PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES REGARDING THEIR ROLE AS LEADERS OF CURRICULUM REFORM IN LESOTHO

by

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DECLARATION

I, **Moeketsi David Ralebese**, declare that this study titled *'Principals' perspectives regarding their role as leaders of curriculum reform in Lesotho'* is my own work. It has not been submitted previously for an award of academic degree or examination at any other university. The sources quoted are acknowledged by means of reference and failure to acknowledge is inadvertent. Furthermore, I took reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and, to the best of my knowledge, does not breach copyright law, and has not been taken from other sources except where such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text. Furthermore, I cede the copyright of this study in favour of the University of the Free State.

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To my parents: 'M'e 'Mants'iuoa and Ntate Polao Ralebese

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me to pursue this challenging, exciting, and fruitful journey; honour to you!

ABSTRACT

The present study explores the perspectives of principals regarding their roles and responsibilities in the implementation and leadership of the new integrated curriculum at primary level within the context of Lesotho. This country is currently in the process of implementing a new primary school curriculum. However, it is no secret that many of the principals who lead these reforms have minimal or no prior training in educational leadership, yet their role is crucial for reform implementation. The sense-making theory was used to shed light on how principals interpret and understand their roles and responsibilities as leaders of curriculum reform. Using the concurrent mixed methods design, a questionnaire collected quantitative data from 83 principals on their beliefs, views and understandings regarding their roles. Semi-structured interviews with six principals were conducted to gather qualitative data regarding the challenges and opportunities they encounter in their role. The SAS program was used to generate descriptive statistics. The interview data was deductively analysed based on three main a priori codes. The two datasets were then merged to establish convergence and/or divergence. The participants for this study were primary school principals. They were purposively drawn from Maseru, Lesotho to provide rich data because they currently lead the implementation of curriculum reform at this school level. The main findings indicate that principals in this study have positive views regarding their leadership of the new curriculum. However, inadequate in-service training and insufficient knowledge/information on the new curriculum compromise their leadership. As a result, contrary to the sense-making theory adopted in this study, it is the sense-making of teachers that drives the implementation of the new curriculum. In spite of this, principals rely on subtle strategies, such as collaboration and teamwork, to execute their role. Therefore, this study recommends an in-depth in-service program for principals to equip them with curriculum knowledge/information and change management skills. This study is intended to provide valuable insights on how principals view and make sense of their new roles during curriculum reform. It will shed light on challenges and opportunities that principals currently face. It will offer an opportunity for the principals to reflect on their work for possible growth.

Key words: principal, perspectives, curriculum, reform, leadership, in-service.

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NC- New Curriculum

MoET- Ministry of Education and Training

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The role of the principal in a school has been subjected to scrutiny and reframing over the past three decades (Hallinger & Lee, 2013). The scrutiny has led to the reconceptualisation of the principalship. The new role attached to principalship represented a move away from the traditional concept of the principal's position. Initially, principals were synonymous with managers. Their main task was to ensure that schools ran smoothly and adhere to the district and state regulations (Lunenburg, 2013; Hallinger, 2005).

However, this view has since been reframed in response to the advances in education brought about by continuous standard-based reforms (Fullan, 2009; Lin, 2012; Hallinger & Huber, 2012). The reframed role requires principals to become instructional leaders in order to improve students' levels of attainment (Hallinger, 2005). In times of reform, principals are expected to oversee the successful implementation of such reforms (Squires, 2015). In short, they are tasked with improving the overall effectiveness of schools (Hallinger & Lee, 2013). However, principals' views about their new role have largely been ignored in conventional literature (Werts & Brewer, 2015).

The current study investigates the perspectives of principals on their roles during the implementation of the new primary school curriculum in Lesotho. This chapter specifically gives an outline of the whole research project.

1.2 Background of the study

Lesotho, through its Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), developed the New Curriculum and Assessment Policy in 2009. The development of this policy led to the implementation of the New Curriculum and Assessment Syllabus (commonly known as the New Curriculum) countrywide in 2013. As highlighted earlier, the implementation of an educational reform policy has implications for agents at the school level.

Firstly, Lesotho's education was criticised as being irrelevant to the needs of the country (Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 1982). Secondly, the high stakes examinations were regarded as having a negative influence on teaching and learning (Lephoto, 2005). These factors provided an impetus for curriculum reform. However, it should be noted that several educational reforms have previously been attempted in Lesotho with little success (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015). As a result, researchers agree that the curriculum reform landscape in Lesotho is typified by continuities but not discontinuities (Mosisili, 1981; Nketekete & Motebang, 2008).

It was only after independence in 1966 that the general feeling from Basotho arose that the British education system was irrelevant to the economic and developmental needs of the country. Subsequently, several attempts to reform education were started. The first reform initiative was started in 1978. National dialogue on education was held, where the ordinary Basotho voiced their concerns about education and its future direction. The main aims of this reform, 'education with production' and 'training for self-reliance', were aligned with the economic needs of Lesotho. This reform largely failed due to strong resistance from the churches who were the proprietors of the schools (Ts'ephe 2004; Muzvidziwa & Seotsanyana, 2002).

In 1988, the government solicited donor support for yet another reform initiative. The government wanted to gain control of education and implement policies that would make education responsive to the needs of the country. This reform attempt also failed due to strong opposition from the churches. The churches interpreted the changes as the government's way of undermining their authority (Muzvidziwa & Seotsanyana, 2002).

In 2000, the government implemented the Free Primary Education (FPE) policy amid strong opposition from churches and opposition parties who questioned its sustainability (Lephoto 2005; Muzvidziwa & Seotsanyana, 2002). Even though the aim of the FPE was to increase access to basic education, this policy did not change the nature of Lesotho's education. It was apparent that the longstanding desire to make Lesotho's education relevant was far from reality (Lika, 2005).

The 2009 policy framework is the most radical educational reform in Lesotho. With the New Curriculum and Assessment Policy, the government sought to align education with the needs of the country. The aim is to make education "*accessible, relevant, efficient and of the best quality.*" Hence, this policy is geared towards individual and social development. To achieve this, the policy advocates for (a) a high correlation between curriculum and assessment; (b) juxtaposing curriculum aspects and learning areas to identify core competences; and (c) emphasising an integrated curriculum approach (MoET, 2009).

To effect the changes that the policy stipulates in the classroom requires a radical shift in pedagogy. By moving from traditional teaching approaches, the policy advocates for teaching methods that "*develop creativity, independence and the survival skills of learners*" (MoET, 2009, p. 18). While the policy implications are explicit for teachers' classroom practice, the policy also has implicit implications for school principals. The principals have to lead, facilitate, monitor and manage the implementation process to ensure that the envisaged changes actually take root in the classroom.

Research studies into school leadership revealed that the principalship is an important component for the success of schools (Hallinger, 2005; Lynch, 2012). Some studies linked principals' performance with students' achievements by claiming that, among all the school variables that have a positive impact on the achievements of students, principals' leadership ranked second, only after classroom instruction (Spillane & Hunt, 2010; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2013).

These studies highlighted that principals are able to have an impact on students' achievements when they act as instructional leaders (Lai, 2015). Although instructional leaders positively influence students' achievement, their impact is mostly exerted indirectly (Lin, 2012). Studies suggest that principals, who are instructional leaders, work within certain frameworks to manipulate other school variables skilfully to achieve improved student achievement levels (Hallinger, 2010; Dematthews, 2014).

Various researchers have developed frameworks on instructional leadership (Hallinger & Lee, 2013). The primary aim of those frameworks is to describe behaviours and actions that characterise leadership, which improves teaching and learning. The most prominent models were developed by researchers such as Hallinger and Murphy (1987), Hussein (1997) and Krug (1992). When considered separately, their frameworks are different. This observation implies that there is no consensus of exactly which behaviours principals should demonstrate if they adopt the instructional leadership role (Louis et al., 2010). To counter this observable flaw, a combination of frameworks would seem plausible. Hence, Sim (2011) adapted and adopted the domains that were identified in various frameworks and developed a framework that has seven domains. Sim (2011) claims that principals who use the seven domains would positively, but indirectly, influence students' academic performance.

On the other hand, Spillane (2005) offer an alternative route to understanding and exploring leadership. He proposes that leadership is a social phenomenon and therefore the best way to understand leadership is by considering it from a distributed viewpoint. He further stresses that this leadership practice is spread over leaders, followers and their specific contexts. Moreover, he also argues that the distributed perspective provides a more detailed approach to leadership practice as opposed to the single dimension that an instructional leadership perspective offers. The criticism on instructional leadership is that it is concerned with the classroom only and overlooks other aspects within the school that have potential to influence learning (Bush, 2015).

Principals are often neglected in the formulation of reform initiatives (Wallace Foundation, 2009) yet implementation studies recognised that the principal is central to reform implementation at school level (Kasprzhak, Filinov, Bayburin, Isaeva & Bysik 2015; Lai, 2015; Botha, 2013). The irony is that principals are expected to be leaders of those very changes. When the changes are fundamental, it is difficult to focus and sustain the effort to make the reform effective (Fullan, 2009). It can be argued that principals are therefore experiencing the worst of both worlds – running schools smoothly and changing schools into learning organisations.

Another irony is that, as expectations on principals heighten, their roles become overloaded to the extent that it makes it difficult to lead the proposed reforms (Lynch, 2012) and efforts to prepare and develop them are inconsistent and ineffective (Moorosi & Bush, 2011. The main reason for this is that principals are given new responsibilities on top of their already established tasks. This is done often without checking whether that the new role is feasible under the same working conditions (Fullan, 2009).

Moreover, the lack of preparation compounds the role of principals. Research has established that principal preparation has received adequate attention in developed countries but worse in many developing world countries, where principals frequently assume the role without prior preparation (Moorosi & Bush, 2011; Bush & Oduro, 2006). Even after assuming the role, there is no guarantee that principals will get in-service training or support (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011). Both pre-service and in-service training is needed to equip principals with management and leadership knowledge, as well as skills (Bush, 2009) to enable them to cope in their new role.

In light of new roles being added to old responsibilities, the expectation to lead reforms and a lack of preparation imply that principals are likely to encounter problems in executing their work (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011). Among their problems are stress and a lack of time to supervise teaching and learning (Fullan, 2009). Moreover, principals are victims of negative perceptions. For instance, because principals lack leadership training, teachers do not usually perceive principals as instructional leaders (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), and neither do principals conceptualise themselves as such (Sim, 2011). This study therefore seeks to understand the reality of the principal's role from the point of view of the incumbents as the starting point, and how they make meaning of and understand state-mandated reforms and policy initiatives.

1.3 Problem statement

How do Lesotho primary school principals view their role as curriculum leaders when implementing the new curriculum? In the midst of curriculum reform, the role of the principal gets redefined as an instructional leader rather than a school manager (Lunenburg, 2013). Principals are also expected to act as agents of envisaged and

mandated change by supervising curriculum change (Dematthews, 2014). Researchers claim that the reframed roles need specialised skills and knowledge because a principal's effectiveness is linked to learner achievement (Hallinger, 2005; Lynch, 2012). Research also suggests that the principal's role is critical for the implementation of reform policies at school level (Lai, 2015; Wallace Foundation, 2013; Lynch, 2012).

In the rest of Africa, as much as in Lesotho, principals often occupy this new and unfamiliar role with minimal or no preparation (Bush & Oduro, 2006). But with heightened expectations on principalship, their perspectives and challenges remain unknown. It is therefore imperative to investigate their views, especially during curriculum reform, to understand how they make sense of their roles, and possibly uncover the challenges they encounter in leading curriculum change.

1.4 Purpose of the study and research questions

This study primarily aims to investigate Lesotho primary school principals' perspectives regarding their roles during the implementation of the new curriculum and their implications for practice in their schools. The questions of this study follow:

1.4.1 Main question

What are the perspectives of primary school principals in Lesotho regarding their roles and responsibilities in the implementation and leadership of the new integrated primary school curriculum?

1.4.2 Secondary questions

1   What are the principals' views and understandings of their role in the implementation and leadership of the new integrated primary school curriculum?
2   What challenges and opportunities do principals encounter in fulfilling their role as described above?
3   How can the principals' views, challenges and opportunities be understood and/or explained?

1.5 Study objectives

The main objective of this study is to explore the perspectives of Lesotho primary school principals regarding their roles and responsibilities in the implementation and leadership of the new integrated primary school curriculum.

To achieve the above objective, the following subordinate objectives evolved:

1. To investigate principals' views and understandings of their roles in the implementation and leadership of the integrated curriculum in Lesotho.
2. To explore challenges and opportunities that principals encounter in fulfilling their roles.
3. To explain the perspectives, challenges and opportunities of the principals with respect to their roles in curriculum implementation and leadership thereof.

1.6 Significance of the study

In the context of Lesotho, not much is known on how principals in primary schools make sense of the new curriculum and mandated policy directives. This is worth investigating, especially in contexts where they often assume the new role with minimal preparation (Moorosi & Bush, 2011), yet their role is critical for the successful implementation of curriculum reform (Wallace Foundation, 2013).

This research sought to provide valuable insights into how principals view and make sense of their new roles during curriculum reform. It describes principals' views about leading curriculum reform and sheds light on challenges that curriculum leaders face. By uncovering principals' views and challenges, principals were offered the opportunity to reflect on their own practice. Moreover, this study will assist policymakers to design preparation and development programmes to equip principals with the skills and knowledge to lead teaching and learning effectively, as well as manage change. Finally, this study sought to add to the literature on school leadership in Lesotho.

1.7 Limitations of prior studies

Many studies tend to focus on the 'what' of leadership, while several others explore the 'how' of leadership. Hallinger and Huber (2012) observe that most studies are

either prescriptive or descriptive of instructional leadership. They claim that the prescriptive studies focus on stating what principals need to do to be successful, while, on the other hand, descriptive studies focus on key problems or concerns facing principals.

While these studies provide important information on principals' leadership, their obvious limitation is that they fail to explore leadership from the principals' perspectives (especially in a time of reform). Werts and Brewer (2015) strengthen this claim by stressing that many studies on policy implementation fail to 'invest in the richness of the local world'.

Another limitation of prior studies is that they only conceptualise the principals' leadership in terms of principals' actions and behaviours. These studies obviously fail to consider the perspectives of principals in order to capture their thoughts about their roles (especially when implementing curriculum reform). Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004) point out that studies on leadership have failed to consider the ways in which leaders think about their work. These overlooked areas are what Hallinger and Heck (1996) call 'blind spots'.

The Wallace Foundation (2013) noted that, about a decade ago, the majority of school reform initiatives conspicuously failed to regard school leadership as an important aspect. Of late though, many school reform agendas are beginning to consider improved school leadership to be a top priority. Lin (2012) concurs with Lai (2015) that, for any educational reform to succeed, the principal needs to play an important part. While leadership is regarded as a key component for the success of reform in developed countries, for developing countries like Lesotho, school leadership continues to receive scant attention from policy makers, researchers and reformers initiatives (Moorosi & Bush, 2011).

Studies in Lesotho about principals only venture into the roles of principals as instructional leaders and how they use distributed leadership (Sefeane, 2013; Mokoqo, 2013). Studies that focus on the perspectives of principals on their role in the advent of curriculum reform are limited. This means that literature on school leadership in Lesotho has little on the perspectives of principals about their role in implementing curriculum reform.

Essentially, this study investigates school leadership from a view that '*other voices need to be heard*' (Botha, 2013, p. 441), because how leadership is affected by change remains an underexplored area in Lesotho, and only principals can reveal that information.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This study was be informed by the ideas of Coburn (2005) and Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (2002) on the sense-making theory. Sense-making refers to a process whereby people construct meaning by relating new information to their prior knowledge in order to be able to act on it (Schechter, Shaked, Ganon-Shilon, & Goldratt, 2016). Sense-making suggests that principals use their prior knowledge and experiences to interpret and enact their own meaning of reform (Coburn, 2005; Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002). As a result, principals may construct meanings that either reinforce their pre-existing practices or focus on superficial changes of the proposed reform (Coburn, Hill & Spillane, 2016).

1.8.1 Principal as a sense maker

Sense-making involves using prior knowledge to construct meaning of new ideas (Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002). Prior knowledge, beliefs and understandings of individual agents influence their ability to interpret new ideas. As a result, the principals' interpretations of reform are often different from those of policymakers. Also, prior knowledge influences principals to encode new information by adapting it to what is already known. This causes the misunderstanding of new ideas as familiar, thereby hindering the envisioned change. According to the aforesaid authors, principals also tend to put their attention on reform features that are superficial, and which often fail to recognise embedded principles due to their lack of expertise in the type of change expected (Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002).

Coburn (2006) argues that local implementers also act as policy makers because the decisions they make on the state policies determine how those policies ultimately play out in practice. This implies that interpretations made by the principals and teachers often determine the direction of policy implementation. Because of their position in the school governance hierarchy, principals have the authority to define and interpret the district policy for their staff (Coburn, 2005). Therefore, principals'

understanding of policy influences the teachers' sense-making process because principals may direct the teachers' attention towards certain aspects of the policy that they consider more important than others. In this way, principals provide an interpretive structure within which teachers adopt and construct their understandings of the policy (Coburn, 2005).

Sense-making theory is used in the selection of data collection methods and data analysis. Both the questionnaire and the interviews allowed principals to give their views and understandings about their roles during the implementation of curriculum reform. These methods generated rich, explanatory results that illuminated how principals understand their roles and responsibilities when implementing the new curriculum.

1.9 Design and Methodology

Research design is the plan of how the collection of data and its analysis will be made to determine the answers for the research questions (Babbie, 2010; Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Research methodology is an outline of the methods, techniques and procedures used to implement the research plan (Babbie, 2010). By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, this study explored principals' views on their roles during the implementation of the new curriculum. The summary of the research approach, data collection methods, procedures and techniques is discussed in the sections below.

1.9.1 Concurrent mixed methods design

A concurrent mixed methods design was adopted to collect and analyse relevant data for this study. Owing to the paradigm and the theoretical framework (pragmatism and sense-making theory), as well as the research questions of this study, this design was considered suitable because it allowed for the exploration of different dimensions of principals' perspectives (Creswell, 2014).

This design involves the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative datasets concurrently. This means that the data collection and analysis are done independently, but at the same time. Subsequently, the results are integrated and compared during the interpretation phase to establish whether there is convergence

or divergence. Equal priority is given to both types of data so that they both play an important role in addressing the research questions (Creswell, 2014).

The key intention of this design is to yield comprehensive research results by utilising different types of data. Therefore, in order to understand principals' perspectives best, I deemed it necessary to collect both survey data and interview data at the same time using parallel variables (Maree, 2011).

1.9.2 Data collection

Sense-making theory acknowledges the manner in which agents understand new information (Coburn, 2006; Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002). As a result, in this study, sense-making influenced the researcher's choice of the following data collection and analysis methods in order to explore principals' perspectives:

1.9.2.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used to gather data in order to answer the first research question (what are the principals' views of their role during the implementation of the new integrated primary school curriculum?). Therefore, a questionnaire was designed to collect data on principals' views and beliefs about their role as leaders of curriculum reform. To capture this data, the questionnaire comprised closed-ended questions. This questionnaire was distributed to primary school principals in Maseru, Lesotho.

1.9.2.2 Individual interviews

Concurrently, semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals. The intention of this qualitative strand was to collect in-depth data regarding the principals' views and understandings on their roles and responsibilities as well as the challenges and opportunities that principals encounter in their leadership of curriculum reform.

The researcher was particularly interested in conversations in which principals make sense of their authentic experiences with reform, and therefore, interviews were considered the best strategy.

1.9.3 Sampling

Participants were selected using a random purposeful sampling technique. According to Teddlie and Yu (2007), this technique combines probability and purposeful strategies to select a smaller sample from a large target population. Sandelowski (2000) adds to this by indicating that the aim of this technique is to select information-rich cases.

The main intention of this study was to investigate perspectives of primary school principals on their roles during the implementation of curriculum reform. Therefore, only primary school principals were considered. The principals were selected from the Maseru district in Lesotho. Maseru was chosen for convenience, as the researcher is based in this district. Only principals who expressed willingness to participate in this study were selected. Anyone who expressed interest was considered for recruitment, while those who expressed reservations were excluded.

Based on the objective of this study – exploring principals' perspectives – quantitative data was collected using questionnaires, from 83 primary school principals. The questionnaires consisted of mainly close-ended items on a Likert scale. Participants anonymously gave their views about their roles in the implementation of the integrated curriculum.

Concurrently, six principals were purposefully selected for interviews. The main purpose of the interviews was to elicit in-depth data about the principals' views and understandings on their roles and responsibilities as well as the challenges and opportunities that they encounter in their roles. Interviews provided first-hand data that were otherwise not possible to obtain.

1.9.4 Data analysis

The researcher made sense of collected data by conducting a data analysis process (Babbie, 2010). The quantitative data analysis stage involved using descriptive statistics to compute the scores on the principals' views and understandings.

The interview data was transcribed, and then the researcher read through the transcripts to get a sense of the data. The transcribed data was coded and

categorised into a priori themes.

1.10 Ethical Considerations

Participants were not forced to take part in this study as they participated on a voluntary basis (Strydom, 2007). Permission was first obtained from the relevant authorities, the Ministry of Education and Training district office and selected school principals, before the research was undertaken. The informed consent of the participants and respondents was ensured, and an explanation was given to them about how the information would be used.

Pseudonyms are used for the school and principals when reporting the findings to maintain confidentiality (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Emotional issues were addressed with sensitivity and empathy. The principals were allowed to pull out of the study at any time if they chose to do so (Sullivan, 2001; Shenton, 2004).

1.11 Validity

The following strategies were used to ensure that the qualitative data was trustworthy: member checks, iterative questioning, debriefing sessions and auditing (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). On the other hand, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to ensure that the questionnaire was a reliable instrument for the study.

1.12 Limitations of the study

The following factors constrained this study:

- The quantitative data in this study was derived from principals self-reports about their views regarding their leadership of the new curriculum. In this regard, McDonald (2008) warns that caution should be exercised when interpreting such data due to the fact that people often respond in a way that present them in a more favourable light.

- Due to a small sample used in this study, the findings should be treated as illustrative but not representative.

Mitigation

- The relevant international literature, as well as Southern African literature, was reviewed to corroborate the findings of the study.

- The questionnaire data was triangulated with the interview data to maximise the validity of the findings.

1.13 Research outlay

This research has five chapters:

Chapter 1 – This chapter provides an overview of the study, including the research aims, research problem and brief discussions of methodology and the theoretical framework of the study. It also discusses the ethical considerations followed.

Chapter 2 – This chapter contains discussions on relevant literature. Important themes include instructional and curriculum leadership, principal preparation, reform leadership, an overview of the New Curriculum and the theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter 3 – This chapter presents the methodology of the study. It explains the concurrent mixed method design, data collection and analysis procedures followed in this study.

Chapter 4 – This chapter presents the findings from the qualitative and quantitative datasets.

Chapter 5 – This chapter provides the discussion of findings, conclusions and the recommendations drawn from the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review literature on the role of the principal in the school, especially during the implementation of educational reforms. Firstly, I reviewed literature to show the importance of principals as leaders of schools. Subsequently, through the literature review, I situated principalship in curriculum reform. This is mainly because principals act as agents of change during the implementation of reforms. Principal preparation also forms part of the literature review, and I demonstrate the importance of preparing principals before they occupy headship or lead reforms. I have used the literature to shed light on the challenges that research has associated with principals' leadership. Finally, I explain the sense-making theory, which forms the framework for the current study.

2.2 School leadership

School leadership is primarily concerned with directing the behaviour of school personnel or a group of individuals towards a certain goal or vision. This can be achieved by influencing and motivating others (Botha, 2013). Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom and Anderson (2010) clarify principals' leadership further by indicating that it is about providing direction and exercising influence on school personnel.

The principal is the school leader who is accountable for the general administration, as well as the management of school affairs. Louis et al. (2010) stressed that the principal is uniquely positioned to ensure that the necessary synergy exists between all the school variables in order to improve students' learning. Lin (2012) affirms the central importance of the principal by reiterating that the principal is situated at the heart of the communication network in the institution. Therefore, the principal is the key variable in the school to promote an environment conducive to teaching and learning.

Furthermore, leadership is concerned with providing direction and exercising influence (Botha, 2013). This is where the principal's main task is to establish worthwhile goals and agreed-upon directions for the school and to encourage the teachers and students to move in those directions (Louis et al., 2010). Fullan and

Langworthy (2013) also stress that leadership should be conceptualised as an act of mutual influence, while the Wallace Foundation (2009) notes that the principal is the fundamental source of influence in the school.

2.3 The refined role of principal

Traditionally, principals were viewed as school managers whose core responsibilities included the smooth running of their schools. They were regarded as the sole leaders in whom all authority and decision-making powers were vested (Lunenburg, 2013; Hallinger, 2005). However, Hallinger and Lee (2013) point out that the position of the principal has been subjected to scrutiny and debate for the last three decades.

Developments in education, through reforms, have aimed to improve the achievements of students and the overall effectiveness of schools (Fullan, 2009; Lin, 2012; Hallinger & Huber, 2012). In addition, research forays into different school components were started, and the principal's role came to the fore (Fullan & Langworthy, 2013; Hallinger & Lee, 2013). Various studies acknowledged and emphasised the vital role played by principals in improving the academic performance of their students (Lai, 2015; Louis et al., 2010; Dempster, 2012). For instance, with the implementation of reforms, some schools in America were unable to turn around poor students' achievements, while others managed to improve them dramatically. Among other school factors that were found to improve students' achievements was the critical role played by the 'effective principal' (Hallinger & Lee, 2013; Krug, 1992).

