded the same to the same question (Richards, 2015). The researcher – in this study – used manual coding to index and categorise text to establish a framework of thematic ideas (Punch, 2014).

According to Richards (2015), coding in qualitative research indicates how the researcher defines what the data is all about. The researchers – through coding – identify a passage in the text, or other data items, searching and identifying concepts and finding relations between them (Lichtman, 2013). Qualitative data coding in this study was not only used as a labelling strategy but was also used to link data to the research idea and back to other data. The codes – which were applied in this study – enabled the researcher to organise data to further examine and analyse them in a structured way by examining relationships between codes. The coding process required initial and thorough readings of the transcribed data whereafter the noticeable patterns were written down. Several passages of the text that shared the same codes – i.e., an expression for a shared concept – were identified (Bernard et al., 2016). These codes were used as names or labels assigned to specific units or segments of related meaning identified within the field notes and transcripts (Creswell, 2016).

Where categories were identified, the data that were collected was divided into different parts using a classification system. Codes were then used to differentiate between participants and to classify words or phrases in the data. During the process of coding, data were analysed and brought together under the same major themes, concepts, interpretations, and propositions. Then, the researcher read the transcribed data carefully and broke it down into logical and meaningful pieces assigning codes to the different segments in the form of descriptive words.

The process of coding was mainly used to reduce the amount of collected data. The researcher used open coding to read through the transcripts and assigned codes that recurred in the data. The process of open coding was maintained until the researcher worked through all the individual transcripts. The process of open coding involved the identification and naming of segments of meaning from the field notes and transcripts in relation to the research topic. The focus of open coding was based on the wording, phrasing, context, consistency, frequency, extensiveness, and specificity of comments by participants. Then, the segments of meaning from the field notes and transcripts were marked – or highlighted – and labelled in a descriptive and understandable manner. Following the process of open coding, the codes were further reduced and classified into categories – or subthemes. These categories were further grouped together as themes and given a descriptive

name/label. This practice continued until all the coded data were classified under their relevant themes.

The qualitative analysis process was concluded by the description of thematic relationships and patterns of relevance to the research. The qualitative analysis process as outlined above served as a framework to ensure that the initial data from interviews and content analysis were systematised by a thematic organisation to form part of the final data. The outlined process of coding enabled a systematic and logical step-by-step approach for the analysis of the qualitative data. It also allowed the researcher to go beyond mere descriptive, comparative, and explanatory ends to discover the rationale and motivation of the participants' responses (Brinkmann, 2014). The qualitative analysis process was approached in a circular process, which is not a fixed linear action. The content analysis approach implied that the various steps taken to analyse data were regarded as procedural guidelines and not as rigid steps.

The identified themes were further used as the basis for further understanding, argumentation and the formulation of syntheses and conclusions into the principal's ability to improve learner performance in secondary schools in rural areas.

4.7 Trustworthiness

To assure credibility and reliability in this qualitative research study, rigour was followed. Rigour refers to the actual demonstration of integrity and competence in qualitative research by adhering to detail and accuracy (Maxwell, 2012). This adherence assures authenticity and trustworthiness of the research process. As such, the rigour in this qualitative research relates to the overall planning and implementation of the research design, which was conducted in a logical and systematic manner to ensure the authenticity and trustworthiness of procedures according to the following criteria:

4.7.1 Credibility

The engagement with the data (recordings, notes, and transcripts) was done intensively to demonstrate a clear link between data and the interpretation thereof (Miller et al., 2012). Since data generation was done verbatim, participants' responses reflected the range and tone of the responses gathered. The credibility of the research was further increased by the member checking and academic guidance and assistance of my experienced promoters. After completion of the interviews and coding process, the results and interviews were again submitted to my promoters for an independent evaluation to ensure the correctness thereof.

4.7.2 Dependability

The researcher ensured dependability by taking good care of almost every detail. Care was taken to ensure that the research process was logical, traceable, and clearly documented in a reflexive manner by giving a detailed account of the whole research process (Creswell, 2015).

4.7.3 Transferability

This indicates the extent to which the findings can also be applied in other contexts or from any other participants (Maxwell, 2012). The strategies used for achieving transferability comprised thorough descriptions and purposive sampling. Thorough descriptions were insured by giving detailed descriptions of the data that was provided. Purposive sampling was applied within this study because of its propensity to allow for the maximisation of information that was obtained within a specific context of the study (Cloete et al., 2015).

4.7.4 Confirmability

The process of data auditing was implemented by working forwards and backwards through the research process to ensure that the gathered data and the interpretation of the research findings were not mere figments of imagination but rather clearly derived, sound and confirmed factual findings (Crossman, 2019). The intention – during the interpretation process – was not to generalise findings to a particular population but to identify generically accepted principles and trends related to the research topic. Confirmability in this study, therefore, constitutes the degree to which my own biases has been excluded from the research finding (Bricki & Green, 2018).

A confirmability audit trail was developed by leaving an adequate trail that was used for further following up on the conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations (Doody & Noonan, 2013). To ensure that such a trail was adequately provided, six classes of data were reviewed. These included raw data, reduction and analysis products of data, reconstruction and synthesis products, and process notes.

The description of the way the research process was conducted – in accordance with criteria for qualitative research – ensured that the authenticity and trustworthiness of the research were further increased. The above-mentioned criteria did not serve as a restrictive checklist for the qualitative research process but served as parameters for generating informational knowledge in accordance with the research aims (Bricki & Green, 2018). Furthermore, the legitimacy of the interviews was assured by creating a clear conceptualisation and purposeful design of an interview schedule. This also included a set plan – or protocol – of conducting a trusted interview. The consistency of

responses was also checked by restating questions in various forms at various stages of the interview to check if the responses would have been the same even from different angles (Cohen et al., 2013).

The process of member checking offered the researcher a good opportunity to check the quality of the transcribed data. As such, member checking acted as a sounding board and a way of checking that the researcher has understood and correctly reported responses of the interviewee (Creswell, 2013) especially when it came to important things such as irony, emotions, silences, or other recognizable body gestures. Since this study involved people, the researcher took ethical issues into consideration and dealt with them as follows.

4.8 Ethical consideration

Ethics in research is made to ensure that research involving human subjects would be carried out in an ethical and humane manner (Devault, 2018). In the history of research, ethics focuses mainly on the protection of human subjects from various forms of exploitation or exposure to unacceptable levels of risk through their participation in research (Maxwell, 2012). When the research involves human subjects there are basic ethical principles that must be considered:

4.8.1 Respect for persons

Respect should be given to people, for those who have offered themselves to be participants in the study (Cox & McDonald, 2013). The principle of respect in research ethics incorporates two things:

People in research should be treated as autonomous.

This, therefore, allows people to make their own decisions on what to do and on what to agree to (Peter, 2015). Researchers should respect the fact that participants offered themselves by agreeing to be part of the research and they remain with their right to withdraw at any time without prior notice (Centre for Critical Qualitative Research, 2015). Participants were given complete information beforehand about the entire study and its aims for them to make an informed decision about their voluntary participation.

People with diminished autonomy should be protected.

Some people in the community may not be in the position to make fully informed decisions on what happens around them (Andrews, 2014). These people are also referred to as those who lack the capacity to decide on critical issues that involve them. They include minors, very ill people and those who are mentally disabled (Centre for Critical Qualitative Research, 2015). People falling under this category should, therefore, be protected as they are not capable of making their own and informed

decisions. Although – in this study – neither minors nor people with diminished autonomy were involved. All people involved were able to make their own decisions in terms of their participation.

In terms of respecting potential research participants, the researcher was obliged to be forthcoming in terms of imparting the necessary information whereby the potential participant could have given consent to participate based on the information given by the researcher (Crossman, 2019). Important information in this study involves spelling-out the procedures of the interviews. Principals needed to be told that whatever they are asked has to do with the research. The idea was that the individual principal must be fully informed about the processes of the research.

4.8.2 Beneficence

The researcher should not be reckless in handling participants but should always have the welfare of the research participants as a top priority (Allen, 2015). The researcher's actions presented good, and he tried – by all means possible – to remove all possible threats that may intimidate the participants. The principle of beneficence is also referred to as the principle of “do no harm” (Andrews, 2014). This principle states clearly that the purpose of the research should not harm anyone or find information at the expense of other people (Cox & McDonald, 2013). Beneficence also involves the maximisation of benefits for participants while minimising the risks.

4.8.3 Justice

This refers to the fair selection of research participants (Varpio & McCarthy, 2018). Although this can be found in scientific or experimental research studies where participants are recruited for medical trials that may affect human life, researchers in qualitative research should also select – or sample – a population that can represent the entire group of people who can be affected by the same topic (Mealer & Jones, 2014).

The above-mentioned principles provided a framework that assisted the researcher to think about risks that may occur to the human subjects participating in the research. They also provided a basis for human consciousness and the need to protect participants during the whole interview process. Respect for persons was also taken into consideration. Respect in this study was dealt with in two ways: (1) it stressed that people (participants) are autonomous human beings who are capable and entitled to their own decision-making in terms of participating in the research process or not. (2) Conversely, if their autonomy is diminished, they are persons in need of protection in terms of their possible participation in the research process.

4.8.4 Other ethical issues

Ethical clearance

Ethical clearance (refer Addendum G) was obtained from the North-West University ethics committee:

The ethical clearance number: NWU-01647-19-S2

Informed consent

Participants were given letters (refer Addendum C) to obtain their informed consent in writing (Wilson, 2012). The letter specified the purpose, nature, data generation methods and extends of the research prior to commencement. The researcher further explained to them their typical roles in the research.

Harm and risk

In this study, there were no expected risks to participants. However, participants were assured that no participants will be in a position of harm neither by their presence nor by their responses. (Hayward et al., 2015). They were also assured that they will never find themselves in a situation where they might be physically or psychologically harmed because of their participation.

Honesty and trust

The adherence to the outlined ethical guidelines served as a standard for honesty and trustworthiness for the data generation and data analysis.

Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity

Confidentiality involves proper handling of the information concerning the respondents – or participants – in a confidential manner (Cox & McDonald, 2013). All participants were ensured that their confidentiality and anonymity would be strictly maintained. They will also not be asked to identify themselves or their schools during and after the interviews. The researcher made it clear that the names of participants would not be used for any other purposes, nor will information be shared that reveals their identity in any way.

The issue of confidentiality also embraces the principle of trust, and I assured the participants that their trust would not be exploited for personal gain – or benefit – by deceiving or betraying them during the research process or in its published outcomes (Allen, 2015).

f. Voluntary participation

All the participants agreed to take part in the interview process because they wanted to. No one was forced into the programme. Despite all the above-mentioned precautions, it was made clear to participants that the research was only meant for academic purposes and their participation was

voluntary. All the participants were informed beforehand that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time (Bell, 2014). The principle of informed consent was attached to the questionnaires and verbally explained to the interviewees. Both principles entailed explaining the research process and its purposes to the participants.

g. Permission

Permission was sought and granted by the Vhembe East district director and the circuit manager of Malamulele central circuit office as all the ten selected schools fall under the said circuit. Letters of permission were also obtained from the schools if their principals were participants. Letters of permission are also attached as Addendum C. The questionnaires that were used for the interviews were approved by the ethics committee of the North-west University (See addendum D).

4.9 Summary

This chapter introduced the research methodology and methods used for this study. A qualitative approach was adopted to investigate the key issue in relation to this investigation, which is the ability of principals to improve learner performance in rural under-performing schools in the Vhembe district. This was followed by a detailed description of the implementation of research methods. This description included information regarding participant selection, the data generation methods that were used and the data analysis procedures for this study. The ethical considerations for this study have also been outlined in this chapter. The primary focus of this chapter has been to provide a clear description of the research process and its applicability to the research questions at hand. The following chapter, therefore, reports in detail on the findings of this action research study using a structured narrative format.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, a detailed description of the qualitative research design – as well as the methodology that was used in this study – was discussed. It also discussed the method used to collect the data. This chapter presents an analysis and discussion of the data gathered during the interviews with principals of selected secondary schools in rural areas concerning their ability to influence the improvement of under-performance in secondary schools. Interviews were conducted with ten secondary school principals. The interviews were aimed at answering the following research questions: to determine how effective school leadership can improve poor academic performance or sustain high academic performance; to identify what the experienced leadership challenges by principals in rural areas are; and to examine why school principals find it difficult to influence the improvement of low academic performance. In this chapter, attention is further given to the process used to analyse data, followed by a discussion on the identified themes. These themes will then be used to inform the strategy that will be explained in the next chapter. A summary then concludes this chapter.

5.2 Process of data analysis

In this study, the data analysis was based on the outcome of verbatim quotations from interviews with principals. The principals of secondary schools in rural areas are regarded as original sources as they carry with them professional experience in the principalship position. They gave rich information, which offered the researcher a direct awareness of the experience and views of participants on their ability to influence under-performance in secondary schools.

The researcher followed an inductive approach to qualitative data analysis. Constant contrast has been considered inductively, which involved analysing data without any fixed hypothesis, context, or processes. This approach has been selected for its comprehensiveness and capacity to construct dense explanations from data, which is considered the core feature of qualitative analysis. Content analysis was used as this is the most popular form of analysing qualitative data. It examines wording and conversational phrases as given by participants. The researcher used a whole set of data to define the underlying trends expressed within the data. An analysis was carried out by means of transparent coding where text was read repeatedly in order to get a clear overall impression of the transcribed experience of the participants.

Data collected from interviews were transcribed, typed, and saved as a Microsoft Word document. This was followed by an analysis of the transcripts, which was done manually. The researcher read the transcripts several times during the data analysis in order to obtain their full connotations for interpretation. The transcripts of the interviews were coded to arrange and reduce the data into usable units. A summary of how the data was analysed will be provided:

Interviews were recorded and transcribed; a verbatim copy of data obtained from interviews is therefore presented. Transcripts were processed by chunking the data into smaller and relevant pieces of information. The researcher further developed and defined themes within such text where each chunk was branded with descriptive code. The codes were clustered by similarities to construct a category. This further led to the development of a theme from each category.

The researcher made sense of the classified data by using colour themes, which enabled detailed interpretation. Different colours were used to differentiate between the code, category, and theme. After repeatedly reading through the chunked information, the data fragments were clustered together and labelled according to the codes of the same colour, which further led to the development of the key themes. The researcher gathered the colour-coded data as verbatim evidence from participants. These codes were used as quotations, sentences, or statements from interviews.

In this study, data analysis involved arranging and assembling the data for analysis; then decreasing the data via a process of coding and condensing the codes into categories, the categories into themes and eventually expressing the data in a discussion. Themes arising from the participants' responses are directly related to the purpose and objectives of the research. The researcher used a comparative method that involves the process of data generation and data analysis. The researcher's belief is that the themes that arose from the participants' responses are important and of significance. Thus, extracts of their responses are included in the section that follows.

5.3 Presentation and analysis of data

This section presents a discussion on the identified themes by using the participants' voices in the form of direct quotes from the interviews. Qualitative analysis uses direct quotes from transcripts as evidence – or proof – and as the main basis of raw data. The data obtained from the interviews are rich in information and have given the researcher a good understanding of the attitudes, perspectives, and opinions of the participants. The analysis of data was conducted through the process of identifying themes, and direct quotes from the participants endorsed these themes. In each theme the researcher presents a graphical overview. For a clear identification of the participants, the researcher labelled participants P1 to P10. P1 indicates the responses from the

principal of the first school that was interviewed. Quotes used in this chapter are from both performing and under-performing schools. Therefore, P or UP is indicated in the quotes to indicate that the quote is from a performing (P) or under-performing school (UP).

Three sub-themes on effective school leadership were identified as leadership, management, and capital. The aim was to determine how effective school leadership can improve poor academic performance or sustain high academic performance. Effective leadership and management by school principals as well as the correct application of capital can have an influence on improving the poor academic performance or sustaining the high academic performance of schools in rural areas. In this section, quotes from both performing (P) and under-performing schools (UP) are used with the aim of identifying the gap between the two groups. The above theme and sub-themes are further explained in detail as indicated in the diagram below.

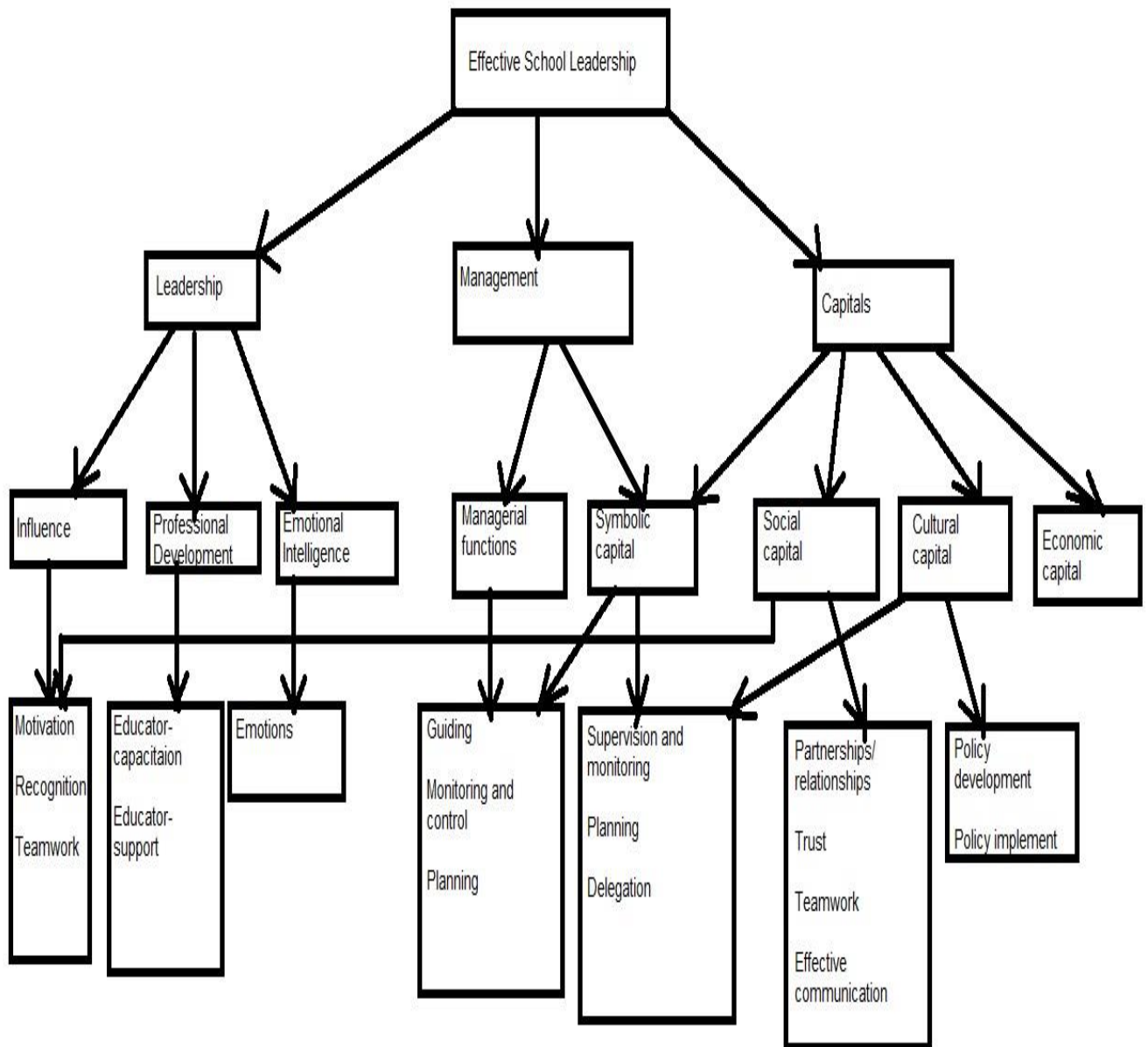


Figure 5.1 Effective school leadership
Source: Own compilation (2021)

5.3.1 Leadership

Principals of performing schools indicated how effective leadership can improve learner performance in secondary schools in rural areas. Data indicated that principals' leadership play a pivotal role in affecting the climate, attitude, and reputation of their schools. With successful school leadership, schools become effective incubators for learning; places where students are not only educated but challenged, nurtured, and encouraged. To meet targets, successful leadership in schools is based on identifying positions and clarifying people's priorities. These tasks enable leaders to direct and

arrange the actions of followers; to identify positions and modes of communication; to explain goals, priorities, and methods of work; to plan, arrange and delegate responsibilities; and to track and control assignments. Principals emphasised that effective leadership assisted them to use their power of influence to work closely with their staff towards achieving the goals and objectives of the school. In the discussion of effective leadership, factors such as influence, recognition, teamwork, professional development, and emotional intelligence were identified as having an influence on school leadership.

5.3.1.1 Influence

For the school to thrive, the principal needs to possess the innate ability to influence educators, learners, and parents for the school to work towards achieving a set target and goals. Effective principals use their power of influence and motivate educators and learners in the school to work effectively in the realisation of the vision and mission of the school. The researcher attempted to establish whether influence can improve learner performance in secondary schools in rural areas. Principals of effective schools expressed their ability to use influence to improve and sustain high academic performance in their schools. They influence educators, learners, and parents through motivation.

P7: "So, in order to improve results, I needed to capacitate educators through different sessions, not a once-off session of motivation, of support, of capacitation it's a process you know." (P)

The same sentiment was shared by another principal who also indicated the use of motivation to influence everyone in the school.

"P10: I use motivation. I believe that it is through motivation that er... keeps us afloat." (P)

Principals in schools use varied methods of influence to motivate educators and learners. However, principals of under-performing schools displayed an inability to influence educators in the school to work together towards a common goal. This is evident from the quote below.

P6: "Yes, but educators in this school have got a tendency of undermining leadership." (UP)

As indicated in the previous statement by principal 6, the perception or experience of principal 6 prompted the researcher to want to know what strategies are being used by the principal to address the tendency as indicated above.

P6: Hmm it's tough. When I arrange meetings, sometimes they don't attend. I do not want to fight with them. If I charge them of course if that is the answer you are looking for. I will not be safe; my family won't be safe either. Look, we stay in the same village so ah.....(moment of silence) (principal just waved a hand which is assumed to be a gesture of letting it go)..... So, to them they are still of the view that even when I was a co-opted member of the SMT I do not qualify to be the principal. They still see me as that CS1 educator who came to the SMT by chance. Some think that my presence in the SMT was an internal arrangement with the former principal to take over. (UP)

Principals from performing schools use the key factor of motivation to influence educators. However, a principal of an under-performing school indicated an inability to motivate, encourage and influence people in the school to work as a united force – as stated in a quote below.

P3: “We had inexperienced teachers in Grade 12. Teachers not working harder....Learners not fully involved. High rate of absenteeism as I've indicated; Lack of total commitment in giving quality tasks and also marking them.” (UP)

The above principal does not only lack the ability to influence subordinates but also lacks proper monitoring and work supervision. Influence is closely linked to motivation. The motivational levels of educators and learners in performing schools are high, hence it is easy to achieve high-academic results regardless of the poorly resourced environment the school is in. Below is a statement from a principal who has provided a long list of reasons why the school is unable to perform.

P4: Err... we have overcrowded classes; most promotional posts were not filled for quite some time. More Fundza Lushaka educators are forced into the school by the department. This makes supervision to be minimal as most SMT are just co-opted members. Learners are sharing textbooks mostly in lower grades.poor infrastructure.no deputy principal in a school with 21 educators. (UP)

From the above section, principals of performing schools have indicated how they use motivation to influence and sustain performance while principals of under-performing schools indicated factors that hinders them to improve learner performance. Moreover, principals of under-performing schools did not clearly indicate the ability to influence their staff towards the realisation of common school goals. In the following discussion, principals indicate how they use motivation in schools to influence performance in order to achieve the desired outcome.

5.3.1.1.1 Recognition

Principals of performing and under-performing schools indicated the use of rewards in recognition of good work. A reward is regarded as a token of appreciation for good work performed. Principals of performing schools value rewards as anything that could be given to a person in recognition of good service, effort, or achievement. They also believe that giving a person something in recognition of their effort improves results in the workplace. Principals encourage their colleagues and learners in the school to work hard by giving them awards as indicated in the quote below.

P9: "We do awards for best educator or subject per quarter. We also award best learners. I think this helps in motivating them to work hard." (P)

Rewards work as a stimulus to both educators and learners. It is intended to reinforce a desire to win or succeed. Principals of successful schools indicated another dimension of giving awards to people based on performance. They do not just give rewards to educators and learners for good performance; however, they give rewards based on improved performance.

P7: We also have awards but ours are not for the best performing learner, no. We give on the basis of improvement. We give an award to a learner who has tried to improve from previous marks. We are pushing for excellence hence we are very much impressed by the level of improvement on our learners. (P)

Educators who are involved in decision-making processes are twice more effective in their work than educators who are not. Effective principals involve educators in making decisions. This in turn assists them to build strong and committed teams in the school.

5.3.1.1.2 Teamwork

Effective principals use teamwork as the process for working in collaboration with the rest of a group of people who share a common goal or objective. Principals who are active in their leadership understand that working together with their colleagues as teams create more success as it emphasises on the importance of social support.

P7: It was to create teamwork among staff members. Creating an atmosphere where educators can effectively work together even in my absence. We take decisions together. Our teamwork helped us a lot with discipline in the school and we also won the hearts of many parents in the nearby villages; because of the good results in Grade 12, the enrolment went very high. (P)

A principal who managed to create effective teams in the school indicated that the teams work as a unit and also give professional support to the members of their teams.

P6: Creating unity and also developing the spirit of teamwork. We are more successful when we work together. We complement each other. I have created strong teams in all the streams of subjects we are offering. These teams function as a support structure for educators in those streams. (UP)

A principal of an under-performing school admitted in a quote below that the reason for non-performance is a lack of unity in the school. He alluded to the fact that the SGB, SMT and the staff are not working as a team. Meanwhile principals of performing schools believe that teamwork helped colleagues to communicate with each other, improves social skills and confidence. Teamwork among staff members can enhance school performance. Underestimation of teamwork results in negative performance in the school. Below is the comment of the principal who indicated a lack of teamwork and unity in the school within the colleagues as well as among other stakeholders. The principal indicated that the reason for non-performance in the school is a lack of unity and teamwork. However, the principal does not seem able to convince stakeholders to work as a team.

P4: because we are not united. We are not working together as a team. Maybe it is because when I was appointed as the principal here, I was not accepted by the SGB, SMT and the royal house because I am not coming from this village. It is not easy to work with your

detractors from within..... Here it is evident that the stakeholders had their own preferred candidate not me. So, basically, I work without their full support. (UP)

Effective schools have shown that principals who work individually do not benefit the school in any way. There is a need for different approaches, skills, and abilities to bring out the best performance in the school. Effective principals displayed the ability to work with other team members. They have also illustrated their ability to develop their subordinates to become important role-players within the team. Meanwhile, principals of under-performing schools indicated divisions amongst stakeholders in the school whereby the principal is working without the support of all stakeholders within the school.

5.3.1.2 Professional development

Professional development has also been identified as a sub-theme under effective leadership. Principals who are effective in their leadership create time for training and building the capacity of their subordinates. Professional development in education focuses more on training educators as part of an investment in the available human resource. It also assists principals in setting the necessary tone for hard work while instilling commitment in educators. One principal indicated that they prioritise staff development at the beginning of every year.

P1: "The staff development is done holistically once in a year before the academic year kick starts so we can plan for the whole year." (P)

It is necessary for educators to receive continuous professional development and support in order to stay cognisant of professional practices. Professional development helps educators to refine their practice. Principals in rural schools depend on the quality of the educators they have. For these schools to thrive, principals need to invest in their professional development and support. Principals indicated different forms of educator support, which include workshops and enrolment as part of the continuous educator development. Principals also encourage their educators to attend workshops – as indicated by the following principal.

P4: "During the year we just support educators by encouraging them to attend departmental based workshop programme." (UP)

As part of support, some principals also advocate for the active functioning of subject committees. These committees work as a support structure to educators who need assistance in content knowledge – as is stated in the following quote:

P1: “We also encourage educators through their heads of departments to make sure that subject committees are active because that is where they are able to share contents and to share expertise.” (P)

There is no specific identified scope of effective professional development for both principals and educators. However, educators who continue to receive professional development are successful in classroom management and also in content knowledge as indicated in the quote below. Good principals involve stakeholders in their leadership coaching and mentoring. It remains the responsibility of the principal to identify areas of development for their staff. In some schools, principals developed programmes to mentor new and inexperienced educators as indicated in the quote below:

P7: “We have mentoring programmes for the newly appointed teachers and inexperienced teachers and workshops that are organised in the school.” (P)

Principals determine the areas needed for development by educators. In order to deal with under-performance, the principal must also be equipped on instructional leadership. Moreover, principals who are aware on their role as instructional leaders can add capacity to their staff on curriculum implementation, educator professionalism and holistic educator development. Some principals indicated that they are pro-active in identifying areas for development and seeking ways to address challenges.

