

**Experiences of female principals as  
leaders of successful secondary schools  
in the North-West Province**

**LKM Motlhabane**

**orcid.org 0000-0003-2630-2560**

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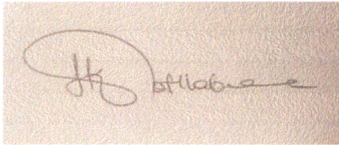
Promoter: Prof CB Zulu

Graduation ceremony: April 2020

Student number: 16396901

## DECLARATION

I, **Louisa Kgomotso Mmaphatsima Motlhabane**, declare that this thesis entitled **Experiences of female principals as leaders of successful secondary schools in the North West Province** is my own work and all sources that have been used are duly acknowledged in the list of references. Furthermore, this work has not been submitted to this or any other institution before for any qualification by me or any other person.

A rectangular photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored, textured surface. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'LK Motlhabane'.

Signature:

Date: 03 February 2020

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my late grandparents, Reverend Titus and Maria Lenkwe, Tatedi and Mmaphatsima Kgokong, my late father, Reverend Japhta Lenkwe, and my late mother-in-law, Plantina Motlhabane, whose dreams and prayers for me have resulted in this achievement.

I also dedicate this study to my mother, Herrieth Lenkwe, for her nurturing love and care. She is my rock. This one is for you mom!

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## **ABSTRACT**

A growing body of research on female leadership shows that females are generally successful as leaders. Although, historically, females have never been the majority in leadership positions in many institutions including secondary schools, their number has steadily increased in what has been, traditionally, 'male territory' thus creating a critical mass and a pool of subjects for the study of female leadership experience. The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of female principals as leaders of 'successful' secondary schools. Four female principals were purposively selected to participate in a multiple case study design that followed a constructivist/interpretive research paradigm and was underpinned by three leadership theories namely, transformational, instructional and relational leadership and ethic of care. The leadership experiences of the four female principals were explored through observations, in-depth interviews and the diary method. The findings revealed that although these female principals were successful in their job, their career advancement was not without obstacles. The leadership styles employed by the principals were not always democratic or collaborative as each situation called for a different style. For instance, they applied autocracy when major decisions had to be taken. The ethic of care, nurturing and 'motherhood' were dominant attributes that were revealed in the leadership of these females. These principals understood leadership as inspiring and convincing followers towards achieving the vision of the school. This study contributes to new horizons of knowledge by developing a model of successful school leadership by females. The capabilities and contributions of female principals who participated in this study is an inspiration to those who intend to become future leaders.

## **KEYWORDS**

Female principals

Leadership

Successful schools

Secondary schools

Leadership theories

## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ACE:	Advanced Certificate in Education
AA:	Administration Assistant
ATCP:	Alternatives to Corporal Punishment
CAQDAS:	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
DBE:	Department of Basic Education
DoE:	Department of Education
DH:	Departmental Head
DTTs:	District Task Teams
ELRC:	Education Labour Relations Council
EMIS:	Education Management Information System
HED:	Higher Education Diploma
LTSM:	Learning and Teaching Support Material
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisations
NSC:	National Senior Certificate
NTA:	National Teaching Awards
PAM:	Personnel Administrative Measures
QLTC:	Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign
RCL:	Representative Councils of Learners
SACE:	South African Council of Educators
SADTU:	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SGB:	School Governing Body
SMT:	School Management Team
SAPA:	South African Principals' Association
SASA:	South African Schools' Act

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# CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION



Leadership of secondary schools in many countries, including South Africa, is still predominantly male-dominated. Females are still under-represented in leadership positions generally and have never been the majority of secondary school principals (Pashiardis & Johansson, 2016:20; Shakeshaft, 1987:18; Gipson, Pfaff, Mendelsohn, Catenacci & Burke, 2017:32). Nevertheless, there is an increasing number of them who hold prominent positions in education in many countries today. For example, the ushering in of the new political era in South Africa in 1994 has seen two female ministers, namely, Naledi Pandor and Angie Motshekga being among those at the helm of the Department of Education and the growing number of secondary schools headed by females, in comparison to males. Despite the high representation of females in the teaching profession, females are still disproportionately represented in leadership positions of secondary schools in the majority of countries, including South Africa (Bosch, 2015:2; Lumby, Azaola, de Wet, Skervin, Walsh & Williamson, 2010:1; Lumby & Azaola, 2013:30; Diko, 2014:827; Schmidst & Mestry, 2015:1). According to Faulkner (2015:419), under-representation of female principalship is an international conundrum which is also prevalent in South Africa even though there are policies about the empowerment of females (Diko, 2014:825 & 827).

In many instances, male principals predominantly lead secondary schools. For instance, in 2013, the South African Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, was quoted in a newspaper article as saying, “only 36% of school principals are females” (m.new.24.com City Press, 2013). According to Minister Motshekga, in 2013, “there were 8 210 female principals and 14 337 male principals in permanent posts in South Africa.” In 2016, there were 80 female-led secondary school principals in the North West Province out of 446 secondary schools (ASS2016 Survey).

In order to gain more insight into female leadership, it is worth studying the experiences of the few females who have made it into leadership positions. Al-Jaradat (2014:147) contends that these female principals are eligible and efficient in leading successful secondary schools to the extent that their leadership sometimes supersedes that of males. Bush and Coleman (2009:3) as well as Mollel and Tshabangu (2014:47) also indicate that female principals bring significant strengths and different qualities to leadership and management, which may be particularly appropriate to effective leadership today. Looking at the experiences of these females in leading

secondary schools, particularly successful ones, could provide insight into their experiences of leadership of schools. Understanding the roles they play and the leadership styles they use in these successful schools might provide insights into the study of female leadership and could ultimately dispel 'doubts about the leadership skills of females which still exist in most countries' (Mollel & Tshabangu, 2014:46; Faulkner, 2015:420). Moreover, there is a wide gap in appreciating the leadership of females in general and consequently they are perceived in less favourable ways (Mollel & Tshabangu, 2014:46; Gipson, Pfaff, Mendelsohn, Catenacci & Burke, 2017:35).

A successful school is generally characterised in terms of learner outcomes, or effective leadership. Learner outcomes are not the only yardstick to measure the success of a school as Ginya and Perumal (2015:1) point out. Effective and efficient leadership skills can also nurture successful school. In addition, bringing various crucial values within the institution could also be a measure of success (Netshitangani & Msila, 2014:259; Day & Sammons, 2016:8).

At this point, it is necessary to explain how a successful school is defined in this study. A 'successful' school in the context of this study and that of the North West Province is defined in terms of overall National Senior Certificate results of a school according to a cut-off point of a 70% pass rate. A female school principal leading a successful school in the context of this study refers to a female principal who has been leading a school which has been performing at between 90% and 100% in matric results for a period of three or more years consecutively from 2012-2015.

In their review of successful school leadership, Day and Sammons (2016:9) highlighted that 'success' can be accumulated by 'promoting positive values to students such as integrity, compassion and fairness; love for lifelong learning and fostering citizenship and personal, economic and social capabilities.' This is an indication that secondary schools can be successful when they are led by committed principals and a disciplined school community. Successful schools can be described as functional with all the necessary management systems in place (Bush, 2007 cited by Diko, 2014: 829).

There is an array of literature on gender globally (Coleman, 2003:2; Chandana & Damayanthi, 2011:1; Chin, 2011:1; Lumby *et al.*, 2010:1; Al-Jaradat, 2014:148; Muzvidziwa, 2014:213; Mollel & Tshabangu, 2014:48), comparing the leadership of males versus that of females. Bush and Coleman, (2009:33) have shown that the experiences and attitudes of females are different

from those of their male counterparts. Bush and Coleman (2009:33) indicate that females could bring strengths to leadership and management that may be particularly appropriate to effective educational leadership today. It is these 'strengths of leadership and management' that need to be explored in determining how best to improve educational leadership in schools. Thus, exploring the experiences of females in educational leadership positions in successful schools provides significant insight into the 'strengths' they bring to leadership and management of schools.

Murphy (2011:34) asserts that many female leaders do not "lead" the way leadership is written about in the textbooks or from formula crafted from studies of their male counterparts. Females may have what some studies refer to as the 'female leadership advantage'. In their study of the female leadership advantage, Eagly and Carli (2003:825) conclude that "females possess both advantages and disadvantages as leaders with the disadvantages arising primarily in roles that are male-dominated or otherwise defined in masculine ways".

Eagly and Carli (2003:825) also note that successful female leaders generally work hard and seek leadership styles that do not unnecessarily elicit resistance to their authority by challenging norms dictating that females be egalitarian and supportive of others, and that given these constraints, transformational leadership may be especially advantageous for females because it encompasses some behaviours that are consistent with the female gender role's demand for supportive, considerate behaviours.

Murphy (2011:34) and Eagly and Carli (2003:825) make contentions about female leadership that point to the fact that females may have some leadership styles that cause them to approach leadership differently from males. It is this notion of a 'different' leadership experience that this study seeks to explore about female secondary school principals. Moreover, leadership has been mostly investigated from a male perspective and little research, according to Smit (2014:117), has been "conducted on a feminine approach such as relational leadership in educational leadership".

Although the increase in the number of females in educational leadership (and management) positions is slow and full of impediments, there are females who are still determined to take the leadership of secondary schools albeit the obstacles. One of the obstacles that Timney (2011:3) highlights is the pressure that females have in fitting their leadership styles into existing ones rather than being allowed to develop their own styles. Coronel, Moreno and Carrasco (2010:143) observe that 'females continue to increase their share of managerial positions, but the rate of

progress is slow, uneven and sometimes discouraging.’ However, despite the obstacles encountered by female principals, they are, in the view of Coronel *et al.* (2010:148) “still committed to running their schools with integrity. They want to see their ideas put into action; they want to be agents of change regarding schooling and schoolwork”. Therefore, researching the experiences of this minority of females who are in leadership positions in secondary schools, particularly in successful schools, might contribute towards a model for school leadership that builds more humanitarian, just and cohesive educational institutions (Coronel *et al.*, 2010:159). It is against this background that this study strives to explore the experiences of female principals as leaders of successful secondary schools.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

There is a dearth of research on female principals in general and in particular on experiences of female principals as leaders of successful secondary schools (Ginya & Perumal, 2015:1). In the North West Province of South Africa, Lumby *et al.*’s (2010:13) study found evidence of insufficient research on leadership of women in secondary schools. Yet, the number of females now leading secondary schools that are performing well has grown large enough to merit academic studies conducted to provide an in-depth understanding of the leadership experiences of these principals in such schools.

This study seeks to answer the following **main research question**:

### **1.2.1 Main research question**

What are the leadership experiences of female principals of successful secondary schools?

In order to fully answer the research question, the following sub-questions are posed:

#### **1.2.1.1 Sub-questions**

- How do female principals of successful secondary schools perceive good leadership?
- What leadership attributes and qualities do female secondary school principals perceive as relevant for leadership of successful schools?
- What leadership styles are commonly preferred by females in school leadership for achieving successful learner outcomes?
- What model of ‘successful’ school leadership for aspiring male and female principals could be developed from the study?

### **1.2.2 Objectives**

- To determine female principals' perceptions of good leadership.
- To examine and describe the leadership attributes and qualities of female principals in successful secondary schools.
- To determine commonly preferred leadership styles of female principals for successful learner outcomes.
- To develop a 'successful school leadership model' for aspiring and current female (and male) school principals.

### **1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study explores the experiences of female principals leading successful secondary schools; therefore, the study is significant to female leaders who are in leadership positions in schools and other institutions with regard to leadership techniques related to female leadership. The state of affairs in the Department of Education in South Africa on the issue of females not being represented in leadership positions, especially in secondary schools and elsewhere, need to be looked at through the lens of those already in leadership of such schools that are predominantly led by males and how female leaders have managed to secure their leadership roles. The study serves as a 'mirror' to those who already serve in leadership positions and strives to encourage those females who aspire to become leaders of secondary schools (both females and males).

The study might enable female principals to take inspiration from others to adapt lessons learned to their own situations (Schleicher, 2018:62) and further improving their work from good to great (Tubin, 2017:791). The study might also provide females who are uncertain about the future of female leadership in educational sectors with confidence to "hold the bull by its horns" and with knowledge and skills on how females in leadership positions have shattered the glass ceiling. Therefore, leadership aspirants might draw on personal experiences from those studied.

In addition, the study might also shed some light on leadership theories that are related to how females lead. Theories such as Relational, Transformational and Instructional leadership are said to be advantageous on female leadership, depending on the context (Eagly, 2013:5).

Furthermore, the study might inform policy makers and recruiters to consider female leaders into leadership positions, especially principalship of secondary schools because females are able to

lead and manage in such schools. This is evident in Eagly's study (2013:5) asserting that "women face a double standard in attaining leadership roles".

#### **1.4 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

This section is divided into two parts. The first part provides a critical discussion of current models of educational leadership and the second part focuses particularly on those that are closely associated with female leadership. Current models of school leadership are briefly examined such as managerial leadership, transactional and transformational leadership, moral leadership, participative leadership, distributed leadership, teacher leadership, postmodern leadership and contingent leadership.

In-depth and critical analyses of three female leadership theories underpinning this study are presented. Each of these theories helps in understanding some aspects of the phenomenon under study (Maxwell, 2012:86), which in this case is the leadership experiences of female principals in secondary schools that are perceived as successful. The three theories each have something to offer in unpacking the experiences of female principals leading successful secondary schools that bring about behaviours and events in their institutions (Bush, 2007:393). These theories include Relational, Transformational and Instructional Leadership and as Smit (2014:117) observes, "these theories offer potential to strengthen the knowledge base around female educational leadership".

Relational leadership theory and the ethic of care, transformational leadership and instructional leadership theories are discussed. Although these leadership approaches may be used by both females and males, they are also a 'best fit' as described by Day and Sammons (2016:17) for female principals in successful secondary schools.

Khan and Nawaz (2018:20) contend that leadership theories are categorised by, firstly, the way the leader and the led relate, secondly, by the leader's personal qualities and thirdly, by the skills relevant to the assigned tasks. Bush and Glover (2003) argue that developing a successful model of leadership is not easy. However, a model assists in reflecting different ways of understanding and interpreting the behaviours of successful leaders (Bush, 2007:394).

#### **1.4.1 Relational leadership theory and ethic of care**

Relational leadership theory was developed by Regan and Brooks in 1995 (Akram, Lei, Hussain, Haider & Akram, 2016:118). Though this leadership theory is uncertain according to Uhl-Bien (2006:654), it is seen as “a view of leadership and organisation as human social constructions that emanate from rich connections and interdependencies of organisations and their members” (Uhl-Bien, 2006:655).

On the other hand, care ethics were developed from a feminist perspective. Ethics of care points to the fact that a human being depends on others (New World Encyclopaedia), that is, school communities depend on each other for their well-being. Smit (2013:89) indicates that relational leadership is not only meant for females; male leaders can also become relational. Relational leadership and ethic of care therefore potentially strengthen the knowledge base around female leadership (Smit, 2013:89). This theory assists in understanding the experiences of female leadership in the context of South Africa given the scarcity of research on females as leaders in general and as leaders of secondary schools in particular, especially in the North West Province of South Africa (Smit, 2013:89).

#### **1.4.2 Transformational leadership theory**

According to Bush (2007:397), transformational leadership theory, which is charismatic in its nature, is one of the leadership theories that has the potential to engage all stakeholders in the achievement of institutional objectives. Burns (Burns, 1978; Grootenboer & Hardy, 2015:404) developed the concept of transformational leadership. According to Burns (1978), transforming leadership is a process in which “leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation.” According to Bush and Glover (2014:214), the success of a transformational leader can be gained when teachers are on board and this can be done through building school vision, establishing school goals, modelling best practices and demonstrating high performance expectations. The principal must inspire the followers in order pursue activities linked to the vision (Bush & Glover, 2014:215; Grootenboer & Hardy, 2014:404; Nyamboga *et al.*, 2014:199; Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016:3). In a nutshell, transformational leadership is based on the commitments and capabilities of all stakeholders under the leadership of an individual, hence female principals displaying more transformational style (Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016:3).

### **1.4.3 Instructional leadership theory**

Lastly, instructional leadership theory differs from relational leadership and transformational leadership theories. Bush and Glover (2014:213) observe that there is growing attention to instructional leadership in South African schools' context. Instructional leadership is one of the models that could be appropriate to school improvement in South Africa (Bush & Glover, 2014:215). Its focus is on the direction of influence, rather than its nature. The focus of instructional leadership is on managing teaching and learning, which are core curriculum activities in schools (Bush, 2007:400).

The aforementioned leadership theories are the theoretical lens in this study and they provide insight into issues related to female leaders in secondary schools of South Africa and how the "charismatic" nature of these females allow the vision and goals of their institutions to be a success.

## **1.5 DELINEATION AND LIMITATIONS**

There are four districts in the North West Province, namely, Ngaka Modiri Molema Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati, Dr Kenneth Kaunda and Bojanala. This study was delimited to one of these four districts in the North West Province, namely, Ngaka Modiri Molema. It focused on the leadership experiences of four female principals leading performing secondary schools, which have performed, between 90-100% for three consecutive years. The main limitation was the small sample size of four participants. However, in qualitative research, large samples are not necessary, as the aim is not to generalize to a larger population but to seek in-depth understanding of a phenomenon.

## **1.6 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

Defining concepts used in the study gives clear meaning and understanding of what the study entails. The following are the key concepts.

### **1.6.1 Leadership**

Leadership is the process of influencing the behaviour of followers towards the accomplishment of the goals set for the organisation.

### **1.6.2 Principal**

Principal is “an educator employed and appointed as a manager of a school responsible for providing leadership and management” (Department of Education, 2010:89).

### **1.6.3 Successful schools**

Successful schools, in the context of this study, are those schools, which obtain beyond a cut-off point of a 70% pass rate, that is, above 90%. For schools to be successful, evidence of students’ achievement beyond expectation should exist. Other indicators of success, which are context-specific, should be evident in the school, for example, the overall reputation of the school and awards for exemplary programmes should exist (Gurr, 2015:136).

### **1.6.4 Secondary schools**

Secondary schools are schools that offer selection of grades in two bands known as General Education and Training (GET) and Further Education and Training (FET). Secondary schools range from grade 8-12 (Department of Education, 2009: 10).

### **1.6.5 Student/learner**

A student is defined as “any person enrolled in an education institution” (National Education Policy Act, 1996: A-3).

A learner is “a pupil or a student at any early learning site, school, further education and training institutions or adult centre (South African Council for Educators Act, 2000:1). Therefore, the two concepts, student and learner, are used interchangeably in the study.

## **1.7 CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH**

This study contributes a model titled “Successful Female Leadership Model” for the successful leadership of schools by both female and male secondary school principals. This model adds to the body of knowledge on the theory and practice of leadership in general and of leadership of successful secondary schools in particular. This is relevant not only for females who wish to become principals, but also for those who aspire to apply for leadership positions in different institutions. The model contributes towards theory and practice of leading successful schools in

general and of how females exercise and experience leadership particularly in schools considered as successful.

The model also contributes to the improvement in the implementation of equity policies in South Africa so that when females are due for promotional posts, they are not seen as irrelevant but as people who want to achieve goals set for success.

## **1.8 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS**

### **Chapter 1: Orientation, problem statement, aims and research questions**

An overview and background of the problem investigated is provided in this chapter. This includes the statement of the problem, aim, questions and significance of the study, as well as delimitations and limitations of the study.

### **Chapter 2: Theoretical and conceptual frameworks underpinning the study**

Female leadership theories are discussed and critiqued. These are Relational, Transformational and Instructional leadership theories.

### **Chapter 3: Review of literature on leadership styles**

This chapter focuses on the review of literature on female leadership, female leadership styles, women and career advancement challenges, school leadership issues and school community relations.

### **Chapter 4: Research design and methodology**

Chapter four explains the research design and methodology in the study. The study used qualitative (interpretivist) research where interview, observation and the diary were utilised as instruments to gather information.

### **Chapter 5: Presentation and discussion of findings**

Findings from interviews and observations are presented and discussed. The chapter also focuses on the interpretation and analysis of data.

## **Chapter 6: Summary of the study and findings, conclusions and recommendations**

### Section A



In chapter six a final overview of the study, the major findings and conclusions are presented. Recommendations are also stated in this chapter.

### Section B

A proposed model for female leadership of successful schools in the North West Province is presented.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 1 has presented an orientation and background to the study based on the research problem. Included also in chapter one were the research questions, research aims, objectives and research methodology that outlined how the problem was addressed. This chapter presents the theoretical framework employed in the study. According to Khan, Nawaz and Khan (2016:1), leadership theories have been refined and modified throughout the years and they are still relevant, however, their relevance will depend on the context in which they are applied. Therefore, Williams (2013:24) asserts that in order to understand the origin of leadership theories, the concept of leadership itself should be examined.

It is argued that feminism seeks for females the same opportunities and privileges that society gives to males (Damons, 2008:18) and that leadership is not a simple process; it requires multiple leadership abilities (Al-Jaradat, 2014:148) like effective communication (Murphy & Hallinger, 1982:143); motivation (Lumadi, 2017:4); trustworthiness (Belle, 2018:46; Yukl, 2012:77, creativity, feedback (Ismail, Don, Husin & Khalid, 2018:136), responsibility, delegating, positivity, commitment and flexibility.

Bush and Middlewood (2013:9) assert that high quality leadership is vital in achieving successful schools. This means that leaders improve learning indirectly by developing and sustaining good relationships with teachers, who work directly with students. Bush and Middlewood (2013:9) contend that successful leaders focus most strongly on motivating and developing people rather than establishing and maintaining systems and structures because there is no way that anyone can separate a leader from a follower. It means that for a person to become a leader there must be people that they lead.

In education settings, people are more likely to show commitment if they are valued by those who have responsibility for them (Bush & Middlewood, 2013:9). This means that if principals value the work of teachers and have good working relations, there is harmony in the schools. Developing relationships based on integrity, trust and respect for the dignity and worth of others is a prerequisite if leaders hope to maximise their influence on those who engage with them within their fields of influence (Duignan, 2012:145). Duignan (2012:145) argues that educational leaders are accountable to stakeholders (learners, parents, communities).

Educational leadership requires a person who is an expert at working through competing commitments such as autonomy and fairness (O'Sullivan & West-Burnham, 2011:3). For a female principal to take advantage of the opportunities, they will have to learn new ways and have the courage to step out and take responsibility for the future of their schools (O'Sullivan & West-Burnham, 2011:3). Being a principal requires a dedicated person who cares deeply about his/her work and who takes care of him/herself (O'Sullivan & West-Burnham, 2011:15). Burns (2003:142) explains that "leadership is pursued through a process of mutual actualisation with others, motivated by commitment to a value or a purpose that stands higher than the person". He asserts that "leaders rise one step ahead of followers", but continued progress depends on their ability to stay closely attuned to the evolving wants, needs and expectations of the followers.

Males and females lead and manage in completely distinctive ways. Lumby, Azaola, de Wet, Skervin, Walsh & Williamson (2010:32) refer to a style of leadership for a woman that takes a firm, non-compromising attitude and also a distinctively feminine 'mothering and nurturing' style. The participants in Lumby *et al.*'s (2010:32) study believed they were capable of managing schools and as such presented "the strongest value supporting and inspiring the process for achieving goals." The prevalence of caring as a foundation of leading amongst principals suggests that both social conditions and nature of the environment may have influenced a specific gender identity that has helped to shape the way of leading for a majority of female principals (Lumby *et al.*, 2010:32). The strong tendencies to mothering, nurturing and community response were presented by the principals as a conscious strategy directed at redress of a legacy of socio-economic ills largely associated with schools lacking the resources necessary to deliver quality education to learners (Lumby *et al.*, 2010:32).

Females have developed values and beliefs that translate into specific behaviours arising in their leadership styles (Normore & Jean-Marie, 2007:72). Research has indicated that females are socialised into show their emotions, feelings, compassion, patience and intuition and that leadership styles in education are more democratic, participative, inclusive and collaborative (Normore & Jean-Marie, 2007:72). Female leaders value having influence more than having power. When they are teaching in classrooms, they motivate students without the need to use domination (Normore & Jean-Marie, 2007:72).

### 2.1.1 Examining the concept of leadership

Leadership is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been widely researched and not easy to define (Scott, Coates & Anderson, 2008:1; King, 1991: 43). Leithwood *et al.* and Yukl (as cited by Bush & Clover, 2003:2) acknowledge that there is no agreed definition on the concept of leadership. Blackwell (2009:241) contends that "... there are as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have worked to lead." Leithwood and Riehl (2003:2) assert that at the core of most definitions are two functions, which are: providing direction and exercising influence. Roe and Drake (1980:99) contend that the leadership is "a complex process, therefore they contend that the leader is viewed as a potent force for good in the organisation; his task is to use the influence of his office to bind the wills of his subordinates in accomplishing the purposes beyond their self-serving ends."

As such, leadership is a planned process that is based on the following results:

- The challenging of people to work toward an ever-expanding vision of excellence in the achievement of organisational goals and objectives.
- The creation of a threat-free environment for growth so that the creative talents and skills of each person are used to best advantage.
- The encouragement and building of working relationships that are individually and organisationally satisfying, unifying and strengthening in the realisation of mutually determined goals and objectives.
- The optimisation of available material resources (Roe & Drake, 1980:100).

The above definition, according to Roe and Drake (1980:100), assists leaders to identify and nourish any ideas, acts and efforts that further the goals and objectives of the institutions. In contrast, Scott, Coates and Anderson (2008:1) describe leadership as the process of engaging people in charge, leading them forward, achieving voluntary followership, helping identify what most needs to be done and then helping in making it happen.

Hollander (cited by Hamal, 2019:2) defines leadership as a process of influence between a leader and those who are followers. Bass (1990:19-20) asserts that leadership is an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves structuring of the situation and perceptions and expectations of members. Bass (1990:20) adds that leadership occurs when one group

member modifies the motivation or competencies of others in the group, therefore, any team member can exhibit some amount of leadership.

Leadership, on the other hand, is defined as “influencing others’ actions in achieving desirable ends (Bush, 2007:392). Leadership is defined as influence which is a part of most conceptions of leadership because it is a central element in many definitions (Bush & Glover, 2003:4). Mbokazi (2015:471) contends that the influence may help in arriving at what constitutes success of the school. Moynihan and Van Wart (2013:554) add that leadership comprises a complex set of processes that is difficult to perform successfully, and that in as much as it is not easy to define leadership, it is necessary to make fundamental distinctions about leadership, expose assumptions, define terms and have some basic mental models of leadership that are specific to the context of the organisation. Therefore, Moynihan and Van Wart (2013:554) add to what has been contended that leadership is perceived as the ability to influence others, the ability to change organisations, the ability to provide a vision, the ability to create consensus to move forward and the use of emotional intelligence or the use of common sense.

Bush and Glover (2003) view leadership as “a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes”. Mestry (2017:1) is of the view that leadership is

a process that develops human relation skills and that leaders (principals) should understand it as such. Leadership involves inspiring and supporting others towards the achievement of a vision for the school which is based on clear personal and professional values. ...leadership is about supervising the curriculum, improving the instructional programme of the school, working with staff to identify the vision and mission for the school and building close relationship with the community.

From the definitions above, it can be concluded that leadership is a wide and complex concept. The definitions of leadership indicate that leadership cannot be enacted in silos, it is a collaborative and joint effort.

## **2.2 LEADERSHIP THEORIES**

A general overview of educational leadership theories is presented in the first part of this section but the bulk of the section is related to those theories associated with female behaviours. The models put forward here are drawn from the work of Leithwood *et al.* (1999) and Bush (2007:394). The discussion of the theories focuses on their relevance to school leadership in

general and on female leadership in particular. The review interrogates the appropriateness of these models in schools in general and in particular how they resonate with successful secondary schools led by females. It is important to note that the success of the school lies in the leader who applies a ‘little bit’ of each theory because they have distinctive advantages and drawbacks. These theories are:

- Managerial leadership
- Participative leadership
- Contingency leadership
- Transactional leadership
- Moral leadership
- Postmodern leadership
- Distributed and teacher leadership

### **Managerial leadership theory**

The focus of this leadership model is on the leader’s functions, tasks and behaviours. It is characterised by placing the primary responsibility upon the tasks that have to do with the smooth operation of the school (Roe & Drake, 1980:14). The success of this model is basically that if the leader carries the functions competently, the work of others in the school/organisation is essentially facilitated. Bush’s (2007:395) stance is that the leader needs to develop and implement cyclical processes that involve their managerial functions, which are: goal setting, needs identification, priority setting, planning, budgeting, implementing and evaluating.

The managerial leadership model manages existing activities successfully such as achieving functional school as an essential requirement if learning is to take place.

Bush (2003:55) comments that this type of leadership does not include the concept of vision, which is central to most leadership models thus, when vision and mission have been defined and goals agreed upon, they have to be converted into strategic and operational management (Bush, 2003:186). The focus of this model is therefore more on getting tasks done than on visioning a better future for the school. However, this does not mean that managerial leadership is not a

significant element for the success of the school. The disadvantage of applying managerial leadership is that teachers and principals might not be enthusiastic in owning innovations if they are required to implement externally imposed (top-down model) changes which may lead to possible failure (Bush, 2003:56; Bush, 2007:396). In a nutshell, managerial leadership is 'a vital part of the armoury of any successful principal.'

### **Participative leadership theory**

Participative leadership theory can be traced back to the early 1960s. Hamal (2019:12), describes participative leadership as a 'popular remedy' because it provides opportunities for employees to take part in decision-making through sharing ideas about their work and working conditions. Participation of staff members will provide efficiency in a team "when the workers feel a sense of participation and task involvement, they will identify with the organisation, take responsibility, and strive to contribute to the organisation's objectives." (Crane as cited by Hamal, 2019:10).

Participative leadership model is about 'bonding' staff together and increases commitments of all involved in the school towards the success of the school. It reduces the burdens of leadership when function and roles are shared (Bush, 2003:78). It is an attractive model of leadership because it gives to teachers and other stakeholders the courage to become involved in decision making process. In contrast, Roe and Drake (1980:103) argue that this leadership model slows movement in the organisation with nothing ever really getting done because everyone has a say in everything, unless the principal clarifies a well-planned coordinated operation that clearly identifies goals and standards of performance with procedures established to encourage maximum achievement (Roe & Drake, 1980:104). Therefore, participative model is perceived to be facilitative, supportive and non-directive in using this type of leadership model that also needs to be inclusive in shared decision making (Marczynski, 2011:21).

Leithwood *et al.* (cited by Bush, 2003:78) suggest that this leadership is normative and is based on three categories: participation will increase school effectiveness; participation is justified by democratic principles; and leadership is potentially available to any legitimate stakeholder. According to Eagly's study (2013:5), being a participative leader does not necessarily mean that it is advantageous to lead but depends on the context and ultimately the leader (principal) remains accountable for all decisions taken under collective process (Bush, 2003:187). Participative leadership theory is therefore a collective measure between the leader and the

subordinates, and the success of this leadership depends on the shared vision of all stakeholders which will result in ownership of the organisation (Hamal, 2019:13).

### **Contingent leadership theory**

Contingent leadership, which was proposed by Fiedler (1964) is one of the leadership models that provide alternative approach, recognising the diverse nature of school contexts and the advantages of adapting leadership styles to the particular situation (King, 1990:44). The emphasis of this leadership model is that a variety of situations determine the type of leadership that should be exerted (Roe & Drake, 1980:97). Bush (2003:151) contends that the leader needs to effectively diagnose the problem in order to adopt a certain approach to the situation at hand that would be appropriate. “What is important is how leaders respond to the unique organisational circumstances or problems” Leithwood *et al.* (cited by Bush, 2003:188). This leadership theory emphasises that no leadership is precise as a standalone because leaders behave quite differently depending on the circumstances they are facing (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004:10; Khan, Nawaz & Khan, 2016:2) and Yukl (cited by Marczynski, 2011:2), adds that contingency leadership model emerges over time as a result of the circumstances.

### **Transactional leadership theory**

Transactional leadership was given rise to by Burns (as cited by Brock & Grady, 2012:87) which he coined together with transformational leadership model that is discussed at a later stage.

Transactional leadership theory is described as a leadership whereby leader-follower associations are based upon a series of agreements between the leader and the follower (Khan *et al.*, 2016:3). Transactional simply means ‘exchanging one thing for another’, ‘giving something to get another’. Transactional model is defined as trading one thing for another (Burns, (cited by Brock & Grady, 2012:87)). Martin (2011:3) continues to contend that transactional leadership is a system of bartering for results. Martin (2011: xiv) asserts that leaders who are more transactional tend to have more difficulty in achieving authenticity because it is incentive-based. Incentives are acceptable but the principal must seek a way of improving the behaviours and motivating staff members by getting them to commit to what is due by them (teaching learners). In addition to what has been contended, when followers act in a way that gels with what the leader wants to encourage, a reward is given (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2016:1239).

Transactional leadership is a type of reward that has an active and positive exchange between a leader and a follower whereby followers are rewarded for accomplishing agreed upon objectives (Khan *et al.*, 2016:3). This leadership model relates to the relationships between leaders and teachers as a way of exchanging valued resources. However, interaction between administrators (leaders) and teachers (followers) is usually episodic, short-lived (short-term) and limited to the exchange transaction (Miller & Miller, (cited by Bush & Glover, 2003:13)). It is influential because people act in a particular way in order to secure incentives (Bush, 2011). Zulu (2007:37) adds that the latter is characterised by reward for performance, short-lived commitments and strong self-interest. While rewards may implicate gratitude on the side of the leader, this type of leadership model should be limited in schools.

Eagly (2013:5) posits that there is somewhat evidence that female leaders are related to this type of leadership. They tend to motivate followers with positive, reward-based incentives although male leaders are associated with this type of leadership. Female leaders place more emphasis on social values of benevolence and universalism (Schwartz & Rubel, (cited by Eagly, 2013:7). Benevolence refers to “preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact” and universalism refers to “the understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature (Schwartz & Rubel, (cited by Eagly, 2013:7)).

### **Moral leadership theory**

The critical focus of this leadership model is on values, beliefs and ethics of leaders themselves. It has been affirmed that the expectation of administering moral leadership operates on the basis that what is ‘right’ or ‘good’ and integrity is key (Bush, 2003:189). According to Hall *et al.* (cited by Myende, Samuel & Pillay, 2018:5), moral values are described as “how individual values propel people to act in ways that are ethically acceptable in an organisation, a moral accountability”. Cansoy (2019:38) posits that this leadership theory also involves the characteristics that an individual employs in determining the rules needed to be followed in interpersonal relationships, makes decisions and shares those with staff members through communicating with them (staff members).

Integrity, as a moral value, involves several dimensions, for example, honesty, selflessness, trustworthiness, fairness, compassion, courage and humility (Belle, 2018:46; Yukl, 2012:77). According to Moynihan and Van Wart (2013:560), when people are trustworthy, they know their

principles, they can explain them clearly and conform to them. Leaders also need to work hard to discourage and prevent unethical conduct and maintain an environment that is safe for the disclosure of wrongdoing (Moynihan & Van Wart, 2013:556). When addressing teachers and learners, the principal should consider that the following are keenly adhered axioms of practice, as expressed by Belle (2018:46): principals should use words of high expectations, love, respect, relationship, accountability, hope, guidance, understanding and unity. Leithwood *et al.* (cited by Bush & Glover, 2003:15) contend that moral leadership model is inclusive of normative, political/democratic and symbolic concepts of leadership. Nevertheless, morality in the context of school leadership is of great importance for the study, not forgetting other issues related to society at large. According to Day and Sammons (2014:21), the most effective leaders have strong moral and ethical purposes and a strong sense of social justice.

Bush (2015:12) notes that there are similar characteristics between moral and transformational leadership models, however, the goals are assumed to be worthy and ethical. This model drives followers to adopt and pursue the goals when they share the moral purpose of the leadership.

Morals are spiritually inclined; they are represented by a particular religious affiliation and therefore can be uncomfortable for those staff members who do not share the values of the majority. Leaders need to apply 'moral confidence' as an approach to leadership whereby the emphasis is on the capacity of the leader to act consistently on ethical systems and consistency must be overtime, it must not be limited to particular issues only (Bush, 2007:400). Day and Sammons (2014:25) have also posited that principals possess some common traits like being flexible, open and being fair. They further contend that the work of principals is informed and driven by strong, clearly articulated values which may be shared within the institution.

### **Postmodern leadership theory**



There have been conceptual shifts in education that has changed from modern to postmodern outlook and due to this shift; the appropriateness of various kinds of leadership has changed (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2016:1239). Postmodern leadership suggest that no "best" style of leadership is possible. Bush and Glover (2003:21) affirm that postmodern leadership theory is one of the leadership theories that acknowledge the importance of individuals in an organisation. This type of leadership cannot be undertaken without the active involvement of the school principal (Bush, 2006:15). They need to be there all the time for all school community members.

Leaders (school principals), are needed to attend to the multiple voices in their organisations and to develop “power to”, not power over” model of leadership (Bush, 2006:15).

Postmodern leadership determines one’s own strength and weaknesses and that of others, identify solutions to particular problems and having desire for personal growth and this type of leadership is associated to transformational leadership (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2016:2043). According to this leadership theory, leaders are supposed to respect and give attention to and the diverse and individual perspectives of stakeholders (Bush & Glover, 2003:20). Postmodern leadership, as contended by Bush (cited by Bush & Glover, 2003:20), is aligned with democracy and it advocates a “more consultative, participatory, inclusionary stance”. It is a consistent approach towards collegiality.

### **Distributed and teacher leadership**

Leadership is not the exclusive domain of one individual; it resides in many people, that is, individuals engage in a collaborative action (Williams, 2011:191; Mahlangu, 2018:137). Therefore, the success of the school is due to the leadership of many (teachers, learners and parents) whose contributions are genuinely valued (Gurr, 2015:138). Belle (2018:46) maintains that teachers should be given opportunities to be leaders. Furthermore, distributed leadership is a collective action towards a common goal. Distributing leadership is about sharing of tasks among teachers (Mythili, 2019:61). Howard (cited by Mahlangu, 2018:137) posits that distributed leadership includes distributing tasks and it provides a holistic perspective on the embodiment of leadership actions spread across multiple leaders. Cansoy (2019:38) also contends that distributive leadership ensures collaboration among professional learning communities (PLCs) at school by making them to be part of the decision-making process. It is the form of leadership closely related to improved learning outcomes (Williams, 2011:192). Distributed leadership is a model in which tasks are undertaken collaboratively between individuals who trust and respect each other’s contribution and is effective when people at all levels engage in action, accepting leadership in their particular areas of expertise and finally requires resources that support and enable collaborative environments (Ghasemy & Hussin, 2014:4). According to Ross (cited by Hermann, 2016:11), leadership is no longer the responsibility of the principal alone but has transitioned to more of a collective.

Hermann (2016:14) suggests that distributed leadership specifically examines how activities and interactions are distributed among a number of people and situations. Through distributed tasks

all staff members offer their unique perspective and serve as experts in their own rights. Spillane (cited by Hermann, 2016:14) is of the view that Distributed Leadership Theory extends power and responsibilities beyond the principal as an individual but to share the daily work in schools with deputy principals, teachers and staff members. Therefore it is also important for principals to encourage an exclusive approach which involves all participants in an institution whereby they develop projects and work towards a common vision; which are likely to mobilise all concerned to be useful to any kind of project within the institution (ELRC, 2003: H-4).

Distributed leadership is linked to “power within” and is centred in the interaction between people. The goal of this leadership theory is to create a process of institutionalised improvement (Hermann, 2016:19). This type of leadership gives people the opportunities to lead in organisations.

Rowlands (cited by Tabrizi & Rideout, 2016:1240) identified the following types of power: power over, power with, power to and power within.

“Power over” occurs when someone takes power from another or uses power to prevent others from gaining it. This type of power, according to Rowlands (1997), is expressed when there is lack of relationships among individuals in an institution. “Power with” occurs when people find a common ground and it is used to build collective strength. Through this type of power the knowledge, talent and ability to collaborate lead to individuals’ growth. Edwards and Perumal (2017:2) posit that the relationship between the female educational leader and her followers is often associated with power, however, that power/authority is in the form of “authority with – not over which is care-based and reciprocal”. The perspective of feminist is that “power as domination may be interpreted as power in the form of oppression, patriarchy and subjection” (Edwards, 2018:1620). However, there is another version of power in that “power and domination have consistently been associated with masculinity”. In the context of this study, power is regarded as power “through others”. Leaders can as well manage to resolve conflicts between people with competing interests.

“Power to” occurs when an individual attempts to change his/her perspective of life. As people begin to grow - understanding their own strengths and weaknesses – they tend to practice this type of power to harness that personal growth through developing and acting to this understanding.

“Power within” is associated with the capacity of the leader to imagine and to have hope: it affirms that there is common human endeavour for dignity and fulfilment (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2016:1244). “Power within” occurs when an individual attempts to develop his own sense of self-knowledge and self-worth. According to Rowlands (cited by Tabrizi & Rideout, 2016:1240), people use this type of power to change their views and that of others and it helps such people to find hope and fulfilment.

There are elements which are essential to distributed leadership. Firstly, teachers can and must lead because they have the potential and entitlement to contribute meaningfully towards leadership. Secondly, distributed leadership is characterised by flexibility, making allowance for changing circumstances and emerging contingencies and lastly, it extends the boundaries of leadership as it entails higher level of teacher involvement and utilises a wide variety of expertise, knowledge and skills (Woods (cited by Williams, 2011:192).