These studies also illuminated the fact that educational reforms compounded the role of the principal. Thus, on top of managing schools, principals became mediators between policy makers and teachers. Essentially, principals are expected to advocate for reforms, manage change, facilitate pedagogical changes demanded by reforms, and monitor the implementation of reforms as envisaged by policy makers (Hallinger & Lee, 2013). What makes their role even more difficult is the fact that the reforms are mostly imposed on schools where the principals are not consulted or included in the formulation of such policies. Fullan (2009) affirms that reform efforts fail because principals are expected to carry out roles that are centrally determined.

Research also reveals that the compounded role of the principals makes it virtually impossible for them to fulfil the task (Fullan, 2009). Lack of resources, support, time, training and resistance from teachers are among the many variables that hinder principals from attaining and effecting changes as mandated by policy makers (Sim, 2011). Principalship is therefore characterised by stress, lack of personal time, constant pressure and overload (Fullan, 2009; Sim, 2011; Dempster, 2012; Lin, 2012).

According to Kasprzhak et al. (2015), principals are currently experiencing a paradigm shift concerning their position. Educational reforms compel principals to act differently compared to the behaviours they previously exhibited. Educational changes or reforms seek fundamental changes within the classroom and primarily aim to improve students' achievements. These changes thus pressurise principals to work as leaders of the mandated reforms.

Moreover, in times of reform, principals act as agents of change. They lead, guide, as well as monitor the implementation of envisaged pedagogical changes. Therefore, to carry out these tasks effectively, Mestry (2013) argues that principals, as leaders of instruction, should possess the necessary skills, the capacity and the commitment to lead an effective school.

2.4 Curriculum leadership

Most of the literature on school leadership indicates that the principal is a pedagogical leader in the school (Ylimaki, 2012). This literature posits that principals have the potential to influence teachers to improve teaching and increase students' achievements (Blase & Blase, 1999; Quinn, 2002). Leading the teaching and learning processes is the key responsibility of principals in schools and the principal is, therefore, the primary leader of the teaching-learning facet and ought to be at the heart of leadership endeavours (Mestry, 2013).

However, the role of the principal extends beyond teaching and learning to include the socio-cultural and political aspects of the school (Ylimaki, 2012). In this study, the principals are conceptualised as curriculum leaders. Curriculum leadership is an overarching role for the principal, which implies that the principal is responsible for the overall functioning of the school. It encompasses the organisational leadership

of the principal. It also means that all facets of the school, which contribute to the educational endeavours of the teachers and the educational experiences of the students, are the ultimate responsibility of the principal.

It is noteworthy that management is a critical component of this leadership. It can also be argued that management is worthy. But for a principal, who aims to improve teaching and learning, management is more salient.

Some scholars have underscored the importance of blending leadership with management. For instance, Lunenburg and Lunenburg (2013) are optimistic that management is a prerequisite to leadership. Essentially, principals manage the everyday operations of their schools. Dematthews (2014) emphasises that curriculum leadership is both managerial and administrative and that principals play a pivotal role in coordinating all school activities to support teaching and learning.

Presenting the same argument, Lunenburg and Lunenburg (2013) emphasise that principals who have the necessary management skills lead effective schools. Almost simultaneously, and on a daily basis, the managerial tasks of the principals seek to produce stability (a viable system) while their leadership tasks promote change. This implies that principals' efforts to change and their efforts to maintain viable organisational arrangements are blended in their daily activities (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004).

The goal for school leadership is to facilitate students' learning. Therefore, principals' main tasks, as curriculum leaders, should focus on supervising and monitoring teaching and learning, developing learning goals and building a school culture that focuses on the continual improvement of teaching and learning (Lynch, 2012).

The above tasks are essentially encompassed in curriculum leadership. According to Dematthews (2014), curriculum leadership is concerned with devising an innovative system that aligns teaching with learning and assessment to meet the newly revised standards.

From the above discussion, it can be argued that principalship can be reconceptualised as curriculum leadership, amongst other activities. In conclusion,

principals should therefore be knowledgeable about curriculums in order to implement the curriculum as envisaged successfully.

2.5 The principal and curriculum reform

Policymakers in education are in constant pursuit of an effective reform blueprint (Gawlik, 2015) and, for the past two decades, governments all over the world have been pre-occupied with devising educational reforms that would transform schools to make them more beneficial (Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2017; Young & Lewis, 2015). In most cases, these large-scale reforms have become a common feature in many education systems (Robinson & Aronica, 2015).

Curriculum reform can follow a top-down or bottom-up approach. In the latter, policymakers engage with the implementers, and collaboratively come up with policies for the reform initiative (Honig, 2004). The advantage of having a bottom-up approach to reform is that it endows the implementers with a sense of connectedness and ownership of the reform, which eases implementation (Seashore Louis & Robinson, 2012). However, policymakers seemingly prefer the traditional top-down reforms, whereby the implementers need to find ways to make sense of or interpret the policymakers' intentions, and the main drawback is that this approach to reform creates tension between the implementers' experience and reform expectations, which compromise the implementation of the envisaged reform (Kaniuka, 2012; Seashore Louis & Robinson, 2012).

The effectiveness and importance of leadership in schools cannot be overemphasised. For Bush (2009), effective leadership is vital for successful schooling. Lin (2012) goes further by situating leadership in reform initiatives. Lin indicates that the principal's leadership is a crucial element for the successful implementation of educational change initiatives. Hourani and Stringer (2015) reiterate that the success of any school reform depends largely on the sound and skilled leadership skills of the principal.

Principals are regarded as the key players in the implementation of educational changes. Thus, it is important to recognise that how principals act in response to educational change can either reinforce or inhibit the envisaged change (Lai, 2015).

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The principals' role in the implementation of reforms can be contentious and open to different interpretations and enactments (Jorgensen, 2016). It then becomes essential to note that successful curriculum reform depends on how leadership practice is undertaken and how principals adapt their styles to the needs of the new curriculum. Botha (2013) says, in this regard, that principals' approach to leadership is dependent on their epistemological beliefs.

On the same note, Krug (1992), who used a constructive perspective to leadership, indicated that the belief systems of principals lead them to interpret activities differently hence they act differently. Krug, therefore, concluded that the effectiveness of leadership is easily discerned in how a specific leader construes events.

Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (2002) add a sense-making perspective to the implementation of policies by principals. They argue that, when confronted by reform policies, principals, as sense-makers, first discern the meaning of the policy themselves. This allows them to make decisions in order to ignore, adapt or adopt the policy locally.

During curriculum reform, this dual role becomes critically important as principals undertake strategic planning to supervise curriculum change (Lynch, 2012). Principals enact this dual role by monitoring teaching and learning, and by focusing on ways to continually improve teaching and learning (Grissom & Loeb, 2011) to ensure that all efforts align with envisaged standards.

As stated above, effective schools have principals who exhibit strong curriculum, as well as instructional leadership (Lunenburg & Lunenburg, 2013). During curriculum reform implementation, principals must act as agents of change, as well as curriculum and instructional leaders. However, principals tend to focus more on curriculum and give instruction little attention (Lunenburg & Lunenburg, 2013).

2.6 The principal as an agent of curriculum reform

School leadership is indispensable during the implementation of curricular reforms. Furthermore, the principal's role is of special significance with regard to instructional and curricular changes that are required by reforms (Squires, 2015). Curriculum

reforms are designed to challenge the status quo of schools, including changes to the functioning of the personnel (Hourani & Stringer, 2015; Botha, 2013). Gewertz (2013), for instance, argues that reforms demand that teachers change their pedagogy. Consequently, principals are expected to influence teaching, learning and other school aspects to meet the demands of these reforms, which are designed to reshape curriculum, instruction and classroom practices as a whole (Coburn, Hill & Spillane, 2016; Beane, 2013).

The Wallace Foundation (2009) observed that school leadership was missing in major educational reform plans despite an empirical link that was found to be present between the principal's leadership and improved student achievement. Successful reform implementation has also been linked positively with a principal's leadership qualities (Kasprzhak et al., 2015).

To implement reforms, principals are required to exhibit a wide range of both managerial and leadership skills and capacities. These skills enable the principal to make complex decisions in cooperation with other stakeholders when advocating for the implementation of reforms (Ng & Chan, 2014). Therefore, it can be argued that the principals' skills and capacities enable them to be catalysts of reform implementation. Lai (2015) concludes that school principals act as brokers of envisaged educational changes.

Strong leadership in a school is needed to ensure that the teachers and the school personnel make the required shifts in instruction towards the new curriculum requirements (Quinn, 2002). To effect the required pedagogical changes, principals need to have the knowledge and skills with which they can influence and direct the activities of school personnel (Botha, 2013). In fact, the prerequisite knowledge and skills capacitate the principals. This is because the principals are expected to be conversant with the tenets of envisaged instruction, as well as having adequate knowledge of the intended curriculum (Hourani & Stringer, 2015).

Furthermore, the necessary knowledge and skills empower the principals to mobilise the teachers to take note of, accept and undertake tasks that aim to change instruction. At the same time, principals should also endeavour to harness and mobilise resources that support teachers while they attempt to transform teaching

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and learning (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004). It is vital for principals to influence teachers to change, to motivate them during the change process, and to ensure the availability of physical materials that can enhance that change.

Other scholars call for principals to adopt a transformational model of leadership. Transformational leadership means that principals' efforts are geared towards initiating change through the articulation of a shared vision, while advocating for commitment towards the desired change (Hallinger, 2003). Through the transformational leadership model, principals are able to manage the change process at school level. These principals capacitate other members of the school with the knowledge and skills, which enable them to manage the change process (Magno, 2009).

These leaders are able to create change because they have a multidirectional influence and are able to change the way people think about new ideas (Magno, 2009). They are actively and emotionally involved during the process of change. The transformational leadership approach is based on the idea that schools are not static. Rather, schools should be success-oriented in the midst of reform. For principals to succeed as change agents, they need to develop a shared vision and develop a strategic plan of implementation (Glatthorn, Boschee & Whitehead, 2006).

2.7 Principals as mediating agents

According to literature, the position of a principal in the school is that of a gatekeeper, standing between two opposing stakeholders, which exert internal and external forces to the school (Shaked & Schechter, 2017). The internal forces include the school staff and the students, while the external forces include the national policy makers (Kelchtermans, Piot & Ballet, 2011). The stakeholders often have conflicting goals and demands on the school (Ewy, 2009). This situation places the principals at the centre, as mediating agents; they walk a tight rope between the internal demands and the external demands (Seashore Louis & Robinson, 2012).

When mediating, the principal in the school works by bridging or buffering the external forces (Shaked & Schechter, 2017; Kohansal, 2015). According to Johnson, Mirchandani and Meznar (2015), institutions respond to external forces by either

conforming to them or by trying to resist these forces (Gössling, 2011). When using the bridging strategy, an institution seeks to adapt or conform to the demands of the external stakeholders and are open to change. In contrast, when buffering, an institution seeks to prevent or resist external factors from interfering with its functioning (Kim & Kim, 2015).

The process of bridging or buffering is especially common and more critical during the implementation of educational reforms (Rutledge, Harris, & Ingle, 2010). Implementation of such reforms usually entails an influx of external demands. These demands often force the principal to decide either to conform to a process of change that is mandated by the reform, or to seek ways of adapting it, and maintaining the status quo (Murphy & Torre, 2013). The processes of bridging and buffering indicate the complex situation in which principals find themselves. They are caught between external reform demands and their local contexts, experiences and capacities.

During the process of bridging and buffering the reforms, the principals often partially implement reforms. They decide which reform aspects they want to introduce into their schools, which aspects they will emphasise to their teachers and which aspects they will ignore (Diamond, 2012). They are mediators between external reform demands and the local school context because they work by adapting and incorporating certain elements of the reform policy, and this ultimately creates new practices, which tend to change the original reform policy over time. This may explain why different schools seemingly understand and enact the same policy in different ways (Koyama, 2014). Moreover, the principals often interpret and enact reforms creatively depending on their different contexts (Salter 2014), because they are mid-level managers who often leave their 'fingerprints' on mandated reform as they implement them (Schechter & Shaked, 2017). They are also local policy-makers because they adjust external reform demands to suit their particular school contexts (Spillane & Kenney, 2012).

2.8 Principals' reaction towards reforms

According to recent literature (Schechter & Shaked, 2017), reforms cause confusion to the normal business of the principal. As a result, they respond to these reforms by

making several considerations. Firstly, the principals respond by adjusting the guidelines of the reform to suit the school contexts. The principals take into consideration the characteristics and contexts of their schools (such as working environment, timetabling constraints, as well as specific educational needs), and then decide how to change reform guidelines to fit into the existing school culture and contexts.

Secondly, the principals make deliberate efforts to take care of their teachers. They take into consideration the attitudes of their teachers and their capacities. In essence, the principals work to satisfy their teachers and try to solicit their support for the reform.

Thirdly, the principals make a consideration to use their own discretion. In this regard, the principals choose to rely on their own judgment regarding the implementation of the reform in their schools. This consideration indicates that principals are not passive receptors of the reform, but, as they mediate between the external and internal demands, they bring their own perspectives into their role. These three considerations indicate that principals have a great impact on the implementation of reforms in their schools; in short, they leave their fingerprints on the reform as they lead its implementation.

In another study, Schechter, Shaked, Ganon-Shilon and Goldratt (2016) investigated the use of metaphors by principals as they describe their leadership during the implementation of the reform. In their study, the principals used metaphors to illustrate their unique understanding of their role while implementing a national reform. Their findings revealed that the principals' usage of the metaphors represented three main aspects of their leadership.

The first aspect is that the principals used metaphors to show their reframed role. The principals used the metaphors to indicate their desire to work as local policymakers. The metaphors indicated that the principals play an active role as they mediate between reform policies and their local contexts during the implementation of the reform. Their metaphors indicated that they regard themselves as local policymakers, even though unofficial, because they exercise influence as they negotiate and adapt reform demands to their school contexts.

The metaphors also showed that the principals have reframed their work. Principals used metaphors to show how they make sense of their leadership roles. Their metaphors showed that their roles have changed. Interestingly, their metaphors emphasised heroic notions that they attached to their leadership; they referred to themselves as conductor, magician and captain. On the other hand, some principals chose to use metaphors, which portray them as a hand-puppet or a string-puppet. These metaphors indicated that principals have a mechanistic view of their reform leadership in their school. Moreover, the principals used metaphors, which show that their administrative role involves multitasking; they also used metaphors to reveal that they pay more attention to the structural and administrative changes of the reform.

Lastly, these scholars found that the principals have reframed their relationships with the teachers. In this regard, the principals chose to use metaphors, which expressed that their role was to lead their teachers towards achieving the reform demands. But their goal was also to create a positive environment and to take care of the teachers to ensure that they buy in into reform. The principals used metaphors such as a shepherd, a gardener and a supportive parent, to describe how they shield their teachers from unwelcome conditions brought by the reform and to provide necessary support.

2.9 Principal preparation

2.9.1 Training

Often leadership development is generically used to define both pre-service and in-service training. However, Moorosi and Bush (2011) provide a distinction between leadership preparation and development. According to them, the former means training before a person becomes a school principal. This person needs to meet set entry requirements or other forms of training prior to this preparation. The latter refers to on-the-job training of a leader after he/she has assumed principalship. It is also considered as career-enhanced type of learning.

Moorosi and Bush (2011) point out that, in Commonwealth countries, leadership development is considered more important than its preparation. In Lesotho, for instance, leadership development is done mostly through ad-hoc government

workshops. However, the infrequency of the workshops may suggest a lack of strategic approach to leadership development by the government (Moorosi & Grant, 2013).

In the 21st century, there is growing realisation that headship is a specialist occupation that requires explicit preparation (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011). Preparation of principals can be seen as a way of increasing their ability to cope with challenges. Lin (2012) suggests that improved principal leadership fundamentally determines the accomplishment of educational goals. As a result, Bush (2009) cautions that leadership should be deliberately developed, rather than leaving its development to chance.

While principal preparation receives deserved attention in American education and the rest of the developed countries, it continues to be given scant attention in developing and underdeveloped countries (Bush & Oduro, 2006). In countries like the USA and the UK, aspiring principals have a specific preparation program (Moorosi & Bush, 2011). On the contrary, in most African countries, the preparation of principals is not considered vital (Moorosi & Grant, 2013). In Africa, formal principal training hardly exists and the criteria for hiring principals are varied and unreliable (Bush & Oduro, 2006).

Bush and Oduro (2006) point out a worrying trend where novice principals, in developing African countries like Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria and Botswana, are 'tossed into' headship without undergoing any pre-service training and with no guarantee that in-service training will be provided. In such countries, high teaching qualifications, vast teaching experience, and even political connections, are the main credentials that are needed to become a principal. Moreover, Botha (2013) adds that, by showing that reform initiatives necessitate a new conception of school leadership, school principals can no longer lead using the old and traditional ways. Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011) also add to this by claiming that radical educational changes have caused many principals to be ineffective in running their schools.

There is a claim that, while teaching experience is vital, on its own it is not enough to prepare teachers for the position of being a principal (Sim, 2011). Moorosi and Grant (2013) contradict this claim by indicating that there is no research-based evidence to

suggest that leadership preparation, on its own, can directly enhance student learning. But, principals who are required to start principalship without specific training experience personal stress, which contributes to the failure of the educational system, and this has ethical implications because untrained principals are technically unqualified for the role (Bush & Oduro, 2006). Other researchers contradict this by saying that any teacher who possesses a disposition towards leadership or has a vision can be a principal (Krug, 1992). This leaves the question: Are leaders born or made?

2.9.2 Rationale for preparation

As indicated above, frequent and radical educational reforms have caused many serving principals to be unproductive in running their schools (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011). As a result, leadership should be deliberately prepared to produce leaders who are skilled to lead and manage schools in the best possible way (Bush, 2009). Improving leadership is considered the first step towards building capacity within schools (Hallinger & Huber, 2012).

It has further been recognised that the role of leadership is different from that of teaching. For instance, in Africa, many principals are initially trained as teachers and principalship is beyond their experience and skills-set (Bush, 2016). The implication is that leadership needs separate and specialised preparation (Bush, 2009). As a result of disregarding principal preparation, Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011) say that many of the principals do not function effectively because they do not have prior basic training in management. Even after they have assumed leadership, they do not get any training. Mathibe's (2007) study points out that many principals in South Africa lack the appropriate skills and training for school management and leadership. In Lesotho, for example, there is no formal training for principals, and thus no formal strategic school leadership development (Moorosi & Grant, 2013).

Principals are currently experiencing a paradigm shift in their leadership positions (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011). Botha (2013) echoes this sentiment by indicating that, currently, principals can no longer employ the old and traditional approaches of leadership in their schools. He explains that traditional ways of leadership are rapidly changing in response to significant school-wide reforms. Hence, principals' roles and

responsibilities, as discussed by Bush (2009), Spillane and Lee (2014), have become increasingly demanding.

Principals often lack expertise in the kind of curriculum change envisaged. The majority of principals in Africa assume this role without preparation, and the development opportunities after assuming this role are limited. As a result, principals lack the necessary skills and capacity to lead the envisaged changes. Principals tend to spend much of their time on administrative tasks, and not on teaching and instructional tasks. This tendency is reinforced by the implicit belief that the classroom is the private domain of the teachers as they try to preserve their autonomy and discretion in the classroom. Often, principals may have less expertise in certain subjects. As a result, teachers do not perceive principals as having instructional leadership capacity.

Bush (2009) notes that the following reasons necessitate the paradigm shift in principalship and make its preparation and development essential:

- the role of the school principal has expanded

- school contexts have increased in complexity

- preparation has been recognised as a moral obligation

- recognition that principals become better leaders due to specific training.

Researchers further claim that the reframed role of the principal requires special knowledge and skills. For instance, Grissom and Loeb (2010) claim that instructional leadership is best described through the leader's skills and knowledge with regard to curriculum, instruction and academic improvement. Possession of skills by the principal is also considered important by Hallinger and Lee (2013). They emphasise that skilful principal leadership essentially contributes to school improvement. It can be argued that the principal should be armed with the knowledge of innovative teaching and learning strategies. Therefore, training principals equips them with leadership knowledge and skills for them to execute their work effectively.

The following sections present literature on education in Lesotho with the aim of

contextualising principalship in the newest curriculum reform.

2.10 Education in Lesotho

2.10.1 Education overview

Education in Lesotho was traditionally provided in initiation schools that were run by the elders in society. The purpose of initiation schools was to inculcate moral and cultural values amongst the youth, as well as to create an awareness of their origins. Much emphasis was put on practical work at home and activities in the fields. The traditional informal system aimed to produce people characterised by social responsibility, committed to serving society and to meeting family requirements (Muzvidziwa & Seotsanyana, 2002).

The first missionaries who came to Lesotho in 1833 were from the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (P.E.M.S.). They were followed by the Roman Catholics in 1862 (Lephoto, 2005). The first undertaking of the numerous groups of missionaries was to spread their doctrine to Basotho. They established Christian schools in which the education focused on cultivating Christian values. They also taught basic literacy, mainly to enable Basotho to read the Bible (Muzvidziwa & Seotsanyana, 2002).

Although Christian education provided Basotho with the opportunity to develop literacy, some believe that what was taught in mission schools was decontextualised from Basotho culture. The problem intensified when Britain colonised Lesotho in 1886 and established a British system of education. This system was based on British values and traditions (Ts'ephe, 2004; Muzvidziwa & Seotsanyana, 2002). The British education system continued even after Lesotho's independence in 1966.

One area of interest in Lesotho's education is proprietorship. According to the Lesotho Education Act of 1995, the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC), Anglican Church of Lesotho (ACL) and the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) own the majority of schools (90%) in Lesotho. The government and private owners unevenly share the remaining ten percent (Lephoto 2005). The Lesotho Ministry of Education is, therefore, in the unique situation that it administers the education in schools even though it is often not the owner of the physical school buildings. This situation creates areas of conflict and uncertainty in

the management of Lesotho schools.

One such area is the fact that, due to the joint proprietorship, it is difficult to identify and separate the responsibilities of the government and the churches. It is difficult to decide, for example, how far the power of the churches should be allowed to impact education in Lesotho (Polaki & Khoeli, 2005; Muzvidziwa & Seotsanyana, 2002).

Officially, the government's responsibility in education is threefold – to deploy teachers, to formulate a uniform curriculum, and to conduct school inspections, thus standardising education in Lesotho (Ts'ephe, 2004; MoET, 2001). Churches, on the other hand, are responsible for the schools' infrastructure and the religious values in the schools (Lephoto, 2005).

2.10.2 Reform history

The history of educational reform in Lesotho has been quite eventful. Because of almost a hundred years of colonial rule, Lesotho inherited the British style of education, which was not wholly relevant to the needs of Basotho. Since independence in 1966, education in Lesotho has been through various reforms designed to make it more responsive to the needs of Basotho nation (Lephoto, 2005; Muzvidziwa & Seotsanyana, 2002). But the concern on the irrelevance of education in Lesotho was persistent (Lika, 2005). The educational changes that took place were mostly structural, such as reducing the number of the primary cycle years from eight to seven. Not much change occurred in the curriculum development (Muzvidziwa & Seotsanyana, 2002). The first reform initiative for education in Lesotho was in 1978 following the 'Educational Dialogue'. The government and other stakeholders deemed it necessary to refocus education to 'education with production' and 'training for self-reliance'. One of the objectives of this reform was to teach students practical subjects and to instil in them a spirit of self-reliance. This reform forum failed because churches interpreted the government's proposals as an attempt to undermine their authority. Hence, the churches did not cooperate.

The second reform initiative was in 1988. The government initiated another conference with the aim of implementing an education system that would respond

to the needs of Basotho. In addition, the government wanted to transform education so that it could have control over schools. Despite having secured the donor support, this attempt to reform education was strongly opposed by church proprietors and it also failed.

The third reform initiative was in the year 2000. The government announced that free education was to be phased in, effective immediately, from grade one. This was announced despite opposition from churches and opposition parties. The churches implemented the policy even though this implied that they would lose much of the revenue that they generated from school fees. The government committed to pay teachers, to supply materials, even to build new schools, as well as provide food for the students. This positive reform still did not change the nature of Lesotho's education (Muzvidziwa & Seotsanyana, 2002).

In essence, since Lesotho attained its independence from Britain in 1966, numerous attempts to reform the education system were undertaken to address Lesotho's developmental needs. There was, however, little success. The implementation of the FPE policy in Lesotho provided an impetus for other reform policies, such as the New Curriculum and Assessment Policy of 2009.

2.11 Overview of the New Curriculum and Assessment policy of 2009

The New Curriculum and Assessment Policy of 2009 is the most radical educational reform policy in Lesotho. The government of Lesotho, through MoET, recognised that the high stakes examination system was distorting the education because teachers taught students to pass the examination and disregarded the development of envisaged skills. Besides that, this policy was developed in an attempt to resolve the long-standing problem of relevance. The policy makers felt it was imperative that the curriculum should be closely linked with the assessment in order to achieve the aims of education.

2.11.1 Aims

The overall aim of the policy framework is to provide guidance on the 'transformation of teaching, learning and assessment, with the purpose of making education accessible, relevant, and efficient, and of the best quality' (MoET, 2009, p.

6).   Firstly, the framework aims to align assessment with teaching, in order to establish a strong 'link between what is taught, learned and assessed' (MoET, 2009, p. 15). This is an attempt to minimise the negative influence of examinations on teaching. Another concern was that the examinations do not appropriately measure competencies and skills (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015; Ralebese, 2014).

Secondly, it seeks to 'address the emerging issues on new demands and life challenges of the global world' (MoET, 2009: p.15). The inclusion of emerging issues and life challenges is a deliberate step by policy makers to make education relevant in local and global contexts. The policy framework also counteracts the flaws of the previous curriculum (heavy reliance on examinations and irrelevance) by integrating curriculum with assessment to ensure a balance between them (MoET, 2009).