P2: “We look at the current development and challenges that relates to education and our work as well so that each one of us would be at par.” (UP)

Successful principals build an environment where educators can collaborate, communicate, and support each other. They help educators to see themselves as part of the team as opposed to spectators. Principals use professional development in schools to improve communication, collaboration, and empowerment. It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure effective teaching and learning in the school. The primary focus of principals in schools is to ensure that learners have

good instruction. Therefore, schools should offer support to educators as it is done by the principal quoted below.

P7: “Professional support is done on a monthly basis, but I spot educators who need one-on-one motivation and capacitation and I do that as soon as the need arise. We also have professional development in the form of strategic planning at the beginning of each year.” (P)

Although the majority of principals invest in their educators through professional development, the researcher observed that a principal in an under-performing school indicated they do offer development to their educators. The way they conduct professional development is not realistic. The following quote indicates that professional development is done fortnightly for educators and weekly for the SMT.

P5: “Professional development is done every after two weeks for teachers, and every week for SMT.” (UP)

Another principal indicated professional guidance as part of HODs daily activities.

P3: “Professional guidance is offered on a daily basis by HODs.” (UP)

Principals of performing schools do arrange for staff development. They indicated that they do among other things; staff development, provide support to educators, engage their educators in strategic planning while in under-performing schools’ principals also indicated that they do professional development and guidance in their schools. It was noted however, that the frequency of development and guidance – as indicated in the quotes above – may compromise and limit contact time of educators in the classroom. The researcher also noted that the frequency of professional guidance offered by departmental heads of under-performing schools is unrealistic as it is offered daily.

5.3.1.3 Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) involves the ability of principals to effectively manage emotions within themselves as well as the emotions of educators in the school. It also relates to the ability of the principal to create meaningful relationships in the school. Principals with high EI are effective and successful in school management as they carry within themselves the ability to manage conflicts as

they arise at schools and resolve them in the best interest of both educators and learners. A school – just like any other institution – faces various challenges every day.

Emotional intelligence emphasises the ability of principals to manage emotions while creating meaningful relationships in the school. Principals of under-performing schools showed an inability to manage bad relationships in the school. A participant in an under-performing school indicated that under performance in the school is due to poor relationships between the principal and the SGB. It was, therefore, noted that the principal seems to lack the ability to manage bad emotions, which results in a lack of meaningful networks in the school. The comment below indicates the frustration that the principal has about the broken relationships between the principal and other stakeholders in the school. There is no evidence, however, to indicate the principal's ability to mend relationships in the school as was noted by the researcher in the quote below.

P6: "Aah... I think the problems that I mentioned earlier about some of the stakeholders not wanting me to be the principal here; I think it has crippled a possible good relationship." (UP).

Emotional intelligence assists principals in dealing positively with stakeholders' emotions and the way they view the principal's professional work. Schools become effective when principals can manage the emotions of everyone in the school.

Effective principals can deal positively with emotions in the school. They know how to handle their emotions as well as the emotions of educators in the school. People's emotions are closely linked to job satisfaction. If workers are not happy, they will hardly yield the needed results. Principals displayed low EI as they are unable to manage the emotions of their staff in order to enforce good relationships between colleagues. The following comment clearly indicates the principal's inability to handle emotions; as a result, the principal decided to avoid bad emotions in the school.

P4: "It is difficult, even teachers from this village who are in our school are also divided in this matter. So, we try by all means to avoid talking about such because it could be a matter of life and death." (UP).

Principals with high EI are effective in dealing with conflicts before they even arise. Therefore, the above comment is an indication of the principal's ineffectiveness in dealing with issues of emotions in the school. Principals need to be aware of their colleague's emotions. This, therefore, makes it

easy for the principal to identify whether the whole staff is working as a unit or not. Principal 8 displayed an ability to lift the morale and emotions of educators through encouragement and motivation.

P8: "I do that through encouragement and motivation. I try by all means to deal with whatever tension that may arise to divide us. If I see that someone is distressed and not happy in the school. I try to talk to that person so that together we can get an amicable solution." (UP).

Principals cannot ignore the emotions of their staff, if the low emotional state of educators is neglected, it often leads to under-performance. Hence, it affects their commitment, sense of purpose and their confidence. Successful principals identify – in the school – the behaviour and sudden change of character of their educators and address them as they emerge – as explained by the principal below.

P1: there are issues where we have one-on-one with a person and try to understand why they behave like that because sometimes they are not behaving to an environment at school, they are reacting to something else outside it's just that they are taking it to a wrong place so if you have one-on-one and try to understand where this person comes from you are able to make them realise that I think what they are doing is misplacedwe all have our baggages but when we come to work our only focus is the future of the learners so our one-on-one is based on trust. (P).

The researcher, however, has picked a sense of rebellion in some schools as some educators in school 6 do not even attend the motivational sessions as part of their educator development. Principal 6 indicated that emotions in the school are high. There is also no indication from the principal of his ability or capability to deal with these kinds of emotions. Until under-performing schools are assisted to deal with emotions at work, the status quo will remain.

P6: Sometimes the tensions are too high. It's practically not workable if I can say so, I sometimes ask motivators to come and give a round of motivational sessions for teachers. But then, this group of educators do not attend. Sometimes they stay in their cars or if we are to take a trip for motivation and staff development, they submit a leave form. It's tough, indeed it is very tough. (UP).

Emotional intelligent principals know when to use different forms of motivation to lift the morale of educators in school, however, schools become more effective when principals are able to manage high levels of stress. Emotional intelligence practically provides principals with problem-solving skills. Moreover, principals who have high EI are clear on what to do to solve problems at the school. Principals of underperforming schools struggle when it comes to managing emotions of educators in the school. They also indicate fear in approaching educators whose emotions are high showing inability to calm emotions down. On the other hand, principals from performing schools seek ways to understand any kind of behaviour that may cause conflict in the school. They also indicated how they are able to approach educators and give support. Apart from leadership, management was also identified as an important factor under effective school leadership.

5.3.2 Management

The common cause for the under-performance of schools in rural areas was identified as ineffective school management. Effective management in schools involves the ability of the principal to effectively carry out managerial functions in the school. It also includes the ability of the principal to control functions in the school, monitor processes, set up systems and lead. Some participants believe that to improve and sustain good school performance, they need to effectively employ managerial skills or functions.

5.3.2.1 Managerial functions

In the interviews with participants, three managerial functions were noted: guiding, planning and control. Monitoring is also identified as it relates to these functions as well. The discussion under management includes guiding, monitoring and control and planning.

A. Guiding

Principals in schools should be comfortable and confident in commanding their staff daily in terms of expected tasks and following up on work that should have been done. Guiding – encompasses – gives a strong sense of direction and purpose in the workplace, setting goals and effectively following up on them. Guiding can also manifest itself in numerous ways, including the ability of the principal to identify and recognise when educators in the school need reinforcement and direction. Principals who are effective in their leadership are able to make final decisions and give guidance as indicated in the comment below.

P1: "Because I have to take final decisions where everybody else seems to be out of their depth, I have to stack up and mop up a direction." (P)

Some principals see their roles as leaders by referring to their ability to empower the SMT and involving them in all the managerial and leadership functions. This is evident from the following comment from principal 9.

P9: "I empowered the SMT by involving them in all leadership functions.....Creating a positive school culture as well as cultivating leadership in others." (P)

The above sentiment was found lacking in under-performing schools. Principals of under-performing schools pointed out that when they leave the school premises, all work ceases. Bunking of work by educators is an indication of a principal's poor leadership skills whereby principals work alone and fail to capacitate the SMT to effectively work even in the absence of the principal. Hence, educators only work in the presence of the principal. This kind of behaviour by educators puts a further strain on the control functions of the principal of under-performing schools as further discussed below.

P3: In most cases, educators are here at the school, but they do not go to classes as expected. Now, you have to constantly be up on your feet, frequenting their staff room to check up on them. When by chance you go out to attend to something else you find them seated and not attending to their classes. (UP)

From the above quotes, the researcher noted the fact that performing schools have set up systems that enable work to continue in the presence or absence of the principal. However, it is found that under-performing schools only function in the presence of the principal.

B. Monitoring and control

Effective school management requires principals – with the assistance of members of their SMT's – to track the daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly progress of both educators and learners in the school. Effective monitoring and control are effectively done by gathering reports and analysing trends of learner and subject performance. However, principals of under-performing schools indicated that educators do not want to be monitored or their work controlled as indicated in the quote below.

P5: "Eerr... mam to be frank with you and be honest it is working but hey (taking a deep breath) only with serious and very strict supervision. If weekly monitoring is relaxed all the plans becomes a white elephant and educators relax too. My colleagues actually hate being supervised. They don't want their work monitored but for the sake of the quality work we have to." (UP).

Another principal also indicated the same sentiment stating that educators in school 8 also hate supervision. However, the principal agreed that control and monitoring of educators' work helped the school to improve results.

P8: "No, they actually hate it. But I used it last year and produced good results, although not best but good results." (UP).

Control in school management is about ensuring that the ultimate goals and vision of the school are adequately met. It also involves the ability of the principal to evaluate results and make alterations to plans when necessary. If principals want to work toward the success of the school, they should consistently monitor and evaluate the performance of both educators and learners from time to time. In under-performing schools with poor monitoring as indicated in the quote below, educators tend to avoid attending their classes on time and do proper work.

P5; "We are now starting to have strict period and time registers will be in class for the teachers to indicate the time he or she arrived in class and the time he or she left the class. These registers will be monitored by the SMT daily." (UP).

It is through control that schools will minimise the inadequate and sub-standard work given to learners. Principals also indicated that if educators are not monitored, they go to class late and leave before the period ends. The following comment indicates that some educators in under-performing schools do not stay in class for the entire period as allocated.

P4: "I am trying to stress the importance of teachers to be in class in time and that they must teach for the entire duration of that lesson." (UP).

The above statement indicates the importance of monitoring and control in schools. Monitoring is important as it informs the principal about the possible failures or successes in the school. It also serves as a performance indicator as it indicates knowledge and informational gaps, which may ultimately be addressed in the planning process. On the other hand, the principal of a performing school – when asked what makes the school produce good quality results –indicated that it is through the effective use of monitoring.

P5: Eerr... I think it is the importance of monitoring, continuous assessment by the SMT. I think this is the strong points that need careful consideration. I have learnt that if we relax monitoring, teachers also relax doing proper quality work. And also, the learner profiling, my previous principal use to ensure that learners are profiled more specially in Grade 12. They were profiled according to their academic potential and if you know them better, you teach them better. You know who wants what and who needs a special push, I think it works. (UP).

Principals in performing schools emphasised being consistent in monitoring and control in the school, which I found lacking in under-performing schools. The principal below indicated the importance of consistency in monitoring and control.

P10: “You see educators should be aware of how their HODs operate. we have learnt consistency in implementation of plans. My deputy and I monitor the work of the SMT so as to make all HODs consistent in their work.” (P)

Both principals from performing and underperforming schools indicated an understanding of monitoring and control of educators’ work. However, only principals from performing schools indicated consistency in monitoring and control in the school. While principals in under-performing schools indicated that their staff does not want to be monitored and/or controlled.

C. Planning

One of the main roles of the principal – as the manager in the school – is to develop a plan to meet all the set goals and objectives. Effective principals plan around the delegation of duties and responsibilities as well as setting realistic and achievable timelines. Successful schools use planning as an important tool to sustain high performance as indicated below.

P1: “We have planning sessions where we plan for the whole year, and we have programs of action.” (P).

Principal 1 further indicated the involvement of educators in school planning sessions. The more the staff members work together, the more solutions you have.

P1: "They come up with plans which they own." (P).

The involvement of educators in decision-making in the school improves their morale. It also assists the principal to know their staff's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for growth and mentoring. Principal in a quote below indicated how educators feel obliged to adhere to decisions that they were a part of. The inclusion of educators in planning sessions improves teamwork as colleagues in the school plan together. The principal below indicated how the inclusion of educators improved discipline in the school.

P5: The improvement of learner discipline and management of teaching/lost time or recovery plan. As a school we plan every year. Each subject is expected to set a target and we put our plans in writing and paste it in all our offices. This also encourages people to work towards their set targets. Learners and educators are encouraged to set their quarterly targets.and also work towards achieving these targets. (UP).

Educators feel more responsible when they have a say in decisions. The school's outcome is even greater when educators are involved in decision-making compared to when the management announces a plan of action or change in policies without listening to the inputs of the educators. Some principals indicated in their responses the availability of the school's year plan, which includes various aspects as indicated below.

P6: "We have plans for curriculum management. In our year plan we have plans such as teacher development, academic improvement and also school improvement." (UP).

One of the most important functions in planning is the ability of the principal to work independently in determining what duties and responsibilities are to be given to the SMT and educators. The following quote indicates that a school performs well when priorities and timelines are set and adhered to.

P9: "I am now delegating responsibility to people around me a lot and ask for feedback." (P).

Both principals of performing and underperforming schools concur with each other that they do school planning. Planning in performing and underperforming schools is intended to achieve set goals such as educator development, academic plans, and school improvement plans. Therefore, effective principals make planning part of their management process. Through effective planning, schools establish high aspirations for themselves as well as focusing intensely on the proper execution of their plans. The ability of principals to effectively use various forms of capital in their leadership was identified and is discussed below.

5.3.3 Capital

Capital was explained as an important resource that can be acquired – or gathered – by the principal to assist in the improvement of under-performance. Better and improved results are obtainable only if the leader can employ the correct form of capital in leadership. The responses from participants in the interviews indicated that some principals are aware of their power to use capital in their leadership while others are not. Four types of capital were identified from the data collected: symbolic, social, cultural, and economic.

5.3.3.1 Symbolic capital

Symbolic capital is accumulated largely by the fulfilling of social duties that are, themselves, laden with the capacity for prestige. Symbolic capital – like economic capital – is 'fair' in the sense that it can be voluntarily translated into manipulating advantages in social and political spheres. However, symbolic capital – unlike economic capital – is not limitless, and the historical sense in which it was acquired can be limiting or magnifying. Symbolic capital is the principal's cumulative skills, knowledge, and abilities, which are developed through formal education and through work experience. Bourdieu further indicates that symbolic capital is further developed through ongoing professional development. The theory of habitus and field indicated the power of the principal through symbolic capital to improve learner performance in the school. The effectiveness of the leadership of principals in performing schools involves their ability of the principal to use and understand their hierarchical power of symbolic capital to influence the results. Hierarchical power is also known as the legitimate power of the principals. Principals – in their capacity – can use power to influence performance in the school. The principal – by virtue of the position – has the power to supervise the work of educators through departmental heads. Some principals of under-performing schools do not show the use of symbolic capital in their leadership. In the comment below, a principal

expresses difficulty in managing the school using symbolic capital. This is evident by the confrontations with educators who are not doing their work.

P5: "I go to the staffroom and confront them. I personally want to be seen around. I hate teachers who are coming to school and then become lazy to do their work." (UP).

The above statement indicates a lack of symbolic capital. Symbolic capital is also referred to as hierarchical power; this kind of power does not make principals force educators to work. However, the principal's presence will make educators do their work without being forced or coerced.

P1: I do not force people to work, we are a team. they know why they are here. We engage them in setting targets and developing strategies to improve results every year. Every teacher account for his or her own subject. (P)

The researcher noted that principal 5 above have been in the school for seven years but the school is still not performing well. However, power enables the principal to build the type of school they envisage. Effective principals – who understand their power – can persuade educators to do things that they would otherwise not do. Below is a statement by the principal who realised the importance of using the power of supervision.

P6: "I managed to improve daily school attendance by educators, observe school-working hours, leave and time register and extracurricular work." (UP).

Effective principals use their embedded power through symbolic capital to influence and empower members of their staff. They use their power to convince, persuade and encourage others. Power was seen in the previous chapter as the invisible strength of the principal to improve learner performance. principals from underperforming schools use their presence to make educators work while managing them through registers. This exercise is proving to be ineffective since educators will not work in the absence of principals. While in performing schools use their power to influence and build effective teams that are responsible and accounts for their subject performance.

5.3.3.2 Social capital

The researcher identified this kind of capital from the responses of the principals. The aim was to investigate the ability of the principal to improve learner performance through the creation of important support structures from within the school community. Social capital usually takes the form of social networks. It is concerned with the way the principal creates relationships in the school. It also builds on the relationships that the principal creates in the school with educators, parents, and learners. The difference between effective and ineffective principals is their ability to build their support structure. Effective principals create effective partnerships in the school to support and to give guidance where necessary. Under social capital, the following was identified:

A. Partnerships

Building partnerships with people in the school is one of the most effective ways to expand the support base for the principal. Partnerships are beneficial to schools of all sizes. Effective partnerships between all stakeholders in the school improve accountability and also set clear and achievable expectations. If all partners in the school are clear with the expected outcomes, each group will work hard to accomplish the expectations of the school. It will further eliminate confusion and insubordination as everyone will be working towards the accomplishment of the expected results or outcome. Partnerships in schools were identified in various forms. Responses from participants indicated that principals who have managed to improve the academic results of their schools considered partnering with effective schools in order to learn from best practices – as explained below.

P10: Also, we are partnering with well-performing schools to learn the best practice. Look we are in the same rural area as them..... There surely must be something they are doing well. We have copied a number of things from them. We attend their meetings; we see how their HODs operate. we have learnt consistency in implementation of plans. We are now profiling learners based on their abilities; the level of commitment from their educators, discipline is very high. (P)

A principal was asked about what he learnt from the previous school before he was appointed as the principal in his school. He indicated that his former school's educators had a good relationship with other educators from schools that performed well. He also indicated that parents had a good relationship with educators, which may be lacking in his current school – as stated in the quote below.

P3: "The school had a good working relation with other educators from good schools. Parents are hands-on. I would really want to see parents working together with educators. I would like to see the whole community involved. I think that was the strength of my previous school."
(UP)

The above principal was in a performing school before being employed as a principal. Currently, the principal has been in the school for almost nine years but is still struggling to achieve the previous school's success. Another principal was asked what led to the drop in performance in the school as well as solutions to remedy the situation. The participant mentioned subjects that learners are not performing well in and partnering with better performing schools to improve the results in these subjects respectively.

P5: Accounting, agricultural sciences, business studies, economics, mathematics, maths literacy and physical sciences have been identified as killer subjects. This means that the rate of learner passes in these subjects is very low and not improving. We have identified good schools within our circuit we want to partner or twin our school with the best performing schools in the mentioned subjects. This will provide an opportunity for peer mentoring. (UP)

Principals of performing schools indicated that partnerships with stakeholders in the school are important for improving results. The following quote indicates a lack of support from educators and parents as partners in the school.

P3: "It is for all grades to attend morning and afternoon studies; at the beginning I did not have a full support of educators." (UP).

The same sentiment was picked up from another principal in another school. The principal of an under-performing school indicated a struggle to get success in forming effective partnerships with the school community; hence, there is no improvement in the results.

P6: Hey, some can be very aggressive, but I try by all means to sell the idea to them in our staff meeting but sometimes opposition is too strong even in those meetings more especially if it is based on the willingness of the teacher to offer extra service. If a particular teacher says no sometimes for the sake of peace I do it on my own with those who will be willing to offer their services for the benefit of the poor child. When the coffers of the school are ok, we

also ask help from the best performing school. We usually ask their maths, physics and accounting teachers to come and help us on Saturdays. It was so difficult to the point that I also wanted to resign. The department wanted answers, the village was not supporting me, and educators are also not supportive. (UP).

Principals of performing schools do not build partnerships with educators alone; they create relationships with the entire school community who have an interest in education. The following principal indicated the greatest motivator for learner performance is the relationships that the school have with surrounding businesspeople. As a form of encouragement, they offer learners bursaries and laptops.

P7: No, the bursary is for any learner who passes Grade 12 well without money for registration at the university. We have also been adopted by two local pastors they have a programme where they come and offer us spiritual support, guidance, and motivation. We also have a structure from the village of professionals who come once a year to motivate Grade 12's and give career guidance. They also give awards for the best performer in science not just one subject. Most of them are in Johannesburg but they really communicate and come once, but we update them on a quarterly basis. We also have programme with social workers from victim empowerment; they offer us support and counselling to learners with social problems. Businesspeople also gave us laptops although they are not enough, but it really makes a difference. (P)

In this era of education reform, schools are held responsible for learners' performance. Therefore, it is crucial for schools to create lasting partnerships with members of the school community. These partnerships assist schools in upholding the values of education. The importance of creating healthy partnerships in the school has been echoed by performing schools. Principals of performing schools created partnerships with performing schools and stakeholders to promote education. while principals of underperforming schools indicated that parents are not supporting their schools and educators oppose any effort from the principal to promote effective teaching and learning.

B. Trust

Any relationship or partnership the principal creates at school should be based on trust. The trustworthiness of the principal helps to determine the success of the school. Genuine relationships in schools are built on trust and honesty. The core of any professional relationship in the working place is trust. It is, therefore, important that the principal creates an atmosphere of trust. This will not only help in building a good reputation for the principal but will also establish a strong network of

people who will support the school. Principals of performing schools emphasised on building relationships based on trust as echoed in the following statement.

P1: "My relationship with my colleagues and parents and all other stakeholders is based on trust." (P)

A relationship of trust between colleagues in the school breeds effective communication. The following quote stresses that if trust exists, it becomes easy for educators, parents, and learners to voice out their concerns and challenges.

P2: "So, we do talk to our teachers, and we also give them a platform to highlight whatever challenges they may have, so that we will be able to see as to what is it that we can do in order to address those challenges that may be prevailing." (UP)

Another way of cultivating genuine relationships in schools – which are based on trust – is the ability of the principal to identify hard work and to acknowledge the good work that they do. Rewarding the good work of both educators and learners has been discussed in this chapter. Trust in the school extends further to the ability of the principal to also trust the inputs of others in the school. The principal should give educators space to execute their delegated work and trust them to execute it. Many principals of under-performing schools unintentionally micromanage their staff members and do not trust them enough to deliver – as reiterated in the quote below.

P4: "Educators in this school just undermine leadership.... they are not committed at all." (UP)

The statement above indicates a lack of trust between educators and the principal. Meanwhile, social capital refers to the relationship between educators and the principal to have universal norms of trust and collaboration and a sense of obligation. Principals of performing school build their teams in the school based on trust. All stakeholders have faith in the work of the principal and educators. While principal of underperforming schools cannot trust the level of commitment on educators to can be able to deliver the expected outcome.

5.3.3.3 Cultural capital

Bourdieu explained cultural capital in chapter 2 as the knowledge and intellectual skills of a person, which is acquired through education. He further explains that a person's education provides a certain advantage in achieving a higher social status in society. In this study, cultural capital is seen as the knowledge and skills that the principal can draw on to give him or her an advantage in the workplace. The principal's cultural capital provides skills, knowledge, norms, and values, which can be used to improve learner performance. Principals in their capacity are expected to acquaint themselves with policies in education and implement them accurately. Performing schools have also indicated the ability to develop policies that help in managing functions in the school. The following quote indicates adherence to policy in the school as compulsory and cannot be compromised.

P7: "Another thing it is err... what I call the non-negotiables. These are your written work policy and protecting teaching time." (P)

Each school has its own way of functioning. Different policies are developed and meant to address a certain challenge. Other principals also indicated the need to develop a time register to monitor the attendance of educators in classes. This in a way shows the ability of the principal to apply the embodied cultural capital in school leadership. Cultural capital encompasses the level of preparedness of the principal to improve learner performance in schools. It was observed during interviews that effective schools employ more strategies to keep the work going. While other schools developed a written work policy others also developed a marking policy to help educators to mark within the given period and be able to provide timely feedback to learners. The following quote emphasises the issue of developing policies in the school to effectively manage systems.

P1: In school A, they are not doing it why are we doing it, so you have to motivate, encourage, explain and you know teamwork is built on consistency. If this month you say we are writing and produce a timetable and teachers administer and you say on this day you say submission is needed because one thing that helps us, is we are a high enrolment school now because of the five years of good results like I said so our Grade 12 class is a bit highly enrolled so marking can be a problem so we have a policy, marking policy. We write your paper today, if we write on Monday, Friday we need marks on or before Friday.It's a five-day policy, you see one other thing mam which is interesting like I told you consultation. We don't instruct, for these policies to be effective we sat down first with management, we discussed, and we agreed then we took to issue to the educators, and we indicated to them why is it important for us to do it that way and they were convinced because if you don't make follow-ups, you are not consistent and without consistency there is no culture. (P)

Principals of under-performing schools are out of their depth. They do not seem to have developed their own policies that will enable them to manage, among other things, the distribution and collection of textbooks and management of learner absenteeism and other things. As a result, they are frustrated by high rates of learner absenteeism and lack of textbooks. The frustration is echoed by the quote below from the principal of an under-performing school.

P5: Each and every subject teacher makes sure that he/she collects textbooks back at the end of the year. We often make threats that its either you bring back a textbook or you risk not to have your end of year report. But it's only a threat we do not have a right to do that some go and buy and replace but some still cannot afford then we really don't have concrete management plan on textbooks. It is against the law to withhold reports or to deny them books the following year so whatever we try it's really not working. (UP)

Another principal indicated that results dropped because of learners' ill-discipline. However, there is no evidence of the ability of the principal to manage and/or correct the situation.

P8: "Our results dropped because – among other thing – its learner discipline. We've got high rate of absenteeism and bunking of classes. Our learners just don't have a purpose in life. We also experience late coming, overindulgence and lack of commitment." (UP)

Principals of under-performing schools are not aware of the cultural capital they possess in their position as principals. They do not exercise their skills and knowledge, which gives them the advantage of developing and implementing policies as principals. Performing schools have developed own policies to manage informal tasks as well as protecting written work.

5.3.3.4 Economic capital

Bourdieu's theory of habitus and field explains financial capital as the access to financial resources, such as money, property, and other assets (Bourdieu, 1983). Principals indicated their ability to secure and manage the funds in the school. Principals are expected to secure economic capital to maintain or improve the quality of education offered in the school while some principals indicated difficulties in providing quality education due to a lack of financial resources. Lack of economic capital in schools has an impact on the principal's ability to improve performance. Below is a comment from a principal who indicated that with the small amount they receive, it is not easy for

the SGB to employ other educators. Therefore, as a small school, some classes go without educators.

P9: "As a small school in quintile 2 you receive a very small amount of money in the form of the norms and standards, we cannot employ anybody as the SGB cannot afford." (P)

The same principal went on to indicate the school's inability to outsource other educators from other schools as the school will not be able to compensate them.

P9: I tried to outsource. It is also a big problem to outsource because as a small school it means you get very little in the allocations. Outsourcing needs money, so without money your efforts are very limited. So, our learners have to go without teachers sometimes we ask teachers to teach these other subjects as I said that they are not qualified for, and they have no enough content knowledge of that. (P)

Principals further indicated that parents in rural areas do not support the school financially. Although, it is the responsibility of the SGB to raise additional funds for the school, principals also look up to parents for financial donations. In the quote below, the principal indicated a lack of financial assistance from parents.

P4: Mainly I think is the lack of interest, but I think many parents here are not educated so errr.... They don't value education that much. Last year because of vandalism we asked parents to volunteer guarding the school but as you know that security guards are not catered for on the monies from the norms and standards the SGB asked all parents to donate money, they agreed a certain amount but if I can tell you now for last year out of 750 learners only 75 parents paid. (UP)

It must be, however, stated that there are many reasons for parents' inability to help other than a lack of interest. A principal in the comment below indicated the difference between the schools he worked at. In a current rural school, the principal indicated that parents are not working; hence, they cannot offer financial assistance to the school.

P3: Rural environment has got its own challenges. No resources, no classes, shortage of staff, the SGB's hands are very tight there is very limited opportunity here to raise funds. In

my former school if we do not have an educator for a certain subjects' parents would offer themselves and come and teach in the afternoon and Saturdays or even volunteer to hire someone and pay from their own pockets. Here you raise the issue of money they will plainly tell you that we don't have money and I don't blame them it is true they are not working. So, everything like I said is different. (UP)

Economic capital does not refer to financial resources only but also to other material resources including textbooks and other learner-support materials. Both principals of performing and underperforming schools experience the same conditions of inadequate financial resources. They are unable to outsource due to their inability to compensate educators for extra classes. Parents of learners in underperforming schools do not give schools financial support. However, principals in performing schools indicated that educators share the subject that is without the educator although there are challenges such as content gap. indicates that the principal's inability to secure economic capital jeopardises quality and effective curriculum delivery.

5.4 Factors identified about leadership challenges experienced by principals in rural areas

Effective school leadership is the centre of high and sustained academic achievement. Data collected from participants indicate that there are notable leadership challenges experienced by principals of under-performing schools in rural areas. In Chapter Two, leadership is explained as a personal characteristic or trait, which is both built-in and can be acquired. The development of relevant skills and abilities in leadership is a built-in characteristic and can also be mastered through professional development and work experience. Upon analysing the transcripts, three sub-themes were identified. The sub-themes indicate that there are leadership challenges that occur internally, which is within the school; they also indicate that there are factors within the principal that indicate deficiencies within the leadership of the principal. The third sub-theme indicates the external environment, i.e., outside the school factors that put an extra strain on the ability of the principal to improve learner performance. These sub-themes have exposed the inability of the principal to effectively manage functions in the school. The three sub-themes are further discussed in the diagram below.