Spillane and Healey (2010:256) identified two aspects that are related to distributed perspective which affirm what distributed leadership entails. They are the leader-plus aspect and the practice aspect. The leader plus-aspect illustrates that leading and managing schools can involve multiple individuals in addition to the principal and the leadership practice aspect has more to do with foregrounding the practice of leading and managing.

### **An International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) model of successful school leadership**

This leadership model is created in order to understand what drives school leaders to be successful. There are indicators of success that Gurr (2015:137) has highlighted that are more context-specific, such as evidence of student achievement beyond expectations on national tests, principal’s exemplary reputation in the community or school system, and the overall reputation of the school and awards for exemplary programmes. Gurr (2015:143) has however mentioned that the reputation of the school is an important element of success. In his model, Gurr noted three levels of which they impact on students/learners’ outcomes. Firstly, it is the impact from teaching and learning, secondly is from leadership and thirdly is from the context in which leadership is practiced (Gurr, 2015:143). The model includes the following: a broad range of student outcomes including academic attainment and progress, participation and achievement in extra and co-curricular programs and personal aspects such as social development. Importantly,

it also includes school outcomes such as the success and reputation of the school, the quality of the teachers and the quality of the learning environment (Gurr, 2015:143).

The three levels mentioned above are also operational in the current female leadership model. Success is built from collaborating efforts between the school management team (SMT), teachers, learners and parents. However, the model is basically focused on how leadership impacts on the success of the whole system within the school as an organisation. Gurr (2015:144) maintains that successful school leaders focus much energy on developing people such as developing teachers and other staff members, parents, including community members. This is an indication that leaders attain their success through collaborating with and involving other stakeholders to achieve the vision and goals set.

This model has two overarching organisers. One of these is the distinction between the why, how and what of successful school leadership. The second organizer is the three impact “levels”, moving from the least direct impact on learning outcomes (level 3, impact of the wider school context), to level 2 (impact of leadership in the school) and level 1 (impact of teaching and learning) (Gurr, 2015:141).

### **2.2.1 Leadership theories and female leadership**

Shakeshaft (1987) and Ozga (cited by Bush, 2003:29) posit that theory has failed to acknowledge the different values that define females but remains largely rooted in a male perspective. This suggests that there are no specific leadership theories related to females hence most of the aspects of leadership are borrowed from a male orientation. The latter is supported by Hall (cited by Bush, 2003:29).

There is relatively little to date in research about women managers that can be used to challenge theories of educational management or lead to their reconceptualisation to include both women and men ... research is needed that challenges traditional stereotypes of what constitutes appropriate management behaviour and process.

To inscribe the female gender into leadership theories, there is a need to distinguish between ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ paradigms in school leadership as suggested by Gray (cited by Bush, 2003:30). Feminine characteristics such as caring, creativity and intuitiveness dimensions, while the masculine paradigm features such as competitive, highly regulated and discipline elements should be interrogated anew (Bush, 2003:30).

The main leadership theories mentioned enhance an understanding of leadership in different gendered-roles and they are distinct in nature. According to Bush (2015:4), theories of leadership help in advocating how organisations ought to be led and managed. Although schools are perceived as universal, they may not be in reality based on school context. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that educational leadership models are universally applicable (Bush, 2015:1). Brock and Grady (2012:108) concur with the latter that “every school is unique in context and successful principals respond to that context.”

Roe and Drake (1980:53) add that:

Each school organisation is a dynamically different system consisting of different personalities and combinations of different people who are living in different communities with schools administered and operated by different executives with different styles.

The relevance of educational theories as the lens of this study is based on the three characteristics that these theories possess. However, it is important for this study to appreciate the full dimensions of theory. Roe and Drake (1980:55) define theory as “systematically organised information and knowledge with a series of assumptions or hypothesis devised to help analyse, predict, or otherwise explain the specific nature and or behaviour of people and the organisation”.

According to Volante (2012:12), the theoretical underpinnings of school leadership have been influenced by earlier twentieth century management theorists. Volante (2021) contends that many of these early leadership theories and models attempted to isolate characteristics of successful leaders in the belief that once the leadership qualities were identified, they could be applied to the broader group of public administrators (Volante, 2012:12). On the other hand, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011:37) add that theories of leadership include the experiences of all involved, not just the hierarchical leader. On the contrary, they contend that theories of leadership have a negative impact on the field because they do not address the concerns, needs, or realities of female leaders and do not prepare females or males to create and work effectively in inclusive systems (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011:37).

The educational leadership theories that are discussed in this study assist in understanding the experiences of female principals in leading successful secondary schools and what type of leadership styles these female principals have adopted in these secondary schools.

Leaders differ in a number of ways, that is, background, experience, gender, ethnicity and religion. They are bound to lead and perceive events differently which might ultimately lead to potentially different responses to events, problems and situations (Eacott, 2018:178). Schools need the leadership of highly effective principals and support from other senior and middle managers. Bush (2007:391) contends that while the need for effective leaders is widely acknowledged, there is much less certainty about which leadership behaviours are most likely to produce favourable outcomes. Therefore, it is important for leaders to adopt leadership styles that suit their institutions. This is supported by Nyamboga *et al.* (2014:203) that different situations will call for different leadership styles.

Eacott (2018:178) in his book, *Beyond Leadership* highlights two main reasons why theory of leadership is important. First, he contends that leadership theory paves a way of understanding and interpreting the actions of leaders. Second, it provides a guide to leadership practice for principals and other leaders (Eacott, 2018:179). The reason for choosing three theories was that these theories are associated with leadership styles and situations (Northouse, 2013:123) and they provide an alternative approach, recognising the diverse nature of school contexts and the advantages of adapting leadership styles to the particular situation (Bush & Middlewood, 2013:25; Lee, 2009:117). It is important for effective leaders to be able to continually read the situation and evaluate how to adapt to that situation. Bush and Middlewood (2013:26) emphasise that leadership requires effective diagnosis of challenges, followed by adopting the most appropriate response to the issue.

In the light of the above, the study is guided by three leadership models that are associated with female leadership. They are: Relational and ethic of care, Transformational leadership and Instructional theories.

### **2.2.2 Relational leadership and the ethic of care**

The study, among others, employed relational leadership theory and the ethic of care. Relational leadership was originally developed by Hollander (1964), one of the earliest scholars to adopt a focus on leadership as a relational process (Uhl-Bien, 2006:657). Hollander emphasises that leadership is a process involving an influence on the relationship and that the leader is one among other participants in a relationship (Uhl-Bien, 2006:657). On the other hand, care ethics was developed from a feminist perspective. Ethics of care points out to the fact that a human being depend on others (New World Encyclopaedia), that is, school community depend on each

other for their wellbeing. Lumadi (2017:1) is of the view that ethic of care is suitable in the sense that school leaders possess passion to care for both the teachers and learners they lead. It connects people and emphasis is on helping others; therefore, caring enhances productivity in an institution.

According to Edwards and Perumal (2017:2), relational leadership is regarded as a feminine leadership feature. Relational leadership, as an approach to leadership, is concerned with “leading by being alongside another”, that is, female leaders allow themselves to hear the inputs of others and take them into cognisance. Relational leadership could build strong leadership through collaboration and sharing of power (Edwards & Perumal, 2017:2).

However, Smit (2014:118) describes relational leadership as a new term although the concept of relation-oriented behaviour is not new in leadership studies. In her study, Smit (2013:89) indicates that relational leadership is not only meant for females, however, the research based on female leadership, for example, in the study conducted by Grogan and Shakeshaft, the concept of relational leadership based on research conducted with female leaders in educational concepts was explored (Smit, 2013:91). Relational leadership and ethic of care therefore offer the potential to strengthen the knowledge base around female leadership (Smit, 2013:89). This theory assists in understanding the experiences of female leadership in the context of South Africa given the scarcity of research on females as leaders (Smit, 2013:89) in general and as leaders of secondary schools in particular, especially in the North West Province of South Africa. Therefore, relational leadership “requires a way of engaging with the world in which the leader holds herself /himself as always in relation with and therefore morally accountable to others” (Murakami & Törnsten, 2017:809). Pless (cited in Murakami & Törnsten, 2017:809) affirms that “relational nature of leaders is a normative disposition developed under three basic needs, that is, justice, ethics and morality; recognition, respect and value; a sense of care for self and others.”

Relational leadership does not exist by itself. Relational leadership and ethic of care are interrelated. This is endorsed by Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011:42), maintaining that when an ethic of care is projected to staff members, they reciprocate care by caring for the learners and supporting leadership goals. Lumby *et al.* (2010:31), in their report, support the latter in that systems of care indicated by principals included provision of clothing, emotional support, nutrition, health care and supplemental education to needy learners. Robinson, Shakeshaft, Grogan & Newcomb (2017:8) add that, according to research, female educational leaders tend to

be child-centred because of their different curriculum and instruction background. They emphasise effective learning climates.

Giles and Palmer (2015) perceive leadership as invariable and relational, it means being in a relationship with others in a horizontal rather than hierarchical sense (Nicholas & Nicholas, 2014:28; Smit, 2014:118). These researchers indicate that, when in a good relationship with teachers and other staff, including the learners, the principal is able to work with them as a unit. Uzoma (2010:5) emphasises that the principal needs to positively influence all stakeholders in reaching educational goals. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011:6) add that during her interview with females on leadership, female leaders indicated that they accomplished goals with and through others. It is important to note that planning and goal accomplishment is approached with others rather than through others.

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011:6) also indicate that relational leadership style promotes “power with rather than power over”. Applying the ethic of care to leadership practices produces a leadership style marked by nurturing, capacity-building and sharing of power which may be viewed as relational leadership, therefore female leaders draw on their mothering roles in approaching leadership (Lopez & Rigano, 2018:6). Shakeshaft (1987:18) contend that “feminine form of leadership is rooted in solid human values, that nurtures everyone connected with it”. Building positive relations is key to effective school leadership while building and maintaining strong relationships require a real commitment and involve hard, labour-intensive work and a lot of time (Bennett, Wise, Woods & Harvey, 2003:152). On the other hand, Uzoma (2010:5) asserts that females possess more power to nurture and give care to others than their male counterparts. This inherent power, according to Uzoma (2010:5), was affirmed by psychologists who established that the female principals are better listeners because they seem to be more in touch with their emotions.

Nicholas and Nicholas (2014:28) assert that the reciprocity of the relationship existing between leaders and their context of leadership suggest that leaders are not “independent actors”. This is also emphasised by Smit (2014:119) who submits that relational leadership is a process of reciprocal interrelating through which expertise held by different participants interpenetrates; creating a more holistic perspective that is integrative rather than additive. Rather, leaders shape and are shaped by their context in subtle and mutual processes of influence. This is emphasised by Bennett *et al.* (2003:32) who observes that leadership is moving toward achieving a group goal, not necessarily because of the work of one skilled person (principal) but because of the

multiple members of the group (teachers, learners and other staff members). Leadership involves the contributions of other great thinkers and doers, access to the right resources and the social composition of the group.

For leadership to be effective it must be built on relationships and the quality of relationships reflects the quality of leadership (Brown, 2012:23). This type of leadership is expected to enhance harmonious relationships within the institution.

The emphasis on the relational aspects of expertise for inter-professional work calls for the capacity to work with others to expand understandings. It involves working alongside others towards mutually agreed outcomes (Preedy *et al.*, 2012:243). The elements of leadership that most consistently inform a female administrative style include an emphasis on establishing relationships with others in an attempt to build community. Relational leadership may lead to relational trust (which is one of the attributes of leadership) within an organisation. When relational trust in a school community is strong, the sense of uncertainty and vulnerability is moderated as stakeholders confront the demands of school reform (Preedy *et al.*, 2012:138). Relational trust also improves problem-solving in the school because all stakeholders will trust one another and they will less likely to question the motives behind changes made or to be made (Preedy *et al.*, 2012:138). It is therefore important for leaders to be direct and honest in order to win the trust of stakeholders. According to Pless (cited by Murakami & Törnsten, 2017:815), “responsible leadership is rooted in an ethics of care driven by a desire to serve others.”

Because secondary school principals have traditionally been men who have led in ways that do not resemble the way females tend to lead, some of the stakeholders in the education fraternity and in general are not familiar with the relational leadership style employed by females. Females are perceived to value relationships more than males. Their relational leadership is associated with the way they communicate, teamwork, collaboration and connecting with the community (Smit, 2014:118). Relational leadership theory therefore views leadership as a dialogic process where systems and practices are co-constructed. Leadership is seen as embedded in everyday practices and as a way of engaging with the world (Giles & Palmer, 2015). Relational leaders show a concern that interpersonal exchanges create humane and connected inter-relationships. Such a concern recognises a shared humility and a fundamental respect for others (Fullan cited by Giles & Palmer, 2015).

Duignan (2012:145) posits that principals need to maximise their influence on the teachers, learners and the community they engage with within their fields of influence. They also need to prioritise the development of relationship based on integrity, trust and respect for the dignity and worth of others. Duignan (2012:145) argues that by doing that, educational leaders exhibit the trait that they are accountable to stakeholders.

Grogan and Shakeshaft (cited by Smit, 2014:118) state that “leaders who develop coherence around shared values are likely to deepen the sense of community with an organisation – a sense of being in a relationship with others who are striving for the same goal”. Achieving goals usually takes place with and through others; power is conceptualised differently emphasising that power of everyone should be expanded. Power is conceptualised by female leaders as something that is shared and therefore: they seek to expand everyone’s power (Smit, 2014:118).

Leadership styles that are attributed to gender can be a positive addition to the secondary school position. Females portray relational leadership by utilizing decision-making strategies that are inclusive of other members of the school (Brown, 2012:24).

Literature and basic statistics amply show that most of the female principals are found in primary schools and the number of females serving as secondary school principals is small. For example, in Ngaka Modiri Molema District, there are 16 female led secondary schools out of eighty-two secondary schools (Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), Ngaka Modiri Molema District Office).



Females are feminine in nature and therefore a feminine orientation is rooted in solid human values that nurtures everyone connected with it. It accomplishes practical results with no less of idealism need to be instituted (Shakeshaft, 1987:18).

According to Martin (2011:3), relational leadership accords nicely with the transformational leadership model. It provides for relational leadership and value for the communal, for mentoring and for establishing a sense of connection between people.

What follows are feminist attributes on relational leadership and ethic of care.

#### **2.2.2.1 Feminine attributes on relational leadership and ethic of care**

Although the femininity of females has been questioned and viewed with a negative eye, these females continue to become successful in the ‘big world’. The characteristics that are assumed to

be feminine have helped in assuring that females succeed in their leadership roles (Marczynski, 2011:5). The feminist attributes reveal individual participants' experiences in organisations through meaning, relationships and the construction of speakers' identities (Murakami & Tömsen, 2017:812). Therefore, the femininity of females in leadership continues to surface in predominantly male dominated space (secondary schools).

Furthermore, females have distinct leadership traits and skills in leading educational institutions amid the difficulties and challenges they face that impede their leadership effectiveness (Al-Jaradat, 2014:148). For example, socially constructed norms that are generally attributed to females such as the ability of a female to be understanding, caring and collaborative, according to the study done by Marczynski (2011:5) are somewhat noted as contributory factors toward the successful leadership of females in secondary schools. In addition to this, flexibility (Marczynski, 2011:5) and ethic of care also includes concepts such as care, vision, collaboration, courage and intuition, which are perceived to be feminine attributes of leadership and have been conceptualised for the practice of relational leadership (Smit, 2013:90). Therefore, ethic of care is relational, its roots emanate in a female's mothering experience. Furthermore, females are being associated with the type of leadership style of caring and nurturing (Lumby *et al.*, 2010:31). Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) contend that when applying the ethic of care to leadership, it produces a leadership style which is perceived as nurturing, capacity building and the sharing of power which may be viewed as relational leadership. Females, as Shakeshaft (1987:26) describes, are "solitary possessors of the nurturing, receptive qualities necessary to be both a teacher and a mother". Female principals use their nurturing "maternal" abilities in a natural extension from home to school room (Shakeshaft, 1987:26). According to Zulu (2011:838), female leaders have qualities such as strong communication and interpersonal skills, information and power-sharing, professionalism and integrity, participatory, collaboration and leadership styles. Furthermore, collaboration and teamwork, relation building, caring, nurturing, empathy, participation and inclusiveness are values perceived to be relevant in schools under the leadership of female principals (Zulu, 2011:838).

It is important to highlight the five feminine attributes of relational leadership and ethic of care which illustrate the way female leaders 'behave' in their institutions because "females value relationships more than males" (Gilligan (cited by Smit, 2014:118)).

## Care

Care, in Smit's study (2013:90), is described as both a disposition and action to reach out to other people in society at large. Caring has been connected to democratic processes. In their study, Smylie, Murphy and Louis (2016:1) concluded that caring lies at the heart of effective schooling and good school leadership, however, caring is often neglected. Nevertheless, students are beneficiaries of caring (Smylie *et al*, 2016:2). Caring in schools is important because the social and academic support that arise from caring is good for students and their success. Smylie *et al*. (2016:2) continue to argue that "such support increases the odds of students performing well academically". Moreover, Noddings (2005) is of the view that the importance of intellectual development should not be the first priority of schooling. Therefore, principals of schools cannot ignore the learners, their purposes, anxieties and relationships for the sake of making them competent in academic skills. She asserts that the school cannot achieve its academic goals without providing caring and continuity for students (Noddings, 2005).

Noddings (2005) describes a caring relation as "a connection or encounter between two human beings – a carer and a recipient of care, or cared-for". Each party (carer and cared-for) must feel something toward the other. When a person cares, they can listen to the need, see or feel what the other person tries to convey the message (Noddings, 2005).

Gilligan (1982:62) asserts that the ideal of care is thus an activity of relationship of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world by sustaining the web of connection so that no one is left alone. "The notion of care expands from the paralysing injunction not to hurt others to an injunction to act responsively toward self and others and thus to sustain connection (Gilligan, 1982:149). What Gilligan maintains is that caring for others needs to be sustained. Caring has been perceived therefore as the constellation of real interests taken by the principal in the well-being of the teachers and which manifest in sympathy, empathy and a commitment to the teachers. In their research, Van der Vyver and Van der Meyer (2014:2) assert that to care for and about people in an organisation imply that leadership value the people they lead. According to Noddings (2005), reception, recognition and response are the primary features of the consciousness of the one who is cared for. The cared-for receives the caring and shows that care has been received. For example, appreciating that care and that becomes heart-warming for the carer. Therefore, in schools, learners need being cared for and they will in turn appreciate that care by performing to the best of their abilities.

The attribute of care is therefore directed at the person and the well-being of the human being. As the head of the school, the principal takes into account that the well-being of learners and staff is important, therefore, to show that they care, they need to know the whereabouts of the learners and teachers, including support staff, at all times (Van der Vyver & Van der Meyer, 2014:2). It is alluded to by Van der Vyver and Van der Meyer (2014: 2) that for principals to be effective, they need to show their ability to empathise with, to be optimistic, build morale and motivate their teachers and learners. All these aspects are directly associated with care as principals need to establish continuous relationships with teachers and learners in order to have a deeper understanding of their needs (Smit, 2016:3). Chao (2017:64) has emphasised that female leaders have great compassion for their subordinates, and this makes a great impact on their leadership style.

Smit (2013:90) is of the view that the ethic of care requires several components such as attentiveness to the needs of others, responsibility, understanding of contexts, competence and responsiveness on the part of those who have received care.

## **Vision**

Vision is a significant element in leadership discourse and this has been the case for more than 20 years (Eacott, 2018:177). Vision is another attribute and an essential requirement of leadership and is highlighted under relational leadership and ethic of care. It is a crucial leadership skill. Vision assists the leader to leave the organisation stronger than it was (Martin, 2011:20). According to Matheri, Cheloti and Mulwa (2015:12), the articulation of vision can lead to desired purposes. For example, Eacott (2018:177) indicates that vision is a central element of successful schools. Vision is the ability of a leader to formulate and clearly articulate original ideas through a facilitated process of encouragement (Smit, 2013:91; Chao, 2017:71; Duke, 1987:51). All stakeholders must be included in the development of a school vision. The term vision has become important in the literature on leadership (Duke, 1987:51). A visionary leader is compelled to focus on what is truly important. A vision, according to Kaser, Mundry, Stiles and Loucks-Horsley (2013:10), entails “knowing where you want to be or what you want to become”. Smit opines that a visionary leader creates a trusting work environment where the staff is encouraged to collaborate and participate in the success of the school (Smit, 2013:91). In the findings of Chao’s study (2017:68), leaders need to have clear vision of the future state of their organisations. The vision should include the collective interests of individuals and units in an organisation. Chao (2017:71) concluded that leaders who are effective are able to create a

vision that provides an important bridge for the organisation to move from the present to the future. Such a vision allows members to find their roles both in the group and society.

Kaser *et al.* (2013:2) contend that one of the key responsibilities of principals in schools is to shape a vision of academic success for all learners, one based on high standards. As effective leaders, principals need to inspire shared vision, not an imposed one. Female principals care deeply about what they want to accomplish. They work with all stakeholders to identify common shared goals and aspirations for the future. Committed effective principals would engage all stakeholders in the school to build a commitment toward the shared vision that becomes the guiding force for all actions. School principals need to have a vision that shape what is undertaken in their schools. Kaser *et al.* (2013:10) assert that “a shared vision incorporates individual visions, engenders commitment and focuses energy”. Not imposed on them. It is still relevant to have leaders with visions of what their institutions would look like if they were operating successfully (Duke, 1987:11). Botha (2018: 10819) perceives visionary leaders as:

... the builders of a new dawn, working with imagination, insight, and boldness. They present a challenge that calls forth the best in people and brings them together around a shared sense of purpose. They work with the power of intentionality and alignment with a higher purpose. Their eyes are on the horizon, not just on the near at hand. They are social innovators and change agents, seeing the big picture and thinking strategically. There is a profound interconnectedness between the leader and the whole, and true visionary leaders serve the good of the whole. They recognise that there is some value in every point of view.

## **Collaboration**

Collaboration is “the ability to work in a group, supporting group members and creating a synergic environment for all” (Smit, 2013:91). Collaboration incorporates inclusiveness, shared ownership, connectedness and cooperativeness (Smit, 2013:91). Collaboration leadership is one way in which leadership at all levels is ensured (Kaser *et al.*, 2013:26). According to Rubin (cited by Kaser *et al.*, 2013:26), collaborative leadership “is the skilful and mission-oriented facilitation or relevant relationship”. Moreover, Chao (2017:64) indicates that females prefer to use collaborative and mediating tones in interaction. Kaser *et al.* (2013:1) note that leadership that is based on quality requires collaboration among many to make the schoolwork well and Kaser *et al.* (2013:1) indicate that this need practice to get it right.

A collaborative leader is one who accepts “responsibility for building - or helping to ensure the success of – a heterogeneous team to accomplish a shared vision” (Kaser *et al.*, 2013:26). Botha (2018:10817) perceives collaboration as a key in the success of the school and by doing so, teaching and learning becomes transformative.

### **Courage**

As another feminist attribute, courage is “the capacity to move ahead into the unknown, teasing new ideas in the world of practice” (Regan & Brooks (cited by Smit, 2013:91)). Courage involves the degree of risk-taking for the good of the group or the individual and a quality of leaving oneself vulnerable with a difficult situation.

### **Intuition**

Intuition is the ability to give equal weight to experience and abstraction, mind and heart. Therefore, intuition relates to the capacity of the mind and heart that was integral to relational approach to leadership (Smit, 2013:91).

### **2.2.3 Transformational leadership and female principals**

Transformational leadership is a leadership theory developed by Burns and commonly associated with female leaders (Msila, 2013:468). Chin (cited by Martin, 2011:3) further articulates that the transformational leadership is the style most practiced by female leaders, particularly feminist women. This is emphasised by Billard (cited by Gupton & Slick, 1996:138) who submit that females are more likely than males to manage in an interactive style whereby encouragement of participation, sharing of power and information and enhancing the self-worth of others is emphasised. Several studies (Chao, 2017:6; Gupton & Slick, 1996:139) indicated that female leaders may use more transformational leadership skills than do their male counterparts and it made positive impact on the performance of an individual, group and organisation. Therefore, the transformational leadership adopted by female leaders benefits organisational performance (Chao, 2017:65). Eagly and Carli (2003:815) maintain that transformational leadership entails establishing oneself as a role model by gaining the confidence and trust of the followers.

According to Bass (cited by Cansoy, 2019:38), transformational leaders are described “as individuals who raise the interest of individuals in the group by forming a common vision and mission and ensure intellectual stimulation by increasing the motivation of group members”. Cruickshank (2017:117) affirms that transformational leadership concentrates on establishing

school culture and vision to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in schools to develop people and improving the organisation.

Transformational leadership theory is argued to be based on uniting subordinates together to pursue higher order common goals such that both the principal and his/her followers can raise each other to higher levels of motivation (Burns (cited by Eboka, 2016:26; Khan, Nawaz & Khan, 2016:3)). According to Tabrizi and Rideout (2016:1239), leaders should have followers who are willing and exhibit an inherent desire to be there. Transformational leaders are future oriented as they develop plans to achieve future goals and their organisations are generally successful (Eagly & Carli, 2003:815) and Tabrizi and Rideout (2016:1239) emphasise that successful organisations require strong leadership. Eacott (2018:180) also emphasises the fact that this theory suggest that as leaders, principals are expected to inspire followers to perform at higher levels as they commit to what are presented as school goals. In as much as transformational leadership theory is inspiring followers to perform to the best of their abilities and to function independently and effectively, it has been criticised for instituting the decisive values that are often those of government and the principal is perceived as a cog acting on behalf of government (Eacott, 2018:180). It is commonly known that principals manage their schools, but they are compelled to act in the interest of the Department of Education.

The central focus of transformational leadership, according to Eacott (2018:180), is based on commitments and capabilities of organisational members. However, in Msila's study (2013:468), it has been contended that transformational leadership focuses on the four factors which are: charisma (Muzvidziwa, 2014:215; Moynihan & Van Wart, 2013:558; Kaume- Mwinzi, 2016:86), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration (Bass & Riggio, (cited by Tabrizi & Rideout, 2016:1243). Some of these factors, one may argue, are feminine in nature. This may imply that females who administer this type of leadership excel in their performance. This is supported by Noor *et al.* (cited by Conradie, Lowies & Upton, 2015:3) and Bush (2003:77) who confirm that females tend to be transformational through their heroic and charismatic leadership features. Followers are motivated through a sense of self and connection. Motivation can be displayed through a leader being a positive role model or giving staff tasks that enable growth (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2016:1240). In support to the latter, Cruickshank (2017:118) asserts that school leaders need to motivate their staff to the point that both their personal and organisational goals are the same and they will ultimately display exemplary follower behaviours such as independence, engagement and positivity.

Furthermore, transformational leadership is meant for individual and collective growth, which requires creativity (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2016:1240). Volante (2012:103) argues that the transformational leader has an influence on teacher collaboration and that significant relationships exist between aspects of transformational leadership and teachers' feedback on the attitude towards change on school improvement and altered behaviour. It was found that schools where teachers and learners reported a culture conducive to school success had a transformational leader as its principal (Volante, 2012:103).

Furthermore, Muzvidziwa (2014:215) points out that transformational theory holds features associated with feminine characteristics hence this type of leadership is argued to be particularly advantageous or appropriate to female leaders because of its androgynous qualities and alleged that people usually act favourable to females when they lead with this type of leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2003:816; Eagly, 2013:5) and this was found in their meta-analysis (2003) that, compared with male leaders, female leaders were more transformational and engaged in more of the contingent reward behaviours (Eagly & Carli, 2003:817. Eagly (2013:4) provided strong support that as transformational leaders, school principals need to act as inspirational role models, foster good human relationships, develop the skills of followers and motivate others (Msila, 2013:468) to go beyond the confines of their job descriptions. Eagly (2013) continues to argue that such behaviours would make females excellent leaders. Msila (2013:468) in his research highlights that female leaders are prone cherish dimensions that support the followers effectively. Higher personal commitment to organisational goals and greater capacities for accomplishing those goals, are assumed to result in extra effort and greater productivity (Bush & Middlewood, 2013:19). Conradie *et al.* (2015:3) perceive transformational leadership as a style that is marked by optimism, mentoring, open-mindedness and collaboration and is often cited as a style practiced more by women. Msila's study (2013:468) concurs with the above when asserting that transformational leadership style may suit female because of their nature of having nurturing aspects and that females are traditionally socialised to be nurturers. Conradie *et al.* (2015:3) emphasise what many researchers have alluded to that female leaders are more collaborative and are more concerned with relationship building, inclusiveness, participation and caring. Msila (2013:468) quotes Valerio (2009) who affirms that female leaders demonstrate more transformational leadership.

Female leaders are more likely to be transformational leaders than male leaders. Women leaders demonstrate more transformational leadership, particularly for those behaviours that communicate the organisation's mission, examine new perspectives for solving problems and

develop and mentor followers. These closely resemble the visionary, participative and coaching styles previously mentioned. In addition, transformational leaders identify and share school vision, lead and inspire others by example, create a culture of learning and encourage staff members to undertake professional development (Cruickshank, 2017:117).

This type of leadership motivates others to do more than they originally intended or thought possible (Preedy *et al.*, 2012:75). Msila (2013:468) posits that transformational leaders succeed in getting committed followers where they end up accomplishing an intended moral imperative and that performance of a transformational leader is beyond expectations. Transformational leaders, when faced by crises, will convert them into challenges, by questioning assumptions, identifying opportunities and focusing on new ways of thinking and doing things (Preedy *et al.*, 2012:76).

Preedy *et al.* (2012:76) emphasise that transformational leadership is authentic in the sense that it morally uplifts and stimulates colleagues and followers to view their work from new perspectives; embrace the mission and vision of the team and organisation, develop the ability and potential of others; and motivates individuals to look beyond their own interests to concerns that benefit the group, hence Zulu (2007:37) and Conradie *et al.*, (2015:4) are of the view that transformational leadership is built around familial relationships where leaders and followers share a common destiny and a strong sense of interdependence, shared norms, including a shared organisational purpose, vision and mission. Female leaders tend to be inclusive and transformative in leading schools. This is supported by Conradie *et al.* (2015:3) in their study, where it was asserted that “effective leaders take a personal interest in the long-term development of their employees”. Motivating their employees to achieve the vision and goals of their institutions is the order of the day for effective and successful leaders.

Day and Sammons (2016:18) assert that transformational leadership is associated with vision, setting directions; restructuring and realigning the organisation; developing staff and curriculum; and involvement with the external community hence the most essential role of a principal is setting the initial course of the school and then inspiring and transforming others into developing a shared vision for the future. Cruickshank (2017:118) posits that futuristic school leaders might use transformational leadership theory because of its greater emphasis on using shared vision to guide reform and enhance the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Cruickshank (2017:118) advises that principals need to shift their efforts and focus on different leadership dimensions that could lead their schools to being successful. Leithwood and Day (as cited by

Cruickshank, 2017:118) maintain that the leadership dimensions, for example, building vision and setting school directions could account for the largest proportion of leadership. Such transformation becomes difficult without interpersonal skills (Brown, 2012:23-24). Interpersonal skills are essential in developing relationships and transforming others to share a common vision for the organisation.

Cruickshank (2017:117) contends that transformational leadership has been criticised for not having adequate emphasis on education, however, Winkler (cited by Msila, 2013:468) maintains that transformational leadership results in performance beyond expectations.

Table 2.1 illustrates the difference between transactional and transformational leadership as conducted by Hackman and Johnston (cited by Tabrizi & Rideout, 2016:1244).

**Table 2.1: Transactional and Transformational leadership**

<b>Transactional Leadership</b>	<b>Transformational Leadership</b>
Leadership is responsive	Leadership is proactive
Works with the organisational culture	Works to change the organisational culture
Objectives achieved through rewards and punishment	Objectives achieved through higher ideals and values
Motivation through appealing to self-interest	Motivation through encouraging group-interests
Maintain the status quo and stress corrective actions to improve performance	Individualised consideration (IC): Personalised consideration and support for each follower  Intellectual stimulation (IS): Promote creative and innovative solutions to problems

*Extracted from Tabrizi and Rideout (2016:1244)*

#### **2.2.4 Instructional leadership and female principals**

Instructional leadership theory originates from the theory by Hallinger and Murphy (cited by Ismail, Don, Husin & Khalid, 2018:137). There are three dimensions included in this theory, which are: defining the school mission; managing curriculum and instruction; and promoting school learning climate (Ismail *et al.*, 2018:137). The three dimensions are illustrated in Table 2.2.

The framework presented in Table 2.2 expands on what the principal as an instructional leader has, as the responsibility is to ensure that all stakeholders are taken on board about the vision and mission of the school and that the aims are disseminated and understood by all involved. As an instructional leader, the principal has the mandate of shaping a vision that enhances academic success and to manage people intrinsic to the success of the school (Belle, 2018:46). According to Murphy and Hallinger (1982:140), having clear goals and objectives enables the principal to measure effectiveness and efficiency of school operations.

**Table 2.2: Instructional Leadership Framework**

Dimension	Function
Defining the school mission	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Drafting school aims</li> <li>2. Disseminating school aim</li> </ol>
Managing curriculum and instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Supervising and Evaluating Teachers' classroom Instructions</li> <li>4. Coordinating Curriculum</li> <li>5. Monitoring Students' progress</li> </ol>
Promoting school learning climate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Protecting teaching and Learning Time</li> <li>7. Enriching Professional Development</li> <li>8. Maintaining High Visibility</li> <li>9. Provides incentives for teachers</li> <li>10. Provides incentives for learning</li> </ol>

*Extracted from Ismail et al. (2018:138)*

An instructional leader looks at defining the school goals, supervise the delivery of curriculum and encourage a positive learning environment (Wills, 2016:6; Cruickshank, 2017:116). This argument is supported by Noddings (2005) when she posits that “if the school has one main goal, a goal that guides the establishment and priority of all others, it should be to promote the growth of students as healthy, competent, moral people”.

Furthermore, as an instructional leader the principal has the role to play in supervising teachers' work, evaluating the instruction and monitoring learner performance (Murphy & Hallinger, 1982:138). When the instructional leader assesses and monitors learner performance, they ensure

that the objectives of high levels of learner performance are met (Murphy & Hallinger, 1982:140).

Moreover, on the issue of promoting school climate, an instructional leader has a positive impact on learner academic achievement by protecting instructional time at the school. This can be successfully done through policies that reduce tardiness, absenteeism and truancy thereby increasing teaching time, and subsequently learner achievement (Murphy & Hallinger, 1982:141). The principal could also protect teaching and learning time by managing class timetables and ensuring that teachers are in class with learners all the time, by limiting extracurricular activities to be done after school and reducing interruptions during school hours.

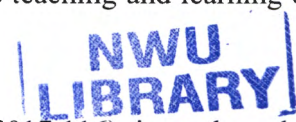
A good instructional leader maintains high visibility on the school premises which in turn models the behaviours of those they lead. This entails that the instructional leader leads by example (Ismail *et al.*, 2018:138).

Carrier (2014:3) asked this question: Why instructional leadership? In responding to that Elmore (cited by Carrier, 2014:3) indicated that "... in order for people in schools to respond to external pressure for accountability, they have to learn to do their work differently and to rebuild the organisation of schools around a different way of doing their work". Belle (2018:46) maintains that the focus of instructional leadership is based on the core mission of the school, which is effective teaching and learning and furthermore, according to Wills (2016:4), it is important to note that principals matter for school effectiveness and learner outcomes (Cruickshank, 2017:116). While instructional leadership conveys the importance of teaching and learning at the forefront of decision-making, it also conveys the importance of core objectives of making schools work better for students (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004:6).

The South African Standard for Principals (DBE, 2014:10) maintains that:

at the heart of the principal's role is a fundamental responsibility for the management of the curriculum, the enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning and the raising of levels of learner achievement. While every key area within the principal's role is directed at the promotion of quality teaching and learning; the leadership and management of the learning school focuses directly on the principal's responsibility for the creation and maintenance of a learning culture for all learners and staff.

One of the work areas of the principal, according to Carrier (2014:6), is to focus on learning for students and adults; to have high expectations for learning and practice; to use data to drive instruction and to develop a community that is focused on a unified vision and mission. Belle (2018:46) concurs with the latter in that as an instructional leader, the principal should maintain that the physical learning environment is conducive, establish what is expected from teachers and learners in terms of academic success and behaviour, manage teaching time, ensure that teaching and learning materials are available, and involve school community members to actively participate in relevant activities. Edwards (2018:1621) contends that one of the central functions of educational leadership is to provide instructional leadership. The principal, as the head of the school, must provide the leadership that is essential for the teaching and learning of students in the school.



The focal point of instructional leadership, according to Cruickshank (2017:116), is on the value of creating clear educational goals, planning the curriculum and evaluating the quality of teachers and their teaching. This leadership model reiterates the fact that the efforts of the principals should be directed on the promotion of better outcomes for learners and the importance of classroom teaching and learning (Day *et al.*, 2016).

Edwards (2018:1621) has argued that instructional leadership is “a complex collection of curriculum knowledge, leadership skills, judgement and pedagogy.” Complex in that as a leader, the principal has to ensure that every role assigned to her/him is achieved. For example, the principal has to ensure that curriculum matters are managed and adhered to accordingly, the leadership enacted is developmental and that whatever judgment is taken, is according to the prescripts of policies.

Instructional leadership has been the most researched leadership model according to Hallinger (cited by Brown, 2012:29) however, Bush (2003:34) does not link it to any of the models because it is focused on the direction of influence, learning and teaching rather than the nature of the influence process. Instructional leadership is one of the important dimensions that are relevant today because it targets the school’s central activities (Bush, 2003:16).

This leadership model includes all activities performed by principals to promote student learning (Bush, 2012:29). For example, De Bevoise (1996:15) argues that the concept of instructional leadership has been interpreted as encompassing those actions that the principal takes to promote

growth in student learning by focusing on school wide goals, defining the purpose of schooling, providing resources needed for learning to occur, etc.

According to Nicholas and Nicholas (2014:29), instructional leadership is central to female leaders as teaching has remained a woman-dominated profession. However, according to Edwards (2018:1621), female instructional leadership as a research area has received little interest but female leaders are now raising their heads to be recognised as they continue to excel in their roles as principals. This is supported by Perumal (cited by Edwards, 2018:1621) when indicating that the movement of females into educational leadership roles does not stop them to continue ensuring that teaching and learning remain the “central focus of the rhythms of the educational enterprise”.

Female principals have been seen as much more likely to introduce and support strong programs in staff development and encourage innovation. They are also seen as experimental towards instructional approaches (Nicholas & Nicholas, 2014:29). Likewise, Marczyński (2011:2) found that female principals are more instructional-oriented than their male counterparts in that they spend more of their time on instructional tasks and arguably have taught “longer” than many of their male counterparts.

Instructional leadership, as explained by Bush and Middlewood (2013:15), differs from other models as it focuses on the direction of influence, rather than its nature and source. The increasing emphasis on managing teaching and learning as the core activities of educational institutions has led to instructional approach being emphasised and endorsed (Bush & Middlewood, 2013:15). Instructional leadership is seen as essential for the improvement of teaching and learning in schools and emphasises behaviours of school principals (Brown, 2012:12). Female principals in secondary schools place instruction and learning at the centre of their leadership focuses and mission to push for instructional change that improves learning (Nicholas & Nicholas, 2014:29). In their study, Webber, Mentz, Scott, Okoko and Scott (2014:503) found that school principals can influence the quality of teaching and learning in their schools through their direct effects on staff and organisational conditions. Principals are faced with a mammoth task of accountability (Mestry, 2017:2) in reforming their schools and improving student achievement, they are needed to work to greatly impact the functions of the school that improve student performance (Brown, 2012:29). Nicholas and Nicholas (2014:29) emphasise that the decisions based on these female secondary school principals’ priorities of

student learning allow them to acknowledge that schools must be managed well, but the focus to gain student growth and development is a priority.

Strong instructional leadership, trust among teachers and among teachers and administrators and a sense of collective responsibility for student learning can create incentives and opportunities for teachers to implement policy and revise their practice (Preedy *et al.*, 2012:133). In addition, Forrest (cited by Brown, 2012:31) emphasised that “strong instructional leaders accept the challenge and do what is needed to ensure high quality teaching and learning”. Instructional leaders show the importance of effective instruction through constant monitoring and supervision; they must have the skills to employ teachers that support the shared vision of all stakeholders (Brown, 2012:31).

De Bevoise (1996:19) points out that principals as instructional leaders, can delegate teachers (on their behalves) in assuring that the following support functions are fulfilled in their schools. These functions are:

- Implement programmes of known effectiveness or active involvement in curricular improvement
- Monitor student performance
- Monitor teacher performance
- Provide concrete technical assistance to teachers (in-service programmes, coaching)
- Demonstrate visible commitment to programs for instructional improvement
- Provide emotional support and incentives for teachers.

Instructional leadership has been summarised in the Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship (DBE, 2016:14) as follows. As the instructional leader, the principal is required to:

- a) lead learners and ensure that the school is a professional learning community
- b) lead continuous improvement in curriculum implementation
- c) lead the school into the future through the use of ICT
- d) foster the success of all learners

- e) promoting a culture of achievement for all learners by communicating and implementing a common vision and mission that is shared by all stakeholders
- f) develop and implement an instructional framework that is data-driven, research-based, and aligned with the national curriculum
- g) empower staff to become instructional leaders who share the responsibility to achieving the mission, vision and goals that have been set
- h) recognise good instructional practices that motivate and increase learner achievement, and encouraging educators to implement these practices (DBE, 2016:14).