2.11.2 Implications of pedagogical changes on teaching practice

At school level, comprehensive educational changes challenge the status quo among all school personnel. Principals and teachers are key players at this level, and the impacts of such reforms directly affect them (Botha, 2013). This situation is reiterated by Beane (2013), who indicates that teachers are challenged by top-down curriculum reforms to change how they teach. This is especially true with reforms that seek vigorous and radical fundamental changes in instruction (Hinchman & Moore, 2013). In the case of Lesotho, Raselimo and Mahao (2015) stress that the implementation of the new curriculum challenges the dominant teacher-centred pedagogy that exists in Lesotho schools.

Countries often put in a lot of effort to develop policies that instigate changes in the classrooms but these new ambitious policies often fail to change classroom practice (Jita & Mokhele, 2013). One reason given by Lefstein (2008) indicates that proposed reforms hardly ever penetrate into classrooms due to the durability of interactional genres. Cohen (1990) sums it up by stressing that, even though the policy seeks to change practice, it is practice that has an even greater effect on policy.

It can be argued then, that the development of policies does not guarantee that they will be implemented as intended. Policy makers depend on middlemen, the principals,

to oversee the implementation of state-mandated policies. Meanwhile, the principals rely on the willingness and motivation of teachers to effect the changes in their respective classrooms (Spillane, Diamond, Burch, Hallett, Jita & Zoltners, 2002). Hallinger and Lee (2013) caution that 'without skilful leadership and active support from the principal, how can teachers hope to make these changes in curriculum and teaching?' Hence, the relationship between principals and teachers is characterised as that of 'dependency and conflict' whereby principals need to use subtler strategies to effect envisaged pedagogical changes in the classroom (Spillane, Diamond, Burch, Hallett, Jita & Zoltners, 2002).

Reforms seek to change teaching from traditional positivist approaches, such as teacher-centred methods, to more constructivist learner-centred approaches. The problem with this paradigm shift in teaching and learning is that teachers and learners have well-established interactional genres that appear to be highly durable. Most likely, the same phenomenon in the classroom applies to the principals and teachers. The principals and their teachers already have interactional patterns that characterise their work as professionals. Any new policy ideas are likely to be assimilated into their existing schema. This assimilation changes the new policy ideas. The results are the appropriation, adoption, rejection or even misunderstanding of the policy ideas.

2.11.3 Implications of pedagogical changes on principalship

While the new curriculum is silent about the role of the principal, it is explicit on how teachers ought to teach. In fact, this confirms the observation by the Wallace Foundation (2009) that school leadership was evidently missing in major school reform plans. However, research on leadership abounds with evidence, which shows the critical role that it plays in implementing curriculum reforms and school improvement. For instance, Hallinger and Huber (2012) indicate that continuous reforms led to remarkable growth in the significance of the principals' role. Moreover, Squires (2015) shows that, for schools to be instructionally effective, leadership is critical.

Notwithstanding the scant attention given to them by the policy makers, the primary school principals have to oversee the overall implementation of the new curriculum.

To this end, the Wallace Foundation (2013) concludes that 'without effective principals most of the goals of educational improvement will be very difficult to achieve'.

The Lesotho Education Act (2010, section 21) says, 'A principal shall ensure that meaningful teaching and learning take place at the school'. This indicates that the principal is regarded as an overseer of teaching and learning in schools. To ensure meaningful teaching and learning, the principal has to use subtle strategies (Spillane, Diamond, Burch, Hallett, Jita & Zoltners, 2002) that influence and motivate teachers to implement the mandated changes effectively (Squires, 2015). The Wallace Foundation (2013) describes the principal as a leader of learning who is capable of developing a team that delivers effective instruction. However, Hourani and Stringer (2015) advise that principals should possess sufficient curriculum and instructional knowledge in order to provide effective leadership.

The response of the principal towards educational change can either support or inhibit intended change (Lai, 2015). Essentially, a principal is a sense-maker during policy implementation (Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002). Policy implementation is, therefore, subject to the principal's interpretation. Principals first understand what the policy means and then decide to ignore, adapt or adopt the policy to their particular context. Principals are not just passive receptors of policy but they endorse the policy. Moreover, as local implementers, principals tend to presume that they are equal in status with policy makers. Hence, they are in a position to query, reconfigure, adapt, acknowledge or even refuse the instructions and directives from central policy makers (Werts & Brewer, 2015).

Many reforms come with innovative ways of teaching and have thus rendered both novice and veteran principals less capable of leading learning (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011). Principals, especially those who have not undergone preparation, seem to have insufficient curriculum-instructional expertise. This is because traditional knowledge-transfer pedagogies are currently changing to complex constructivist approaches (Quinn, 2002). Teaching and learning have become more complex and sophisticated in response to both technological advances and the reframed role of schools in the global community (Sim, 2011). As a result, principals

encounter problems when trying to fulfil their leadership roles.

In short, the New Integrated Curriculum policy in Lesotho, which seeks to change teaching and learning, is the most radical reform initiative. It aims to integrate teaching and learning with assessment, so that assessment can be used to inform teaching and learning. This is done in order to reduce heavy reliance on high stakes summative examinations. Teachers are expected to function as facilitators of learning, while learners should construct knowledge by assuming greater responsibility for their own learning.

The implications of this policy for principals include the expectation that they need to lead, monitor and manage the envisaged changes. The success or failure of the policy intentions to take root in classrooms, therefore, depends on principals. This is the case even though the role of the principals is not clearly defined in the policy.

2.12 Current status of principalship

By emphasising the prominent roles of principals above, it should be noted that the work of principals has far-reaching implications. Principalship is complex, overloaded, daunting and a very difficult role, as the following sections will highlight.

2.12.1 Time

Even though principals want to spend considerable time leading instructional tasks, their managerial/administrative tasks consume much of their time so there is none left for doing instructional duties (Sim, 2011).

Moreover, Lunenburg and Lunenburg (2013) reveal that principals consider curriculum and instructional leadership roles as top-priority areas, which deserve more time. But when surveyed, a discrepancy was found between their convictions and their actions. Principals were found to have a propensity to spend little time on curriculum and instructional tasks but they dedicated more time towards managerial tasks. Spillane and Hunt (2010) also found that principals tend to spend more than half of their time (nearly 70%) doing administration-related activities, whereas the time spent on teaching-related activities was considerably less. Teaching and learning are the main activities of the schools and these activities deserve the most

time. As a result, Sim (2011) argues that principals cannot use time constraint problems as a reason for their inability to do instructional duties.

2.12.2 Stress

According to Lynch (2012), principals juggle many responsibilities daily and, consequently, they have stress-related problems (Fullan, 2009) because they realise that it is difficult to fulfil their obligations. Principals may therefore feel discouraged and dissatisfied (Fullan, 2009).

Other researchers claim that the role of school leadership is an emotionally daunting endeavour. For instance, Day (2014) says that the social environment in which principals work is emotionally charged and they need to possess emotional resilience to survive. Elmeski (2015) stresses that, for principals to improve schools, they should 'dig deeper into their emotional and spiritual reserves'. Likewise, Bush and Oduro (2006) emphasise that novice principals are filled with anxiety, frustration and personal stress, especially when they assume headships without preparation.

Hargreaves (1998) says that emotions are crucial during policy implementation. This is because policy initiatives affect the emotions of implementers. He says that policies tend to 'alienate, anger, frustrate or sadden those who are obliged to implement them' (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 316).

The expectations from policy prescriptions cause stress on principals' personal and professional lives. Factors that cause the stress include the fact that principals are trying to discern the strategy that is centrally imposed despite the fact that the principals already are burdened by too many responsibilities. New responsibilities have been added to the old ones, without considering whether the new role is actually feasible. This situation conspicuously limits their influential and motivational impact on teachers (Fullan, 2009).

2.12.3 Capacity

Hallinger and Lee's (2013) study found that Thailand's principals did not possess the necessary capacity for leading the instructional reform in that country and, as a result, they were not able to support the implementation of instructional changes in

their schools effectively. Their study found that preparation or development programs were not designed specifically to support the new instructional leadership role of the principals. They report that there was a discrepancy between principals' preparation, training and development, and the role expectations brought by the instructional reforms. Hence, instructional leadership capacity among the principals was lacking. According to Hallinger and Lee (2013), the implementation of the instructional reforms in Thailand needed the principals to be active instructional leaders. However, they had not been trained to lead the envisaged changes in their role.

According to Stringer and Hourani (2016), the Abu Dhabi government supported its desire for curriculum change with strong professional development for principals and teachers in order to build capacity within the schools. In this regard, the principals' professional development was considered a crucial factor to improve their capacity to lead and implement the envisaged changes in the schools.

Mestry's (2017) research in South Africa shows that school principals do not have the necessary capacity to lead their schools. In fact, Mestry reports that there is a serious need to empower and professionally develop principals for school leadership. In support of this view, other scholars also show that many principals in South Africa do not have the relevant capacity to lead their schools effectively (Mestry & Singh, 2007). This may be caused by the fact that many principals do not have basic leadership training before or after entering principalship (Bush & Oduro, 2006). In order to solve this situation, policymakers need to develop programs that build leadership capacity among the principals (Mestry, 2017).

The rapid and radical changes within the education systems increase the administrative work of the principals and put them under pressure. Therefore, to manage these changes becomes a complex and an elusive process, which questions their capacity (Mestry, 2017).

2.12.4 Challenges

Studies by Allison (1997), Friedman (2002), and Lindle (2004) show that school principals have worrying concerns about their working conditions, which contribute

to their increased stress and burnout levels. In addition, some researchers found that attrition was prevalent among new school principals due to overwhelming challenges they face in this role (Spillane & Lee, 2014). More studies across different countries have indicated that new principals have experienced similar challenges (Northfield, 2013; Walker & Haiyan, 2006). New principals lose interest in this role and are more inclined to vacate their positions. Another study by Borg and Riding (1993) affirm that many principals face several challenges in their position and pointed out that a lack of resources, undesirable working conditions, inadequate support and heavy responsibilities cause distress in the principals.

Cooper and Kelly (1993) also found that principals are mainly stressed by, among other challenges, work overload, poor relations with teachers, undesirable relations with the local education authority, and poor staff performance. Friedman's (2002) study found that a typical principal is over-burdened by many responsibilities as the leader in the school. For instance, the principal has to find time to take part in many meetings and attend to all the needs of the school. In addition, Friedman found that parents cause most of the stress and burnout for principals. Most parents make difficult requests and they act offensively towards the principal and teachers, keep the principal busy, and often ignore the expectations of the school. Other studies found out that the principals' challenges included working long hours and shouldering relentlessly heavy workloads, coupled by unrealistic expectations from many stakeholders (Lortie, 2009; Portin, Shen & Williams, 1998).

Another challenge for new principals is the leadership style of the previous principal (Hart, 1993). Teachers tend to compare the new principal's leadership style to the previous principal's style, and they usually oppose new ideas and policies brought by the new principal. Moreover, the new principals often experience technical challenges that include the school budget and implementing new government initiatives in the school (Spillane & Lee, 2014). Furthermore, forming new social relationships with the teachers is a challenge for new principals. As a result, new principals often harbour feelings of isolation and loneliness once they transition into the office (Spillane & Lee, 2014).

2.12.5 Perceptions

Principalship also encounters negative perceptions from teachers. It is reported that teachers primarily do not view principals as having the capacity to be instructional-curriculum leaders. They believe that their principals lack leadership, as well as management skills, and the knowledge and expertise to be instructional leaders (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Moreover, the beliefs of principals about their roles (Botha, 2013) determine the leadership approach they will adopt. Krug (1992) shows that the belief systems of principals guide them to interpret activities differently, hence they act differently. Sim (2011) explains that, because principals lack basic leadership and management skills, they do not usually consider themselves instructional leaders. This belief may be an explanation as to why some principals are conceptualised as administration-bound (Spillane & Hunt, 2010).

Bush and Oduro (2006) say that many principals are unprepared for leadership. They, therefore, do not conceptualise themselves as leaders of learning. Some reasons, as pointed out by Fullan and Langworthy (2013), may be the fact that the classroom has traditionally been considered the private domain of teachers and, as a result, principals may not feel welcome. Again, the principals often have limited expertise in the subject areas of the teachers that they supervise.

2.13 Theoretical framework

2.13.1 Sense-making

According to Weick (2009), sense-making is a process whereby individuals seek to create a holistic picture of an ambiguous event through three interrelated processes: creation, interpretation and enactment. Firstly, the creation process suggests noticing, selecting and extracting cues from the actual experience of the ambiguous event. Secondly, individuals make multiple interpretations of the ambiguous event, and develop an initial sense that they create into a more organised perception. Thirdly, the enactment process involves incorporating new information and taking action based on the interpretation created previously.

Through the sense-making process people seek to understand events that cause

ambiguities in their routine and are often not consistent with their previous beliefs. According to Ganon-Shilon and Schetcher (2017), sense-making process explains how people structure their unknown in order to be able to respond to it. Therefore, sense-making means that people actively create new meaning by relating new information to their pre-existing cognitive frameworks (Coburn, 2006). In essence, people create and enact a new sense of how to engage in a complex situation through an action-oriented thought process. This process suggests that cognition and action are integral parts of sense-making (Weick, 2009). Sense-making explains the manner in which people select information from their context, interpret that information, and then act on their interpretations to develop new routines and culture (Gawlik, 2015).

Individuals make sense by constructing reality through the creation of meaning out of their prior knowledge, experiences and beliefs (Spillane & Anderson, 2014). Through the sense-making process, school principals give meaning to new information that is characterised by ambiguity, confusion and misunderstandings. In other words, when they are confronted with reforms, school principals create a new meaning of their role and interpret this by integrating their backgrounds and prior experiences together with contexts within which the reforms are implemented (Saltrick, 2010; Braun, Maguire, & Ball, 2010). In other words, principals look for new ways to enact and mediate the demands of reforms to suit their particular contexts (Spillane & Kenney, 2012).

2.13.2 Rationale for using sense making

In school leadership studies, sense-making is a useful theoretical frame because it explains how principals interpret new information, and it goes further to explain that principals play an active role when constructing meaning from the events, which they attempt to understand and this, in turn, determines their actions (O'Laughlin & Lindle, 2015). Specifically, through a sense-making perspective, the principals shape the meaning-making process of their teachers as they mobilise those teachers into action.

Therefore, sense-making is a suitable framework for understanding the complex role

of the principals in the implementation of reforms. For instance, in the school leadership context, sense-making suggests that the principals use their prior understandings to construct and enact their meanings of reform demands in consideration of the conflicting internal and external social contexts of the school. The sense-making process of the principals takes place in conflicting contexts within the school (Coburn, 2005). For this reason, Beabout's (2012) recommendation is that sense-making should be a central theory when exploring the complex role of the principals, especially when implementing educational reforms.

2.13.3 Principals as sense-makers

This study is informed by the ideas of Coburn (2005) and Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (2002) on the sense-making theory. According to these scholars, sense-making suggests that principals use their prior knowledge and experiences to interpret and enact their own meaning of reform (Coburn, 2005; Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002). As a result, principals may construct meanings that either reinforce their pre-existing practices or focus on superficial changes of the proposed reform (Coburn, Hill & Spillane, 2016).

Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (2002) believe that prior knowledge, beliefs and understandings of the individual principals interfere with their ability to interpret new ideas. Thus, the principals' interpretations of reform are often different from those of policymakers. Prior knowledge influences principals to encode new information by adapting it to what is already known. This causes the principals to misunderstand new ideas as familiar, which hinders the envisioned change.

When using their prior knowledge, beliefs and understandings, principals tend to focus on shallow features of reform, and do not recognise deeper principles due to their lack of expertise in the type of change expected. Again, principals may be biased towards implementing reform ideas that are in line with their prior beliefs and values. Principals also ignore reform ideas that discredit their extant practices as they seek to preserve practices that affirm their self-esteem and self-worth.

The principals' construction of new meaning is mediated by their prior knowledge, experiences and beliefs, which are also embedded in the social environment in which

they work (McDonnell & Weatherford, 2013). In this regard, the sense-making of principals during education reforms is a social process, which influences the interpersonal relationships among the school personnel in their contexts and their routine activities. According to Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (2002), the school sense-making process of the principals is embedded in the school culture and its value and norm systems.

The sense-making process is situation-specific. Each individual principal makes sense of new policy ideas based on their current situation or institution. The norms, rules, beliefs and behaviours of each institution shape the sense-making of the participants in it. Therefore, it is possible for principals to construct different meanings for the same policy ideas depending on their unique situations.

2.13.4 Principals shape teachers' sense-making

Coburn (2006) suggests that local actors are also policy makers, because the decisions and actions they take on the policies determine how those policies ultimately play out in practice. This implies that the interpretations of the principals and teachers determine the direction of policy implementation given that that principals and teachers interpret policies using their pre-existing beliefs and practices. Coburn (2005) concurs with Spillane, Diamond, Burch, Hallett, Jita and Zoltners (2002) that principals are also sense-makers and importantly, the principals' understanding of policy influences the sense-making of teachers. Principals may direct the teachers' attention towards certain aspects of the policy that they consider more important than others.

Principals provide interpretive structures within which teachers need to adopt and construct their understanding of the meanings and implications of policy (Coburn, 2005). Coburn (2005) further indicates that principals' nature and depth of knowledge about instruction shape their conception about policy messages. As a result, their conceptions allow them to emphasise some policy ideas to the detriment of others.

This study, therefore, is an exploration of how principals understand and make meaning of their roles as they enact the new curriculum. To explore their

perspectives, sense-making theory was used in the design of the data collection methods and the data analysis. These methods generated rich, explanatory results that illuminate how principals view and understand their roles and responsibilities when implementing the new curriculum. The results were important because little is known about the implications of principals' perspectives when implementing curriculum reform (Coburn, 2005).

2.14 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the reframed role of principals over the last few decades. Traditionally, principals were viewed as school managers whose primary task was to ensure that the schools ran smoothly, especially by adhering to educational regulations. More recently, principals are regarded as instructional leaders, as well as curriculum leaders. Included in their work now, is the need for them to supervise teaching and learning with the aim to improve students' achievements.

This reframed role of principals seems to be compounded by the implementation of educational reforms that mostly seek fundamental changes in classroom practices. The reforms introduce innovative ways of teaching and learning. These innovations have far-reaching implications for principals. These implications make principalship a very difficult role for both novice and veteran principals.

The role of the principal in this study is seen through the sense-making framework. This framework implies that, when implementing policies, principals make sense of the policies by interpreting them using their prior knowledge and beliefs. They understand new policy ideas by incorporating them into what they already know. Principals may therefore construct different meanings from those intended by policymakers. The principals' construct messages are legitimate because each individual has a different set of prior knowledge and beliefs.

Principals are the chief sense-makers in schools. Their understanding of the policy ideas ultimately determines how teachers will understand the intended policy ideas. As principals interact with teachers about the policy ideas, the principals themselves control the parameters of those conversations by emphasising some ideas and ignoring others. Their hierarchical positions in schools empower them to enforce their understanding on teachers.

The current study focuses more specifically on analysing the perspectives of Lesotho's principals in providing the pedagogical leadership needed to transform teaching and learning in classrooms, in line with the vision embedded in the New Integrated Curriculum Policy framework.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The key purpose of this study was to explore Lesotho primary school principals' perspectives regarding their roles when implementing the new curriculum, as well as the challenges and opportunities they encounter when implementing the new curriculum in their schools. Therefore, this chapter outlines the overall methodology utilised to accomplish the aim of the study.

3.2 Research paradigm, approach and design

3.2.1 Paradigm

A paradigm can be regarded as a worldview, which includes the basic viewpoints of the researcher that direct action (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, a paradigm is a central concept in research methodology because it guides what to study and how to study it (Morgan, 2007). A paradigm helps a researcher to frame an approach to a research problem, and the best methods to address it (Shannon-Baker, 2016).

As a result, the paradigm adopted for this study guides the approach to data and the use of the methods that respond to the research questions in the best possible way (Biesta, 2010). Pragmatism is a paradigm that calls for deep commitment to the practice to arrive at truth through different points of view. Therefore, what is true, according to pragmatists, is that which works best in order to solve immediate problems (Kalolo, 2015). As a result, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in this research. This means that the research adopted the mixed methods approach.

Pragmatism has been advocated considerably by several mixed methods researchers. For instance, Feilzer (2010) posits that pragmatism offers a practical way to solve problems in the real world, and it does not make arguments about the nature of knowledge while Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) state that it is an attractive philosophical partner to mixed methods research. Mixed methods researchers adopt pragmatism based on the following three reasons:

Firstly, it is easy to understand the usefulness of any mixed methods design before using that particular design. Secondly, pragmatism sheds light on how to mix research approaches effectively. Thirdly, pragmatism allows research approaches to be mixed, with the intention of providing the best answers to the research questions.

According to Kalolo (2015), because of its power of complementarity, pragmatism is a better approach for mixed methods research because the weaknesses in one method are balanced by the strengths in the other method. Therefore, pragmatism is a compatible paradigmatic partner for a mixed methods approach that is intended to yield better research outcomes.

3.2.2 Mixed method approach

Mixed methods research is a type of study where there is an intentional mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods and techniques in one research study (Shannon -Baker, 2016). Terms associated with this approach include terms such as quantitative and qualitative methods, multi-method, synthesis, integrating and mixed methodology, but recent literature tends to use the term mixed methods (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010). For this study, the term mixed methods refers to the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative datasets in one study. The aim of using mixed methods is to offer a comprehensive answer to the problem being investigated.

In this mixed methods research, the two forms of data were integrated by merging the data during the analysis. The timing of the data collection techniques and procedures was important in this type of research. Therefore, the data collection phases were done concurrently, and these procedures were given equal emphasis so that both datasets have equal contribution in revealing the perspectives of the principals. The decision to use mixed methods in this study was based on a desire to provide rich descriptions of the principals' perspectives regarding their roles during the implementation of the new curriculum.

The overall intention of this design was to combine the two methods in order to corroborate the results from both quantitative and qualitative methods. Also, mixing these methods compensated for weaknesses inherent in each method, which

brought reliability to the results of the study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Moreover, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods allows for a more comprehensive exploration of the research problem (Creswell, 2014).

The three reasons for deciding to use mixed methods are: (a) mixed methods was chosen because it draws its strength on both qualitative and quantitative approaches and minimises the drawbacks that are inherent in these approaches; (b) mixed methods is a sophisticated research approach that utilises recent research procedures; and (c) it is a functional strategy to generate comprehensive answers to the research problems by corroborating the qualitative and quantitative results.

3.2.3 Concurrent mixed method design

Research design is the plan of how the collection of data and how its analysis will be made to determine the answers for the research questions (Babbie, 2010; Johnson & Christensen, 2014). A concurrent mixed methods design was adopted to collect and analyse relevant data for this study. Owing to the paradigm and theoretical framework (pragmatism and sense-making theory), as well as the research questions of this study, this design was considered suitable because it allowed for the exploration of principals' perspectives using both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Creswell, 2014).

This design involves the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative datasets concurrently. Equal priority is given to both types of data so that they both play an important role in addressing the research questions. In this design, data collection and analysis are done independently but at the same time. Subsequently, the results are integrated and compared during the interpretation phase to establish whether there is convergence or divergence (Creswell, 2014).

The key intention of this design is to yield comprehensive research results by utilising different types of data. Therefore, in order to understand the principals' perspectives, I deemed it necessary to collect both survey data and interview data at the same time (Maree, 2011).

Figure 3.1 below illustrates how the design was adopted to collect and analyse relevant data on the perspectives of principals on their roles and responsibilities

when implementing the new curriculum.
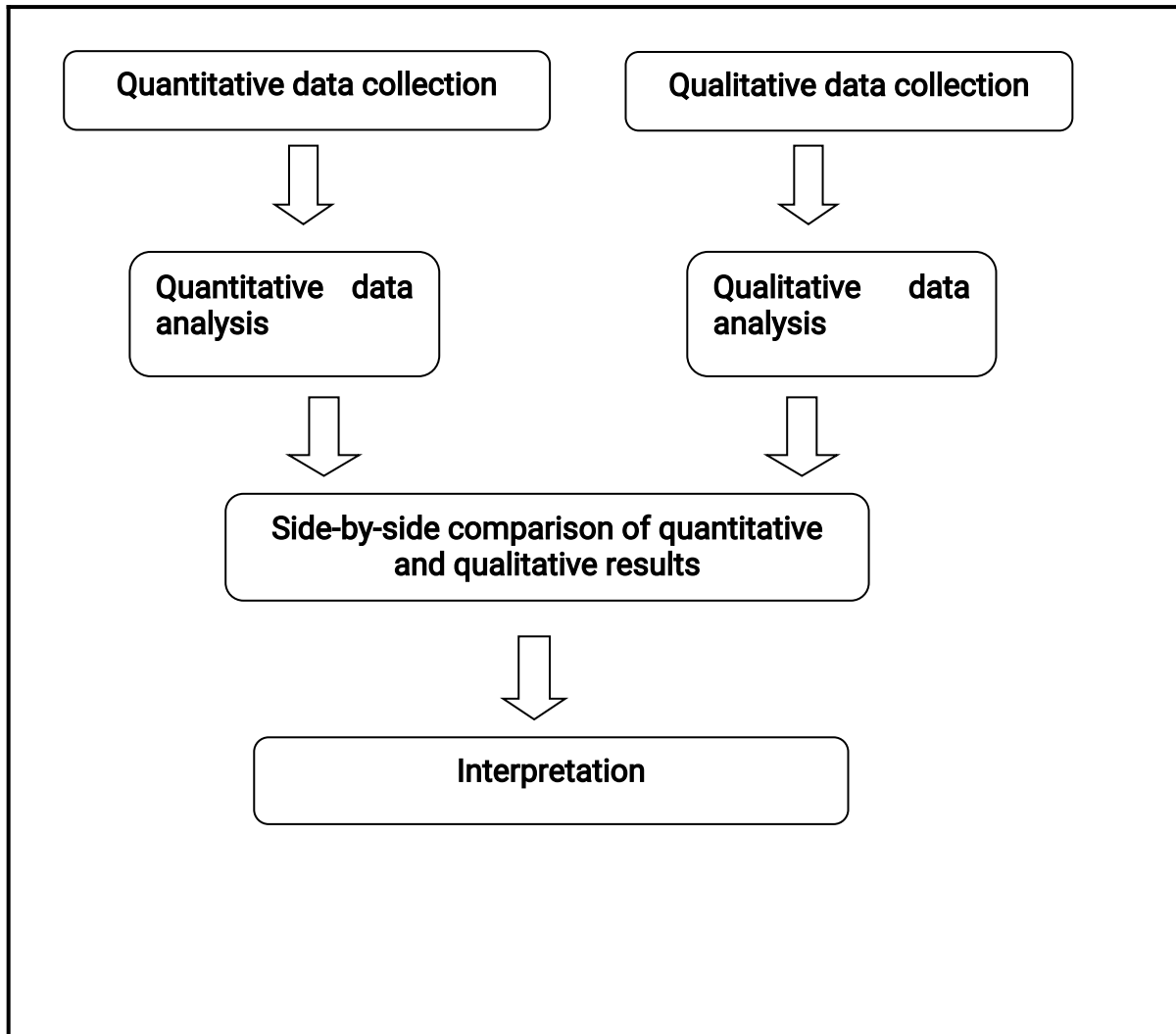
Figure 3.1: Concurrent mixed methods design

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 Concurrent mixed methods sampling

Concurrent mixed methods sampling stems from the design adopted for this study, and it involves the selection of sample techniques that incorporate the simultaneous use of both probability and purposive sampling (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The probability sampling techniques were used to generate quantitative data to answer the first research question, and the purposive sampling techniques were used to generate qualitative data to answer the second research question. The overall purpose of this concurrent mixed methods sampling was to generate a sample that will help

address the research questions (Teddlie & Yu, 2007; Onwuegbuzie, & Collins, 2007; Patton, 1990). The point of commonality between the two samples was that the purposively drawn sample was a subset of the probability drawn sample (Onwuegbuzie, & Collins, 2007). A random purposeful sampling technique was used to select the sample for this study.