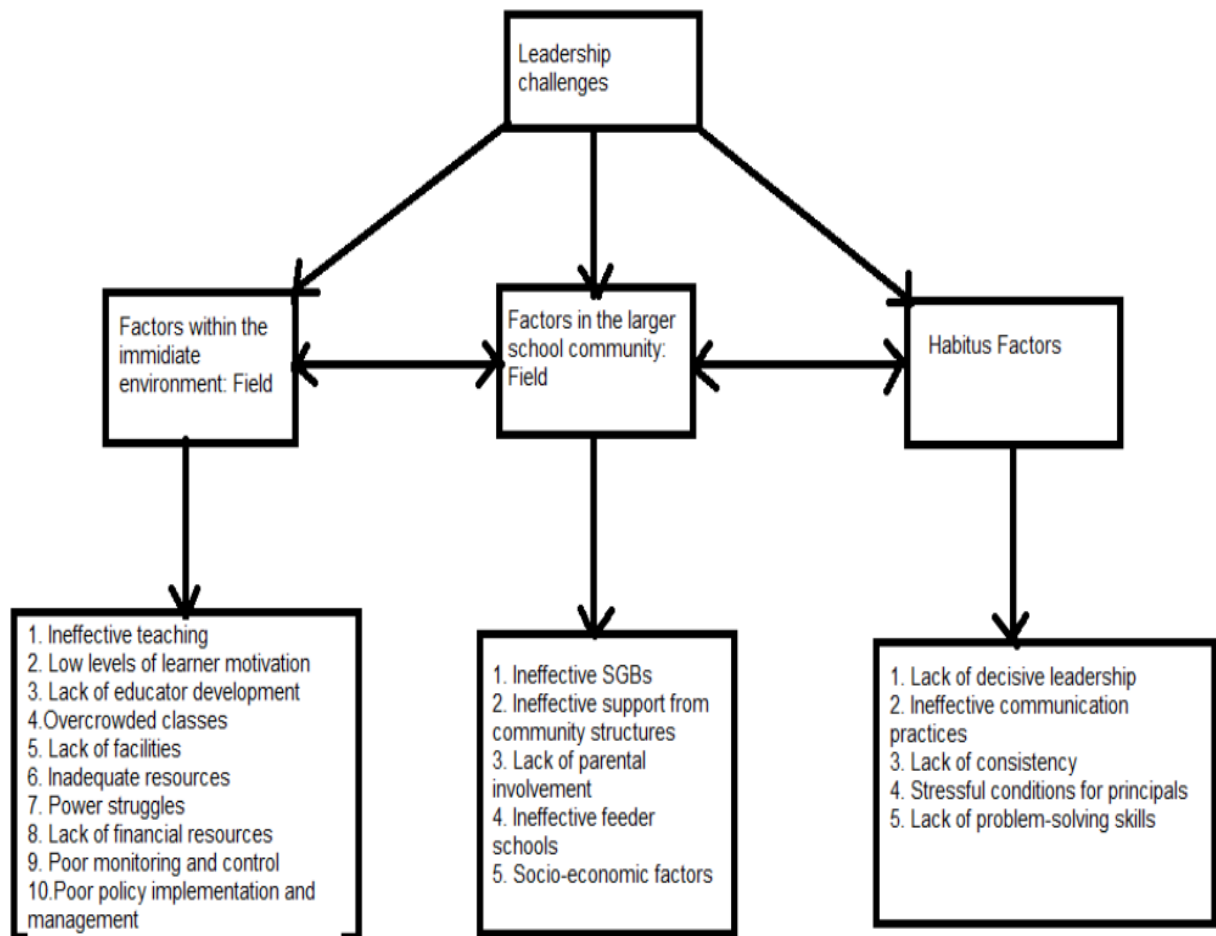


Figure 5.2 Leadership challenges
Source: Own compilation (2022)

5.4.1 Factors within the immediate school environment (Field)

In chapter two, Bourdieu’s theory of habitus, field, capital, and power indicates that the field is an institution wherein a leader operates. The field – in this study – referred to a school as an educational institution, which has a structured system, or a set of relationships, which may be religious, educational, cultural, intellectual etc. Through Bourdieu’s theory, explained that factors within the field have a considerable influence on the leadership of the school. Principals of under-performing schools – in rural areas – indicated that factors within the school as the field contribute to under-performance. High learner performance closely relates to an environment that is stimulating and exciting. However, data collected from principals in rural areas indicate that the environment – or the

field – is not conducive to effective learning. Numerous challenges within the school were identified by principals that contributed towards under-performance. These challenges include ineffective teaching, overcrowded classes, a lack of facilities and a lack of textbooks. A lack of adequate resources deprives effective learning in schools in rural areas. The following were identified by principals as factors within the school (field) that pose leadership challenges in schools in rural areas.

5.4.1.1 Ineffective teaching

Principals of under-performing schools indicated ineffective teaching as a challenge that affects the schools' performance. Educators play an important role in classroom teaching; there is no doubt that most educators in schools are effective. However, during data generation, some principals indicated that some educators have poor content knowledge of the subject that they teach. Effective educators can get all learners to learn – even those from poor families without parental support. While ineffective schools complain most of the time about issues such as – amongst other things – the lack of parental involvement, a lack of resources and a lack of experience in teaching the subject and other related issues as explained below.

P2: “Basically, ours is a small school. So, I think the question of lack of experience from some of the educators plays a role.” (UP)

The same question was posed to another principal to identify what makes it difficult for principals to improve learner performance in rural areas. Various issues were identified by the principal as shown in the following quote.

P6: “Again I would say poor content knowledge on the side of educators and lack of commitment on the side of our learners.” (UP)

Various issues that hinder schools in rural areas to sustain high academic achievement were also identified as indicated below.

P4: “It is not easy to sustain results we are affected by.... incompetent science educators who are highly qualified but cannot do the job. One other thing is the lack of resources. We want to produce scientists, but we do not have labs.” (UP)

Ineffective teaching takes place in various forms. Under-performance in schools also depend on the quality of educators the school has and concur that the success of a school is based on the attitude of educators towards their work and their willingness to go the extra mile in finishing content on time and giving proper informed revision. Principal 10 indicated that educators do not finish teaching content on time and as a result, they are not in the position of giving learners revisions.

P10: "I think it is the lack of teacher commitment in finishing the content on time and also do proper revisions." (P)

The above comment links with a previous discussion on ineffective control and monitoring in under-performing schools (refer § 5.3.) In another school, it was indicated that educators do not have a sense of urgency; they work in the presence of the principal only. The researcher also noted from the following quote that once the principal leaves the school, educators relax and do not do their work, as a result, such schools experience ineffective teaching.

P8: "I have observed that let's say for example one leaves for a meeting, all they do is sit in their staffrooms hence learners also show poor performance." (UP)

High failure rates in rural schools are a result of ineffective teaching. Principals of underperforming schools indicated that ineffective teaching is caused by – among other things – lack of experience, poor content knowledge of educators, educators' incompetency, ineffective or poor monitoring as well as the inability of educators to employ various teaching methods. In under-performing schools' principals also indicated a lack of commitment as a cause of ineffective teaching. The above-mentioned problems found in under-performing schools was not found in performing schools.

5.4.1.2 Low levels of learner-motivation

Under-performing schools in rural areas are characterised by learners' lack of commitment and high rates of absenteeism, which emanates from poor school leadership. Principals of under-performing schools indicated that learners in their school lack passion for learning and are not self-motivated – as explained by the principal below.

P8: "Our results dropped because among other thing it's err.. our learners do not have discipline. We've got high rate of absenteeism and bunking of classes. Our learners just don't

have a purpose in life. We also experience late coming, overindulgence and lack of commitment.” (UP)

Some principals believe that low levels of learner motivation are caused by the lack of parental involvement. Learners are aware that since their parents are absent from home, there will not be anybody to question their actions of bunking school and other matters related to a lack of discipline. The following principal explains the lack of parental support as a contributing factor to under-performance.

P10: One of the main reasons is lack of parent support. Some parents are not that supportive to the education of their children, and I think that has resulted to many of our learners’ lack of commitment and motivation. A lack of motivation on the side of our learners is a major downfall, they are not self-motivated. (P)

Principals argue that progression policy is another factor in the low levels of motivation and learner commitment. They indicate that the policy progresses learners from one grade to another even when they have failed. Principals indicate that learners are aware that they will progress due to reasons that are not academic related, such as being over-aged or repeating a phase more than twice. The frustration about the progression policy is shared below in the following quote.

P9: I think our learners are too much relaxed because they know that progressing to other grades is no longer a struggle as it used to. Now a learner progresses because you are over-aged, or because you cannot repeat the same phase more than twice. So, they progress anyway. Hence, they are not committed in any way. (P)

Another principal agreed with the above statement.

P3: “Like I said progression policy is our biggest challenge; these learners do not have a sense of commitment; you just have to push them.” (UP)

Principals of under-performing schools see low learner motivation is an overriding outlook towards learning, which lead to negative school outcomes. Learners in under-performing schools who are demotivated show signs of being demoralised and they lack the zeal for schooling. Principals indicated that their learners are ill-disciplined and also lack commitment k owing the fact that they

will progress to the next grade because of the progression policy. Principals of performing schools also experience the same learners who are less committed to their work and show low levels of motivation.

5.4.1.3 Lack of educator development

The most challenging issue in under-performing schools is inadequate educator knowledge. The lack of educator development in under-performing schools increases the difficulty of educators' knowledge transfer to learners. In the data collected, some principals do not prioritise educator development. However, educational experiences relating to educators' work can only be acquired through continuous educator development. Educators participate in professional development sessions to acquire new skills and knowledge that will eventually improve work performance.

A principal in an under-performing school indicated that educators who do not perform are removed from teaching Grade 12. They are restricted from teaching in higher grades and may only teach in the lower grades. The quote below indicates the lack of development – or capacity – of under-performing educators.

P8: "Educators who underperform are identified and excluded from teaching Grade 12 in the future." (UP)

The above comment indicates that some under-performing schools prioritise teaching in Grade 12 while disregarding teaching in lower grades. As a result, there is also a possibility that learners may reach Grade 12 not well prepared as the school uses incompetent educators to teach in the lower grades. In another school, a principal indicated – in the quote below – those educators do not need professional development to improve their performance; rather they can work effectively even when they have not undergone professional development.

P3: "You know how it is working with people. If they want to work, they will, even those sessions were not there." (UP)

It has also been noted that effective schools do prioritise professional development for the rest of the staff. Staff development makes educators more equipped in classroom instruction. It further gives them the ability to effectively manage the correct implementation of the curriculum and learners'

holistic development. A performing principal indicated – in a quote below – the importance of development, support, and motivation.

P7: Professional support is done on a monthly basis, but I spot educators who need one-on-one motivation and capacitation and I do that as soon as the need arise. We also have professional development in the form of strategic planning at the beginning of each year. We have mentoring programmes for the newly appointed teachers and inexperienced teachers and workshops that are organised in the school. We have a committee that deals with that, and I am the coordinator. (P)

Effective school principals take the work of the educator seriously and prioritise their professional development. Educators essentially need to have the capacity on issues pertaining to content knowledge and other relevant competencies. Below is the quote that indicates the purpose of professional development.

P1: The staff development is done holistically once in a year before the academic year kick starts so we can plan the whole year. During the year we just support educators by encouraging them to attend departmental based workshop programmes, you know those kinds of programmes and we also encourage educators through their heads of departments to make sure that subject committees are active. (P)

Performing and under-performing school principals do not equally see the importance of educator development. Principals of performing schools prioritise the development of educators as a continuous activity while under-performing principals think that educators can work even in the absence of development.

5.4.1.4 Overcrowded classes

A classroom is regarded as overcrowded when the total number of learners in a class exceeds the expected number of learners in the class, which causes hindrances in the process of teaching and learning. Overcrowded classrooms were found to be a problem in many rural schools. Principals identify overcrowded classes as a cause for concern in rural areas. They further indicated the difficulty of teaching in overcrowded classrooms. A principal – in the comment below – indicated that under-performance is caused by many factors including overcrowded classrooms.

P6: "It is a combination of so many factors. We are in a rural area without resources that is number one. Our learners learn in overcrowded classes. It is not easy to teach a class that is full to the brim." (UP)

Another principal indicated overcrowded classes as a cause of under-performance as – indicated in the quote below.

P4: "I think another issue is overcrowded classes with the department disregarding the teacher/learner ratio." (UP)

Principals indicated that overcrowded classes make effective teaching impossible. Classrooms that are overcrowded diminish the quality and quantity of teaching and learning; as a result, schools face serious implications in attaining their educational goals. A principal – in the comment below – indicated that overcrowded classes make it difficult to control and monitor learners' work in the class.

P3: "One other thing we have classes that are overcrowded. Therefore, it is not easy for a teacher to control and monitor learners' work and learner progress as they are too many." (UP)

Principals of under-performing schools indicated overcrowded classrooms as a contributing factor to under-performance. These principals all concur with one another that classes that are overcrowded are not conducive to teaching and learning. However, principals of performing schools did not find overcrowding a concern. These may be that most underperforming schools are small to medium-sized school with fewer educators to teach many subjects whereas performing schools do get adequate number of educators.

5.4.1.5 Lack of facilities

The lack of adequate facilities in rural schools poses a serious challenge in the provision of quality education. Schools in rural areas still face challenges in terms of a lack of facilities, such as classrooms, libraries, and laboratories. The lack or inadequate number of facilities has compromised the learner performance in rural areas. A principal in an under-performing school indicated in the statement below that schools do not have facilities such as laboratories to enhance the education of learners.

P6: "One other thing is the lack of resources. We want to produce scientists, but we do not have labs." (UP)

Another principal indicated that schools do not have facilities because of the issue of vandalism. Facilities in schools are vandalised by members of the community for various reasons. A principal – in the comment below – indicated that schools suffer from acts of vandalism during community protests.

P5: "You know, with us quintile 2 schools we are not authorised to build additional classrooms or offices or libraries or even to buy additional desks. We only repair the one's we have. We had a library which was torched last year during the protest. Now we are struggling." (UP)

Another principal indicated that the lack of adequate facilities and resources is in both primary and secondary schools in the same vicinity. The principal further alluded to the fact that learners proceed from the feeder school to a secondary school with a knowledge gap due to the lack of adequate resources.

P8: "Both our feeder school and we don't have resources. Our learners who are doing science they are doing theory only but expected to also do practical's in class. It is not easy without labs hence the knowledge gap." (UP)

Principals of under-performing schools indicated challenges regarding the lack of facilities in their schools. Rural schools face severe challenges in the lack of resources and adequate teaching facilities, which are unique to their environment; these challenges are seen as barriers to effective teaching and learning.

5.4.1.6 Inadequate resources

The resource concept in education is not restrictive. It involves anything that can be used as a teaching and/or learning aid – or tool. Principals in rural areas refer to resources as things like money, textbooks, classrooms, libraries, and computers. A shortage of resources in schools has been identified as a challenge for various schools in rural areas. Principals indicated that the lack of adequate resources has impacted negatively on the outcome – or achievement – of schools in rural

areas. inadequate resources in rural schools can also be a factor found in the larger school environment since the socio-economic status in rural areas is low. Therefore, the level of poverty in rural communities may also compromise quality education. A principal's comment below indicates a common challenge that hinders positive school performance, such as a lack of physical resources.

P7: "We don't have adequate resources, here in our school we don't have science lab. We don't have computers for our learners and teachers." (P)

Another principal alluded to the fact that it is not easy to teach subjects that need a laboratory as a resource for practical training. Subjects such as physical sciences and life sciences are the ones suffering the most.

P8: "We don't have resources.....It is not easy without labs." (UP)

Participants were also asked how they deal with the problem of a shortage of resources in the school. Some principals indicated their frustration at the non-response from the Department of Basic Education on the allocation of human and physical resources in schools.

P8: For both we have written numerous letters to the department and made follow ups for that block that you see. The roof has been blown away. I think it's about five years now, the department has never given us a positive response on the rebuilding or repairing that block. On the shortage of staff, I think the department nowadays in our province no longer advertise post for CS1 educators; they just give us the Fundzalushaka bursary holders. (UP)

School principals in rural areas indicated the unbearable conditions wherein learning is supposed to take place. Some schools have indicated a multitude of resources shortages as indicated below.

P9: One more thing is the insufficient staff. The department does not consider the teacher/learner ratio. Again, department we have a problem of inadequate infrastructure. Our main building which is that block adjacent to us has been burnt down on a community strike five years ago and still up to so far, we have never received a response from the department despite so many letters that we have written to them. We also have a shortage of textbooks. We do top ups, but we receive small number of textbooks or no textbooks at all. (P)

Due to insufficient classes in rural areas, most school principals also indicated the issue of overcrowded classes and learners not having textbooks. However, principal 9 of performing school indicated how they keep the limited textbooks over time.

P9: We make it a point that we partner with parents. We give parents textbooks not learners, so it is easy for us to recollect as parents commit themselves upon collection. (P)

While some also indicated that learners share textbooks.

P3: "We have overcrowded classes; most promotional posts were not filled for quite some time. Some of the members of SMT are co-opted members. Learners are sharing textbooks mostly in lower grades..... No deputy principal in a school with 21 educators." (UP)

Teaching and learning in rural schools solely rely on textbooks and the syllabus. Principals of under-performing schools explain the lack of textbooks as a barrier to effective teaching and learning. School principals in rural areas indicate that learners share textbooks as they are rotated amongst them. Every learner is given a chance to own a textbook for a week or so. The rotation of textbooks by learners in rural schools is discussed below.

P5: "The little that we have, we make it a point that they share. And they rotate and borrow each other. We also prioritise giving learners' notes and hand-outs. So that even when it's not your turn to have a textbook at home you will have something to refer to." (UP)

Except for the issues of textbook shortages and overcrowded classes, principals also indicated the key element of vandalism – i.e., the destruction of school resources. The comment below indicates that the little resources that under-performing schools do have are vandalised.

P4: "It's a combination of so many things; we also have a problem of drug abuse and I guess it is also a cause of the level of vandalism and graffiti in the school." (UP)

Under-performing school principals have indicated a desire for effective teaching and learning. However, they all agree to the fact that a lack of human, physical and learning resources affects their performance. Therefore, the ability of both educators and learners in rural areas cannot be properly

measured without adequate resources. On the other hand, performing schools do experience the same conditions as under-performing schools. They too indicated lack of adequate resources in the form of labs as well as inadequate learning resources such as textbooks.

Schools in rural areas still face a lack of textbooks and other important learner-educator support materials. The most common problem identified by participants in rural schools is the lack of textbooks. The conditions that exist in rural areas interfere with quality teaching and learning in schools. A principal – in the comment below – indicated that the school does not have the necessary resources, which include textbooks.

P5: “I think it’s the great shortage of infrastructure; we do not have enough furniture for our learners as well as the lack of textbooks.” (UP)

Another principal indicated that learners share textbooks as the school does not have adequate textbooks for all learners.

P4: “However, we do not have textbooks at all. Learners are made to share textbooks.” (UP)

The lack of textbooks makes rural schools unable to deliver effective and quality education. As a result, principals in rural schools make provision for all learners to share the available resources. In the comment below, a principal indicated that learners share textbooks in the classroom as well as taking turns of ownership by allowing each other to take a textbook home when necessary.

P3: “Learners are sharing textbooks mostly in lower grades; they rotate in handling textbooks. In fact, they take turns and borrow each other.” (UP)

The lack of textbooks in rural schools has serious implications for the provision of quality public education. Challenges of a lack of resources contribute to the poor academic performance of learners in rural areas. Most under-performing schools in rural areas – as indicated by principals – are under-resourced.

5.4.1.7 Power struggles

One of the most difficult areas of school management identified during the interviews is the fights that are happening between educators, between educators and the principal, between the SGB and the principal and between the community and the principal. Conflict is regarded as a sign of problems in the school. Principals of under-performing schools indicated difficulties in managing fights in schools. This may also create the potential for under-performance and ineffective school leadership. The comment below indicates the inability of the principal to manage power struggles in the school.

P6: "I think that in this school I inherited a culture of laziness, divisions caused by infight for power and poor staff meeting programmes." (UP)

Conflict situations often lead to unhappiness and poor job performance. Another principal – in the statement below – indicated that the reason for poor performance in the school is the lack of support and power struggles.

P10: "I guess it's because of the power struggle. You know if some in the staff thought they are more qualified for the post than you." (P)

Conflicts and power struggles are identified as originating from inside the school as well as outside the school. For effective school leadership, the principal needs the support of everyone around them. This includes the royal council as part of the school community. A principal indicated divisions in the community regarding community leadership contributed to the under-performance in the school.

P4: "Like the dispute on the royal council or headman's dispute. It affects teaching and learning as the chairperson of the community royal council who is disputing the current village leadership is also a chairperson of the SGB. So, some of the suggestions from the schools are rejected by the council, these squabbles are not assisting." (UP)

Conflicts in the school can take any form. Sometimes it is brought into the school from outside – as indicated from the quote above. In under-performing schools, these conflicts are regarded as a contributing factor to low school performance – as it involves educators who are also members of the council or the SGB. Some principals of under-performing schools are not able to deal with issues of conflict and power struggles. This is evident from the quote below.

P4: "It is difficult, even teachers from this village who are in our school are also divided in this matter. So, we try by all means to avoid talking about such because it could be a matter of life and death." (UP)

Principals of under-performing schools do not display the ability to manage conflicts in their schools. Hence, the quote from the above participant indicates a sense of avoiding these kinds of fights in schools. Principals do not have the capacity to resolve these conflicts in a way that will be in the best interest of learners. A principal indicated that there are no sound relations between the school and other stakeholders. Hence, the participant indicated a lack of support.

P6: Aah.... We have sort of an understanding, but I think the problems that I mentioned earlier about some of the stakeholders not wanting me to be the principal here, I think it has crippled a possible good relationship. I can't say everything is well I really don't see them supporting the school. (UP)

Conflicts are a natural part of any functional institution (Niehoff, 2018). Disputes in the school can come in any form. Sometimes they are brought into the school by sources close to the school. However, effective principals can manage conflicts while building relationships with everyone around them. A good-performing school expresses good working relationships with stakeholders in the school; there is an understanding between the school, the SGB and parents. There is also a sense of unity and understanding between all other stakeholders in the school. The statement below highlights the importance of building relationships with stakeholders in the school.

P1: Ever since the school began to show a positive vibe in terms of results, we have seen the stakeholders supporting us 98% because when we call parent's meetings, we have an attendance of 70% plus, they attend. SGB meetings when we plan, they are there to help us realise the academic planning even when it comes to the purse of the school because you see you can budget and say this is for teacher development, this is for LTSM, this is for what, what, what and when you show them the quotation you find that procurement becomes a problem. So, with the SGB we involve them to see how much these things cost, and they are very much helpful. (P)

Another successful school indicated a good relationship between the school and other stakeholders.

P8: The school has a cordial relationship with the business fraternity, religious sector, parents, and the traditional council. Because of lack of space, we use the church nearby to hold our meetings with parents and the traditional leadership also assist us with issues of discipline. The chief comes here sometimes to address learners in our morning assembly on the issues of discipline. (UP)

Power struggles are eminent in under-performing schools. They are disruptive in the school and sometimes cannot be avoided. If poorly addressed, power struggles have the potential to cause under-performance (Myran & Sutherland, 2016). Principals of performing schools do not struggle in handling disputes and conflicts in the school – unlike their counterparts in under-performing schools.

5.4.1.8 Lack of financial resources

The lack of financial resources in the school has been discussed under economic capital. However, it is further discussed in this section to indicate factors within the school as the field of education that may be a contributory factor to under-performance. SASA 84 of 1996 indicates the responsibility of the SGB to supplement the funds of the school. Principals in rural areas have commonly indicated a lack of financial resources to supplement the functions of the school while noting the fact that the management of school funds is limited as per their allocation by the norms and standards and the school's budget. The primary funder of school functions is the government; however, the lack of supplementary financial resources has barred schools from managing extra classes, acquiring other learner-educator support materials as well as funding educators who are outsourced from other schools. The principal's comment below indicates the financial struggle in rural areas, which stands as a barrier to funding extra classes to improve performance.

P2: "We made sure that there are extra lessons but at the same time you would understand that when you have extra lessons teachers are using their own time so in one way or another they must be remunerated and the money from norms that we have as the school is not meant for that goal so what would happen basically is parents would have to pay but at the same time ours is a non-fee school so parents are not expected to pay. So, it's a very difficult decision because you have to convince parents to pay at the same time the department does not expect you to make parents to pay. (UP).

Another participant made the same comment as above.

P3: "I also had difficulties to convince parents to fund the Grade 12 Saturday classes, so that teachers who volunteered their services could be financially subsidised and be motivated to come and teach these poor kids." (UP)

The majority of children in rural areas go to public schools. Many of these schools are struggling to produce better results. The problem of a lack of supplementary funds in the school has further been exacerbated by lack of possible donors and unemployed parents – as indicate in the quote below.

P9: "It is the high rate of poverty and high levels of unemployment. Because of these factors our parents here in the school cannot help us financially in anyway." (P)

When asked about the issue of seeking donations to fund the extra classes, the response below indicates the lack of businesses to help as they are in rural areas.

P5: "Where? I mean there is no business around except the Somalian spaza shops. There is literally no business to go to." (UP)

Money – as a resource – plays a significant role in managing programmes and functions in the school. High educational outcomes are attributed to the efficient use of the schools' financial resources. The sound financial position in the school has a lot to do with its existence and continuity. The researcher noted that schools that are performing well do not solely rely on outsourcing educators and spending extra funds on them.

Both performing and under-performing schools experience a lack of sufficient funds to cover all the expenses in the school. However, the difference lies in the management and administration thereof. Principals of under-performing schools continue spending money on the continuous outsourcing of educators while performing schools capacitate the human resources at hand.

5.4.1.9 Poor monitoring and control

Personal administrative management explains the core duty and responsibility of the principal; it indicates that the principal is responsible for guiding, supervising, and offering professional advice on the work and performance of educators in the school (Department of Education, 1999). Therefore, a principal's inability to monitor and control work in the school brings fewer dynamic teams. A

principal's ineffectiveness also brings about the lack of job supervision. Principals were asked the reason that led to the decline in results. Their responses – as indicated below – included poor monitoring and control of human resources and/or the poor-quality control of tasks by the principal and the SMT.

P3: "Yes. I think we need to improve a lot in our control and monitoring. As the SMT we need to tighten the loose ends." (UP)

These principals have been in the principalship position for over five years, yet they still indicate a need to tighten loose ends in their leadership. The above comment indicates that the principal knows what is expected from them but are unable to conduct proper monitoring and control. The position of the principal in the school is the focal point and a driving force of the school's activities. Therefore, principals need to do their work as expected. Another principal indicated the need to improve assessment practices in the school.

P5: "In the meantime we are trying to improve assessment practices." (UP)

The same principal indicated the reason for the poor monitoring and controlling of educators and the work they give to learners is that educators – in his school – hate being monitored and supervised. However, it is the responsibility of the principal to educate, guide and workshop educators on their roles. It is also the responsibility of the principal to ensure those educators understand their roles as well as the role of their seniors in the workplace. If roles are not clearly outlined, educators tend to resist monitoring and supervision – as indicated below.

P5: "My colleagues actually hate being supervised. They don't want their work monitored but for the sake of the quality work we have to." (UP)

Principals of under-performing schools indicated lack of effective monitoring and control in schools which is caused by the resistance of some educators. As a result, some principals may have less courage to face educators in this regard. However, the principalship position grants the principal hierarchical power to give guidance, advice and monitor the work of educators. Monitoring involves the regular assessment and observation of programmes set in place by the principal while control is the ability of the principal to judge, determine the worth – or value – of the work offered to learners in the school. Effective monitoring and control enable the principal to take decisive action in the

school to improve and monitor learners' academic progress. Poor or ineffective monitoring and control was not identified in performing schools.

5.4.1.10 Poor policy implementation and management

Policy does not fail on its own; it is rather the failure of the school management to properly implement them. Principals believe that under-performance is caused by the lack of proper policy implementation. They believe that some policies on progression – from the department –are either vague or ambiguous. The sentiment is shared in the quote below.

P1: "Or let me say there came a point where the system introduced the cohort passes. That one was vague in execution at the end of the day because the issue of determining who passes based on cohort was sneezy but end of the year the government introduced multiple exam opportunities." (P)

Furthermore, principals aired their frustration on the progression policy and the policy for the staff establishment as they accuse these policies to destabilise schools and to cause under-performance – as explained below.

P7: If only the government can get rid of their ambiguous policy on progression....and also the issue of R and R. I mean the issue of moving teachers from one school to another in the middle of a term unsettles us. When an educator arrives, you need to teach the culture of the school and so forth. So, I think is a kind of a setback more specially that we are given old people. They already have their way of doing things which does not fit here. It takes time to groom them to fit into our system. (P)

A principal indicated that the reason for low Grade 12 results is because of the progression policy as alluded to by other principals.