There is no way that the principal as an instructional leader can work in a vacuum; support is needed from teachers, learners, parents and community members. This is supported in the policy on the South African Standard for Principalship (DBE, 2016:8) where it is maintained that “good principals do not act in isolation but lead and manage their schools professionally and in ways that are grounded in and embraced by the principles of Batho Pele (people first) and Ubuntu (humanity)”.

### **2.3 SUMMARY**

Leadership theories have been discussed in this chapter. Although there is a distinction between leadership theories, the three theories adopted for this study are related in the sense that they can be associated with female leaders. It is evident that female leaders are participative, transformational and relational. They enact their roles with a view to produce outcomes that can be described as more compassionate, benevolent and universalistic which promote public good. It is important to note that secondary schools and schools in general need the leadership of highly effective and charismatic leaders and support from other senior and middle managers. Relational leadership theory and ethics of care, transformational and instructional leadership theories have been associated with female leadership styles. Relational leadership theory is more of a motherly style where care is based at the centre when coming to the welfare of teachers and learners. Although instructional leadership theory may sound to be masculine, literature has revealed that it is central to female leaders. When principals adopt instructional leadership, they are arguably enhancing school and learner outcomes. Through these theories, female principals have unleashed their capabilities in leading their schools.

## **CHAPTER 3: FEMALE LEADERSHIP STYLES**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter dealt with educational leadership theories in general and those associated with female leadership. The present chapter reviews leadership styles administered by female principals in schools. The chapter provides a concise overview of leadership styles such as democratic, autocratic, laissez-faire and authoritative leadership styles. In addition, females and career advancement challenges, school leadership issues and school community relations are presented. Therefore, there is a need, to understand the context within which female principals operate (Mbokazi, 2015:471) and the styles of leadership they adopt to make these female principals lead successful schools. Heystek (2016) contends that “there are already some exceptional examples of schools performing against all odds and from these successes we can learn and theorise about educational change on a larger systemic scale”.

Despite the fact that secondary schools are predominantly led by male principals, there are, however, female principals who lead secondary schools because school leadership plays an important role in the success of a school (Salfi, Virk & Hussain, 2014:342). This is also emphasised by Eboka (2016:25) when asserting that the success and failure in secondary schools depends largely on the influence the principal imparts on teachers’ morale. Leadership is therefore defined as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2015:5). The essence of leadership, according to Yukl (2012:66) is influencing and facilitating all staff members and utilising collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives. Mbokazi (2015:471) perceives leadership as having a direct influence on issues such as teaching and learning and the influence that a leader has may assist at arriving at what constitutes success of the school. Therefore, the quality of leadership makes a difference between the success and failure of a school (Nyamboga, Gwiyo, Njuguma, Waweru, Nyamweya & Gongera, 2014:198).

To further understand what successful schools entail, the findings derived from the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) were drawn. The project, which was conducted from seven countries including Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, England, Norway and Sweden focuses on the leadership of principals in successful schools which summarises the nature of successful principal leadership (Gurr, 2015:138).

Successful principals demonstrate the following leadership characteristics:

- High expectations;
- Pragmatic approaches;
- Core practices;
- Heroic leadership;
- Trust, respect and capacity development through continuous learning and personal resources; and
- Context sensitivity, resulting in sustained school success.

The latter should be demonstrated, mindful of the fact that the success of female principals is entirely based on actions and results (Murakami & Törnsten, 2017:812). Successful schools can be identified when learners demonstrate above-satisfactory academic achievement; when teachers perceive the principals as performing above expectations in leading the school and when parents and other stakeholders know the principals from successful actions and results (Murakami & Törnsten, 2017:812).

Furthermore, Gurr (2015:138) asserts that principals of successful schools set high but reasonable expectations which are manifest of both personal and collective levels. Gurr (2015:138) further opines that setting individualised expectations also help individuals to achieve their best rather than focussing on meeting external accountability demands only.

Salfi *et al.* (2014:342) argue that principals' leadership styles play an important role in the effectiveness and improvement of the school. The point of departure is that a particular style of leadership employed by the principal in one situation may not always contribute effectively in another situation. Naidoo and Perumal (2014:810) attest that curriculum leaders should be able to shift leadership styles to accommodate different situations. The style or styles of leadership employed by principals depend on the context of the situation. In their study, Nyamboga *et al.* (2014:197), contend that there may be a relationship between the principal's leadership styles and the performance of learners. Cruickshank (2017:117) posits that the leadership style that the principal enacts is a critical factor in creating and maintaining an environment in which teachers could teach; learners could learn which could ultimately lead to exceptional outcomes.

It is worth noting, however, that female principals, (just like their male counterparts), approach leadership differently. According to Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011:102), some lead with and through others; listening carefully to what they say; leading with passion and using the power of leadership to address social justice issues.

### 3.2 FEMALES IN EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

Educational leadership is central to the improvement of instruction and educational quality (Spillane (cited by Diko, 2014:829)). According to Yukl (2012:66), leaders have the power to influence the process that determines performance through improving the performance of a team. Diko, (2014:829) asserts that the role that female principals have to play is huge in that they have to improve educational quality. The leadership roles that female principals contemplate demonstrate the knowledge they possess about their leadership (Vohra, 2014:63). Davids (2018:159) supports the latter that females who are in leadership tend to work hard to remove the perceived stigma that they are weak or emotional. The time has come for female leaders to unlearn the myths about their lack of abilities and capabilities in ensuring that they assume leadership roles with confidence and competence (Edwards & Perumal, 2017:1).

Female leaders who reach top positions need to be more determined, dedicated, endure challenges and have good network structures (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014:809) not only to succeed but also to develop themselves academically to be on par with any challenges their positions may bring (Davids, 2018:159). For example, Lopez and Rigano (2018:8) are of the view that leadership preparation is seen as paper qualification that is the reason why some principals lack functional leadership skills as they did not go for proper training for their roles.

Davids (2018:160) argues that the effects of societal stereotypes and apartheid could have been resulted in perceptions that female leaders are less credible in their leadership because effective leadership has been associated with masculinity. Therefore, to access leadership positions and to be recognised and respected has always been a challenge to females in and those aspiring to be leaders. They are expected to have effective problem solving and interpersonal skills that allow them to work successfully within staff, learners, parents and the community (Rouleau-Caroll, 2014:34). In addition, Coleman, (cited by Zulu, 2011:839) for leadership to be effective, female leaders need to ensure that they “bring strengths to leadership and management which are applicable to leadership of females at all levels”. This can only be achieved when female principals are supported by all stakeholders within the education fraternity. While there is evidence that female leaders have more experiences in the classroom than their male counterparts, female principals tend to be problem-solvers; task-oriented and they have high expectations of self and others. Grogan (cited by Hansen, 2014:26) reported that females have “strong instructional backgrounds, a focus on curriculum and a focus on student growth and achievement”.

Hughes *et al.*, (2009:38) assert that such leaders encourage participation and shared power and information. A study conducted by Al-Jaradat (2014:148) showed that females are characterised by qualities that show their leadership abilities, through enhancing interaction between individuals, cooperation with others, focusing on social relations more than focusing on the hierarchy; and that the social relations style is the most common method among females' leadership. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011:84) maintain that these approaches are directed toward the growth of others. Moorosi, Fuller & Reilly (2018:153) assert that by virtue of their authority and power, female leaders are perceived to be privileged individuals; however, they continue to experience marginalisation despite the power they hold.

According to Hughes *et al.* (2009:25), females are portrayed as leaders who are better listeners, that is, listening to other people around them, knowing who they are and becoming sensitive to other people's feelings reflect a good principal (Lumadi, 2017:1). Furthermore, female leaders need to be more empathetic, less analytical, more people-oriented and less aggressive in pursuit of goals. Such leaders encourage participation and shared power and information in their organisations (Hughes *et al.*, 2009:38). It is worth mentioning that many females accepted the responsibilities of leadership in order to make a difference in the opportunities for learners' learning, to improve the system or to change the practices in a particular school (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011:3). Therefore, for female leaders to be successful in achieving educational objectives and goals at their institutions Uzoma (2010:5), a combination of factors is suggested, such as the style of leadership and the willingness of the leader to exercise such authority of power; including human relations approach and commitment to the welfare of staff and learners must be applied.

Volante (2012:101) posits "that leadership is learnable because there is a body of knowledge, skills and dispositions associated with leadership". Therefore, it is imperative for leaders to possess certain core leadership traits that contribute significantly to their success (Pashiardis & Johansson, 2016:110). Female leaders are therefore perceived to have distinct leadership traits and skills in leading educational institutions (Al-Jaradat, 2013:148) for example, intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity and sociability (Northouse, 2013:23). Kaume-Mwinzi (2016:86) adds that principals are perceived to be team-players, mentors, facilitators, visionaries and entrepreneurs who stimulate creativity, innovation and promote teaching and learning.

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011:2) have articulated five approaches that characterise females' educational leadership: leadership for learning; leadership for social justice; relational

leadership, spiritual leadership and balanced leadership. Of the five approaches, relational leadership befits the study, based on the lived experiences of female principals in secondary schools.

Different leadership styles enacted by female principals are examined.

### **3.3 FEMALE LEADERSHIP STYLES**

Principals play a significant role towards the success of their schools (Ismail, Don, Husin & Khalid, 2018:136) and Myende *et al.* (2018:1) add that principal leadership has been perceived to be most important factor for activating success both locally and internationally. Crickshank (2017:115) states that school leadership is recognised as playing a key role in improving student's outcomes. The major role of school principals is to lead their organisations. Principals need to draw a vision that can be embodied and communicated to the school community and lead them in making sure that the vision is achieved (Msila, 2013:468).

Leadership styles therefore enable principals to be competent, professional and behaving ethically (Murakami & Törnsten, 2017:814) and impact positively in schools they head since leadership styles shape organisational behaviour (Akanji, Mordi, Ajonbadi & Mojeed-Sanni, 2018:830). Kaume-Mwinzi (2016:85) posits that principals' leadership style have a positive effect on teachers' job satisfaction and motivate learners' academic achievement. Furthermore, leadership styles play a critical role in an organisation (Kaume-Mwinzi, 2016:85) because the way in which leaders lead have an influence in how the followers behave in their duties (Luthans (cited by Khan, Khan & Ismail, 2015: 87)). Allie and Sosibo (2018:89) maintain that the effectiveness of the school can be influenced by leadership styles, availability of resources, parental involvement and learners' academic performance. In addition, Myende, Samuel and Pillay (2018:2) assert that female leaders work hard in schools to maintain a good reputation both academically and organisationally, and through their leadership styles, their schools produce good academic results and are schools of choice for many parents.

Furthermore, female leadership is traditionally associated with leadership styles that are transformational, collaborative and participative and this could contribute immensely to the effectiveness of teachers (Adeyemi, 2010:84). Additionally, transformational leaders inspire employees towards goal attainment (Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018:196). For example,

female leaders surround themselves with consulting, encouraging, discussing and negotiating which Zulu (2011:841) considers to be varying depending on the situation.

“The tone of the school is set up by the school principal” (Eboka, 2016:25), therefore, the principal, as the head of the school, sets up the tone for school through different leadership styles displayed as the functions are carried out. Essentially there is no single style of leadership which is appropriate to all situations. This is emphasised by Uzoma (2010:5), who observes that “the success or failure of the school depends to a large extent in the ability and capacity to effect desired educational goals”. Duke (1987:47) affirmed that principals are often the most visible school leaders and other stakeholders may exert major influence over what goes on in schools, so their leadership styles matter a lot in terms of their success. Crickshank (2017:116) maintains that the leadership style that the school principal demonstrate make a substantial difference to the quality of teaching and learning in their respective schools, leading to student achievement. Hallinger, (cited by Crickshank, 2017:116) notes that principals can have indirect positive effect on student achievement by building a collaborative organisational learning culture and helping to develop the leadership capacities of staff and community.

Furthermore, female leaders approach leadership in different ways. Chandan and Damayanthi (2011:2) add that female leaders are usually associated with collaborative leadership and that females are perceived as some of the new source of leadership talent because of their “caring and sharing propensities, their communicative and organisational skills and their capacity to listen to and empathise with the needs of others” (Blackmore (cited by Chandan & Damayanthi, 2011:2)) and become more sensitive to the ideas and proposals coming from staff members (Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018:196).

Netshitangani and Msila (2014:265) highlight that “the fact that some of the principals are mothers themselves and understand the difficulties that parents and female staff may face is also an advantage” for females in leadership positions. Literature shows that the collaborative and participatory styles of leadership styles are strongly identified with female leaders (Chandan & Damayanthi, 2011:2). Participative leadership involves leaders who engage their staff in goal setting processes and integration in discussion on company (school) performance (Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018:193). Furthermore, Adkison (cited by Hansen (2014:26) and Uzoma (2010:8) opine that “there is evidence that female principals are more likely than their male counterparts to involve themselves in instructional supervision, to exhibit democratic leadership style, to be concerned with students and to seek community involvement”. Therefore, no single

approach can be effective for improving all schools and all student outcomes (Cruickshank, 2017:120).

Leadership styles are selected to fit a certain situation. Therefore, the concept of “females’ leadership style” has been described as “an open, trusting, compassionate, understanding and supportive of continuous learning” (Gupton & Slick, 1996:139). Females’ leadership styles are perceived to be empowerment driven, productive and outcomes-based; not about being nice to those they lead (Gupton & Slick, 1996:139). Thus, leaders should understand different styles that fit particular situations (Amanchukwu *et al.*, 2015:9).

The way school principals exercise their leadership may be a direct factor that influences effective teaching and learning. According to Cronin (cited by Zulu, 2007:26), style refers to “how a person relates to people, tasks and challenges. A style is usually personal and distinctive feature of his or her personality and character”. Therefore, leadership style can be defined as “a set of behaviours that one consciously chooses to use that best fits the situation when the situation changes, so does the style” (Johannsen, 2014; Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016:2; Northouse, 2013:101). Leadership styles, can be flexible, that is, a leader can shift from one style to the next, depending on a particular situation (Johannsen 2014). Furthermore, Mullins and Christy (as cited by Akanji, Mordi, Ajonbadi & Mojeed-Sanni (2018:831) define leadership styles as “specific methods in which leadership functions are achieved, arising from ways managers typically behave towards subordinates”. Therefore, leaders are not forced into a particular style of leadership because leadership styles have worked for different leaders in different situations, leading to the assertions that there is no single best leadership style (Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016:2). Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, (2018:194) are of the view that leadership style is “a choice of measures to influence employees and stimulate performance-oriented actions”.

The leadership styles employed in this study are distinguished based on ways in which the principals set directions for development, work out and execute plans and also how principals in their respective schools interact with their subordinates (Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018:194). Therefore, the common leadership styles employed in this study are democratic, autocratic, authoritarian and laissez-faire, on the contrary, Kunwar (cited by Salfi, Virk & Hussain, 2014:342) claims that democratic and participative leadership has significant relationships with school effectiveness and improvement. This indicates that such leadership styles can be used by both female and male leaders.

Moorosi and Bantwini (2016:2) further assert that different leadership styles are being used by different leaders, depending on the situation at hand. In line with this assertion, Kessler (2014:3) argues that “a woman in leadership position will - consciously or unconsciously - exercise one of the leadership styles, but she will do it in a specific female way”.

Literature on leadership styles will be reviewed and how they relate to how female principals lead in their schools. However, for the context of this study, these leadership styles will be viewed under the lens of female leaders in successful secondary schools.

### **3.3.1 Democratic leadership style**

Democratic leadership style is a style whereby the leader pursues an open, trusting and follower-oriented relationship (Jogulu & Wood, 2006:240). It becomes easy for a democratic leader to get commitment from the followers to do specific tasks that helps with suggestions as needed (Roe & Drake, 1981:94). By adopting a democratic leadership style, the leader encourages subordinates to take part in decision making (Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016:3, Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015:10; Murakami & Törnsten, 2016:814; Khan, Nawaz & Khan, 2016:1; Adeyemi, 2010:84; Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018:194). The leader takes it into account the inputs and contributions from team members but the final decision rests with the leader (Allie & Sosibo, 2018:91). This style of leadership provides teamwork (Eagly & Carli, 2007:127; Roe & Drake, 1981:96) and staff members are usually encouraged to be creative by giving them the independence to commence their own tasks and are highly engaged in projects and decisions and ultimately a high degree of staff morale would be enhanced (Adeyemi, 2010:84). The democratic leadership style allows the staff to benefit positively by achieving high job satisfaction while becoming productive because of their involvement in leadership decisions and they feel empowered. The staff working under a democratic leader feels a part of something larger and meaningful (Amanchukwu *et al.*, 2015:10; Roe & Drake, 1981:96). Democratic leadership also provides guidance, empowers subordinates to make the best of their competencies and talents and prioritises social aspects for group work (Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018:195).

Furthermore, Gastil (cited by Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016:3) concluded that “democratic leadership is more effective when it is ‘emergent’ rather than externally imposed”. This is supported by Nyamboga *et al.* (2014:203), when asserting that a democratic leadership style is perceived as the best leadership style for an organisation because “little grievance, low employee turnover, absenteeism and job satisfaction result in increased productivity”. According to Jogulu

and Wood (2006:240), the leaders who adopt democratic leadership are described as caring, considerate and easy to compromise.

In addition, Murakami and Törnsten (2017:814) indicate that the characteristics of a democratic style can be shown through the importance of being relational and morally accountable. Democratic leaders are also perceived as having a sense of responsibility and attachment to their followers. Therefore, the aforementioned descriptions indicate the female attributes of leadership and this can imply that female principals may adopt this style of leadership, not forgetting the insinuation that there is no perfect leadership styles, leadership styles are used according to situations. Furthermore, Eagly and Carli (2007:127); Eagly (2013:4) and Msila, (2013:468) support the assertion that female leaders are more democratic on average and participative in how they lead. School principals who embrace democratic and participative leadership styles tend to encourage group work and team spirit, produce significantly high academic performance (Allie & Sosibo, 2018:103; Steyn, 2018:10786). According to Uzoma (2010:8), female leaders exhibit a democratic leadership style in their institutions and concerning themselves with the welfare of their students which may result in learners performing excellently in their academic work.

### **3.3.2 Autocratic leadership style**



Autocratic leaders are leaders who use power to force or persuade in leading the followers. This leadership style entails leaders who make decisions without consultation or input of others (Allie & Sosibo, 2018:90; Khan, Nawaz & Khan, 2016:1; Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018:195; Khan, Khan & Ismail, 2015:87). Autocratic leaders influence their followers because of the position they hold (Jogulu & Wood, 2006:239). Because of their positions, autocratic leaders assign tasks on a continuous basis knowing that the job will be done (Roe & Drake, 1981:94) nonetheless; this type of leadership is beneficial because it is incredibly efficient (Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2016:10). In adopting autocratic leadership style, subordinates are expected to obey orders without explanation from the leader (Khan, Khan & Ismail, 2015:87). Furthermore, an autocratic leader gives direction to the followers on the way things should be done (Adeyemi, 2010:84), however, Adeyemi, (2010:84) argues that the leader does not delegate authority nor permits their subordinates to participate in policy making; they hold all responsibilities to themselves unless deciding otherwise. Burns (cited by Nyamboga *et al.*, 2014:204) emphasises that an autocratic leader maintains most of the vested authority by issuing orders and telling staff what to do without consulting them.

Furthermore, females are usually perceived to be democratic and when they resort to being autocratic (based on a particular situation), staff members tend to complain. Allie and Sosibo (2018:102) maintain that autocratic leadership style can be advantageous in attaining good learner performance; however, this leadership style can bring negative feelings. Machumu (cited by Allie & Sosibo, 2018:102) further maintains that autocratic leadership appears to be more dominant in poor performing schools. On the contrary, the participants of the current study when applying autocracy were able to maintain discipline by advising their teachers to do what was expected of them (whether in rural or low performing schools or in urban performing schools). Autocratic leadership style is however normally used in crises situations, when decisions must be made quickly.

According to Khan, Khan and Ismail (2018:88), autocratic leadership, when practised, might arouse defiant behaviours among staff members against the leader and therefore trust issues may be negatively affected. Autocratic leadership leaves the staff with little or no confidence in themselves because their input is not taken into consideration and their talents are not recognised by the leader.

Furthermore, autocratic leadership should not be perceived to be a wrong choice, but should help staff members to perform tasks effectively, solve identified problems and also meet targets or deadlines on time (Khan, Khan & Ismail, 2018:87). The employees need to understand that they should adhere to the clear and short instructions given on what they are expected to do and how to perform those instructions (Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018:195).

### **3.3.3 Authoritative leadership style**

Authoritative leadership style is related to autocratic leadership style. Authoritarian leaders, just like autocratic leaders, make independent decisions with little or no input from the staff members. Such leaders are found to be controlling, bossy and dictatorial (Khan *et al.*, 2015:88). According to Khan *et al.* (2015:88) this type of leadership is applicable in situations where the leader has little or no time to consult staff members in decisions taken. Furthermore, authoritative leadership style might be applicable where the leader is the most knowledgeable member of the group, hence taking such decisions (Khan *et al.*, 2015:88).

Prinsloo, (2016:2) posits that there is no principal who can manage the school without authority therefore the authority that the principal applies should be enforced by certain actions in

accordance with the specific guidelines, and furthermore, the principal as the manager of the school has the right to take actions against those who do not cooperate to achieve set goals. Bowers, Shoho and Barnett (2015:6) further contend that the leadership style(s) exhibited by female leaders appear to be influenced by their male counterparts. For example, female leaders tend to adopt authoritative (masculine) leadership styles as they progress in their leadership careers to prove to the male principals that they are as good as them in leading secondary schools successfully; however, they become comfortable as they get used to leadership and begin to emphasise emotions, student learning and participatory decision making more than their male counterparts (Bowers *et al.*, 2015:6). According to Akanji *et al.*, (2018:843) authoritative leadership style may result in passive resistance by subordinates and may require continuous pressure and direction from leaders in order to get their staff engaged. Allie and Sosibo (2018:94) contend that authoritative leadership style of running schools leads to a lack of commitment on the part of the teachers, poor teamwork and lack of any motivation to take any initiative in decision making.

The varying of leadership styles tends to affect the overall performance of organisations, either negatively or positively depending on the situation. From the findings in the study of Ibrahim and Al-Teneiji (2012:44), females are slightly stronger in relationship supportive style. Kessler provided strong support that the strengths that female leaders display are relationship oriented and shapes females' understanding of leadership. On the other hand, Lumby *et al.* (2010:31) have reported that the strength in forming relationships with both learners and staff is perceived as a critical aspect of effective leadership. Female strength and perseverance will enable female principals to endure hardships and better manage their schools.

Jogulu and Wood (2006:236) contend that leadership has been considered to be reliant on the leader's judgement and consideration of situational factors for an appropriate leadership style to be chosen to cope with each situation.

### **3.3.4 Laissez-faire leadership style**

The term laissez-faire is described as letting others act without interference (Jogulu & Wood, 2006:240). According to Goodnight (as cited by Amanchukwu, 2015:10), this leadership style may be the best or the worst of leadership styles, depending on what is to be done. A leader using this style of leadership allows people to work on their own, without being supervised and has less confidence in his or her supervisory duties (Jogulu & Wood, 2006:240; Khan, Nawaz &

Khan, 2016:1). Roe and Drake, (1981:94) contend that this type of leader is completely passive. A laissez-faire leader allows subordinates to set their own deadlines. The leader gives staff members specific responsibilities and avoids taking decisions (Amanchukwu *et al.*, 2016:10; Nyamboga *et al.*, 2014:205). However, Aydin, Sarier and Uysal (2013:807) view a laissez-faire leader as unfair because the leader ignores the needs and developments of followers and rejects their responsibilities and also not providing feedback to the staff members.

Furthermore, a laissez-faire leader usually provides the staff with resources and advice, when needed, but do not get involved. The leader who adopts a laissez-faire leadership style allows for complete freedom to staff members to make decisions without the leader's participation in the course of events suggested by the staff (Adeyemi, 2010:85). This type of leadership may ignite leadership skills from teachers as they will be participating in different school activities without the principal interfering. It is the view of the researcher, therefore, based on the evidence presented, that female leaders may adopt this style as they want to see production of their teachers and learners, however, this type of leadership is overindulgent and lacks direct supervision, which may result in poor production, lack of control and waste of resources (Allie & Sosibo, 2018:90).

### **3.4 LEADERSHIP SKILLS**

Leadership skills are essential for the effective functioning of the schools (Wiehahn, 2018:2; Lumadi, 2017:1). Furthermore, Piaw, Hee, Ismail & Ying (2014:5125) assert that principals' leadership skills are often the key factor between effective and ineffective schools. Lumadi (2017:1) describes effective leadership as "a process whereby one person or group of individuals influence others". Furthermore, for a school to acquire its effectiveness, improvement of learner performance and distribution of leadership resources should be achieved. Therefore, it is of great significance that principals uphold their schools through their effective leadership skills. According to Da'as (2017:207) leadership skills have an impact on the behaviour of leaders, their effectiveness and performance. When possessing leadership skills assist principals in coping with the complexity of their schools and contribute to team performance (Da'as, 2017:207). Effective and good leadership skills encourage positive school climate (Piaw *et al.*, 2014:5125). Through these leadership skills effectiveness and efficiency can be maintained by principals. Furthermore, the quality of leadership practices in schools could significantly make a difference to the learning and achievement of students academically (Kaume-Mwinzi, 2016:86). It is therefore important to understand what leadership skills are and what they maintain. In

general, a skill is the ability to do work. Therefore, leadership skills, according to Knapp (as cited by Bolanle, 2013:27) are “the learned ability to bring about pre-determined results with maximum use of time ... energy and both”. On the other hand, Kalargyrou, Pescosolido and Kalargiros (2012:40) and Strawn, McKim and Velez (2017:36) concur with the latter that skills are behaviours that can be learned and developed. Yukl (2012:77) also maintains that a skill is the ability of a leader to perform some type of activity. A skill therefore denotes developed expertise in the course of training and experience. The leader has the responsibility to match the demands of a particular task to the appropriate skill necessary for the effective achievement of the task (Gregory as cited by Bolanle, 2017:201). So, for the school to be effective, principals need to apply necessary leadership skills. Moreover, the roles of principals as leaders of schools are dynamic and complex; therefore it is crucial that principals acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for leadership through undergoing formal training sessions before they can be entrusted with any leadership role, whether managerial or administrative duties (Lopez & Rigano, 2018:2; Hilliard & Newsome, Jr, 2013:353; Kalargyrou *et al.*, 2012:39).

As school principals, clear and consistent messages should be disseminated (Kaume-Mwinzi, 2016:88) to those they lead. A skilled and competent principal ensures facilitation of input; ensures the achievement of desired goals and oversees all the processes involved in the running of the school for overall effectiveness (Bolanle, 2013:27).

Communication and collaborative skills involve leaders working together with others to send information or tackle problems and are critical in the improvement of learning outcomes for students (Kaume-Mwinzi, 2016:88; Lopez & Rigano, 2018:1). Furthermore, collaboration and productivity are accomplished to curb any challenge principals may come across in their schools (Lumadi, 2017:1).

Communication skills facilitate social acceptance, integration and involvement with others (Education Labour Relations Council, 2003: H-25). Therefore, Da’as (2017:208) posits that communication is considered an important skill for effective leadership. Moreover, the ability of principals to motivate teachers and learners using effective communication skill is highly recommended (Tyler, 2016:2). It has been observed that principals spend much of their time engaging in interpersonal communication, either face-to-face or verbal (which is the highest preferred method), telephonically, through emails, which makes their roles even more complex (Tyler, 2016:3), however through being transformational, combined with relational trust, leaders (principals) contribute to the high performance of learners’ achievement (Tyler, 2016:4).

Transformational leadership has been perceived as being a strong open communication leadership model because clear and consistent communication is an attribute of transformational leadership (Tyler, 2016:4).

Tyler (2016:4) asserts that communication breakdown may lead to collegiality and teamwork getting lost. To curb that, leaders of different institutions should take it upon themselves to possess and use strong communication skills as the key component to the success of their schools (Tyler, 2016:17).

According to Tyler (2016:8), factors that promote good relationship include trust, mutual respect, responsibility for words and actions and open honest communication. When there is a good working relationship among stakeholders there is increased cooperation and performance. When building relationships, the school principal should ensure that they are transparent to all they work with. Being transparent ensures that there is no hidden agenda, thereby sharing information to all stakeholders on regular basis (Tyler, 2016:8).

Interpersonal skills are critical to effective school leadership (Simon *et al.*, 2018:85) because as a leader, the principal of a school should relate and interact with people he/she works with, including influencing them (Kalargyrou *et al.*, 2012:50) for the betterment of the school. Furthermore, the principal, according to The South African Standard for Principalship (2014:7), is responsible for building relationships among the school and the wider community. The interpersonal skill that the principal possesses encourages the building, development and maintenance of partnerships for the mutual benefit of all involved in the education of learners (DBE, 2014:7). Through effective interpersonal relationships and communication principals need to enhance professional learning community in the school (DBE, 2014:16). Interpersonal skills are perceived to be social and afford leaders to relate to and influence their followers to efficiently achieve organisational goals (Da'as, 2017:209). Having effective leadership skills affords the principals to have the opportunity to have the mutually satisfactory relationship in their schools (Da'as, 2017). Furthermore, Cullen-Lester, Woehler and Willburn (2016:322) assert that informal relationships in organisations enhance the staffs' ability to communicate, collaborate and influence across internal silos and eternal boundaries. The ability to develop relationships is an important leadership competency; therefore, principals need to improve their networking skills for the success of the schools they lead (Cullen-Lester *et al.*, 2016:322).

The connections that the female principal and staff members have create a network that provides access to information, support and other resources that are needed to influence each other in order to progress in their careers (Cullen-Lester *et al.*, 2016:322). In developing such networks, the school community is enabled to achieve professional goals and enhances organisation's success (Cullen-Lester *et al.*, 2016:322).

According to Byrum-Rinson and Womeldorff (cited by Cullen-Lester *et al.*, 2016:322) "networking refers to behaviours used to create and manage a system of social connections that provide access to resources for the mutual benefit of oneself and others".

The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) has five pillars under their 2030 vision. Of the five pillars, pillar number five talks about building delivery based organisational capacity (SADTU Declaration, 2017). Pillar number five further elaborates on the servicing of school principals and office-based teachers. The National General Council (NGC), after realising that networking is one of the elements that assist school principals in developing their teachers and learners, declared that they will establish a network of principals that may be convened when a need arises to address matters that are peculiar to them (SADTU Declaration, 2017).

Through networking, relationships are built and maintained. Burt and Ronchi (as cited by Cullen-Lester *et al.*, 2016:322), however, posit that learned properties of an effective network assist leaders in achieving greater performance and career advancement.

Traditionally females have been perceived to be reluctant to engage in networking because of the feeling that they could not possibly fit extra activities into their busy schedule (Cullen-Lester *et al.*, 2016:328), however, participants in the study were able to make time in developing effective network with their counterparts from performing or successful schools (*see 5.3.8*) in order to access valuable information, opportunities and resources (for example, advise, time, resources, connections to others).

### **3.5 FEMALES AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT CHALLENGES**



"The principalship is strewn with obstacles, fraught with challenges, but priceless in its rewards" (Brock & Grady, 2012:147), therefore females in leadership positions are faced with many challenges in all walks of life; be it in business, politics or in churches but they ultimately thrive towards success. It is also noteworthy that females have more obstacles that prevent them from being taken seriously as leaders and to being viewed as authentic leaders (Martin, 2011:6). It is however, not only in secondary schools that females in leadership positions are minimal,

business sector is also affected by this perplexing problem. Conradie *et al.* (2015:1) have argued that although the government of South Africa and business organisations have tried to prioritise elevating females to top positions through equal rights, it has been a complex mission to do that. Females have continued to experience challenges towards advancing through their careers and these obstacles affect their self-confidence and self-efficacy negatively, of which they hamper their career advancement (Bowers, Shoho & Barnett, 2015:6). One of the contextual factors that contribute to these challenges, according to Conradie *et al.*, (2015:1), is the unique nature of South African history. This is supported by Msila (2013:465) and Pheko (2014:1), who assert that the experiences of the few females who have assumed or are assuming leadership positions are full of challenges. These challenges may be due to assertions on stereotypes attached to females, more specifically, their lack of capacity to hold leadership positions (Jean-Marie & Martinez, 2007:43). Nonetheless, there are also barriers that pose a challenge in the career advancement of secondary school female principals (Netshitangani & Msila, 2014:260). Furthermore, Chao (2017:63) adds that there are still fewer women than men in top positions because of structural barriers to their advancement thereby giving a reason why for so many years people have associated leadership traits to maleness (Msila, 2013:46; Robinson *et al.*, 2017:2).

In addition, it has been found that this is a societal matter in general that expected effective leaders to be males and these societal obstacles prevent females to progress in leadership positions (Netshitangani, 2018:206). Van Eck *et al.*, (1996:403), indicate that patriarchy has led to the thinking that females are better suited to management positions in primary schools and males to management positions in secondary schools therefore highly qualified and experienced females may end up not applying for leadership positions and the system will end up losing the opportunity to capitalise on skills and talent females have in the organisation (Netshitangani, 2018:206).

The extent to which females are not taken into consideration for leadership varies from country to country and South Africa is no exception. However, having a good track record of accomplishment is likely to predict career advancement for females (Pheko, 2014:3). We are, however living in a patriarchal society. This has been emphasised by Shakeshaft (2011:212) when asserting that through the historical barriers, females were perceived as undependable, unprofessional workers and that they were a wasted investment in that *when a female is educated, it is a waste because one day she will get married and become a house wife*, hence the

barrier. Of all the given facts, some of these females have managed to overcome these historical barriers or have managed to break through barriers that keep them in lower positions by becoming effective leaders (Conradie *et al.*, 2015:2).

Mythili (2019:55) posits that in Nepal, females are discouraged to take up leadership roles due to limited chances to pursue education beyond school levels. Furthermore, in Bangladesh females are discouraged to apply for university education which is a prerequisite for becoming school principal (Sperandio (cited by Mythili, 2019:55)). In Afghanistan females are forced to confine themselves to teach in community-based schools near their homes and therefore lack opportunities of exposure to outside world and interaction (Mythili, 2019:55).

Females have been marginalised in leadership positions; therefore, leadership of females is under-represented, especially in secondary schools. Moorosi *et al.* (2018:152) assert “even when blacks are able to advance professionally and acquire a degree of economic self-sufficiency, it is the social realm that racist and gendered stereotypes are continually used as ways of defining black women’s identity and behaviour”. These gendered notions affect leadership legitimacy of females in leadership positions. Mythili (2019:56) maintains that females are constrained by social class, norms and family due to complex gendered hierarchy. According to Mythili (2019:55) females are usually given primary school in the majority whereas males occupy secondary school leadership. Females have been doubted of their leadership capabilities and are not valued for what they might bring into the field, therefore expected to prove themselves through their training and academic education (Mythili, 2019:55).

Another factor that marginalises females from leadership positions is power differences (Mythili, 2019:61). Power differences tend to create prejudice which was reported against females in Lumby’s study (2015:406) and where doubts about their ability to lead were expressed by appointment panels, teachers and local community. Power differences include (i) less favourable evaluation of females’ potential for leadership because leadership ability is stereotypical of males than of females and (ii) less favourable evaluation of the actual behaviour of females than male because agentic behaviour is perceived as less desirable in females than males (Mythili, 2019:61). Furthermore, female leaders are negatively evaluated for violations of communal behaviour such as being affectionate, helpful, kind, nurturing and gentle behaviour, however, such behaviours are beneficial in females’ leadership because they manifest in speaking tentatively, not drawing attention to oneself, accepting others’ direction, supporting and soothing (Mythili, 2019:61).

Hansen (2014:27) asserts that equalising women's opportunity in school leadership is a difficult job. Maseko (2013:46) arguably maintains that the range of issues arise in restraining women's potential to aspire to positions of leadership. Furthermore, Mathepa and Tsoka (cited by Msila, 2013:469) listed some of the barriers which represent the faulty perceptions of true positions regarding females and are camouflaging for deeper, societal roadblocks to females' advancement: poor self-image; lack of assertiveness; less career orientation; less confidence; poor performance; and demotion (Msila, 2013:469) which Shakeshaft (1987:83) regards as internal barriers keeping them from advancing and socialising. It is important to note that females, according to Shakeshaft (1987:82), "behave in self-limiting ways not because they were socialised as females but because they are locked into low-power, low-visibility, dead-end jobs". Other factors are posited to find out how female leaders deal with such challenges.

In her study of *Women in Educational Administration*, Shakeshaft (1987:82) has identified females' career barriers from gender-role stereotyping, gender-role socialisation, career socialisation, organisational characteristics and devaluation of female perspectives. Netshitangani (2018:206) has also highlighted the following as obstacles that hinder females' progress: family attachments, low self-esteem and lack of support, individual and political barriers, negative criticisms, social, cultural and religious beliefs are among the hindrances that negatively affect rising of females in leadership positions.

For the context of the discussion, it is important to understand what a career is. Although Shakeshaft (1987:64) asserts that the literature on careers and career paths in administration does not fit the experiences of female administrators because the experiences document the career routes coming from male experiences, a career has been defined from the traditional perspective. Furthermore, Shakeshaft (1987:64) explains that a career has been characterised as "a pre-established total pattern of organised professional activity, with upward movement through recognised preparatory stages and advancement based on merit and bearing honour". Female career barriers range from sex-role stereotypes, sex-role socialisation, career socialisation, organisational characteristics and devaluation of women perspectives (Shakeshaft, 1987:82).

Literature has revealed that in democratic South Africa and elsewhere in the world, females continue to face a different climb to reach to the top positions in organisations and to be accepted as managers and leaders (Nkomo (cited by Bosch, 2012:30)). Lumby *et al.*, (2010:6) strongly support the argument in it is evident that females in general have experienced more constraints when appointed in leadership positions and when performing their duties than do their male

colleagues in the same positions. The barriers that females have experienced in advancing their careers include traditional stereotypes, domestic responsibilities, lack of encouragement (mentorship) and discrimination at work (Lumby *et al.*, 2010:6). Msila (2013:466) has argued, given the report on his study in 2010, that the challenges experienced by females would also be experienced by male principals given the context of their schools. However, there is a need to empower female principals to be strong leaders in their schools (Msila, 2013:466). Furthermore, females need to be coached when leading secondary schools as they are sometimes perceived as “under-utilised resource (Msila, 2013:467) but the latter may not include all schools because there are those female principals who are leading successful secondary schools through the identified challenges. The latter is supported by Netshitangani and Msila (2014:260) by arguing that organisations do benefit when there are more females at the helm.

There is no doubt that there are more females entering leadership positions in South Africa and other countries in the world but given the context, Moorosi (2010:548) has established that females are theoretically recognised to have equal rights and equal access to employment and promotion. However, it is evident that most principalship of secondary schools is held by males, which sabotages females (Moorosi, 2010:549). Maseko (2013:3) asserts that despite the impressive strides toward appointing females into leadership positions in South African schools, females continue to experience challenges in dispensing their leadership. Nonetheless, Paustian-Underdahl *et al.* (2014:1130) argued that the presence of a female in top leadership positions provides information about their abilities or responsibilities to others in the institutions. What Paustian-Underdahl *et al.* (2014:1130) might be implying is that females in leadership positions must showcase their competence in the ‘*male dominated*’ position for them to be recognised in such a challenging leadership role.

However, Lumby *et al.* (2010:40) in their conclusions have indicated that female principals believed that they were good as their male counterparts in the areas in which they were particularly doubted such as discipline. Shakeshaft (1987:39) adds that females were thought to be incapable of discipline and order, primarily because of their size and supposed lack of strength and this applies to the South African contexts. Coleman (2003:205) maintained that “one of the reasons why women are not favoured as principals is the stereotype that women leaders are likely to be soft, indecisive and generally unsuited to the demands of a role that is thought to require masculine qualities of decisiveness, assertiveness and dominance”. Literature on female leaders has revealed that females have been considered to have a greater chance of

securing teaching in primary schools than acquiring a principal position in successful secondary schools as principalship of successful secondary schools is defined by a male perception of physical size equals power and power equals the ability to discipline (Mythili, 2019:55). It is therefore unfortunate that female leadership capabilities are judged from the vantage of traditional cultural stereotypes about women. This was evident in Brown's study (2012:15) that school administration is being perceived as masculine position and in order to success, females must simulate male personalities, nonetheless, those female principals who have shattered the glass ceiling have managed to lead in the very same masculine institutions though they are faced with many challenges and demands in leadership (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014:2).

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that females are competent in their leadership. It is therefore important to acknowledge that female principals manage their schools through the challenges and obstacles that confront them in their daily encounters (Schmidt & Mestry, 2015:813).

Schmidt and Mestry (2015:813) hold the view that it is also imperative to be mindful of the socio-political context within which female principals work under and understanding the conditions that are essential to comprehend their experiences. Literature on female leadership in secondary schools and in schools in general has established that it has never been easy for a female to be in a leadership position. There have been constraints on female advancement into senior leadership positions (Mahlase (cited by Mestry & Schmidt, 2012:535)). Lumby (2015:406) has also alluded to the fact that prejudice against female leaders was identified in her study, with doubts about their ability to lead being expressed by teachers and the local community. Shakeshaft (1987:48) adds that prejudices against female leaders date back to the 1950s and 1960s that hindered the female's advancement into administration from the colonial onward. In her research, Diko (2014:827) maintains that democratic policies in South Africa should protect and support the advancement of female leaders. Diko further reflects that schools and government departments fail to open up spaces for women to lead or encourage them to perform well once they attained leadership. The aforementioned arguments suggest that female leaders are still far from achieving equality in the workplace (Msila, 2013:463).