3.3.2 Random purposeful sampling technique

This is the combined use of probability and purposeful sampling strategies (Sandelowski, 2000). It is employed when there is a very large pool of potentially information-rich cases (Sandelowski, 2000). As such, this technique involves selecting a random sample of a small number of units from a much larger target population (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). According to Patton (1990), a random purposeful sample is credible but not necessarily representative because its purpose is to yield in-depth information from the phenomenon, and it is suitable when the resources and time are limited. But each case drawn must meet the minimum criterion in all purposeful sampling, namely, that it is an information-rich case (Sandelowski, 2000). In this study, the sample selected has a nested relationship because the sample for one facet is a subset of the sample for the other facet of the study (Onwuegbuzie, & Collins, 2007).

3.3.3 Sampling procedure

The choice of the primary school principals that participated in the study was made from the list of primary schools found in Maseru. According to the Lesotho Education Statistics Report (2014), Maseru has 252 registered primary schools, which translates to 17% of the primary schools in Lesotho. From this population, I decided to select 100 principals purposively who met the following broad criteria: (a) principals have leadership experience in both old and new curricula; and (b) their schools are accessible by road transport.

In selecting the principals for my investigation, I gave due consideration to the limited resources at my disposal, the easy and regular access I had to the schools, and the richness of that data that I needed for the in-depth study. Based on these considerations, I purposefully chose five centres/clusters within Maseru, which would yield the 100 principals as indicated in Table 3.1 below.

In order to reach the participants, I first sought permission from the district's Senior Education Office, and thereafter, I contacted the centre coordinators. The coordinators gave me the opportunity to address the principals during one of their regular centre meetings. I explained the significance of my study and anyone who expressed interest was given a questionnaire. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed to the principals of which 83 of them were returned, yielding a response rate of 83 percent.

Table 3.1: Sampling table showing the number of principals per centre

Centre/cluster	Number of principals
A- Lithabaneng	29
B- St. Bernadette	33
C- Mazenod	13
D- Machache	15
E- Tikoe	15
Total	105

From the initial sample of 100 principals, I contacted 10 principals for interviews, six of whom consented to be interviewed. The accessibility of the participants, as well as their willingness to participate in the study became the main criteria for their inclusion (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Moreover, given time constraints and travelling costs, I chose principals whose schools were within a radius of 20 kilometres from Maseru's Central Business District (CBD). Moreover, this criterion was also ideal in this instance given the constraint that the principals in Maseru are geographically dispersed, and the cost of reaching them was anticipated to be very high because I would have to travel to their schools for interviews.

3.3.4 Development of research instruments

The aim of the quantitative strand of this study was to find the views and understandings of the principals regarding their roles and responsibilities as they

lead curriculum reform in their schools. Therefore, a questionnaire was developed by the researcher, after careful consideration of the other already existing questionnaire, in the field of school leadership literature. Most of the questionnaire dealt with instructional leadership (e.g. Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale [PIMRS] by Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). It was not in the scope of this study to deal exclusively with the instructional leadership of the principals but their leadership of curriculum reform.

Moreover, most studies that treat curriculum reform leadership do so from the qualitative approach (Mestry, 2017; Schechter et al., 2016). As such, the researcher decided to develop a new questionnaire based on the reviewed literature, mindful of the aim of this study and the Lesotho Curriculum Policy.

In this regard, the items in the questionnaire sought the views of the principals regarding their roles and responsibilities during their leadership of the curriculum reform in Lesotho.

The aim of the qualitative strand of the study was to investigate the opportunities and challenges that the principals encounter in their positions as they lead the curriculum reform. Therefore, the researcher developed an interview schedule that asked the principals to reveal the opportunities, as well as the challenges, they encounter during their leadership of the curriculum reform. This schedule was also developed based on the challenges that principals face according to literature on curriculum reform leadership. For instance, literature shows that teachers are usually resistant to changes brought by reforms and that it is the duty of the principals to influence the teachers to change (Ng, 2009). Therefore, the interview asked the principals to indicate the challenges they encounter as a result of the implementation of the new curriculum. Similarly, the principals had to reflect on the benefits or opportunities that they received since the introduction of the new curriculum.

3.3.5 Validity and reliability of instruments

It was important to establish the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Firstly, I constructed the items from the themes that I derived from the literature review on

instructional and curriculum leadership, as well as curriculum reform. I then grouped the items under the domains as indicated in Table 3.2 below.

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were considered important because it contained self-constructed questions. As such, the reliability of the questionnaire could be threatened by poor wording and poor correlation between the items. As a result, the questionnaire was scrutinised by my study leader. The feedback from my study leader helped me to re-align items to the research topic, and most importantly, it helped to align the items to the research questions. Moreover, I piloted the questionnaire. The pilot test gave me an opportunity to remove some irrelevant items, as well as any ambiguities that were found.

Lastly, internal reliability was established by Cronbach's alpha coefficient. This coefficient is used to establish the degree of correlation between the items in the questionnaire. The alpha coefficient above 0.70 shows acceptable reliability while 0.90 means high reliability (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

After doing the reliability test through the SAS program, the Cronbach's alpha was 0.97. This value was considered very high. Using the guideline of Tavakol and Dennick (2011), I had to reduce the Likert scale from being a 5-point scale to being a 4-point scale. This meant that I had to combine two scales (4=mostly and 5=almost always). The new scale was then 1=never, 2=seldom, 3=moderately and 4=mostly. The new scale gave a Cronbach's alpha of 0.95, which was also considered to be very high. Consequently, I had to remove some items, especially those that seemed to be a repetition of others. I also removed those items, which showed a low and inconsistent correlation with others. As a result, I removed nine items altogether and the Cronbach's alpha of 0.93 was achieved, which I considered to be very good.

Table 3.2: The Cronbach alpha for each questionnaire domain

Questionnaire domains	Number of items	Cronbach alpha
Planning and implementing change	3	0.75
Understanding curriculum requirements	5	0.87
Understanding new methods of teaching and learning	3	0.85
Organising the delivery of the new curriculum	2	0.88
Ensuring that change is understood and accepted	4	0.83
Monitoring and evaluating teacher performance	4	0.76
Lead and manage change	4	0.68
Fostering collaboration with community stakeholders	3	0.89
Overall	**28**	**0.93**

After developing the schedule (see Appendix F) for the semi-structured interviews, I gave it to my study leader for scrutiny. The purpose was to ensure that the questions asked were addressing the research questions for the qualitative strand of the study.

Following these reliability and validation exercises, the instruments were then piloted by collecting dummy data.

3.3.6 Piloting

After the questionnaire and the interview schedule had been constructed, it became imperative to pre-test them to ascertain that they would provide valid and reliable information that addresses the research questions adequately.

The process of piloting is important as it brings confidence and assurance to the researcher that the chosen procedures of investigation are suitable for the study (Creswell, 2014). It also helps the researcher to correct identifiable errors before the main study is conducted.

The questionnaire was piloted to ten principals. After that, the data was analysed to see if the results could help to answer the research questions. The pilot helped me

to eradicate issues such as ambiguous questions and irrelevant statements from the questionnaire. On the other hand, time management and the ability to probe were important issues that emanated from the pilot interview. I also held discussions with some pilot study participants to ascertain the appropriateness of the instruments.

3.3.7 Triangulation

This refers to a combination of several methods in a single study to investigate the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). Mixed methods design in this study ensured that triangulation was achieved. Quantitative and qualitative data were integrated to produce comprehensive descriptions of the principals' perspectives. Mixing the questionnaire and interview data was considered the most profound form of triangulation, and this strengthened the validity of the findings. Triangulation was achieved on two levels in this study.

3.3.7.1 Data source triangulation

This is achieved by using primary and secondary sources of data. For instance, in this study, interviews and documents of literature were used. Secondary data obtained through the literature review was verified by primary data obtained through the interviews and questionnaires.

3.3.7.2 Methodology triangulation

This is achieved when multiple methods of gathering data are combined in a single study. For instance, questionnaires were employed to collect quantitative data. Concurrently, data collection involved the use of interviews for gathering qualitative data. These methods were used to complement each other.

3.3.8 Member checking

The specific descriptions or findings are taken back to the participants. This gives the participants the opportunity to determine whether the descriptions are accurate (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). In this procedure, a follow-up interview was conducted with some participants, and they were provided the opportunity to comment on the interpretations.

3.3.9 Debriefing and auditing

This process involves having another person critically review and ask questions about the study. This is to ensure that the study makes sense to other people apart from the principal researcher. Involving an interpretation of an independent person other than the researcher adds validity to the findings (Creswell, 2014). My study was scrutinised by two volunteer critics from the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State.

3.4 Data collection

Sense-making theory acknowledges the manner in which agents understand new information (Coburn, 2005; Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002). Importantly, the agents' contexts (social and organisational) influence the way they understand and interpret new events and information (Coburn, 2005; Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002). On the other hand, pragmatism allows the researcher to decide on methods that are regarded as being the best to collect relevant data that can answer the research problem (Morgan, 2007). As a result, in this study, sense-making and pragmatism influenced the researcher's choice of the data collection methods in order to explore the principals' perspectives.

Both data collection methods allowed the participants to give their opinions about their roles and responsibilities when leading curriculum reform. A questionnaire was used because it was regarded as the best method to collect large quantitative data about perspectives (Kitzinger, 2005). A questionnaire offers an economical way of gathering a large amount of quantitative data from many participants (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, the questionnaire provides the participants with an opportunity to state views that they would otherwise not disclose in an individual interview (Kitzinger, 2005).

The questionnaire collected data on principals' views, beliefs and understandings regarding their roles as leaders of curriculum reform. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions to measure these constructs.

The initial data collection commenced from the end of October 2017 to November, 2017. The second phase of data collection started from the end of January 2018 to

February 2018. For the purpose of consistency, both questionnaire and interview data were collected from the same participants as the study is concerned with the principals' perspectives. However, the sample of the interviews was smaller (N=6) compared to the questionnaire sample (N=83).

3.4.1 Distribution of questionnaires

I personally distributed the questionnaires to the principals at their schools. This gave me an opportunity to establish a rapport with the principals and to explain, in detail, the purpose of the questionnaire, as well as to clarify some issues that principals raised concerning the questionnaire and my study in general.

On the agreed upon date, I collected the questionnaires. This helped me to ensure a high return rate. In most cases, the questionnaires were already completed when I arrived. There were only a few cases where I had to wait for it to be completed, or where I had to wait as the principal had misplaced the questionnaire. All 83 questionnaires were returned.

3.4.2 Conducting semi-structured interviews

Concurrently, semi-structured interviews were designed to elicit in-depth qualitative data from the principals to reveal the challenges and opportunities that they encounter in their leadership of curriculum reform. I was particularly interested in conversations in which the principals make sense of their authentic experiences with reform therefore interviews were considered the best strategy.

I phoned the principals to set the appointment for the interviews. Only six principals out of ten consented to interviews. On the agreed upon date, I arrived at the schools and introduced myself. I explained the purpose of the interview and informed them about issues of confidentiality and consent. I also asked for permission to tape record the interviews. Some showed hesitation towards being recorded but did not object to it.

I used an interview schedule, but tried as much as possible to maintain a conversational atmosphere with the participants. Moreover, I acted as a moderator and guided the participants to discuss their thoughts and feelings about leadership

on the new curriculum, in depth. The interview schedule ensured the coverage of key points. In this way, the semi-structured interviews enabled the participants to provide detailed perspectives on the issues that would have otherwise not been revealed from questionnaires (Nieuwenhuis, 2011; Babbie, 2010).

At first, I did not probe efficiently to bring them back to the topic of discussion. However, after listening to the initial interview tapes, I made notes on the interview schedule of possible ways to probe. (Most principals talked about their role in a hypothetical manner. This gave me the impression that they do not actually practice what they were talking about.) Often, the principals referred to themselves as teachers. I thought it was because most of them were acting principals (thinking that they did not have the real power that a normal principal would have) or because most had experience as teachers.

The maximum time for each interview session was scheduled to be one hour. Even though the interviews were scheduled to last for an hour, most of them lasted for about forty minutes. Interviews were audio-taped to increase validity, and I also took notes during the interviews (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

3.5 Data analysis

Data analysis in mixed methods research involves the analyses of both the quantitative and qualitative datasets that have been collected. Furthermore, these datasets have to be integrated so that the results stem from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses. This integration should yield coherent and meaningful understanding of the research problem (Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2011).

The following criteria proposed by Onwuegbuzie and Combs (2011) were adopted to provide an inclusive and comprehensive description of mixed analysis for this study. These authors argue that it is imperative that the mixed methods researchers clarify the purpose of their analysis, the number of data types to be analysed, the sequence of analysis, and the priority that is placed on each data type.

Table 3.3: A comprehensive description of mixed analysis

Description of the mixed analysis for this study	
Purpose of analysis	• Triangulation • Complementarity
Data types analysed	• Quantitative data • Qualitative data
Sequence of analysis	Concurrent analysis
Priority	Equal emphasis on both data types

3.5.1 Rationale for conducting the mixed analysis

The first goal for undertaking mixed analysis was to establish triangulation. This was done by comparing the quantitative findings to the qualitative results to establish correlations (convergence or divergence) between two types of data. Mixed analysis was also done in order to achieve complementarity. This was achieved by simultaneously interpreting data from the quantitative and qualitative analyses in order to enhance findings obtained.

3.5.2 Number of data types analysed

In this study, the mixed analysis involved analysing the quantitative data using quantitative strategies. On the other hand, qualitative data was analysed using qualitative strategies. These were the only types of data analysed.

3.5.3 Mixed analysis sequence

The convergent parallel mixed analysis was done. Quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis were done concurrently. This means that the two types of analysis happened almost at the same time. One analysis did not influence the other. However, the results from each analysis were merged.

3.5.4 Priority of analytical components

In this study, both the qualitative and quantitative analysis strands were given equal priority. According to Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007), their equal status provides for richer data, interpretations and increases understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

3.5.5 Concurrent mixed analysis

The questionnaire data (N=83) was analysed using the SAS program. This program yielded the descriptive statistics such as frequency tables, means, and standard deviations. The mean scores of the domains formed the basis of the analysis and discussions.

Concurrently, the interview data was coded on two levels. Firstly, deductive framework analysis was used. I coded the data using pre-determined themes by identifying parts of data that fit under each of the a priori themes (*these themes were derived from the review of literature*). This coding was guided by a fixed framework that was taken from the interview protocol (indexing raw data under the pre-defined themes). Where applicable, I refined the a priori themes to come up with new refined themes. Secondly, the inductive thematic network analysis was done. This is an exploratory perspective whereby I coded all the data and allowed new codes to emerge. I added new codes to the list as I progressed with the coding. The coding was done for each of the six participants.

I started fitting raw data under a priori themes, then placed the a priori themes under the main/overarching themes, namely, *views, opportunities* and *challenges*. The main themes were developed to align with the first two research questions of my study, for example, all the data that revealed the participants' views about their role were grouped together. Similarly, all the data where the participants expressed the opportunities they received since the introduction of the new curriculum were grouped under the main theme, with *opportunities* and the challenges expressed placed under the theme called *challenges*. The codes for emergent themes, *training* and *managing change* were also placed under these themes.

3.5.6 Interpretation

Following the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative datasets, I adopted a side-by-side approach when comparing the results from both datasets. First, the quantitative results were presented, followed by the presentation of qualitative results. Interpretation was done based on the comparison of both quantitative and qualitative results. This interpretation process involved integration of data. This was done by mixing both quantitative and qualitative datasets to form a coherent whole.

The interpretation process involved deep thinking about the results in order to reveal their latent meanings. Interpretation is a critical stage in data analysis and, therefore, requires special attention. As such, Krueger's (1994) framework was used for this stage.

Framework for interpreting coded data (Krueger, 1994)

The researcher considered the following aspects of the data:

1. Words: The actual words used by participants and their meanings.

2. Context: The context in which they expressed their experiences and feelings (personalising/impersonal).

3. Internal consistency: Changes in participants' opinions and views, and an extent of consensus.

4. Frequency of comments: The number of times a particular comment was made and the number of participants who expressed that particular idea.

5. Specificity of comments: Placed more attention on the views of the participants who referred to personal experiences rather than imaginary situations.

6. Intensity of comments: The depth of the feelings that were made (positive/negative comments).

7. Big ideas: Big concepts that emerged from accumulated data.

3.6 Ethical considerations

The researcher applied for ethical clearance from the University of the Free State before conducting the research. The clearance stipulates the considerations that a researcher needs to adhere to. In the following sections, I elaborate on the considerations made during the course of this study.

3.6.1 Permission from the Ministry

I wrote a letter to the Senior Education Officer requesting permission to gain access to the schools that were identified as investigation sites for the study. After obtaining permission, I subsequently visited the schools where I met with the principals, and I shared the purpose of my study and all the processes that relate to the study. I presented a letter to each of the principals to request permission formally to conduct the study at their school.

3.6.2 Informed consent and voluntary participation

Due to the sensitivity of the study, respecting the participants' autonomy to make their own choices, as well as their integrity as human beings and as professionals, it was important that ethical principles guided the study. The most fundamental ethical consideration I made was to seek informed and voluntary consent from the principals to participate in the study. I drafted a consent letter for participants. In the consent letter, the principals were made aware that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time, without any prejudice or penalty.

3.6.3 Confidentiality of data and anonymity of participants

The participants were reassured that data collected during the study would remain confidential. As a result, all transcriptions, notes and audio recordings used during the interviews and observations were stored safely with only the primary researcher having access to them.

Participants' information shared during the discussions, interviews and observations was kept private and the research results were presented in an anonymous manner. Both the schools and the participants were informed that, in the case where their schools or their names were quoted, pseudonyms would be used, and that I would endeavour to remove any identifying details that may compromise their schools or their confidentiality and privacy from the research report.

3.7 Limitations of the study

As an experienced teacher, I accept and acknowledge the potential for my views to be skewed by my own experience, values, and perspectives as an instructional leader.

When I realised the potential for my own thoughts and conclusions to overshadow the participants' ideas, I backed up my claims with relevant literature.

Another limitation of this study is the sample for the questionnaires (N=83) and only six participants for interviews. This sample is a small percentage of the entire principal population in Lesotho. However, those individuals who participated provided interesting and meaningful data.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter clarified pragmatism as the paradigm that guided the researcher to decide on using the mixed methods approach. Pragmatism allowed the researcher to select the methods that would help answer the research questions. As such, the mixed methods approach was better placed to provide a comprehensive understanding to the research phenomenon – principals' perspectives regarding their roles during the implementations of the new curriculum.

Furthermore, this chapter discussed the data collection instruments, as well as the sampling techniques used to select the participants. The target of using purposive sampling in this study was to obtain rich data. In addition, the data collection process was carried out in two concurrent phases. This chapter showed that the concurrent data collection was done in such a way that both quantitative and quantitative datasets contributed equally to answering the main research question of this study.

The chapter further explained the ethical considerations followed and the ways in which the quality of this study was ensured.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The overarching aim of this study was to explore the perspectives of Lesotho primary school principals on their roles and responsibilities in the implementation and leadership of the new integrated primary school curriculum. In addressing this aim, the following secondary objectives were formulated:

1. To investigate principals' views and understandings of their roles in the implementation and leadership of the integrated curriculum in Lesotho.
2. To explore challenges and opportunities that principals encounter in fulfilling their roles.
3. To explain the perspectives, challenges and opportunities of the principals with respect to their roles in curriculum implementation and leadership thereof.

The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyse data from the qualitative and quantitative phase. Data collection and analysis thereof were done concurrently but independently. However, in this chapter, the qualitative findings are presented first and followed by the quantitative results. The qualitative data were derived from the semi-structured interviews, and the presentation for this dataset is done under the three main a priori themes, which are aligned to the three research questions of this study. For confidentiality purposes, the following pseudonyms were assigned to each participant: Peter, Prudence, Paul, Takesure, Victor and Dominic.

Quantitative data for this study were obtained from a questionnaire comprising close-ended questions on a four-point Likert scale. It consisted of two sections, viz., section A: Biographical information and section B: Likert scale data. The questionnaire data was statistically analysed using the SAS (SAS Institute Inc. 2016) computer software program. The presentation of data was done using tables to aid quick visual understanding. The mean scores were used to provide a numerical overview of each domain. These mean scores offered a way for analytical description as well as the interpretation thereof using statistical procedures. This data were collected and analysed specifically in response to the first question of this

study.

4.2 Qualitative presentation and analysis

4.2.1 Principals' views and understandings regarding their role

The following themes are discussed to reveal the views and understandings of the principals on their role – their main task being that of a principal, supervising teaching, training and managing change.

4.2.1.1 Main task of a principal

The principals expressed a variety of views on their main task in the implementation of the new curriculum. Views such as helper, collaborator, supervisor, teacher and servant surfaced. For instance, Peter described his task as that of a helper, because he helps the teachers to implement the new curriculum in the correct way. He pointed out, however, that it was a challenging task to help the teachers, but he believed that he was doing his best to help them:

> *My main task is to help teachers master this curriculum even though it is challenging ... I have to help them to implement this curriculum appropriately ... It is challenging ... I am trying my best.*

Peter realised the challenge that comes with mediating curriculum change and he is also concerned about the appropriate implementation by his teachers.

A unique view was given by Prudence. She considers herself a servant of the Ministry. Her main task during the implementation of the new curriculum is to give guidance to the teachers, especially when they encounter problems. She said,

> *I am a servant who is under the control of the Ministry of Education ... I feel that my main task is to guide ... to guide my fellow teachers, especially where they may have problems.*

From her statement, Prudence appeared to be somewhat of a bureaucrat, whose task is to follow centrally mandated orders. She also seems to take a problem-oriented approach to implementation. This would suggest that she only deals with the problems associated with the implementation of the new curriculum.

Paul has an even more interesting view of his main task as a principal. He regards himself as a collaborator. He says he works together with the teachers during the implementation of the new curriculum in his school. He indicates that he and his teachers are still in the process of learning more about the new curriculum and, as a result, he does not regard himself as a leader as far as the new curriculum is concerned. He said,

> It is to work hand-in-hand with the teachers. I have to work together with them because I cannot say I can guide them with it. We are all learning how to deal with it.

Paul acknowledges that he is in the same boat as the teachers although he is the principal. He also believes that expertise does not only reside in him but in the whole group. This shows that he values the principle of distributed leadership. Alternatively, Paul's revelation indicates that he may somehow feel inadequate because making sense of the curriculum together with his teachers does not seem like he leads its implementation.

On the other hand, Victor describes his main role as a teacher and a supervisor. As a principal, his work is to teach learners and to supervise teachers. This indicates that he has dual functions in the school. He said,

> In Lesotho, a primary school principal is supposed to get into the class and teach, that's the first thing. While still teaching, you also have to supervise other teachers to ensure that they teach and teach well.

Victor's utterances reveal that he may see his role in implementing the curriculum reform from two fronts, as a teacher and as a supervisor of teachers.