P6: "Our main downfall as the school is the department of education with its policies. The progression or pass requirements or cohort passing is our main defeat." (UP)

Policy implementation refers to the actual process of turning policy into practice. However, some principals experience a gap between what is planned versus the actual occurrence of implementation. Principals indicated that some policies are only a setback for the school. They indicated that schools are obliged to progress learners based on age – not competency. Therefore, principal 3 – as commented below – thinks that with these kinds of policies, it will not be easy for them to produce good result.

P3: Eer... can add to say that learners who are “PWA” (pass with adjustments) and “QP” (qualified to progress) are a setback as they are not academically ready to progress to the next grade, aaargh... but they proceed anyway, you know these policies moes. It’s so frustrating because you are therefore allowing learners to go through these grades until Grade 11 and even 12 and the department themselves, they don’t apply this policy in grade 12, then for them to pass it becomes a mammoth task. I mean how can you expect a learner who did not pass other grades who basically do not have adequate content of previous grades and also failed all their grades more than once, how can you expect them to pass grade 12 at once, its literally impossible. (UP)

Under-performing schools themselves do not have the ability to manage learners who qualify to progress to another grade. This study found that principals were only implementing the policy without programmes of managing learners who fell short of the passing requirements. The frustration of poor policy implementation and management is echoed in the quote below.

P5: And we also did not have the proper management of progressed qualified learners (QP’s) as the policy is not that clear on both implementation and management. I personally think that with policies such as these we will never have good quality in grade 12. I mean if learners are progressed because they have failed a phase more than twice or they progress because the number of years is too much in the phase I mean who will then go and study. This policy argh....I don’t like it, I just don’t have a choice but to implement. (UP)

Both performing and under-performing schools are experiencing the same challenges about the progression policy. Performing schools indicated that the policy was vague, it needed to be understood before implementation. Principals of under-performing schools blame the policy on progression as another cause of poor performance. Principals believe that since learners know this policy, there is no more learner commitment in schools. They explain that learners no longer study as they are aware of the policy. Moreover, principals of under-performing schools lack of

programmes to manage and support progressed learners. However, performing schools expresses effective school leadership which thrives irrespective of these above-mentioned policies. A principal's leadership is one of the critical factors that determine the success or failure of the school.

5.4.2 Factors in the larger school community (Field)

The field as explained in the previous section is further discussed in this section. However, this section identifies factors in the larger school community that contribute to leadership challenges in under-performing schools in rural areas. These factors were identified to be outside the character or personality of the principal. They were identified to have a contribution to the leadership challenges experienced by principals of under-performing schools in rural areas. The factors identified make it difficult for principals of under-performing schools to make informed decisions on the improvement of learners' academic performance. The factors identified include socio-economic factors and an ineffective support structure. If schools are to improve learner performance, an effective support structure is a pre-requisite. School leadership is successful and effective when the school receives support from all the stakeholders in the school. This support creates an environment that is strong and effective. The following categories were identified as external challenges in school leadership.

5.4.2.1 Ineffective SGBs

The governance mandate of the SASSA 84 of 1996 is for the SGB to promote the best interest of the school and to strive for its development. The role of the SGB is crucial in supporting the work of the principal. The SGB is less successful in the democratic model of participation due to the level of literacy of parents. Illiterate parents do not know their roles and expectations in the SGB. Principals indicated a lack of active participation by SGBs in rural areas due to various reasons – as outlined by the participant below.

P10: "One more thing our SGB are not hands-on, they are not literate therefore interest on education is minimal." (P)

Due to the SGBs low levels of literacy, principals explained that SGBs show a lack of interest in the issues of education. SGBs are only aware of their financial responsibility in the school and unconsciously ignore their other roles as explained below.

P1: “Ja! When I arrive, we had a problem in most committees in deep rural. Because if you arrive in a school, you find that the SGB has no idea what their role is. So, they will come, and baby sits the coffers of the school only.” (P)

Other than the low levels of literacy, principals indicated that they do not get support from other structures in the community. The issues in the community also affect school governance. Below is a comment from a principal, which indicates that when structures in the community are at war, it also somehow disrupts the relationship that these structures should have with the school.

P4: Like the dispute on the royal council or headman’s dispute. It affects teaching and learning as the chairperson of the community royal council who is disputing the current village leadership is also a chairperson of the SGB..... So, some of the suggestions from the schools are rejected by the council and the same here. So, these squabbles are not assisting..... village politics which are brought into the school premises by some members of the community make our meetings with stakeholders ineffective. (UP)

Stakeholders such as the SGB and other community structures within the school community act as critical friends to the school. Their job is to support the school while holding it to account. The supportive role of the SGB is clearly stipulated in the SASA. Principals of under-performing schools indicated that the supportive role of the SGB and community structures in rural areas is unavailable.

5.4.2.2 Ineffective support from community structures

Schools in rural communities experience a lack of support from stakeholders within the school community. An ineffective support structure refers to a lack of support by stakeholders within the school community. Strengthening the quality performance of rural schools is not a single issue. Many factors in schools are involved, such as support from parents, educators, chiefs, and the whole school community. When principals were asked about their personal goals, it was evident that they wish they could have the support of educators and parents in the school. The quote below alludes to the fact that schools need the support of all stakeholders around them.

P2: I would like to see parents being actively involved but the community at large as well. This would mean the involvement of the traditional leaders and other stakeholders in the community may do well as far as getting good results are concerned. Yes, but I would like to see educators as well-being highly committed. (UP)

Another principal indicated a desire to see the active involvement of parents in the school. The principal of the quote below indicates that parents in rural communities do not have an interest in attending school meetings.

P3: I mean we really need the support of parents. Our parents meeting is not effective because parents are not available. Parents in this community do not come to meetings. Do not even send apologies, you just wait for them for the meeting to start and you realise after an hour that nobody is coming. (UP)

Schools are perceived to be institutions that provide communities with education while preparing learners for their future. Therefore, support from stakeholders is of paramount importance. School principals in rural areas indicated a lack of support from the school community. Some principals also indicated that they do not have the full support of stakeholders in the school because they are regarded as wrongfully employed in the principalship position. They believe that they are rejected because they do not reside within the village where the schools are. They also believe that one of the reasons for the school's under-performance is a lack of unity and support as some stakeholders in the community might have their preferred candidate for the position. This is echoed by the statement below.

P6: Because we are not united. We are not working together as a team. Maybe it is because when I was appointed as the principal here, I was not accepted by the SGB, SMT and the royal house because I am not coming from this village, you know these things of (indicating inverted commas by showing of fingers) "son of the soil". Here it is evident that the stakeholders had their own preferred candidate – not me. So, basically, I work without their full support. (UP)

Schools flourish when they have the full support of stakeholders. It is the responsibility of principals to ensure that there is a healthy relationship between the school and all the relevant stakeholders. under-performing schools in this study have indicated a lack of support due to unhealthy social relations.

5.4.2.3 Lack of parental involvement

Parental involvement is fundamental for school functioning. The importance of parental involvement in education has been acknowledged by various researchers around the world. It has also been established that parents' participation in their children's education can have social and emotional benefits for their children. Principals in rural areas indicated – in the following comment – that they experience non-involvement from parents in the education of their children. Two main reasons were identified from the responses of principals: parental illiteracy and absent parents – due to work and other factors.

P6: "I think it is a low level of parental involvement, however I think this cannot be solved overnight because lack of interest is caused by their high level of illiteracy." (UP)

The lack of parental involvement in education was also indicated by principal 8 – in the statement below.

P8: "Outside school factors that are troubling us I think is lack of interest in education by parents. Parents do not see the need to be actively involved in the education of their children the reason is clear, they themselves are not educated hence the ignorance." (UP)

Principals indicated that some schools struggle alone to persuade learners to learn and take education seriously without the assistance or involvement of parents.

P2: "Hey, lack of parental support in this school. We struggle a lot as educators alone. These kids do not have parental support at home. Most of them are staying alone, no parental supervision hence learners lack educational interest." (P)

In some schools, the lack of parental involvement can be seen by the lack of interest from parents to attend meetings. Even when present are at home, parents do not avail themselves to school whenever they are called. Therefore, principals see this kind of behaviour from parents as having a negative attitude towards the school – as explained in the comment below.

P4: Some parents just have a negative attitude towards me or the school. They simply do not want to be called to the school for any reason, they just cannot come and some parents

when they are not satisfied with something in the school, they just come and insult me in front of their children. So, it is difficult to discipline a child whose parents also misbehave. (UP)

Conditions that exist in rural areas make parents the sole motivator to their children. However, data indicate that some parents unconsciously shift their parental responsibilities to educators. The statement below shows that parents transfer their role of being supportive of their children to educators.

P6: Eerrr... there are still some parents who are donating their parental responsibilities to educators, and this becomes difficult for us because when they are called to school to attend accountability meetings, they don't attend. You call them because of their children are ill-disciplined, they don't come. They only come when they heard that we are employing people to cook for learners. (UP)

A home forms a foundation where learning is laid. Therefore, parental support in education is very important. School principals in rural areas have commonly indicated the lack of parental involvement as one of the main challenges in learners' academic performance. The following quote indicates that the lack of learner commitment and motivation is due to the lack of parental involvement.

P4: "Parents in our school are not supportive. They are just not available to support their children."

Principals of performing schools indicated that their learners support from parents. They also indicated that these learners do not have parental supervision at home. The same sentiments were shared from under-performing schools. We can, therefore, say that both performing and under-performing schools in rural areas experience the same parenthood in this regard. Principals of under-performing schools also believe that the education level and literacy skills of parents have an impact on the level of motivation and performance of their children at school.

A. Absent parents

The presence of parents in the education of their children leads to better emotional, academic, social, and behavioural outcomes for children. Principals in rural schools were asked what they think are the challenges of under-performance. In their responses, many principals commonly indicated that parents are absent from homes due to various reasons. Principal 3 commented – as indicated below

– that some parents are deceased or work far from home leaving children alone or under the care of their grandmother – or a family relative who occasionally checks up on them.

P3: To a certain extent. Most of these learners do not stay with their parents. Very few stays with their parents. Most of them stay with their grandmothers, relatives or worse, some stay alone. It is very difficult to deal with a learner who does not have parents around. When we insist on seeing parents today, they bring this one and tomorrow they bring another one. So, you cannot see progress. (UP)

A high level of parental presence at home improves sociability, confidence, and self-control in learners. The Annenberg Foundation (2020) also believes that children who are left alone without the presence of their parents are more likely to smoke, drink alcohol and abuse drugs. Principal 4 also indicated – in the quote below – those learners who live alone are mostly overaged. They repeat grades more often than those with parental supervision.

P4: “Eerrr... we have many learners who are over-aged. Some of them are really not disciplined no matter how hard you try. They are not disciplined at all. We also have many pregnant girls in this school. I think you know that last year we were the highest in the district.” (UP)

Indiscipline and bullying disrupt schooling in under-performing schools. Many principals also believe that many behavioural problems in schools are a result of absent parents.

P2: Discipline itself is quite a challenge because sometimes you will tell them to call a parent, they will say that no one is there at home but basically what we would do is that we’ve got contact numbers of all the parents of our learners at our school, so we talk to parents directly through the phone that helps in a way. (UP)

Another principal indicated that there are learners at school who need more reading and writing practise, and this needs to be done at home under the close supervision of a parent. However, as explained in the quote below, the absence of parents is failing the mission of improving reading and writing.

P9: When we identify these learners, we call their parents and discuss with them ways in which we can help the learner. We give learners reading work to practice at home under the care and supervision of their parents. Although many learners do not have parents at home it again makes it difficult for us to trace their progress. (P)

At times, varying circumstances are reported to take parents away from their children. Unemployment makes it impossible for parents to be involved in the education of their children. Hence, the impact is disheartening. Concern was also recorded from a principal that some parents are migrant workers.

P6: "One more critical issue is that most learners are alone or under the supervision of a grandmother because parents are migrant workers; there is no supervision at home." (UP)

The problem of absent parents was not recorded from under-performing schools only. It was also echoed by principals of performing schools in rural areas.

P1: Working in a school which is in deep rural has got a lot of challenges. We have got families which are headed by children. We do not have access to see a parent in person. You find that the kid is supposed to be responsible for herself and siblings because parents are not there. That has been the finding problem, but these would be accompanied by say for girls, teenage pregnancies and if they are left alone even attendance is poor because there is no adult to support them morally. You want to talk to parents they are not there. They send this one today. Tomorrow, they send another parent, and you are unable to build a case where you can support a kid so I think that is one part which can account for these kids who traditionally fail in our school, my observation has revealed that. (P)

Principals of both performing and under-performing schools agree that the absence of parents has a great impact on the performance of learners in rural areas. Principals further indicated that learners' behavioural problems are a result of absent parents. However, it was noted that performing schools in rural areas thrive under the same challenging conditions.

B. Illiterate parents

Parental involvement in the school is critical – as discussed above. It is, however, a concern that most parents in rural areas are illiterate. Hence, we see low levels of commitment from both parents

and learners in the school. Parents' high literacy levels have been seen as having a potentially positive impact on the quality of education of their children. Parents who are literate are said to be able to give emotional support to their children during their academic development. Principals in rural areas indicated a concern over parents who are not supporting the school or their children. The following comment indicates that parents' lack of interest in education is caused by their low level of literacy.

P6: "Lack of interest is caused by their high level of illiteracy.....Parents are illiterate, so they do not see the importance of education on their children." (UP)

Another principal indicated that it was very difficult to convince parents to let their children attend extra classes.

P4: It was also difficult convincing parents on why their children should come to school on Saturdays or even on Sundays. Remember, parents themselves are not educated. It now becomes difficult to convince them to do their part of supporting their children as well as supporting the school. (UP)

Parents play an important role in school and at home. Principals in rural areas regard parental involvement in education as a central element to learners' academic development. Without parental support and home supervision, it is difficult for learners in rural schools to succeed in their education. Principals believe that the presence of parents may have a significant impact on the performance of learners. Principals in under-performing schools experience difficulties in involving parents in the education of their children.

5.4.2.4 Ineffective feeder schools

A feeder school refers to a primary school within the same location – or geographical area – as a secondary school. The responsibility of a feeder school is to prepare learners to further their secondary education at a secondary school within that area. Most principals in secondary schools indicated that their enrolment depends on learners coming from these feeder schools. However, many principals have a concern that learners coming from some of their feeder schools are not able to write properly and cannot read for meaning and understanding. The following quote indicates that some learners' progress to secondary school while not being well prepared.

P2: “The learners that we receive sometimes from Grade 8 are not school ready. So, we have a situation sometimes where they cannot read and write properly – so we have to work on that. So, that basically is a challenge.” (UP)

The challenge of learners who cannot read is also indicated below. The principal indicated that even the least who can read, do so without reading for meaning. Another challenge – as indicated – is the lack of understanding of questions – as they come in English.

P6: I think it is the poor readiness of learners from Grade 7 to 8, many of these learners come here without being able to read and some cannot also write. For those who know how to read, most of them read without understanding. It becomes difficult for them to answer questions in English since they do not understand the language. (UP)

Rural schools experience a high rate of learner drop-out due to overaged learners who are frustrated as they repeat grades. The learning gap in rural schools is caused by a lack of adequate resources in schools. Principals of under-performing schools confirm that schools in rural areas do not have adequate resources. Principal 8 – as quoted below – indicated that learners are promoted to a secondary school with a knowledge gap since feeder schools also lack resources. He further indicated the same sentiments as indicated above, i.e., that many learners struggle to read and understand questions.

P8: Both our feeder school and we don't have resources. Our learners who are doing science are doing theory only but expected to also do practicals in class. It is not easy without labs, hence the knowledge gap. Another thing is that majority of our learners do not read with understanding. So, it is not easy for them to answer question papers if you do not read with meaning. (UP)

Another challenge of the language of teaching and learning is expressed by another principal.

P5: “And also we have a big problem of a language barrier which always leads to the misinterpretation of questions.” (UP)

The inability of learners to read and write from primary schools puts a lot of pressure on educators in secondary schools. under-performing school principals, indeed, confirm that educators in high

school work under pressure to ensure that learners learn while meeting deadlines for common assessment. Principals indicate that secondary schools do not have time to deal with learners who cannot read or write.

P9: I think the crop of learners we are receiving from our feeder schools is our main downfall. Most of these learners cannot read and write properly. This puts enormous pressure on educators because here in the FET or high school in general we do not have time for basics. We are chasing pace setters and timetables for common tasks. (P)

A major concern for principals of under-performing schools is ineffective primary schools. Moreover, principals indicate that educators are not able to employ a variety of teaching and learning resources since schools are struggling with a lack of resources.

5.4.2.5 Socio-economic factors

Socio-economic status as a person's overall social condition as well as economic position. Parents' socio-economic factors involve not only income but also educational achievements. Principals of under-performing schools indicated that learners' under-performance can be attributed to the inability of parents to supply the learning resources for their children. Principals further identified low socio-economic factors as a barrier to effective teaching and learning in rural areas. Although issues relating to socio-economic factors originate from outside the school, its presence is felt in the school and if not properly managed, it may possibly lead to learner dropout. The following key issues pertaining to socio-economic factors were identified from the interviews with principals of secondary schools.

A. Poverty and unemployment

Many parents in rural areas are financially disadvantaged. Therefore, these parents fail to financially support their own children. United Nations Economic Commission For Africa (UNECA), (2019) indicated a strong link between low economic status and low academic achievement. Principals explain that parents in rural areas are failing to supplement the education of their children due to their under-income status. The statement below indicates the issue of poverty and unemployment as the main concern of principals in rural areas.

P6: "We are really struggling with the issue of poverty, unemployment, and the set-up of the rural environment.....These parents cannot supplement the education of their own children. They simply do not have the means." (UP)

Schools need supplementary funds and donations to carry out their daily duties. However, principal 9 – in the statement below – indicated that parents in rural areas are not in the position of assisting the school financially.

P9: "It is the high rate of poverty and high levels of unemployment. Because of these factors our parents here in the school cannot help us financially in anyway." (P)

Principals indicated that the monies from the norms and standards cannot be used to fund extra classes. Therefore, it remains the responsibility of parents to fund those classes. However, principals voiced their frustration on the inability of parents in rural areas to help fund the extra classes for their children.

P4: look, parents are unable to fund extra classes. It is also very difficult for the SGB to supplement the funds of the school because there is not much business you can ask for donation here. Still on the issue of unemployment, many parents are pushed to go to cities and farms to look for jobs and leave children alone at home. (P)

It has been a concern for principals that due to unemployment, parents leave their children alone at home to seek employment in cities and farms. Principals have attributed their failure to produce and sustain high academic performance to the lack of parental supervision at home.

P5: Parents unconsciously neglect their children to look for jobs elsewhere. I am telling you; it is very difficult to teach a child who does not have high regard for education. I guess lack of parental supervision and parents being committed to the education of their children might be the main contributory factor to a high rate of learner drop out. (UP)

Principals attribute poor learner performance to the low socio-economic status of parents. Due to poverty and unemployment, parents in rural areas are unable to provide their children with extra learning materials so as to boost their academic performance.

B. Child-headed homes and teenage pregnancy

Traditionally, a parent is regarded as the primary caregiver in a household. Therefore, in the absence of a parent, a senior child assumes the role of the primary caregiver to other children within the same household. The Department of Basic Education (2014) agrees that children within a child-headed household are failing to cope in school without parental supervision. Principal 7 – in the comment below – indicated that schools in rural areas are also affected by the absence of parental supervision at home.

P7: “We have child headed families; some of our learners are taking care of their siblings in the absence of their parents, be it through death or working far away from home. We also have teenage pregnancies and drugs abuse as well as poverty.” (P)

Children without parents are at high risk as their health and wellbeing are impaired. The principal’s comment below shows that the conditions of child-headed homes have left children vulnerable to abuse; hence, schools in rural areas experience a high rate of teenage pregnancies.

P8: Outside school factors that are troubling us are diseases and other related factors that force learners to be alone at home, which I think might be the reason why we have so many child-headed homes in our school. Most of our learners do not have parental support whatsoever, they are just learning because they want to. (UP)

Rural schools with high rates of child-headed households experience high rates of learner absenteeism from schools. The absence of close parental supervision makes the number of days absent from schools by learners goes unnoticed. The comment from principal 3 below shows that learners’ absenteeism is due to lack of parental supervision.

P3: Another challenge is learners’ absenteeism, which is a result of lack of parental supervision. These learners do as they like from their own homes. We also encounter laziness on the part of learners to do schoolwork since there is no one to monitor or supervise them to do their schoolwork at home. One more important or critical issue is the child-headed families, I mean we have a lot here you know.....and its err... it’s a reality these children are parenting their siblings and themselves. One thing for sure that is a problem here is the

number of pregnant learners in our school, I mean the number is too high, most learners are pregnant here. (UP)

Principals acceded that child-headed families pose a big challenge to the schools' performance. Learners in rural communities also need psychological, emotional, and physical support from their families, which they do not have. The issue of a lack of parental support is explained below

P10: "We also have the issue of child headed families which also pose a big challenge on learners' performance. We try to reason with relatives of such learners for support to help them to cope with their situation, but it is not easy." (P)

Senior children in child-headed homes face multiple challenges. Some of these challenges cannot be resolved in the absence of parents. Senior children in the household are expected to take care of their younger siblings in the absence of parents. Many children in rural areas repeat grades as they are not capable of balancing schoolwork and family responsibilities. Principal 5 indicated in the quote below that the reason for under-performance in the school is that many learners live in child-headed homes and these learners in rural areas are preoccupied with family responsibilities at home.

P5: But these learners are parents themselves they have huge responsibilities back at home..... but I must be fair to you, many of our kids here have serious issues that keeps them away from the school. They got too many responsibilities like child headed families most of the families are without parents. (UP)

Both performing and under-performing school principals agree that socio-economic status is a contributing factor to low school performance. Among other responsibilities, learners in rural areas are found to have limited time to study. Their time is spent on running family errands, such as looking for wood (for cooking) and looking for water, which is very scarce and other things. However, it must be noted that the approach to managing these conditions differs from one principal to another. Effective school principals engage with parents and negotiate with them to take all the responsibilities away from learners in Grade 12 to allow them to focus on their studies.

P1: She is in Grade 12 now surely, she can't come back from school go and fetch water because communities are very dry, sometimes they go the whole night looking for water. She can't manage to go and fetch water, cook, wash, study. Her studies are suffering please

assist her. Fortunately for me the parent was very much cooperating, and he promised me that he will hire someone to assist her with that and in two- or three-days' time the kid came back to me and say sir, they have hired someone to cook for me, wash for me to sweep the yard all I do now is to study, and I said now give me results. (P)

Parental support plays a significant role in the education of children in both performing and under-performing schools. The researcher found parental support lacking as many children as possible in rural schools live alone without parents. These children face numerous challenges, which deprive them of their right to learn.

C. Overcrowded homes

Principals indicated that learners in rural areas live in overcrowded homes, which limit the space to study. Research also confirms that children in large families perform lower than their counterparts in small families. What learners learn in class is practised at home, which is disturbed by overcrowding. Learners in overcrowded homes are deprived of their right to study in a quiet and safe environment. Principals indicated that, indeed, their learners do not have space to study at home due to overcrowding.

P3: These learners face different challenges every day. Amongst serious challenges are that they live in overcrowded homes, no space to study. Some are also raped in their homes. Whenever we hear a case, we refer to the social worker. Look, we believe that some of these cases have a serious bearing on the state of mind of a learner. Whenever we identify a learner who suddenly loses concentration in class, or always absent or start to be reserved we investigate and take urgent action. (UP)

Overcrowded households are difficult to manage. Moreover, as it is explained below, some of these learners only stay with their grandmothers who are not capable of managing large households.

P9: There so many things in our village that contributes to under-performance. Our learners are staying in overcrowded homes; households in villages are too big to can be managed. I think it will be difficult to solve this because many children are living with their grannies while their mothers are away on work or for some other reasons. (P)

Overcrowded households accommodate people of different characters, interests, and hobbies. Principal 3 indicated – in the quote below – that rural schools experience behavioural problems due to the environment that these learners find themselves in.

P3: “We also have high rate of bullying and the report we got from social workers was that most of these cases emanate from homes.” (UP)

Since learners in overcrowded homes do not have space to study, a principal indicated that the Grade Twelves are compelled to stay behind after normal school hours to study and do their homework in school before going home.

P6: “There are many people in one household how do you think these learners’ study at home? That is the reason I keep the Grade Twelves here until five every day. I need to make sure that they do their homework and also find time to study here.” (UP)

Schools do not exist in isolation. Therefore, it is important that people within the communities where there are school children respect the fact that learners also need to study at home. Principals indicated that the environment in the rural areas is not conducive to learning. It has been indicated in the following quote that there are households that sell homemade traditional beer, which is coupled with loud music.

P5: We have also constantly indicated that our villages are too noisy. Even now you can hear loud music, many households are selling homebrewed beer. I mean the environment itself is not conducive. I think this is one of the reasons why our learners are failing their grades. (UP)

Principals argue that overcrowded homes seriously impact the performance of learners in under-performing schools. Furthermore, principals also believe that the lack of study space impacts directly on learners’ academic performance.

5.4.3 Habitus factors (within the principal)

The discussion in this section focuses on the habitus (character, personality and experiences, training and development of principals and the way they react to issues). Habitus was discussed in

chapter two. Principals' character and personality assisted the researcher to understand why principals are not able to improve under-performance.

5.4.3.1 Lack of decisive leadership

Leadership is a practical skill, which encompasses the ability of a person in a leadership position to lead, guide and influence other people in the entire organisation. Principals are regarded as leaders in the school as they lead through the process of influencing and guiding people to maximise their efforts towards the achievement of goals. A decisive leader is a leader who can identify the appropriate information necessary to make an informed decision in the workplace. Principals are regarded as decisive leaders when they can demonstrate a clear understanding of the knowledge they are expected to have in their line of duty.

The most important part of successful school leadership is the ability of the principal to make decisions that are well informed. Decisive leadership is informed by the knowledge the principal has about the work at hand. The principal's knowledge is guided by principles and policies within the field of education. Hence, principals are expected to take decisions based on all those principles. Decisiveness is explained as the ability to plan functions beforehand as well as the ability to predict a possible outcome. Principals of under-performing schools have shown a lack of decisiveness in their leadership. They lack the ability to exercise leadership and take the final decision on what needs to be done and how it should be done. The quote below indicates that the principal is unable to take the crucial decisions that will improve learner performance. The principal has introduced extra lessons to help learners improve their academic achievement. However, when educators were not willing to participate, the principal was unable to influence them to work. Moreover, the principal was unable to take decisions on what can be done to correct the situation.

P6: "If a particular teacher says no sometimes for the sake of peace I do it on my own with those who will be willing to offer their services for the benefit of the poor child." (UP)

The comment above from the principal indicates that the principal is threatened by the aggressiveness of educators who do not want to take part in extra classes. The principal then withdraws in the name of peace; however, the learners' educational needs remain uncatered for. The principal's withdrawal in the above comment can be because of the inability to take an informed decision through relevant policies to protect the best interest of learners. Principals are expected to take decisions that will resolve issues in the school in a definite way. However, principals of under-performing schools seem unable to persuade educators in the school to perform tasks in the interest

of learners. When educators in under-performing schools do not agree to take part in extra curriculum activities, principals also withdraw as they run out of their depth in convincing educators to perform important duties in the school. Another principal indicated – in a comment below – the unwillingness of educators to offer extra classes – or extra lessons – for the benefit of the school.

P4: Aah.... Some educators are still reluctant until now. The school do not pay for these classes and so are parents. So..... (Touching the face) it is kind-of difficult. I have to device some means to keep learners busy on their own studying. Few teachers do come sometimes but you know they too sometimes have excuses of things like church or funerals. Eerr... and I can't force them since I cannot pay for those classes. I just appreciate those days when they are present. (UP)

Another principal indicated – in the quote below – those educators and learners in the school bunk classes in his presence when asked about the corrective measures put in place to correct the situation. The principal only expressed frustration on the kinds of learners and educators he has.

P5: "They sometimes leave early in class, and I will hear noise from my office coming from the classes. They sometimes do not honour their classes. I think it is the issue of discipline that we need to deal with. You know with the kind of teachers and learners we have; it will be difficult to turn the curve. They are really not committed." (UP)

The same sentiment was echoed by a principal of an under-performing school – in the quote below.

P6: "We had high rate of absenteeism in the margin of one or two days..... They had several excuses on sick leave. If they are in the school, they would not really honour their responsibilities of going to class. They go to class very late and leave early." (UP)

Meanwhile the principal of a performing school indicated his position of being able to take final decisions. The quote below indicates the ability of giving directions on what needs to be done in the school.

P1: "I have to take final decisions where everybody else seems to be out of their depth I have to stack up and mop up a direction." (P)

Principals of under-performing schools showed difficulties in taking decisions to correct the behaviour of educators. They indicated educators' resistance to class attendance and the misuse of leave. Principals' failure to take actions is judged to be ineffective and weak. Both performing and under-performing schools have taken decisions of administering extra classes. However, under-performing school principals are met with resentment and less enthusiasm which principals are failing to manage.