Following the above arguments, Moorosi (2010:2) singles out three phases in a model called the "management route model" whereby she explains what females go through before attaining leadership positions: *anticipation, acquisition, and performance*. This model was used to interrogate the nature of gender inequality in women principals' career paths. It is crucial to note

that this study is not about inequality of females in institutions, but the analytical framework used by Moorosi (2010:2) assists in determining that it is not easy for a female to acquire leadership position in secondary schools. Furthermore, Moorosi (cited by Msila, 2013:464) highlights the fact that reality of female principals' experiences suggest that female principals continue to fight a battle against social and organisational discrimination. This battle may take time before female principals are perceived as leaders just like their male counterparts; some of them perform better than the male principals in secondary schools. However, those that believe that *'the place of a woman is in the kitchen'* have realised that females are now taking the lead in managing their schools towards success (Conradie *et al.*, 2015:2).

The first phase highlighted in Moorosi's study is the anticipation phase which is described as a preparation phase for females towards management/leadership. In this phase the development of knowledge and skills are crucial in attaining such a position. Qualifications, trainings and workshops, including participation in informal networks play a crucial role in preparing females for leadership positions. Furthermore, getting the opportunity to act in leadership positions and attending leadership meetings prepare females for the actual leadership functions.

The second phase is the acquisition phase, which focuses on females accessing and entering into leadership positions. Females tend to apply for leadership and are backed up by having informal networks and support from sponsors; they are seeking for appointment in principalship (Moorosi, 2010:548). It is in this phase where Moorosi (2010:548) has established that most principalship positions of secondary schools are held by males and this sabotages females in acquiring the principalship position in secondary schools despite the gender equality entrenched in the Constitution (South Africa, 1996). It is in this phase, according to Moorosi (2010:549), that discrimination takes place. Discrimination takes place because females' suitability and acceptability are likely to be assessed based on male attributes (for example, assertiveness, control and confidence). Naidoo and Perumal have asserted that females started to have a challenge when they began to climb the corporate and government ladders, striking a balance between family life and leadership roles. Naidoo and Perumal (2014:810) continue to contend that for females to reach top positions they have to be determined, dedicated, endure challenges and have a good network structure. Moorosi (2010:548) posits that females acquiring leadership positions are backed up by clear selection criteria and procedure, including national policy and regulations that advances females' chances to be appointed in such positions.

The third phase is the performance phase where actual leadership function is performed. It has been established that within this phase the experiences of female principals are influenced by personal, organizational and social factors (Moorosi, 2010:549). Paustian-Underdahl *et al.* (2014:1130) concur that females, based on social roles, are typically described and expected to be more communal, relation-oriented and nurturing.

Netshitangani (2018:207) posits that gender challenges are common for both rural and urban females in acquiring leadership positions. Another factor is that females usually hold back from pursuing their leadership interest because of the family responsibility they have and that those responsibilities may interfere with their leadership roles.

According to Naidoo and Perumal (2014:809), when a female becomes a principal, there is often scepticism as to whether they are indeed 'leadership material'. Their suitability of leadership has been questioned because South Africa and other Southern African societies are traditionally patriarchal (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014:810) and this has led female leaders, through their experiences, to internalise that they are not made for leadership (Msila, 2013:463). Mestry and Schmidt (2012:836) concur with Naidoo and Perumal in that the patriarchal culture in South Africa remains dominant in many communities and schools, placing formidable constraints on females' advancement to the principal position. However, Muzvidziwa (2014:213), referring to the Zimbabwean context and the context of South Africa, saw females' career advancement as being slowed down by traditional roles. While in South Africa the Bill of Rights (1996) acknowledges that all citizens have to enjoy equal treatment and that the Employment Equity Act (1998) guarantees equal employment and promotion opportunities, Moorosi (2010:2) argues that males and females do not have an 'equal playing field'. She asserts that females do not benefit from equal opportunity interventions.

Shakeshaft (1987:83) identifies the internal barriers that have often listed as contributing to the female's lack of achievement in administration. Msila (2013:468) is of the view that females have poor perceptions of themselves thus complicit in the oppression of females in general. Nonetheless, these internal barriers are just camouflaging the female's advancement. They are low or negative self-image, lack of confidence and lack of motivation or aspiration (Netshitangani, 2018:208). The increasing poor self-image of females is gender stereotypes which exist at the organisational levels which is the major cause of continuous under-representation of females in principal positions. Netshitangani (2018:208) also maintains that

inferiority complex is also clouding females' progress and some of these females tend to believe that females are better leaders over them.

More so that females can lead, it is therefore critical to understand challenges that may limit the abilities of females to lead successfully. By identifying the challenges that limit female leaders' success, Glass and Crook, (2016:52) emphasise that policies will be informed in ways that limit bias and support female's mobility and success. Once females can acknowledge their power, they will stop undermining their leadership abilities.

The following are the factors that may limit females' success to advance in leadership positions.

### **Lack of confidence**

Msila (2013:468) contends that females tend to perceive themselves poorly and this leads to other women in general to "oppress" them. The lack of confidence in females' ability to lead emerges from race and gender issues (Chisholm (cited by Naidoo & Perumal, 2014:810)). Shakeshaft (1987:84) argues that lack of or low self-confidence arises from a system that keeps women from experiences that would help build confidence in public sphere because females are measured by male defined standards of self-confidence. However, Lumby *et al.* (2010:5) echo that "women leaders are still perceived and perceive themselves as challenging the norm" by becoming leaders. Grogan and Shakeshaft (cited by Lumby *et al.*, 2010:5) assert that females do not lack confidence in their abilities to lead, but the elements of racism and sexism persist hence discouraging females to move into leadership positions. This has been a finding in Conradie *et al.*'s study (2015:4) that females see themselves as less effective and it was found that the cause of this was lack of self-confidence. The lack of confidence is also caused by female leaders who perceive themselves as too emotional and measure their success by the stereotype of males being more successful and this strengthens their lack of confidence (Conradie *et al.*, 2015: 4; Al-Jaradat, 2014:149). In addition, Robinson, Shakeshaft, Grogan and Newcomb (2017:6) suggest that females are often their own worst enemies in keeping them from administrative positions.

Thus, a lack of confidence as one of the internal barriers which female leaders must face and as one of the personal failings of women might be more accurately seen as the consequence of sex-structured society that generates a belief in females that they lack ability (Shakeshaft, 1987:85). Chandana and Damayanthi (2011:3), in presenting their paper, have revealed that the lack of confidence of female leaders is linked to the fact that the women have felt they were in an

environment where leaders are expected to be male or they would be compared unfavourable with men. The findings of the study conducted by Chandana and Damayanthi (2011:5) also indicated that low self-confidence and low self-esteem inhibited females in their leadership role. In their study in Tanzanian schools, Mollel and Tshabangu (2014:50) found that the perception that female leaders lacked confidence and focus, ranked 20% from all their respondents. The assertion may imply that female principals who are afforded the opportunity to lead are fairly comfortable in senior leadership roles since most of them were mature to hold the leadership position, which may be the case in South African secondary school leadership.

Nonetheless, female leaders have self-confidence in areas in which they have experience. Hence self-confidence is described as a narrower construct which focuses on performance expectancies and self-evaluation of abilities and completed performance (Shakeshaft, 1987:85). It is contended that self-confidence affects the way women are perceived as well as the ways they perceive themselves. Simon, Christie, Heck, Graham and Call (2018:83) posit that it is crucial for principals who have developed expertise and confidence in their roles to mentor other principals in supporting their growth and development and help them address issues of great concern.

### **Lack of motivation or aspiration**

Another barrier based on the challenges faced by female leaders that hinder them on advancing their careers is lack of aspiration or motivation (Gupton & Slick, 1996:135; Netshitangani, 2018:208). Firstly, the fact that inspiration is traditionally defined fails to fit female experiences and it appears as if females do not aspire to become leaders. Secondly, women aspire but because of organisational and societal barriers, women are prevented from acknowledging their aspirations and it thus appear that females lack aspiration (Shakeshaft, 1987:86). Dr Jim and Dr Watterston (cited by The Sydney Morning Herald, 2010) echoed that views in saying that females are reluctant to aspire to principal positions due to a lack of confidence accompanied by a nagging uncertainty about whether they were ready to lead. This reluctance also limits these females' capacity to take the roles of becoming principals. They are reluctant to apply for principalship until they feel like they are perfect to take that role (The Sydney Morning Herald, 2010). According to Wills (2016:109), in South Africa, motivation levels may be lower among principals that transition out of their schools. In addition, Shakeshaft (1987:86) argues that aspiration and motivation have been defined using male lens and male experience. Dr Watterston emphasised this issue and was quoted in The Sydney Morning Herald (2010) as saying

Women underestimate their own capacity for the position because they have unrealistically high expectations of the level of skills and experience needed, or they lack the confidence to articulate their own achievements and desire for career advancement.

Eagly and Carly (2003:819) support the latter that the general doubt about women's leadership ability led to a point that they are being held to a higher standard of competence than men are. Female principals are often criticised by their subordinates because of patriarchal stereotypes. This challenge has led to females thinking that they were incompetent to assuming leadership positions (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014:810). It is important to note that the traditional stereotypes have associated the principalship with masculinity, which hampers females' progress in education management (Moorosi (cited by Mestry & Schmidt, 2012:837)). Adkison in Hansen's study (2014:25) suggested that the masculinisation of education administration brought male out of the classroom and kept females as teachers. Kessler (2014:3) asserts that:

Women in leadership in a masculine world are faced with the danger that their performance will be measured according to masculine values, or that they will also equate success with internalised male values. This danger can be avoided only if women recognise and incorporate their own specific female strengths.

However, Eagly (2013:5) argues that females, more than males, combine feminine and masculine leader behaviours. Nonetheless, the slow pace at which female leaders have experienced career advancement prompted them not to despair, they needed to overcome the presumed incompetence (Nkomo (cited by Bosch, 2012:31)) and these females succeeded either because they were given the opportunity to test their abilities or by being courageous to redefine who they are in society. Eagly and Carli (cited by Msila, 2013:465) enumerated three barriers that obstruct female's advancement in leadership. They are: the concrete wall, the labyrinth and the glass ceiling. The glass ceiling concept will be used as an example of barriers females encounter in this study (Msila, 2013:464).

### **Glass ceiling phenomena**

Teaching is still seen, in large part, as traditional female job. Females are not considered viable candidates for leadership positions traditionally because of their gender. Therefore, throughout the study there has been mention of the limited number of female leaders in management positions due to many factors like "glass ceiling" which could be weakened once female leaders

understand the barriers they face in their advancement and career strategies used by other females who have successfully overcome the barriers to advancement (Pheko, 2014:2). Furthermore, when female leaders understand the organisational climate in which females find themselves also help in weakening the glass ceiling (Pheko, 2014:2).

Glass ceiling phenomena is one of the career barriers that are faced by many females globally and in South Africa and in other African countries and it has not changed (Msila, 2013:465). It attempts to describe the invisible barriers females encounter when trying to advance to the top in careers. Rouleau-Carroll (2014:36), in her study and those of many scholars, is of the view that female leadership has steadily increased over the years but continues to decrease with the level of hierarchy, for example, in primary schools female principals constitute higher percentage while the numbers decrease in secondary schools. Glass and Cook (2016:51) assert that although challenges facing female leaders are well documented, less has been understood about the factors that shape the experience and success of female who, against significant odds, rise above the glass ceiling. The glass ceiling explains why there is a disproportionately low presence of females in top level management (Pheko, 2014:3). The glass ceiling phenomena has been described as invisible, yet unbreakable barrier that keep females from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, despite holding the requisite qualifications, it brings about negative experiences for females who wish to advance or take their careers to the next level (Nkomo (cited by Bosch, 2012:30); Msila, 2013:465; Coleman, 2003:3; Rouleau-Carroll, 2014:9)).

Pheko (2014:2) contends that the glass ceiling phenomena has led to female managers thinking that their positions are non-existent. However, Davies-Ntzley (cited by Pheko, 2014:2) reiterates that females who have been able to shatter the glass ceiling offer a unique perspective on females as outsiders on the inside'. In her article, it has been noted that there has been an increase in the number of females in managerial positions but there is still a gap in the sense that such an increase has not afforded those females an opportunity to fully utilise their potentials (Pheko, 2014:3).

### **Glass-cliff effect**

Females are obliged to prove themselves through meeting higher standards than that of males working in same positions (Mythili, 2019:61; Lumby, 2015:403). This is an indication that females have to double their efforts in attaining leadership roles and maintaining a better performance to retain their roles. According to Lumby (2015:403) female principals are

vulnerable to school failure being attributed to their gender. For example, females attain leadership positions in times of crisis having higher risks of failures or are transferred to low-performing and higher risks schools whereas their male counterparts are likely to rise to leadership positions in times of success and prosperous times (Mythili, 2019:64). Glass-cliff effect also occurs due to stereotype about gender and leadership (Mythili, 2019:64).

### **Gender stereotypes**

Edwards (2018:1620) posits that the voice of female educational leaders concerning their lived experiences has been largely absent and the cause for the silence may be because of the gender stereotypes that have been formulated in patriarchal societies. Gipson, Pfaff, Mendelsohn, Catenacci & Burke (2017:35) maintain that the main contributors of the gender gap are stereotyping, gender bias and discrimination against females in leadership.

Furthermore, gender role stereotyping has been identified as a root cause of the challenges female leaders face. Gipson *et al.* (2017:35) describe gender stereotypes as beliefs that dictate the expectations about how females and males should behave. However, the cultural shared beliefs are biased because they oppress female leaders. Gender stereotype influences people's judgement against female leaders (Pheko, 2014:4; Netshitangani, 2018:220). The stereotypic nature of different cultures in South Africa, especially among black groups has contributed towards these challenges (Conradie *et al.*, 2015:1). Furthermore, Bowers *et al.* (2015:6) opine that the strong patriarchal culture practiced in Arabs societies, just like in other countries, inhibits opportunities for females in obtaining leadership roles. Traditionally, Nkomo (cited by Bosch, 2012:31) points out, "a woman's place was perceived to be in the home or in traditionally 'female' jobs, not in the boardroom or executive suite". Noddings (2005) argues that females have been charged with the direct care of children, the ill and the aged. Female leaders have been expected to create and maintain a pleasing environment, to look after the need of others (love, choice and consummate skill in the traditional female role) (Noddings, 2005).

Shakeshaft (1987:39) identified that negative attitudes towards female leaders is a major barrier. Moreover, Edward's study (2018:1620) established that "gender related challenges manifest in negative attitudes, labelling, stigmatisation, resentment and rejection as leaders from both society and colleagues".

Furthermore, Lumby *et al.* (2010:1 & 6) argued that stereotypical perceptions and traditionally held beliefs contributed to the barriers for females aspiring to become leaders and allocated specific and junior roles. The impact of being female has been moderated by other individuals' characteristics and mediated by the societal and professional contexts (Lumby, 2015:402; Conradie *et al.*, 2015:1). Nonetheless, there are females who have persisted despite the opposition they have experienced (Marshall (cited by Pheko, 2014:4)).

Furthermore, Zulu (2017:196) argued that gender and race should be central to transformation efforts; for instance, it should not focus only on males more than on females. She adds that there is increased attention on redress for South African females "who have borne the brunt of patriarchal culture and discriminatory employment policies of the past" (Zulu, 2017:196). Race, gender and social class have influenced access to leadership positions for both genders over many years; however, females have experienced high marginalisation in all employment sectors. Zulu (2017:196) maintains that race and gender have played a significant role in promotion to higher level.

Lumby (2015:403) affirms that family, motherhood, care and educational success may be conceived differently in South Africa compared to many other national cultures. In other words, there is a repressive culture in South Africa, as elsewhere, that limits or distorts female's capacity to function as leaders (Lumby, 2015:403).



In addition, Brown and Irby (as cited by Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011:34) indicate the importance of knowing more about the roles of female principals in leadership, how they obtained their positions and how they have become successful would increase the likelihood of increasing their numbers in the field. By doing so, female leaders could "construct their identities in inherently inequitable circumstances" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011:34) and female leaders can only become successful if they set the agenda and believe in themselves (Msila, 2017:469).

Rouleau-Carroll (2014:34), in her study, has mentioned additional barriers that might be a summary of what has already been mentioned) that females who are in leadership or who aspire to the position of leadership encounter that may lead to female's underrepresentation in leadership positions. They are:

- Females are less willing to relocate due to the impact the move may have on their families

- Females are less confident of working in a male dominated field
- Females might have limited expertise beyond curriculum and instruction
- Perceptions about females managing difficult or ineffective staff and
- Lack of female role models and mentors to support females aspiring to the principalship.

Martin (2011:7) has raised an important argument that females make up the majority of degree recipients in educational leadership which does not work for them. The reason for this argument is that most of the females are unable to funnel through the pipeline to actual positions of leadership in schools and elsewhere. This may arguably be that females are judged based on their gender biased notions of their abilities to juggle home life and career, lack of informal and formal networking opportunities for females, few female mentors in higher ranks of educational leadership.

### **3.6 SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ISSUES**

Firstly, it is imperative to understand what principalship entails. Principals are expected to understand the organisations they lead and offer effective and efficient management of that organisation (DBE, 2016b:25). According to Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (DBE, 2016a:41) a principal is someone who has qualified as a teacher and has been teaching and who has about seven years' experience in teaching. Therefore, principals are entrusted with the leadership and management of schools. As the head of the school, it is the responsibility of the principals to work effectively with school management teams (SMTs), school governing bodies (SGBs), representative councils of learners (RCLs) and wider communities which will ultimately enable learners to attain the highest levels of achievement in their schools effectively manage, support and promote the best quality teaching and learning, (DBE, 2016b:8). According to Prinsloo (2016:2) responsibility is referred to "a person's duty in terms of his/her post and the work allocated to him/her". Therefore, the work that is allocated to the principal does not necessarily mean it should not be shared among staff members. The principal has the authority to delegate some of her duties to her staff bearing in mind that the final decision lies with him/her.

#### **3.6.1 Roles and responsibilities of the principal as the manager of the school**

Successful leadership in schools is sustained through monitoring, evaluating and resources (Lumadi, 2017:1). Although principals are managers of their respective schools, they are expected to execute departmental policies and become accountable to the Head of Education for

effective professional management of the school (Prinsloo, 2016:1). Principals are also members of the SGB in their official capacity and therefore they are expected to represent the Department of education according to section 23(1) (b) of the School's Act (Prinsloo, 2016:1).

The Department of Education expects principals to multitask in their responsibilities, for example, as members of SGBs, they are expected to watch over the interests of the SGBs, the school and the community and parent community (Prinsloo, 2016:2; Ismail, Don, Husin & Khalid, 2018:136). Interaction of the principal with stakeholders is further stipulated in the PAM document (DBE, 2016a:43). The principal should engage with school governing body, to serve on the governing body of the school and render all necessary assistance to the SGB in performance of their functions in terms of South African School Act (SASA). Principals also need to participate in community activities in connection with educational matters and community building. The principal should also meet with parents concerning learners' progress and conduct (DBE, 2016a:44). Principals also need to participate in departmental and professional committees, seminars and courses in order to contribute to and/or update professional views/standards (DBE, 2016a:44).

Principals are responsible for the management of staff affairs; instructional leadership; administrative affairs, physical facilities, including school community relations. Prinsloo (2016:2) furthermore asserts that as managers of their schools they should make sure that staff members work as a team in order to achieve the objectives set for the school.

Ismail *et al.* (2018:136) further add that principals also manage the school administration matters such as budget and timetables, disciplining students, managing curriculum activities, safety, recruitment and monitoring teachers, assessment, teaching and learning materials.

PAM further outlines the aims related to principal post as follows:

- To ensure that the school is managed satisfactorily and in compliance with applicable legislation, regulation and personnel administrative measures as prescribed
- To ensure that education of learners is promoted in a proper manner and in accordance with approved policies.

The PAM document (DBE, 2016a:42) has also clearly outlined the roles and responsibilities of the principal as the head of the school, designed to:

- Provide professional leadership within the school
- Guide, supervise and offer professional advice on the work and performance of all staff in the school and, where necessary, to discuss and write or countersign reports on teaching, support, non-teaching and other staff
- Ensure that workloads are equitably distributed among the staff
- Undertake the development of staff training programmes, both school-based, school-focused and externally directed and to assist teachers, particularly new and inexperienced teachers, in developing and achieving educational objectives in accordance with the needs of the school
- Ensure effective use of resources
- Engage in teaching as per the workload of the relevant post level and the needs of the school
- Serve on recruitment, promotion, advisory and other committees as required
- Play an active role in promoting extra and co-curricular activities in the school and to plan major school functions and to encourage learners' voluntary participation in sports, educational and cultural activities organised by community bodies.

Msila (2013:468) asserts that school leadership entails leading schools and different other organisations through drawing a vision, communicating that vision and leading the school community which are some of the functions of a leader. Teaching and learning should not revolve around teachers only. Several research studies have confirmed the claims that principals are only second to teachers in terms of their importance for learning (Wills, 2016:109). However, principals play a pivotal role in school functioning, upholding the operational management of schools, coordinating teachers, disciplining and motivating students while providing instructional leadership (Wills, 2016:4). In relation to curriculum management, successful principals need to be personally involved in planning, coordinating and evaluating the school curriculum. This enhances the quality of teaching and learning (Steyn, 2018:10787).

Stability of the organisation is an important aspect of well-functioning education systems and schools (Wills, 2016:109). While it is true that some principals are not directly engaged with classroom instruction, one of the issues of school leadership is the argument that the influence of principals on learning is mediated through mechanisms such as establishing purposes and goals, through selecting and hiring better teachers, good administration and establishing a healthy organisational culture. But, in the South African context, Wills (2016:109) asserts that principals

of public schools are not directly responsible for the hiring and firing of teachers (Wills, 2016:109). They are done at district level. This is supported by Chandana and Damayanthi (2011) in that the situation in Sri Lanka is also similar to the South African context where authorities are responsible for hiring, not principals.

Although school principals are confronted with a variety of issues as they provide leadership to their schools, it is evident in Tobin's study (2014:1) that successful school leaders have influence in the achievement of their learners through the support and development of effective teachers. Therefore, Wills (2016:4) argues that school principals matter for school effectiveness and students' success. The academic success of students and student achievement are therefore paramount in a result-driven accountability of a school (Hermann, 2016:6).

Female principals, in their daily routines, observe teachers more often than any other business. For example, they conduct more unscheduled meetings, monitor less and take fewer trips away from the building than their male counterparts (Shakeshaft, 1987:170). In many instances, female principals use their time to visit classrooms and teachers, keeping abreast of the instructional program (Shakeshaft, 1987:171). This is supported by Steyn (2018:10787) he asserts that the principal's active involvement in debates that are related to education issues, cooperation with staff in improving and reviewing quality of teaching, involvement in class observations and commitment ensures that the teachers systematically assess and evaluate their students' performance. Whenever a need arises, principals seek suitable solutions to address the inadequacies in the school environment to improve students' performance (Bouchamma (cited by Steyn, 2018:10788)).

Principals take charge of creating a clear vision and a sense of direction for the school (Day & Sammons, 2016:13). The clear vision that has been created by the leader will make people they lead to follow suit. The vision of the principal will be a 'mirror' whereby the principal will gauge themselves in terms of their leadership. Moreover, giving feedback, praising encouraging, supporting learning and teaching approaches facilitate school climate that is driven by teamwork (Ismail *et al.*, 2018:137).

In dealing with leadership issues, the Department of Basic Education has developed a South African Standard for the Principalship that fully defines the role of school principals and the key aspects required, they are: professionalism, image and competencies (DBE, 2014:1). The gazette provides a clear role description for school leaders and sets out what is required of the principal.

Together with the wider community, the principal must effectively promote, record, manage and support the best quality teaching and learning in order to enable learners to attain the highest levels of achievement for their own good, the good of the community and the country as a whole (DBE, 2014:1). The eight key areas of principalship assist school principals to manage the workload and to have time for and an understanding of their leadership tasks (Kruger, 2003:206). The key areas assist principals to act accordingly, as required by the Department of Basic Education. They are:

- Leading the Learning School;
- Shaping the Direction and Development of the School;
- Managing Quality and Securing Accountability;
- Developing and Empowering Self and Others;
- Managing School as an Organisation;
- Working with and for the immediate school Community as well as the broader community;
- Managing Human Resources (Staff) in the school and
- Management and advocacy of extra-curricular activities (DBE, 2014:9).

Being a principal requires performing certain tasks. The study seeks to draw from the experiences of females leading successful secondary schools in their issues (Nicholas & Nicholas, 2014:27). According to Bush and Middlewood (2013:77), “individual roles are established and there is a recommended relationship between role holders. The concept of role is more dynamic and exists at the interface of formal duties and responsibilities, the expectations of the roles set and the status accorded to the role by the players” (Bush & Middlewood, 2013:78).

According to Kruger (2003:206), the primary task of the principal is to ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place in the school. However, the duties of principals are wide-ranging. They include current initiative to improve the schooling system such as an increase of site-based management responsibilities and the inclusion of more parent participation in school governance as well as the introduction of new curricula (Kruger, 2003:206). According to Kruger (2003:206), principals have to divide their time between issues of curriculum and instruction and a large number of non-education matters such as labour relations, financial management and empowering governing bodies.

Coronel *et al.* (2010:159) contend that traditionally the priorities of females and the way they resolve problems is different. Female leaders usually put themselves last. Perception is one of the strengths of relationship orientation. Female leaders are perceived as trying to take everything and everyone into consideration. Coronel *et al.* (2010:159) emphasise that females put the happiness of others before theirs. In achieving the happiness, they then develop inexhaustible abilities. Coronel *et al.* (2010:159) further maintain that:

Females are strong and persevering in order to achieve and maintain calm. This has transformed females to be great mediators and negotiators. They then develop empathy, making the impossible possible, prioritising the essential and understanding that all parts added together are what make life easier or harder.

Azaola *et al.* (2010:1) argue that female principals usually have more opportunities in leading schools for girls than would otherwise be the case. Female leaders have a motherly instinct when leading. They are seen as wanting to carry the caring role from home into the work situation (Bush & Middlewood, 2013:115).

Female principals provide care and they are being responsive to the needs of the school community and nurturing learners and staff. They also meet the physical and practical needs of children and families in highly difficult circumstances (Lumby *et al.*, 2010:31). The strength in forming relationships with both students and staff is a critical aspect of effective leadership (Lumby *et al.*, 2010:3). Coronel *et al.* (2010:159) assert that there is a need to raise awareness and of equal importance, to recognise the principals' work in the schools, their good administrative practices and their contributions to understanding educational change that they have developed in their daily work as professionals.

When they become principals, females tend to make changes and improvements in the school that are functional. Teacher empowerment is fostered and through their leadership female principals help teachers generate reforms internally. They exercise indirect but powerful influence on the effectiveness of the school and on achievement of students (Coronel *et al.*, 2010:149). Despite their success, each secondary school leader continues to face ongoing challenges in their principalship (Notman *et al.*, 2009:9).

The Department of Basic Education (2016c:3) calls for quality teaching and learning in schools through a campaign that was effected in 2008 which is called Quality Learning and Teaching

Campaign (QLTC). QLTC “is a social compact between education department, stakeholders and communities (DBE, 2016c:3). The intention of the department towards QLTC is to promote accountability to all stakeholders and provide a platform for communities and broader society to become actively involved in the improvement of teaching and learning (DBE, 2016c:3). Furthermore, QLTC is primarily mandated to make education a societal matter to strive to make schools “centres of excellence” (DBE, 2016c:20).

### 3.6.2 Management of learner discipline by female secondary school principals



Learner indiscipline has been rated as one of the most significant de-motivating factors in schools (Belle, 2018:43). Belle also maintains that learner indiscipline has caused teaching and learning environment in other schools to deteriorate. Discipline and how it should be dealt with is one of the features that appear largely in school policies. Roe and Drake (1980:311) posit that discipline has been ranked as one of the most serious challenges facing public schools and is considered to be an important part of the principal’s leadership functions. Order and respect are two imperatives for any efficient and effective school system for learning to take place undisturbed.

Issues of indiscipline in schools are a worrying factor and a complex one (Belle, 2018:43) and this has attracted attention to many in different sectors (Moyo *et al.*, 2014:1). The challenge in South African schools is to maintain discipline effectively and this leadership challenge manifests itself daily in schools. Learner transgressions have been reported many times, we see them on television, social media and newspapers. They also present themselves on daily basis at different institutions. According to Belle (2018:44), “the main cause of the alarming situation of learner discipline in state secondary schools is the lack of leadership and power of the school principal”. Furthermore, school principals have the mammoth task of leading and ensuring that discipline is always maintained in their respective institutions. Managing learner discipline is one of the duties principals must deal with in instructional leadership (Mestry, 2017). Lack of discipline, according to Moyo, Khewu and Bayaga (2014:2), negatively affects learning as they sometimes have a “don’t care” attitude towards their work. Belle (2018:44) states that some principals do not take the most appropriate disciplinary actions and strategies at school level to deal with learners who misbehave, however, proper rules or laws must be put in place as a vehicle to drive discipline in schools. For example, Belle (2018:39) emphasises that the major cause of indiscipline is the use of cell phones by learners at school. All participants of the study indicated that when learners bring phones to school they confiscate them and only parents could

be called to fetch them, at a cost by the way. Hence, discipline has to be dealt with consistently on daily basis by school managers and all stakeholders. It involves learners, teachers and every staff member in an institution. It is therefore important to understand what discipline is and what it entails, especially under the leadership of females in secondary schools.

According to Wikipedia, “discipline is an action or inaction that is regulated to be in accordance with a system or governance”. Discipline is commonly applied to regulating human behaviour. It can be a set of expectations that are required by any governing entity, including the self, groups, classes, fields, industries, or societies (Wikipedia). Matheri *et al.* (2015:13) have echoed that discipline in schools is the offspring of effective leadership.

Dr Shaheda Omar, director of clinical services at the Teddy Bear Clinic, was quoted in the Mail and Guardian newspaper (November 2017) as saying “discipline means teaching acceptable behaviours and unlearning maladaptive behaviour with support, guidance and direction in managing behaviour”. On the other hand, corporal punishment is intended to cause grievous bodily harm and violates the basic rights of the learner (Mail and Guardian, November 2017). Moyo *et al.* (2014:1) also note that corporal punishment can be taken beyond the physical to emotional and psychological domains.

The Constitution of South Africa, however, clearly states several laws that protect learners from corporal punishment and abuse in the name of disciplining a child. For example, Section 28 (1) (d) says every child has the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation. Section 10 also states that everyone has inherent human dignity and the right to its protection.

What the Constitution spells out is that corporal punishment is not the answer to proper discipline in schools. There is a distinction between disciplining a learner and punishing him/her. It is important for leaders, especially school principals, to understand that discipline is about setting limits, clarifying role, responsibilities and mutual expectations and creating a predictable, orderly and stable life and when disciplining a child, it must be in the interest of that child (Mail and Guardian newspaper, November 2017). Chisholm, (cited by Moyo *et al.*, 2014:2) indicates that there are some means to disciplining learners. Alternatives to corporal punishment (ATCP) in South African schools were published by the government in 2001 as a means of maintaining discipline. ATCP is defined as a disciplinary strategy that emphasises effective communication, respect and positive educational exchanges between teachers and students, the recommended

disciplinary measures are verbal warning, detention, demerits, community work and small menial physical tasks.

Based on the above background, literature is silent on the role of female leadership in the context of school discipline and the uncertainty in the issue of whether females are effective with regard to maintaining school discipline, however, it can be argued that female leaders have the potential to lead and shape schools to be effective in dealing with school leadership.

Furthermore, Oosthuizen, Rossouw and De Wet (2017:176) advise that when drafting school policy and the intervention strategies which include school discipline policy, risk factors that contribute to indiscipline in schools should be taken into consideration.

### **3.7 SCHOOL COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

The school and the community are two inseparable institutions (Ezimoha & Ngerem, 2016:2). Mahlangu (2018:137) concurs that the school is an integral part of the community; therefore, parents are an important part of the school. Therefore, as effective leaders, principals should be able to know what parents expect or want from the school (Hilliard & Newsome, Jr, 2013:354). It is important to note that the school is an extended organ of the community. The purpose of school community relations serve to achieve the goals of education in the community under effective leadership (Ezimoha & Ngerem, 2016:2). Green (2017:370) emphasises that the improvement of learner achievement and neighbourhood outcomes are founded in the relationship of the school and the community and this creates a robust connection between the two. Therefore, involvement of the parents in the education of their children has a substantial influence on learners' academic achievement (Cruickshank, 2017:119). On that positive note, it is a fact that the community can have a dramatic impact on the work of principals. Therefore, surrounding communities take responsibility for the schools to be a safe space for learners (Davids, 2018:163). The communities wherein female principals work could provide either constraints or opportunities for them (De Bevoise, 1996:18).

Furthermore, Cruickshank (2017:120) contends that the community need to be involved in affairs of the school. A sense of belonging plays a vital role in helping community members to achieve academic, personal and vocational goals. Therefore, the principal has an important role to play in the wellbeing and development of the community whereby school improvement and community development complement each other (DBE, 2016b:24). Myende *et al.* (2018:2) have

asserted that the principals have established a good working relationship between the school and the SGB who contributed meaningfully in the schools by performing their tasks competently. The latter has been supported by DBE (2016b:24) that to build collaborative relationships and partnerships within and between the internal school community, the principal should ensure that she closely works with SMT and SGB for the mutual benefit of all involved. According to policy on the South African standard for principalship, schools exist within particular social and economic communities that have an influence on and may be influenced by the school" (DBE, 2016b:24). The participants of the study have established a positive image in the community through working collaboratively.

Principals are essential personalities to successful school-community relationships and their approach towards the community is significant (Green, 2017:370). Tadesse (2015:2195) argues that for school principals to realise a vision for the academic success of all students, they need to engage all stakeholders to achieve common objectives. Cruickshank (2017:119) maintains that "creating a strong shared sense of community is an important component of providing some security in the unstable lives experienced by some children attending particularly challenging schools". Females in leadership positions face disturbing resistance in the form of insubordination and sabotage (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014:820) and that in South Africa it is not always the case that females get the support of their communities and that they have to always prove their leadership capabilities under conditions of oppressive critical scrutiny (Lumby *et al.*, 2010:7), however, Gaetane and Martinez (2007:43) highlighted that female principals have a good working relationship with their school communities to create successful schools. This is supported by Cruickshank, (2017:119) when asserting that principals who have achieved exceptional learner outcomes have a strong connection with and understanding of their environment and actively engaged in it.

On the other hand, the community, especially the parents, perceive female principals as a "poor fit" for the secondary school principalship and they are perceived as weak and not fit for management positions. The latter is supported by Shakeshaft's study (2011:218) that communities believe that female leaders are easily influenced and that their abilities to lead are limited. Lumby *et al.* (2010:7) reported that in South Africa female leaders do not always have the support of their communities and must prove their capability as leaders under conditions of oppressive scrutiny. Lumby (2015:403) asserted that sometimes principals face unrealistic professional and community expectations of what can be achieved and if they fail they are held

responsible for failing to realise the expectations. This tends to draw a negative stereotype of gender, especially of female principals for the lack of success. These utterances bring to the female vulnerability to school failure due to their gender rather than their success (Lumby, 2015:403).

Secondary school leadership should have an open-door policy towards parents and encourage parents to be actively involved in school activities. Parental involvement is regarded as a contributing factor to school effectiveness. Principals need to reach out to parents so that they take part in school related activities such as fund raising and attending meetings (Allie & Sosibo, 2018:102).

It is also crucial that school principals ensure that they improve their communication with parents using available technology such as emails, newsletters and WhatsApp messages so that parents are updated with whatever is taking place at school that concerns their children. Hillard and Newsome (2013:356) contend that in most successful schools, principals have been perceived as having much strength in their leadership capacity based on effective communication to all stakeholders and ensure that members of their team are great communicators too.

According to Daresh and Arrowsmith (cited by Naidoo & Perumal, 2014:820), female principals can feel very alone if they do not form associations with key stakeholders of their institutions. The contention is that when building strong relationships with the school community it shows collaborations and care, as well as courage and vision, which are feminine attributes. Relationships built in schools are established on trust and collaboration between the school and community. The latter is supported by Cruickshank (2017:120) who aver that principals who lead successful schools usually engage closely with and are trusted by their schools' key stakeholders. According to Gurr (2015:139), the degree to which principals are respected and trusted by their school communities is their standpoint characteristic. Gurr (2015:139) further suggested that the following are qualities and practices that lead to respect and trust: acting with integrity and being transparent about the principals' values, beliefs and actions; modelling good practices; being careful to ensure fairness in how they deal with people and involving many in decision making. Collaborating with stakeholders (teachers, parents, learners and members of the community) will help principals in maximising accomplishment of learners' success in their schools. In their research, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011:9), through one of the female principal interviewees, reported the establishment of a strong community within the school to celebrate their cultural roots engaged the wider community to underscore their community's diversity.

Being familiar with the local community and working hard enables female principals in achieving success in the schools they lead (Lumby & Azaola, 2011:78). In presenting their conference paper, Notman, Henry, Lathman, Potaka, Slowley and Ross (2009:8) indicated their findings that the principals demonstrated an influential capacity to promote a symbolic relationship between the school and community by creating a collaborative team approach at which all the teachers, learners, parents and other stakeholders are contributing towards a safe and sane school learning environment with learners manifesting positive behaviour (Belle, 2018:45). Heystek (2016:2) asserts “current issues in leadership that require attention include the need to lead towards diversity, social justice and leadership for the sake of quality education and not for the examination system”. Muzvidziwa (2014:214) indicated in her study that female leaders (as much as their male counterparts) have the ability to communicate with everyone within the school community, negotiate with parents and give them respect despite their status and have understanding. The indication from the latter is that female principals, given the opportunity, can and have succeeded in empowering the learners and community at large.

The Department of Education came up with pillars that underpin community mobilisation that ensures commitment of stakeholders towards learners’ learning (DBE, 2016c:5). Firstly, principals should ensure that there is participation of all stakeholders in the departmental programmes, collaboration is another pillar whereby consistent involvement of community leaders, social partners and departmental officials to be involved in the programmes of the department of education. Thirdly, partnership is crucial in the sense that sharing and recognising stakeholders’ expertise and skills for implementation and success, transparency and joint decision making in executing the departmental programmes. Equity is another pillar that has been mentioned to mobilise communities. The department of education emphasises that the success for the implementation of Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) rest on applying equity across all areas of society, for example, gender, race, class, literacy and health status. Lastly, the department ensures that quality must be applied in all aspect of a successful campaign (DBE, 2016c:5).

### **3.8 SUMMARY**

Literature on female leadership demonstrates that indeed it is not easy for females in leadership positions to acquire those positions looking at the numerous hindrances they come across. However, female principals who have continued to face those obstacles in secondary schools they lead have managed to overcome those challenges, limited though this could be.

Furthermore, the study identified leadership styles that are feminine in nature to suit the way female principals lead in their schools. The 'mothering' style of leadership afforded female leaders the opportunity to bring positive results in teaching and learning of learners in their schools. It is also important to note the fact that schools are extended organ of the community. This means that principals of schools need to work together with the community at large though the communities tend to undermine their leadership abilities because of traditional stereotypes.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Having presented a review of the literature on experiences of female principals as leaders of successful secondary schools in the North West Province in the preceding chapters (2 and 3), this chapter now deals with the research design and the methodology followed in this study. Creswell (2014:12) refers to research designs as types of inquiry within the three broad approaches: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods that provide specific direction for the procedures in a research.

A qualitative (interpretive) approach employing the case study design was utilised. Qualitative research, according to Mills and Birks (2014:260), is a research tradition that relies primarily on inductive approaches to the treatment of data (usually in the form of words), to explicate an understanding of phenomena of interest from the perspective of those who experience it. The qualitative approach thus facilitates an understanding of the meaning participants construct about their experiences as they make sense of their world and their lived experiences (Merriam, 2009:5). Thus, through the use of a qualitative approach, a deeper insight into the leadership experiences of female secondary school principals was obtained.

### **4.2 PHILOSOPHICAL WORLDVIEW AND RESEARCH PARADIGM**

The study employed a philosophical paradigm that is applicable to a qualitative research. To understand the nature of qualitative research, the researcher needed to look at its philosophical foundations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:8). Creswell (2009:6) and Denzin and Lincoln (2018:97) proposed four different worldviews. These are: Social constructivist; Advocacy and Participatory; and Pragmatism. Constructivism as one of the philosophical worldviews was adopted, together with the paradigm which includes axiology, epistemology, ontology and methodology.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018:325), a paradigm is the philosophical stance taken by the researcher that provides a basic set of beliefs that guides action or influence what should be studied, how research should be done and how results should be interpreted (Bryman, 2012:714). Paradigm defines “the nature of the world, the individual’s place in it and the range of possible relationships to that world” (Creswell & Poth, 2018:325). Paradigm can be summarised as mapping a way throughout the research process.

#### **4.2.1 Research paradigm**

Research paradigm is described as a cluster of beliefs which influence what should be studied, how research should be done and how results should be interpreted (Bryman, 2012:714; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:97). As for Creswell and Poth (2018:325), a research paradigm is the philosophical stance taken by the researcher that provides a basic set of beliefs that guides action. A paradigm defines the nature of the world, the individual's place in it and the range of possible relationships to that of the world. Therefore, the research paradigm maps a way through for the research process to take place. Rehman and Alharthi (2016:51) describe paradigm as understanding and articulating beliefs about the nature of reality, what can be known about it and how to attain the knowledge. The researcher, in this study attempted to understand what participants understood about the phenomenon being studied.