According to Dominic, his main role is to ensure that the school functions properly. He does this by ensuring that teachers do their daily work. His priority is on the general functioning of his school by ensuring that the teachers adhere to their daily tasks. He elaborated: *"My role is to see to it that the school functions properly in general ... to see to it that the teachers are doing their daily duties."*

Due to a lack of materials during the implementation of the new curriculum, he also makes sure that the teachers improvise. However, he is also a resource provider whose task is to provide materials in cases where teachers cannot improvise. He seems to prefer creative teachers and he is always eager to support them. He said, "*I have to see to it that we improvise ... where the teachers cannot, I have to see to it that, as a principal, I provide.*"

Takesure regards himself as an overseer of the thorough implementation of the new curriculum. Therefore, his main task is to ensure the implementation of government policies by the teachers. By so doing, he ensures that teachers implement the curriculum as stipulated. He said,

> *To ensure that the government policies are implemented thoroughly by the implementers, who are the teachers ... I have to guarantee that teachers are really implementing what is stipulated ...*

He is concerned with the appropriateness of the implementation of policies as stipulated. This may indicate that he is conversant with the policy stipulations and knows what is expected of the teachers. His expectation is that the teachers should implement the new curriculum by planning lessons, recording their work and assessing learners. Therefore, his work is to ensure that teachers thoroughly perform these tasks. It seems that he regards these technical aspects as important indicators of implementation. He said,

> *So they will plan, they will make the lesson plans, they will record, and they will assess the concepts of the curriculum ... I am the overseer of seeing to it that all these things are done thoroughly as they can.*

The principals view their leadership roles differently. While the role of being an overseer and a supervisor is a common view, these principals' duties also involve ensuring that the teachers implement the new curriculum by doing their work thoroughly. Others consider themselves as teachers, collaborators and servants. For instance, Victor says that he is, first and foremost, a teacher because he has to teach, and Paul considers himself a collaborator, who works hand-in-hand with teachers, because he is still learning about the NC. At other times, Paul becomes a

subordinate because some teachers know more about the new curriculum than he does. Prudence views herself as a servant under the control of the Ministry of Education because she views the new curriculum as an order from the Ministry, which mandates teachers to change, and she, therefore, becomes a guide for teachers who experience problems. According to Shaked and Schechter (2017), school principals are mediators between the reform and the teachers. From the preceding sections, the principals made sense of their mediation role differently based on their various contexts.

4.2.1.2 Supervising teaching

The common view among the principals is that they supervise teaching and learning by conducting lesson observations. However, the frequency with which they conduct lesson observation differs even though the purpose seems to be similar. For instance, Peter conducts lesson observation in order to oversee that teachers adhere to their work. However, he felt that the low frequency with which he conducted lesson observations amounts to nothing. He said, "*I have to supervise them to see that they do their work … I can't say that I do it because I don't do it regularly; I do it after a long time. One time per quarter.*"

His guidelines for lesson observations were based on the content to be taught. His main concern during lesson observations is the teaching of prescribed content. He also believes that the content of the new curriculum is too challenging and, therefore, difficult for teachers. He said, *"I consider the content to be delivered … will refer to the lesson plan … from there, I will observe the teacher whether he or she is delivering what has been planned for that period."*

Paul indicated that he conducts lesson observations once per month. According to him, this low frequency is because he also has a specific class to teach. During lesson observations, he checks the teachers' lesson plans against the syllabus to verify that the teachers teach the prescribed content. Therefore, for Paul, aligning the lesson content with the syllabus is the major proof that teachers are doing the right things. It means that his guidance is largely limited to ensuring that teachers deliver the prescribed content. He said,

> *… maybe in a month I do it (lesson observations) once or twice … because I too have a specific class that I have to teach. Only way that can prove that one is on the right track is by looking at their lesson plans, checking whether what they schemed is there in the syllabus.*

Prudence showed that she conducts lesson observations at least twice per year. She pointed out that a lot of office work prevents her from conducting lesson observations as frequently as she would like. She described her presence in classrooms as '*visits*'. She said,

> *Yoh… ! Sometimes the work in the office is too much that day-in and day-out, even when I thought that I would visit the classes, I am not able. I think I do it once in the first session and once in the second session because the time does not allow me that much.*

Her lesson observations were casual. For instance, she said that she was marking learners' books while observing lessons and said she tried to be very friendly during observations. It can be argued that she tends to create a win-win situation because she may feel like she is intruding and the teachers may not be as welcoming. She said,

> *I went to them, asked for their preparation books, sat there … and I was marking … And I am trying as much as possible to be friendly.*

When talking about the same issue of supervision, Takesure's view was that he needed to ensure that teachers have planned. Therefore, he monitored the teachers' planning books on a weekly basis. He believed that checking the teachers' books regularly gave him an indication that they have done the work. He said,

> *My role there is to see to it that teachers have planned and, on a weekly basis, I will ensure that I monitor their books that they have well prepared the lessons daily … So, in that way, I will be ensured that they have done the work.*

In the same way, Victor elaborated that his supervisory tasks involve ensuring that teachers are prepared and that they teach the prescribed content. This may suggest

that he regards lesson preparation and teaching the prescribed content as the two most important tasks for him as a supervisor. He said, *"To ensure that they are well-prepared for teaching before every lesson ... I ensure that they teach what is expected, what the syllabus prescribes."*

Moreover, when compared to other principals, he holds divergent views towards lesson observations. His main concerns during lesson observations are preparation and pedagogy. He expects the teachers to use learner-centred pedagogy. Unlike other principals, Victor is concerned with both teaching and learning. He says learners should be engaged during the teaching and learning situation. He said,

> *I observe other teachers ... check the lesson plan, we discuss how she is going to address that subject that she has planned ... I want to see … if the teacher is able to pass the message that is planned to give to learners ... to see if those learners are able to get that information that we need ... learners to be engaged.*

For Dominic, supervising entailed making sure that the teachers prepared daily lessons. He also conducts quarterly lesson observations, which he called 'visits', to monitor teaching. During lesson observations, the principal checks for the link between lesson content and the syllabus. By doing this, the principal ensures that teachers teach the prescribed content. He placed primacy on lesson preparation and the teaching of the prescribed content. He explained it this way,

> *I have to see to it that teachers prepare. I have to make sure that teachers prepare on a daily basis ... the lessons … Then I have to visit the classes ... I visit classes, actually, on a quarterly basis ... to see to it that teaching takes form properly in classes … Actually, the main thing is to see that the teacher teaches according to the plan that he or she has made and that it links with the curriculum.*

Dominic gave an interesting reason for conducting quarterly lesson observations. He revealed that there was a prior arrangement to set the rules of engagement between the principal and teachers regarding how the principal should monitor teaching. He explained, *"Actually, there is the plan we reached*

together, that is, what we agreed upon as a team that we have to work this way. We have to be visited quarterly."

Another pertinent issue revealed by the principals is the location for post-observation feedback. A recurrent view among them is that post-observation feedback is done in the office. For instance, Peter holds the post-observation meetings with teachers to give them feedback. Interestingly, the post-observation meetings are held specifically in the office and not the classroom. It can be argued that, in the office, the principal holds a territorial advantage over the teachers. He said,

> *I can sit with the teacher, help the teacher but, if I fail to help, I ask for help from other teachers, those who are knowledgeable in the subject ... I talk to the teacher here in the office, not in the classroom.*

Post-observation discussions between observed teachers and Prudence also take place in the office. She pointed out that teachers often accept mistakes that she highlights. The discussion location and teachers' acceptance of their mistakes may be related to the power dynamics between the principal and the teachers. It can be argued that the principal's authority is augmented in the office where teachers may feel inferior. She said,

> *After that we came here, sat down and had a discussion ... in the office ... The teacher accepted problems that were pointed out and also gave reasons for those mistakes ...*

After lesson observations, Victor also gives feedback to individual teachers to show them how he expected teaching to take place. Post-observation feedback is usually done in the office. However, he believes that, in his school, teachers are free and they take observation feedback positively. He noted,

> *When the teacher has finished, I sit down with him and show him how he was supposed to teach. Then the teacher will go back to re-teach the lesson differently ... In most cases, we call them into the office ... our teachers here ... we give chance ... they are free.*

Victor also emphasised that help is readily available for any teacher who encounters problems during teaching. Help can come from him as a principal, his deputy or any teacher who may be asked to assist others. He said,

> *If there is a certain topic that they don't know, they may ask another teacher who knows that topic or they can come to the office and ask to be given assistance. If they can get it from the office, there can be a person from the office who can go and teach that topic, either the principal or the deputy, or any teacher that we can ask to go and assist that particular class with these issues.*

Recent literature does show that principals often conduct lesson observations as a way of supervision (Shulhan, 2018). The principals in this study gave evidence to the effect that they conduct lesson observations as a strategic way of supervising teachers. However, the frequency of the observations differ. These lesson observations were done either monthly, quarterly or once per semester. Peter observed teachers quarterly based on his belief that the content of the new curriculum is too deep for teachers, that teachers were not well trained and that some teachers were still resistant to the new curriculum. Therefore, lesson observations helped him to ensure that teachers were implementing the new curriculum appropriately. Moreover, teaching the prescribed content seemed to be the purpose for conducting lessons. For instance, Peter, Dominic, Victor, Takesure and Paul's objective during lesson observations was also to ensure that teachers deliver the content prescribed in the new curriculum. However, Victor was concerned with how teachers teach and how learning takes place during his observations, while for Prudence, lesson observations were rather casual and "friendly."

Another reason for lesson observations was to ensure that teachers have prepared daily lesson plans. This was highlighted by Victor, Takesure and Dominic. These principals also monitored the daily lesson planning by teachers. For instance, Takesure believed that checking lesson plans shows that teachers have actually done the work.

In most cases, the principals referred to their time in classrooms as *'visits'*, admittedly because they are not always in the classrooms. For instance, Paul and

Victor reported that they have their own classes to teach and, as a result, they are not able to conduct classroom observations as often as they would like. Office work seemed to hinder Prudence from conducting lesson observations. Moreover, the post-observation feedbacks are held in the '*office*', and they believe that teachers are free to talk and take the feedback positively. However, it can be argued that the office may disempower the teachers because it is associated with hierarchy (Tsang & Liu, 2016). According to Hourani and Stringer (2015), principals should continually monitor teaching and learning to ensure that all efforts align to the reform standards. In doing so, the principals make considerations of what is implementable given the reform demands and their context (Shaked & Schecter, 2017).

4.2.1.3 Training/preparation

Prevalent views expressed by principals included the fact that they were either not trained or received insufficient training regarding the implementation of the new curriculum. Seemingly, their general impression is that they have shallow information on the new curriculum.

For instance, Peter expressed a view that being a principal is confusing for him because he is not trained. He did not get leadership training on the new curriculum. However, he indicated that, on behalf of his previous principal, he was part of the consultations during policy formulation. He believes that more training on the new curriculum is the solution. Therefore, Peter relies on his own knowledge or understanding to lead the new curriculum. He said, *"No, I wasn't trained ... I knew about this curriculum before it started ... I was just asked by my former principal to go there on his behalf."*

According to Peter, most teachers in his school are old (himself included) therefore, their content knowledge is old and not relevant in the new curriculum. He also pointed out that their initial teacher training did not prepare them to teach the new curriculum. This may explain why he regards the content of the new curriculum as difficult for teachers. He said, *"We were trained long time ago ... Our (preservice) training was not leading us to teach this (new curriculum)."*

Similarly, Paul says that, as a principal, he has not been trained about the new

curriculum. He attended training about the new curriculum once, but as a teacher. This implies that he relies on information about the new curriculum that he acquired as a teacher, which he believes is inadequate for him to execute his oversight duties. As a result, insufficient information about the new curriculum creates challenges for principals. He points out that those who disseminate information about the new curriculum only give them superficial information. He, therefore, believes that he needs a regular and detailed course/workshop that will deepen his knowledge/understanding of the new curriculum because a lack of understanding hampers implementation. He said,

> *At the time of going there, I wasn't a principal. I only went to the workshop at ECoL once. Really, the information that we got there was very shallow, therefore, we struggle a lot. Those who are supposed to give us the right information about this curriculum only give us very shallow information. The implementation of the curriculum is not easy. We need a course that will help us to know this curriculum deeply. If we do not understand it deeply, there will not be any progress.*

Prudence argues that she got the training but believes that she is 'half-baked' as a principal because the in-service workshops she attended were short and did not give her detailed information about the new curriculum. She indicated that she often seems to rely on teachers for the new curriculum. She feels that not knowing enough about the new curriculum poses a problem for her as a leader when she has to help the teachers. She said,

> *Ministry half-baked us, we leaders ... felt that we were under-cooked. We were not given enough workshops to ensure that we indeed know it. It was very short indeed because it did not even last one week ... They should not seem to rely more on the teachers, even though we need to help each other.*

She further indicated that the attitude of the trainers was the main flaw of the workshops. It was as if the trainers believed that principals already know about the new curriculum hence the workshops were sketchy and short. She said she realised that the workshops did not address core issues, but she hesitated to ask questions

for fear of appearing to lack knowledge, yet she felt that she was being 'under-cooked'. She said,

> It was like the trainers believed that, because we are principals, we already know … so there was no need to spend a lot of time at the workshops. It was very short indeed because it did not even last one week. I was reluctant to ask a lot of questions because I could be viewed a being a bit stupid hence I refrained from asking a lot of questions. I felt that we were under-cooked.

On the same issue of insufficient training, Takesure believes that the dissemination of the new curriculum was not done well hence implementation is problematic. He stated that he attended the '*so-called training*'. He believes the training was not adequate and he is very suspicious of the training he received and does not value it. He said,

> Truly speaking, in Lesotho, the dissemination of the new curriculum wasn't done well … the developers of the curriculum did not do much in terms of dissemination of the curriculum, hence, its implementation is problematic … First and foremost, the trainings that were held were not adequate... the principals, they have gone to the so-called training …

As a principal, Takesure believes that he is lagging behind concerning the new curriculum. He reports that the teachers were trained before he was and that the teachers taught him about the new curriculum. As a result, he compares this situation to '*the tail wagging the dog*'. Given this situation, he says that he is trying hard to be a leader. Moreover, he says it becomes difficult to monitor teachers because they were trained before he was. The teachers were familiar with the new curriculum before him yet he is required to monitor them. He said,

> … even before principals went to the training, the teachers were already teaching the principals … they were already teaching the principals what the principals were supposed to monitor … And now, the dog is striving very hard to wave the tail … They have gone to a new land and familiarised themselves into a new land … before a person who is supposed to monitor

them familiarise themselves to that land … They left the leader behind.

He reports that principals trained for four days while teachers were trained several times. This means that the teachers were trained more than the principals regarding how to implement the new curriculum. However, he believes that the training of the teachers was not consistent. According to him, the trainers gave conflicting messages to teachers. He said,

> *The principals, they have gone [for] just four days … following the teachers that have gone for several trainings … You shall find that some of the teachers … they were even trained more than the principals in regard to how to implement the new curriculum… but even those trainings … they were not consistent … you shall find to it that the trainers … some of them have said things this way, some of them have said things that way.*

Takesure was of the view that the inconsistencies in teacher training cause teachers to dislike the procedures of the new curriculum. As a result, teachers feel that it is better to stick to the old ways of doing things. The conflicting messages from the trainers tended to frustrate the teachers, hence their belief that it is better to stick to the old ways of teaching. He said,

> *So, such things turn the implementers, which are the teachers, to loathe what they are to do … If they are to go to the training and told to do so… the other group go to the training and told to do that way … the third group go to the training they come with a new concept to them … It is very frustrating … hence, why they will even say it is better if we could stick to what we have been doing.*

Takesure is sceptical of the manner in which the NC was introduced. As a result, he says that he does not even understand the basic concepts of the new curriculum because he feels that it was implemented rapidly. He said,

> *I don't even understand the concept … why can you say you are no longer a teacher, you are a facilitator? … I don't even understand why you are no longer saying this is a subject, this and this is a learning area that … so*

that kind of change.

He says the hasty introduction of the new curriculum with its new terminology has a negative impact on them as implementers. He reports that they feel inferior if they are not familiar with the changes that are envisaged by the new curriculum. He explained,

> *The more it is rapid with terminology ... the new curriculum ... whatever ... everything ... it makes the implementers to feel inferior ... am I familiar to this? ... I don't know this ... it turns to make them what ... to feel inferior to what they are supposed to do.*

Victor believes that the training that he got on the new curriculum was not enough to prepare him as a principal. The superficial training resulted in him having inferior curriculum knowledge compared to the teachers yet he feels that, as a principal, he should be more knowledgeable about the new curriculum than the teachers so that he is able to monitor the teachers. He said,

> *I was taught all that in one day. That is, Grade 7 teachers took one week being trained about the new curriculum but I took one day. Whereas, I am supposed to have more knowledge than them ... They have more knowledge than me ... that is even where the teacher is cheating me; I am not able to see ...*

As a principal, Dominic expected to spend more time being taught in more detail about the new curriculum than the teachers are. He feels that the Ministry made things difficult for him as it has failed to prepare him for the new curriculum. He said,

> *I expected that if teachers were taught about this ... I was going to be taught in more detail than the teachers ... but I won't say it is better because nobody made it better ... it is the work of the Ministry to make it better than it is.*

To improve his knowledge, he had to self-educate by learning about the NC on his own despite attending a training workshop. He said, *"Learn on your own... that is, if I didn't do that I would still have no knowledge."*

Dominic also believed that he got inadequate training on the new curriculum. He believed that the week's training that he received was not sufficient because the new curriculum is very broad. He said:

> *The training was shallow ... It wasn't enough because this curriculum is very broad. You can't say you are trained well if you are taking just a week's training for this broad thing that you have to implement in class.*

Due to this lack of training, Dominic reported that he had to learn about the new curriculum from the teachers. He had to learn the procedures of the new curriculum especially from teachers of Grades 1, 2 and 3. He said,

> *I have to learn from the teachers ... You learn the procedures of the curriculum from the teachers ... more especially, teachers who went to training of the lower classes, Grades 1, 2, 3. We were not given the chance to be trained for this curriculum at that time. We only learned from the teachers who were workshopped.*

The principals seem to think that they received superficial training on the new curriculum that lasted from one day to a week, while others claim that they did not get any training at all. Prudence, Takesure, Dominic and Victor believe that their training did not prepare them adequately to lead the new curriculum. On the other hand, Peter and Paul received no training about the new curriculum and, as a result, they rely on the training that they got as teachers. The principals who got shallow training use words such as 'half-baked' and 'under-cooked' to describe the shallow information they got from their training. They further pointed out that their knowledge of the new curriculum is inferior to that of teachers. For instance, Victor and Takesure believe that their superficial knowledge hinders them from monitoring teachers. Principals appear to have either self-educated themselves about the new curriculum or learnt from their teachers as Dominic did. In this regard, Moorosi and Grant (2013) have argued the point that there seems to be no strategic or deliberate efforts to improve school leadership in Lesotho.

4.2.1.4 Managing change

During the implementation of an educational reform, principals are expected to act as brokers of such envisaged reform (Lai, 2015). Principals, in this study, alluded to the notion that some of their teachers are resistant towards the new curriculum and these principals use several strategies to counter teachers' resistance. Their strategies included monitoring resistant teachers, using peer-influence, out-sourcing help from the community and using school-based workshops.

Peter believes that some of his teachers are resistant to the new curriculum. As a result, he feels that he has to monitor those teachers closely to ensure that they do what is expected of them. It seems that the principal knows what is expected from the teachers (i.e. they are involved in the curriculum). He said, *"Most of people are resistant to change …There are some people who are still resistant and I have to see that they are involved in this new curriculum."*

Likewise, Takesure has realised that some teachers are resistant, hence they are reluctant or have a fear of teaching some concepts of the new curriculum because they are not trained in teaching those concepts. This shows that a lack of expertise from the teachers can cause them to resist teaching certain concepts of the new curriculum. He said,

> *Some of them are resistant to adopt the concepts of the new curriculum … you can see that they are reluctant to implement … certain LOs that teachers fear to implement … some of them never attended the lessons for IT, concerning IT, that means they are technologically poor, so they are unable, totally unable, to implement concepts in regard to the IT.*

Apart from that, Takesure thinks that teachers who lack expertise also have a fear of being judged by learners. To counter a lack of expertise from teachers, the principal sources help from experts from the community. He said,

> *Sometimes they fear when their learners could see that they are not skilled in that … As the office, we have gone to the extent of finding the resource people from different centres.*

On the other hand, Prudence allows teachers to influence each other about the new curriculum. However, it can be argued that while influencing each other, there is a potential that teachers may collectively misinterpret the curriculum. Interestingly, the principal seems to rely on this strategy without an indication of her own role influencing the teachers. Prudence seems to conform to the teachers' sense-making with no clear indication of how to lead that process. She said, *"They influence others to go along with this curriculum telling them that they will end up doing it smoothly just like the old curriculum ..."*

Despite using peer-influence to ensure that teachers adhere to the new curriculum, she expressed a view that she regards the new curriculum as an order from the Ministry for teachers to change. She believes that teachers are the ones capable of bringing about the envisaged change. As a result, her main task is to motivate teachers to accept and like the new curriculum. She said,

> *I tried to show them that this curriculum is an order from the Ministry for us to change ... we are the ones who bring about change, no one can shy away from that truth ... So my role in this regard was that of a motivator for the teachers to like this thing. Because, if we resist, it will be our downfall ... so it was just that I was motivating.*

According to Victor, the teachers in his school are very slow to change as required by the new curriculum. He said his teachers did not like the new curriculum at first and did not understand it. As a result, they examined the new curriculum to try to understand it. The principal allowed collective meaning-making. He said,

> *"They are very slow, truly speaking ... And initially, they did not like it at all. They didn't even understand it at all ... we sat down and examined it and realised that this curriculum, it is deeper ... it is a lot better than the old one."*

Furthermore, in dealing with teachers' resistance towards the new curriculum, Victor sought help from the pilot schools in his centre. The principals agreed that teachers from the pilot schools should train other teachers within the centre. Victor's role was to allow his teachers time to be trained. He said,

> *In that situation, I was helped by my centre ... because my centre had schools that were pilot schools ... I was one of the principals who were crying ... then we asked the centre to meet and we met. The pilot teachers were the ones who trained others ... They helped a lot because our people were afraid.*

Dominic pointed out that teachers were trained before him as a principal. As such, Dominic's school holds school-based workshops whereby the trained teachers had to train the principal and other teachers in a school-based workshop that gives the modus operandi for the principal. Then the principal's task is to follow up resolutions of the school-based workshop. He noted,

> *Actually, when this curriculum came, teachers were given the workshops. Immediately after the workshops, we used to have our school-based workshops, whereby the teacher that comes from the workshop gives us what we are expected to do. Therefore, I take it from there, then I make sure that the teacher teaches according to what that teacher who came from the workshop told us that we have to do.*

During the school-based workshops, decisions are taken collectively and the principal seems to rarely take the lead. He said, *"… it's collective responsibility because we are trying to help each and every individual ... but if I realise any general concern, then I address it."*

To sum up, the principals reported that some teachers appeared resistant to the new curriculum. Therefore, they use different strategies to ensure that the new curriculum is implemented in their schools. For instance, Peter's approach is to closely monitor resistant teachers, while Prudence says she motivates the resistant teachers to like the new curriculum. Victor sought help from the schools that piloted the new curriculum as a way of dealing with teachers' resistance. Takesure believes that teachers lack expertise in certain areas of the new curriculum hence he out-sources help from experts in the community. Prudence and Dominic allow teachers to make collective decisions on how to implement the new curriculum. While Prudence allows teachers to influence each other about the new curriculum, in Dominic's school, the school-based workshops are used to set the modus operandi

for implementing the new curriculum. This means that a teacher who attended new curriculum training would train the principal as well as the other teachers. Then the task of the principal is to follow up on resolutions of the school-based workshop. Accordingly, Lunenburg and Lunenburg (2013) suggest that principals should act as agents of change during the implementation of a curriculum reform which is somewhat the case with the principals in this study.

4.2.2 Opportunities

Principals expressed various opinions regarding the opportunities they get on their role in the implementation of the new curriculum. Their opportunities included motivating learners about their schoolwork and also motivating teachers to like the new curriculum. Furthermore, principals use teamwork to solve problems brought by new curriculum.

4.2.2.1 Motivating teachers and learners

Peter found it difficult to speak about the benefits of being a principal. However, since the implementation of the new curriculum, he works as a motivator. He indicated that the new curriculum puts emphasis on learners doing practical work. As a result, he gets the opportunity to motivate learners who excel in hands-on activities. He said, *"those who are doing practical work, I used to motivate them."*

He rather spoke hypothetically about the benefits of being a principal. He indicated that principalship would offer an ambitious person the chance to improve his/her school, even though it is not what he is experiencing. He said,

> *I think what can be good is when you are ambitious ... as a principal you will get that chance ... to ensure that the objectives that carry the school forward ... to have wisdom to solve, you will have to think; have problem-solving skills which are powerful.*

He indicated that he asks teachers who excel in teaching to help those who experience difficulties. He prefers an environment where teachers help each other. He noted, *"... if ever I find that the teacher is excelling, I just ask that someone to help others."*

According to Prudence, her main role is to act as a motivator for learners who have a bad attitude towards school. She seems to be concerned about the attitude of the learners towards school. She explained, "*I motivate them (learners) to see things differently than they are currently doing.*"

4.2.2.2 Personal growth

Paul believed that the new curriculum has made him look for more information about it in order to increase his knowledge. He said that he gathered a lot of information (self-educated) regarding the new curriculum and this led to his personal/academic growth. He said, "*I read a lot to gather a lot of information so that made me grow and have more knowledge.*"

4.2.2.3 Benefiting from teamwork

Paul also stated that the new curriculum gives him the opportunity to harvest the benefits of teamwork. He used teamwork to solve problems that arise from the teaching-learning activities. Teachers usually gather to discuss ways of dealing with such problems. He said, "*Normally we have teamwork with the teachers ... But if I see that the problem involves the lower classes, I call all lower classes and we discuss how to go about it.*"

Similarly, Prudence showed that teachers who like the new curriculum convince or influence those who are resistant to it. In this case, she allows teachers to influence each other. For instance, when there is a common misunderstanding of new curriculum concepts among teachers, she allows teachers to meet, discuss and come up with their own common understanding. However, it is noteworthy that during such meetings, teachers tend to compare aspects of the new curriculum to the old one. It shows that Prudence believes in the meaning-making of her teachers even though there is a possibility that they may mislead each other by likening the new curriculum to the old curriculum. She explained,

> *Some are still resistant, saying that this curriculum cannot be implemented ... some teachers liked it very much even when others were talking bad about it, they stood firm and explained to other teachers. They influence others to go along with this curriculum telling them that they will*

end up doing it smoothly just like the old curriculum. This new curriculum is the same as the old curriculum except that the wording has been changed here and there.