5.4.3.2 Ineffective communication practices

Under-performing schools experience poor communication between the principal, the SMT and the staff. Poor communication often leads to low morale, conflicts, and job dissatisfaction, which can further contribute to the deterioration of the academic performance of learners in the school. Effective schools give educators an opportunity – through communication – to participate in the school structuring process. The lack of communication can be destructive for any organisation. Principals of under-performing schools illustrate a lack of communication skills in addressing misunderstandings in the school. The quote below indicates that whenever issues of misunderstanding crop up, principals withdraw in order not to offend anyone.

P6: As I said it's all in the communication. Like I said I inherited a culture of poor communication. When you address an issue in the staff meeting there are people who feel offended; they feel like they are being attacked. So sometimes I don't talk about it in the meetings. If needs be, I call an educator and talk to them individually. (UP)

A principal explained that educators do not want to be part of Saturday classes.

P3: "Err educators just do not come on Saturdays. Even when I have issued a lot of notices..... They have a lot of excuses." (UP)

Others also stated that educators do not support the idea of teaching in Saturday classes. This might be as a result of poor communication – as indicated in the quote below.

P4: "Ja! You see, we do have communication book. it is there. They know about it." (UP)

Principals of under-performing schools – as quoted above – indicate that educators are informed about extra classes in the communication book. The principal indicated the main method of communication in the school is the communication book. Educators are said to read the information on the communication book and not react to it. They do not feel the need to implement anything imposed on them by the principal. If educators are excluded from decisions that affect them, they are likely not to cooperate. He further alluded to the fact that ineffective communication in schools often leads to stress, depression, and insomnia amongst staff members. Ineffective communication was not found in performing schools.

5.4.3.3 Lack of consistency

One of the key features of successful leadership in schools is consistency. The principle of consistency means that principals are to be consistent in carrying out their everyday duties if they want to improve the academic performance of learners in the school. Consistency is further regarded as a necessary element in creating successful schools. Principals of under-performing schools indicated – in the comment below – that they are not able to set clear rules, policies, requirements and/or expectations for everyone in the school. Principals showed a lack of consistency in managing and controlling tardiness and absenteeism. However, there has never been any indication of punitive measures – from the data – should learners fail to adhere to such policies.

P5: Yes, we do have that policy. But these learners are parents themselves they have huge responsibilities back at home. So these policies are really not working but we are pushing any way..... but I must be fair to you, many of our kids here have serious issues that keeps them away from the school. They got too many responsibilities like child headed families most of the families are without parents. (UP)

The above comment confirms that the principal seems to understand and tolerate reasons why learners do not adhere to school policies. However, good conduct, excellent academic performance, excellent teaching, and best practices by staff should be consistently monitored and controlled. Another principal also confirmed that a policy on absenteeism is available. However, the principal – in the quote below – also acknowledges that learners have valid reasons for not complying with the policy.

P4: “Yes, learners know about our policy on absenteeism. But I think we are compromised by the problems I have just stated above. For example, if a learner stays alone at home and no parent supervision it is easy to flaunt laws.” (UP)

Data collected from effective school principals indicate that rules are enforced every time they are broken. Principals have set disciplinary committees to deal with such misconduct. Consistency in these schools is key and no exemptions. Therefore, no learners are allowed to wheedle their way out of punishment.

P7: We have educators whom I have delegated duties of overseeing school discipline. The disciplinary committee accounts to the deputy principal. They handle cases of ill-discipline which include absenteeism. There are cases that we deal with learners on the first warning then on the second warning we now deal with your parent or guardian and can also lead to suspension. (P)

Consistency has always been regarded as the most important tool in achieving success in schools. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that principals must be consistent in carrying out their duties. The element of consistency is important in improving issues of discipline and rules, which was found lacking in under-performing schools. Under-performing schools have policies of absenteeism which is not adhered to. The principals understand and tolerate social reasons for non-compliance which are not educational. Performing schools are consistent in the processes of discipline.

5.4.3.4 Stressful conditions for principals

Principals work under demanding conditions with unprecedented pressure. The education fraternity itself has various stressors for the principal. The most common stressor – as identified in the interviews – is the expectations of high academic performance of Grade 12 results from various stakeholders. In under-performing schools, parents have been identified as stressors for the principal. Parents are classified as that group of stakeholders who want results without giving support. The quote below expresses frustration from the principal concerning the way parents show a lack of interest in the school.

P4: Parents want to see results at the end of the year, but they do not understand that we need their support from January. They are just not there to support these kids. Some parents do not avail themselves for anything in the school except when they come to collect their children's reports at the end of the year. (UP)

Principals in rural areas are stressed by the fact that parents are not available to support educators and learners as expected. From the above quote, there is no evidence of active involvement by parents in the school. Furthermore, other principals are not only stressed out by parents but also educators in the school who do not support an idea that may improve performance – as stated below.

P3: There are some educators who were of the idea that getting Grade 8 and 9 learners into a morning and afternoon is a sought of a punishment. And I think it was evident enough to learners that we were divided. Another difficult issue of course was to push educators in grade 12 to teach in both studies I mean morning and afternoon. There were those err... teachers who when the school rang just packed their bags and go home simply because their 7 hours of working is done. It was very tough convincing them.” (UP)

Stress for principals of under-performing schools can be attributed to the lack of effective social support. Strong support for principals in schools decreases the levels of anxiety and stress. However, differences were found in support and cooperation between performing and under-performing schools. Principals of performing schools are less stressed than their counterparts in under-performing schools. In performing schools, principals confirm that educators do support initiatives of extra classes and participate with full commitment. The principal of a performing school explains this in the quote below.

P10: Yes. We have a timetable that we use to rotate teachers so that we may give them a breather. What we do is that we have only three subjects per Saturday each running for two hours. So, our educators are committed because we make sure that the timetable also works in their favour. (P)

Principals of under-performing schools are stressed by various things. Whenever issues of potential stress arise some principals of under-performing schools simply withdraw and avoid confrontations. This study also identified the fact that principals of under-performing schools only want to work within their comforts zone to avoid stress. Hence, when educators stay away from Saturday classes, they do not have the zeal to convince them. As indicated in the comment above, performing school principals are creative in setting timetables that accommodate the needs of educators.

5.4.3.5 Lack of problem-solving skills

Solving problems in the school is an important aspect of the role of a principal. Many problems that present themselves in schools can best be solved through policies and rules. Principals' ability to solve problems in schools improves relations and foster school discipline. The role of the principal requires them to possess a multitude of skills to be competitive. In the data collected, many principals of under-performing schools display an inability to solve problems as and when they arise.

The interviewed participants provided evidence that principals of under-performing schools struggle with balancing the efficiency of making correct decisions by using policy alone and expending personal time and energy to actively engage in problem-solving. The inability to solve problems in the school may be influenced by many things. However, it was picked up from the interviews that when things do not go according to plan, some principals do not have the ability for remedial actions; they simply withdraw and do not give direction to solve the problem. This is evident from the comment below.

P6: "Mam, I sometimes try to talk to them individually, but I can see that it is not yielding results. I want to live. I want to live for my kids, sometimes I just let them be. As long they go to class, I am fine." (UP)

The above quote is an indication of frustration and an incapability to solve the problem. The above statement may prove to illustrate the gap between successful and ineffective school leadership. Principals who are effective in solving problems in the school are also able to create a safe environment for both educators and learners. In the following quote, a principal indicated the inability to manage educators who leave their classes before time – or bunk them entirely. The principals are not able to address the problem and solve it. They would rather blame the educators for not being committed.

P5: "They sometimes leave early in class, and I will hear noise from my office coming from the classes. They sometimes do not honour their classes. You know with the kind of teachers and learners we have; it will be difficult to turn the curve. They are really not committed." (UP)

Effective school principals who have good problem-solving skills can identify a problem as well as a suitable course of action. Some principals of under-performing schools run out of solutions and resort to unprofessional tactics, such as excluding educators from teaching in the higher grades. Another principal indicated the principle of exclusion of educators who do not perform in Grade 12. They are removed instead of being given capacity. The principal made it seem acceptable to underperform in

the lower grades but not in Grade 12. Educators who are removed from Grade 12 classes are left to teach in lower grades only – as explained in the quote below.

P8: “Educators who underperform are identified and excluded from teaching Grade 12 in the future. Learners who misbehave are not allowed to repeat Grade 12 in our school.” (UP)

The above two comments indicate that these principals lack the ability to solve the problem of non-performance of educators. They prefer exclusion rather than building capacity. Moreover, a temporary solution such as exclusion – while non-performing educators are still in the system – will only make learners progress from lower grades not being well prepared. Successful school principals rather seek ways to remedy the situation. Principal 1 indicated that if an educator is not good in any topic of the subject, which is considered as not performing. The HOD and subject committee assist the educators by building capacity or even volunteering to teach that part that seems difficult to the teacher.

P1: We also encourage educators through their heads of departments to make sure that subject committees are active because that is where they are able to share contents, to share expertise. I can be good in say I’m teaching mathematics there is algebra, there is trigonometry, there is geometry, I may be good in one aspect and somebody who is not teaching Grade 12 is good in algebra so if the committee is alive there are able to say in this section I’ll come and assist and it makes us to have a big pond in the school where we know this aspect in this subject will be handled by Mam so and so, and this one will be handled by Mrs so and so. (P)

Effective problem-solving skills give principals options in addressing issues of under-performance. In the quote below, principal 1 further displays the ability to improve performance by indicating that the idea of assisting educators who are not performing is not to demonise them but rather to give the educator more capacity.

P1: Like I told you, every month we have monthly tests and I personally sit with those people – a team that analyse results subjects per subjects and we check which subject seem to be lacking behind because statistics never lie.....so we try to identify those cracks and when we identify them we don’t demonise the educator. We sit down with them and say “how can we help you, what do you need” so that we can be able to make resources available to the educators and the learners and like I said because I believe in teamwork, trust, and honesty. I

think we are improving because my team believe me now, they trust me to know that I am not grilling their professional expertise, but we are looking at what is on the table. (P)

The daily problem-solving processes of principals of under-performing schools are immensely interpersonal. The factors discussed in this section indicate various aspects identified from under-performing schools, which make it difficult for schools to thrive. Principals in under performing schools do not have the courage to confront people whose behaviour need to be corrected instead they tend to withdraw; however, withdrawal only make the misconduct or ill-behaviour persist. Other principal of under-performing schools indicated that educators do not go to classes as a result the principal deals with classes that make noise rather than dealing with educators who do not go to class. However, performing schools have educational programmes such as monthly tests which keeps both educators and learners engaged. Performing schools also have organised committees monitored by departmental heads to achieve educational goals.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter, data collected from participants' interviews were analysed and presented. In order to understand principals' ability to influence the under-performance of secondary schools in rural areas, themes with regard to effective school leadership were identified from data. This was followed by identified factors regarding leadership challenges – as experienced by principals in rural areas. Three broad factors were identified and extensively discussed: within the immediate school environment and factors in the larger school community, and habitus factors within the principal.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION ON THE PRINCIPAL'S ABILITY TO IMPROVE LEARNER PERFORMANCE USING BOURDIEU'S THEORY

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, data presentation under the identified themes were discussed. The findings of the previous chapter serve as the basis for principals' ability to improve learner performance using Bourdieu's theory as theoretical lens. Challenges on principals' ability to improve learner performance in rural areas were identified and discussed by indicating the principal's habitus, and field factors that can be used to address the identified challenges as well as the available capital and power the principal can employ to improve learner performance. The discussion on the findings of the main research question is discussed below.

6.2 Why school principals find it difficult to influence the improvement of under-performance in rural areas

Interviews and literature were used to answer the main research question: why do school principals find it difficult to influence the improvement of under-performance in rural areas? The data and literature provide similar reasons to the causes of difficulties experienced by principals to improve performance. To answer the main research question indicated above, factors which contribute to the inability of principals to substantially, systematically, and sustainably, improve the under-performance of schools were crystallised. In previous chapters, data and literature were used to outline the causes of under-performance in secondary schools in rural areas. In the discussion below, the identified factors that make it difficult for principals to influence the improvement of under-performance in rural areas are discussed.

To understand the difficulties experienced by principals of under-performing schools in improving performance, the researcher identified various difficulties as influenced by the principal's habitus as well as difficulties that are influenced by factors in the field. Chapter Five presented the identified factors that make it difficult for principals in rural areas to improve learner performance. These are the most common and frequently identified challenges from principals in the collected data. The challenges identified are those that principals may be able to overcome as they exist within the field of education.

6.2.1 Field factors

The researcher noted that the field is the same for all the secondary schools in rural areas. All the schools indicated same challenges about the lack of adequate infrastructure and other resources such as lack or shortage of textbooks, laboratories, and libraries. Moreover, schools in rural areas are situated in communities with low socio-economic status. Policies driven by the same field values are so similar for all principals and schools. The implementation of these policies within the socially restricted field are also then similar for most schools in this area. Principals therefore have to rely on the habitus which are potentially making the difference between schools that are performing well and schools that are not getting out of the underperformance situation. Therefore, challenges and contextual factors of these secondary schools in rural areas are the same. Regardless of schools facing the same challenges and situated in the same environment some schools achieve high learner performance and can sustain such performance. while others are not able to improve learner performance.

The field of education or a school in particular is a controlled system. The field is an important aspect in this study. It is an institution with formal platform wherein principals communicate and reproduce their personal inherent qualities of mind and character as they strive for the distribution of various kinds of capital. Bourdieu also explained the field as different positions that social actors can occupy (Bourdieu, 1987). The field is stabilised with rules and policies which principals operate. Bourdieu emphasises that stable fields rarely emerge on their own, but must be constructed by skilled leaders (Bourdieu, 1986). Principals must therefore be able implement rules in the field to minimise conflicts. He also regarded a field as a network, a structure, or a set of relationships, which may be intellectual, religious, educational, cultural, etc. From factors within the same field as explained above the researcher noted the following from performing and under-performing schools.

6.2.1.1 Lack of resources

The lack of resources prevalent in both performing and under-performing schools in rural areas (refer §5.4.1). lack of resources in these schools include lack of textbooks, inadequate classrooms, and other supplementary learning materials. As a result of high poverty rates in rural areas, principals find it difficult to influence parents to provide supplementary resources, which cannot be provided by the department. Some principals indicated that learners share textbooks, which make learning difficult in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic where learners are supposed to implement social distancing (refer §5.4.1.6).

6.2.1.2 Socio-economic factors

Schools in rural areas are faced with poverty as one of the most common socio-economic factors in both performing and under-performing schools (refer §3.4.3). These factors do not originate in the school, but their effects are felt in the school. Principals in under-performing schools explained that they are unable to raise funds because communities in rural areas are poor (§5.4.2.5.3). Jansen (2016) indicated that learners in rural areas are more likely to achieve low academic outcomes due to poverty and unemployment. Unemployed parents are unable to provide additional learning materials for their children (§5.4.2.5.1). Unfortunately, learners in rural areas only depend on the department's provision without supplementary help from parents. However, principals of performing schools encourage parents to support the education of their children by providing learning materials that cannot be provided by the department. Principals in performing schools use the power of influence (which will be further discussed in detail) to see a bigger picture and contribute positively to the education of their children.

Principals of both performing and under-performing schools in rural areas do not have the opportunity to supplement the little resources provided by the department (will be discussed in economic capital) due to poverty and the low economic status of communities that schools are situated in. Schools are surrounded by poor communities with little or no financial resources to support the school (refer §5.4.1.8). However, although parents of performing schools are also unemployed, they seem to share the same understanding with their principals of wanting to maintain high learner achievement and within their will, they support their children from the small income or perhaps from the grants they receive.

6.2.1.3 Lack of facilities

The lack of adequate facilities such as classrooms, libraries and laboratories are a common challenge in rural schools (§5.4.1.5). All schools in rural areas are experiencing the same challenge that hinders effective teaching and learning. Schools in rural areas are commonly experiencing overcrowding (§5.4.1.4). Overcrowded classes impact the quality of education received by learners in the class. Principals identified overcrowded classes as a cause for concern in rural areas.

6.2.1.4 Lack of parental involvement

Principals of secondary schools in rural areas indicated lack of parental involvement to support their children as well as supporting schools (§5.4.2.3). Schools in rural areas experience low or non-involvement parents' participation. Two common reasons for lack of parental involvement are parental illiteracy (§5.4.2.3.2) and absent parents (§5.4.2.3.1). Most parents in rural areas are

illiterate or working far from home which makes it difficult to monitor and support their children. Hence, we see low levels of commitment from both parents and learners in these schools. Majority of learners in rural areas are said to be living in child-headed homes without parental supervision (§5.4.2.5.2).

6.2.1.5 Ineffective support from community structures

Schools in rural communities also indicated a common experience of lack of support from stakeholders within the school community (§5.2.2). Schools commonly lack effective support from stakeholders within the school community to strengthen the quality performance of rural schools.

6.2.1.6 Ineffective SGBs

Although the governance of public schools in South Africa is upon SGBs as per the mandate of the SASA 84 of 1996. Schools in rural areas commonly experience ineffective SGBs that are well equipped to promote the best interest of the school and to strive for its development (§5.4.2.1). The crucial role of the SGB in supporting the work of the principal is reported lacking. The SGBs in rural schools are less successful in the democratic model of participation due to the level of literacy of parents.

6.2.1.7 Ineffective feeder schools

Schools in rural areas also indicated poor performance by their feeder schools. Principals in secondary schools indicated that their enrolment depend on learners coming from these feeder schools. However, many principals have a common concern that learners coming from most of their feeder schools are not able to write properly and cannot read for meaning and understanding (§5.4.2.4). As a result, learners from these ineffective feeder schools progress from one grade to another at a very slow rate. Hence, secondary schools in rural areas have large numbers of overaged learners.

6.2.2 Habitus factors

Habitus as discussed in chapter 2, encompasses all the past experiences of the principal which shaped dispositions as experienced and determined through circumstances which then determine how the principal engages with their current contextual conditions. Bourdieu also explains that habitus is made up of a set of historical relations embedded inside people that appear or manifest in

the form of mental and physical patterns of viewing things and in the manner of how they act. Principals in schools are managed by a set of rules and regulations (of the field), and these rules influence the behaviour and actions of school principals. Hence, the difference between the field and habitus is that the field operates within the institution whereas the habitus is within the individual (refer to Chapter 2).

The discussion on habitus is the most important factor which contribute to the new knowledge since it is the habitus factors which make principals act or respond to issues that improve or hinder learner performance. The following discussion indicate that principals of performing and low performing schools react differently to issues. Their different reactions have the potential to shape the cause of events as and when they happen in these different schools. The factors of different reaction by principals were identified and explained below.

6.2.2.1 Poor human relations

Poor human relations were mainly found in under-performing schools. Principals' interaction with educators and other stakeholders in under-performing schools is low. The habitus of the principal may show that some principals are unable to encourage meaningful and positive interaction in the school. Poor human relations in under-performing schools occur as some principals indicated in paragraph 5.3.3 that they sometimes withdraw when they are frustrated by the actions and non-cooperation of educators in the school. The character withdrawal of the principal in the school has detrimental effects on the performance of the school. Although there are reasons (in the field) for the withdrawal and frustration of the principals of underperforming schools, such as the negative attitude of educators and the SGBs. Principals need to be able to employ different forms of capital in their leadership to mend situations, such as social and symbolic capitals. Principals in performing schools positively interact with fellow colleagues, SGBs, and other stakeholders in the school.

Principals are in a position of power. However, due to the resistance of educators and SGBs principals are unable to create meaningful relationships (social capital) in the school (§5.3.3). in performing schools' principals indicated social capital in their leadership which encompasses their ability as leaders to create meaningful relationships that benefit the school. Principals of performing schools also have support from stakeholders in the school. This is due to their symbolic capital in their leadership. Symbolic capital involves using the principal's status and position to enforce good relationships (capital will be further discussed in detail).

Poor human relations in schools may be caused by various factors however, it is the responsibility of the principal to encourage positive and healthy working environment where people in the school relate positively with each other. Principals of under-performing schools were also identified to ineffectively using power as influence positive relations between all the stakeholders in the school. The difference between principals of performing and under-performing school principals is that in under-performing schools, principals do not have charisma in their leadership in cases where situations need their charismatic influence to win people over through influence. Furthermore, a charismatic personality develops confidence; hence, the principal – as a leader – feels more comfortable connecting with people with different personalities. It is another way of displaying charm while embracing the strength that can be used as an advantage (Antley,2020). It is easy for principals of performing schools to influence educators through charisma hence, they were able to build effective teams in the schools. Principals of performing schools use their power that derives from an outgoing and friendly personality of a leader enabling them to influence interactions and relate one to another.

6.2.2.2 Principals' inability to manage conflicts

Under-performing schools continue to experience friction between stakeholders. The data analysis also revealed that under-performing schools experience a permanent struggle for power (as also indicated previously) between educators and the principal when compared to schools that are performing (refer §5.3.2.1). These struggles create conflicts in the schools. Moreover, principals of under-performing schools showed poor conflict management (refer §5.3.3) and poor problem-solving skills (refer §5.4.3.5). As a result, under-performing schools are highly conflicted with many unresolved conflicts.

Principals' habitus in schools play a crucial role in managing conflicts and creating a safe environment for all. Principals are afraid to confront situations of conflict. It may be deduced that principals are afraid of the reactions they will receive from educators. Moreover, principals of under-performing schools do not have adequate skills to identify the root causes of the conflict in the school. One other thing to be outlined is that the principal may fail to differentiate between constructive opinions or views and personal attacks. As a result, the principal may see every opinion, view or idea aimed at pulling him/her down. Furthermore, principals lack knowledge of the available set of guidelines in conflict resolution. Principals in performing schools indicated ability to handle issues of conflict by being courageous to call individual teacher(s) with problems and provide guidance in resolving matters causing conflicts.

There are various causes of conflicts identified in under-performing schools (field) including the educators' low level of motivation (refer §2.8) as well as the resistance to cooperate (refer §5.3). The school as the field of education has its own rules for conflict management, which principals of under-performing schools are afraid to implement. The difference between principals of performing and under-performing schools is the will power and courage to face or confront people to resolve conflicts as it arise. The principal's lack of an effective mode of communication to assist in dealing with conflicts makes the school a battlefield of high emotions and conflicts. Conflicts in under-performing schools make it difficult for principals to achieve high performance.

6.2.2.3 Ineffective communication

Blackwell (2017) indicated that effective communication in the school makes educators feel more involved and willing to participate in all the processes of the school. Principals who do not involve educators in decision-making are those who know they have poor communication skills, and they are, therefore, unable to convince educators on any matter of implementation (refer §3.3). Poor communication in some schools may be linked to conflicts and power struggles that occur between the principal and educators. Poor communication in the school reduces trust between colleagues and increase elements of suspicion (refer §5.4.3.2).

Ineffective communication in under-performing schools is also caused by unresolved conflicts in the school. Hence, schools experience the behaviour of educators who do not want to participate in meetings arranged by the principal. This kind of behaviour is a result of power struggles and conflicts in the school (as explained earlier). Poor – or ineffective – communication can also be linked to a principal's low emotional intelligence; thus, they are not able to manage the emotions of everyone in the school. Moreover, the principal's ineffective social capital also contributes to ineffective communication and poor social interaction (will be further discussed in capital below). Bourdieu emphasised that organisations function well when the leader can implement social capital. This kind of capital has not been found in under-performing schools. Principals are unable to create meaningful relationships in the school as people do not have platforms to interact and communicate work-related issues. Bourdieu further explained that the character and behaviour of the leader contribute to the kind of leadership that prevails in the school.

Principals of under-performing schools are not aware of the various powers they can use to affect effective communication in the school. Principals of under-performing schools do not use their charismatic power to confidently inspire and influence educators in the school. Charismatic power helps principals to be influential, considerate, and civil while getting useful things done (refer §3.3.3).

Furthermore, principals are not aware that they can use social power to influence people through building relationships that may also result in a change of character in other people. The process of building meaningful relationships can also be linked to an educators' professional development wherein people will easily understand everyone's role in the school. Ineffective communication was found to be in under-performing schools only. Principals of performing schools do not experience problems of communication. Principals of performing schools communicate with ease with their colleagues. They hold strategic planning with educators and listen to the views and opinions of educators.

6.2.2.4 Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability of a person to understand, use and control own emotions in a manner that relieves stress, makes communication effective and helps to empathise with others (Segal et al., 2020). Emotional intelligence was described in chapter 3 as the ability of the principal to recognise and manage own emotions as well as the ability to manage various levels of emotions of other people in the school (Brinia et al., 2014). Four aspect of EI was also discussed comprises of teachable soft skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills.

Principals with high EI build and manage relationships in school as well as set the tone for how other people are to relate to each other (Visone, 2018). Principals of under-performing schools indicated a lack of – or poor – EI to calm the emotions of educators in the school (refer §5.3.1.1.). Principals of under-performing schools are unable to effectively lead, inspire or motivate their colleagues. In under-performing schools, principals cannot detect or identify key prospects for improving performance through lifting the morale and emotions of educators (refer §3.3.1).

Data gathered from participants in under-performing schools indicate principals' low EI as they fail to calm emotions and resolve conflicts (refer §5.3.1.1). Principals' EI is closely related to the habitus (character) of the principal. Habitus speaks to the principal's unconscious inbuilt values and beliefs. These values and beliefs assist the principal in knowing how to correctly act in any situation the principal may believe to be wrong. The voices of principals in under-performing schools are not heard since principals in case of conflicts and acts of insubordination principals reserve their views and opinions and not providing leadership. for example, they are afraid of confronting educators who do not attend staff meetings. These principals also indicated that some educators do not go to class on time and teach for the duration of the period and some educators in under-performing schools also dodge classes. However, no remedial action was taken to correct the situation. This kind of

behaviour and attitude were not found in performing schools because principals of performing schools constantly motivate educators, lifts their morale, and reward them for their good work in order for them to work even harder.

Under-performing schools in rural areas are experiencing conflicts and high emotions between educators and principals as well as between the principal and the SGB. Principals of under-performing schools lack the EI to understand and handle their own and educators' emotions (refer §3.3.1). Furthermore, principals illustrated poor people management skills and they cannot promote interpersonal relationships in the school. The inability to effectively manage emotions increase stress and misunderstandings. Principals of under-performing schools cannot control their own emotions, they are also unable to empathise with others; therefore, they cannot defuse conflict (refer §3.3.1).

Emotional intelligence is built in the principal's habitus; however, it can be improved by being aware of everyone's emotions as well as understanding the common stressors in the workplace. EI gives principals of performing schools the drive and urge to connect with other people and provide them with skills for problem-solving and resolving conflicts (refer §3.3.1.1). principals of performing schools indicated that they know the characters and personalities of their education. This enables them to be aware of any changes in the mood and behaviour of educators and offer the necessary support. Bourdieu explained that the inability of the leader to employ the correct capital creates tension and contradictions in the workplace (refer §1.6). High EI is closely linked to social and symbolic capital. Symbolic capital speaks to the way a principal's status, reputation and respect is held and maintained (Lawler, 2014). Principals are, therefore, in a position to use their status and respect to manage and calm the emotions of everyone in the school.

6.2.3 Capital and Power

In this section capital and power are discussed together to get a clearer understanding on how principals of under-performing and performing schools use both in their leadership. chapter 2 we explained capital as the accumulated labour in its materialised, incorporated, and embodied form which when correctly applied provide social energy in the form of reified or living labour (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu (1984) also explained that capital are resources that are acquired, accumulated by leaders and are of strategic value in particular situations. Bourdieu (1984) further outlined the four categories of capitals: economic, symbolic, cultural, and social. capitals inherited from the past become enablers for principals in the field of education, and when these capitals match what the school values most – as an institution – it then becomes easy to manage it effectively.

According to Bourdieu, the power of a leader to influence is the essence of effective leadership (Bourdieu, 1984). Power involves the ability of a principal to convince educators to accept and follow the vision of the school (Avgar, 2015). Principals by virtue of their position possess hierarchical and legitimate power (refer §2.6.7). This kind of power comes with the position of leadership they occupy. Power is viewed by Bourdieu as a tool used by leaders every day in any institution; therefore, schools would not exist without power relations (refer §2.6). To get things done in schools, principals need to use power to influence educators. The effectiveness or ineffectiveness of principals of performing and under-performing schools lies within their ability to recognise their power to influence and then use it effectively.

The theory of habitus and field recognises the issue of power and capital. In this study we saw power as being culturally and symbolically created. It was also noted that there is a difference in the application of capital and power by principals of performing and under-performing schools. Principals of under-performing schools lack various capitals in their leadership. The lack of capital and the absence of application of power in leadership was noted in the following factors below.

6.2.3.1 Insufficient professional development

Professional development refers to the ongoing education, training and/or career development being done by a person who has entered the workforce to continue developing his/her skills and knowledge of the work as well as staying up to date with the trends in the sector (Courtney 2017). In Section 2.11, Satell (2016) explained professional development as the ability of the principal to improve the capabilities of him/herself and others in the workplace through in-service training and continuous education. As indicated in chapter 5, under-performing schools lack professional development. Various factors were identified in under-performing schools as reasons for insufficient and ineffective professional development. These factors emanate from both principals' habitus and factors within the field in which the principal operates. The lacking capital and power in this regarded were identified as follows.