According to Gunbayi and Sorm (2018:57), the research paradigm helps researchers to formulate research questions systematically and it also engenders the possible answer so that researchers are to predict the future results logically. Through a research paradigm, the researcher was able to employ compatible research design (case study) which informed the research strategies that led to the use of correct data collection and data analysis for the research to be reliable and credible (Gundayi & Sorm, 2018:58).

#### **Axiology**

Axiology, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2018:97), is about ethics and values. It is based on the ethical-moral stance towards the world. Axiology entails that all research is value laden and includes the value systems of the inquirer, the theory, the paradigm used and the social and cultural norms for either the enquirer or the respondent (Creswell & Poth, 2018:323). Values feed in this study in that:

Choice of the problem, choice of paradigm to guide the problem, choice of theoretical framework, choice of major data-gathering and data-analytic methods, choice of context, treatment of values already resident issue within the context, and choice of format(s) for presenting findings.

According to Lincoln and Guba (cited by Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:132) the above mentioned are strong enough reasons to argue for the inclusion of values as a major point of departure.

## **Epistemology**

Epistemology is what is regarded as appropriate knowledge about the social world (nature of knowledge) it regarded as a stance on what knowledge should pass as acceptable (Bryman, 2012:19 & 711; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:8; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:97). Gall and Borg (cited by Rehman & Alharthi 2016:52) epistemology refers to “the branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge and the process by which knowledge is acquired and validated”. It is therefore critically important for researchers to understand knowledge and how it can be produced.

## **Ontology**

Ontology is “a theory of nature of social entities” (Bryman, 2012:714). Merriam and Tisdell (2016:8) and Denzin and Lincoln (2018: 97) add that ontology is understood to be the belief about the nature of reality. Creswell and Poth (2018:325) maintain that something is real when it is constructed in the minds of the actors involved in the situation. Ontology addresses the relationship between the researcher and those studied as interrelated (Creswell & Poth, 2018:325). Ontology is therefore relevant for this qualitative study and as for this study the researcher enquired about the nature of reality and what kind of reality exists about the phenomenon under study (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016:52).

## **Methodology**

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018:97), the focus on methodology is based on the best means for gaining knowledge about the world. Methodology involves how researchers go about finding out what the research entails. Qualitative researchers conceptualise the research process in a certain way, that is, they rely on the views of participants and discuss those views within the context in which they occur, that is, they rely on how participants interpret their experiences, how they construct their world and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018:325; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:15). Therefore, qualitative research as defined in Merriam and Tisdell (2016:5) is “an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world”. As a data generation technique, methodology informs the researcher of what route should be followed in gathering the data, including appropriate data instruments to be used for the study (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016:52).

#### **4.2.2 Social constructivism**

Qualitative research by nature is interpretive. This study is located in the social constructivist research paradigm, which, in Merriam's (2009:8-9) view "assumes that reality is socially constructed, that is, there is no single, observable reality. Rather, there are multiple realities, or interpretations, of a single event. Researchers do not "find" knowledge, they construct it." According to Creswell and Poth (2018:326), following this interpretive framework, qualitative researchers sought to understand the world in which they live in and work. The goal of research, as contended by Creswell and Poth (2018:326), is for researchers to rely as much as possible to on participants' views of the situation so that they can have that understanding.

The social constructivist paradigm is relevant for this study as the meaning of leadership of a successful school and a deeper insight and understanding of their lived experiences as leaders of successful schools was constructed by the researcher through 'interaction with the participants' and from the 'participants' perspectives' (Kotze, 2010:11; Mollel & Tshabangu, 2014:49; Bryman, 2012:33).

#### **4.3 CASE STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN**

A qualitative, multicase/multisite case study design was selected for this study. The terms multicase and multiple case are used interchangeably in this study.

This section first describes case study design in general and then the specific type of case study employed in this research, focusing mainly on the work of Merriam (2009), Creswell (2014) and Yin (2014).

Firstly, the case study. A case study as defined by Merriam (2009:40) is "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" which could be the study of a single person (who is a typical example of some phenomenon) 'a program, a group, an institution, a community, or a specific policy...'). A case study can be distinguished from other qualitative research designs in that it focuses on 'the unit of analysis' rather than 'the topic of investigation' (Merriam, 2009:41). Case studies are 'particularistic', that is, they focus on "a particular situation, event, or program, or phenomenon; they are descriptive, meaning they result in a "rich, 'thick' description of the phenomenon under study and they are 'heuristic' in that "they illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 2009:44).

Case study design is one of several qualitative designs: Narrative analysis, Phenomenology, Grounded theory, Ethnography and Critical Research (Creswell, 2013:97; Merriam 2009:24-36). Creswell defines case study research as:

A type of design in qualitative research that may be an object of study, as well as a product of the inquiry...is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information e.g. observations, interviews, audio-visual material, documents and reports... The unit of analysis in the case study might be multiple cases (a multisite study) or a single case (a within-site study) (Creswell, 2013 97).

Yin (2014:16), on the other hand, characterises a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context especially when the boundaries between phenomena and context may not be clearly evident.”

Central to all these definitions is that a case study deals with a specific case (or cases) characterised by a phenomenon of interest, which a researcher wishes to explore in-depth either within the case or across cases. The case has boundaries, thus, it is a ‘bounded system’ and focuses on a particular person, school or program.



A multiple case (or multicase) study of four female secondary school principals each leading a school deemed to be ‘successful’ was the focus of this investigation. The phenomenon of interest was the female leadership experience in a successful school with the unit of analysis being female leadership.

Multicase studies as described in (Merriam 2009:49) involve collecting and analysing data from several cases. The ‘cases’ in this study were four female secondary school principals each leading a school deemed to be ‘successful’. The reason for selecting a multiple case study design was to ‘strengthen the results and increase the robustness of the findings’ (Vohra, 2014:55) in order to develop a model for successful school leadership based on experiences of female principals leading successful schools.

Although the case study method has some disadvantages as Creswell (2013:101) points out, ‘these are outweighed by careful selection of information-rich cases which provide in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation’. For example, selecting female principals

who met specific criteria yielded rich and relevant information and studying multiple cases instead of one case provided a basis for cross-case analysis, which yielded findings that ‘generated theory’ about female leadership of successful schools. As stated by Bryan (2012:74), “the main argument in favour of the multiple case study is that it improves theory building”.

#### **4.4 METHODOLOGY**

In this section, a detailed description of the methodology followed in the study is given. This includes strategies used for site and participant selection, data collection and analysis. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018:174) identified examples of data collection procedures that researchers can use when collecting data. They are designed to:

- Identify sites to be studied
- Identify the participants of the study
- Identify the purposeful sampling strategies
- Discuss permissions needed to study participants
- Discuss types of data to be collected
- Indicate the extent of data collection

Next, the procedures followed when collecting data are described.

##### **4.4.1 Site selection**

A multisite (and multicase) strategy was employed in the study. Schwandt and Gates (cited by Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:345) explain the advantage of multisite approaches which they maintain “aim to place a given practice within a particular site into a larger geographical context, thereby simultaneously illuminating both – a strategy thought particularly useful in addressing the challenges of globalization in place-based studies.” According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018:177) and Singh and Wassenaar (2016:42) when conducting research it is essential to gain access to people and sites through obtaining permission from individuals/authorities in charge of sites. Permission was therefore sought from gatekeepers (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018:177). According to Singh and Wassenaar (2016:42) a gatekeeper is someone who takes control of access to an institution such as a school principal, managing director or administrator. In the case of this study, permission was sought from Ngaka Modiri Molema District Director to conduct research. Four sites (schools) were selected for the study and these were known as ‘performing’

secondary schools from rural and urban areas in Ngaka Modiri Molema District in the North West Province of South Africa. Schools in the North West Province which have obtained an overall National Senior Certificate pass rate of 70% and above are categorised as 'performing' schools.

At the time of the study, there were sixteen female principals who headed secondary schools in Ngaka Modiri Molema District out of eighty-two secondary school principals. Of the sixteen female-led secondary schools, eight had obtained between 70% and 100% in the 2015 matric results and of these eight schools, four were purposefully selected on the basis of an overall matric pass rate of between 90% and 100% for a period of three years consecutively under the leadership of the same female principal. It was this criterion which, for this study qualified a school as being 'successful'.

#### **4.4.2 Participant selection**

The goal of qualitative research is not to generalize findings from a sample to a population, but to study in-depth a situation, event or people in order to discover, understand and gain insight about the phenomenon of interest (Merriam, 2009:77).

Non-probabilistic sampling is best suited for an in-depth study of a phenomenon and purposeful sampling was used to select cases for this study, namely four secondary school female principals. Purposeful sampling is a strategy to choose small groups or individuals most likely to be knowledgeable and informative about phenomena of interest. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which one is interested (Silverman, 2014:141). Creswell and Plano Clark (2018:176) assert that purposeful sampling "means the researcher intentionally select participants who have the central phenomenon or key concept being explored". Cases are selected on the basis of certain predetermined criteria. In this study, the criteria for selection of an information-rich case included being a female principal who had led a 'performing' school for three consecutive years and that school had to have obtained an overall matric pass rate of between 90-100%. The interest of this study was motivated by the eagerness of the researcher to understand successful schools in the light of principals who have performed exceedingly well in terms of their matric results in the North West Province.

The small number of participants recruited for this study provided the researcher with in-depth information about the phenomenon being explored (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018:176). As it was important for the researcher to select participants who met the set criteria, it was inevitable that the pool of participants would decrease, first because there are very few female principals generally and secondly, there are even fewer female principals who are leaders of successful schools in the selected district. Therefore, the sample was expected to be severely restricted.

#### **4.4.3 Data collection strategies**

Data collection is a process of gathering data in which the researcher has limited influence on the data source, such occurs when data is extracted from static materials such as documents and literature (Mills & Birks, 2014:257). Collecting data for case studies involves an entirely different situation, according to (Yin, 2014:88). For this study, data was collected using three types of instruments, namely interview, observation, diary and documents. The instruments facilitated gathering of extensive data from female principals who participated in the study as well as enabled triangulation and validity of data.

##### **4.4.3.1 Interview**

Interview research strategy is an essential source of evidence relevant for case studies because case studies are usually about human affairs or actions. When interviews are well-constructed, important insights could be drawn from them (Yin, 2018:164). The study therefore relied on an in-depth semi-structured interview strategy (Marshall & Rossman, 2011:93).

The purpose of interviews was to gather information from four female principals about their lived experiences of leading successful secondary schools. During data collection, the researcher endeavoured to cater for the interviewees' schedules and availability, not her own (Yin, 2014:88). Creswell and Poth (2018:166) advise that it is of great significance if researchers could locate a destruction-free place for interviews, however, the participants were given the opportunity to choose a place where interviews were conducted, which was participants' offices. In-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted with the principal of each selected school focusing on their experiences of leading a successful school including the challenges and successes as well as the leadership style/s, roles and responsibilities. An audio recorder was used to capture all the information shared by participants during the interviews.

The aim was to capture the deep meaning of experiences in the participants' own words (Marshall & Rossman, 2011:93). In terms of interviews, each individual interview took approximately one hour, depending on the flow of information given. All participants were asked the same questions which were prepared by the researcher. During the interview when necessary, additional questions were asked to elicit information needed which the interviewees may have omitted. Individual interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed. The researcher also took field notes as the interviewees responded (Creswell, 2013:160) and key themes related to research questions were noted at the end of each interview.

#### **4.4.3.2 Non-participant observation**

Observation is one of the common research instruments used in qualitative research. Merriam and Tisdell (2016:137) are of the view that data from observations provide first-hand encounter with the phenomenon of interest. Evidence received from observations is useful because it provides additional information about the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 2018:166).

In addition to interviews and diaries, the researcher used non-participant observation as a data collection strategy. Observation is central to qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 2011:139) and are regarded as one of the key tools for collecting qualitative data and are based on the research purpose and questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018:166). The researcher was cognisant of the fact that when making observations of real-world activities, she would be intruding into the world of the participants being studied (Yin, 2014:88) therefore: the researcher recorded the data without direct involvement with the activity/participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018:166). During observations the researcher used an observation protocol to record field notes on the behaviours and activities of individuals, including the physical setting, interactions, conversations (secondary female principals) at the research site (Creswell, 2009:181; Creswell & Poth, 2018:167). In these field notes, the researcher recorded her observations (based on what was seen or heard) of the "participant's activities at the research site" (Creswell, 2009:181). The observations were made in a natural and open-ended way, without any predetermined categories and classifications and the behaviour of participants was observed as "a stream of actions and events as they naturally unfold" (Punch, 2014:153). The researcher observed morning activities of principals, sat on SMT or staff briefings to observe the leadership style/s that the female principal displayed and also observed non-verbal reactions of the principal. The researcher spent one week and approximately five hours at each site. Prior to observing, participants were

informed of the date and time (which were prior negotiated to by the researcher) of observations and that they were to be shadowed.

The following are the checklists of elements likely to be present in any setting that Merriam and Tisdell (2016:141) suggest that researchers can start at.

- The physical setting: As an observer, the researcher familiarised herself with the environment. For example, the researcher was received at the principals' offices. The first thing that caught the eye of the researcher were the trophies and certificates that were lined up in the offices that were accomplished by the school because of performance in various activities like choral music, debates, chess and other sporting activities.
- The participants: The observer was aware of who she was going to observe, however, Merriam and Tisdell (2016:141) noted that it is important to also observe the relevant characteristics of the participants observed and how they communicate with their staff.
- Activities and interactions: During observations the researcher had to be observant of the activities that were taking place at the research site and whether they were of relevance to the phenomenon under study. The researcher also has to look for any unusual activities that may assist in the study. Any interactions that were connected to the participants were also observed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:141).
- Conversations: The researcher was of the realisation that conversations that took place had to be recorded and non-verbal reactions of participants had to be observed because they bring meaning to the study.

#### **4.4.3.3 Diary**

A diary is the third data collection instrument that was employed in the study in combination with the interview and observation. A diary, which is a self-report instrument, is a document that Bolger *et al.* (2003:579) classify as reporting on daily events and experiences of people. A diary is another method of data collection whereby the researcher requests participants to complete or record events over a period of time (Bell & Waters, 2018:227). A diary helps researchers to capture particular events and experiences that other data collection strategies cannot possibly report on (Bolger *et al.*, 2003:579). Diaries can provide useful accounts into the aspects of participants' lives or behaviours which include their day-to-day activities in a particular environment (workplace/school). Therefore, diaries involve requesting participants to record

their experiences which are related to a particular phenomenon. Diaries provide records of thoughts and actions (Bell & Waters, 2018:228).

A diary was used as another research instrument that helped in validating data acquired from interviews and observations. Diaries require participants to self-report over a period of time. In Yi's study (2008:1) diaries are defined as "first-person observations of experiences that are recorded over a period of time". Diaries help in capturing the participants' feelings and are associated with "confessions" (Yi, 2008:1). Diary keeping in the context of this study is to get as much information as possible into the lived experiences of participants in the absence of the researcher, for example, what happened after the researcher left that could capture interest or any aspects of the participants' day relevant to the research.

According to Bell and Waters (2018:229), diaries might provide a valuable information about the experiences or behaviours and personal reflections provided that the researcher is clear about what information is needed and that participants are also clear about what they have been asked to do and why. Diaries can be arranged as pocket-sized booklets, stapled or bound, thus allowing participants to carry them around in one piece. Secondly, fixed-scheduled diary sheets with dates and times of expected responses keep participants on track and also reduce the possibility of participant error (Bolger *et al.*, 2003:594).

Duke notes some disadvantages in the use of a diary in isolation such as the fact that it is time consuming to create and complete (Duke, 2012:5). For reliable and valid data, a diary should achieve a level of participant commitment and dedication. Bell and Waters (2018:229) are of the view that completing a diary form can be time consuming and irritating for busy people such as school principals and others who has to stop whatever they are doing to make an entry in the diary. In addition, for the researchers to address such anomalies, a short diary instrument must be designed that can take several minutes to complete, however this can limit the intention of getting as much information as possible (Bolger *et al.*, 2003:591). Bolger *et al.* (2003:594) also highlighted another disadvantage of using diaries. They maintain that when using diaries, participants may hesitate to be completely truthful in their responses about interpersonal events and emotions.

However, diary use has several advantages among which is that it helps in triangulating data and can be used in conjunction with other research instruments to confirm and inform (Duke, 2012:4). The diary enables the researcher to evaluate and refine related processes such as time

taken for participants to complete the instrument (Duke, 2012:2). Corti (cited by Bryman, 2012:241) recommends the following steps in preparation of the diary. These are to:

- Provide explicit instructions
- Be clear about the time periods within which behaviour is to be recorded - day, twenty-four hours, week
- Provide a model of a completed section of a diary
- Provide checklists of 'items, events or behaviour' that can jog people's memory- but the list should not become too daunting in length or complexity
- Include fixed blocks of time or columns showing when the designated activities start and finish (for diaries of the kind used by Sullivan (1996), which show how people budget their time)

Bolger *et al.* (2003:580) posit that another benefit of using a diary as one of the data collection methods permits the examination of reported events and experiences in their natural, spontaneous context, providing information complementary to that obtained by other data collection methods. Bolger *et al.* (2003:581) advice that when using a diary, the researcher should carefully consider the following: that a poorly designed diary can involve considerable effort that may yield little useful information. Therefore, a diary must be designed in such a way that the intended outcomes are achieved in terms of the experiences and events.

The participants in the study were requested to keep a diary to assist the researcher with information that the interview and observation could not access such as thoughts, feelings, experiences or practices over a specified period of time (Bryman, 2012:240; Braun & Clarke, 2013:147). In this study the researcher met with secondary school female principals because they were the people who were to give up their time, explained to the participants the purpose of the exercise fully, discussed any possible difficulty that they might experience along the way (Bell & Waters, 2018:229) and that they should write their thoughts and any unusual behaviour that might have taken place whilst the researcher was not around that might help in the study. The researcher took into consideration the intrusive nature of a diary into the participants' personal lives; however, participants were made aware that they had to stop taking part whenever they felt possible.

#### 4.4.3.4 Documents

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016:162), documents are sources of data in a qualitative research which are used to supplement data obtained from interviews, observations and diaries and to check their reliability of evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018:162; Bell & Waters, 2018:146). Furthermore, Stake (1985:68), opines that documents serve as substitutes for records of activity that the researcher could observe directly. Therefore, documents can exist in both a physical setting and an online setting, for the sake of this study; documents were accessed in the physical setting (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:162). Merriam and Tisdell (2016:162) maintain that a document is an umbrella term which refers to a wide range of written, visual, digital and physical material relevant to the study, however, it is crucial to clarify exactly what kinds of documents exist (Bell & Waters, 2018:146).

Data collection techniques have their pros and cons, so are documents. Documents can be reviewed repeatedly however, if retrieved; they can be difficult to find when the retrieval system of the organisation is not good. Furthermore, Yin (2018:158) maintains that documents can provide specific details to collaborate information from other sources.

The documents used in this study were readily available sources of data (matric results of sampled schools from the years 2012-2016) which were scrutinised by the researcher to authenticate the success of those principals participating in the study and their schools.

#### 4.4.4 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of “making sense out of data” and is used to answer research questions (Merriam 2009:175-176). Furthermore, data analysis entails the breaking down of data into parts to obtain answers to the research questions (Saldaña, 2013:177). To answer the research questions, the researcher consolidated all the data about cases that emanated from interviews, observations, diaries and documents and sorted it. The data was brought together to identify similar categories emanated from research tools. She then organised the data into what Yin (cited by Merriam, 2009:203) calls database, which was done for easy management of information and to avoid overwhelming information. The study was a multicase (four cases); therefore, the researcher began analysing using ‘within-case’ of which each case was treated comprehensively because each case is unique. Themes in a within-case emerge as important to the description of the phenomenon (Daly *et al.* (cited by Vohra, 2014:59)). After individual completion of all four cases the researcher then focused on cross-case analysis where the

researcher was able to build a general explanation that fitted each case (Yin (as cited by Merriam, 2009:204)).

The study adopted a qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is appropriate for the study because it is regarded as a flexible tool for analysing text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005:1277). The focus of content analysis is on the contextual meaning of the text. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005:1278) qualitative content analysis provides “knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study”. This research method subjectively interprets the content of the text data through classifying themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005:1278).

Data analysis in this qualitative study commenced by preparing and organising the data (transcripts) obtained from female secondary school principals for analysis. The data collected through interviews, observations, participant diaries and documents was reduced into themes through a process of coding and representing data in a discussion (Creswell, 2013:180). Basically, the researcher consolidated and interpreted what the respondents said and what the researcher saw and read (Merriam, 2009:176).

Data obtained from open-ended questions were analysed by coding. A code, according to Saldana (2013:3) “is a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data”. Coding, on the other hand, is a method of organising and grouping similar coded data into categories because they share same characteristics (Saldaña, 2013:9; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005:1278). The data can consist of interview transcripts, participant observation, field notes, journal, documents, drawings, photographs and artefacts (Saldaña, 2013:3) however, the data for this study was obtained from interview transcripts, observations, diaries and documents of which codes were clustered according to their similarities and regularities which facilitated the development of categories (Saldaña, 2013:8).

For the purpose of the study, the data was analysed using thematic analysis which allows categories to emerge from the data. A theme is the output from coding, categorisation and analytic reflection (Saldaña, 2013:175). Thematic analysis allows categories to emerge, therefore, when analysing, the researcher looked at how various themes were similar, how they were different and what kind of relationship existed between those themes (Saldaña, 2013:178). This means the researcher was able to use thematic description that highlighted different leadership experiences of female led successful secondary schools (Coronel *et al.*, 2010:147).

There are other forms of analysing data. Merriam and Tisdell (2016:221) posit that “the computer has a great capacity for organising massive amounts of data, facilitating analysis and assisting communication among members of the research team”. This computer software enable researchers to block and label text segments with codes for easy retrieval for example, ATLAS.ti, NVivo and Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), however, the researcher could not use either of them because she could not access it.

Before data analysis began, it was necessary to prepare and organise the data for analysis. This entailed preparing and organising the data (transcripts and notes taken from observations and diaries) obtained from female secondary school principals for analysis. The data collected through interviews was reduced into themes through a process of coding and representing data in a discussion (Creswell, 2013:180). Basically, the researcher consolidated and interpreted what the respondents said and what the researcher has seen and read about (Merriam, 2009:176).

Data obtained from open-ended questions was analysed by coding. Coding, according to Creswell (2013:184), involves aggregating the text into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in the study and then assigning them a label.



After gathering the necessary data with the first interview and observation, analysis started. Analysing data was done concurrently with data collection. This means that the researcher went through data again, comparing each element, that is, phrases, sentences or paragraphs to look for common meaning (Thomas, 2017:245). Firstly, the researcher listened to the recorded interviews played it back time and again and notes were taken. After listening to the recordings, the transcripts were typed, printed and reading and re-reading of the transcripts took place for key themes which capture the contents from the data. The emerging themes were then used as the essential building blocks in the analysis undertaken (Thomas, 2017:245). Coloured highlighters were used to mark notes that may have been relevant for the study and later refined them into codes which were written on the margins of the interview transcripts (Merriam, 2009:176; Bryman, 2012:577). Assigning some sort of shorthand designations to various aspects of data helps the researcher in a way that one can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data. After assigning codes to pieces of data the researcher was able to construct categories/ themes which were put together according to the common characteristics with reference to the research questions and the central phenomenon of the study (Merriam, 2009:178-179). This means that

the researcher was able to use thematic description that highlighted different leadership experiences of female led successful secondary schools (Coronel *et al.*, 2010:147).

Data from observations and diaries were integrated with the data from interview transcripts to form a database. Responses that made clear and relevant statements were used as quotes, that is, verbatim quotations were attached to particular themes to verify the information given (Maponya, 2015:139).

#### **4.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

There are several measures of trustworthiness that were used in the study. These included: triangulation, prolonged time in the field, member checking, transferability and confirmability. Triangulation of data collection methods seeks convergence and corroboration of results from different methods and designs studying the same phenomenon (Arthur, Waring, Coe & Hedges, 2012:147) and it improves the reliability of results obtained from a single method. It also examines where different data intersect (Silverman, 2010:133).

In this study, data from interviews, observations and the diary were collected and then compared and collated to determine the findings (Creswell, 2013:251). The diary was used to strengthen and enrich findings from interviews and observations (Braun & Clarke, 2013:148).

Spending prolonged time in the field is another measure of trustworthiness. In this way, the researcher develops an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study and can convey detail about the site and the people that lends credibility to the narrative account. The more experience that a researcher has with participants in their settings, the more accurate or valid will be the findings (Creswell, 2014:202). In this study the researcher spent several days in each school to study the experiences of the principals.

For the study to be credible, member checking was done by actually taking the findings and interpretations back to the participants and asking them to comment on the accuracy according to their perceptions. The researcher had to confirm with the participants to verify the findings, that is, whether the researcher had correctly interpreted the participants' words. (Bryman, 2012:390; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012:110).

To ensure transferability, a rich, thick description of findings was provided to allow readers to make judgements about the findings. Rich thick descriptions give readers an opportunity to make:

necessary comparisons to enhance transferability. The readers are able to make own judgements of similarity to related contexts/situations they have been in or know of. This means that the findings of the study can be transferable or transferred to other contexts. Choosing samples with similar context enhances the transferability of the findings (Bryman, 2012:392; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012:113). In this study, the choice of participants who were all females and lead well-performing schools ensured transferability of findings.

Dependability, as one of the criteria for trustworthiness, ensures that an audit trail is available to enable others to follow what was done in the study and at the end to establish whether proper procedures were being followed (Bryman, 2012:392). Conclusions presented must be supported by the data collected. In this study the researcher ensured consistency in reporting in details all the processes of the study to enable future researchers to gain similar results.

The concept of confirmability corresponds with objectivity in that the data can be traced back to its origins. Through the audit trail, the reader is offered an opportunity to assess whether the findings of the study are similar or not (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012:87).

#### **4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical considerations are particularly important in a research that involves people (Arthur *et al.*, 2012:35). There are ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field and in analysing and dissemination of qualitative reports (Creswell, 2013:174). Some of the ethical issues include obtaining permissions to conduct research and gaining entry into research sites, voluntary informed consent procedures and assurance of confidentiality towards participants, among others.

The researcher obtained permission from the Research Ethics Committee of the University in which she was enrolled. Permission to conduct field work and to gain access to the research sites was sought from Ngaka Modiri Molema District Director (North West Department of Education and Sport Development) and from the principals of the selected schools.

The researcher ensured that participants were provided with adequate information about the nature of the research, how it was used and reported and its benefits to enable them to decide whether or not to agree to take part. The whole procedure was explained to participants and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time (Arthur *et al.*, 2012:35). Anonymity of the informants was protected by using pseudonyms. The names of participants and the schools

they lead were given pseudonyms in the transcripts so that the information they shared could not be traced back to them.

The specific elements included in the consent form are highlighted by Creswell and Poth (2018:155) and are summarised below:

- The rights of participants to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time

The researcher was cognisant of the other specific details that could make the participants identifiable and anonymised the information, for example, the areas in which they work (Bryman, 2012:142). The recorded data will not be used for any purpose or presented in any form whatsoever because the voices of participants may be identified by those who know them.

What is noteworthy is that the entire four participants were willing and agreed to provide information and had shed light on the phenomenon being explored by articulating their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018:152-153).

#### **4.7 RESEARCHER'S ROLE**

The researcher was the key instrument of data collection. The researcher adopted the role of a learner (Glesne, 2011:60) and from a learner's perspective reflected on all aspects of research procedures and findings. As a learner, the researcher's role was of curiosity as she was learning from and with research participants (Glesne, 2011:60). A multiple method approach was used by the researcher for data collection, as mentioned earlier. Firstly, the researcher used non-participant observation technique in the study where she observed participants in all activities they were engaged in without taking part in those activities. The choice of this technique was that the researcher wanted to focus on the participants' experiences of leading successful secondary schools without interfering in their daily schedules. Non-participant observation, according to Bryman (2012:273) is a term that is used to describe a situation in which the observer observes but does not participate in what is going on in the social setting. During onsite observations, the researcher spent five to six hours for five days in each school. This means that about thirty hours was spent at each site for four weeks. Notes were taken based on the aim and purpose of the study and the research questions. Secondly, the researcher played the role of interviewer. The researcher also directed the questions and ensured that participants knew what was expected of them and allowed them to freely answer the questions asked. Thirdly,

information that the researcher did not acquire during observations and interviews was accessed through diaries kept by participants for the period of the study.

#### **4.8 SUMMARY**

Chapter four described in detail the research approach, paradigm, design and methodology utilised in the study. Issues of trustworthiness, role of the researcher ethical considerations were outlined.

Chapter 5 presents the specific themes that emerged from interviews with the four participants.

## CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Following the research design and methodology discussion in Chapter 4, the current chapter presents and discusses findings that emerged from the interpretation and analysis of data from four female principals of secondary schools.

Data derived from interviews, observations and diaries gave the researcher first-hand information on the leadership experiences that these female principals had in their journeys through principalship of 'successful' schools.

The questions that were posed during the interview gave the researcher an opportunity to learn and reflect on the daily events and experiences of the schools these principals led. Although the experiences of these principals may have differed as a result of (school) contextual factors (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014:2), a number of common themes emerged. The process of data analysis assisted the researcher to reflect on the research questions posed at the beginning of the study and to check to what extent these have been addressed.

Because a qualitative study is a recursive strategy, collection and analysis of data was a simultaneous process (Merriam, 2009:169). Merriam emphasises that 'analysis becomes more intensive as the study progresses and once the data are in', hence enabling critical reflexivity and analysis. The themes that emerged from collecting the data became the findings (Merriam, 2009:170). In writing up the findings, the researcher revisited the research questions to ensure that this data responded to the research questions (Olsen, 2012:56).

The interviews, observations and data obtained from diaries offered the researcher a deep understanding of how the four female principals experienced their leadership of successful secondary schools. Their being in a male dominated career, especially in secondary schools, has provided them with strong leadership skills, which they acquired as they climbed the leadership ladder. The principals demonstrated instructional leadership through teaching and making sure that curriculum matters were professionally and expertly addressed. They expanded their responsibilities, directly or indirectly, through making sure that extra mural activities of the schools were adhered to, to ensure balance between academic work and sporting activities. The

four participants seized the opportunity of becoming principals with confidence and they wanted to achieve the vision they set for their schools through teamwork.

In order to protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms were used to identify the principals in the study. The following are the pseudonyms of the participants: Olga, Bontle, Maggy and Cynthia

All the four participants worked in public schools although one of the participants, \*Maggy, from \*Tshupo secondary school, posited that “*we are a public school on a private property.*” This is an indication that she reports to two authorities, one being the landlord and the other being the Department of Education. It can be inferred that this dualistic arrangement hindered some of the principal’s day to day activities. In spite of the dual authorities that she reported to, Maggy was able to overcome these hindrances.

The genuine openness and eagerness of the four female principals made the interview and observation experiences authentic because these leaders were able to share their experiences as trailblazers of successful secondary schools which could in future aid and encourage other females aspiring to become principals. The experiences they shared with the researcher supported the literature reviewed.

All four of the respondents (Olga, Bontle, Maggy and Cynthia) had a range of experiences in education beyond the classroom, fluctuating from being members of the South African Principals’ Association to being the coaches of teachers in aerobics and chief examiner. This is an indication that despite their leadership positions in demanding schools, they could still multitask.

## **5.2 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

Data analysis involves coding and construction of themes. Coding is described as assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of data so that it can be easily retrieved (Merriam, 2009:173). Analysis of data commenced soon after the first interview had been completed. The process began with a general reading of the transcript to get an overview of the content. Once the researcher had read the transcripts, she then reviewed the purpose of the study (as suggested by Merriam, 2009:170) which led to re-reading the transcript and making annotated notes in the margins and commenting on the data (Merriam, 2009:170).

### **5.2.1 Data obtained from observations**

The researcher was warmly welcomed at each of the four sites. The researcher had engaged the participants about her intentions and the reasons why they were chosen as participants in the study prior to the visit (See Appendix C). They had all agreed to be observed but it was not easy to obtain their consent.

Participants were at first reluctant to accept the invitation to take part in the study, especially Maggy, who was a bit sceptical because of the work overload she experienced but ultimately, she agreed.

The researcher understood their reluctance because when observations took place, matric preliminary examinations at the schools had begun. At Lerethabetse and Bosele secondary schools and at Tshupo secondary school observations were carried out close to the beginning of end of year examinations and the principals were quite busy. Nevertheless, the researcher was happy to have observed participants during that busy period as it afforded her a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of these participants. At Cynthia's school, data were collected a few months later than at the other schools.

The following section presents observation results from the four schools.

#### **5.2.1.1 Presentation and discussion of observation results from School A**

The first thing that the researcher had a glimpse of was the many certificates hanging from the wall of the principal's office at Lerethabetse secondary school. There were also trophies, for example, best performing matric academic certificates, choir, netball, soccer, debates and many other certificates. The office space was big and the furniture was impressive and feminine. There was CCTV camera installed in the office of the principal which indicated that security and safety measures were in place. Matric overall percentages were displayed on the notice board from 2012-2016 that pass rate ranged from 90% in 2012 and 97% in 2016. As she was making conversation with the researcher the phone rang. She excused herself and answered the phone. From what the researcher heard, the principal was having a conversation with the SGB chairperson; the researcher could hear that the principal stood her ground by the way she presented the facts to the SGB chairperson. The observation made was that the School Governing Body was highly involved in the day to day running of the school and the principals

consulted with them whenever a need arose. This was also the case in the other three schools that were observed.

At the time observations were undertaken, School A and School B were administering preliminary matric examinations and at School C the observation was undertaken at a time when final examinations were underway. All the three participants were chief invigilators. They ensured that learners were in examination rooms on time. They monitored the examination process so they were in and out of their offices during the start and end of the examinations. Olga, principal of Leretlhabetse secondary school, had a tendency of going to the examination room earlier to motivate the learners before the examination commenced. She calmed the nerves of learners by offering positive messages.

What was noteworthy was that during the first day of observation at Leretlhabetse and Bosele secondary schools, there were disciplinary cases that had to be attended to by the participants. For example, Olga expressed her love for the learners during the hearing. She was determined to extend the potential of the learners in their schoolwork so that they refrained from bad behaviours. Qualities of good leadership were evident in the participants by the way they handled the disciplinary cases. However, in all the four secondary schools observed, not a day passed by when the principals were not dealing with disciplinary cases. Behavioural cases were the order of the day, but the principals followed disciplinary policies to the latter and parents were also involved in dealing with undisciplined learners. Learners who had behavioural problems were called to the principal's office and in all the cases observed the principals handled those in a motherly way and as they talked to their learners, the principals continued to encourage them to take their school work seriously and to work hard in order to earn good grades.

During one of the morning briefings at Leretlhabetse secondary school, the principal displayed characteristics of a democratic leader. She requested her teachers to comment, make inputs or ask questions on the feedback of the meeting she had attended. Such a debriefing session kept her staff informed. She engaged her staff before taking any decisions and some of the decisions were collectively taken and this made teachers feel that they were part of the team. Such consultation and dialogue led to the success of the school built on teamwork and her teachers addressed her as 'ma'am'.

### **5.2.1.2 Presentation and discussion of observation results from School B**

At Bosele secondary school, the principal was welcoming and friendly. She immediately informed the researcher that there was a grievance that she needed to attend to and that she had to lay charges against some of her teachers. She was reading the ELRC Policy Handbook which guided her on how to deal with disciplinary procedures. The ELRC has been endorsed as policy on the South African standard for principalship (DBE, 2016b:22) and it is the principal's responsibility to give guidance on labour related issues, specifically the conduct and actions of teachers which will ultimately assist his/her leadership in terms of ensuring that current legislation, departmental policies and collective agreements are complied with. She indicated to the researcher that she was willing to let her observe the procedures but unfortunately the teachers would not be comfortable as they were dealing with a sensitive matter which also involved unions. She shared with the researcher that she was anxious about the issue at hand because it was her first encounter with such a case since she became a principal.

The office, just like Olga's was full of trophies and certificates displayed on the wall of her small but cosy office. Academic achievement certificates, National Teaching Awards (NTA) certificates for secondary school leadership were visible in her office. When she introduced the researcher to her staff, they joked about their nicknames and how those names had stuck on them. Social relationships were evidently strong and developed amongst staff and the principal and it was interesting to observe such connections.

The researcher also received a warm welcome from the principals of Tshupo and Goodwill secondary schools. The principals' offices at these two schools were no different to those of Leretlhabetse and Bosele secondary schools. The very fact that there were different certificates related to performance of learners academically and in extra mural activities bespoke the remarkable achievements in these schools.

When the bell rang at Tshupo secondary school at 07h30 am, Maggy, the principal, left her office to collect question papers in the strong room (room where question papers were kept for control and safety measures). All learners were in their examination centres and the principal was the chief invigilator as the overseer of the examination process. She went in and out of her office, that is, when the examination started, during and at the end of the examination session the principal was there to assess whether things had gone as planned and that no irregularities had taken place.

The deputy principals at the three schools where observations were carried out were males, except at Bosele secondary school where there was no deputy principal. The deputy principal at Maggy's school addressed her with respect. The researcher could observe a good working relationship as the principal and her colleague discussed how the examinations had proceeded, what had transpired in the different examination centres and mapping strategies on other activities. When given the instruction, the deputy principal honoured those instructions and he would come and give the principal feedback. The way the principal conducted herself in the presence of her staff gained her respect in return.

### 5.2.1.3 Presentation and discussion of observation results from School C



Tshupo secondary is a school with two masters; that is, the school is governed by both the Catholic Church and the Department of Education. However, the principal was able to work together with officials from the Department and the priest in charge. During the observation period, the principal of Tshupo secondary school displayed good working relationships with her staff members and all the stakeholders that visited her school. When an official from the Area Office came to monitor end-of-year matric examinations and to provide feedback to the principal about her findings in the examination room, one could observe that their engagement was both professional and social. The principal had a sense of humour but also a humble person and an attentive listener. The principal also shared the meals with her teachers and through that, the teachers engaged the principal on social issues that helped them to further build their working relationships.

Discipline challenges were also observed at this school. Parents were called to the school on a daily basis. It was clear that these parents came because they were called by the principal concerning disciplinary problems of their charges. It was observed that the principal was always respectful to the parents when narrating why she called them, and she gained the same respect from the parents too.

It was also observed that learners' phones were confiscated on a daily basis, but they were released at a charge of R200. The learners' code of conduct in this school clearly spelt out that no cell phones were allowed during teaching and learning. Talking to her learners about their behaviours made learners to get close to her and Olga was able to understand her learners better through that.

#### **5.2.1.4 Presentation and discussion of observation results from School D**

Cynthia, principal of School D, displayed immense respect towards her teachers. She also had her fair share of discipline challenges. One learner was reported to be racist by the teacher and the principal immediately called the parent of the learner because this was sensitive and she did not want the matter to go viral. Her being pro-active on the matter assisted in curbing the problem. Le Roux (2016: 2) maintains that “ongoing systematic and institutional racism in contemporary South Africa not only underlines the ability of racism to adapt to socio-cultural changes by altering its expression, but highlights its permanence and pervasiveness.” According to Le Roux (2016: 2), racism appears to be endemic and its permanence finds expression in South African schools and that must be challenged. According to ELRC policy (2003: H-13) it is important for school principals to mention the indicators of problems with racism at school as given in the policy.

#### **5.2.1.5 Common features established in the four schools**

What was common with the participants was that they met with their teachers daily. Each day commenced with a prayer and briefing the staff of the new developments and whatever other matter that called for the attention of the staff. School Management Teams (SMTs) also met on a regular basis.

Qualities of good leadership were displayed and the conduct of the four participants was professional. The way they presented themselves in front of the teachers and any other person visiting the school clearly displayed respect. The tone of voice that Olga, from Leretlhabetse secondary school, flaunted was low and she was polite when she addressed teachers. The atmosphere that prevailed during the morning briefings was characterised by openness and a degree of intimacy because participants had time to share jokes and laugh with their staff and ask them how they felt. Participants displayed personal characteristics such as enthusiasm, charm, courage, competence, confidence, helpfulness, dedication, commitment, determination and firmness. There were instances when one of the participants raised her voice because she wanted to emphasise a point in a meeting.

What was interesting to observe was the frequency of visits by parents in all the four schools. Some parents came to check progress in the academic performance of their children; some came because they were forced by circumstances, for instance, when called because of the learners’

indiscipline. Other parents came to book space for their children for the following academic year. Parental involvement in those schools was significantly high in relation to learners' schoolwork. Other stakeholders like departmental officials, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) also frequented the schools for monitoring and making appointments to address learners on issues that affected them. For example, at Olga's school, an official from the section of sport in the Education Department came to school to seek permission to coach teachers on sporting activities in the school and the principal welcomed him.

All the four schools had extra classes for their learners. Parents from other schools came to the school (Lerethabetse secondary school) to ask the principal to allow their children to attend those extra classes. However, the principal had to ask parents to commit themselves to taking responsibility for their children's attendance.

Good interpersonal relationships were observed when the principals took some time to go to the staff room during lunch time to have a conversation with staff. The participants indicated that by doing so they wanted to understand how teachers felt about certain things that take place in the school in a relaxed environment. Maggy shared that she sometimes organised health talks for teachers and other staff members which brings attachment amongst teachers. She has also initiated aerobics classes for teachers at her school which takes place three times in a week. The teachers supported the initiative and the principal allocated a room at school that is currently utilised for this activity. This promoted the message: "a healthy mind in a healthy body" meaning physical exercise is important for the body and mind. Maggy also emphasised that the well-being of her staff members was as important as the performance of her learners. This indicates that principals do not only take the performance of learners seriously, but also the well-being of the teachers.