She also revealed that the new curriculum has created a positive working environment for teachers. Her view is that teachers are happy to teach certain learning areas, which challenge and broaden their minds. She said,

It makes teachers who like their work, who are happy to search the Internet, to collect information for the learners. So, on the other hand, it is a success on the side of teachers, by doing that, their minds widen.

4.2.2.4 Mixed feelings

Takesure reported that the new curriculum confuses him. On one hand, he likes the new curriculum because it offers learners opportunities to learn. However, he regards the teachers' inability to use resources that aid learning as an inhibiting factor towards successful learning. He opined that,

It makes me to be at sixes and sevens! ... Seeing all learners being given an opportunity ... it makes me feel well. But, on the other hand, seeing things that prohibit that particular learner to prove what he is capable of, it makes me sad ... the teachers are unable to use the materials to help the learners.

Victor said that he is enjoying the new curriculum because it is more practical for learners to produce tangible things. It seems that Victor likes the practical aspect of the new curriculum. He said, "*We are enjoying it a lot ... because you will see that one learner is able to make a hat, and teaching learners handicrafts.*"

He felt pleased about the new curriculum but other things that come with it, like the fact that learners no longer repeat grades, frustrate him. Seemingly, Victor has a generally positive view regarding the new curriculum. However, other aspects associated with it have a negative impact on him. He said,

The way the curriculum is built is very good, it is very good, but these other

factors that come with the syllabus, that say a learner does not fail but all other things ... they were not needed ...

4.2.2.5 Reverting to old ways

According to Dominic, teachers did not initially understand what was expected of them in the new curriculum. They thought the new curriculum came with new approaches but later they realised that they had to teach in the usual way. They seemingly reverted to their old ways of teaching, due to the superficial knowledge of teachers and the principal's lack of knowledge to guide the implementation process. It seems that Dominic endorsed the teachers' adaptation of the new curriculum to their old ways of teaching because he feels that everything is going well concerning the new curriculum.

He said,

It was challenging actually ... at first we couldn't even understand the procedures we have to follow in class. We thought it was something very, very new and we have to apply completely new approaches but, as the time goes, we realised that it's teaching as usual ... But now we are getting used to it and things seem to go smooth.

The principals expressed that they have received various benefits since the implementation of the new curriculum. Even though they spoke hypothetically, both Peter and Prudence got the chance to motivate the learners and the teachers. Peter motivates learners to excel in practical activities, while Prudence's motivation targets the learners who have a bad attitude towards school, as well as the teachers who are resistant to the new curriculum.

Moreover, the new curriculum has given some principals a chance to foster teamwork to achieve their specific goals. Apart from using teamwork to solve problems that arise from the teaching-learning situation, Paul also believes that he has become more knowledgeable because of the new curriculum. Dominic relies on school-based workshops, where teachers and the principal collectively create the modus operandi for implementing the new curriculum. Likewise, when Victor

realised that teachers were struggling to understand the new curriculum, he used teamwork to establish a common understanding of the new curriculum. Takesure, on the other hand, out-sources help from experts in the community in order to counter the teachers' lack of expertise in teaching certain concepts of the new curriculum. In consideration of the internal capacities within their schools, the principals seek strategies to adapt to the reform demands (Shaked & Schechter, 2017).

4.2.3 Challenges

In response to the second research question, principals elaborated on the challenges that they encounter in their leadership and implementation of the new curriculum. Their challenges included the fact that they have dual roles, dealing with many problems that involve teachers, parents and the school in general. These problems seemingly cause stress to principals hence their leadership may be negatively affected.

4.2.3.1 Overburdened

Principals feel over-loaded with many responsibilities. For example, they find it difficult to be principals who also have classes to teach. Moreover, they feel overwhelmed by the many problems and responsibilities that come with being a principal. They also feel powerless when they have to deal with problems that emanate from poor relationships among stakeholders in the school.

For instance, Peter stressed that the new curriculum has a lot of work, which he regards as the main problem. Specifically, supervising teachers, which he considers as his main role, is a lot of work for him probably because he has to follow up with the teachers to ensure that they are actually teaching. He said, "*The major problem is that there is a lot of work in this curriculum ... I have to see that teachers do their work ... I have to make the follow ups.*"

Peter further indicated that he teaches three classes altogether on top of being a principal. Being a principal who also teaches creates a lot of stress for him. He feels over-burdened and stressed by his dual role. Moreover, he admits that he is under-performing in both roles. He noted,

I teach. (Most of the time) I'm in class. And I am not teaching only one class ... Plus the office work and I don't master any of this work. I fail to master class work, I fail to master office work ... Sometimes when I come from the office I am stressful then I go back to class.

Furthermore, Peter revealed that he is over-loaded with many problems. For instance, he has to solve problems such as teachers' personal issues, issues brought by parents and issues that concern the school in general. He says these problems cause him stress, which hinders him from doing his work well. He said,

Disadvantages of being a principal are that everything is on you, even personal things are solved by you ... you will have to intervene if there are problems ... It is stressful ... parents bring the moods from home ... Things like that also stress you and hinder you from doing your work well.

Paul expressed a similar opinion regarding the dual role. He feels that being a principal as well as having a class to teach hinders him from conducting lesson observations as regularly as he would like. He said, "*Maybe in a month I do it (lesson observation) once or twice ... because I too have a specific class that I have to teach.*"

Takesure experiences different challenges. He revealed that his biggest challenge is dealing with the relationships of people within the school rather than with the teaching and learning system. He revealed that it is easy to facilitate teaching and learning, but difficult to deal with relationships because some people are difficult to deal with and the bad relationships among them affect the teaching-learning situation. He noted,

[What] you deal with are the challenges in regard to teacher-to-teacher relationships and teacher-to-learner relationships rather than teaching and learning ...Teaching and learning is easily facilitated but those relationships are difficult to deal with ... There are people that are having hard characters in the place of work ... if there is no smooth relationship between the teacher-to-teacher, a teacher-to-parent, a parent-to-teacher ... work of teaching and learning become tense.

As a result, Takesure said that he feels powerless in terms of dealing with relationship problems that hinder the smooth working environment in the school. He revealed that there are no punitive measures that he can take against problematic teachers. He compares himself to a sheep that is monitoring a jackal because he feels disempowered and that it becomes even difficult if a troublesome teacher does not change behaviour voluntarily. He said,

> *If you identify certain things that hinder the smooth relationships ... you shall find to it that you don't have power to bring to an end that, there are no sanctions ... it's like a sheep monitoring a jackal ... A jackal can howl anyhow and a sheep will be so humble ... If he or she doesn't change or reduce jackal manners there is nothing that you can do to him.*

Victor felt that he has many responsibilities at school, which hinder him from observing lessons as often as he would like. At other times, he asks his deputy to help with lesson observations. He said,

> *There are so many problems at school ... there are many parents coming to school ... there are some things that you have to do ... at other times I ask my deputy to go and observe teachers while I am doing the other work.*

Furthermore, Victor appears to be overwhelmed by problems from both teachers and learners. He says dealing or solving learners' and teacher's issues is challenging for him. He emphasised, "*Everybody comes to you crying about anything.*"

Moreover, Victor feels that being a principal is a difficult situation because he works harder than everyone at his school. He said, *"It has an influence ... a bad one in that you have to drive yourself more than everybody ... you have to work harder than everybody."*

On the other hand, Dominic talks about emotions in leadership. He believes that being a principal is a challenging position. It needs a person who is not emotional and who is ready to face challenges. He said,

> *Leadership is a very challenging position ... for you to be a good leader, you don't have to be emotional sometimes ... you have to be ready to face*

challenges ... different challenges.

4.2.3.2 Insufficient information about the new curriculum

Insufficient information about the new curriculum was pointed out as the main challenge in their leadership. Principals report that they were either not trained or inadequately trained. As a result of having little information, they feel that their capacity to lead the implementation of the new curriculum is compromised.

According to Peter, the Ministry should disseminate adequate information about the new curriculum. He feels that he does not have the necessary information to enact the new curriculum given that he was not trained to lead its implementation. He expressed, "*The Ministry needs to see to it that we are equipped with information that helps us to implement the curriculum.*"

Moreover, Paul is adamant that, if the Ministry could conduct regular workshops, they would have the capacity to deal with the new curriculum. He believes that information from such workshops would solve many problems that they currently encounter. He said,

> *I still believe that the Ministry can help us with regular workshops to give us information on how to deal with this curriculum. If we keep getting this shallow information, we will not deliver too well.*

Prudence concurs that she needs intensive training about the new curriculum. Currently, she feels that teachers know more about the new curriculum than she does. As a result, she relies on teachers for many issues about the new curriculum. She feels a need to be more advanced than the teachers. She noted,

> *I suggest that principals should be given intensive training, especially about this new curriculum so that they can be resourceful to the teachers in their schools. They (principals) should maybe be more advanced than the teachers ... so that, when principal talks about something, it should be clear that the principal talks about something he or she is very sure about that thing.*

Prudence also reveals that she doubts her knowledge about the new curriculum. Her knowledge is inferior to that of the teachers. This is likely to affect her confidence when guiding/observing teachers. She said, "*They should not seem to rely more on the teachers, even though we need to help each other. They (principals) should … be more advanced than the teachers.*"

Paul's main challenge is having insufficient knowledge about the new curriculum because he believes that he should have more knowledge than his teachers. He, therefore, thinks that the increased curriculum knowledge will enable him to help or guide teachers whenever they encounter challenges in the new curriculum. However a lack of curriculum knowledge compromises the delivery of the new curriculum and, as a result, its implementation is difficult. He said,

> *It is a challenge (lack of knowledge about curriculum) because I must have knowledge which is a little bit more that of the teachers so that, when they meet challenges in the syllabus, I should be able to guide them … we cannot deliver it correctly because we don't understand it.*

On the same issue, Dominic believes that his knowledge about the new curriculum is inferior to that of the teachers. This hinders his ability to help them. He also fears that those teachers may mislead him. He noted, "*Sometimes you think, this teacher knows more than I do, so how do I assist … or what she tells me sometimes I get to believe that it is the right thing.*"

Takesure metaphorically expressed his dissatisfaction about the knowledge of the new curriculum he has. As a principal, Takesure believes that he is lagging behind concerning the new curriculum. He reports that the teachers were trained before he was and that the teachers taught him about the new curriculum. In essence, Takesure learned about the new curriculum from teachers. As a result, he compares this situation to '*the tail wagging the dog*'. Given this situation, he says that he is trying hard to be a leader. Moreover, he says it becomes difficult to monitor teachers because they were trained before he was. The teachers were familiar with the new curriculum yet he is required to monitor them. He expressed himself in the following manner,

> *... even before principals went to the training, the teachers were already teaching the principals ... they were already teaching the principals what the principals were supposed to monitor ... And now, the dog is striving very hard to wave the tail ...They have gone to a new land and familiarised themselves into a new land … before a person who is supposed to monitor them familiarise themselves to that land ... They left the leader behind.*

4.2.3.3 Deficiencies in teachers' knowledge

Principals expressed a general concern regarding deficiencies in teachers' content knowledge on teaching the new curriculum. According to them, the teachers are not properly trained to teach the new curriculum and, as a result, this situation poses a great challenge to the principals.

In the absence of resources like textbooks, Victor is aware of deficiencies in teachers' content knowledge. However, he finds it difficult to supplement teachers' information himself and he seems unable to find ways of empowering teachers. He explained,

> *... the little information he or she has ... you don't know where you, as a principal, would get additional information ... you say teach this ... if the teacher does not know it, he or she really doesn't know it, what will you do to such a teacher ... what will you do?*

He also says that his experience with the new curriculum was initially challenging because he had the task of teaching the unqualified teachers about the new curriculum. He said, "*When it started, it was very challenging ... they were not qualified teachers ... You had to become a teacher of other teachers instead of being a teacher to the learners.*"

On the other hand, Takesure is also aware of shortcomings in teachers and he perceives this as problematic. He says the teachers are not teaching according to the new curriculum because they still focus on teaching academics and neglect the practical concepts. The reason is that the teachers are not vocationally trained. He said,

They are vocationally not good ... they have the experience of teaching academically so to shift from academic to vocational and then artefacts is now problematic to them ... They are still basically teaching learners focusing on academics ... and putting aside the concepts that demand them ... to be practical. We are now having the untrained teachers under certain concepts.

Commenting on the same issue, Peter pointed out that teachers lack technological skills and, therefore, need to be trained. He said, "*We do not have the computers ... not all of the teachers know how to operate a computer ... Meaning that we also need to be trained on that.*"

4.2.3.4 Insufficient funds

A lack of funds seemed to be a common concern for principals. They alluded to the fact that the new curriculum has financial implications for their schools. However, insufficient funds impinge on their leadership because, as the chief accounting officers of their schools, principals are not able to meet the financial needs of the new curriculum.

For example, Peter's school has no funds available for attending to the needs of the new curriculum. This means that the school cannot afford to buy any teaching and learning materials needed in the new curriculum. He said, *"... the money that the school gets is only enough for maintaining the school ... As for attending to the financial needs of the curriculum, there is no chance.*"

A lack of funds also hinders Paul's leadership. There are no funds available to buy things needed for the new curriculum. As a result, Paul is concerned that teaching and learning processes are suffering due to the inability of the school to buy the necessary curriculum materials. He said, *"[Funds are] not able to accommodate everything that we need to do concerning things that are related to the syllabus.*"

Victor concurs with other principals and feels that a lack of funds hampers his work as a principal. He claims that the money from the Ministry does not come regularly despite the fact that he completes all the necessary requirements to get it. As a

result, the financial needs of the school are taken from his own pocket. He says they spent four years without a utility fund from the government and he had to use his own money to meet the school's needs. He clarified,

> *Other factors that kill your work as a principal ... one of the factors, you may find that this money called ... utility fund does not come even after doing all the necessary things for it to come... this money comes from your pocket as a principal ... We had about four years without any money, financing from our pockets.*

His impression is that principals are poor because a principal will always use his own money to pay school costs whenever the school does not have money. He also thinks that principals cannot even afford to buy cars. He said,

> *I'm telling you. If you want to be a principal ... if you want to be poor, go and be a principal ... Look at your school, look at your principal and look at the teachers ... you will see a principal without a car and all teachers having cars ... Principal will give money from his/her pocket if the school does not have money.*

As a way of raising funds, he relied on the rent from the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) for using the classrooms during elections. Apart from that, they sell trees to the community and rent the kitchen to the people who cook for the school children. He said, "*IEC does pay rent... we sell trees, people sometimes buy the trees... it becomes better... There is a kitchen, it makes money now.*"

Takesure expressed a different opinion. He reports that currently there is no remuneration or incentive for being a principal. He compares himself to a volunteer. He said,

> *As of now, there are no remunerations that you are given when you are working in the office of the principal ... you are just like a Peace Corp ... just like a volunteer working there ... there are no ... from the government ... there is nothing as stipulated as an incentive for working as a principal or doing the work of a principal.*

4.2.3.5 Inadequate support from the Ministry

Peter expressed concern about the inadequate help he gets from the Ministry on the implementation of the new curriculum. Moreover, the Ministry officials who come to assist seem to be ill informed about the new curriculum. The officials who come to assist teachers and principals encounter problems. For instance, such assistance from the officials is characterised by arguments between the officials and the teachers because they hold different opinions on the same issue. He says that, in most cases, the teachers overrule the officials who come to assist them. This situation leaves the principal frustrated because no progress is made. He said,

> *Even those who are from the Ministry, they are not sure in this new curriculum really ... Someone comes to help, then teachers tell that someone (from the Ministry) that 'that thing wasn't said like that in the workshop we attended' ... It becomes difficult for such a person ... then the Ministry person would make argument with the teachers ... this does not give us anything to go on with.*

4.2.3.6 Shortage of materials

Principals also pointed out that shortage of materials such as textbooks create a challenge for them. For example, Peter indicated that a shortage of materials poses a great challenge for his school. For instance, the Grade 7 class did not have textbooks for the whole year. As a result, they resorted to using old high school textbooks brought by the teachers. He also feels that the late delivery of the materials hinders his/their work. He explained,

> *These people are delaying to give us the textbooks ... Grade 7 have spent the whole year without the textbooks, even for the teachers. There was nothing at all ... they were borrowing textbooks from the high schools' learners even the old ones which they (teachers) used when they were in high school ...*

Similarly, Paul expressed a need for material support from the Ministry. He said that a lack of materials like textbooks affect teaching negatively. He noted that they

teach for the whole year without textbooks. He said, "*If the Ministry can support us …*
It is not easy to teach for the whole year without a single textbook."

For Dominic, the greatest challenge with the new curriculum is that certain materials
are not supplied. A lack of funds compounds the challenge. This forces Dominic to
buy materials from his own pocket because the utility fund from the government is
not paid regularly. He said,

> *The resources are challenging because we have to provide from our own*
> *pockets … from our own pockets because last year … we took two years …*
> *from 2016 to 2017 we were not given the utility fund at all.*

4.2.3.7 Improper communication from the Ministry

Principals are concerned about improper communication from the education
authorities. According to Victor, it gives them problems when the education
authorities make announcements to the public before informing the principals, yet
the principals are expected to implement the decisions. He said, "*Even this issue that*
those in authority say things before talking to us, the people who are going to
implement those things, really, it is the one that gives problems."

Moreover, he is concerned about a lack of consultation by the policy makers
regarding the envisaged curriculum changes. He feels that, as teachers who deal
directly with the learners, they should be consulted beforehand about the planned
changes rather than being ordered to implement policies. This will give them the
opportunity to voice their opinions. He said,

> *If they come to us first and we discuss issues with them and show them*
> *because we are dealing directly with the learners … you just give orders*
> *from the top … not knowing how we deal with the learners here. It is as if*
> *they could come to us as teachers … so that we can give our opinions.*

Automatic promotion causes problems in schools. Dominic says they are told that
learners should be automatically promoted to the next grade. However, teachers
disagree and consider this to be the main disadvantage of the new curriculum.
Parents insist that their children should automatically proceed to the next grade

despite teachers' advice to the contrary. As a result, teachers and parents are at loggerheads about automatic promotion. He reported,

> *The assessment method is not good at all. That is what teachers don't like about it. Learners are expected not to fail ... we are told that all learners must proceed whether dull or not ... so that is what our teachers don't like about the curriculum ... Most of them (parents) want to see their learners continuing ... proceeding, therefore, very few accept the advice of their children repeating.*

Furthermore, automatic promotion also makes parents stop taking part in their children's education. For instance, Paul feels that parents do not understand, hence they do not support the new curriculum. He stressed that parents have grasped only two things about education in Lesotho, that education is free and that the learners do not fail/repeat classes. Free education and automatic promotion has caused the parents to neglect their children's education. They refuse to contribute anything because they regard education to be free. He explained,

> *They (parents) don't understand the new curriculum in great depth ... They are just happy that their children are progressing and not failing (automatic promotion) but when it comes to supporting their children's education with materials needed in classrooms, they do not do that.*

Again, automatic promotion seems to cause bad attitude towards school among the learners. For example, Prudence showed that the main problem she faces is the bad attitude of the learners towards school. Learners seem to be aware of automatic promotion and do not take their studies seriously. She says that this situation reflects badly on her school. As a result, it affects her reputation because she is accountable or answerable for the learners' performance. She said,

> *It is not with the teachers; I see the problem on the learners. This curriculum makes learners who do not care ... who do not have any seriousness within them about their education. It has a bad reflection. So, as a leader, when things do not go well, because I am accountable, everyone points fingers to me.*

In all, the principals spelt out the challenges such as dual roles, the lack of funds and shallow knowledge of the new curriculum. Peter, Paul and Victor pointed out that having dual roles is over-burdening them. Peter pointed out that being both a principal and a teacher is stressful for him and he feels that he is under-performing in both roles. Paul and Victor show that their dual roles hinder them from conducting lesson observations as frequently as they would like. The lack of funds is the main hindrance that forces Paul, Dominic and Victor to finance the needs of the new curriculum from their own pockets.

Furthermore, the principals say that the lack of curriculum materials poses another challenge. Paul and Dominic point out that their other difficulty is having inferior knowledge of the new curriculum compared to the teachers. Victor indicated that teachers have insufficient new curriculum knowledge and that he is unable to empower them in this regard. Takesure believes that teachers are not trained in some concepts of the new curriculum. Other challenges include dealing with teacher -learner problems. Victor indicated that, at times, he is over-whelmed by teachers' and learners' problems, while Takesure points out that he feels powerless in dealing with teacher-learner-parent relationship problems. Lastly, Peter, Dominic and Takesure point out that the other challenge is that they do not receive any incentive or payment for being a principal. Literature reiterates that, during the implementation of curriculum reform, the principals are confronted with role ambiguity and contradicting demands (Schechter, Shaked, Ganon-Shilon, & Goldratt, 2016) and they have to make sense of their role from this confusing range of inputs (Spillane & Kenney, 2012).

4.3 Quantitative analysis and presentation

In order to establish and perhaps test some of the findings and or comments by the principals, a survey questionnaire was distributed to a large sample of principals to canvas their ideas on leading the new curriculum. This section of chapter 4 reports on the survey data.

4.3.1 Biographical details of principals

This section of the questionnaire covered the principals' gender, age, experience as a teacher, experience as a principal and additional leadership or management training.

This section was considered important in contextualising the findings.

Table 4.1 below shows that the participants who responded to questionnaires were both male and female principals. The majority of principals in the sample were female (68.67%) and 31.33% were male principals. This could indicate that there is gender disparity in school leadership in Lesotho primary schools at least in the district covered by this study.

Regarding age, about 16.87% of the principals were aged below 40 while 66.26% of the principals were aged between 40 and 60. About 14.46% of the principals were almost at the retirement age of 65 while 2.41% of them had reached the retirement age. With regard to their teaching experience, most principals (51.81%) had more than sixteen years of teaching experience while 32.53% had between 11 and 15 years of teaching experience. Only 7.23% of the principals had taught for 4 to 6 years. This shows that principals were teachers before becoming principals and 84.34% of them had more than ten years teaching experience. Bush and Oduro (2006) found that in African countries and elsewhere principals are often chosen to head schools because of their lengthy teaching experience.

Table 4.1: Biographical information of the principals

		Number	Percentage %
Gender	Male	26	31.33
	Female	57	68.67
Age	26-30	0	0
	31-40	14	16.87
	41-50	32	38.55
	51-60	23	27.71
	61-65	12	14.46
	>65	2	2.41
Teaching experience	1-3yrs	0	0
	4-6yrs	6	7.23
	7-10yrs	7	8.43
	11-16yrs	27	32.53
	>16yrs	43	51.81
Experience as a principal	1-3yrs	27	32.93
	4-6yrs	10	12.2
	7-10yrs	15	18.29
	11-15yrs	13	15.85
	>16yrs	17	20.73
Academic qualifications	Certificate	3	3.61
	Diploma	18	21.69
	Degree	41	49.4
	Post Grad	21	25.3
Attended leadership/ management training	Yes	56	67.47
	No	27	32.53

From Table 4.1 above, 32.93% of the principals have less than five years in the post, while a total percentage of 36.58% have more than ten years in the post of principal. It can be anticipated that the less-experienced principals would encounter some challenges on their role given that they are probably less experienced in that role. According to Wieczorek and Manard (2018), novice principals face numerous

challenges in their work.

Regarding academic qualifications, a small percentage (3.61%) of principals are primary teaching certificate holders, while a total percentage of 74.7% are degree holders. It is encouraging to note that many primary school principals have a university degree given that the Lesotho College of Education where primary school teachers are trained in the country only offers diplomas. The presence of principals who hold certificates bring about the question of the basic qualifications for being a principal. This finding resonates with Bush and Oduro (2006), who indicate that the criteria for selecting principals in Africa are sometimes dubious.

Most of the principals (67.47%) have had additional training in leadership/management, while the rest have no additional training. This implies that additional leadership/management training is not a prerequisite for becoming a principal. This finding again coincides with Bush (2016), who states that many countries do not have systematic leadership programs for principals.

4.3.2 Descriptive analysis and findings

The descriptive statistics formed the basis of analysis whereby the aggregate domain means scores were used to interpret the data. The mean scores provided a way of characterising and summarising the views of the principals in each domain. For the purpose of facilitating the analysis and interpretation of the questionnaire data, the original four-point Likert scale (1=never; 2=seldom; 3=moderate; 4=always) from the questionnaire was merged into two main groups. Never and seldom were assigned a low or negative value (mean score less than 2.50), while moderate and always were given high or positive value (mean score equal or greater than 2.50). Furthermore, this formed the basis for interpretation for the domains whereby a low mean score indicates a negative view, while a high mean score indicates a positive view regarding a particular domain. In addition, the domains were ranked in descending order according to their mean scores. This ranking was created to impose sequencing and ordering among the domains. The ranking also provided valuable insights about the prevalence of views among the principals regarding their role.

4.3.2.1 Overall views of principals regarding their role

It is noticeable that principals in this study generally have positive views of their role as indicated by the high positive aggregate mean scores across all of the eight domains. The domains produced high aggregate mean scores that ranged from 3.54 for *Planning and implementing change* and 2.96 for *Fostering collaboration with community stakeholders*. Interestingly, no domain yielded an aggregate mean score below 2.50 (low and negative value), which also confirms that principals have high positive views regarding their role as leaders of curriculum reform.