A. Cultural capital

Principals of under-performing schools were identified as having little or no knowledge on handling issues as they happen in the field. Principals of under-performing schools lack the knowledge of the content required for effective professional development. Chapter 5 it was also noted that principals of under-performing schools do not organise, plan, or prioritise the development of educators in the school. Unlike in performing schools where principals organise strategic planning and staff

development for educators in the school. Educators in performing schools are developed in various ways of operation hence they manage to sustain high performance. Principals in performing schools use professional development to build capacity of educators. Principals in under-performing schools do not have the content for professional development. Professional development must, however, be well planned to provide a solid support structure for educators in the school (Minadzi & Nyame, 2016). It is through effective professional development that the professional needs of educators are addressed as well as providing informed support.

B. Social capital

Professional development (refer §3.2.1.7.1) closely relates to social capital. Bourdieu's theory of habitus and field on social capital promotes social networking with people in the workplace. Professional development creates platforms for educators to network and to reflect on challenges related to their line of duty (Avgar, 2015). Indeed, professional development further expands the knowledge base of educators as they engage with fellow educators and exchange ideas, information, and content (refer § 3.2.1.7.3). It also keeps educators current on the educational trends and new developments on content knowledge and other related skill development that may improve their performance. Principals have low self-confidence in their leadership. Moreover, principals' lack of professional development makes it difficult to acknowledge and overcome their shortcomings in leadership. Principals' low self-confidence in coaching and mentoring obstruct them from grooming their staff into effective educators in the school. Furthermore, principals of performing schools organise sessions wherein educators who are teaching the same subject share content knowledge and methods of teaching.

C. Economic capital

Principals indicated that schools in rural areas lack financial resources to fund professional development for educators as well as for principals. However, the lack of financial resources for schools in rural schools is the same in all the schools as discussed in 6.2.1.1. Schools in rural areas are quintile 1 to 3 which makes them no-fee schools. These schools only depend on the Department of Basic Education for funding. The lack of financial resources is a field factor, schools also lack money to fund other additional academic programmes. Some schools in rural areas are small with little allocated funds. Principals in rural areas do not have the ability to create economic capital. They do not have the means to raise funds to fund for schools' academic programmes including professional development.

D. Power

Principals of under-performing schools do not use their position power to give direction and guidance in the school like what is done by principals of performing schools. Principals in under-performing schools are perplexed by the fact that their educators do not attend meetings and do not know how to correct the situation. In some schools, principals indicated that educators do not attend the meetings organised by the principal (§5.3.1.1). The act of ignoring professional development in under-performing schools – as identified in the data – will continue to make it difficult for principals to improve the under-performance. Principals in under-performing schools do not have the capacity to engage educators on their non-cooperation. They do not apply their power to motivate, convince, and influence educators in the school. People who prioritise professional development are more likely to succeed in their careers (Antley, 2020).

Professional development is not done as it was expected because principals of under-performing schools do not realise the power of their position and status to enforce such development (position power). Principals are not using their power of position to influence educators' engagement in professional development. Principals also lack charisma power to influence educators in various ways, such as modelling professionalism and furthering academic improvement (refer §2.6.5). Principals are not aware of their power to influence educators through coaching and mentoring. Furthermore, principals in under-performing schools do not have sufficient knowledge on – or trust in – professional development.

6.2.3.2 Power struggles

Data indicate that under-performing schools are characterised by power struggles and conflicts between principals and educators as well as between principals and other stakeholders such as the SGB (§5.3.2.1). Casas (2017) indicated that power struggles occur as a result of the intolerance between stakeholders in the school. Under-performing schools experience power struggles when educators do not do their jobs as expected, such as going to classes, attending meetings, and accepting the monitoring and control of their work (§5.4.1.7)).

A. Symbolic capital

It is important to note that principals have symbolic capital to apply in their dealing with situations. Principals of under-performing schools are not aware of the power of their status (symbolic capital). Principals fail to use their position and status to encourage unity and a win-win approach between the stakeholders concerned.

B. Cultural capital

Principals lack cultural capital which encompasses the knowledge of how to mediate ideas and expectations of stakeholders. Power struggles in schools occur when principals fail to create a fair and supportive environment for everyone in the school.

C. Social capital

Principals of under-performing schools are not using their social capital to win the trust of people in the school. Furthermore, Principals are not aware of the power to lead by motivation and giving rewards for good efforts. As part of a principals' social capital, principals should use their social capital to enforce unity in the school while creating relationships between all stakeholders concerned.

D. Power

Principals of under-performing schools do not use their legitimate and hierarchical power to control and manage power struggles as and when they happen in the school. Principals feel threatened by the actions of educators and are also afraid of confronting educators to curb insubordination (links with habitus) (§5.3.3). Lack of power makes them to withdraw rather than the ability to deal with difficult educators in the school. These principals do not use their hierarchical power to apply principles and regulations in the field to deal with educators to correct the situation. Principals have delegated power. However, they fail to implement policies to influence educators' cooperation. Delegated power gives principals the authority and legitimacy – due to the position they occupy – to call for accountability on poor subject performance.

Principals of under-performing schools are not only unaware of their legitimate power, but they also lack the emotional intelligence to effectively manage high emotions in the school. The way principals of under-performing schools react to power struggle issues and high emotions in the school may be an indication that such principals may not be able to control and manage their own emotions (refer §5.3.2.1). Various powers can also be used to manage power struggles in schools. These powers were not evident in under-performing schools. Principals are not aware of the use of coercive power to push educators to perform their best in producing the desired outcomes (refer §2.6). Coercive power can be seen as positive and negative depending on the intentions of its implementation (De Luca, 2017). Principals can use coercive power in its positive form to make educators aware of the

consequences of the continuous under-performance (refer §2.6.2), such as a drop in learner enrolment, which results in the merging of schools and educators being redeployed. However, principals of under-performing schools must guard against the inappropriate use of power, which may be seen by educators as a form of bullying, which educators may revolt against. Principals of under-performing schools also overlook the issue of reward power (as indicated above) as another form of motivating educators to produce their best while supporting each other.

In performing schools, there were no visible evidence of power struggle between stakeholders in the school. Principals constantly communicate with educators and involve them in decision-making processes in the school. Principals of performing schools also use power to appreciate excellence and hard work of educators by giving them awards. The working environment in performing schools is conducive and promote social interaction between educators.

6.2.3.3 Ineffective monitoring and control

Principals – by virtue of their positions of being educational leaders in the school – are in a good position to supervise, monitor and assess progress in the school. They are in their rightful position to evaluate and give up to date information on educational issues and current teaching techniques aimed at prompting educators to achieve a higher academic performance in the school. Casas (2017) concurs with the fact that effective leadership in the school positively influences the activities of the school. Although educators in under-performing schools hate being monitored (refer §5.3.3.1), principals with strong habitus would do it anyway. Principals of under-performing schools are afraid to confront educators who do not want to be monitored (links with habitus).

A. Symbolic capital

Principals of under-performing schools do not use their status and position to implement consequence management to recover the outstanding work. Principals of under-performing schools lack the confidence to give lawful orders regarding monitoring and control of the quality and quantity of work to be administered to learners. As a result, the quantity and quality of written work are not monitored or quality assured (refer §5.4.1.9). Without monitoring and the control of educators' work, it is going to be difficult for schools to improve learner performance. As explained in the previous section, under-performing schools have conflicts that overlap in all other areas of the school while obstructing effective teaching and learning. The field factor that causes conflict in monitoring and control of educators' work is a result of ineffective educator development. Principals of under-

performing schools fail to take advantage of their symbolic capital (status and position) to give directives on how monitoring should take place.

B. Cultural capital

Principals of under-performing schools lack knowledge of personnel administrative measures (PAM) will fail to take educators to task for their conduct. Educators' reluctance of monitoring may be addressed by principals who will use their hierarchical power to educate educators in this regard. Hence, the researcher stresses the importance of development. The status of the principal (symbolic capital) alone is not convenient if principals lack knowledge in how to effectively implement programmes of monitoring and control in the school (cultural capital).

Without effective monitoring, it is possible that the work done at the school can deviate from what is expected. Studies revealed that low quality and quantity of written work is an indication of the outcome (Tibagwa et al., 2016). The implication of ineffective monitoring in under-performing schools may be that many under-performing schools are very small with one or two departmental heads for the school. Therefore, those responsible for monitoring educators either do not understand the curriculum or they simply do not give enough attention to key issues. Hence, in-service training is crucial in under-performing schools. Elmazi (2018) agrees that if monitoring and control in schools are not taken care of, educators tend to neglect their work.

C. Power

It is the responsibility of the principal to use their hierarchical power to implement policies. Monitoring of written work by members of the school management team is mandatory and should be implemented in schools. Principals of under-performing schools need to realise their responsibility in assisting educators to develop a positive attitude towards their work through meetings and staff development sessions. Coercive power can also be instrumental in forcing educators to do their work efficiently. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of principals to determine the cause for educators' lack of interest in their work. Principals must be able to use their emotional intelligence to diagnose the problem and be able to address it (refer §5.3.3). It must also be indicated that principals need to be able to motivate educators while engaging them in their professional duties (refer §2.8).

Lack of quality work done at schools due to poor monitoring, under-performing schools experience a slow progression of learners across all grades. It is, therefore, a difficult task for under-performing

schools to improve results with such kind of learners. Participants indicated that the policy on progression is a contributing factor to the under-performance in secondary schools in rural areas. However, it was noted that performing schools do not see the same policy as a hindrance to the schools' academic achievement. One may further conclude that the lack of a positive attitude of educators towards monitoring and control in under-performing schools may be another reason why learners fail in big numbers and progresses to other grades due to age and other related factors. Data further revealed that a sizeable number of learners in under-performing schools in rural areas cannot read and/or write properly (refer §5.3.3). Effective monitoring is an effective tool to detect such discrepancies. The lack of effective monitoring and control in under-performing schools deny both educators and learners the opportunity for remedial actions where needed.

Performing schools prioritise effective monitoring and control of the work of educators. Educators are well informed of what is expected of them. These expectations are set and planned at the beginning of each year in schools strategic plannings. Performing schools also provide coaching and mentoring of educators. Therefore, the attitude of educators in performing schools towards monitoring and control is different from that of under-performing schools. Bourdieu's theory of habitus, field, capital, and power emphasised that the field gives a leader the power to exercise authority. Therefore, principals of performing schools are well aware of their hierarchical, legitimate, and positional power to manage the school (refer §2.8). These kinds of powers are consciously exercised and assist principals to deal with conflict as and when they arise. As a result, performing schools experience less divisions and misunderstandings between principals and educators.

6.3 Summary

It was indicated that the field factors of all the secondary schools under discussion are the same. This implies that all schools face the same challenges and contextual factors. However, there is a noted difference in the habitus of principals of performing and under-performing schools. Unlike in performing schools, principals of under-performing schools are not aware that their position grants them authority to exercise power. They also lack knowledge of capitals and how to apply them. Although, none of the principals spoke nothing about the concept capital and how they apply it but in the manner in which principals of performing schools handle their day-to-day work one would see that they do possess all capitals needed in leadership. i.e., they have the knowledge of policies and how to effectively apply them (cultural capital), they are able to initiate a good working relation and create conducive environment for social interactions between stakeholders (social capital), they are able to convince or influence parents to supplement additional learning materials (economic capital), as well as they are able to use their status and position to influence educators (symbolic capital). From the above discussion, we may infer that the difference between participants of performing and

under-performing schools is their possession and application of various kinds of capital or the lack thereof.

Principals of under-performing schools also lack the social capital to build effective teams, unity, and support for educators in the schools. Aspects of issues such as the non-cooperation of educators and other stakeholders, uncommitted learners, and the lack of unity in the school are a result of the failure of the principals of under-performing schools to build effective systems in the school. Furthermore, principals do not know how to use the symbolic capital that is embedded in their position and status to make schools a safe and comfortable environment for both educators and learners. Principals of performing schools easily accumulate financial resources to assist schools in various programmes. The noted difference is that principals of under-performing schools struggle to accumulate financial resources from sources including parents in the school. As a result, under-performing schools struggle to manage programmes that are not funded by the department but may academically assist learners to improve performance.

The researcher also observed a difference in the habitus of principals of performing and under-performing schools. Principals of under-performing schools lack courage in confronting issues, they are characterised by fear and low self-confidence, which might have been caused by consistently unresolved conflicts in the school. The fear of confronting issues has led principals of under-performing schools to become unable to curb ill-discipline and ill-behaviour of both educators and learners in the school. Principals of performing schools have indicated courage to work with educators and show the direction the schools are to take. Furthermore, principals of under-performing schools do not work towards positively influencing educators through motivation and the recognition of good work unlike in performing schools where principals recognise and reward educators' efforts.

Under-performing schools lack self, in-service, and professional development, which helps principals to build their cultural and symbolic capital. Due to the lack of capital – as discussed above – principals lack depth and knowledge in terms of what policies and legislation say about discipline in the workplace as well as issues of incapacity and other work-related matters. Principals of under-performing schools fail to understand the significance of hierarchical power as legitimate power delegated to them by the HOD of education. Their inability to exercise power makes them lack substance and they cannot take decisive decisions in the best interest of the school. They also lack credibility between members of the staff and other stakeholders in the school. Principals of under-performing schools fail to use their positional power to implement rules provided by the department

to put systems in place that will assist in managing and controlling learners and educators as well as shaping how effective learning should take place.

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONTRIBUTION, AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the strategy to assist principals of rural secondary schools to improve performance was developed. This chapter presents a summary of the most important aspects of the study. Then, the findings of the research are discussed in line with the research questions. Recommendations resulting from the literature as well as the empirical investigation are formulated. Finally, the chapter presents a conclusion for the study.

7.2 Summary of the research

This section provides a summary of the various chapters of this research study. Chapter One gave an introductory orientation to the research. It presented the background to the study (refer §1.1) followed by the problem statement. Keywords were clarified (refer §1.3), followed by the research questions, the sub-questions (refer §1.4) and the research purpose and objectives (refer §1.5). The theoretical framework used in this study was then introduced (refer §1.6). Following the theoretical framework, the research design and methodology were briefly discussed indicating a qualitative research approach within a phenomenological study. Thereafter, the sampling strategy, the method of data generation and the method of data analysis were indicated (refer §1.7). Steps to ensure the trustworthiness of the study findings was also presented (refer §1.8) followed by the contribution of the study (refer §1.9) and the ethical considerations that were considered (refer §1.10).

Chapter Two provided a conceptual framework to reveal principals' ability to influence performance in under-performing schools in rural areas. The chapter started by explaining the relationship between the school principal and school leadership (refer §2.2). The theoretical framework of habitus, field and capital was then presented (refer §2.3). The types of capital in habitus and field influencing leadership were discussed (refer §2.3.1). These types of capital include cultural capital (refer §2.3.1.1), economic capital (refer §2.3.1.2), symbolic capital (refer §2.3.1.3) and social capital (refer §2.3.1.4). Effective school leadership – as seen through the lens of habitus and field – was discussed in detail (refer §2.4). This chapter also outlined explicitly the relationship between leadership and power (refer §2.5). The chapter further clarified the power of the principal (refer §2.6). The importance of using power in school leadership was also presented (refer §2.8) as well as the ability of the principal to improve learner performance through the use of motivation (refer §2.9). Then the chapter concluded with a brief summary (refer §2.12).

Chapter Three addressed contextual and individual factors influencing leadership for sustained improvement in rural schools. It elaborated on contextual factors influencing leadership in rural schools (refer §3.2). These were found to be internal factors in the school influencing performance (refer §3.2.1). The discussion went on to identify the stakeholders in the school (refer §3.2.2) – which include educators (refer §3.2.2.1), learners (refer §3.2.2.2) and the school governing body (SGB) (refer §3.2.2.3). Moreover, factors within the principal (habitus) were highlighted as a factor in improving performance (refer §3.3). Factors external to the school that contribute to low performance in rural areas (refer §3.4) include parents (refer §3.4.1), overcrowded homes (refer §3.4.2) and other socio-economic factors. This chapter also highlighted under-performing schools and their characteristics (§3.5). A brief summary was presented to conclude the chapter (refer §3.5).

Chapter Four started by addressing the research paradigm (refer §4.2), the research design and methodology (refer §4.2.1). This was followed by a detailed discussion on the qualitative approach, which is underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm (refer §4.2.2). The phenomenological design of the study (refer §4.2.3), the population and the type of sample the study used (refer §4.2.4) were then indicated. The criteria of inclusion and exclusion were clearly explained (refer §4.3). The chapter further indicated the manner in which data were collected (refer §4.4) including the type of interviews (refer §4.4.1), the interview procedure (refer §4.4.2) and the interview schedule (refer §4.4.3). Thereafter, the data analysis followed (refer §4.5) and measures to ensure the trustworthiness of the study findings (refer §4.6). Finally, the ethical considerations for the process of collecting data (refer §4.7) were stated. The chapter concluded with a summary of the chapter discussions (refer §4.8).

Chapter Five started by indicating the process of data analysis (refer §5.2) and a detailed discussion on the data analysis (refer §5.3). In this chapter, identified themes were presented. The following themes – regarding effective school leadership (refer §5.3.1) – were identified from the data: leadership (refer §5.3.2) with the following sub-themes; influence (refer §5.3.2.1), professional development (refer §5.3.2.2) and emotional intelligence (refer §5.3.2.3); management (refer §5.3.3) with the following sub-themes; managerial functions (refer §5.3.3.1). Capital was also identified (refer §5.3.4), which includes all forms of capital, such as symbolic capital (refer §5.3.4.1), social capital (refer §5.3.4.2), cultural capital (refer §5.3.4.3) and also economic capital (refer §5.3.4.4). This chapter also identified factors with regard to leadership challenges as experienced by principals in rural areas (refer §5.4). These factors are identified as factors within the immediate school environment (Field) (refer §5.4.1) and factors in the larger school community (Field) (refer §5.4.2) followed by the habitus factors – factors within the principal (refer §5.4.3). Then, a summary was presented to conclude the chapter (refer §5.5).

In Chapter Six, a detailed discussion on why school principals find it difficult to influence the improvement of under-performance in rural areas (refer §6.2). A brief discussion on the field factors was presented (refer §6.2.1) as well as indicating factors within the principal – habitus factors (refer §6.2.2). The using of capital and power in school leadership was also presented (refer §6.2.3). Then, a summary of the chapter was given (refer §6.3).

7.3 Findings of the research

The discussion in this section provides a brief overview of the findings of the research study. These findings are presented based on the literature review and the analysis of the collected empirical data. Sub-themes were broken down to answer the main research question (refer §1.4).

7.3.1 Findings with regard to research objective one: what effective school leadership entails (refer §1.5).

The literature showed that effective school leadership involves the ability of the principal to effectively perform mandated administration duties, such as effective teaching and learning, internal relations in the school, school management and administration, learners' performance and relationships between the school and the community to achieve the goals and objectives of the school (refer §2.4). The literature further emphasised that effective school leadership includes the ability of the principal to develop leadership skills and the ability of the principal to manage the school (refer §2.2). School leadership is effective when the principal shows the potential to manage a group of people (refer §5.3.1). Bourdieu's theory is of the view that the effectiveness of the leader is based on the ability to employ all four kinds of capital (refer §2.3) as well as the ability to exercise power in leadership (refer §2.4). Furthermore, the theory of habitus and field linked effective school leadership with the leader's character (habitus), which stresses that a principal is highly ambitious, self-confident, intelligent, has a thorough knowledge of the job, is honest and flexible (refer §2.3.1) and can effectively implement policies in the field.

Through Bourdieu's theory it was clearly indicated and acknowledged that an effective leader is one who possesses the necessary capital and can effectively apply them. The following forms of capital were outlined to indicate how effective the leadership of the principal is: cultural capital, which implies that principals are effective if they have adequate knowledge of the policies within the field (refer §2.3.1), know how to deal with issues and how to effectively take informed decisions (§5.3.1).

economic capital- principals who are effective in their leadership have access to financial resources, such as money, property, and other assets in the school, as well as the ability to convert other forms of property into money (refer §2.3.1.2).

Symbolic capital involves the ability of the principal to use their status and position to influence, inspire and motivate educators in the school (refer §5.3.3.1). Effective school leadership involves principals who have expertise, abilities, skills, and knowledge that is gained through formal education (refer §2.3.1.3). Social capital, which refers to the ability of the principal to build effective and lasting relationships with all stakeholders in the school (refer §5.3.3.2). Social capital lies in the relationships that the principal can build with educators, parents and all the other relevant stakeholders within the school community. Principals who are effective in their school can build their support structure. Effective school leadership also relies on social capital as a network-based resource that is available in the relationships that principals create and maintain within the school community. The literature explains that theorists believe that social capital relates to the social identity theory of leadership, which believes that effective leadership is well displayed by those leaders who do not lead in isolation but become active members of social groups (refer §2.3.1.4). Principals of performing schools explain effective school leadership as the ability of the principal to effectively carry out managerial functions in the school. It also includes the ability of the principal to control functions in the school, monitor processes, set up systems as well as leading (refer §5.3.1; §2.5). Some believed that in order to improve and sustain good school performance, they must effectively employ managerial skills or functions in their leadership (refer §5.3.2). Other principals believed that effective leadership is linked to the ability of the principal to effectively use motivation (§5.3.1; §2.8)

7.3.2 Findings with regard to research objective two: determine how effective school leadership can improve poor academic performance or sustain high academic performance

The researcher in this study noted arguments brought forth by principals of performing and under-performing schools in their views and experience of how effective school leadership can improve poor academic performance or sustain high academic performance. Principals of performing schools indicated a deliberate and conscious practice or exercise of power (refer §2.7). Bourdieu's theory confirmed that people in leadership positions have power (hierarchical/invisible and legitimate) (refer §2.7). Principals of under-performing schools do not exercise their power in their leadership to influence the improvement of learner academic performance. The non-usage of power in under-performing schools is a hindrance to principals to exercise their ability and strength to persuade people to do what the principal believes to be right and beneficial for the school and everyone

involved. Data proved that unlike in performing schools, principals of under-performing schools do not have power to influence, convince and inspire people to work towards achieving the vision of the school (refer §5.4.1; refer §2.6). The exercise of power in performing schools was evident and consciously carried out. The power principals of performing schools possesses in their leadership indicated that they are able to sustain learner academic performance and can also assist principals of under-performing schools to improve learner academic performance. The following powers were highlighted as present to principals' leadership in performing schools.

Expert power: Principals of performing schools have leadership skills, knowledge, and expertise as well as the technical information and knowledge to strategize for the improvement or sustenance performance (refer §5.3.2.1.1; refer §2.7). Coercive power: principals in performing schools use coercive power in a positive manner to force educators to do their work efficiently by motivation, rewards, and recognition of excellent work done at school. This kind of power has enhanced positive competition in performing schools as people want to be recognised as contributing positively towards high achievements (refer §5.3.2.1.1 refer §2.7). While principals of under-performing schools are failing to discourage undesired actions, which may prevent high academic performance (refer §5.3.2.1.1). Reward power: principals of performing schools prioritise motivating educators and learners by giving them some kind of rewards as a means of positively influencing hard work and commitment in achieving high academic outcomes as stated above (refer §2.7; refer §5.3.2.1.1).

Referent power: principals in performing schools influence by role modelling as a result they are considered by the members of the staff as admirable and honourable (refer §2.7). Principals lead by displaying their self-confidence, attitude, calmness, and leadership (refer §5.3.2.3). Charismatic power: principals of performing schools achieve positive reactions from others by utilising conscientious acts and considerate tolerance to get things done (refer §2.7) which was found lacking in under-performing schools (refer §5.3.2.3). Data indicated a difference in leadership of principals from performing and under-performing schools in this regard. Principals of performing schools use charisma to influence and motivate educators; hence, they receive positive reactions from educators (refer §5.3.1). Information power: principals of performing schools have the power to influence stakeholders in the school by displaying a high level of knowledge of policies and regulations (refer §5.3.4.3), There was no evidence of principal's inability to manage emotions and power struggles in performing schools (refer §5.4.10). Legitimate power: in performing schools principals use their advantage of power of their formal role deriving from the concept of ownership or exclusive rights to give orders and implement policies (refer §2.7) and to enforce good conduct and good performance (§5.3.2.3)

7.3.3 Findings with regards to research objective three: identify what the leadership challenges experienced by principals in rural areas are

The data analysis revealed that principals of under-performing schools in rural areas experience numerous leadership challenges. These leadership challenges were found to be within the school as well as within the larger school community. It was noted in the previous section that these challenges are experienced by principals of secondary schools within the same environment (field)

7.3.3.1 Findings with regards to factors within the immediate school environment (§5.4.1)

In the analysis of data, it was revealed that the field factors for all the secondary schools in rural areas are the same (refer §6.2.1). However, it was also revealed that principals of under-performing schools are not able to overcome these field challenges due the poor habitus of principals (refer §6.2.2) as well as the lack of application of power and capital in their leadership (refer §6.2.3). problems such as ineffective teaching (refer §5.4.1.1), the attitude of educators towards their work (refer §3.2.1.5.1) and educators' low levels of motivation (refer §2.9). are left unattended by principals of under-performing schools due to principals' lack of interest, courage, and dedication to resolve issues causing under-performance.

The data also revealed that under-performing schools in rural areas have a shortage of textbooks and other learning materials (refer §5.5). Schools in rural areas cannot provide extra learning resources to learners; as a result, schools do not effectively manage the retrieval of textbooks (refer §5.3.3.3). While in performing schools indicated a better way of managing shortage of textbooks by partnering with parents and other stakeholders (refer §5.4.1.6). Thus, principals of under-performing schools do not apply symbolic and social capital to manage school's resources hence they are not successful in retaining resources and other learning materials.

Most under-performing schools in rural areas experience power struggles (refer §5.4.1). It was also noted that principals do not have the skills to resolve these conflicts. The infighting in under-performing schools is mostly happening between educators, between educators and the principal, between the SGB and the principal as well as between the community and the principal. The inability of principals to manage power struggles in the school is because principals do not know they possess the legitimate power to manage people in the school (refer §2.7). They do not implement the power

delegated to them. They also do not take advantage of their symbolic capital, which is using their position as principals to calm emotions.

Unlike in performing schools, principals of under-performing schools do not apply their economic capital to provide financial resources to push forward programmes that will assist the school to improve learner performance (refer §5.4.1). Such programmes are not funded by the department. However, schools use these programmes to improve and sustain high academic performance. Under-performing schools in rural areas only depend on the provision of the department. Principals in under-performing schools lack the motive, willingness, and courage (*habitus*) to influence educators to put extra effort to assist learners improve performance without necessarily expecting compensation (refer §5.4.1.8).

7.3.3.2 Findings with regards to the larger school community (§5.4.2)

Both the data and literature outlined factors that pose leadership challenges to principals in under-performing schools. The main factors identified include ineffective support and socio-economic factors. As previously indicated that these two main facts indicated above are field factors and appears the same with performing schools. Data confirms that the difference lies in the management of these issues by principals of under-performing schools.

Under-performing schools reported the lack of support from stakeholders (refer §5.4.1), issues pertaining to socio-economic factors (refer §3.4.3), and ineffective feeder schools. The lack of support in this instance is attributed to principals' lack of social capital to build lasting relations with stakeholders. The lack of support may also stem from the inability of the principal to exercise their symbolic capital (position power) to take informed decisions as well as inability to exercise legitimate power. While socio-economic factors do not originate from within the school, its presence is felt in the school and have the potential to disrupt schooling and, in some cases, is a cause of increased learner dropout in rural areas (refer §5.4.2). As parents cannot provide for their children's additional learning materials (refer §5.4.2.), it then becomes the responsibility of the principal to apply economic capital as indicated in the previous section to either raise funds or develop plans to sustain the little resources they have.

Many secondary school principals in rural areas indicated that they receive learners in Grade 8 who are inadequately prepared for secondary education (refer §3.2.1.5.2) and cannot write properly or

read with meaning (refer §5.5). Principals lack skills to profile and develop programme to assist these learners. They leave them until they reach grade 12 through the progression policy (refer §5.4.1.2) hence learners in under-performing schools are lowly motivated (refer §5.4.1.2) and cannot concentrate on their schoolwork. principals also do not exercise their power to influence educators to assist learners individually which cannot be done in over-crowded classes.

7.3.4 Findings with regard to research objective four: why school principals find it difficult to influence the improvement of low academic performance?

There are various factors identified from both the data and literature as reasons why principals find it difficult to improve low academic performance in rural areas. The data collected from participants illustrate the complexity and inter-connectedness of challenges faced by principals in improving low performance in rural areas. Below are identified some of the factors – or reasons – as difficulties faced by principals in improving low performance?

Principals of under-performing schools indicated factors making it difficult for them to influence the improvement of learner performance. These factors are therefore grouped into field and habitus factors. Although some of the factors below were previously identified in the previous sections, it was however, noted as principals identified them to specifically hindering them to influence the improvement of low performance.

7.3.4.1. The field factors identified by principals are:

A. Lack of adequate resources (§5.4.2.4)

Schools in rural areas lack resources such as money, textbooks, classrooms, libraries, and computers (refer §5.5). Various school principals in rural areas indicated a shortage of textbooks, inadequate classrooms as well as a lack of libraries and laboratories (refer §5.4.1). Inadequate resources have a negative impact on the outcome – or achievement – of schools in rural areas (refer §3.2.1.6). Principals lack economic capital to secure funds to sustain and manage schools' resources.