In Olga's school, teachers had to present clear reasons before they obtained permission to leave when they had commitments that would cause them to either not come to school or to leave early. For example, one teacher at Lerethabetse secondary school humbled himself and request very respectfully to be allowed to leave school before the end of the week to attend his niece's wedding. The principal had no choice but to give him permission to go home as he explained with great respect why it was important for him to go home. That request took place at 9h15 and at 9h21, another female teacher knocked at the principal's office to ask for permission to leave early and she whispered to the principal (researcher could not hear what she was saying) but the principal, with a smile on her face, granted her permission to leave.

What transpired above is an indication that the effective listening skills and the body language of the principal appeared to have had a positive impact on the teachers. The principals who took part in the study were perceived as having time to listen to both teachers and learners and they took their time to do that. Ultimately, the actions of female principals brought a sense of harmony in the schools they led.

Another factor that was observed was that of encouraging teachers to apply for promotional posts. When the gazettes for promotional posts were issued out, participants encouraged their teachers to apply. Transformational leadership was displayed in that regard. The participants believed in enhancing the opportunities for their staff members and they had that desire to develop the teachers working at their sites.

The principal of school A used a strategy that improved performance in her school. She engaged matric students to challenge them about their performance. She challenged the Grade 12 (matric) learners that they should perform at ninety plus percent during the year. She promised that she would take them out for lunch to a local restaurant of their choice. However, if they performed at that percentage (90% plus) at the end of the year, she would award them R1000.00 each from her own pocket, no matter how many they would be. That way she encouraged learners to work hard to attain good results. That is how she expressed her love and commitment to her learners and for those who were working hard by attaining good performance, they reaped the incentives.

When participants interacted with the learners, the researcher observed intimacy and care that were displayed by participants. A mother-child relationship was noticeable. They talked to their learners in a way a mother could have a conversation with their children. There was a time when Cynthia, a principal of Goodwill secondary school called all grade eleven retained students to the boardroom to encourage them to work hard so that they can pass at the end of the year. She addressed them as “dear learners”. She showed concern about their future (relational leadership and ethic of care displayed). Cynthia took it upon herself to remind the learners of the rules of the school and how they should conduct themselves during teaching and learning periods, including in the school premises. She also insisted and encouraged that her learners should pass and promised to monitor them regularly to establish their progress. It was also observed that these participants knew the names of their learners, a characteristic that evinces connections with the students. What was noteworthy was that when a learner knocked at the door, the principal addressed that particular learner by their name or surname, not forgetting also to call them “my child”.

However, there was an incident at Bosele secondary school where the principal used stern words on one learner who did not do well in a written task and that particular learner was repeating the grade. The principal was stern and tough but caring (Murakami & Tornsen, 2017:809). From what was observed, the principal wanted “to knock some sense” into the learner’s head. She wanted him to excel in his schoolwork. She exhibited traits of being strict and fair, worked for the positive academic achievement of the learner. The behaviour of the principal was triggered by a sense of care to the learners, just like every parent who wants their children to do well in life.

Three of the four principals were also subject teachers. Cynthia taught Physical Sciences. Maggy, a vibrant and the youngest of all participants, taught Mathematics and Life Orientation; and Bontle taught Setswana. Olga was the only one who did not have a class to teach but she was knowledgeable and experienced about curriculum matters. She held all her teachers accountable for the subjects they taught. As teachers were being monitored by departmental heads, Olga ensured that she monitored the monitors, that is, she called departmental heads to account for the work of the teachers they monitor. The principals scrutinised the quality of work that teachers gave the learners. That was a direct strategy that the principals used to assure quality results. It is also noteworthy to indicate that all the participants were hands-on as far as the curriculum matters were concerned. Not only Further Education and Training (FET) phase was monitored closely, but also General Education and Training (GET) phase. The progress of Grade eight and nine learners was monitored so that they also would produce good quality results when their turn came. Participants paid attention to these lower grades because ultimately the grade eight and nine pupils were still part of them so they had to encourage them to produce best performance. For example, when preparatory examinations were being administered for matric students, teaching and learning in grade eight and nine was in full swing because the principals did not want to disturb the programmes of the lower grades - the same learners would be in matric one day.

Discipline at the four schools was maintained by engaging parents on the behaviours their children displayed during school hours. Through their conduct, participants were able to establish whatever misbehaving learners were going through. When the learners were found out of classrooms without any valid reason, they were reprimanded, but in a way a mother talks to her own child. One of the teachers at Bosele secondary school came to the principal’s office complaining about a learner’s behaviour and the teacher requested the principal to discipline the

learner on her behalf but Bontle, the principal told her that she needed to be firm on learners because they would realise that she was unable to discipline her learners and that the learners were going to disrespect her. This was an indication that Bontle wanted her teachers to take full control of their students. This allowed the teachers to take full charge as a complementary responsibility that coursed throughout the school. When parents did not respond to the call of the school, the learners were sent home until they brought along their parents. In some instances, parents were made to commit themselves in writing on how they would assist the school in improving learners' behaviours. Learners were given a code of conduct as a way of curbing indiscipline. A code of conduct is a set of rules that guide learners on how they should behave or conduct themselves in front of other learners and teachers, especially in class and school surroundings. Parents are also informed about this code of conduct in order to know what transpires in schools.

In the case of teachers, discipline is maintained by using ELRC and SACE policies. Participants of this study used these policies to follow the correct procedures for charging teachers moreover every teacher is having copies of those policies. For example, at Bosele secondary school, Bontle, the principal, just like in other schools where female principals were observed, ensured that no learner was found roaming around the school premises without any valid reason. The principal monitored the surroundings of the school to check whether all learners were in class and that teachers were teaching.



Participants did not spend a lot of time in their offices; they were either teaching learners in class, engaging with teachers and stakeholders, or attending meetings with parents or education department officials. This is supported by Cansoy (2019:38) who maintains that "instructional leaders are those administrators who develop educational programmes at school and influence the relationship among the stakeholders of school in order to enhance educational achievement." All participants were visible in the school premises and they had security personnel at their schools, including Maggy's school, which was governed by the Department of Education and the church. When the principals were not at school, their deputies or SMT members took charge to ensure that the learners were in class and were getting taught. The principals also took rounds in classes to check if learners were not left alone in the classrooms.

The principal of Leretlhabetse secondary school shared with the researcher that in June 2017 she was one of the principals of performing schools in South Africa who were invited by the minister of education to share with other principals from other schools the good practices they implement.

### 5.2.2 Data obtained from diaries

Participants were provided with diary entry forms and were inducted on how to complete the copies and when they were supposed to be returned. The diary was to be completed over a period of five days. The diaries were read to find “salient features” and patterns that validated data obtained from the interviews and observations (Yi, 2008:4). Firstly, participants were requested to record the details of any main activity that took place during the absence of the researcher at the research site. Secondly, participants were requested to report on how they felt and thought when performing certain activities in their schools and also to record their whereabouts, whether they were alone or with colleagues, family or friends. The reason for requesting all this was to track information that could validate what observations, interviews and documents established on the experiences of the participants about the phenomenon under study.

The findings from diaries indicated similar themes that were related to the themes found from other research instruments applied in the study, such as a concern about learner performance. The diaries revealed that all the four participants were concerned and worried about the learners’ end of year performance. For example, Maggy wanted all her learners to make it at the end of the year but was worried about the performance of some learners during mid-year examinations. Participants of this study did not want performance of their learners to decline because it would affect the previous years’ performance.

“I was exhausted and anxious. The official from the Area Office (IGSS) demanded the management plan for SGB elections”.

Cynthia indicated that she was anxious because of the demands of officials from the Department of Education. She had to meet deadlines and at the same time monitor the progress of learners.

Goodwill secondary school was one of the schools where Maths Academy took place. Learners from various schools near Goodwill secondary school attended classes in the afternoons. Cynthia had indicated that the preparations for those classes took all her energy as she was supposed to oversee the extended programme on a weekly basis. She made sure that learners were safe in school and that when they left at five in the afternoon all systems were in place. This activity exhausted her. The other participants were also drained by different activities taking place at their schools. Other activities that took place were related to NGOs who visited the school to

address learners on substance abuse which is a concern to every leader or parent in the current times in South Africa. Such interactions help principals in controlling indiscipline in schools.

Meeting with parents was reported in the diaries. The meetings were about issues of discipline which took place on a daily basis after hours. Other findings were based on meeting with parent components in the SGB either for approval of quotations or strategising on issues that may take the schools forward. Such meetings sometimes took long and participants like Cynthia and Olga reported to have quality family time.

What is also noteworthy was the way in which participants managed performance of learners.

The principal of Leretlhabetse secondary school indicated that

*at 6 o'clock in the evening I went back to school to monitor evening classes. The presence of the parents during the study made me to be grateful because they gave their children support in their studies.*

Evening classes and Saturday classes were held at Leretlhabetse secondary school and the principal indicated in the diary that she supervises these studies herself. Other parents were reported to have come to the school to support the principal in that initiative. At Bosele secondary school, Bontle indicated that her learners spent the night at the school as a strategy to enforce studying. The principal noted that she took rounds during the night to monitor learners and teachers. Saturday classes for matric learners were also utilised as an intervention established towards improving the results.

One of the participants' diary entries described her stressful feeling regarding an encounter that she had following a physical fight between two of her teachers. She indicated that she wanted harmony in her school and when such school-based violence occurs, they affect her work, "*since I have been a principal for many years, I have never experienced charging a teacher.*" Another worrying factor was the way learners got sick during study camps that forced principals to drive them home during the night. This is yet another illustration of the sense of responsibility and caring on the part of the principals.

Going through all these strategies (extra study time, school camps and Saturday classes) may have resulted from the pressures that continue to mount on all principals, which accounts for their performance. According to Steyn (2018:10784), school leaders are increasingly becoming

accountable for improving students' performance. Moreover, effective school leadership is considered one of the major forces to ensure school success and student performance (Steyn, 2018:10784). As an effective leader, the principal of a school should ensure that learners are put at the centre of a school system by perceiving the education of learners as the ultimate tool of empowerment, focus on the achievement of learners, maintain a sense of urgency about improvement, engage in 'whole person' education, thrive on challenges, use power effectively, demonstrate personal activities (empathy), have designs of motivating teachers and learners, develop and inspire people and include community outreach and engagement (Kaume-Mwinzi, 2016:87). Tyler (2016:8) also contends that effective principals should have an understanding that "they do not act in a vacuum", they have to ensure that they bring on board all stakeholders in the picture so that they can have a collaborative decision-making that could take the school forth.

### **5.2.3 Data obtained from documents**

It was evident through the data obtained from the four participants that the schools they lead are successful. According to The South African Standards for Principals (2014:7) principals have the responsibility to create a climate that encourages teachers and learners to perform and commit to excellent academic results. Bolanle (2013:26) argues that a school becomes effective when the set goals or objectives are accomplished. An effective school is the one that produces results in observable positive outcomes among its students, consistently over a period of time.

The following table highlights the performance of participants throughout their years of leading their schools. Table 5.1 represents matric results from 2012-2016 respectively.

Looking at the table presented in Table 5.1, it is clear that participants took it upon themselves to be consistent in keeping their results up to standard. At Lerethabetse secondary school, the results have been standing within the bracket of 90s and it is evident that the 'graph' is normal because the results go up and down but maintain the high standard above ninety percent.

Bosele secondary school on the other hand has been underperforming. Looking at 2014 results this school performed very badly, however, the principal, through her leadership skills, was able to motivate her staff and learners to work harder than before and ultimately managed to increase their performance to 70%. This is full proof that hard work pays.

**Table 5.1: 2012-2016 matric results**

School (pseudonym)	Pass rate (%)				
	(2012)	(2013)	(2014)	(2015)	(2016)
Lerethabetse secondary	90.16	97.91	92.13	95.68	97.5
Bosele secondary	88.89	77.78	20.00	91.30	92.4
Tshupo secondary	71.43	100	95.08	95.65	100
Goodwill secondary	98.06	98.68	97.84	92.40	95.14

Tshupo secondary school matric results have been consistent since 2013. It really shows that the principal wanted to maintain the 100% pass rate. The principal of Tshupo secondary school disclosed that she cannot regard her school as successful because she has not reached her destination as far as performance is concerned. She indicates that *“there are many issues that still need improvement”*. This statement clearly shows that there is always room for improvement and as principals they need to strive to reach their expectations.

Matric results at Goodwill secondary school demonstrate consistency because they range above 90% which is impressive. Working together with all stakeholders who understand their responsibilities and being a ‘strong leader’ bears good fruits.

### **5.3 THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THE STUDY**

Eleven themes emerged from the study. These are first listed, and then elaborated on for a better understanding of the commonalities of the experiences of the participants (Table 5.2).

**Table 5.2: Themes that emerged from the study**

Codes	Framework of themes that emerged from the study
Code 01	Motivation for becoming principals
Code 02	Mentoring female principals received
Code 03	Challenging experiences encountered by female secondary school principals
Code 04	Leadership qualities displayed by female principals leading secondary schools
Code 05	Participants’ version of successful schools
Code 06	Participants’ understanding of leadership

Code 07	Participants' leadership styles
Code 08	Interpersonal relationships displayed by participants
Code 09	Relationship displayed by participants with other stakeholders
Code 10	Support received by participants
Code 11	Participants as disciplinarians

### Employment details of the participants

Table 5.3 shows the details of the participants of this study. What is noteworthy is that participants are professional teachers (they have significant formal education) and acquired principalship based on the requirements of the post, for example, to become a principal in South Africa an applicant should have qualified and taught for a minimum period of seven years and have leadership skills, probably having served as a Departmental Head (DH) (Wiehahn & du Plessis, 2018:1).

**Table 5.3: Biographical details of participants**

Geographic location	Secondary school (pseudonyms)	Participant (pseudonyms)	Qualification	Age	Race	Years Teaching experience	Experience as principal	Marital status
Urban area	Lerethabetse	Olga	-	-	African	28	7	Married
Rural village	Bosele	Bontle	HED, ACE	56+	African	21	6	Divorced
Rural village	Tshupo	Maggy	Honours	35-40	African	16	6	Married
Urban area	Goodwill	Cynthia	Masters	46-50	Indian	24	2	Married

The biographical data that was gathered suggests that participants' academic records paved a way for them to acquire principalship. Unfortunately, Olga did not supply the researcher with her qualifications and age, none the less, but the qualifications of these female principals clearly indicate that the academic qualifications of these successful female principals "are more prevalent than gendered distinction" (Aslanargun, 2012:259). According to Piaw *et al.* (2014:5129), academic qualification was found to be a significant factor of principal leadership

skills. Maggy, the principal of Tshupo secondary school had registered for her Master's degree at the time of the study. The principals' teaching experience equipped them with necessary historically experienced leadership skills and abilities to lead in secondary schools and confirm that they deserve to occupy the principalship positions. Aslanargun (2012:259) affirms that although there has been a stereotyped consideration that has been used to disguise the underrepresentation of female leaders in senior positions, females are continuing to occupy such positions.

Female secondary school principals have been perceived to be single, separated or divorced (Aslanargun, 2012: 259), but the current study proved otherwise. Female principals can be successful in leading secondary schools even when they are married and have other family commitments.

During data collection in 2017, Olga, principal of Leretlhabetse secondary school served 913 learners in her school, Bontle had 189 learners, Maggy had 603 and Cynthia had 855 learners in her school. Leretlhabetse and Goodwill secondary schools are located in urban areas whereas Bosele and Tshupo secondary schools are located in rural areas. It is noteworthy that all the participants led secondary schools ranging from grade 8-12 and the four participants demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities in leading their schools. None of the participants expressed any displeasure at their appointment in that leadership position, although they experienced challenges, some exacerbated by gender stereotypes. In spite of these hurdles, the participants had a way of mitigating the challenge evident in their passion in leading secondary schools.

The following are the discussions constructed from the themes that emerged from the study. Within the discussions, verbatim quotations from participants were extracted to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings (Belle, 2016:237). Literature that further supports the findings is included, especially from the preceding Chapter 2 and 3.

### **5.3.1 Motivation for becoming principal**

There were many factors which motivated participants to become principals. Although all the four participants followed different avenues to attaining their positions, there was a common factor amongst three of them and that is they were deputy principals at the same schools where they got promoted. Only one of them was from a different school at which she was a

departmental head (DH). However, all the four participants were involved in leadership activities before they became principals; as class teachers, as heads of departments (DH), in extramural activities (choral music conductor, soccer, netball, debates coach, chess, athletics convenor etc.), in district task teams (DTTs) and through these commitments; they were appointed for higher posts.

When asked to share: *What in particular motivated you to become principals of secondary schools*, participants came up with several reasons. The first motivation emerged was the love of being a teacher, of being amongst and working with learners. Secondly, there were influential people who happened to appreciate the work of these females. The second motivation was that they were influenced by people who happened to appreciate the work of these females. Thirdly, they all wanted to make a difference in the lives of the learners motivated the participants. One of the participants shared her motivation to apply in order to shatter the perception that secondary school principalship as a male-dominated career. The perception was proved wrong and she succeeded in doing that.

The principal of Tshupo secondary school described her experience in acquiring the principal post:

*What motivated me was when I was checking the issue of gender in principalship. So I said let me just go and try to see if as a woman can't I make a difference in the lives of these learners because I saw it as a male dominated career, so I thought let me just go and see if I can make a difference, let me just go and see how it feels like to be in a leadership position as a woman. I wanted to make a mark on that.*

What Maggy indicates is emphasised by Murakami and Törnsten (2017:815) when arguing that “if career choices are still limited for women, not from a recruitment and hiring standpoint, but from a historical perception that women can only fit in certain positions based on gendered social expectations, what kind of professional development can bring satisfaction?” It will be only fair for all concerned to follow the right channels and procedures in acquiring such positions, not to be perceived in a certain way because one is a female.

In the following excerpt, Maggy also highlights some of the factors that motivated her into becoming a principal.

*The willingness of my educators, even if they are not all willing, you know seeing them responding to the instructions that I'm giving them, seeing them being empowered, seeing them hungry to do more sustains me and another thing that sustains me is my eagerness to see something that I have started, because coming here, being a leader in this school is like a project to me, is like a baby. I have a vision to see it reaching a certain degree. So that's what pushes me to say in seven years' time, in ten years' time I want to see this school, I want to see people being transformed into leaders and every day when I see people springing forth as leaders it motivates me to say there's still another extra teacher that I can train to be a leader because I also believe in empowering people.*

It was clear that Maggy proclaimed herself as a transformational leader. She wanted to see her teachers empowered, especially in sharing her leadership skills with her staff. She also maintained that the empowerment of her teachers into leadership roles made her work easy as a principal. She mentions *"seeing teachers eager to know what happens, teachers eager to know how the school runs, how the time table is drawn, activities of the school, says you know I can still wake up again and again in the morning to make sure that as and when I leave the school there's going to be a leader who carry my visions"*.

Bontle expressed that she was motivated by the school inspector who was impressed by the school results produced under her leadership as an acting principal. She indicated that she was reluctant to do so and did not want to embarrass herself because she felt that the teachers' 'union' might be having their own candidate. Her hard work ultimately paid off. She highlighted that *"in 2011 I raised results from 63% to 83%"*.



The greatest motivator for the female principals who participated in the study was their passion for their work. Their passion for teaching resulted in excellent learner performance. Being around learners and being visible in the schools is another instance of their work. One of the factors that make female principals successful in leading their schools is developing themselves academically. Keeping abreast of new developments in the education system increases the chance of leaders (principals) being able to cope with changes that occur.

Cynthia was encouraged by her culture, attitude and her personality. She indicated that she had that ability within herself and her being appreciated for what she was doing and as a cherry on

top, she was a chief examiner and then she realised that she had that potential to be a leader and that was what motivated her to apply for principalship post.

Moreover, the greatest encouragement that female principals who participated in the study received were from the passion they reflected in their work. The love of teaching was intertwined with the potential instilled in them and this gave them the platform to shine and the learners to perform excellently. Being around learners and being visible in the schools has proved to be another element that increases the passion female principals have about their work. One of the factors that make female principals to be successful in leading their schools is developing themselves academically. Keeping up with the new developments in the education system increases the chance of leaders (principals) to be on par with the changes that occur.

### **5.3.2 Mentoring female participants received**

A mentor is someone who shapes female's growth and potential in school leadership. Mentoring helps in addressing the needs for professional development and increase understanding of the changing roles of principals. Mentors help female principals to enhance their personal growth by building their self-confidence (Pheko, 2014:3). Therefore, it is important to note that no one was born a leader albeit notions that "leaders are born". It is also important to understand that no one was born a principal and that there is no school for principalship. That is why Tyler (2016:9) contends that there should be on-the-job training with a mentor to afford opportunities for principals, especially newly appointed, to observe how leadership is performed, not forgetting that everybody can lead but others can lead better and efficiently. When sharing leadership with a mentor, principals are provided with the foundation to take decisions on their own (Tyler, 2016:9). This is what Olga, a principal from Leretlhabetse secondary school alluded to.

*You grow and learn from other principals and then I call them my mentors because I will be looking at one principal and there will be some good practices that I will definitely gain from him or her. So I honestly respect them because there are good, there are those that I consider better than myself and I will always learn from them.*

Olga indicates that she considers someone as competent when their schools are effective and she will always learn from such people. Visiting performing schools (benchmarking) certainly assists and she shares those good practices with her staff. Attending and being a member of associations

like South African Principals' Association (SAPA) also assist as principals from different spheres in South Africa to meet and network.

Maggy shares the same sentiments and also emphasised that mentorship is not only from the Department of Education (DoE), as long as one perceives the other leader as being successful, you can actually approach them and check how they do things. Leaders are not islands, they need each other. But Olga indicated that:

*The biggest challenge is that as principals you are so isolated, you are lonely because you are the last bus stop, everybody comes to the principal and yet you cannot go anywhere... there are pressures from every side, from parents, from learners, from the department and from the community, but if you have a mentor, somebody on your side to pat your shoulder and say you can still go on, is the biggest role of the mentor.*

The other participant mentioned that their mentors (from the province, district and area offices/sub district offices) guide them in a good spirit. What is noteworthy is that although females have mentors, others indicated that they do not have a personal mentor who tells them what to do and what not to do. Cynthia from Goodwill secondary school mentioned that she prefers motivational talks, reading leadership pamphlets and referring to leadership books (John Maxwell). Martin (2011:4) asserts that females need more role models of their own who are exemplary to them in order to transition to the high levels of leadership with greater frequency. Cynthia believes that by reading leadership a book connects her spirituality to leadership skills. She takes whatever will work for her and apply in her leadership.

### **5.3.3 Challenging experiences encountered by secondary school female principals**

There is no leadership without challenges and these stem from diverse situations. This is no difference to female principals who participated in the study. According to Muzvidziwa (2014:218), a challenging process requires reciprocal action by using power through and not over others. Involving the community on issues that concern their children could address some of the challenges these female principals experience in their schools. They face different challenges daily and some of the challenges seem to be female focused. Being in the leadership position is challenging yet these participants approached their leadership responsibilities pragmatically and with determination (Hansen, 2014:86). However, Day and Sammons (2014:15) highlighted several challenges that leaders (principals) face on their day to day job.

- Ensuring consistently good teaching and learning
- Integrating a sound grasp of basic knowledge and skills within a broad and balanced curriculum
- Managing behaviour and attendance
- Strategically managing resources and the environment
- Building the school as a professional learning community
- Developing partnerships beyond the school to encourage parental support for learning and new opportunities

To curb these challenging circumstances, Day and Sammons (2014:7) assert that principals have a key role to play in setting direction and creating a positive school culture that include the proactive mind-set and supporting and enhancing staff motivation to foster the improvement and promote success for schools.

Secondary schools are perceived as male-dominated and when a female becomes a principal in such a school, 'disaster' or mismanagement is anticipated. Females are usually appointed mainly in primary schools, low performing and dysfunctional schools or rather in multiple deprivation schools. That is why in many instances they face challenges in realising societal expectations (Lumby, 2015:402). Findings in Lumby's (2015:406) study showed that there was prejudice against female leaders whereby doubts about their leadership ability was expressed.

Some of the challenges were expressed by the four female principals in the study. Olga indicated that as female principals they experience challenges daily. She mentioned challenges coming from learners, teachers, from the department and also from the community. Interestingly she indicated that she has never come across a challenge she was unable to overcome.

As for Bontle, lack of parental involvement was her greatest challenge. She responded:

*... few parents know the objective of learners to come to school. Most of them they don't know, they don't even care. You will call a parents' meeting you will find few coming and that will make us to waste time at school because we must teach. There was a day where I returned learners back to go and collect their parents and then some will refuse.*

Bontle indicated that to her, education for her learners was a priority and that she informed parents that 'education is a three-legged pot', there is a teacher, learner and parent. *"If the other leg is broken, the pot will fall ... so the most challenge is the parents"*.

The other participant, Maggy, attested to the fact that her greatest challenge was to 'gel' or interact with male teachers. She maintained that it was a challenge for them to accept leadership of a female because of their innate ego. She experienced some resistance from her male teachers. According to Naidoo and Perumal (2014:12), the degree of resistance was open defiance. The extract below emphasises what has been said.

*Sometimes male teachers wouldn't want to take instructions from me, sometimes they wouldn't want to be ridiculed or they wouldn't want to be told they are wrong. they would always want to push their maleness in front of the job at hand.*

Based on the above assertion by Maggy, there is confirmation of what Eagly and Carli (2003:822) argued in stating that female leaders face discriminatory barriers mainly in male-dominated and masculine environments and therefore this prejudice is highly consequential for females' advancement, however, in this instance, the principal was already in the scene and these male teachers wanted her to feel their maleness. Eagly and Carli (2003:822) call this kind of 'behaviour' by male teachers the 'discriminatory disadvantage'. What Eagly and Carli contended clearly prove that kind of societal prejudice with words like: 'women cannot lead', 'women are weak', 'women are emotional' and 'women are difficult to trust'. They contend that for females to encounter such disadvantages in male-dominated environments tend to sometimes produce the appearance of a female competence advantage. Those females who do rise in such hierarchies are typically the survivors of discriminatory processes and therefore tend to be competent Eagly and Carli (2003:822).

Maggy also experienced a pull-her-down syndrome (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014:12). She indicated that some of the female teachers did not support her as a female principal because they have been under the leadership of a male for some time and they resisted change. She stated that:

*It was difficult for them to trust that a female can actually take them to greater heights because it was also influenced by culture of society to say a woman cannot lead, women are weak, and women are emotional when dealing with issues.*

Maggy believes that her teachers were influenced by the societal culture that indicates that females cannot lead, women are weak and emotional and that may have affected their trust on her.

Cynthia, from Goodwill secondary school, did not have any challenge with regard to the opposite sex. She was able to deal with both male teachers and learners. She mentioned that she goes into the male toilets to check on learners who are misbehaving and bunking classes (maintenance of discipline). However, her greatest challenge was to be at school alone. *“I do not feel confident nor am I comfortable to be at school alone”*. The element of exposure, vulnerability and loneliness was detected in what the principal said and has also shown another element of feminism.

Leithwood *et al.* (2014:14) summarised this theme through claiming that the most successful school leaders are open-minded and ready to learn from others under challenging circumstances.

#### **5.3.4 Leadership qualities displayed by female principals leading secondary schools**

There are different traits that have been identified in leadership of both males and females. But there are those that distinguish themselves as female driven. Conradie *et al.* (2015:4) have identified several traits that may give female leaders the upper hand for being successful. Managerial styles, which Moorosi *et al.* (2018:155) call balanced view of leadership, of these female principals, are caring in nature, motherly, empathetic, compassionate, collaborative, motivated, driven, energetic and empowering have been identified in the study.

The roles of principals go beyond the office and classroom. When asked about her role as a female principal and not just a principal but what she actually does that her male counterparts are not doing, Olga sighed and said *“a mother will always be a mother”*. She indicated that the love that a mother has for her children can never be the same as that of the father. *“So that’s really what makes me or brings me out from other male principals. The love that I have for kids, I love these kids as if they are mine, yes that really motivates me every day to come and work with them”*. She was referring to her learners at school. Being a mother cannot be separated by home or workplace (school). Participants took the welfare of learners and teachers at heart and this brings them fulfilment in their job.

Bontle on the other side has another version and referred to discipline when asked the same question as others (... what specific things do you actually do as a female that you believe male

principals do not do?) She indicated that when she went to neighbouring schools led by male principals, she found that the discipline of that school was out of way. She mentioned that she was amazed by the way learners conducted themselves in the presence of their teachers and principals. She shared:

*You'll find learners during school hours roaming around the yard, noise, then you will ask yourself where is the time table, why can't SMT monitor because really you must give every teacher a time table that will lead her or him which class he must attend at what time, then that is the instrument that will keep you to hold the discipline in your school. If there is noise in the school just check the timetable, check whether the teacher is in school or not, why are learners making noise. So, I've gone to the male school principals and that is what I found, but I always talk to them.*

Bontle's actions show that female leaders are able to share good practices with their fellow male counterparts. Helping her neighbour principal indicates that female are caring people. She did not want to see others not coping in maintaining discipline in their schools.

The following extract explains what Maggy thought about the same question:

*As a female principal, I'm able to touch the lives of girl learners, you know as young as I am I realised that I could actually talk to the girl learners about things that their mothers cannot talk about because in this community many of our learners are raised by mothers, single parenting mothers so I am able to connect with them at that level and when I also check my staff I'm able to connect with them as a mother on that basis so I believe that male principals cannot do that and you know as females we are able to multi-task and I think that is an extra thing that I feel male principals cannot do.*

Maggy also indicated that female leaders want everything coming together, that they have organisational skills and they like to involve everybody to do their part. Maggy exudes an element of feminism in what she shared.

Interestingly, Cynthia shared the same sentiments as Maggy's. She indicated the following:

*I believe in my feminine ability, I believe a woman has much greater power and authority to make high sounding, longer lasting and more realistic decisions. Being raised as girls*

*only we were brain - washed into believing that we are much better than our male counterparts ... so I feel as a woman you know, we have the highest potential.*

Olga also had her say. She indicated the following element of a carer, mother and a nurturer.

*When I look at the eyes of these innocent learners because I believe that I'm here specifically for them, seeing them every day eagerly coming to school, sometimes on an empty stomach, sometimes some of them walk for a very long distance just to come to school, it motivates me, it sustains me to say look, even if I can't take it anymore, I just have to be here for these learners.*

From the conversation, Olga had some concerns on the welfare of the learners. The “tone” of her voice indicates that she has that deep motherly care for all the learners. Although her job takes much of her energy and gets frustrating sometimes, her learners are the reason she wakes up every morning to go to work.

What has been indicated clearly shows that female leaders have special characteristics that will always ‘make them shine’ in their leadership.

There are several characteristics that researchers have identified that distinguish female leaders from male leaders. The following were highlighted in Conradie *et al.*'s, study (2015:4), they are:

- Female leaders are more persuasive than their male counter parts
- When feeling the sting of rejection, they learn from adversity and carry on with an “I’ll show you” attitude
- Female leaders demonstrate an inclusive, team-building leadership style of problem solving and decision making
- They are more likely to ignore rules and take risks.



It was found that female leaders also believe that they must play multiple roles and work excessively hard to be successful (Conradie *et al.*, 2015:4). This was supported by Maggy when she affirmed that she assumes a role of a mother, counsellor, conflict, manager and marriage counsellor for both teachers and learners. This indicates that female principals have the potential to swap roles to cater for the situation at hand. She often offers support where needed and was able to ‘jell’ or interact with everybody in her school and she was also able to go to different

levels and through these traits she was able to transform the lives of the learners and teachers in her school.

Interpersonal relationships were also observed in all the four female principals that were studied. They were able to mingle with their teachers, even though their relationship was often of a professional strand, respect topped it all. There are times when participants socialised with their staff and learners. They drank tea together, they sometimes ate together. They indicated that they live as a family, that is, a family away from home. For example, Cynthia indicated that she gives her learners the opportunity to interact with her very closely, *“not creating that high and mighty authority with them, just to make them understand, feel comfortable”*. She continues to mention that when learners are comfortable they are ready to tell the principal more truth about their situations and she said: *“it must be my femininity and my ladylike attitude”*.

Charisma was also observed in participants' leadership, for example, the principal of Tshupo secondary school was the youngest of all and she was in her late thirties. She shared her energy with teachers and learners as she wanted to make a difference in her school. Because her teachers were used to a male leader, when she arrived at the school she embraced all her teachers with their weaknesses because some of them were reluctant to accept her as a principal, because she is a woman. Furthermore, Maggy was hands-on curriculum issues and she shared with the researcher that one of her Mathematics teachers was struggling with learners failing Maths in Grade 9. Because she also taught Mathematics, the principal called the teacher to her office to find out what was wrong. After deliberating, Maggy assisted the teacher by going to class together to demonstrate other methods of teaching that topic. Maggy motivated her staff through her actions; she involved her teachers in “critical management functions” whereby she embraced distributive leadership style (Botha, 2018:10816).

The findings in Murakami and Törnsens' (2017:818) study include female principals' abandonment of personal assets such as the ethics of care and motherhood so that they could fit in their leadership roles. However, the findings in this current study show that principals took ethics of care and motherhood as their top priority for the well-being of both the learners and teachers. All the four participants have shown a sense of care by demonstrating integrity where learners were their priority.

### 5.3.5 Participants' version of successful schools

A successful school is a school that has a leader who is people-centred. Besides learner development, the principal leading a successful school is also concerned about developing adults in a school community by building the capacity of teaching and non-teaching staff to better themselves in what they are doing, for example, personal, professional, organisational and community capacity building (Gurr, 2015:139). Although the definition of success used to select schools was relatively narrow (based on matric results), those principals in selected schools were eager to emphasise the broad range of outcomes that successful schools have, outcomes for both student and others (Gurr, 2015:143). Successful principals continuously keep their staff well informed, empower them to cope with their responsibilities and help them in acquiring professional knowledge and acknowledge and appreciate their quality as teachers (Steyn, 2018:10787).

A school needs an effective and efficient leader for it to succeed. Success does not just happen; it depends on achieving educational objectives and goals (Uzoma, 2010:5). Furthermore, Cruickshank (2017:118) contends that high performing schools have leaders who focus more on their time communicating clear academic goals. The success of the school is measured in different ways. Academic performance in matric is a key measure of school success in South Africa (Wills, 2016:9) but this is not the only yardstick or indicator by which performance can be measured. Extra-curricular involvement can also lead the school to being successful, inasmuch as effective leadership also leads to success. Having proper resources, both human and physical, make a school successful; being a responsible and charismatic leader could also lead to a school being successful. But again, there are those schools that are well resourced but lacking effective leaders. According to Pheko (2014:3), factors such as warmth, friendliness, competence and directedness facilitate the success of female leaders. According to Moorosi *et al.* (2018:154), successful leadership is learner-centred in priorities that realise students' achievement. Involvement of principals in learners' academic work, being hands-on and principals' engagement with the community determines the success of a leader. Appreciating care for learners and staff both ensures success in school leadership because people desire to be acknowledged and appreciated (Moorosi *et al.*, 2018:155).

According to Allie and Sosibo (2018:91), school effectiveness is characterised by good management, strong governance, a healthy school environment, good infrastructure, motivated learners and good teachers. Allie and Sosibo (2018:91) identified some traits that make a school

successful. For example, the instructional style(s), expectations for students, principals' leadership, school goals, inter-staff relational and the daily experiences of learners. Staff development, parental involvement and community, monitoring learner progress at all levels, positive school culture and availability of resources are other factors that make a school to be successful (Allie & Sosibo, 2018:91).

To further understand what successful schools entail, Day and Sammons (2014:7) outline key dimensions referring to successful schools:

Defining the vision, values and direction; improving conditions for teaching and learning; redesigning the organisation; aligning roles and responsibilities; enhancing teaching and learning; redesigning and enriching the curriculum; enhancing teacher quality (including succession planning); building relationships inside the school community; building relationships outside the school community and placing an emphasis on common values.

All the four participants had their own interpretations of success and successful leadership. When the participants were asked whether they considered their schools successful and what makes a school successful, Olga, said that she could not say their school was successful because they had not yet attained a pass rate of 100% in matric and that they were working hard to attain that percentage. The researcher's conclusion from Olga's statement was that academic performance of learners is the cornerstone for a school's or principal's success. As Olga stated: "*Success breeds success*", Olga maintained that every teacher who joined her team came to her school mindful of the fact that Leretlhabetse secondary school had a history of a performing school, therefore she could not allow anyone coming to teach in her school to bring the results or performance down: "*So there is this morale of working hard and the achievement is first priority, eh, prioritise the achievement of the learners, achievement of the school it's key so we work towards getting us being having achieved something for the school, this is what makes us to work very, very hard.*"

Bontle indicated that proper discipline with respect to the teachers and learners leads to a successful school. She maintains that discipline sustains her efforts in making her school successful. She mentioned that a principal cannot become successful without disciplinary measures in the entire school community. Bontle also mentioned the fact that in-school camps also assist in acquiring good results. She said:

*Our learners in every examination, that is, June, September and November, they come to school for camping, to keep them busy in the school. We plan a timetable on how we are going to attend them. That is why we become successful.*

Her statement concurs with that of Olga because they see academic performance of the learners as leading the school to be successful.

Likewise, Maggy felt that she has not reached success as far as performance of the learners was concerned. She mentioned that there were many challenges that needed to be improved. Here is what she said:

*I cannot say I'm there yet because to me a successful school means educators are motivated, are self-motivated to do what is expected, it says to me there is implementation of policies, it says there is learner discipline taken care of, it says parents are fully involved in the education of their learners, so as far as performance is concerned, we are trying, but other issues need to be addressed. I cannot say my school is successful because I have not reached a point where educators, all educators are motivated to do what they are expected to do. I haven't reached a stage where educators take ownership of the system, I haven't reached a place where educators are actively involved in curriculum development, are actively involved in extracurricular issues of the school.*

Maggy made an interesting statement regarding the participation of matric teachers in other activities as they are forever chasing the syllabus and that their efforts are directed at teaching and neglecting extra-curricular issues.

What Maggy emphasised is that that academic achievement is part of success but other facets are also as important as curriculum because they make learners complete. Learners cannot be denied the opportunity to excel in other activities that the schools offer. The commonness of the responses was expressed by Cynthia when she reiterated that “a school is successful not only based on its academic performance. A school is successful if there is a strong leader”. In other words, effective leadership counts. Conradie *et al.* (2015:4), in their findings, assert that female leaders see themselves as successful because they are efficient. Cynthia also expressed that, if all stakeholders know their responsibilities and perform according to them, a school does succeed. She also mentioned other reasons that may assist the school to be successful. She gave the same

example that Maggy has alluded to, that is, extra mural activities. Gurr (2015:139) contends that as a successful principal, one needs to continue to seek new ideas, new ways to do things, new opportunities for their schools which ultimately lead to professional.

Another important factor that Cynthia, principal of Goodwill secondary school mentioned about successful schools was keeping the same staff members in her school. This is highlighted in the following excerpt.

*Trying my best to get my staff remain as they are. Trying my best not to reshuffle the staffing and I have to be apologetic, I am very critical about new members that are coming in. ...so far the school has become and remaining successful because 90% of our staff is still as it was since the time the school started for a long period of time and the 10% that is coming is where my fears lie at the most.*

Cynthia is of the view that being presentable in front of learners boosts the image of the school. For example, she indicated that young teachers joining her team do not look presentable in the way they dress which could bring the image of the school down. She indicated the following:

*These young ones are coming and you know; now they want to wear their booby stripes, you know, and ever since, Goodwill teachers we are always dressed up and now they want to wear jean and a t-shirt and a tekkie, you understand, and that is the biggest discussion that we are having from this week from teachers. If I have to tell you they say it is their democratic right to wear that but with our old teachers the 90% of teachers we still believe a teacher must be standing ...presentable in front of the learners.*

Hilliard and Newsome, Jr (2013:360) maintain that successful schools are characterised by articulating high expectations for success, strong instructional leadership through action, continuous monitoring of students' progress, time provided for teaching and learning and students performance, safe school environment and an orderly school and relationship building with school personnel and informing parents of what take place in the school (Hilliard & Newsome Jr, 2013:360). Successful schools also mean that there is a sustainable culture of teaching and learning.

### 5.3.6 Female principals' understanding of leadership

Although historically leadership has been construed as primarily a masculine enterprise (Eagly & Carli, 2003:808), females in leadership has shown that they too can jell in the leadership that traditionally was perceived to be male-centred. Because leadership is a phenomenon that is built through social interaction (Cansoy, 2019:38), good leadership encourages teamwork and collaboration and emphasises the ability to empower, support and engage members of the school community (Eagly & Carli, 2003:809). Yukl (as cited by Cansoy, 2019:38) maintains that leadership involves individual characteristics, leadership behaviours, interaction patterns, role relationships, followers' perceptions and the organisational culture.

Leadership is understood differently by many researchers and some use management and leadership interchangeably, yet they mean different things (Day & Sammons, 2014:11). Leadership is regarded as a vital function in education because it steers the ship to either success or failure of an organisation (Uzoma, 2010:6). Management basically is about issuing of resources and making sure that things run smoothly whereas leadership is about possibilities and opportunities that lie in the horizon. Leadership is the process whereby an individual encourages and influences his/her followers to act in the right way to achieve a common goal. Gupton and Slick (1996:108) and Bezzina (2002:3) describe leadership as a process of influencing others to achieve mutually agreed-upon purposes for the organisation.