The subsequent sections provide an analytical overview of the eight domains in descending order according to their aggregate mean scores.

4.3.2.2 Planning and implementing change

Table 4.2A: Means and SDs for Planning and implementing change domain

A. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING CHANGE	Mean	SD
1. I encourage teachers to be innovative when implementing the new curriculum	3.66	0.65
2. I effectively promote change in the school community	3.41	0.72
3. I actively communicate information about the new curriculum	3.56	0.74
Aggregate mean score	**3.55**	**0.58**

According to Table 4.2A, this domain is the most popular among the principals in this study. It has the highest aggregate mean score of 3.55, which indicates that principals have high positive views in this domain. As indicated previously (cf. 2.7), it is important for principals to manage the change process in their schools (Hallinger, 2003). The results from this domain would mean that principals act as agents of reform because they have a transformational approach towards the implementation of the new curriculum. According to Glatthorn, Boschee and Whitehead (2006), principals who act as agents of change have a plan to implement changes. Therefore, a high mean score in this domain gives the impression that principals in this study view themselves as change agents.

4.3.2.3 Understanding curriculum requirements

Table 4.2B: Means and SDs for *Understanding curriculum domain*

B. UNDERSTANDING CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS	Mean	SD
1. I know the requirements of the new curriculum	3.49	0.67
2. I lead the teachers to understand the requirements of the new curriculum	3.28	0.85
3. I use the new curriculum requirements as a guide when I observe and assess teaching and learning processes	3.48	0.77
4. I encourage teachers to change their teaching strategies to meet the new curriculum requirements	3.73	0.52
5. I explain to the teachers what is expected from them in the new curriculum	3.46	0.75
Aggregate mean score	**3.49**	**0.59**

Table 4.2B shows that the aggregate mean score for this domain is 3.49. This is the second highest mean score. Generally, principals seem to have a view that they understand the requirements of the new curriculum. This may mean that principals understand the pedagogical demands of the new curriculum. The high mean score for this domain may suggest that the majority of principals in this study have a view that they understand the prescriptions of the new curriculum. This view may increase their propensity to conceptualise their role as instructional leaders. It was argued earlier (cf. 2.3) that principals should become instructional leaders or leaders of learning (Hallinger, 2010) by supporting teachers and learners in the classrooms to make pedagogical changes (Dematthews, 2014). Their knowledge and understanding of curriculum requirements is critical for them as leaders of the new curriculum (Mestry, 2013).

4.3.2.4 Understanding new methods of teaching and learning

Table 4.2C: Means and SDs for Understanding new methods of teaching and learning domain

C. UNDERSTANDING NEW METHODS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING	Mean	SD
1. I understand new teaching methods that teachers have to use in the new curriculum	3.41	0.75
2. I know the new learning styles brought by the new curriculum	3.35	0.78
3. I share my knowledge of the new curriculum with the teachers	3.41	0.83
Aggregate mean score	**3.39**	**0.69**

Like other domains, the aggregate mean score (3.39) for this domain (Table 4.2C) is considered to be high and positive. This indicates that principals in this study hold a positive view on their understanding of the new methods of teaching and learning as envisaged by the new curriculum. The principals feel that they know the new pedagogy that is envisaged by the new curriculum. This finding is consistent with the findings by Hourani and Stringer (2015) who stress that, during reforms, the principals should be conversant with the tenets of the envisaged pedagogy. This understanding enables the principals to influence and direct the teachers towards the required pedagogies (Botha, 2013). As indicated earlier (cf. 2.7), their understanding increases their propensity to be leaders of learning (Hallinger, 2010). However, this finding is inconsistent with an explanation by Sim (2011) that principals do not usually conceptualise themselves as instructional leaders.

4.3.2.5 Organising the delivery of the new curriculum

Table 4.2D: Means and SDs for organising the delivery of the new curriculum domain

D. ORGANISING THE DELIVERY OF NEW CURRICULUM	Mean	SD
1. I prepare a clear plan to implement the new curriculum	3.23	0.98
2. I ensure that the school policies and systems align to the new curriculum	3.53	0.82
Aggregate mean score	3.38	0.58

The high positive aggregate mean score of 3.38 for this domain indicates that principals hold a positive view regarding their ability to organise the delivery of curriculum (see Table 4.2D above). The implication from this view is that principals view themselves as curriculum leaders (Lynch, 2012). This view seems to support the idea that principals should organise school systems that align teaching and learning to new curriculum (Dematthews, 2014) and ensure that all efforts in the school focus align with new standards (Grissom & Loeb, 2011). Most importantly, principals determine the direction of policy implementation in their schools (Coburn, 2005). The nature and depth of the principals' knowledge about teaching and learning may direct the teachers' attention towards certain aspects of the new policy and not towards others (Coburn, 2005; Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002).

4.3.2.6 Ensuring that change is understood and accepted

Table 4.2E: Means and SDs for Ensuring that change is understood and accepted domain

E. ENSURING THAT CHANGE IS UNDERSTOOD AND ACCEPTED	Mean	SD
1. I make professional development plans for individual teachers on the new curriculum	2.76	1.02
2. I ensure that all teachers are actively involved in the professional development programs	3.51	0.69
3. I ensure that professional development is on-going and based on the needs of the new curriculum	3.31	0.85
4. I ensure that teachers understand the change, the need for change and the change process brought by the new curriculum	3.60	0.64
Aggregate mean score	3.30	0.65

Table 4.2E above shows that this domain obtained a high positive aggregate mean

score of 3.30, which indicates that principals have a view that their role involves ensuring that teachers understand and accept the changes brought by the new curriculum. This finding corroborates the idea of Lai (2015) who states that, during reform implementation, the principal's role is to be a catalyst or broker for the envisaged change. As discussed earlier (cf. 2.6), the role of the principal is crucial for successful implementation of reform initiatives. The high mean score in this domain seem to suggest that the principals in this study view their role as critical for the success of the new curriculum in their schools.

4.3.2.7 Monitoring and evaluating teacher performance

Table 4.2F: Means and SDs for Monitoring and evaluating teacher performance domain

F. MONITORING AND EVALUATING TEACHER PERFORMANCE	Mean	SD
1. I conduct regular classroom observations and give feedback about teaching the new curriculum	3.22	0.86
2. I evaluate and review the classroom practices of teachers to ensure that they align to the new curriculum	3.24	0.83
3. I develop a curriculum implementation plan for the school	2.86	0.97
4. I guide the teaching and learning processes of the new curriculum	3.38	0.77
Aggregate mean score	**3.18**	**0.67**

The high aggregate mean (3.18) for this domain (Table 4.2F) signals a positive view that principals have regarding their role as monitors and evaluators of teachers' performance. This view may suggest that principals in this study allocate time to monitor and evaluate teachers' performance on the new curriculum. In this regard, it is encouraging to note that teachers have a high positive view of this role, whereas Spillane and Hunt (2010) found that principals tend to spend less time on teaching-related activities.

4.3.2.8 Monitoring and evaluating teacher performance

Table 4.2G: Means and SDs for *Lead and manage change domain*

G. LEAD AND MANAGE CHANGE	Mean	SD

1. I make use of change theory to manage curriculum reform in the school	2.77	1.17
2. I believe in change and I am able to guide teachers to implement changes	3.23	0.93
3. I am able to deal with obstacles and uncertainties brought by curriculum reform	3.24	0.92
4. I am responsible for making sure that curriculum changes take place	3.56	0.72
Aggregate mean score	**3.20**	**0.68**

With an aggregate mean score of 3.20, this domain (Table 4.2G) is the second last in the rank. This high mean shows that principals have a view that their role involves leading and managing change. This finding correlates with findings from literature, which emphasise the critical role that principals play in the success of educational reforms (Jorgensen, 2016; Lai, 2015; Lin, 2012). This finding may also indicate that principals take full responsibility for the implementation of the new curriculum in their schools by ensuring that curriculum changes are adopted in their schools.

4.3.2.9 Fostering collaboration with community stakeholders

Table 4.2H: Means and SDs for fostering collaboration with community stakeholders domain

H. FOSTERING COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS	Mean	SD
1. I establish open communication with the wider community about the new curriculum	3.04	0.97
2. I involve parents in school programs that facilitate implementation of the new curriculum	3.06	0.92
3. I introduce new curriculum to the wider community through regular meetings and other communication channels/platforms	2.81	1.02
Aggregate mean score	2.97	0.87

Even though this domain (Table 4.2H) is the least ranked, its aggregate mean score of 2.97 is still considered to be high and positive. This finding supports some frameworks proposed for the instructional leadership of principals. For instance, Sim's (2011) framework suggests that principals should work together with external parties, while Dempster (2012) proposes that the principal should foster parental and community support for teaching and learning. The high mean score, therefore, may suggest that principals in this study have a high positive view regarding their collaboration with other stakeholders on the implementation of the new curriculum.

In conclusion, from the preceding discussions, it can be deduced that principals in this study have high positive views regarding their role in the implementation of the new curriculum in their schools.

While most of the findings confirmed the literature, it is surprising to find that principals revealed high views in *Understanding curriculum requirements* and *Understanding new methods of teaching and learning*, which obtained mean scores of 3.50 and 3.38 respectively, compared with lower mean score for *Lead and manage change*, which had a mean score of 3.20. The implication of this observation may be that even though principals understand the prescriptions of the new curriculum, they may not lead or manage the change in their schools to the same extent as they seem to understand what it prescribes.

It is interesting to note the mean difference between the top ranked domain

(*Planning and implementing change*) with a mean score of 3.54 and the least ranked domain (*Fostering collaboration with community stakeholders*), which has 2.96 as its mean score. The difference may suggest that principals do not normally include the community in their implementation plans for the new curriculum.

Lastly, the ranking of the domains in accordance with their mean scores revealed the popular views among the principals in this study. It can be seen from the above tables 2 that the two top ranked domains are *Planning and implementing change* and *Understanding curriculum requirements*. These views may reveal the general tendencies of principals regarding the implementation of the new curriculum.

From the preceding discussions and presented data, it can be confirmed that the principals' views, in this study, support and provide evidence regarding the aim of this study - to explore the perspectives of Lesotho primary school principals on their roles and responsibilities in the implementation and leadership of the new integrated primary school curriculum.

4.4 Integrated findings

4.4.1 Views and understandings on role and leadership

The qualitative findings illustrate that principals have various views regarding their role. Principals (Takesure, Dominic and Peter) predominantly consider themselves as supervisors and overseers of curriculum implementation. This finding coincides with the results obtained from quantitative data. In particular, the domain - *lead and manage change* with a mean score of 3.20 showed that principals have a positive view that their role in the new curriculum encompasses leading and managing (cf. 4.3.3.8). Taken together, these views echo the empirical findings in literature about the critical role played by principals in reform implementation (Jorgensen, 2016; Lai, 2015; Lin, 2012).

Mestry (2013) argues that for principals to function as instructional leaders, they should be conversant with the proposed teaching-learning theories and practices. The interview analysis revealed that Paul considers himself a collaborator, who works hand-in-hand with teachers, because he is still learning about the new curriculum. At other times, Paul becomes a subordinate because some teachers

know the new curriculum better than he does. This finding corresponds with the finding by Fullan and Langworthy (2013), who state that principals often have limited expertise in the subjects areas of the teachers they supervise.

Furthermore, Prudence has a different view of her role. She considers herself a servant under the control of the Ministry of Education. This is because she views the NC as an order from the Ministry, which mandates teachers to change. This view confirms Coburn's (2005) assertion that principals, as sense makers, decide how policy mandates shape out in practice. It seems that she expects teachers to adopt the change as mandated by the policy.

As stated by Lynch (2012), the main task of a principal is to supervise and monitor teaching and learning. As such, the analysis of the interview data shows that all principals conduct lesson observations. Although the frequencies are different, the purpose seems to be the same; to ensure appropriate implementation of the new curriculum. The lesson observations are done either monthly, quarterly or once per session. By conducting lesson observations, principals believe that they are ensuring the implementation of the new curriculum. For instance, Peter monitors lessons quarterly based on his belief that lesson observations help him to ensure that teachers are implementing the new curriculum appropriately. The lesson observations are encompassed in the domain '*Monitoring and evaluating teacher performance,*' which had an overall mean score of 3.28, indicating that principals have a high positive view of this role (cf. 4.3.3.7). Notwithstanding this view, an empirical study of how principals spend their time found that principals spend relatively less time supervising and monitoring teaching and learning activities (Spillane & Hunt, 2010).

The qualitative data further shows that the objective for all principals during lesson observations is also to ensure that teachers deliver the content prescribed in the new curriculum. As a result, principals monitor daily lesson planning to ensure that the content in the lesson plans aligns with the syllabus. However, Victor is also concerned about how teachers teach and how learning takes place during his observations. His concern coincides with the high positive mean score of 3.39 for the domain '*Understanding new methods of teaching and learning*' in conjunction

with the domain '*Monitoring and evaluating teacher performance* (mean score=3.28). All in all, both datasets confirm that principals undertake strategic ways to ensure that teaching aligns with the requirements of the new curriculum as indicated by Dematthews (2014).

However, Takesure, Dominic and Victor expressed a surprising view. They elucidated that checking lesson plans is the only way to show that teachers have actually done the work. This finding suggests that principals may rely on checking lesson plans as a way of ensuring that teachers adhere to the new curriculum. According to Coburn (2005), during reform implementation, principals may focus on certain aspects of reform to the detriment of others. As a result, the high positive mean score (3.28) for the domain '*Monitoring and evaluating teacher performance*' may indicate a view that principals check lesson plans as a way of monitoring the implementation of the new curriculum. Thus, this view may resonate with the finding that principals may not have the capacity to be instructional leaders during reforms (Hallinger & Lee, 2013).

4.4.2 Opportunities

According to the principals, some teachers are resistant to the new curriculum. As such, principals use different strategies to ensure new curriculum implementation in their schools. For instance, Peter's approach is to monitor resistant teachers closely, while Prudence says she motivates the resistant teachers to like the new curriculum. These strategies seem to be backed up by the results from the two domains viz. *Monitoring and evaluating teacher performance* and *Lead and manage change'*, which obtained mean scores of 3.28 and 3.20 respectively. The high mean scores may indicate that principals take strategic measures to ensure that teachers implement the new curriculum. This finding further corroborates findings by other scholars that the principals' role is indispensable in the implementation of educational reforms (Hourani & Stringer, 2015; Hallinger & Lee, 2013).

Furthermore, the high mean scores (3.28 and 3.20 above) may indicate that principals feel accountable for ensuring that curriculum changes take place. To illustrate this view, the interview analysis revealed that Takesure out-sources help from the community to counter the teachers' lack of expertise. Evidently, Takesure

believes in collaborating with the community regarding the implementation of the new curriculum. His strategy is further backed by the high mean score (2.96) for the domain '*Fostering collaboration with community stakeholders*'. In this regard, Lynch (2012) advices that principals should have a strategic plan to supervise curriculum change.

Another strategy is shown by Prudence. She allows teachers to influence each other about the new curriculum. This view shows that Prudence relies on peer-influence as a way of ensuring that teachers adhere to the new curriculum. On the other hand, Dominic uses the school-based workshops to set the modus operandi for implementing the new curriculum. In these school-based workshops, the teachers discuss ways of implementing the new curriculum and Dominic's task is to follow-up on the decisions made by the teachers. The results from the domain '*Ensuring that change is understood and accepted*' (high mean score=3.29) affirm Prudence and Dominic's strategies. Literature agrees with these strategies by showing that principals influence the implementation of instructional reforms by fostering a collaborative working environment in their schools (Blase & Blase, 1999).

These views may also suggests that Dominic and Prudence believe in a laissez-faire leadership style, which increases teachers' discretion to make their own implementation decisions. Principals just follow up on the resolutions made by the teachers. This finding may be explained by Sim (2011), who pointed out that principals may not consider themselves to be instructional leaders because they lack basic management amd leadership skills. Moreover, Spillane, Diamond, Burch, Hallett, Jita and Zoltners(2002) show that principals tend to depend on teachers in cases where the teachers have more expertise than their principals.

4.4.3 Challenges

Principals pointed to issues such as dual roles, lack of funds and shallow knowledge of the new curriculum among the challenges they face. In this regard, Lynch (2012) attests to these challenges by stating that principals juggle many responsibilities daily, hence they have stress-related problems. For instance, Peter, Paul and Victor noted that having dual roles is over-burdening. Peter explained that being a principal and a teacher is stressful for him and he feels that he is under-performing in both

roles. Paul and Victor show that their dual roles hinder them from conducting lesson observations as frequently as they would like to.

The concern of these two teachers is in contrast with the results obtained from the domain – '*Monitoring and evaluating teacher performance'*. The high positive mean score (3.28) for this domain indicates that principals regard monitoring and evaluation of teachers' performance as one of their roles. However, the qualitative findings reveal that principals are over-burdened by dual roles, to the extent that it hinders them from monitoring and evaluating teacher performance. These results further confirm the argument that principals tend to spend considerably less time in teaching-related activities despite their desire to do so (Spillane & Hunt, 2010).

One of the tasks of principals is to ensure the availability of physical materials that enhance change (Hallinger & Lee, 2013). However, the lack of funds is pointed out by Paul, Dominic and Victor as a main hinderance that forces them to finance the needs of the NC from their own pockets. Apart from that, the principals say that a lack of curriculum materials poses another challenge. A lack of funds and materials seems to be the main obstacles caused by the new curriculum. These qualitative findings do not support the quantitative results obtained from the domain - *Lead and manage change* (mean score=3.20). The high mean score in this domain suggests that principals have high positive views regarding their leadership and how they manage curriculum change. Taken together, the qualitative findings and quantitative results suggest that principals in this study understand the expectation that their role involves leading and managing curriculum changes, but the lack of funds and resources hinders them from fulfilling their role tasks. These findings resonate in literature that a dearth of resources and funds frustrate principals (Mushaandja, 2013; Hallinger & Lee, 2011; Bush & Oduro, 2006).

Another challenge for the principals is having an inferior knowledge of the new curriculum compared to the teachers. The results from the domain - '*Understanding requirements of the new curriculum'* (mean score=3.50) contradict this finding about inferior knowledge. In the survey results, the principals indicated that they have a good understanding of curriculum requirements. However, according to the qualitative findings, Paul, Prudence and Dominic believe that they do not have

enough knowledge about the new curriculum. This suggests that principals may encounter problems when guiding teachers to implement the new curriculum.

The insufficient knowledge of the principals also contradicts the results from the domain - '*Ensuring that change is understood and accepted*' (mean score=3.29), which indicates a high positive view from principals that their role involves guiding teachers to understand and accept the changes proposed by the new curriculum. The qualitative findings and quantitative findings may suggest that principals understand what is expected of them but insufficient information about the new curriculum may hinder them from fulfilling that task. One explanation for having insufficient information about the new curriculum is that the principals were either not trained or inadequately trained on the new curriculum.

Interestingly, the quantitative data revealed that principals in this study understand curriculum requirements, but the interviews produced contraditory findings, which show that principals are uncomfortable or dissatisfied with having insufficient information about the new curriculum. They pointed out that their insufficient information was due to the fact that they were either not trained or poorly trained. It is also noteworthy that some principals complain of insufficient new curriculum information despite attending the in-service training. This finding brings into disrepute the quality of the in-service training offered to them. In this regard, Moorosi and Grant (2013) show that there is no strategic development for leadership in schools.

According to Hourani and Stringer (2015), principals are expected to have adequate knowledge of the tenets of curriculum reform, such knowlegde empowers principals to mobilise teachers to change their instruction. Botha (2013) concurs by pointing out that principals should have the necessary skills and knowledge to lead the proposed pedagogical changes in their schools.

On the other hand, Victor shows that even the teachers have insufficient knowledge about the new curriculum, and that he is unable to empower them in this regard. Takesure concurs and believes that teachers are untrained in some concepts of the new curriculum. This qualitative finding may impact on the leadership of the principals, especially in view of two domains - *Lead and manage change* and

Ensuring that change is understood and accepted. The high mean scores in these domains (3.20 and 3.29 respectively) suggest that principals take full responsibility for the implementation of the new curriculum in their schools as indicated earlier (cf. 2.6 and 2.7). As a result, the challenge of leading untrained teachers may be mitigated by their collaboration with community stakeholders as Takesure indicated earlier (cf. 4.2.1.2). In this regard, Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (2002) warn that agents often lack expertise, and this poses a threat to the mandated reform. These scholars reiterate that having adequate expertise causes implementing agents to recognise deeper principles of reform and not to rely on its superficial features.

Other challenges include dealing with teacher-learner problems. For instance, Victor shows that, at times, he is over-whelmed by teachers' and learners' problems. Takesure further points out that he feels powerless in dealing with teacher-learner-parent relationship problems. However, it can be argued that these problems may not be directly brought by the new curriculum but by the type of teachers, parents and learners in the school but they affect the leadership of the principal. Literature echoes the fact that principals, especially novices, experience difficulties in managing human resources in their schools (Mushaandja, 2013).

4.5 Conclusion

From the qualitative and quantitative findings and results, valuable lessons can be learned.

Principals in Lesotho seem to believe that they are leaders of curriculum reform, and their leadership strategies include lesson observations and monitoring daily lesson plans. Interestingly, the purpose for these strategies is to ensure that teachers teach the prescribed content. Monitoring daily lesson plans helps to ensure that teachers deliver the new prescribed content (they check lesson plans to ensure content delivered aligns with the syllabus).

The principals also believe that they are accountable for reform implementation, and as such they rely on subtle methods to influence teachers to change (motivation, close monitoring, collaboration, and peer-influence). However, the principals encounter several challenges that compromise their envisaged leadership of the new

curriculum. Challenges include dual roles, the lack of funds and resources, and insufficient information or knowledge about the new curriculum.

The mixed methods design used in this study brought the quantitative and qualitative datasets together to reveal pertinent issues regarding the principals' leadership of curriculum reform. The quantitative results give the impression that the principals understand that their role entails supervising the implementation of the new curriculum, as indicated by high positive mean scores across all the domains of the questionnaire. The qualitative findings indicate that they use various indirect or subtle strategies to ensure appropriate implementation of the new curriculum. The qualitative findings also reveal the various challenges that compromise and constrain their leadership. Most importantly, the findings indicate that the principals largely depend on teachers for curriculum information. Hence, the direction of implementation mainly depends on the sense-making of the teachers while the principals only endorse teachers' interpretations.

The challenges that the principals encounter may compromise their perceived role, hence they indirectly lead the implementation of the new curriculum.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the main findings in relation to each of the three research questions. The main findings are interpreted, related to a larger body of literature on principals' leadership of reform implementation, and also linked to the theoretical framework of sense-making. Both confirming and contradicting findings are discussed thoroughly. Subsequently, conclusions are drawn from the main findings. Following the conclusion, the recommendations are made based on the main findings.

Various scholars agree that the role of a principal is integral during the implementation of reforms (Shaked & Schechter, 2017; Hourani & Stringer, 2015; Hallinger, 2003). Essentially, the principals often act as middle managers, gatekeepers, change agents, and as mediators between the reform initiatives and the teachers (Schechter & Shaked, 2017; Ng & Pun, 2013; Spillane, Diamond, Burch, Hallett, Jita & Zoltners, 2002). However, reforms challenge the status quo in schools (Schechter, Shaked, Ganon-Shilon & Goldratt, 2016) by prescribing new roles and new ways of working for the principals, teachers and students (Hourani & Stringer, 2015).

Ganon-Shilon and Schechter, 2017; Kaniuka, 2012 also point out that reform implementation brings ambiguity, uncertainty and complexity to the role of the principals. As such, principals are forced to make sense of their new role as they mediate between the external reform pressures and internal school pressures (Spillane & Kenney, 2012). In this case, the principals draw from their prior experiences and beliefs in order to make meaning of the new information brought by the reform (Coburn, 2016; Spillane & Anderson, 2014). In turn, the sense-making of the principals influences the sense-making of their teachers (Gawlik, 2015; Coburn, 2005).

The role of school leadership is important in the implementation of curriculum reform (Hourani & Stringer, 2015; Hallinger & Lee, 2013). However, when those

principals are unprepared for leading the reform implementation, it becomes crucial to determine their understandings, opportunities and challenges regarding their role. It was important to explore their perspectives because many principals in Lesothooccupy principalship with minimal or no leadership training (Moorosi & Grant, 2013) even though their role is critical for the success of reform implementation (Lai, 2015). This study sought to investigate the views of principals on their roles as leaders of curriculum reform in Lesotho.

The main objective of this study was to explore the perspectives of Lesotho primary school principals on their roles and responsibilities in the implementation and leadership of the new integrated primary school curriculum.
The secondary objectives were as follows:
1. To investigate principals' views and understandings of their roles in the implementation and leadership of the integrated curriculum in Lesotho.
2. To explore challenges and opportunities that principals encounter in fulfilling their roles.
3. To explain the perspectives, challenges and opportunities of the principals with respect to their roles in curriculum implementation and leadership thereof.

Following a pragmatic paradigm, this study used the mixed methods approach and I employed a concurrent design whereby qualitative and quantitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires respectively. The main purpose of this design was to develop a comprehensive answer to the main research question. Eighty-three principals from five purposively selected dissemination centres completed the questionnaires of which six of them were interviewed. For analysis, interview data were subjected to deductive coding based on a priori codes, while also incorporating the emergent themes. The questionnaire data was analysed by Statistical Analysis System (SAS) software, which generated mean scores and standard deviations for each domain. The mean scores formed the basis for analysis in this dataset.

Furthermore, the qualitative findings and quantitative results were integrated to establish convergence or divergence and the main findings of this study were

established. The sense-making theory as espoused by Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (2002) and Coburn (2005) was used to interpret the findings of this study because sense-making acknowledges the manner in which principals, as agents of reform, come to understand their roles when leading curriculum reform.