B. Lack of parental involvement (§5.4.2.3)

Although various researchers acknowledge the importance of parental involvement in education, many under-performing school principals – in rural areas – indicated the absence of parents to support children (refer §5.5). The literature confirmed that parents' participation in their children's education has social and emotional benefits to their children. Parents were found to be absent for various reasons: some parents are working far from home while others are not offering the kind of support that is expected from parents because they are illiterate (refer §2.5.7). Therefore, principals' social capital is inactive to assist them to build trust from parents so they may support the school. Principals are unable to establish trust and support from parents.

C. Lack of educator development (§5.4.1.3)

Principals in under-performing schools do not apply cultural capital (knowledge) and information power to capacitate or develop educators in the school. The data indicated that some educators in under-performing schools do not have adequate content knowledge (refer §5.5). Under-performing schools in rural areas do not have educator development programmes. The lack of educator development in under-performing schools increases the difficulties experienced by educators with the transfer of knowledge to learners (refer §2.5.6). In the data collected, principals themselves do not prioritise self-development (refer §5.5). However, educational experiences relating to educators' work can only be acquired through continuous educator development. The literature indicated that educators who participate in professional development sessions acquire new skills and knowledge that will eventually improve work performance (refer §2.11.1). Therefore, the shortage of skills and knowledge in under-performing schools may be the results of principal lacking expert power (refer §6.2.1) which is the superior or specialised knowledge on the content gap and content of educator development.

D. Ineffective SGB and other community structures (§5.4.2.1)

Principals of under-performing schools indicated a lack of support from SGBs and other stakeholders (refer §2.11 and §5.5). The lack of social capital denies potential good relations between principals and stakeholders in the school.

E. Low levels of learner-motivation (§5.4.1.2)

The data provided that under-performing schools in rural areas are characterised by learners who are less committed to their schoolwork as well as a high rate of absenteeism (refer §2.5.4). Principals of under-performing schools indicated that learners in their school lack a passion for learning and are not self-motivated (refer §5.5). Although the literature indicated various reasons for this kind of learner behaviour, such as absent and illiterate parents; these factors have been making it difficult for principals to improve learner performance. principals lack power to influence the behaviour of learners. Principals are within their rightful position (legitimate) to motivate learners and stimulate their love for schooling through incentives and other measures (refer §5.4.1.2)

F. Poor policy implementation and management (§5.4.1.10)

Most principals put the blame of under-performance on the progression policy (refer §5.5). while principals from performing schools argue that policy does not fail on its own, rather it is a failure of the school management to understand its proper implementation (refer §5.5). principals of under-performing schools lack cultural capital – the knowledge and understanding of policy which informs proper implementation.

G. Poor monitoring and control (§5.4.1.9)

Many under-performing schools fail in the core duty and responsibility of the principal as outlined in the PAM, which indicates principals' responsibility to guide, supervise and offer professional advice on the work and performance of educators in the school (refer §2.5.2). Principals in under-performing schools lack cultural capital – the knowledge of policies and implementation. Monitoring and control is mandatory in schools. However, principals do not implement it due to lack of knowledge. Principals do not know that they have legitimate power to enforce monitoring and control. Monitoring and control in under-performing schools are inconsistent and poor (refer §5.5). The lack of monitoring and control in under-performing schools have brought about incompetent and less dynamic teams.

7.3.4.2 Habitus factors

A. Lack of decisive leadership (§5.4.3.1)

Principals of under-performing schools lack the courage skill and ability to lead, guide and influence people in the school (refer §5.5). Principals are unable to demonstrate a clear understanding of the knowledge they are expected to have in their line of duty. Principals in under-performing schools lack knowledge, which is guided by principles and policies within the field of education to guide their schools out of the under-performance. Hence, principals are expected to take decisions based on all those principles. Furthermore, principals in under-performing schools do not have the ability to plan functions beforehand nor the ability to predict a possible outcome (refer §3.3).

B. Ineffective communication practices (§5.4.3.2)

Principals in under-performing schools experience ineffective communication between the principal and all the other stakeholders. Poor communication has led to low morale, conflicts, and job dissatisfaction among people in the school (refer §5.5). Ineffective communication in schools contributes to the deterioration of the academic performance of learners in the school. Educators are not given an opportunity – through communication – to participate in decisions and structuring processes (refer §3.3). The literature further indicated that a lack of communication is destructive for any organisation. Principals in under-performing schools do not engage educators through communicating issues in the school. They do not have the courage and enthusiasm to communicate with educators.

C. Lack of consistency (5.4.3.3)

Principals of under-performing schools lack consistency in carrying out their everyday duties (refer §5.5). The literature indicated that consistency is an important element in creating successful schools. Principals in under-performing schools are not able to set clear rules, policies, requirements, or expectations for people in the school (refer §2.2). Principals of performing schools were consistent in – among other things – managing and controlling late coming and absenteeism by both learners and educators of the school (refer §5.5). While in under-performing schools, principals are afraid of taking decision.

D. Lack of problem-solving skills (5.4.3.5)

Principals of under-performing schools lack the ability to solve problems and resolve conflicts (refer §5.5). The literature viewed problem-solving skills as an important aspect in the role of a principal for improving under-performance (refer §2.10). Principals in under-performing schools fail to understand that many problems that present themselves in schools are best solved through policies and rules (refer §2.3.11). Principals' ability to solve problems in schools improves relations and fosters school discipline. The literature further confirms that the role of the principal requires them to possess a multitude of skills to be competitive (refer §2.2).

7.3.5 Findings with regard to research objective five: explore how Bourdieu's theory of habitus, field, capital, and power can be used to explain principals' ability to influence learner performance in rural schools

This study was guided by Bourdieu's theory. The theory was used to explore the ability of principals to improve learner performance. It is through this theory that we examined the effective use of capital and power in school leadership. Bourdieu's theory of habitus and field was also used to identify the field of power that may influence principal's leadership in the school. In this study, the following conclusions were made regarding habitus, field, capital, and power to improve learner performance.

A. The field

The field has a considerable influence on school leadership since it is managed by a given set of rules and regulations, and it is these rules that influence and guide the behaviour and actions of everyone in the school. It was noted – in this study – that although the field is regarded as a “power arena” within which we understand the power relations within the field, principals themselves do not understand the power they have in the field to implement policies. In this study, the education field – as a platform – has rules and policies to govern schools as institutions. The findings of this study indicated that the factors in the field are the same for all the schools in rural areas. Therefore, the emphasis will be on the habitus as well as a power struggle and potential use of capitals.

B. Principal's habitus in improving learner performance

In this study, habitus and field could not be separated from each other but the focus is on habitus since the field is more similar for most schools. Therefore, the habitus maybe the more important

factor why some schools are performing better than others in the similar field context. The way in which the principal carries out work eventually influences the way the principal responds to issues in the school (field). In this study, the conclusion was drawn that the way principals think, behave, and conduct themselves contributes largely to the way they exercise leadership in the school. The habitus of the principals – i.e., the character, courage, previous experience, training and exposure and confidence (personality) – play a vital role in improving low performance. Principals of under-performing schools are afraid of taking crucial decisions that may change the way in which educators behave, act, conduct the core business of the school which is effective teaching. They lack the courage to solve conflicts, manage emotions and communicate with stakeholders in the school. Therefore, we may conclude that the habitus of principals in under-performing schools' compromises school performance. Principals in under-performing schools were found to have low self-confidence. They also struggle to socialise; hence, they cannot create meaningful relationships in the school. (refer §5.4.3.5). Principals in under-performing schools are afraid to implement consequence management to correct shortfalls in curriculum delivery. Furthermore, principals of under-performing schools cannot motivate, encourage, or influence people at school to achieve set targets. Moreover, principals of under-performing schools were also found to lack the four key elements of emotional intelligence (EI), namely (1) self-awareness, (2) self-management, (3) social awareness and (4) social skills.

C. Capital

From Bourdieu's theory, capital was used to understand the extent to which principals can effectively use the different available capitals in alignment with their own habitus. In this process the power play between principal and other role players should be negotiated to improve under-performing school. Different kinds of capital were explained as enablers for principal leadership, and when these capitals are harmonised to what is of value in the school as an institution, it becomes easy to manage it effectively. The theory explains capital as resources that are acquired, accumulated by leaders and are of strategic value in particular situations as it demands. This study centred on four forms of capital as the basis of effective school leadership, i.e., cultural, symbolic, economic, and social capital.

Principals of under-performing schools were found not to be able to harmonise the four forms of capital in leadership. They lacked knowledge, expertise, and the skills to implement policies (cultural capital). In issues of conflict, principals of under-performing schools were found to be out of depth and did not know what to do to solve issues of conflict. Hence, it compromised the quality of their leadership and their level of preparedness to improve learner performance. Principals of under-performing schools do not understand the authority and status of their position in school leadership

(symbolic capital). Their lack of knowledge (cultural capital) compromised their position as leaders as they were not able to take crucial decisions that will benefit the school.

Principals of under-performing schools are not able to create social networks in the school (social capital). Bourdieu's theory explains that social capital has an influence on building a support structure for the principal and the school. Principals' lack of social capital restricted them from creating healthy relationships among all the stakeholders in the school. The extent to which under-performing schools have conflicts and power struggles is a result of a lack of unity and trust that is built through healthy relationships. under-performing schools – in rural areas – lack financial resources to fund certain programmes in the school, such as extra classes and professional development (economic capital). Principals lack access to financial resources such as money, property, and other assets in the school. Moreover, schools in rural areas lack donors due to the high rate of poverty and unemployment in their communities.

D. Power

Bourdieu's theory recognises the issue of power and capital in leadership. Bourdieu perceives power as culturally and symbolically generated. Principals of under-performing schools are not aware that their power – as leaders of schools – is legitimised by legislation. Principals are not aware that they have hierarchical – or legitimate – power. Principals are in a rightful position – through this power – to influence change in schools. Various forms of power were discussed in this study. However, there are some forms of power that were visibly lacking in school leadership of under-performing schools in rural areas, i.e., legitimate, reward, charisma and coercive (positive or negative) power.

Conclusions drawn from the findings of this study are based on Bourdieu's theory, which indicated the importance of capital, power, principal's habitus, and the field. These were seen to be important in leadership and could not be ranked in order of priority. Habitus: the principal's character and beliefs play an important role in the way he/she implements policies in the field. This is as important as the knowledge of policies in the field to achieve expected performance. Principals need to master using capital in leadership and using power to lead schools out of its poor performance. Capital and power can be effectively carried out by a principal with a strong personality to implement policies and give guidance on what and how to do things in the school. The availability of the habitus, field, capital, and power in school leadership balances the leadership of the principal. Moreover, principals become effective if they possess all the four factors listed above. The implementation of policies in the field, the employment of capital and the use of power in leadership is also based on the strong habitus of the principal.

7.3.6 Findings with regard to research objective six: develop strategies for school principals to improve low learner academic performance levels

This study sought to develop a strategy to be used as a general plan aimed at achieving a long-term goal under conditions of under-performance. It involved the development of set of skills and tactics to achieve an overall goal of improving learner performance. Horwath (2021) further explains that a strategy defines the future and the human endeavour to accomplish desired outcomes. Principals of under-performing schools will use a strategy as a way – or method – of discovering, developing, and establishing a philosophy that – if faithfully implemented – will guarantee long term success. The strategy in this study could further assist the decision on how to combine the principal's capital, expertise, and competencies to build a competitive advantage.

A strategy in this study is aimed at building a strong internal competence by sharing ideas, technologies, and resources in the school to improve learner performance. A well-structured strategy can develop and nurture a strong school culture and brand (Horwath, 2021). This current strategy is concerned with how the various departments within the school should fit together as well as an understanding of how resources should be deployed to create the greatest possible value. A principal should be able to structure departments within the school to work harmoniously and effectively towards the improvement of under-performance. Hence, the strategy is aimed at assisting principals to deal with some of the power struggles and conflicts in schools. The current strategy is also concerned with assisting under-performing schools to compete successfully as individual schools as it addresses the question of how to improve and sustain high performance. This strategy could further assist principals to gather competitive intelligence as well as competitive analysis to sustain high academic performance. As part of strategy development, it is crucial to think about the core competencies the school have and how to best use them to meet the needs of all stakeholders in the best possible way (The Open University, 2020).

7.3.6.1 A strategy for school principals to improve low academic performance levels

The strategy for principals to improve learner performance is informed by the data collected from participants as presented in Chapter Five. The challenges identified in Chapter Five answered the main research question: why principals find it difficult to influence under-performance in secondary schools in rural areas. Therefore, this section emanates from challenges identified as problems to be addressed by developing a strategy to assist principals to improve performance. The strategy presented in this section does not address individual challenges. For example, a strategy to improve principal's communication will also address other related challenges. The strategy developed in this

study is directed to under-performing schools in rural areas with similar challenges as the sampled schools that provided data to form the basis for this strategy. Therefore, the strategy addresses aspects that can be adapted by school principals with similar contexts for implementation.

The following discussion outlines the identified problems – or challenges – that make it difficult for principals to improve performance: the goals that the strategy aims to achieve; the action to be taken by principals of secondary schools; the capital that may be employed by the principal to improve performance; the possible power that can be used by principals; the people involved in the strategy; and the evaluation and monitoring of the effectiveness of the strategy. The strategy to address the ability of principals of under-performing schools to improve learner performance is divided into four, the field, habitus capital and power. However, capital and power are infused within the field and habitus to indicate how best can principals apply capital and power to improve their habitus as well as applying the same in the field to improve learner performance.

7.3.6.1.1 The Field

In chapter 5 factors within the field was explained to be the same in all the schools in rural areas. In this section the following problems were identified regarding the field. This section also indicates what principals of secondary schools in rural areas can do to improve factors in the field to influence the improvement of learner performance. Noting the fact that principals of performing schools are doing well within the same circumstances of the same field.

A. Lack of resources and inadequate facilities

Low performing schools in rural areas experience shortage of textbooks and other learning materials as well as overcrowded classes (§3.2.16). A strategy therefore is presented on the effective management of school's resources (textbooks and other learning materials) as well as managing the issue of inadequate classes.

Principals and SGBs may lay out strategies on resource management. Principals together with the SMT or any delegated members of the staff can design a tracking and retrieval tool for textbooks and other learning resources in the hands of educators and learners. The retrieval policy and procedure may include that during final examinations, on the day of each subject learners should hand in their textbooks to their subject educators; Then educators will take their books to the store after counting and verifying them; learners who did not bring their textbooks are reminded and a letter goes out to their parents. Principals and SGBs may also involve other community structures to

assist in identifying help in resource provision and donation. Principals may continuously engage the DBE on the provision of classrooms.

In addressing the issue of lack of resources and inadequate school facilities principals may use the following capital: Symbolic capital - Using the principal's status and position to influence the effective implementation of guidelines on managing the school's resources. Cultural capital - Providing capacity to relevant stakeholders on management of the school's resources. Power to be used by principals to manage lack of resources and inadequate facilities include position power - To give guidelines on the efficient management of the schools' resources. Legitimate power - To influence accountability from both educators and learners (as well as parents) for mismanaging the school's resources. Symbolic power - To continue engaging the DBE on the provision of classrooms. Above the issue of capital and power, principals must also employ their habitus in managing schools' resources. Principals must have courage to continuously exercise power to manage these resources as well as applying policy and procedure to retrieve lost or damaged resources.

Policy and procedures on the management of textbooks and other learning resources should be reviewed annually by all educators at the beginning of every year as a way of evaluating and assessing the effective management of schools' resources. The effectiveness of the tracking and retrieval tool must also be evaluated and be reviewed by all educators quarterly. All stakeholders to receive feedback on the progress of the Department of Education on provision of physical resources.

B. Lack of support from parents, SGBs, and other stakeholders

Under-performing schools in rural areas experience lack of support from stakeholders within the school community. Schools experience lack of parental involvement (§5.4.2.3 & 6.2.1.5), lack of support from SGBs (§5.4.2.1 & 6.2.1.7), and lack of support from other stakeholders within the school community (§5.4.2.2 & 6.2.1.6). Strategies are presented to assist principals to gather support from all relevant stakeholders in the school.

The strategy for principals is to design a programme for meetings with all stakeholders. During these meetings the principal gives a quarterly report on the progress of the school as well as inviting inputs in areas of concern to improve things such as learner attendance, learner discipline and learner conduct etc, the principal must show a deliberate interest of working with stakeholders therefore, their inputs should be noted and be attended to.

The principal may use social capital to improve and influence interaction and communication between the principal and other stakeholders. This kind of interaction may create a lasting relationship and will improve accountability to meet the expectations of each stakeholder. The principal may assess the inputs given by stakeholders as well as reviewing the effectiveness of such meetings quarterly.

7.3.6.1.2 Strategies to effectively use habitus, capital, and power to improve learner performance

This section is aimed at assisting principals to effectively use their habitus, capital, and power to improve learner performance. Habitus was explained in chapter 2 as those innate or personal characteristics of the principal. These personal traits or characteristics can enable them to have courage and inner strength to manage issues that contributes to poor learner performance. Although the field was explained to be the same, habitus cannot be the same with all the principals however, this serves as guidelines to improve principals' habitus. From data it was also evident that principals of under-performing schools are not effectively using capital in their leadership. Furthermore, principals of under-performing schools do not use their given power to enforce the improvement of learner performance.

A. Managing conflicts and power struggles in the school (§2.10.2; §5.3.2).

The aim of this strategy is to empower principals with effective communication skills, decision-making as well as increasing their emotional intelligence to prevent or manage high emotions, conflicts, and power struggles in the school. Emotional intelligence will enable principals to identify and prevent potential causes of conflicts and to skilfully communicate with stakeholders to resolve conflicts. Improving emotional intelligence mean that principals must know their emotional state, temperament, as well as their ability or inability to control own emotions. After mastering their own emotions, principals will be able to study other people's emotions. Both emotional intelligence and communication skills can be learnt through self-development.

Principals may avoid conflicts and power struggles in the school by transparently, and in collaboration with educators, lay out work allocation/task agreements and set out objectives and goals to be met in each allocated task. Principals could also attend courses/workshops to improve capacity on conflict prevention and management. For example, online courses such as: <https://alison.com/course/introduction-to-conflict-management-and-negotiation> can help to improve knowledge on management of conflicts in the school. The above link is just one of many examples of online courses helpful on conflict prevention and management.

The following capital and power may be used to manage conflicts and power struggles in under-performing school. Cultural capital – improving knowledge on conflict resolution and management. (Links with professional development). Social capital – to influence interactions in the school by involving all relevant stakeholders in decisions. Symbolic capital – to use their status and position to manage and resolve conflicts in the school. The procedure of resolving conflicts is laid down in the personnel administrative measures (PAM). However, principals must have courage and mental strength to tackle conflicts (*habitus*). Cultural capital/power to improve knowledge and information on conflict management and resolution as laid out in the PAM document. Furthermore, the principals may use positional power to resolve conflicts as well as using hierarchical power to command authority in applying policies to resolve disputes and conflicts. Principals who do not resolve conflicts are afraid of confronting people hence, it is good for principals to enhance their *habitus* to apply given policies.

B. Effective communication

Low performing schools experience principal's ineffective communication (§5.5). Therefore, this strategy is aimed at assisting principals of under-performing schools to develop strategies for effective communication skills.

Principals could attend courses/workshops to improve effective communication skills. (To be linked with professional development as it will also improve the effective management of conflicts and power struggles in schools). Principals may also be engaged in refresher courses on rules and procedures for holding effective staff meetings. Each school may draw up plans for meetings with various stakeholders.

Principals may use various capitals to improve communication in the school such as the following: Social capital - Principals may frequently have meetings and encourage stakeholder participation; Principals can build relations with all stakeholders by involving them on educational issues; Principals may encourage and allow inputs from stakeholders on educational issues. Principals may also use symbolic capital as their status and position to influence social relations between educators. Communication can also be improved by allocating responsibilities to other members of staff and during meetings they be afforded a chance to report so as to promote participation. Principals may exercise position power to encourage, motivate and influence stakeholders to support the school as well as relation power to encourage people to relate with one another. Principals must use their position to create a platform for stakeholders in the school to debate issues of interest. Moreover,

principals must develop (workshop) stakeholders to understand roles and parameters so as to minimise or avoid power struggles. Principals may also relate well with everybody in the school as a way of leading by example by being warm and kind to everyone in the school including those who oppose them.

C. Use of emotional intelligence (§2.10)

Principals in under-performing schools seemingly lack emotional intelligence to manage emotions of people in the schools. The high emotions lead to conflicts and lack of unity and teamwork among stakeholders in the school. Principals may improve their EI by designing an emotional intelligence development plan to improve emotional awareness and the principal's soft skills. Principals may also use self-evaluation assessment tools to improve skills on EI. For example, online evaluation tools such as https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCDV_59.htm, can help principals of low performing schools to assess their own progress on the improvement of their own skills.

Principals may also attend coaching and mentoring courses by experienced principals of performing schools. To improve their EI principals may use the following capitals: cultural capital – the essential knowledge of EI – the ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions. Principals may engage in programmes/courses that help to understand their own emotions as well as managing other people's emotions as well as Cultural capital - Principals' awareness of their own emotions as well as being able to identify the high emotions of others and manage them effectively to avoid demotivation and conflicts among educators as well as improving their knowledge and awareness of self-emotions and the emotions of others; Social capital - Principals can use social capital to build trust and improve the social relations of educators.

Principals may evaluate the improvement of their EI by receiving and reviewing feedback on self-assessment tools used to improve EI skills. An example of some of online tools effective for EI self-assessment is: https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/26776/1/Emotional_intelligence_questionnaire-LAL1.pdf. These kinds of tools will assist principals to receive and review feedback on personal improvement on their emotional intelligence. Principals may also receive feedback on coaching and mentoring courses on EI.

D. Quality human relations

Under-performing schools experience poor human relations (§5.3). Therefore, a human relations development plan for the principal to improve relations in the school can be developed. Principals of

under-performing schools may be subjected to training opportunities that improves human relations in the workplace. These training sessions may be conducted by retired principals from performing schools, district officials (human resource department) and union representatives from the regional level, which may be at no cost to the school. Principals may also assess their own development and improvement (self-evaluation) on issues of human relations in the workplace.

To effectively improve human relations at work the principal may use social capital to restore or build effective relations between stakeholders. In the building of relations in the school, principals may also employ strategies employed in the improvement of EI and effective communication discussed previously. People relate well in the workplace where there is effective communication and emotions are managed to provide a calm working space. Principal may also use social capital to build effective teams in the school. These teams may act as the support base for the principal. Social capital may link with effective communication; the principal may prioritise communication to build effective teams that will constantly interact with one another. As well as symbolic capital - principals may use their status and position to model and encourage relations in the school by not allowing disruptive behaviour to go unnoticed and unaddressed. Building a positive human relations will also assist the school in dealing with power struggles to build support teams and minimise opposition.

Ways to evaluation the effectiveness of improved human relations by conducting annual evaluations regarding the training sessions received on improving human relations. Principals may also receive and review feedback on their performance and progress from their trainers at the end of every training session.

E. Professional development for principals and educators

Under-performing schools in rural areas do not have sufficient professional development for principals and educators (refer§3.2.1.7; §3.2.1.7.1; §5.3.2.2). Principals do not show interest on their own or educators' development. Furthermore, amid financial challenges principals of underperforming schools in rural areas do not prioritise coaching and mentoring of educators which is less costly but can be effective. There has also been no indication on the school budget to prioritise educator development. Principals of under-performing schools may identify experienced principals of performing schools as their mentors and coaches (refer§5.3.2). SMTs and master educators may be engaged in coaching and mentoring other educators in the same subject stream. Schools may monitor and award efforts for self-professional development. Schools may also develop plans to monitor the effective implementation of QMS.

Principals must first identify areas of needs for their self-development in order to deal with their own shortcomings. The lack of interest in developing other people might be caused by poor communication skills or the way they relate with each other in the school. Principals of under-performing schools may use various capital to assist them to improve learner performance such as the economic capital – With limited funds for schools in rural areas principals themselves may organise and conduct educators’ development sessions or delegate members of SMT, senior or master educators; Social capital – principals can involve educators in planning for their development. Educators may be allowed to have inputs on their identified areas for development; Cultural capital – principals may prioritise self-development through free online courses and programmes such as the national school of government. The coaching and free online courses for principals may also include but not limited to improving EI, communication skills, conflict management and resolution. Principal must also enrol with distance learning institutions for personal capacitation and improvement of qualification levels on school leadership. Principals may also encourage and influence educators to engage in self-development and acknowledge educators who show improvement.

Power to be used by principals to improve professional development may include Charisma power - principals may use their charismatic personality to influence, encourage and motivate educators in the school; Legitimate power – principals may use the power of their position to coach and mentor educators in the school. Furthermore, principals may also use their legitimate power to organise or send educators for professional development.

Principals may evaluate the effectiveness of professional development by reviewing each development session by all members of staff as well as developing plans to monitor progress from all developed or capacitated educators. The content for development may be assessed by everyone involved. The reviewing of the school budget for professional development can be done to cover for all the planned areas for development. The school development committee may record and assess any improvement from educators. Such improvement may be commended, rewarded, and recognised.

F. Effective monitoring and control

Under-performing schools experience ineffective monitoring and control of educators and learners’ work (§2.5.2). Principals are easily threatened by educators who do not want to be monitored (refer §5.4.1.9). Furthermore, principals are not enforcing monitoring through their departmental heads. Principals who are weak in enforcing discipline and feel uncomfortable to enforce monitoring when they are opposed should first train their departmental heads on their roles in curriculum management

as per PAM. They should also train their deputy principals as the heads of curriculum in curriculum management (links with professional development). Together with the SMT, the principal must draw accountability plan for each departmental head to give a report of each monitoring session. Principals must avoid one-on-one arguments with educators on educational issues instead the principal must rely on departmental heads or subject heads for effective implementation of mandatory curriculum implementation. SMTs and subject heads may compile monitoring tools that will assist in monitoring educators' work, may as well as drawing a data generation tools for monitoring and control of educators and learners' work. The developed monitoring and control plan for the school must be presented to all educators in the school before implementation.

Principals must build their courage (*habitus*) to implement educational policies. order to monitor effective monitoring and control in schools' principals may use the following capital and power; Symbolic capital – to use their position to implement programmes of monitoring and control. Cultural capital – principals may capacitate members of the SMT and subject heads on the monitoring tool to be used. Principals' may use legitimate power to implement the monitoring plan as well as consequence management to manage curriculum coverage gaps and recovery.

Principals of under-performing schools may evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy through receiving weekly feedback of monitoring and control from HOD's and subject heads. The adequacy of monitoring plan should be reviewed, and the plan be updated quarterly by all SMTs and subject heads. Feedback on monitored work can be made available to members of staff. Improvement and recovery plans should be drawn up, implemented, and monitored as well.

7.4 Synthesis

In the above section, strategies to assist principals to improve performance in under-performing schools in rural areas were presented. The focus of the above strategies was to improve the principal's *habitus*, application of capital and the effective ways of using power to influence performance. The strategy also outlined the people involved in assisting the principal to realise the vision of the school. This section was mainly informed by results as crystallised in Chapter Five and Six as well as the theoretical insights that emerged based on the literature study in Chapters Two and Three. Specific goals and actions were set for each problem identified.

7.5 Recommendations

The following section presents recommendations at various educational levels to assist principals of under-performing schools to improve learner performance. Recommendations are necessary to

bring about changes in the leadership of principals to improve under-performance in secondary schools in rural areas.

7.5.1 Recommendations to principals

7.5.1.1 Recommendations with regards to research question one: What does effective school leadership entail?

Recommendation 1

Principals should enrol and engage on continuous professional development with institutions of higher learning to capacitate themselves with effective school management and leadership. Principals of underperforming schools should engage on improving their ability to influence stubborn stakeholders and should learn to effectively perform mandated administration duties, such as the effective management of teaching and learning, internal relations in the school, learner performance and relationships between the school and the community to achieve the goals and objectives of the school. Principals should also focus on improving their capital, power and emotional intelligence.

Motivation

Findings from this study indicate that principals in underperforming schools display inability to carry out mandated administrative duties aimed at achieving the school's goals and objectives (§7.3.1). They also demonstrated the lack of capacity to manage groups of people (§5.4.3.5; §6.2.2.2). The theory of habitus and field identified the effective use of a principal's habitus, capital, field, and power in leadership (§2.3.1) which was found lacking in underperforming schools. The literature regards effective school leadership as an important tool in guiding schools out of under-performance and dysfunctionality (§5.3.1).

7.5.1.2 Recommendations with regards to research question two: How can effective school leadership improve poor academic performance or sustain high academic performance?

Recommendation 2

Principals of under-performing schools need capacitation or development that may suit their time and pace amid the tight programmes of secondary schools. They may engage in online courses that improve habitus, emotional intelligence, social capital, and effective communication.