This is enabled by the leader's action towards achieving the desirable goals and shaping the goals and motivating others (Bush, 2007:392). However, Olga (Leretlhabetse secondary school principal), understands leadership as inspiration towards her staff in order to fulfil the vision of the school. She indicated that *"if I'm able to convince people to do and support me in whatever that I wish to have, that's what I call leadership"*. This is emphasised by Bezzina (2002:3) who contends that a leader has to display enthusiasm, passion and inspiration to get others to high levels of performance. Bontle, (the principal of Bosele secondary school) on the other hand, understand leadership as a challenging issue in all avenues, that is, when in leadership, one finds him/herself acting in the position of a parent (in loco parentis), social worker, nurse or lawyer. What Bontle indicates is that leadership is a challenging portfolio that needs someone who could sustain it and not run away from.

Maggy, from Tshupo secondary school, understands leadership as "a very complicated and technical issue." She attests:

*Leadership means creating leaders in educators and you know it touches my heart to see an educator taking up a leadership role in his/her own capacity as a teacher. To me leadership says when I look back and see my followers I can gladly say even if I leave the school it will run smoothly; it is a self-managed school that to me is leadership.*

This is supported by Gurr (2015:139) who contends that leading a school requires collaborative and aligned efforts by all. Success of the school is determined due to the leadership of many because leaders value the contributions of teachers.

Cynthia sees leadership as understanding the situation in which one finds him/herself in. She describes a leader:

*As a person who can stand up and understand the reason why or give proper reason why his performance is not what I expect from him before I can take an action. For me a leader is a person who will understand a situation, a leader is someone who can stand up and make a decision very quickly depending on the circumstances.*

What Cynthia indicates is that leadership is situational; you act according to the nature of the situation (Gupton & Slick, 1996:25).

The four female principals interviewed shared their views on what the visions of their schools were. Day and Sammons (2014:13) emphasised that effective leaders provide clear vision and sense of direction for the school. Visionary leadership should be based on purpose, meaning and values. Secondary school leadership should be mission-driven and outcomes-based (Belle, 2016:134) so that all involved in the teaching and learning of students know exactly what to do based on the vision and mission of the schools they work in.

The principal, as the head of the school, needs to collaboratively involve the school community in creating and sustaining shared school values and crafting vision, mission and goals. When creating a vision for the school, the principal needs to be guided by an educational policy based on sound research, personal experience and ongoing reflection (Mombouquette, 2017:20). The vision should also be clearly communicated to all involved which may ultimately lead to ownership of that vision. Belle (2016:134) contends that having shared vision which is clear with expectations is clearly a factor for the success of learners' outstanding performance. The principal also needs to be effective in communicating the educational philosophy to the stakeholders in the school community (Mombouquette, 2017:20). In tandem with Allie and

Sosibo (2018:103) and Steyn (2018:10786), this study confirmed that delegation, inclusion partnering and collaborating and establishing relationships with all stakeholders are principles that are embodied by the female principals. Leaders count on the commitment of staff members to attain goals (Steyn, 2018:10786).

When asked about the vision of their schools, the researcher noted that principals were able to articulate what they considered to be the vision for their respective schools with conviction and confidence. They addressed ideas of vision from their point of view of what was generally considered the features that made their schools to be unique (Mombouquette, 2017:27).

For Olga, Bontle and Cynthia, their visions were performance based: Olga said:

*The vision for the school, it's like I said, is performance, it is my dream that I could really see my school performing extremely well, getting 100% with good quality and that is my dream.*

Bontle stated:

*I want the school to go on, up and up, it must not go down, really it mustn't because if you obtain 100% you must not obtain 90%, keep it stable, make sure that the school does not drop down because now you have reached the climax, which you must not compromise.*



Cynthia's vision for her school is to take the school to the level of excellence and to meet the expectations of the community, not only through her own endeavours, but through the concerted efforts of the learners too. *"My dream for the school is that I have a nice high-performance sports ground"*.

But as for Maggy, her vision for her school was the welfare of the teachers, learners and the community she worked in. Her vision was to see the school community touching the lives of the villages surrounding the school.

*I'm not content with seeing learners performing well in grade 12. I want to see them even beyond the borders of the school. My vision for the school is to ultimately change the standard of living of the surrounding villages and my values and principles that are guiding the vision is this thing of not giving up until you see what you want to see done*

*and this include all people, diversity is what is driving me because when I look back at the learners of the school I could see that somehow I can still make a difference in their lives.*

Maggy mentioned an important factor which she felt it was unfair because her geographical position of her school cost her school to be quintile four. Davids (2018:161) maintains that there are controversies surrounding the quintile system in that, regardless of the resources and communities that some schools serve historically advantaged and historically disadvantaged schools might find themselves in the same quintiles. This unfairness was raised by Maggy because parents of her learners come from disadvantaged backgrounds, as if that was not enough, her school was classified in quintile four similar to Olga's and Cynthia's schools (between quintile four and five). The two schools (Lerethabetse and Goodwill secondary schools) which are well resourced have science laboratories, excellent sporting codes (rugby, soccer, netball, etc.) and there was evidence that these schools continue to do well in these sporting codes. Another criticism levelled against quintiles four and five is that parents are charged more on school fees to cater for all the resources and hiring of additional teachers to help in other spheres like music and visual arts and design (Davids, 2018:161).

According to Dass and Rinquest (2017:146), the Minister of Basic Education is the one responsible for classifying schools according to the level of poverty in surrounding areas. The factors that are considered when classifying schools include the surrounding infrastructure. For example, quintile one schools are schools in a very poor area and quintile five are schools in wealthy areas. Quintile 1-3 schools are wholly subsidised by the government whereas quintile 4 and 5 are partially subsidised by the government. Maggy's argument is that her school is situated in an area where parents are not working and cannot afford paying school fee but her school is classified quintile 4. This argument is supported by Dass and Rinquest (2017:146) when asserting that there are circumstances in which schools are incorrectly classified as quintile 4 and 5 and is generally difficult to change their classification.

### **5.3.7 Participants' leadership styles**

Earley and Weindling (cited by Naidoo & Perumal, 2014:6) contend that female leadership tend to be interactive, relational and predisposed to power-sharing, learning-focused, authentic and moral. Leadership styles involve what the leader does, emphasises and how he/she behaves around those under his/her supervision. According to Khan and Nawaz (2016:23), everyone has

their own style of leadership in which they feel comfortable. They contend that each style has its own efficacy level regarding its strengths and weaknesses. According to Naidoo and Perumal (2014:6), many leadership styles are employed and the style that is chosen will depend on the context and situation in which they find themselves. This is where these female leaders usually expose their maternal skills which are often used to support, encourage and protect their learners (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014:6). Maternal in the sense that traditionally, females are expected to nurture and provide nourishment for children (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014:7).

What transpired in the study is that the styles of leadership demonstrated during the observations and interviews ranged from the democratic, autocratic, consultative and shared leadership. This confirms what literature suggested that the style is chosen based on the situation at hand. Interestingly, Bontle couldn't clearly state the leadership style she uses but from what she indicated the researcher was able to detect democratic and autocratic leadership styles. Autocratic leadership style was detected when Bontle indicated that "... *and then when I want work, they know, I want work, I want it. The work must be done, it ends there*".

Olga suggested that she combines the two styles, that is, democratic and autocratic. She also employs consultative leadership style where she consults but in some instances, she takes personal decisions that she feels would really benefit the school. She claimed that most of the time she consults with school governing body (SGB) members and school management team (SMT) members. "*The decisions that I take will be the ones that I feel would take the school forward but other issues I don't do anything without consulting*".

Maggy also mentioned that her leadership style was democratic mixed with autocratic leadership. She indicated that she cannot be democratic forever.

*I believe in shared leadership, you know, giving people latitude to manoeuvre in the system but sometimes you need to be autocratic, sometimes there are things that have to be done according to the way as the leader you want them to be done. Sometimes in order for things to be run smoothly I normally have to be autocratic and say you know, this is going to be done by this time, especially on issues of submissions, on the issues of leave management. Sometimes if you become too democratic educators tend to take advantage of the system, so I'm manoeuvring between democratic and autocratic.*

Cynthia also believes in democratic leadership style, as suggested in the following excerpt:

*I believe that everybody's ideas and views are important. Some of my decisions may not satisfy everybody but when I stand up to make a decision and style of ruling I believe that I consider their views, their ideas, their inputs and everything and then ultimately make a decision which is the best for everybody, for the majority. And those that are not going to be happy they must adapt to it because there might be another decision which will be favouring them and not the others.*

The way female principals enacted their leadership styles it clearly indicated that there was little or no room for laissez faire leadership on their side.

In summary, one may say that leadership is about going an extra mile, setting example, leading by example, understanding who you are, motivating, respecting all stakeholders, including the school community, acknowledging those you work with, supervision and cooperation of leadership team, support, team work and prioritising achievement of learners. Leadership can also be about encouraging others to lead, that is, shared leadership and engaging them in decision making.

### **5.3.8 Interpersonal relationships displayed by participants**

Interpersonal skills are one of the important characteristics of leadership. Zulu (2011:842) is of the view that every leader is expected to have leadership skills which are appropriate to their job description and female leaders often engage their staff members in leadership (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2013:114). Female leaders are also being perceived as relation-oriented. Developing good relationships could be one of the factors that facilitated female principals' advancement to leadership positions (Pheko, 2014:3). Relational leadership and ethic of care are important characteristics because females are nurturers. Several sub-themes emerged in this question of: *How do you relate with your staff and learners?* Some mentioned 'very well, positive, social and professional'. Good social relations were observed although the participants indicated that social relationship was restricted to a certain level. In her research, Rouleau-Carroll (2014:86) found several skills that female leaders displayed, though the skills are suitable for all successful leaders. Some of the skills were also identified in this study. These skills are: patience, listening, clear communication, sense of humour, nurturing, intuitiveness, empathy and being inclusive. A good communication skill is one of the requirements or prerequisites for any leadership position (Rouleau-Carroll, 2014:86).

Participants in the study indicated professionalism as one of the leadership traits that a leader should display. However, Olga from Leretlhabetse secondary school asserted that there are times when the teachers and learners see her as a leader, where they deal with professional matters but she also relates with them on a social level. Social skills were reflected in all the four participants by the warmth, caring and concern for the welfare of the learners and staff members. Olga sometimes drinks tea with teachers just to have that moment where they talk about everything, as colleagues, as brothers and sisters. In dealing and interacting with the learners, she goes with them on camps as a mother, carer and nurturer, even on educational tours where *"I try to come to almost their level so that they relate with me, they don't see me as that person that stay in the office all the time"*. Caring principals empower everyone in the school. They empower teachers by sharing leadership and allowing them to explore their territory.

Maggy also indicated she has professional relationship with her staff and learners but sometimes she assumes the role of a mother to both teachers and learners. She also assumes the role of a councillor, conflict manager or marriage councillor. The element of trust, which Mestry (2017:262) calls a trusting relationship was observed when teachers or learners discussed their personal problems with the principal. She affirms that her strongest point is to go to different levels depending on what the situation dictates. *"I believe being a principal doesn't mean I'm in the highest position, I'm untouchable, I can't swing between different levels, I think that's the one thing that I believe transforms the lives of these learners and teachers"*.

What Maggy attested to is the fact that female leaders, on many occasions, put the organisation before theirs and motivates their staff to do the same. According to Grogan and Shakeshaft (2013:114), this kind of relationship and alliance facilitates in negotiating effective and sustainable organisational change.

Cynthia from Goodwill secondary school also emphasised professional relationship with her teachers and learners. She asserted that she tries to be a parent and a teacher.

*Where I have to be a teacher I become a teacher and where I have to be a parent I become a parent. But even with learners I maintain, I know exactly where the limits are. They don't go beyond that line, nor do I go beyond that line. The same relation is what I keep with my teachers. There are moments where I become their friends, their colleague, their sister, mother; some of them address me as their mother, even sometimes as a mentor, motivator, in all aspects I keep the limits very well, but I know where I should*

*stop, even in my dialogues and talks with them I do not indulge in anything other than that.*

From what the participants indicated, every relationship has its ups and downs and that there are limits or boundaries in what they talk about. Professionalism was emphasised through respecting each other.

The other skill that was realised during observations and interviews and from what Zulu (2007:53), in her study found was that female leaders are able to develop wider social and professional networks that are more reliable, where these leaders can share their frustrations, their successes, they can share good practices or even mentoring each other. For example, Olga indicated that she is a member of the South African Principals' Association (SAPA) where they meet annually from different spheres of South Africa. When she was talking about this association, one could identify that she was very passionate about it because that is where she networks with other members of the association.

*This year we are having a continental conference where the principals from the whole of Africa will be meeting. I will be able to meet principals from Botswana, principals from all these other countries and we will share information about how best can we really upgrade our schools. Those people are my mentors and I learn so much from them.*

### **5.3.9 Relationship of participants with the community**

The community is one of the entities which plays an influential role on the character formation of the principal (Bezzina, 2002:7). Schools are deeply embedded in the communities in which they work. The community is influential in the role that they play on character formation of some participants, without cooperation of the community; there is no progress (Bezzina, 2002:7; Muzvidziwa, 2014:217). One of the participants indicated that she relates well with the community and that the community respects her. Moreover, participants in the study demonstrated solid relationships with their teachers, learners and communities in which they work.

The welfare of the learners and teachers was taken into cognisance and must be instilled in a principal for her to work well with the community. The female gender may become an advantage in the eyes of the community in that the stereotyped role of a nurturing mother appears to match closely what the learners of the school require (Lumby, 2015:407). Olga indicates that the

community knew her before as a deputy principal and their wish was to see her as the next principal of the school and that did happen. This is acknowledged by Lumby (2015:407) who observed that principals who are highly experienced, hardworking and knowledgeable about the lives of learners and the wider community are appreciated. Bontle also indicated that in her community respect is due to everyone. Because of her position as the former wife of the chief in the village, she earned more respect, especially from those whose learners were attending at her school. She indicated that the community had put more trust on her leadership because she took the school to greater heights. Principals need to engage with the community and communicate regularly with parents to engender their trust by caring for their children (Steyn, 2018:10787).

However, Maggy had a difficult time in engaging with the community where she worked. Her challenge was that the school she worked at was governed by the church and the Department of Education. It was difficult for her to please both of the masters. She says:

*It becomes a mammoth task to please the two masters but we try through being involved in church activities... We've recently come up with this thing of trying to be visible around the community members. Whenever there are funerals we normally encourage educators to go and attend funerals, even if you don't know those people, for them to see the principal it goes a long way.*

Maggy used this strategy to recruit the community to be close to the school and to work together as a unit.

Cynthia has adopted the 'open door' policy where community members or parents come to the school if they needed assistance. She says that she avails herself to give help or advise whenever the community wants something from the school. She also allowed parents to interact with teachers when enquiring about learners' academic progress, but parents were not allowed to disturb learning and teaching. They interacted with teachers after school.

### **5.3.10 Support received by participants**

A strong support system is necessary for everyone, especially in demanding positions. Leaders also need to be given some kind of support. Hansen (2014:116) affirms that support that led the participants to eventually land in the principalship post was an important aspect in their careers. Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2020:10) asserted that, when emphasising the support needed, 'while school leaders made modest direct contributions to staff capacities, they had quite strong

and positive influences on staff members' motivations, commitments and beliefs about the supportiveness of their working conditions. For some, the support that they received was from their homes, from their colleagues, from parents and also from the department. Family support was evident in Naidoo's and Perumal's article (2014:13).

Some of the participants were sceptical when asked about the personal support they have. Support from the department of Education was mentioned by the three participants. Olga indicated that she received support from her family. Here is what she said:

*They support me like on days when I will be knocking off very late, they know that I am a leader and they really don't expect me to do some of the things from home. I really get support from my family and other support I get from the department, I get from parents, I get from educators.*

In one school the principal indicated that she gets administrative support from the school clerk. In other cases she uses skilled teachers as part of empowering them in administrative work. Researchers like Grogan and Shakeshaft (2013:115) call this type of leadership 'distributed leadership' because collaboration and interdependence among members of the organisation is considered. For example, accounting teachers assist in finance matters. She did not mention anything about her personal support and from my observation, the researcher could sense that she was not prepared to talk about personal issues and that was respected. Gurr (2015:145) suggests that developing networks, collaborations and partnerships was a key feature of the success of many of the ISSPP principals.

### **5.3.11 Participants as disciplinarians**

The major role of every principal is to foster teaching and learning to pursue academic success which enhances positive behaviour. Discipline also determines the quality of education that learners experience in a school (Belle, 2018:42).

Learner discipline is one of the challenges that many principals face in their schools. Discipline in schools entails the development of self-control, character and orderliness for learners (Subbiah (cited by Kallie, 2015:1)). Through purposively-instilled discipline, learners can develop a sense of responsibility and Belle (2018:4) posits that the learners equally develop an emotional attachment to the school and are willing to get involved in school activities. Literature indicates that schools led by females maintain high quality of leadership irrespective of the challenges

they come across concerning discipline. Discipline is set to be the key measure that underpins every aspect of school life which results in the school being successful. Belle (2018:35) opines that discipline is the extent to which the school community perceives the behaviour of learners as appropriate and socially acceptable behaviour. Moreover, discipline is a global norm that ensures functionality of education in both public and private schools (Segalo & Rambuda, 2018:1). For a school to be functional, disciplinary policies that suggest strategies and mechanisms to support effective learner discipline must be put in place.

However, the four participants acknowledged that learner ill-discipline affected teaching and learning and this was observed by the researcher in all the four schools that there were difficult learners when during teaching and learning learners were brought to the principals' offices because they were either fighting, misbehaving in class, disrespectful (insulting teachers), bunking classes etc. In most cases, parents were called to intervene as these learners were unruly. Some of the parents were cooperative whilst others felt that the principals were unfair to their children. Participants did not compromise the integrity of their schools by allowing indiscipline in their schools. Using school policies was a way of showing the serious professionalism which female principals displayed. They were consistent in applying policies (South African Schools' Act-SASA, South African Council of Educators (SACE) and Education Labour Relations Council-ELRC).

Learner discipline allows learners to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and capacitates them to shape their behaviours. Discipline was instilled through learners' code of conduct, classroom rules, dress code etc. Learners had to adhere to the rules or else face the consequences.

While it is proper to indicate that indiscipline is a matter of concern in South Africa, principals play a great role in inculcating acceptable levels of learner discipline. The principals interviewed were policy-driven when dealing with disciplinary cases in their schools. When asked about how they experience learner discipline, the principal of Leretlhabetse secondary school indicated that she was a straight talker and that she did not compromise.

*I put down rules and expect a rule to be followed. So my learners and teachers know that there are things that I can accommodate and there are things that I don't accommodate. I follow the policy. If one doesn't do according to policy I apply what is expected. So that's how I handle discipline because I am really consistent in applying policy.*

Another strategy that female principals apply to discipline learners is talking to them. Talking to learners like a mother makes learners to understand that they have transgressed against the school's code of conduct. Bontle indicated that this strategy works for her and reduces learners' indiscipline, but only to a certain degree. Maggy on the other hand, indicated that learner discipline was quite a challenge.

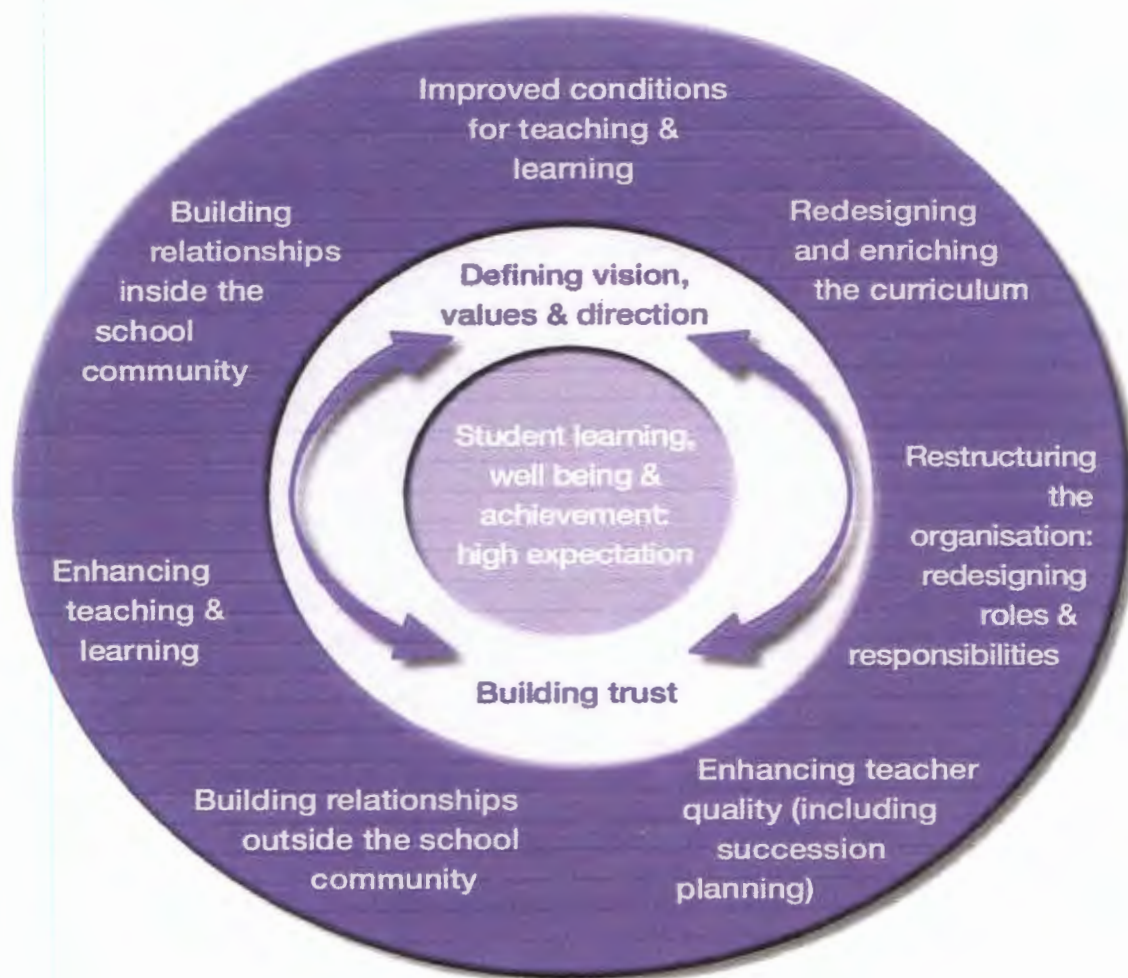
*I believe for me to manage learner discipline, I put systems in place, the learners' code of conduct, safety policy of the school and the disciplinary procedures of the school. So what I do is to make learners aware of the policies that we have. Because I believe if they don't know the consequences of their actions then we will continue to battle with the same issue every time so I believe in talking to them in a polite way because one thing that I have realised when I was trying to manage learner discipline is one learner just said to me you know what, I don't want you to talk to me, I want you to talk with me and that was the biggest challenge. I believe we had to turn around and get to the root of the broom and really talk to learners to say what made you do this, are there some underlying factors that pushed you to do this, what can as a principal support you.*

When talking to the learners about their unacceptable behaviours, this strategy seems to work in that they begin to understand the consequences of their negative behaviour they display at school. In her study of discipline in schools Kallie (2015:5) highlighted that ill-discipline in secondary schools in South Africa is a serious challenge. This was based on media reports about how learners behave at schools. Although Akomolafe and Belo (2018:196) concluded that the toughness of principals (who exhibit masculinity irrespective of gender) is the best predictor of learner discipline, the case study that was conducted indicated that talking to the learners is the best remedy.

Glasser (cited by Belle, 2018:36) mentioned seven caring habits that need to be demonstrated and that a researcher may call 'manipulative' by learners when disciplined. They are supporting, encouraging, listening, accepting, trusting, respecting and negotiating differences. Encouragement of miscreant learners is a powerful tool for principals to enhance the motivation such that students learn to demonstrate good behaviour. Segalo and Rambuda (2018:1) reiterate that learners who lack discipline to yearn for attention.

Figure 5.1 below summarises what successful schools are and suggests what leaders need to do in order to be successful. According to Day and Sammons (2014:16), these eight key dimensions of effective leadership were identified by IMPACT research.

- The inner circle demonstrates the core focus of leaders' attention,
- Inner ring demonstrates the core strategies,
- Outer ring illustrates the actions they take in support of the strategies and
- An intrinsic part, which is embedded within the strategies and which is an essential part of the actions in the outer ring, forms the building of trust.



**Figure 5.1: Dimensions of successful schools (Extracted from Day and Sammons (2013:16))**

## 5.4 SUMMARY

The four interviews conducted brought a deeper understanding of what the female principals experienced in their journeys as leaders of successful secondary schools. They were eager to share their experiences and they understood and were passionate about their careers. Relationships were created, though it was not easy. Each of them demonstrated leadership in their own rights. They demonstrated instructional leadership through their engagement in curriculum issues. Their willingness to extend their responsibilities (taking part in extra mural activities, monitoring during camps) helped these principals to be effective in their schools. The data obtained from observations, diaries and documents also gave an insight into what is transpiring in schools led by female principals. Through their interaction with various stakeholders, female principals were able to maintain their matric results. The table above also highlights how these participants were eager to keep their learner performance a top priority in their schools and showed that giving up was not an option, for instance, at Bosele secondary school in 2014, the learners dropped drastically and the following year the results improved.

Chapter 6 presents the major findings, conclusions and recommendations as well as a model for female leadership of successful schools.



## **CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY OF THE STUDY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter six summarises the study whose aim was to explore the experiences of female principals as leaders of successful secondary schools in the North West Province.

In chapter one the research problem is presented and expressed in the main question: What are the leadership experiences of female principals of successful secondary schools?

Several key issues (in the form of specific sub-questions and objectives) guided the entire study so that the focus was not lost as the study progressed. Issues such as: what female principals of successful secondary schools regarded as good leadership; what leadership attributes and qualities female secondary school principals perceived as relevant for leadership of successful schools and what common leadership styles were preferred by females in school leadership for achieving successful learner outcomes were deemed relevant to pursue in order to arrive at the meaning of leadership experiences of female principals of successful secondary schools.

In this chapter, two sections are presented. Section A deals with the final overview of the study, the major findings based on the themes which have been itemised in the previous chapter; the conclusion which reflects on the research questions and recommendations for research and practice. In section B, a model of successful school leadership by female principals is presented.

### **6.2 SUMMARY OF STUDY**

Preceding chapters presented the background to the study. Chapter one highlighted the problem statement whereby the focus was on the experiences of female principals that have been investigated in this study. The dearth of extensive research on experiences of female principals in successful secondary schools motivated the researcher to reflect deeper on the phenomenon under study. Historically, secondary school leadership has always been under males even though there are females who are capable of those leadership positions. Although there are females in leadership positions – literature that has been reviewed sings a different tune. The number of female principals leading secondary schools is still minimal. There is still a huge number of male principals in secondary schools than their female colleagues. However, the females in this study

displayed their worthiness in making their schools succeed and they have shown what good leadership is in terms of their leadership styles and how they run secondary schools.

South Africa is one of the countries that have equity policies that were intended to address or curb equity challenges but inequality between males and females in different institutions/organisations still prevails even today. South Africa is one of the few countries that have beautifully crafted policies but implementation is lacking in some instances.

The aim of the study was to explore the experiences of female principals as leaders of successful secondary schools in South Africa – North West Province.

Chapter 2 reviewed literature on educational leadership theories in general and those associated to female leadership. Firstly, the concept of leadership was examined as it was the major concept which the study revolved around. Leadership is therefore described as a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes (Bush & Clover, 2003).

Different theories have been developed and new approaches towards leadership emerged from those theories. The chapter discussed the significance of leadership in schools and the nature of the leader in his/her role of making sure that desirable learning outcomes are achieved. Definition of leadership in the context of schools was also explored because it is understood differently. For example, leadership is influential, vision and value based. A leader must have influence over their followers, must be a visionary - be futuristic. Vision is seen as an essential component of effective school leadership and it must be clearly articulated. Participants in this study were able to define their visions for the schools they led and that was based on teaching and learning. In terms of values, a leader must be grounded in terms of their actions in the personal and professional values that represent a moral purpose for the school. The reason for this is to provide an insight into understanding what leadership is all about and how these female leaders are experiencing their leadership positions in secondary schools.

Leadership models such as managerial, participative, contingent, transactional, moral leadership were discussed generally and relational and ethic of care, transformational and instructional leadership were discussed looking at female leaders specifically. The significance of reviewing these leadership models was that none of the models provides a complete picture of school leadership and that 'there is no single best' (Bush, 2003:150).

The leadership of female principals has been researched and well documented but as for the experiences of female principals leading successful secondary schools which have been perceived as the territory of males is lacking, especially in the North West Province in South Africa. Such female leaders have, according to Zulu (2007:216), 'shattered the glass ceiling against all odds'. Literature compellingly demonstrates that female principals leading in secondary schools are few in number as compared to their male counterparts, yet they managed to occupy such a position.

Chapter 3 presented a concise overview of leadership styles related to the leadership of female principals. Leadership styles such as democratic, autocratic, laissez-faire and authoritarian were discussed in this chapter. Presented also was an overview of females in educational leadership, leadership skills, females and career advancement challenges whereby the following factors were found to have an impact on the advancement of females in leadership positions: lack of confidence, lack of motivation/aspiration, glass ceiling phenomena and gender stereotypes were perceived to be barriers in participants' leadership. School leadership issues and school community relations were also discussed.

In Chapter 4 research design and methodology were presented. A qualitative research approach (under a constructivist/interpretive paradigm) which uses words to describe phenomena was applied whereby a case study design was administered. A qualitative approach helped in gathering in-depth information and elaborated it from a purposefully sampled female principals leading in successful secondary schools. The reason for using purposeful sampling was that the pool of participants in the study was not sufficient for any other sampling technique. The participants were selected because of their knowledgeable background and information about the phenomena under study. Various methods of data collections were used, for example, observations, interviews, diaries and documents. These instruments helped in that data was validated through triangulation. Trustworthiness and ethical considerations were reflected also in this chapter.

Chapter 5 presented and described the findings from the study. Findings from observations, interviews, diaries and documents were analysed. Twelve themes emerged from the study and they were: employment details of participants, participants' encouragement towards leadership position, mentoring received by female principals, challenging experiences encountered by female secondary school principals, leadership qualities displayed by female principals leading successful secondary schools, participants' version of successful schools, participants'

understanding of leadership, participants' leadership styles, interpersonal relationship displayed by participants, relationship displayed by participants with other stakeholders, support received by participants and participants as disciplinarians were presented.

These female principals made it against all traditional stereotypes whereby females are perceived as 'domestic material' or stay-at-home mothers by society. The experiences shared by participants suggested that it is not easy for society to accept that females can be leaders of institutions, however, society should engage with female leaders in different institutions to understand their plight to be recognised just like male leaders are recognised. Beliefs that females cannot lead secondary schools have deep roots in the history of education but they can bring progressive contribution within the society (Hansen, 2014:9).

### **6.2.1 Employment details of participants**

All participants had appropriate qualifications for the position of principalship, ranging from Higher Education Diploma to Master's degree level. Hard work and determination have put them where they are. The latter is supported by Aslanargun (2012:258) when contending that female principals are hardworking, energetic and committed for learners and teachers. Furthermore, female principals have a huge responsibility in the society as they take care of learners as far as compassion, empathy, sincerity etc. are concerned. Principals can also improve their leadership skills through in-service training and further academic qualifications.

## **6.3 KEY FINDINGS**

### **6.3.1 Motivation and career direction**

It was established that participants had several motivations that led them to being in leadership positions. First, these females were teachers, taking part in all activities of the entire school, being part of different committees and ultimately, they were deputy principals until they accepted the invitations towards leadership positions. The initial love of teaching and being with learners was one of the motivations one participant had to pursue in order to reach principalship. Working with learners on daily basis ignited that inner nurturing instinct and led her develop herself towards the position by furthering her studies.

Some of the participants indicated that fellow colleagues motivated them because another participant was reluctant to apply for principal post but one official motivated her to do so.

Kessler (2014:6) shares the same sentiment when asserting that conversations are a means of developing closeness in which affirmation and support are given and received. This enables the principals to assess opportunities presented to them and the risks. Braveness was one of the attributes that fuelled another participant to apply for the post. Knowing that gender was not balanced in secondary schools, she took the “risk” of applying for the position. She aspired to be a leader, hence the position. The desire to make a difference in the lives of learners motivated her to be in a male dominated career and it was her goal. Self-motivation drove her towards leadership. The response of this participant leads to the breaking of a thinking that females are only suited to lead in primary schools than in secondary schools.

From what these participants indicated it showed that lack of confidence, doubting themselves could have been one of the reasons why they felt the way they did. However, the braveness of being in a leadership role made them to be in those positions. Females are mostly thinking of others, they want what is best for those they work with. They know what they want and they strive to get it. They displayed that they were unselfish because they brought the best out of everyone.

### **6.3.2 Challenges experienced by female principals**

The roles and responsibilities of the principal are mainly focused on strengthening instructional leadership (Preston, Jakubiec &, Kooymans, 2013:1) therefore they require suitable integration of leadership knowledge and skills to respond effectively to the many and uncanny challenges that beset them in doing their work (Lingam, Lingman & Raghuwaiya, 2014:372). Literature suggests that principals in rural areas face unique challenges that differentiate them from other schools located in other areas, however, effective leadership that has been displayed by participants of this study suggests otherwise (Lingman *et al.*, 2013:1; Preston *et al.*, 2014:372).

Female leaders in general face challenges and obstacles in their leadership positions, and female principals of secondary schools are no exception. Mashall (cited by Hansen, 2014:198) suggests that cultural constraints still hinder females’ career aspirations in the field of education administration.

Society’s perception of leadership as ‘male’ discourages many females from aspiring to leadership positions. In addition, it is thought that lack of confidence, lack of aspiration, the glass ceiling phenomenon and gender stereotypes also limit female potential (5.3.3). However, the findings of this study show these obstacles were not part of the experiences of the female

principals who were included in this study. The findings have also shown that females aspire to be leaders but they are limited by organisational and societal barriers from fulfilling their aspirations. Hence the impression is created that females lack aspiration. Hansen (2014:194) asserts that principals' aspirations have developed as they left their typically female roles in classroom settings and assumed leadership positions in a typically male occupation.

The researcher acknowledges and concurs with Zulu (2007:222) in her findings, that lack of mentorship and lack of formal preparations in the form of professional development have been perceived as a major obstacle for many females who aspire to leadership positions. Female leaders who are principals in secondary schools have managed to break barriers, stereotypes and gender conflicts as they secured leadership positions (Hansen, 2014:2). However, it will take some time until equity is acknowledged in South Africa and elsewhere in the world.

### **6.3.3 Leadership attributes and qualities relevant for female leaders**

The findings established that females who are in leadership positions, especially female principals who were involved in this study, tend to get lesser status in the public world (Coleman, 2005:4). Whenever a female leader does well, society becomes doubtful of their leadership skills and qualities. For example, in Coleman's study, one of the participants commented that: "when you prove you 'can' the impact on 'doubters' is even greater" (Coleman, 2005:14). Furthermore, secondary school female principals were found to have demonstrated leadership skills to improve learner outcomes. For example, the principal at Bosele secondary school has managed to improve the results from 63% to 83.3% in 2011. She could not have done this on her own but through teamwork and involvement of parents in their children's education.

Participants have also displayed that caring is in their nature (relational leadership and ethic of care). They showed that they are nurturers through mothering teachers and learners. The "soft touch" and "tenderness" allowed learners to be "vulnerable" knowing that they have caring mothers. When teachers had troubles principals showed compassion, empathy and being sensitive and that made them to be respected by their colleagues and learners. One of the participants echoed that "*a mother will always be a mother*". This clearly shows that female principals have transversed their roles from being a mother to her children at home to being a mother to learners and teachers at school. For example, Coleman (2005:6) indicates that "there is generally expectation that the maternal role will be extended to the care and education of very

young children". Being compassionate, helpful, nurturing, kind and gentle were observed of which Mythili (2019:61) refers to as communal behaviour.

The findings also suggest that female leaders lead the same way as male leaders but deploy different techniques. The participants demonstrated their feminists' power and authority in their respective schools. The findings have also shown that participants wanted teachers to be empowered whereby transformational leadership was displayed. As transformational leaders, they acted as inspirational role models, fostering good human relationships, developing the skills of followers and motivating others to go beyond the confines of their job descriptions (Eagly, 2013:5). Mythili (2019:64) is of the view that the leadership of female principals is expected to make valuable contributions.



Eagly (2013:4) also asserts that female leaders have been perceived as less hierarchical, more cooperative and collaborative, more oriented to enhancing other's self-worth and this provide guidance and encouragement to many ambitious females (Eagly, 2013:4). Allowing them to help in administrative and leadership issues was one way of empowering them for leadership positions (delegation). Encouraging teachers to further develop themselves academically was a sign of empowerment to their teachers. Leading by example and acknowledging teachers' and learners' efforts to strive to do well ultimately make them very proud. As relational leaders, they empowered others by sharing power, "not sharing power over but rather sharing power with" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011) and the tasks associated with decision-making.

Interpersonal relationships are one of the attributes found in the study. Hansen (2014:195) contends that females are socialised to nurture, support and soothe others (Mythili, 2019:61) as they assume the familial role and caretaker of the home. Socialisation was one of the qualities that participants showed in the study. When socialising with teachers, participants were able to do so in a "responsible" way. Responsible in that they know when to maintain professionalism and when to be flexible. Sharing a cup of tea or a joke with teachers makes teachers free and they are able to interact with the principal freely and also show respect to one another. Therefore, as the principal of the school, one has to foster a positive school climate where all feel as part of the bigger whole. Working as a team allows for such cooperation because it builds a conducive working relationship for all school community members.

Another attribute that emerged in the study was that of hard work. All participants indicated that being successful needed a hard-working leader and having a sense of ownership to whatever

leads to success. Female principals displayed the skills of being hands on and prior planning has shown that instructional leadership is important because they were involved in the teaching and learning of learners. They have been found to be skilled at providing instructional supervision, communicating and collaborating with all stakeholders. This skill has been realised because females are found to be in the majority in the teaching fraternity.

#### **6.3.4 Understanding of successful schools**

Success cannot be measured by masculine values but it is earned through hard work and inclusion of others and female leaders have incorporated their own specific strengths toward success which lie in their relationship orientation (Kessler, 2014:3). The findings of the study concur with what Kessler posited, for example, two of the participants indicated that motivated teachers, implementation of policies, learner discipline and involvement of parents, including involvement of teachers in curriculum development and provision of resources, extracurricular of the school lead to success, unlike neglecting other activities and only chasing academic results. A 'successful' school in the context of this study and that of the North West Province is defined in terms of overall National Senior Certificate results of a school according to a cut-off point of a 70% pass rate (see 1.1). Larsen and Hunter (2014:75) suggest that what is critical to the success of the school is bestowed on the principals as instructional leaders.

The findings also suggest that all participants understood success in the context of learner outcomes. Their success was based on the pass rate in matric (Grade 12). The participants indicated that until they attained 100% (which is their target point) they will not consider their schools successful. However, Day and Sammons (2014:18) contend that when principals provide teachers with discretionary space, promote regular access to a range of professional learning and development opportunities, distribute leadership across the school and 'practise what they preach' they promote success within the institution. Day and Sammons (2014:18) further contend that principals are able to achieve and sustain successful learner outcomes, but the degree of success is likely to be influenced by the relative advantage/disadvantage of the communities from which their learners are drawn (Day & Sammons, 2014:26).

#### **6.3.5 Female principals' understanding of leadership**

The findings of the study under this theme indicated that participants had different meanings of leadership. Leadership was confirmed by participants to be a challenging issue, complicated and

technical. Inspiration towards fulfilment of the vision and self-managed school were seen to be leadership. Visionary leadership allows leaders to look at the future; they plan ahead and want to achieve what they dreamed about for their institutions. This has been drawn from transformational leadership theory which is most often associated with vision; setting directions; restructuring and realigning the organisation; developing staff and curriculum; and involvement with the external community (Day & Sammons, 2014:18).

### **6.3.6 Leadership styles**

The major leadership style(s) performed by each participant was determined in the study. It was found that all the participants used democratic leadership style and autocracy. It was also found that these participants used these styles based on a particular situation. The style of leadership practiced by participants has described the nature in which the school was led and how the participants view their roles in schools. Accounting for results puts much pressure on principals, therefore their responsibility is to transfer the pressure to their teachers therefore autocracy may rise.

### **6.3.7 Relationship with staff and learners**

The findings of the study suggest that the relationship between participants' staff and learners were based on respect, building trust and the way they related was professional. When acknowledging the little efforts that the staff and learners do complements everything which Day and Sammons (2014:18) concur with when asserting that acknowledging and rewarding good work, listening to teachers' ideas, being collegial, considerate and supportive have proved to improve the relationship in the institutions. It was also observed that the principals and the rest of the school community relate very well, especially looking out for teachers' personal and professional welfare, when providing feedback to teachers about their work also mean positive working relationships.

School principals are increasingly held responsible for raising standards of achievement, leading and enhancing the quality of teaching in schools (Day & Sammons, 2014:13), therefore their visibility in the school premises, accompanying learners on matric camps, accompanying them on educational tours allowed participants to relate with learners quite well.

Day and Sammons (2014:17) have restated that principals as leaders of the schools have direct and indirect effects on students' learning - direct effects through the building of 'organisational

learning' through working with staff and leadership capacity that has a clear focus on teaching and learning and subsequently indirectly affects students' motivation, behaviour, engagement, learning and achievement. Because they were females, touching the lives of girl learners was the priority that one participant echoed. Girl or boy talk help principals and learners to open up, sometimes the learners are able to talk about things they are not comfortable to talk about when they are with their parents. This takes us back to female principals multitasking (mothering teachers and learners).