Motivation

School principals of under-performing schools – in rural areas – displayed an inability to control or manage their own emotions and the emotions of educators (§7.3.2; §2.10). Principals also displayed a failure to build positive relationships with others (refer §5.3.1.3). Principals should also consider online courses – as suggested in §6.3.

7.5.1.3 Recommendations with regards to research question three: What are the challenges experienced by principals in rural schools that lead to low academic performance?

Recommendation 3

Principals of under-performing schools should work on improving their habitus (character). Principals should identify their weakness in character that hinders them to be effective. They can use free online assessment tools – as discussed in §6.3 – to improve their habitus (character and confidence) to effectively implement policies in the field. There are free online assessment tools principals can use.

Motivation

Under-performing schools experience numerous challenges such as ineffective teaching (refer §5.4.1), ineffective management (refer §2.5.1), a lack of decisive and consistent leadership (refer §5.5) and low motivational levels (refer §2.9; §7.3.3). Findings from this study also indicated that most of these challenges are as a result of principals who are afraid of confronting educators and are also afraid to take decisions that may not favour some (§7.3.3). Principals of under-performing schools also indicated how they avoid confronting issues. The above-mentioned challenges can well be addressed by principals themselves. Free online assessment tools to assist principals in improving the above may also be linked to the emotional intelligence assessment tool – as provided in Section 6.3.

7.5.1.4 Recommendations with regards to research question four: Why do school principals find it difficult to influence the improvement of low academic performance?

Recommendation 4

Principals should work with school governing bodies to prioritise financial capital to address field factors such as lack of educator development, management of resources, monitoring and control, problem-solving skills. Principals of underperforming schools should work improving their own habitus.

Motivation

Schools in rural areas experience the same field factors (refer §7.3.4). However, principals of underperforming schools fail to navigate their way within the same hindrances as performing schools (refer §5.4.2; §6.2.1). Principals in underperforming schools fail because they are afraid to confront educators. Principals in underperforming schools cannot use their habitus to correct and confront the unwanted behaviour and misconduct of educators. They do not use their habitus (factors within the principal) to influence the improvement of learner performance (refer §5.4.3).

7.5.1.5 Recommendations with regards to research question five: How can Bourdieu's theory be used to explain principals' ability to influence learner performance in rural schools?

Recommendation 5

Bourdieu's theory pointed out and explained that the field of power influence leadership. The theory recognises the issue of power and capital in leadership. Bourdieu's theory proved that capital is not automatically available to every leader but is rather available to those individual leaders who make efforts to gain it through the acquisition of power and prestige and by developing goodwill.

Motivation

Bourdieu's theory reflected on the knowledge and ability of the principal to carry out their expected duties. Principals of underperforming schools lacked the ability of the principal to coordinate capital and power for the achievement of educational objectives (refer §7.3.5). Bourdieu's theory acknowledges power as the basis for effective leadership. Principals of underperforming schools missed the fact that by virtue of their position they possess hierarchical and personal power (power within) in school leadership.

7.5.1.6 Recommendations with regards to research question six: Which strategies can school principals employ to improve low academic performance levels?

Recommendation 6

Principals should identify mentors to offer them guidance in effective school leadership. Guidance should include how mentors lead performing schools amid socio-economic factors in rural areas, the use of different forms of capital and power in leadership as well as the effective application of habitus – i.e., the way the principal thinks, behaves and conducts him/herself in exercising leadership in the school.

Motivation

Some of the currently under-performing schools used to perform under the leadership of previous principals who retired. Although, some of the current principals were in the same schools most of them are coming from other schools. Former principals of performing schools may be identified as mentors and coaches for principals of under-performing schools in rural areas (refer §2.11.3 & §6.4). Though principals cannot solve socio-economic factors in communities (refer §3.4.3; §7.3.6), their predecessors managed effective schools and maintained high performance within the same socio-economic conditions. Mentors may also assist principals of under-performing schools to develop a strong habitus.

Recommendation 7

Principals should regularly do self-assessment to determine their strength and abilities in school leadership. The self-assessment should focus on but not limited to personality and characteristics of a leader (habitus), the knowledge of legislation and other policies (Cultural capital), Building of effective teams and relationships in the school (social capital), the effective management of financial resources (economic capital), and the use of power in leadership.

Motivation

Principals of under-performing schools – in rural areas – displayed a lack of knowledge on the use of capital and power in leadership (refer §7.3.6). It is, therefore, recommended that principals should consider the strategies developed in Section 6.4.

Recommendation 8

Principals of under-performing schools should engage in professional development with institutions of learning to further develop their leadership skills through improving their academic knowledge. For example, they may enrol for an Advanced Diploma in School Leadership or other related diplomas.

Motivation

The minimum academic requirement for the appointment of principals is currently a M+3 (three-year diploma in teaching). This minimum requirement does not encourage further education from these principals. Since efforts of staff development are compromised by schools' lack of funds (refer §5.3.1.2), principals must prioritise self-development to improve their academic knowledge of leadership.

Recommendation 9

Principals should use their position (symbolic capital) and legitimate power to conduct school development sessions for the SMT and educators. Areas for development may include roles of SMTs and educators (PAM), monitoring, discipline in the workplace and other education policies.

Motivation

Schools in rural areas do not have funds for development sessions (refer §5.3.3.4). Therefore, principals in under-performing schools do not prioritise development. Unlike in performing schools, under-performing schools reported numerous problems which can be addressed by developing both SMTs and educators. School-based development programmes may be conducted in order to minimise costs and expenses. Furthermore, principals of performing schools indicated that they do strategic planning and school development sessions by themselves at the beginning/end of every year (refer §5.5).

In the data collected, it became evident that principals are not using their power and capital in their leadership. Hence, they find it difficult to improve learner performance. It is therefore recommended that in order for principals of under-performing schools to improve learner performance, principals should use different kinds and forms of capital and power to be able to improve their performance.

7.5.2 Recommendations for the circuit office

Recommendation 10

The circuit managers should introduce clustering of schools together to share best practices.

Motivation

Schools in rural areas work in isolation. Therefore, to push the result of circuits, circuit managers must facilitate collective effort by all principals within the same circuit to share best practice. Principals of under-performing schools indicated inability to use capital and power in leadership while principals of performing schools within the same neighbourhood are performing well. It is, therefore, recommended that these principals must share good practices (refer §2.11.2).

7.5.3 Recommendations for the districts Department of Education

Recommendation 11

Districts can facilitate the establishment of principals' forums, where principals can meet once a term to share ideas. These forums will assist in dealing with practical experience of principals in both

performing and under-performing schools that contribute to under-performance or sustaining high learner performance.

Motivation

Principals in under-performing schools – in rural areas – are not able to manage high emotions, conflicts, power struggles and they cannot effectively communicate with educators and other stakeholders (refer §6.2). Therefore, forums will assist principals to have experts who will assist in dealing with such issues. Participation in such forums will also provide principals with an opportunity to improve their habitus and other personal skills as well.

7.5.4 Recommendations for the Department of Basic Education

Recommendation 12

Principals of under-performing schools showed no capacity of handling stubborn educators who do not want to be monitored, the lack skills to handle conflicts, poor communication, and inability to manage power struggles. Under-performing schools also indicated lack of development due to lack of finances. The Department of Basic Education should prioritise development programmes for educators on policy matters. Development should be aimed at building principals' capacity on leadership skills. Inductions and continuous in-service training should be conducted for principals to further develop their leadership and managerial skills. Development programmes for principals of under-performing schools may include effective monitoring, effective communication, conflict management etc.

Motivation

Under-performing schools have among other things; power struggles between educators and principals and poor human relations and principals are not conversant with effective ways to manage these difficult situations which contribute to poor learner performance. Principals are not formally prepared before they assume their responsibility of school leadership. Many schools in rural areas are not in a good financial position to plan for and fund professional development (refer §5.3.1.2). As a result, most schools in rural areas do not have professional development. The department's development programmes may include SMTs for effective school management teams.

Recommendation 13

The Department of Basic Education should mandate provinces and districts to develop and facilitate programmes to educate principals on social capital - the establishment of effective teams in the school and building relations with all stakeholders. Cultural capital - the knowledge of legislation and policies, Symbolic capital - how to use positional power to stamp authority in the school and

implementing policies. Economic capital – the acquiring and effective management of financial resources. The departmental sessions may also include the issue of power in school leadership.

Motivation

Some principals of under-performing schools – in rural areas – are not aware of their cultural capital (knowledge) (refer §5.3.3.3), symbolic capital (status/position) (refer §5.3.3.1), economic capital (financial resources) (refer §5.3.3.4) and social capital (social networks) (refer §5.3.3.2). Moreover, principals are not in the position to use their legitimate charisma, coercive and reward power (refer §5.3.4, §2.7 & §2.8).

7.5.5 Recommendations for further research

Further research should be conducted to determine how school principals can improve habitus, capital, and power in school leadership. Further recommendations are made to explore how – and to what extent – professional and academic development can improve habitus of principals of under-performing schools to improve their leadership skills.

7.6 Contribution of the study

The focus of the study was to examine and explore the ability of school principals to influence the improvement of learner performance in rural areas. Therefore, Bourdieu's theory outlined that effective leadership possess capital and power. Furthermore, the contribution of this study emerged on the effective application of Bourdieu's theory of habitus, field, capital, and power in school leadership. the study found that the principals' ability to improve learner performance is among other things based on the effective using of capital and power in the field. principals of underperforming secondary schools were found not to be able to display the ability to improve learner performance in secondary schools in rural areas. Through Bourdieu's theory this thesis contributed a new understanding on the application of principals' habitus in leadership which was found lacking in underperforming schools. The deprived rural contexts of underperforming schools exposed principals who cannot apply capital and power in their leadership. This study also outlined how principals of underperforming schools can apply emotional intelligence in their leadership. Principals of underperforming schools were given strategies to apply the available capitals at their disposal as well as how they choose potential power to achieve certain goals.

Bourdieu's theory was used to identified and address various challenges in principals' ability to improve learner performance. Therefore, Bourdieu's theory assisted in adding new insight on

explaining and understanding principals' ability to improve performance of learners in secondary schools in rural areas. It is through Bourdieu's theory of habitus, field, capital, and power that the researcher developed strategies to assist principals to effectively apply habitus, power, and capital in the field of education to improve learner performance. Data found that the field factors are the same in all the schools in rural areas however, the difference which was addressed by developing of strategies were the application of principals' habitus in their leadership.

7.7 Conclusion

This research explored principals' ability to improve performance in secondary schools in rural areas. It further indicated the need for principals' further professional development to improve their leadership skills. Principals need to be given the capacity to be able to employ capital and power in their leadership as this research found that principals of under-performing schools do not realise the importance of power and capital in leadership. Principals in under-performing schools lack the ability to guide schools out of the low performance. As a result, this study developed strategies to assist principals to improve performance. The strategies developed are aimed at harmonising principals' abilities, skills, expertise, and knowledge of school leadership. It is now upon principals of under-performing schools in rural areas to prudently implement strategies developed to improve learner performance.

The findings of this study were presented to determine the ability of principals to improve the low performance in secondary schools in rural areas. The implications of the findings are presented: principals of under-performing schools do not show effective school leadership; they need to realise their own shortcomings in their poor habitus, their lack of power and use of capital in leadership; and they need to work with various stakeholders in the education field (as recommended above) to effectively address their shortcomings.

Research objective number two indicated that effective school leadership can improve poor academic performance and it can also sustain high academic performance. Principals of under-performing schools are not aware of the various kinds of power they possess; these powers need to be awakened through alternative mechanisms. Effective school leadership can improve learner performance only if principals are aware of the various kinds of power, they can use in school leadership.

Research objective number three identified challenges in school leadership as experienced by principals of under-performing schools in rural areas. School principals in rural schools encounter various challenges as indicated in the findings; however, it is possible to overcome these challenges via the correct use of power and authority – as is shown by successful principals. Findings on research objective number four identified reasons why school principals find it difficult to influence the improvement of low academic performance in rural areas. As was indicated by the findings, principals in rural schools find it difficult to improve academic performance because of the shortcoming within themselves (*habitus*) as well as contextual challenges (*field*) that are possible to overcome using the power and authority that comes with their position as principals.

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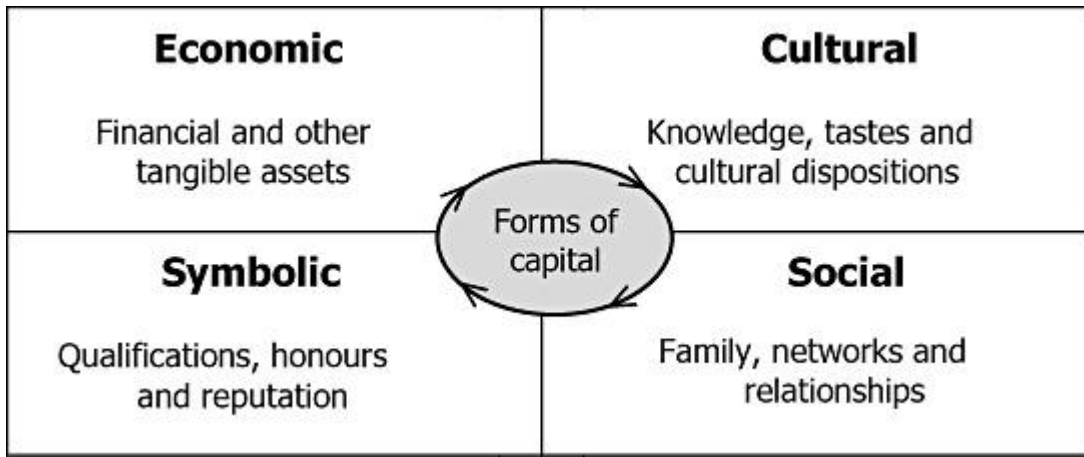
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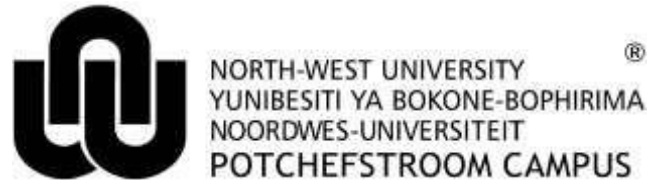
ADDENDUM A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. How many years have you been a principal of this school?
2. What were your previous posts at this or another school?
 - 2.1. If you are coming from another school, what was your previous post there?
 - 2.2. How does the previous school differ from this school? Why? Explain
 - 2.3. What did you learn from the previous schools which you can apply at this school to improve the quality of grade 12 results?
3. How was the academic performance before you took over as the principal in this school? (Or since you have been appointed at the school)
 - Can you indicate the grade 12 examination results of this school for the past five years? Indicate percentages.
 - Compared to other schools?
 - For the past five years did you manage to reach your targets? Why/ Why not?
 - What are your personal goals for the school? What do you want to achieve in the school?
4. Are you satisfied with the performance?
 - 4.1. How does this make you feel as principal?
 - 4.2. What do you think is the reason for such performance? Why?
 - 4.2.1. Field / context,
 - 4.2.2. Capital - economic (finances), cultural (knowledge, culture – local), symbolic (qualifications, management/leadership training, standing in community), social (family, community)
 - 4.2.3. Habitus / own contribution (personality, experience, motivation ability, relationships, conflict resolution)
 - 4.2.3.1. Can you as principal do anything about these factors? What? Why /why not?
5. What are you doing to improve the quality of the matric examination results?
 - 5.1. Field – Facilities, Community – parents, other role players
 - 5.2. Capital
 - 5.3. Habitus - working with staff and other role players. learners, power - what is it? Do you use it? Why / not?
6. Do you think it is working? (Well, / a little bit / significantly / sustainable)
 - 6.1. If yes, why? Habitus / field
 - 6.2. If no, why? Focus more on habitus – why the personal qualities are not enough
7. What are the most difficult decisions that you took as the principal to improve learner performance?
 - 7.1. Why?
 - 7.2. Give an example.
8. What do you think are your strong points to make the changes? What are you doing well or correct?

9. What are the internal factors (inside the school) that you think contribute to the current performance?
 - 9.1. Remember we are looking for habitus and field questions in other words personal from the principal as well as the staff members and in the context of the field.
 - 9.2. What did you do about it?
10. How do you identify areas of needs that have a potential of under-performance in the school? / Do you foresee under-performance before it happens? How/ what do you do about it?
 - 10.1. Field aspects
 - 10.2. habitus aspects
 - 10.3. capital aspects
11. How do you plan improve/uplift morale of both educators and learners in the school?
 - 11.1. Field aspects
 - 11.2. habitus aspects
 - 11.3. capital aspects
12. Looking at the context of your school, what are the challenges that you think are the socio-economic factors that affect teaching and learning in your school? E.g. (Vandalism/teenage pregnancy/ child headed homes/HIV and AIDS/insufficient staff etc. and how do you deal with it).
13. What is the relationship like, between the school and other stakeholders? / How do you ensure that there is a meaningful relationship between the school and other stakeholders.
14. Who determines the annual academic goals for your school? (Yourself school management team the teachers the learners the parents the broader community)
15. How often and to what extent do you give professional development and support to your educators?
16. What do you think may be the biggest challenge to have sustainable improvement – the context (field) or the personal (habitus – of learners, teachers, and self)?
17. Do you think that you as principal have what it takes to change/maintain the academic results of the school? Why /Why not?



ADDENDUM B



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<http://www.nwu.ac.za>

16 June 2020

To Whom It May Concern

I hereby confirm that the ethics application, as stated below, is approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the meeting on 30 April 2020.

Ethics number: NWU-01647-19-A2

Project head: Dr CP van der Vyver

Project team: RPP Baloyi (PhD student – 22016759); Prof J Heystek

Title: School principals' ability to influence the improvement of performance in selected rural schools in Limpopo

Extended period: 30 April 2020 – 30 April

2021 Risk level: Low

Should you have further enquiries in this regard, you are welcome to contact Prof Jako Olivier at 018 285 2078 or by email at Jako.Olivier@nwu.ac.za or Ms Erna Greyling at 018 299 4656 or by email at Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za.

Yours sincerely



Prof J
Olivier
Chair Edu-
REC

ADDENDUM C



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
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School for Education Studies

Tel: 0182994587

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Email: cp.vandervyver@nwu.ac.za

Date: 16 JULY 2020

The District Director
Vhembe East Education District
Private Bag X 2250
SIBASA
0970

THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR: DR RAMBIYANA N. G

VHEMBE EAST EDUCATION DISTRICT

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT

I herewith wish to request your permission for principals to participate in this research, which involves principals of secondary schools. Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

School principals' ability to influence the improvement of under-performance in selected rural areas in Limpopo.

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr CP van der Vyver

CO-SUPERVISOR: Prof J Heystek

ADDRESS: Room G61, Building B11, North-West University, Potchefstroom, 2520

CONTACT NUMBER: 018 2994587 / 0845052695

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM Ph.D. Student: RPP Baloyi

ADDRESS: P. O. Box 2222, Malamulele, 0982

CONTACT NUMBER: 0799241052/0836362280 (Mahuntsi sec school, Malamulele Central)

Ethics Approval number: NWU-01647-19-S2

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER: NWU-01647-19-S2

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this committee. Permission was also obtained from the provincial Department of Basic Education.

What is this research about?

The aims of this research are to:

- To determine from relevant literature what effective school leadership entails.
- To determine how effective school leadership can improve poor academic performance or sustain high academic performance.
- To identify what the leadership challenges experienced by principals in rural areas are.
- To examine why school principals find it difficult to influence the improvement of low academic performance.
- To formulate strategies that can be employed by school principals to improve learner performance in schools.

Participants

- Participants are principals of secondary schools Malamulele Central Circuit.

What is expected of the participants?

Principals are expected to participate in an interview with the researcher. The researcher will ask questions to establish the ability of principals to influence the improvement under-performance in rural areas. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews will be conducted over the phone. The interview will take about one hour and will be conducted over the phone at a time that will suit the participants. The interviews will be recorded with an audio recorder.

Benefits to the participants

Unfortunately, there will be no financial benefits to participants, as they will not receive any remuneration for the participation. They will however play an important role in providing insights on the ability of principals to influence under-performance in rural areas. These insights could be used as information to develop strategies that would assist principals to improve learner performance in secondary schools in rural areas. The results will be made available to you and the school on request.

Risks involved for participants

There are no anticipated risks foreseen for the participants in this research. Participants will be interviewed over the phone which should provide a safe environment. Should any participant at any time feel uncomfortable to continue with the interview, they are free to withdraw from the interview. Their withdrawal will not be held against them. Interviews will not influence formal activities at the school as it will be arranged after hours.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

The identity of the principal will not be made public to any person. The name of the principal will never be published in this research. The information given in the interview will be treated as confidential and will be used for the purpose of this research only. All audio data collected will be stored on a password protected computer and will never be made public.

Dissemination of findings

The findings of this research will be made available to you upon request. Should you have any further questions or enquiries regarding the participation of your principal in this research please don't hesitate to contact the researchers for more information.

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researchers for more information.

DECLARATION BY THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR:

By signing below, I agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

School principals' ability to influence the improvement of under-performance in selected schools in rural areas in Limpopo.

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place) _____ on (date) ____/____/20____

Signature of the district director

ADDENDUM D



The District Director
Vhembe West Education District
Private Bag X 2250
0970

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
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School for Education Studies
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Email: cp.vandervyver@nwu.ac.za
Date: 16 JULY 2020

THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR: MR RAVHUANZWO S.M

VHEMBE WEST EDUCATION DISTRICT

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE VHEMBE WEST DISTRICT

I herewith wish to request your permission for principals to participate in this research, which involves principals of secondary schools. Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

School principals' ability to influence the improvement of learner performance in selected rural areas in Limpopo.

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr CP van der Vyver

CO-SUPERVISOR: Prof J Heystek

ADDRESS: Room G61, Building B11, North-West University, Potchefstroom, 2520

CONTACT NUMBER: 018 2994587 / 0845052695

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM Ph.D. Student: RPP Baloyi

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Ethics Approval number: NWU-01647-19-S2

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

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- To determine from relevant literature what effective school leadership entails.
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The findings of this research will be made available to you upon request. Should you have any further questions or enquiries regarding the participation of your principal in this research please don't hesitate to contact the researchers for more information.

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By signing below, I agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

School principals' ability to influence the improvement of learner performance in selected schools in rural areas in Limpopo.

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- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place) _____ on (date) ____/____/20____

Signature of the district director

ADDENDUM E



The Head of Department
Limpopo Province
Department of Basic Education
Polokwane

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Faculty of Education

School for Education Studies
Tel: 0182994587
Fax: 0182852080
Email: cp.vandervyver@nwu.ac.za
Date

PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE: VHEMBE EAST AND WEST DISTRICTS

I herewith wish to request your permission for secondary schools in the Vhembe East and West districts to participate in this research, which involves principals of secondary schools only. Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

School principal's ability to influence the improvement of learner performance in rural schools in Limpopo.

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER: NWU-01647-19-S2

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr CP van der Vyver
CO-SUPERVISOR: Prof J Heystek
ADDRESS: Room G61, Building B11, North-West University, Potchefstroom, 2520
CONTACT NUMBER: 018 2994587 / 0845052695

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM Ph.D. Student: RPP Baloyi
ADDRESS: P. O. Box 2222, Malamulele, 0982
CONTACT NUMBER: 0799241052/0836362280

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this committee.

What is this research about?

The aims of this research are:

- To determine from relevant literature what effective school leadership entails.

- To determine how effective school leadership can improve poor academic performance or sustain high academic performance.
- To identify what the leadership challenges experienced by principals in rural areas are.
- To examine why school principals find it difficult to influence the improvement of low academic performance.
- To formulate strategies that can be employed by school principals to improve learner performance in schools.

Participants

- Participants are principals of secondary schools in the Vhembe East district.

What is expected of the participants?

Principals are expected to participate in an interview with the researcher. The researcher will ask questions to establish the ability of the principal to influence the improvement learner performance in rural areas. The interview will take about one hour and will be conducted on the premises of the school at a time that will suit the participants. The interviews will be recorded with an audio recorder.

Benefits to the participants

Unfortunately, there will be no financial benefits to participants, as they will not receive any remuneration for the participation. They will however play an important role in providing insights on the ability of the principal to influence learner performance in rural areas. These insights could be used as information to develop strategies that would assist principals to improve learner performance in secondary schools in rural areas. The results will be made available to you and the school on request.

Risks involved for participants

There are no anticipated risks foreseen for the participants in this research. Participants will be interviewed at the premises of the school which should provide a safe environment. Should any participant at any time feel uncomfortable to continue with the interview, they are free to withdraw from the interview. Their withdrawal will not be held against them. Interviews will not influence formal activities at the school as it will be arranged after hours.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

The identity of the principal will not be made public to any person. The name of the principal will never be published in this research. The information given in the interview will be treated as confidential and will be used for the purpose of this research only. All audio data collected will be stored on a password protected computer and will never be made public.

Dissemination of findings

The findings of this research will be made available to you as the district director upon request. Should you have any further questions or enquiries regarding the participation of your principal in this research please don't hesitate to contact the researchers for more information.

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researchers for more information.

DECLARATION BY THE HOD:

By signing below, I agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

School principal's ability to influence the improvement of learner performance in rural schools in the Limpopo.

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place) _____ on (date) ____/____/20____

Signature of the HOD

ADDENDUM F

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

School for Education Studies

Tel: 0182994587

Fax: 0182852080

Email: cp.vandervyver@nwu.ac.za

Date:

TO THE PRINCIPAL

_____ **SECONDARY SCHOOL**

MALAMULELE

0982

REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH

I herewith wish to request your consent to participate in this research, which involves principals of secondary schools in the Vhembe East district. Before you give consent, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

School principals' ability to influence the improvement of learner performance in selected rural areas in Limpopo

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER: NWU-01647-19-S2

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr CP van der Vyver

CO-SUPERVISOR: Prof J. Heystek

ADDRESS: Room G61, Building B11, North-West University, Potchefstroom, 2520

CONTACT NUMBER: 018 2994587 / 0845052695

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM Ph.D. Student: RPP Baloyi

ADDRESS: P. O. Box 2222, Malamulele, 0982

CONTACT NUMBER: 0833945230/0836362280

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this committee. Permission was also asked from the district Department of Basic Education, circuit office as well as the school SGB.

What is this research about?

The aims of this research are to:

- To determine from relevant literature what effective school leadership entails.
- To determine how effective school leadership can improve poor academic performance or sustain high academic performance.
- To identify what the leadership challenges experienced by principals in rural areas are.
- To examine why school principals find it difficult to influence the improvement of low academic performance.
- To formulate strategies that can be employed by school principals to improve learner performance in schools.

Participants

- The participants in the research will include principals of secondary schools within the Vhembe East district. You are also included as one of the principals.

What is expected of you as participant?

As a principal, it would be expected of you to participate in an interview with the researcher. The researcher will ask questions to establish the ability of the principal to influence the improvement of learner performance in rural areas. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interview will not be conducted face-to-face but telephonically. The interview will take about one hour of your time and will be conducted over the phone at a time that will suit you. The interviews will be recorded with an audio recorder.

Benefits to you as participant

Unfortunately, there will be no financial benefits to you as you will not receive any remuneration for your participation. You will, however, play an important role in providing insights on the ability of the principal to influence learner performance in rural areas. These insights could be used as information to develop strategies that would assist principals to improve learner performance in secondary schools in rural areas. The results will be made available to you and the school on request.

Risks involved for participants

There are no anticipated risks foreseen for you as a participant in this research. You will be interviewed over the phone which should provide a safe environment. The only discomfort you may have is that you would have to sacrifice an hour of your time for the interview. Should you at any time feel uncomfortable to continue with the interview, you are free to withdraw from the interview. Your withdrawal will not be held against you and your participation is entirely voluntary.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

Your identity will not be made public to any person. Your name will never be published in this research. The information given in the interview will be treated as confidential and will be used for the purpose of this research only. All audio data collected will be stored on a password protected computer and will never be made public.

Dissemination of findings

The findings of this research will be made available to you as the participants upon request. Should you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research please do not hesitate to contact the researchers for more information.

Yours sincerely
(Researcher)

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT:

By signing below, I cell number:.....agree to take part in a research study entitled: School principal's ability to influence the improvement of learner performance in rural schools in the Vhembe East District.

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of me in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the research process before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place) _____ on (date) ____/____/20____

Signature of participant

Researcher

ADDENDUM G

LETTER FROM THE LANGUAGE EDITOR

**WESSEL
KRUGER**

Editor and Proofreader

Research consultant

PhD Art et Scien.

CONTACT

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● Wessel Kruger

✉ wessel@sipc.co.za

Mooibraai
Winburg
PO Box 145
9420

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Herewith I, Wessel Johannes Kruger, declare that I am a qualified, certified language practitioner and that I have edited the following document for language and writing errors:

**School principals' ability to influence
the improvement of performance in selected rural schools in Limpopo**

for: RPP BALOYI

All changes and suggestions were indicated via track changes (in MS Word) for the author to verify. I take no responsibility in the instance of authors disregarding such changes and suggestions, for plagiarised copy or for factually incorrect statements. The document remains the final responsibility of the author.

Best regards,



Wessel Kruger,
8/12/2021 /