### **6.3.8 Relationship with community**

The findings of the study suggest that the relationship of the school principals with the communities they work for has given them the opportunity to gain respect within the communities because the community is influential in the character formation of principals (see 5.3.9). Preston *et al.* (2013:2) assert that dedicating time and effort toward forming strong school-community relations promotes a sense of mutuality, understanding, harmony, accord, confidence and respect between school and community organisation. One of the participants emphasised that supporting events (for example, funerals, tombstones, etc.) taking place in the community strengthens relationships within the school and communities. Preston *et al.* (2013:2) concur with Olga, a principal from Leretlhabetse secondary school that "it is important that the community you work around must see in you that the welfare of the institution is in your hands". This simply suggest that as the principal of the school, one is accountable to the community they work in. When principals recognise and embrace the relationship they have within their communities, they are likely to be successful.

### **6.3.9 Vision envisaged by female principals**

Vision is perceived as crucial in any organisation which helps for empowering and developing, caring and vision is an inspiration to others who are part of that organisation, enlisting good and socially acceptable behaviour, supporting and recognising them through development and constructive feedback and praise (Belle, 2018:45). The findings of the study indicated that the participants were clear of what the visions of their schools were. Each of them clearly articulated what their visions were based on learner performance. They indicated that good quality results were their ultimate dreams, seeing their learners performing at 100 %. Seeing their schools in greater heights, seeing their schools competing with other resourceful schools, seeing their schools in partnerships with the community and touching the lives of other communities,

excelling in different sporting activities was the greatest vision of the participants. Meeting the expectations of the communities they work for was also suggested to be a vision for the participants.

#### **6.3.10 Participants' personal values**

Bush (2003:189) has affirmed that the expectation of administering moral leadership is to operate based on what is 'right' or 'good' and integrity is key. Larsen and Hunter (2014: 76) describe values as a set of core internal beliefs that define an ideal reality used by leaders to develop action plans for aligning actual reality within their "ideal" reality. The standards of behaviour of leaders must reflect on the school community. Principals, as moral agents, are expected to use their core values as a guiding compass when confronted with the challenges they face daily, especially when decisions must be made (Laren & Hunter, 2014:72).

Tolerance is one of the values that were suggested in the findings of the study, which is the biggest issue, as highlighted by Cynthia from Goodwill secondary school. Tolerance, especially in a multi-racial school (diversity) needs to be embraced to create harmonious relationships amongst teachers and learners. The findings also suggest that doing the right thing and following instructions was found to be one of the participants' personal values.

#### **6.3.11 Participants' personal and administrative support**

Every leader is entitled to having the support, whether from families, colleagues, officials from the department of education or from parents. Contrary to that, Bartling (2013:9) affirms that lack of support affects females' representation in senior leadership positions. Another support that principals receive, especially from what Olga affirmed, is from mentors. She indicates "*there is no one born a principal and there is no school for principalship*". She indicated that she meets with other colleagues and share good practices. She asserted that she travels a lot and go to different schools that perform well in matric. Interestingly, two of the schools that Olga visited for support basis were led by white males. She made it clear that she went to learn about good practices and what she learned from other schools she implemented in her school to bring growth. This is an indication that females can go an extra-mile to make sure that they become successful. Meeting with other principals during annual conferences (for example, South African Principals' Association - SAPA) makes her to keep in touch with what is happening around principalship and how best they can upgrade their schools.

Maggy mentioned that she gets administrative support from her administration assistant (AA) hired by the department of education. All the four participants have been supported and mentored by both male and female colleagues. Scheduled monthly meetings with district or sub-district officials assist principals to share their successes or challenges. Female leaders are in need of closeness in order to experience and maintain confirmation and support (Kessler, 2014:5).

### **6.3.12 Discipline displayed by participants in their schools**

Learner discipline has been a worrying factor in many schools, both primary and secondary schools. Maintaining good discipline does not depend on the gender of the leader but how that leader addresses discipline and how it impacts on learners. Implementing policies dealing with disciplinary measures was confirmed by all participants of the study. When observed it was easy to conclude that female principals have skills in maintaining discipline in their schools. The nurturing and motherly approach proved that when the principal talks with learners, they can listen and understand the wrong moves they have taken and it leads to positive behaviour. Haucke and Krenovsky (cited by Kessler, 2014:2) concur with the statement and assert that it is not wrong for female leaders to use their 'natural female impulses' than to copy male behaviours.

Involving parents in the welfare of their learners assist principals in maintaining learner discipline, however, there was a case whereby one of the respondents endorsed that there were other parents who were not cooperative when called on about the behaviours of their children to a point that the principal had to send the learner/s home to come with their parents. Harsh (masculinity) measures are sometimes needed in order to maintain discipline. Cynthia affirmed that reading learner code of conduct every month was one of the strategies to combat indiscipline in her school.

## **6.4 CONCLUSION**

The study focused on the experiences of female principals as leaders of successful secondary schools. This study provided some insights (for those females who aspire to become leaders) into the realities of leadership experienced by female principals and that helped them shape their leadership roles.

The participants in this study revealed that hard work and investing more time and effort into what they do helped them to succeed in what is usually a competitive male dominated career. Successful leaders generally work hard and seek leadership styles that are supportive of others. The love of teaching learners emerged as one of the main reasons that motivated these participants to become principals of secondary schools.

Some of the principals were encouraged to apply for the post of principalship by senior managers in the Department of Education. Despite the presence of obstacles and job challenges, these principals managed to succeed. The participants approached their leadership responsibilities with determination and dedication. They ensured that a culture of good teaching and learning as well as good learner discipline prevailed in their school.

The literature has shown that many female leaders lack confidence in leadership and this has often been cited as a barrier to leadership. However, the participants in this study shattered this myth by displaying self-confidence, self-belief and a strong sense of purpose that are perceived to be key determinants in female's abilities to demonstrate their capabilities in their leadership. These attributes might have been useful in assisting the principals to realise the academic potential of their learners and to achieve good outcomes in the schools. In addition, the role of extra mural activities was highlighted as another way of making learners to excel in their academic performance. As leaders of secondary schools, female principals displayed their managerial skills by setting goals, planning and budgeting for resources needed in schools.

The participants in this study encouraged their staff to participate in decision making though the principal ultimately remains accountable for the final decisions taken. Teachers were also given a chance to assist in administrative work as a way of development. Though transactional leadership was not employed, transformational leadership was evident. For instance, the principals continuously encouraged their staff to develop their academic qualifications.

Traits of care, compassion, empathy and relational leadership emerged from the experiences of the four participants. The participants in the study have shown a nurturing feminine style of leadership. They emphasised caring whereby the role of a mother was emphasised. Taking care of learners and staff was realised in the study. Relational leadership and ethic of care were visible in all the four participants. Ethic of care emphasises that human beings depend on each other. When talking to learners and teachers, it was observed that there was a sense of care and concern. Learners were addressed as *'my children'*, *'dear learners'*. Harmonious staff

relationships and friendlier atmosphere were shown in the leadership of female principals who participated in the study.

Moral leadership was also displayed by all four participants. They operated on what was right or wrong and policies were implemented accordingly. Tolerance and patience were practiced by female principals in their respective schools. The study has revealed that females are expected to be submissive, caring and tolerant. For instance, culture and gender are important matters that enable the understanding of how female educational leadership is constructed and how it plays out in various educational settings.

The study also identified the qualities that are associated with females which led to them being successful. The distinct characteristics that are assumed to be feminine have ultimately helped participants to take their schools to greater heights. Females have been found to be strict, disciplined, self-determined and tough in order to maintain their authority which are said to be manly (masculine). Female leaders were also perceived as caring, courageous, nurturing and collaborative.

The study concludes that secondary school female principals continue to succeed irrespective of the challenges they face in the country and elsewhere. Literature reviewed have indicated that females were subjected to the discrimination which emanated from the perception that secondary schools are meant for males but participants indicated that they enjoyed the respect of teachers, learners and the community they worked for although one participant, Maggy, reported some glitches when some of the male teachers were opposing her leadership and authority. She did not despair; she was able to curb that challenge through talking to them. From the evidence provided by participants, female principals' advancement to leadership positions was based on their potential. Leadership of female principals demonstrated a radical approach despite their initial reluctance to apply for the principal positions. The abilities of these female leaders to overcome the barriers and constraints of patriarchal societies in which they work have shown that they are highly committed. Their experiences have shown that they managed to withstand all pressures coming from learners, teachers and communities they work for.

This study also concludes that learner discipline is central to efficient teaching and learning. The gender of the principal does not have any impact as far as discipline is concerned. The study has shown that female led schools do maintain good discipline, in a motherly, nurturing approach.

Implementation of disciplinary policies assisted participants of the study to maintain effective learner discipline.

Participants have encountered prejudicial treatment that restricted their access to leadership roles however, progress on females leading secondary schools has been made but more need to be done so that gender equality in all phases is recognised. Secondary school leadership must not be perceived as a male-dominated territory, it must be perceived as a territory whereby potential is displayed (whether male or female). Females, through their experiences as leaders in successful schools have shown their capabilities through involving other stakeholders.

## **6.5 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

The study contributes a conceptual model which proposes guidelines for female leadership of successful schools and provides knowledge and understanding of what female leadership represents and how females enact their leadership roles in successful schools. The model is termed, "*Successful female leadership model*". The findings of the study provide pertinent information on secondary school leadership challenges and obstacles that aspiring female teachers should be aware of and be prepared to encounter.

### **6.5.1 Successful Female Leadership Model**

The model shown in Figure 6.1 depicts the dimensions of successful female (school principal) leadership. In the discussion which follows, the terms 'leader' and 'principal' are used interchangeably. In the context of this study, female leader refers to female (school) principal/leader. The 'successful' female leadership model is basically about what leadership means for teachers and students/learners, including all stakeholders and how (and why) leadership is enacted. How leadership is enacted in the context of schools is especially relevant to how it is linked to promoting the academic performance of learners towards attaining the National Senior Certificate.

The model focuses on what drives female principals to achieve and sustain success in their schools. This model is based on the context of South Africa – the North West Province in particular. The definition of 'successful school' in this study is thus context-specific. The researcher is aware of the international definition of 'successful schools' as well as the contextual definition of the Department of Education and Sports in the North West Province which regards *successful schools* as those that have crossed the 70% margin in the overall pass

rate. The focus of this study has been on schools which obtained 90% and higher for three consecutive years under the leadership of female principals.

Below in figure 6.1 is a depiction of the “Successful female leadership model”.



**Figure 6.1: Successful Female Leadership Model (Source: Author, 2019)**

The ‘successful female leadership model’ is a four-part model with four main dimensions each with sub-dimensions. The model was developed from categories derived from data on the leadership effectiveness of female leaders and their engagement with stakeholders in the quest for academic achievement of learners in their final matric results. The relationship between the features in the model highlights the success of female leaders through collaboration with all stakeholders.

The first dimension of the model is the *Ethic of care*. This dimension is highly characteristic of leadership traditionally associated with caring, empathy, compassion, motherliness, nurturing and concern for the welfare of others. From the findings of this study it is evident that female leaders take the welfare of learners and teachers into consideration. These leaders are approachable, welcoming and are able to create a friendly environment. The leadership of the principal gives the school its character and reputation.

They are compassionate towards their teachers and learners and act as care givers especially to learners. When exercising a caring relationship, the female leader does not overlook the human element of their members (Akram *et al.*, 2016:118), but focuses on both the task and the person.

The second dimension is *Good personal attributes and leadership traits*. One of the key sub-dimensions in this part of the model is passion – a characteristic associated with successful leaders. A successful leader displays passion in her work and possesses confidence, ability to solve problems, inclusivity, approachability, self-development and service orientation. These are important characteristics for ensuring good relations with teachers and learners. Good relations are conducive to productivity and a willingness to cooperate and collaborate for good school results/outcomes. As leaders, principals also need to involve community members in the affairs of the school. Principals should also take part in the activities of the community as this enhances school-community relations. Good interpersonal skills, being approachable and having compassion are key attributes of leadership in general and of female leadership in particular. For instance, empathy for teachers and learners experiencing personal or family problems is indicative of compassion and this attribute is clearly evident in the leadership of the female principals in the study. Such attributes make the leader accessible to school community members, teachers and learners who perceive her as '*an emotional counsellor*' who is always at their service. The female leaders in this study are frequently in contact with their staff members on a personal level and spend a great deal of time interacting with their staff, sharing ideas and focusing on their needs. Servant leadership is clearly evident in the behaviour of these principals.

The third dimension is *Good instructional leadership*. This entails setting high and clear expectations for teachers and learners, promoting good quality teaching and learning, setting and defining clear goals, and being influential. These are essential elements for leading a successful school and are at the core of good instructional leadership. The female principals who participated in this study were influential in the school community and demonstrated elements of effective leadership, which is perceived to be "the most influential organizational element"

(Akram et al., 2016: 119). A leader becomes influential when leading by example. The principals ensured that the culture of learning and teaching in the schools was instilled in school community members. High expectations were set for teachers and learners and maintaining such expectations resulted in personal growth.

The fourth dimension of the model is "*Combination of different leadership styles and skills*". This fourth dimension exemplifies effective leadership styles and skills employed by leaders/principals for effective educational outcomes. The use of a combination of visionary, transformational, democratic/participatory, authoritarian/disciplinarian styles is a powerful tool for effective leadership as the reality of school leadership calls for different styles for different situations. A variety of skills such as listening skills, good interpersonal and communication skills, multi-tasking skills as well as recruiting and organisational skills are indispensable twenty-first century management skills and are essential for a leader/principal of a school. Female principals are perceived as good listeners and this adds value to their leadership as teachers feel valued and motivated to work hard when the principal listens to their ideas.

### **6.5.2 Features of successful (female) school leadership**

Following are leadership features that emerged from the findings of the study and that constitute the model described in the preceding section (6.5.1). The features show the link between high performing/successful schools and the leadership of female principals, especially in secondary schools. The focus of the *Successful female leadership model* is on the holistic approach of female leadership and how the four main features interconnect. The relationship between the elements displayed in the model shows that as a leader, the personal and professional attributes and skills a principal possesses are key ingredients for good followership and successful leadership for good educational outcomes.

The success of a school depends on the ability and creativity of the (female) leader to engage and negotiate with those who have power or are influential in ensuring that all systems are in place at their institutions. The success of the schools which participated in the study is attributed to teamwork and dedication of all involved in the teaching and learning process in the school.

The academic achievement of students in the National Senior Certificate (matric), including other extracurricular activities serves as indicators of the leadership success and reputation of these female principals in their schools.

Leadership styles such as relational, transformational (charismatic and developmental) and instructional leadership (curriculum issues) form the basis of this success. Every leader expects excellent results from learners and how leadership is enacted may result in the success or failure of the school principal to facilitate the achievement of good educational outcomes for the school. The model shows the interconnectedness and relationship between all elements that constitute the success of the principal, and by extension, the success of the school. In embodying these elements, the female principal and (female) aspirants of leadership would be able to achieve their visions and ultimately enjoy the fruits of their efforts and hard work.

There are attributes that tend to have direct and indirect impact on the success of female principals as leaders. For instance, the way female principals/leaders enact their leadership may directly impact the way teachers and learners respond to them either positively or negatively. How the leader responds to teachers and learners also may have a direct impact on their academic performance and productivity. What may also have a direct impact is the way the female leader engages her staff members in matters of the school. Acknowledging that a leader does not 'work in silos', allowing others the opportunity to lead (collective approach) are some of the attributes that contribute to successful leadership practice. Developing and empowering teachers on curriculum matters and other facets related to school success indicates that the leader has the welfare of teachers at heart. The leader also has to be abreast of any educational developments that may contribute to the success of the school.

Acknowledging that the work of a team leads to harmonious and conducive environment and collegial relationship brings about a healthy and effective working place and enhances student academic performance. Allowing learners space to explore their creativeness through extracurricular activities leads to the effectiveness of the school.

The provision of positive feedback and appreciation of the efforts of teachers and learners in producing high academic results instils a culture of working hard among all involved. As a result, teachers and learners are motivated to take ownership of the success of the school.

The practice of *shared leadership* features highly in the leadership of the female principals who participated in the study.

Teachers are allowed to participate in leadership issues and to excel in what they do best. Female principals embraced the ideas of teachers. Taking time to listen to teachers' and ideas on a particular area, makes them feel appreciated and more likely to be fully engaged.

*Instructional leadership* leads to success of the school because it is focused on teaching and learning and monitoring school activities. Female principals as instructional leaders are more in regular contact with teachers and learners in classes and they are involved in curriculum needs of the school. Female principals are generally energetic, hardworking, driven and active participants in ensuring continuous success in schools. Consulting stakeholders on issues that affect the welfare of teachers and learners ensures growth in schools and being transparent, especially on finances ensures a sense of responsibility and trust.

*Being transparent* brings about a sense of trust and this limits issues of sabotage by other members of the staff. All stakeholders who have the interest of the school at heart should have knowledge of what transpires in the schools, whether school finances or academic progress of the student but the principal should ensure that she becomes transparent in a responsible way.

Leadership skills, qualities, characteristics and competencies displayed by school principals in their personal and professional capacities allow schools to be effective, efficient and successful.

*Recruiting skills* of female leaders result in selection and retention of good teachers. Retention of hard working teachers and recruitment of the best ones tends to influence parents' choice of these schools and this contributes to effective leadership and ultimately to the success of the school.



*Visionary leadership* is another hallmark of successful leadership. As visionaries, leaders are expected to be successful at goal attainment. Visionary school leaders focus on achieving excellent academic results. They also pay attention to other activities that stimulate learners' creativity such as extra mural activities. High performing schools have well formulated and articulated mission and vision statements. All who are involved in teaching and learning have the responsibility to commit to achieving that vision through collaboration with other stakeholders. The important thing is that these female leaders share the vision of the school with all stakeholders and when the vision is clear and well communicated, everyone involved acts his or her part in establishing a sound relationship within the organisation. When stakeholders have an understanding of the vision, they are encouraged to have a 'buy-in' in their schools. They strive to get positive outcomes in terms of learner performance and are supportive and encouraging.

The success of a visionary leader needs to be driven by a clear definition of goals based on core values and what the leader stands for. The vision, which is futuristic, must provide clear direction and compelling, unifying and lasting statements that distinguish the leader's school from other schools. By so doing principals of successful schools craft a collective process by which they encourage a sense of ownership and maximum participation amongst all stakeholders whose needs and requirements are addressed by the vision. Such stakeholders include parents, the department of education and local communities. It is important that the vision be revisited regularly based on the needs of the school.

*Being an inspirational role model* to up-coming female teachers aspiring to be leaders is another feature of the model of successful female leadership. This is achieved when teachers are afforded the opportunity to assume leadership roles.

Other features of the leadership success model are *determination* and the *desire to do well* both of which are strong determinants for successful outcomes. Hard work, love of teaching and love of students/learners are perceived to be predictors of academic success.

*Combining various leadership styles* allows flexibility and versatility to employ one or more relevant leadership styles in a given situation. In other words, situational leadership style is another determinant of successful female leadership. One leadership style that features prominently in female leadership of successful schools is a motherly approach to leadership. The participants in this study had a way of transferring a mother's love to all the learners and teachers of their schools and by so doing they were able to win the trust of all involved.

*An ethic of care and nurturing* also featured highly in the leadership repertoire of principals who took part in the study. Although elements of care and motherliness appeared to be highly regarded, academic performance was given top priority.

The findings also revealed that female principals are *relational in nature*. They use their relational leadership in combination with a caring approach in dealing with school community issues and absenteeism of teachers and learners. This approach allows them to be firm yet flexible enough to deal with tough issues with love and care and thus allow stakeholders to feel important and respected around the school.

The leadership styles depicted in the model are important for female principals to sustain the success of their schools. In other words, sustainability of success in a school can be maintained if certain leadership styles such as collaborative, consultative and democratic are applied. *Including staff / teachers in decision making* is one of the foundations of the leadership success of these secondary school female principals. A democratic leader allows her staff to be free and open-minded during meetings and teachers are able to air their views without fear of being intimidated or victimised. Being autocratic allows a leader to be assertive, thus earning the respect of her followers. In addition, the professional manner in which the principal conducts herself earns her the respect of the entire school and promotes harmonious relationships within the organisation. A successful leader is inspirational and being empathetic and sensitive allows her to bring her staff closer to her. Such leadership style has the effect of minimising absenteeism and delinquency among teachers and learners.

Lastly, findings from the study confirm that female leaders are disciplinarians in their own right. For instance, in their schools, participants in the study reported implementing policies to a point where some of the disciplinary policies were read for learners on a monthly basis so that learners internalised the code of conduct. Another example is when participants utilised, for instance, ELRC and SACE policies for further consultation when the need arose.

## **6.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Future research on leadership of females in successful secondary schools should be expanded to all districts in the North West Province to address the causes of the '*loneliness*' that female principals leading secondary schools experience in their leadership.

Second, research should be conducted on how female principals could develop partnerships beyond the school premises that could encourage parental involvement and support for learning and creating new opportunities.

## **6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

Robust equality policies be developed or re-visited that should address the backlog of females in leadership positions.

Policy makers should allow those affected by inequality to have a contribution throughout the process of drafting policies.

Department of Education and Sport Development in the North West Province and South Africa at large trains or workshops females who have acquired leadership positions so that they are conversant with relevant skills needed in leadership roles and that these trainings be sustainable. The trainings will provide substantive information on preparation programmes that will assist in designing instruction to support females interested in becoming secondary school leaders (Rouleau-Carroll, 2014: 5). Trainees will be able to reflect on what they have been taught in the context of their own schools and the training will provide an opportunity to implement some of the innovative ideas shared during trainings (Nanjonnyojo, 2017). The research will also assist in offering necessary information for female teachers who pursue secondary school leadership to be aware of and prepared for the obstacles and challenges they may encounter in future.

## **6.8 LIMITATIONS**

The main limitation in this study is the scope of the study itself. Research was conducted in only one district of North West Province on a small sample of four female participants. Although the findings cannot be generalised to all female principals in all secondary schools, transferability of the findings to similar contexts is possible.

## **6.9 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, while it is encouraging to note that females are recognised as leaders (principals) of secondary schools, more still needs to be done. Females need to 'up their game' by being confident so that they are not always identified with the home and the care of small children because high performing schools instil confidence in female principals. The success that female principals leading secondary schools have displayed through their experiences is proof that they are able and capable to lead. It may be true that female leadership is based on maternal instincts (nurturing, caring, compassionate, affectionate, sympathetic, loving, etc.) however the reality is that they are making a mark in their leadership positions. Their constant and consistent success in matric senior certificate and other activities in the schools clearly show that they know and understand what they are doing. Female leaders have demonstrated collaborative and caring

leadership however, the pastoral roles enacted were generally judged as inferior and sometimes females had to prove their worth as leaders. Their worth was recognised, for example, some of the principals who participated in the study were running secondary schools that have for example, eight hundred plus learners, yet they still managed to be successful against all odds. Data from the study indicate that “leadership cannot be compromised by socialising”, however, there were times when principals were socialising with teachers on personal levels which somewhat encourages interpersonal relationships. Moreover, female principals need to continue to cultivate appropriate and effective leadership in order to sustain the success they continue to enjoy. Female leaders need to establish themselves as role models to all they lead by gaining their trust and confidence.

Initiating networks with fellow principals of other schools is another way that principals afford support from fellow colleagues through mentorship.

The findings of the study maintained that the glass ceiling cannot determine the greatness and capability of female leaders. Female leaders in the study have demonstrated that they have the capacity to shatter the glass ceiling.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FEMALE PRINCIPALS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

1. How long have you been a principal in this school?
2. What do you think leadership is?
3. What is your role as a principal in a secondary school?
4. As a female, what is your greatest challenge in reference to the principalship?
5. What challenges do you experience as a principal in your school?
6. What leadership styles do you practice in your school and why?
7. How do you feel your staff perceive you and your leadership style?
8. How do you relate with your staff?
9. Do you have any mentors and support you experience as a woman principal?
10. As a female principal, what is your experience about discipline and how do you manage it?
11. Do you think your gender had any influence on your ability to get your current position?
12. To what extent do you consider yourself an active participant in student learning and their achievements?

## INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

### SCHOOL A

**\*LERETLHABETSE SECONDARY SCHOOL**

**PRINCIPAL: \*OLGA**

**DATE: 04 SEPTEMBER 2017**

**TIME OF THE INTERVIEW: 11H00**

**TIME SPENT: ONE HOUR**

**Interviewer:** What motivated you to become a school principal?

**Interviewee:** [*Laughing*]-what motivated me to become a principal? Mmm, the love, the love of being a teacher, yah, being amongst learners, working with learners, that's exactly what motivated me. Actually that's what motivated me to become a teacher but as you grow you also like to develop whatever you would be so, me becoming the principal it was the love that I had initially of becoming a teacher.

**Interviewer:** How long have you been a principal in this school?

**Interviewee:** Since 2010. This is the seventh year.

**Interviewer:** Your school has performed well in the last few years. As a result of this, would you consider your school as successful? In your opinion, what makes a school successful?

**Interviewee:** I can't say eh, we are a successful school; we are working towards being successful because we are still working very, very hard. We haven't attained the 100% pass rate, I think by that time we will then say we have reached our target point.

**Interviewer:** From your experience as a principal, what have you come to understand as 'leadership'?

**Interviewee:** Leadership is setting; it's eh, inspiring, trying to inspire people to fulfil your vision yah, eh, if I'm able to convince people to do and support me in whatever that I wish to have, that's what I call leadership.

**Interviewer:** What is your vision for your school? What are your personal values that influence your leadership?

**Interviewee:** The vision for the school, it's like I said, is performance, it is my dream that I could really see my school performing extremely well, getting 100% with good quality and that's my dream.

**Interviewer:** What do you think is your role as a female principal and not just a principal? In other words, what specific things do you actually do as a female principal that you believe male principals do not do?

**Interviewee:** [Sighing], a mother will always be a mother. You know, the love that a mother would have to a child will never be the same as the father would have to a child. So that's really what makes me or brings me out from other male principals. The love that I have for kids, I love these kids as if they are mine, yes and that really motivates me every day to come and work with them, yes.

**Interviewer:** As a female, do you experience any challenges as a principal? Please explain what your greatest challenge is.

**Interviewer:** We experience challenges on daily basis, yah, there will be challenges from all spheres of life, you face challenges from learners, eh, you experience challenges from educators, from the department, from the community. But, eh, to be very honest, I haven't yet come across a challenge that I was unable to overcome.

**Interviewer:** How would you describe your leadership style/ styles? Which of these styles do you use more often than the others and why?



**Interviewee:** I think I combine the two, eh, the democratic and the autocratic, yah, eh, consultative leadership style where I consult but there are some instances where I would really take the decision that I feel would really benefit the school. But most of the time I do consult with other members of the SMT, members of SGB. The decisions that I take it will be the ones that I feel it would take the school forward but other issues I don't do anything without consulting.

**Interviewer:** What do you think sustains your efforts in making your school successful?

**Interviewee:** The team work that we have and they say success breeds success, eh, every educator who comes to Leretlhabetse secondary school they come here knowing the history of

Lerethlabetse secondary, that it has been a performing school, so you cannot just come here and try to bring the school down. So there is this morale of working hard and the achievement it is the first priority. eh, prioritise the achievement of the learners, achievement of the school, it's key so we work towards getting us being having achieved something for the school, this is what makes us to work very, very hard.

**Interviewer:** How do you motivate your staff and learners? Do you think the manner in which they respond to you is influenced by your gender or your leadership style?

**Interviewee:** Not by my gender'. I think it is by my leadership style, like I said, the way I involve them in whatever they feel part of everything that happens in the school, so they take ownership and once you take ownership you become proud of what you do, you love what you do.

**Interviewer:** As a female leader, is there a difference in the manner that teachers and learners respond to you?

**Interviewee:** Yah, there is. There will be that motherly, you know, approach and eh you know when they come to me they know that they are coming to a mother, eh they expect me also to have that tenderness, yah, so maybe that's what makes me different from male leaders, that soft touch. They know I can be hard sometimes but there will always be the tenderness in me.

**Interviewer:** How do you feel your staff perceive your leadership style?

**Interviewee:** Setting an example, leading by example, eh showing your, you know, motivating and making educators to be very proud of themselves and also acknowledging them of the little efforts that they do, you know, really complements everything, yes.

**Interviewer:** How does your leadership style complement your performance and the performance of the learners?

**Interviewee:** Respect, eh respect for one another, me respecting teachers, respecting parents, you know, eh, respecting learners and also them respecting me, that's really what keep us, eh, performing and the relationship that we have among ourselves.

**Interviewer:** How do you relate with your staff and learners?

**Interviewee:** Very well, yes, we relate everything well, eh, there will, there are cases where they see me as a leader, where we deal with professional issues and I also relate to them on a social level where we sit and have tea together, eh, I always go with learners on camps, on educational tours, you know, where I try to come to almost their level so that they relate, they don't see me as that person that stay in the office every time.

**Interviewer:** How do you relate to the community you work in?

**Interviewee:** I should believe well, because they also respect me, they know, you know, it is very important that the community that you work around must see in you that the welfare of the institution is in you. They know that I love the school and as such they know that what I do I do it to benefit the school and they really respect me, they look at the results and they look at the environment here they could see that we are really trying our best.

Honestly speaking they never, you know, I started as a deputy principal, so they knew me before I became the principal which means I should think that they expected me, it was their wish to see me being the principal, yah, from all the things they saw me doing while I was a deputy. I never had any hostile attitude from, even from teachers because they saw me while I was still the deputy principal, to sat I would really qualify.

**Interviewer:** Please share with me in what way and to what extent parents are involved in the performance of their children at school?

**Interviewee:** Some parents are very much involved, to say, we have parents who would come to school to check on their kids' performance, eh, for instance. right now we have evening studies, there are some parents who come and supervise with teachers during the evening studies. We always have camps, eh, like right now we will be taking our learners to the October camps, the spring camps. There are parents who would come and spend the whole day with us just to see how we do things, how these learners respond and all those things. So, some of the parents are very, very positive, very, very supportive and even though there will be those ones whereby you call them for the PTLs they don't come but we always try to create that teacher-parent relationships.

**Interviewer:** To what extent do you consider yourself an active participant in the learning and the achievements of your learners? Please give examples of how you involve yourself in the learning of your students.

**Interviewee:** Eh, like I say, I plan, like right now I am the one who is responsible for eh, for the spring camp. I plan their spring camps. I make sure that I appoint relevant educators whom I encourage to come on Saturday classes. I always come here to supervise afternoon and Saturday classes. So I am really hands on in terms of learning and teaching of learners. I supervise their classes; I make sure that every single day there is no class without an educator.

**Interviewer:** What kind of personal and administrative support do you have, and from which sources?

**Interviewee:** Personal is from home, from my family. They support me like on days when I will be knocking off very late, they know that I am the leader and they really don't expect me to do some of the things from home. I really get great support from my family and other support I get it from the department, I get it from parents, I get it from educators, I get it from, you know, learners also, they also do support me in my achievements.

**Interviewer:** Please explain the role of mentors in your development as a school leader.

**Interviewee:** There is no one who was born a principal and there is no school for principalship. You grow and learn from other principals and then I call them my mentors. Yah, because I will be looking at one principal and there will be some good practices that I will definitely gain from him or her. So I honestly respect them because there are good, there are those that I consider my better than myself and then I will always learn from them. How do I consider someone to be better? If his school is effective, eh, eh, I will definitely consider that person better than myself. So I will always learn from other people, I travel a lot, I visit other schools, last year I went to \*Steinhoff Hoërskool. I learnt so many things from Steinhoff Hoërskool. This year I went to \*Saal Hoërskool. I learnt so much from \*Saal Hoërskool and when I come back I share it with other educators and we try to implement those that may be possible for us and that really helps us a lot in growing.

I also attend the SAPA (South African Principals' Association) where we would meet other principals from different spheres in South Africa. This year we are having a continental

conference where the principals from the whole of Africa will meet. I will be able to meet principals from Botswana, principals from all this other countries and we will share information about how best can we really upgrade our schools. Those people are my mentors and I learn so much from them.

**Interviewer:** As a female principal, how do you experience learner discipline? In other words, how do you find it to be and how do you manage it?

**Interviewee:** I am a straight talker. Eh, I don't compromise. If something is right, is right. If something is wrong, is wrong. I put down rule and I expect a rule to be followed. So my learners and my teachers know that there are things that I can accommodate and there are things that I don't accommodate. I follow the policy. If one doesn't do according to the policy, I apply what is expected. So that's how I handle discipline because I am really consistent in applying the policy.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **OBSERVATION PROTOCOL**

1. How the principal conduct herself in the presence of staff and other stakeholders

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2. How discipline is maintained during school hours

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3. Visibility of the principal in the school vicinity, if not visible, who is taking charge when the principal is not in school?

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4. The relationship of the principal with the parent component.

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## APPENDIX C

### DIARY RECORD SHEET FOR FEMALE PRINCIPALS LEADING SUCCESSFUL SECONDARY SCHOOLS

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

TIME: \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm

1. What were you doing? Record your main activity for each thirty minutes period from the time the researcher left the research site; distinguish between travel and the activity.

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2. What else were you doing? Please record how were you feeling, thinking at the time when you were performing those activities.

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3. Where were you? Please record the location (at school/workplace, home, at friend's place, in a restaurant) and the mode of transport you were using (in car, on foot, etc.).

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4. Were you alone or with somebody you know? Was it family or work related? (Please do not give names of people you were with, rather use pseudonyms).

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## APPENDIX D

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW AND OBSERVATION

Dear participant

My name is Louisa Motlhabane (082 512 9149). I am currently enrolled for a Doctoral degree in Educational Management at the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus.

You are kindly requested to participate in an observation and interview intended to collect data for a case study project entitled, "*Experiences of female principals as leaders of successful secondary schools in the North West province*".

The research is based on the experiences of female led successful secondary schools and how they sustain their success through their matric results and how other internal classes are performing.

The findings of this study will afford females who aspire to become principals in secondary schools the opportunity to gain an understanding of the approaches to leadership that may lead to successful leadership of schools.

You are assured that no harm or risk will come to you as a result of your participation. However, your involvement in this study is strictly voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time.

The interview will take place at a time and place convenient for you. It will be a face-to-face interview which will be recorded (with your permission).

Every effort will be taken to ensure that information collected from you remains confidential and that you and your school will remain anonymous throughout the study. A summary of the findings of the study will be provided to you if you so wish.

If you are willing to participate in this interview and observation, kindly give your consent by signing below.

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX E**

### **FRAMEWORK OF CODES**

#### **PRINCIPAL A**

#### **EMERGED CODES/CATEGORIES**

- Love of teaching
- Working with and being around learners
- 1 Inspirational leadership
  - 2 Motherhood approach-tenderness, soft touch
  - 3 Challenges from all stakeholders
  - 4 Democratic
  - 5 Autocratic
  - 6 Consultative
  - 7 Team work
  - 8 High morale of all stakeholders
  - 9 Ownership
  - 10 Motivating
  - 11 Leading by example
  - 12 Transferring leadership skills
  - 13 Respect
  - 14 Acknowledging teachers and learners
  - 15 Complementary
  - 16 Professional
  - 17 Visible within school environment
  - 18 Hands-on
  - 19 Welfare of school community at heart

- 20 Creating harmonious relationship
- 21 Displaying leadership qualities
- 22 Positive parental involvement
- 23 Going extra for the academic achievement of learners
- 24 Planning ahead
- 25 In-depth in-school monitoring
- 26 Support from all spheres of life
- 27 Benchmarking with performing schools
- 28 Uncompromising
- 29 Recruiting skills
- 30 Policy-driven
- 31 Strict
- 32 Transparent

**PRINCIPAL B**

**CODES/CATEGORIES**

- 33 Lack of confidence
- 34 Discipline
- 35 Minimal parental involvement
- 36 Going extra-mile
- 37 Focus on quality results
- 38 Priority on academic achievement
- 39 Non compromise
- 40 Sharing experience with other
- 41 In-school monitoring
- 42 Interpersonal relationship
- 43 Creating conducive environment

- 44 Teamwork
- 45 Laissez-faire leadership
- 46 Autocratic leadership
- 47 Instructional leader
- 48 Motherhood
- 49 Family type relationship
- 50 Professionalism displayed
- 51 Respect
- 52 Policy-driven
- 53 Guidance received from department
- 54 Alternative disciplinary measures displayed

**PRINCIPAL C**

**EMERGED CODES/CATEGORIES**

Curiosity

- 55 Making a mark
- 56 Implementation of policies
- 57 Culture of learning and teaching
- 58 Implementing learner and teacher discipline
- 59 Creating a friendly atmosphere
- 60 Collegiality
- 61 Parental involvement
- 62 Ownership of the system
- 63 Actively involved in curriculum issues
- 64 Actively involved in community issues
- 65 Diversity observed
- 66 Motherhood

- 67 Multi-tasking
- 68 Organisational skills
- 69 Prejudice
- 70 Democratic leadership
- 71 Autocratic leadership
- 72 Shared leadership
- 73 Willingness to work hard
- 74 Going extra-mile
- 75 Empowering
- 76 Motherhood
- 77 Empowering
- 78 Emotional, soft
- 79 Professionalism
- 80 Conflict manager
- 81 Uneasy relationship with community
- 82 Limited parental involvement
- 83 Leading by example
- 84 Hands-on
- 85 Overwhelming workload
- 86 Positive strategies for discipline
- 87 Implementation of policies
- 88 Politeness

**PRINCIPAL D**

**EMERGED CODES/CATEGORIES**

- 89 Appreciation from stakeholders
- 90 Potential to lead

- 91 Strong leadership
- 92 Responsibility of stakeholders to the school
- 93 Extra-curricular activities
- 94 Availability of learner teacher support materials (LTSM)
- 95 Situational leadership
- 96 Democratic leadership
- 97 Knowing your staff and learners
- 98 Tolerance
- 99 Feminine
- 100 Fearful
- 101 Strategic on keeping same teachers
- 102 Respectful
- 103 Harmonious relationship
- 104 Professionalism
- 105 Strict
- 106 Motherhood
- 107 Nurturer
- 108 Mentor
- 109 Motivator
- 110 Active parental involvement
- 111 Courageous
- 112 Disciplinarian
- 113 Being accountable

**APPENDIX F**



**Education and Sport Development**  
Department of Education and Sport Development  
Departement van Onderwys en Sport Ontwikkeling  
Lefapha la Thuto le Tihabololo ya Metsameko  
**NORTH WEST PROVINCE**

Matike  
Private Bag X1  
Mmabatho 27  
Tel.: (018) 388-1954 / 33  
Fax: 086 513 9881 / (018) 381-82  
e-mail: bmonale@nwpg.gov.  
e-mail: omolete@nwpg.gov.za (Off. Ma

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## NGAKA MODIRI MOLEMA DISTRICT

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Enquiries S.O. Molete  
Telephone 018 - 388 - 3383

To : Sub District Managers  
Circuit Managers  
School Managers

From : Mr B.E. Monale  
District Director

Date : 08 August 2017

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN 04 SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE DISTRICT

Permission is hereby granted to **Mrs L.K. Mothabane, Student No.: 16396901**, who is a PhD Student at North West University – Mahikeng Campus to conduct a research on ***“Experiences of female Principals as leaders of successful Secondary Schools in the North West Province”***.

School Managers are herewith requested to provide her with support during the research process.

Permission is granted on the basis that prior arrangement is made with School Managers to avoid disruption of learning and teaching.

Your cooperation and support in this regard is highly appreciated

Yours in education,

Mr B.E. Monale  
District Director

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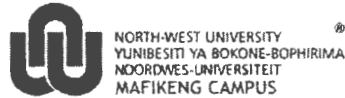
“Towards Excellence in Education and Sport Development”



**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH LETTER**

## APPENDIX G

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



Private Bag X2046, Mmabatho  
South Africa 2735

Tel: 018 389-2111  
Fax: 018 392-5775  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Education Leadership Development  
Tel: 018 3892500 (Secretary)  
Email: [eliza\\_senne@nwu.ac.za](mailto:eliza_senne@nwu.ac.za)

The District Director

08 August 2017

Dear Sir

#### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This is to confirm that **Mrs L.K Motihabane (Student No: 16396901)** is a PhD student registered at the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus. The title of the dissertation is: Experiences of female principals as leaders of successful secondary schools in the North West Province

Permission is hereby kindly requested to enter Mmakgaje Secondary School (Ramotshere Moolwa Area Office), Mmabatho High School (Mahikeng Area Office), Sol Plaatje Secondary School (Mahikeng Area Office), and St Mary's Secondary School, (Mahikeng Area Office) in Ngaka Modiri Molema District to collect data from the principals. Data collection will be by way of interviews and observations.

Collection of data will occur during school contact time but will not interfere with teaching and assessment processes or office duties. The dates and times of the collections are to be agreed upon by the principal and all other participants.

Participants will participate voluntarily in the data collection. The identity of the participants and the school and district will be kept anonymous. The information collected therefore cannot and will not be used to evaluate the district/school in terms of its performance in comparison with others, because the information collected will not be about academic results or teachers' teaching performance in specific schools.

Should you enquire more information about the project, kindly contact the supervisor for this project Professor C.B Zulu (082 680 0057).

Herewith permission is kindly requested to perform this research in your district. It would be appreciated if you would kindly grant permission to this student. Any assistance given to the student to perform the research will be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

**Director: School for Education Leadership Development (School in which the Masters and PhD programme is registered)**

**Mafikeng Campus**