5.2 Discussion of findings

5.2.1 Positive view of role

The findings of this study indicated that principals have high positive views about their role in the new curriculum. This was indicated by the high positive mean scores across all the domains of the questionnaire (cf. 4.3.3.1). The high mean scores were further supplemented by the interview data in which the principals revealed their beliefs that they are leaders of curriculum reform. They reported that they regard themselves as supervisors who oversee the implementation of the new curriculum (cf. 4.2.1.1). According to Ganon-Shilon and Schechter (2017), the positive views that the principals exhibit regarding their role also demonstrates that they are committed to the implementation of the current reform. The principals in this study regard themselves as critical change agents. Gawlik (2015) further indicates that the principals often position themselves at the centre of the current reform.

According to literature, the response of the principals is an important factor, especially in the advent of curriculum reform (Botha, 2013; Krug, 1992). The principals may respond by either accepting or rejecting the reform demands (Werts & Brewer, 2015), mainly because reforms are ambiguous and also challenge the status quo by requiring the principals and their teachers to discard their extant practices and adopt new behaviours (Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2017). Therefore, the positive response of the principals in this study would suggest that they regard themselves as reform gatekeepers as explained by Schechter, Shaked, Ganon-Shilon, and Goldratt (2016).

Although the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (MoET, 2009), which gave birth to the new curriculum, is silent about the role of school principals, the findings of this study show that the principals have assumed the leadership role whether designated or self-proclaimed. In this regard, Ng and Pun (2013) suggest that the principals may be bound by the existing expectations on them to assume the leadership of the

reform. The assumption of leadership by the principals further reiterates their positive view regarding their role.

According to literature, the principals' response towards reform can either reinforce or inhibit the desired change (Lai, 2015). It is, therefore, interesting to note that principals in this study exhibit positive beliefs towards their role in the implementation of the new curriculum. Having positive views about the role may also indicate that principals take responsibility for the implementation of the new curriculum as they described their role by using words such as '*supervisor*' and statements such as "*I have to guarantee that teachers are really implementing what is stipulated*" (cf. 4.2.1.1).

However, the positive view of the role by the principals is in sharp contrast with literature, which claims that principals often have negative perceptions regarding their leadership. For instance, it is reported that principals have insufficient curriculum and instructional knowledge and their expertise and confidence as instructional leaders needs improvement (Sim, 2011). As a result, principals do not regard themselves as instructional leaders due to obstacles like stress and power struggles with teachers, and the lack of skills and training.

5.2.2 Subtle or indirect leadership

Another important finding was that principals used subtle leadership techniques to ensure that teachers implement the new curriculum. For instance, they use motivation, peer-influence, and school-based workshops, and they also collaborate with teachers to influence the implementation of the new curriculum. These leadership techniques do not show direct leadership of the new curriculum by principals. This finding indicates that principals achieve new curriculum implementation through indirect means (influencing teachers by motivation and collaboration). In this regard, the sense-making theorists indicate that principals often use subtle processes to influence reform implementation in their schools (Coburn, 2005; Spillane, Diamond, Burch, Hallett, Jita & Zoltners, 2002). Moreover, the usage of these techniques also reaffirms the notion that sense-making is a socially mediated process (Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002). The principals and their teachers collectively use their different expertise to mediate the implementation of the new

curriculum.

The findings further revealed that the principals believed that their teachers have more information about the new curriculum than they have, hence the principals were seemingly dependent on their teachers concerning the implementation of the new curriculum (cf. 4.2.1.1). This lack of information about the new curriculum seemed to compromise the perceived leadership of the principals to the extent that they do not appear to lead the new curriculum directly. This finding is in sharp contrast with Ng (2009), who found that, in Hong Kong, the principals had more knowledge about the curriculum reform than their teachers, and this discrepancy compromised the implementation of the reform.

It is also important to note that the belief system of the principals during reforms seemingly influences their behaviour. According to Botha (2013), the epistemological belief of principals about their knowledge is a critical factor that influences their behaviour. The more knowledge they have about the new curriculum, the more they believe in their ability to change. Principals are empowered by their knowledge to make meaningful decisions on key areas, such as curriculum.

Literature supports this finding by showing that principals' formal authority over teachers is often limited when teachers have more expertise, and principals rely on indirect leadership techniques to ensure successful implementation (Spillane, Diamond, Burch, Hallett, Jita & Zoltners, 2002). Literature further reiterates that principals tend to use subtle leadership strategies when dealing with intensive changes in which they lack expertise yet need teachers' buy-in to implement the envisaged changes in classrooms (Coburn, 2005; Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002). Because of the ambiguous nature of reforms for the principals, they often, at times, are compelled to reduce their control management style over teachers and adopt collaborative leadership approaches (Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2017). This is because reforms also necessitate new learning for both the principals and their teachers, and as they strive for shared meaning, they shape each other's sense-making (Gawlik, 2015).

The principals' reliance on peer-influence, collaboration and school-based workshops, shows that principals indirectly encourage teachers to use their discretion when

implementing the new curriculum. This indicates that the principals do not necessarily lead the implementation. As shown by the findings, the principals mostly learn about the new curriculum from the teachers, and make follow up resolutions made by the teachers (cf. 4.2.3.2). In this regard, the sense-making theorists indicate that agents' discretion plays a crucial part in the policy implementation process (Werts & Brewer, 2014). They further posit that the policy makers often seek to ensure implementation by limiting the discretion of the agents. However, they also reiterate that policy signals, which are too ambiguous, tend to promote the discretion of the implementing agents on how policy is put in practice (Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002; Spillane, Diamond, Burch, Hallett, Jita & Zoltners, 2002). In this regard, Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (2002) warn that the increased discretion on the part of implementing agents undermines the implementation of policy intentions.

From the findings of this study, it can be learned that teachers have greater discretion on the new curriculum implementation because they have more knowledge/expertise than the principals (cf. 4.2.2.3 & 4.2.3.2). Therefore, teachers' decisions about the direction of implementation may outweigh the expertise/capacity of the principals.

There are two possible implications from these findings. Firstly, the teachers' sense-making may influence the sense-making of the principal. This means that teachers make implementation decisions on their own, without the direct leadership of the principals. The principals just ensure that teachers adhere to the resolutions they have made by themselves. These findings lie in contrast with the findings that principals determine the direction of policy implementation in their schools (Coburn, 2005). Coburn argued that principals provide teachers with ways of understanding policy messages by controlling how teachers interpret and adopt policy messages. In contrast, this study found that the principals do not have the upper hand because the teachers have more curriculum knowledge than the principals do. This study found that principals rely on the teachers' understandings about the direction of implementation (cf. 4.2.3.2). As a result, the implementation of the new curriculum is essentially led by the teachers. For example, Victor confessed that he is not able to determine if the teachers are cheating on him (cf. 4.2.1.3). In support, Takesure expressed that the teachers are actually leading the implementation with his

idiomatic expression that "*the tail is wagging the dog*" (cf. 4.2.1.3).

Secondly, the principals' inferior knowledge of the new curriculum increases implementation discretion on the part of the teachers, and this increases the possibility of misinterpretations of policy intentions. This study found that teachers tend to liken the new curriculum to the old curriculum through the use of peer-influence and school-based workshops as discussed previously (cf. 4.2.2.3 & 4.2.2.5), and this is likely to lead to misinterpretations of policy intentions because they may implement what they are familiar with. This finding confirms the argument made by the sense-making theorists that the implementing agents may focus on superficial features of reform and miss its deep features (Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002). The principals in this study admitted that they were not well trained to lead the new curriculum (cf. 4.2.1.1) and that their teachers were not well-trained either (cf. 4.2.1.2). These findings also indicate that both the principals and the teachers do not have sound expertise in the new curriculum. As a result, the policy intensions envisaged in the new curriculum are likely to be interpreted as familiar due to this apparent lack of expertise in this reform. Hence, the reform would unlikely change their extant practices. In agreement with Ng and Pun (2013), the principals in this study seemingly have no room to play a catalytic role in the current reform.

5.2.3 Strategies for monitoring implementation

To reiterate their positive views about their role, the findings also indicated that principals mainly use two strategies to ensure that the new curriculum is implemented in their schools viz., they conduct lesson observations and monitor lesson plans (cf. 4.2.1.1). The use of these strategies shows a positive step towards fulfilling their envisaged roles. Moreover, the quantitative results revealed that principals have high positive views about the leadership role of the new curriculum, while the qualitative findings further revealed that they undertake specific measures to ensure that the new curriculum is implemented in their schools. As a result, the principals believe that they have a positive impact on the implementation of the new curriculum. These findings corroborate the findings by Coburn, Hill and Spillane (2016), who indicated that principals are expected to influence teaching and learning in line with reform demands. These findings also confirm the notion that principals

play a critical role in the implementation of educational reforms (Hourani & Stringer, 2015). It is interesting to note that principals have a strategic approach towards the implementation of the new curriculum.

According to the findings, the main purpose of using the two strategies is to ensure the teaching of prescribed content. This indicates that the principals believe that the prescribed content of the new curriculum is the central issue with this reform. This is not surprising given that previous studies showed that implementing agents tend to be biased towards aspects of reform that reinforce their beliefs (Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002). For instance, the principals asserted that "*content of the new curriculum is difficult*" (cf. 4.2.1.2) and "*teachers were not trained properly*" (cf. 4.2.3.3). These assertions demonstrate their beliefs concerning the content of the new curriculum and the teachers' capacity to deliver such content, hence they focus unduly on the prescribed content of the new curriculum. However, among the two strategies, monitoring the lesson plans stands out as the most reliable strategy used by the principals to ensure that teachers deliver the prescribed content. This may mean that teaching the prescribed content is the only measure used by the principals to check that the new curriculum is implemented (cf. 4.2.1.1). As a result, they may rely overly on checking lesson plans as a way to guarantee that teachers actually implement the new curriculum.

The implication of the above findings is that the over-reliance on monitoring teachers' lesson plans may indicate that principals are not able to give pedagogical guidance to teachers. In fact, Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (2002) indicated that implementing agents usually focus on superficial features of reform due to the lack of expertise in the envisaged reform. It can be expected, therefore, from the data in this study, that principals consider lesson plan monitoring as the easiest way to supervise the implementation of the new curriculum due to their lack of expertise in the leadership curriculum reform. In this regard, Schechter, Shaked, Ganon-Shilon and Goldratt (2016) show that reform implementations often create a gap between the principals' aspirations and their current repertoire. As such, principals reframe their leadership role to suit their new situation (Spillane & Kenney, 2012).

5.2.4 Compromised leadership

Another important finding of this study is that the dual roles, lack of funds and resources, and having insufficient information about the new curriculum are the main challenges that principals encounter in their leadership. These challenges overwhelm and compromise the envisaged or perceived leadership of the principals. The quantitative results revealed that principals understand their role expectations (cf. 4.3.2.1). However, the qualitative findings also show that the role challenges make it virtually impossible for the principals to fulfil their leadership tasks (cf. 4.2.3). School leadership scholars confirm that principals face many role challenges, which make their role difficult (Fullan, 2009; Mushaandja, 2013).

According to the findings, these challenges seemingly affect their capacity to lead the new curriculum. Their insufficient knowledge of the new curriculum makes them dependent on the teachers (cf. 4.2.1.1). Principals seem to be in a dilemma. They know what is expected of them as leaders, but their situation (contextual challenges) inhibits the enactment of their role as they envisage it. In this regard, Hallinger and Lee (2013) confirm that principals often lack the capacity to lead reforms. Principals understand their role expectations, but the challenges make it virtually impossible to fulfil the tasks.

The implication from these findings is that the principals' understanding and enactment of their role is influenced, to a great extent, by the multiple contextual challenges in their work. In other words, their understanding of their perceived leadership role does not translate to the enactment of that role given the nature of contextual challenges they encounter. Given these challenges, it can also be concluded that the school context is unfavourable for the new curriculum implementation. Accordingly, literature shows that specific school contexts, in which principals function, influences what they do (Angelle, 2017). As a result, the manner in which reforms take shape in schools is determined by the reality in the school (Schechter & Shaked, 2017).

Another significant finding of this study is that principals encounter several challenges in their role (cf. 4.2.3). The principals, in this study, showed that they are overburdened by many responsibilities and that they have insufficient information of

the new curriculum. These challenges constrain their leadership of the new curriculum. The findings also show that they are challenged by a shortage of resources and a lack support from the Ministry. School leadership literature reiterates the plight of principals. According to this literature, the principals' role is amorphous for both veterans and novices (Jorgensen, 2012), it is an overwhelming challenge, especially during reform implementation (Walker, Qian & Zhang, 2011), and a complex task, to the point that it is almost impossible to do (Fullan, 2009).

It can be deduced from these findings that the principals in this study are unable to function optimally, especially with regard to the underlying challenges associated with their leadership of the new curriculum. In this regard, Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011) reported that the proposed changes in educational systems have rendered many serving principals ineffective in their role, more so because many of them are untrained in school leadership and/or management. Similarly, many challenges encountered by the principals in this study seemingly render their leadership insignificant, hence they seem to have an inferiority complex.

5.2.5 Unprepared for reform leadership

Another pertinent finding of this study is that some principals claimed that they were not trained, while others reported that they were poorly trained, hence they possessed insufficient knowledge of the new curriculum. Those who received training were only trained after the teachers had been trained, and they reported that their training was short and sketchy (cf. 4.2.1.1). These findings reveal that the principals in this study are ill equipped for leadership of the new curriculum. These findings also confirm that there is no strategic school leadership development and preparation in African countries (Moorosi & Bush, 2011). The findings further reiterate the findings by the Wallace Foundation (2009), which show that school leadership has been largely ignored in many reform agendas.

The principals further revealed in the interviews that they need more in-depth training on the new curriculum. This indicates that they believe that their greatest need is professional development. In this regard, Ng and Pun (2013) suggest that there is a need to develop different capitals of principals in times of reform to avoid leadership lag. These scholars reiterate that while some principals may possess rich teaching

experience, there is a need to develop their intellectual capacity to enable them to assume the leadership of curriculum reform by guiding their teachers to change.

It has been reported in literature that the criteria for appointing principals are dubious in most African countries (Moorosi & Bush, 2011). Principals are often appointed based on their long teaching service, political connections and high academic qualifications among other things (Bush & Oduro, 2006). This study found that principals may not have the necessary capacity to lead the pedagogical changes required by the new curriculum (cf. 4.4.1) in spite of having high academic qualifications and lengthy teaching experience (cf. 4.3.1). Leadership preparation remains critical because it improves the confidence of the principals in their jobs (Bush et al. 2009). As a result of inadequate training, it can be deduced that principals in this study may have an inferiority complex.

The implication of having untrained principals leading the new curriculum is that the principals are technically unqualified to lead the new curriculum. As a result, this reform faces a threat of being partially implemented at school level. In this regard, Hallinger and Lee (2013) emphasise that teachers cannot make the required pedagogical changes without the skilful leadership and support of their principal.

5.3 Summary of the findings

The aim of this study was to explore the perspectives of Lesotho primary school principals regarding their roles and responsibilities in the implementation and leadership of the new integrated primary school curriculum. To achieve this aim, a mixed methods approach was adopted to explore the principals' views, understandings, opportunities and challenges regarding their roles and responsibilities in the new curriculum pragmatically and comprehensively. Therefore, this study explores the perspectives of principals as curriculum reform unfolds under their leadership in the context of Lesotho.

5.3.1 Principals' views and understandings

Specifically, the questionnaire sought to reveal the principals' views and understanding regarding their roles and responsibilities. The data collected showed that the principals, in this study, have positive views regarding their role as leaders of

the current curriculum reform in Lesotho. The high aggregate mean scores across all the questionnaire domains showed that the principals regard themselves as leaders of the new curriculum.

Similarly, the interview data corroborated the questionnaire data, and revealed that the principals regard themselves as the leaders of curriculum reform in Lesotho, whose main duty is to supervise the proper implementation of the reform. It should be noted that the principals assume the role responsibilities even though their new role expectations are not specified in the new curriculum policy. Moreover, the findings indicated that the principals regularly undertake specific measures to ensure that the new curriculum is functional in their schools. For instance, the principals monitor lesson planning and observe lessons during teaching and learning. The positive views and strategies employed indicate that the principals have reframed their role in response to the new curriculum.

5.3.2 Challenges and opportunities that principals encounter

The interview data further revealed that the principals encounter many challenges (such as a lack of information about the new curriculum and having to rely on teachers for such information), which hinder them from fulfilling their perceived responsibilities. Moreover, these challenges seem to influence the opportunities that they encounter when implementing the new curriculum. The findings show that they rely on indirect and subtle leadership techniques rather than direct techniques. For instance, they employ collaborative strategies such as teamwork, peer influence and school-based workshops. The uses of these subtle strategies seem to encourage teachers' implementation discretion because the principals reported that they rely on the teachers for most of the information and procedures of the new curriculum.

5.3.3 Explaining the principals' views, understanding, opportunities and challenges

A possible explanation for the positive views of the principals regarding their role may be due to role expectations. The principals seemingly understand what is expected from them as leaders. According to the Lesotho Education Act (2010), '*a principal shall ensure that meaningful teaching and learning takes place at the school*'. Seemingly, the principals are mandated by this Act to lead teaching and learning in their school. Mestry (2017) asserts that, nowadays, principalship is

subjected to a range of expectations. For instance, research indicates that the principals are accountable for improving students' achievement and attaining the outcomes of the education system (Hourani and Stringer, 2016). According to Mestry (2017), a principal is usually held accountable for students' academic performance.

The two datasets helped to uncover the fact that there is a gap between what the principals envisage as their roles and responsibilities and the roles they actually enact as they implement the new curriculum in their schools. The discrepancy between the perceived and enacted roles is caused by, among other things, a lack of preparation and the inadequate development of principals. In this regard, Hallinger and Lee (2013) found that a lack of leadership skills and knowledge can impact on their capacity as principals to lead and support the implementation of educational reforms. The findings suggest that in-service programs were seemingly not aligned with the aim of developing the curriculum reform leadership capacity of the principals because the in-service programs that the principals attended apparently did not support their enactment of the reform leadership role. Leadership capacity is seen as a key lever and a prerequisite condition for the sustainable implementation of reforms in schools (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Fullan, 2001). As a result, the findings of this study suggest that there is insufficient leadership capacity among the primary school principals in Lesotho to lead the current curriculum reform.

The findings show that the principals face challenges, such as having insufficient curriculum information. This challenge can also be attributed to the type of in-service training that the principals received. The principals reported that their training was ineffective. This finding is consistent with prior findings, which indicated that the 'workshop' model for professional development of the principals is ineffective (Piggot-Irvine, Howse & Richard, 2013). The findings of this study also resonate with the research in South Africa, which showed that many principals lacked awareness of the requirements of the New Curriculum Statement, and they had a weak grasp of the new classroom pedagogies, which confined them to just checking the teachers' work rather than making informed decisions about the quality of their teaching (Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & Van Rooyen, 2010).

5.3.4 Contribution of the study

The findings of this study are timely and contribute to the existing body of knowledge on reform implementation in two ways. Firstly, they confirm previous studies on curriculum reform leadership and secondly, the findings of this study raise questions about the principals' sense-making theory adopted as a theoretical framework for this study.

These findings concurred with previous studies by showing that principals are often confronted with incomprehensible curriculum reforms and experience complex challenges when leading such reforms. For instance, the findings of this study showed that the principals have limited information about the new curriculum and they encounter other numerous challenges that impinge on their leadership.

The findings raised questions on the sense-making theory adopted in this study by demonstrating that the principals in this study do not necessarily provide an interpretive framework for the teachers' sense-making, and that the teachers, because of having superior information of the new curriculum, direct its implementation.

This study's findings have also illustrated that limited attention has been given to the preparation and development of principals for their leadership of curriculum reform in Lesotho. The principals in this study reported that they were trained after the teachers had been trained and that their training was inadequate. They believed that their knowledge of the new curriculum was inferior to that of the teachers. Hence, the principals tended to rely on their teachers for curriculum information.

5.4 Conclusion

As indicated earlier, the principals in this study perceive themselves as the legitimate leaders of the current reform and they feel bound to adhere to it. However, while leading this reform, they choose the pedagogical aspects of the reform that match their capabilities, such as lesson planning and teaching the prescribed content.

When faced with curriculum reform, the principals make sense of their role by re-constructing their behaviours in relation to the context they find themselves in.

Interestingly, they aspired to play an active role by supervising the implementation of curriculum reform. However, their local capacities fall short of this envisaged role, hence they opted to create their own ways in consideration of their current contexts. The reform brought about radical changes that challenged the extant behaviours within the schools. These changes, coupled with the lack of information and contextual challenges, were inconsistent with the principals' prior knowledge and experiences, and as a result, the reform created role ambiguity and confusion for the principals. In contrast to prior studies (Coburn, 2005; Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002), the principals in this study adjusted their roles in response to the reform, and in consideration to their local contexts or the reality in their schools. In this regard, Schechter and Shaked (2017) claim that the school reality plays a critical role in shaping the implementation of mandated reforms.

According to Coburn (2005), the principals influence their teachers to act in certain ways in response to reforms. She claims that the principals may emphasise certain aspects of the reform to teachers and ignore other aspects. She maintains further that the principals may support or give teachers access to only those policy messages that they believe are appropriate for their teachers and schools, while shutting out policy messages that contradict their beliefs. However, the findings of this study show that the principals in this study are not acting to sabotage or reject the reform initiative. As the gatekeepers or middle managers, they have allowed the reform into their school (the reform seemed to have targeted the teachers but not the principals), but due to their lack of information and other contextual factors on the current reform, they are struggling to establish themselves as leaders of this reform. There is little room for the principals to take the direct leadership role of the current reform, hence there is little possibility also for them to provide an interpretive structure for the teachers' sense-making.

The argument raised by this study is that, the sense-making by the principals seemingly does not drive the implementation of the current curriculum reform in Lesotho, given the context in which the principals find themselves (inadequate training and insufficient information on the new curriculum reform). Coburn's (2005) theory that principals provide an interpretive framework for teachers' sense-making seems to be based on assumptions that principals have or had full information

about the proposed reform. Having full details of the reform would put principals in a better position to choose aspects of the reform that align with their beliefs, and then being able to emphasise those aspects to their teachers.

The principals in this study reported that they have limited information regarding the curriculum reform because they were either not trained or felt that they were inadequately trained. As such, the principals tended to rely on their teachers for information about the curriculum reform, and they used indirect leadership strategies. Given this situation, this study argues that these principals may not provide the interpretive framework for teachers by selecting some reform messages over others.

It can otherwise be argued that the indirect leadership strategies employed by the principals in this study are enough to be an interpretive framework within which teachers make sense of the curriculum reform. By allowing teachers the freedom to decide on which reform aspects they implement, the principals are, in a way, providing the framework for teachers' sense-making. The principals seem to allow implementation discretion from their teachers. The case presented by this study shows that the principals, together with their teachers, are learning about the reform. As a result, the principals adopted collaborative strategies whereby the principals and the teachers influence each other's sense-making about the curriculum reform. However, it is important to note that the principals collaborate with inferior information while their teachers have superior information about the curriculum reform. Hence the teachers have an added advantage to influence the direction of the implementation.

In short, Coburn's (2005) theory, as cited below, assumed that principals have had full access to policy messages. Also, it assumed that they gained this access before their teachers. Also, it assumed that the policy messages reach the teachers through the principals. The theory also assumed that the principals have control over the teachers' professional development and the procurement of curriculum materials through which they can influence and direct the teachers' sense-making.

> *Principals have greater access to policy messages than most classroom teachers. They are the ones who attend district meetings, receive state*

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and district directives, and participate in networking events associated
with reform efforts, learning about new materials, approaches, and ideas
associated with changing policy. As they interact with these policy
messages, principals make key decisions that shape which messages
they bring in, which messages they emphasize with the staff, and which
they filter out. (Coburn, 2005, p. 499).

However, the findings of this study revealed otherwise. The principals in this study showed that they were only trained about the new curriculum after their teachers had been familiarised with it. More importantly, they reported that they were trained for several days yet their teachers were trained for several weeks. (They described their training as 'half-baked' or 'inadequate'). This study found that the principals' believe that they have inferior curriculum information compared to their teachers. Hence, the principals get most of the curriculum information from the teachers. As such, they use subtle strategies, like peer-influence and school-based workshops, in which teachers seemingly use their discretion and understandings to implement the new curriculum. According to the findings of this study, the principals seemingly 'rubber-stamp' the teachers' implementation decisions.

5.5 Limitations of the study

Hallinger and Lee (2013) warn that the principals' self-report ratings are subject to inflation. This quantitative data relied solely on the principals' self-report about their views on their leadership. Therefore, caution should be exercised when interpreting questionnaire results. Again, self-report by principals cannot be trusted because of a tendency called Socially Desirable Responding. People often respond in a way that presents them in a more favourable light, even if these responses do not reflect how they actually think or behave (McDonald, 2008). The questionnaire data was triangulated with interview data to maximise the validity of the findings (Creswell, 2014). The interview data was from a small sample (N=6) because the aim was to gather in-depth data, even though the questionnaire data was generated from a relatively small sample (N=82). Due to the small sample size, the findings of this study cannot be generalised. Rather, the findings should be treated as illustrative but perhaps not representative. This study provides a picture of principals' leadership of

curriculum reform in Lesotho. Importantly, this study should not be regarded as an evaluation of principals' leadership of the new curriculum, but it should be framed as an exploration of their leadership.

5.6 Recommendations

5.6.1 Instructional leadership training

The findings suggested that principals in this study may not have instructional leadership skills to support the envisaged changes in teaching and learning. These findings imply that principals fall short of providing pedagogical guidance to teachers. Therefore, I recommend that there should be intensive leadership training for school principals. This training should also be designed to include capacitating principals with skills for instructional leadership. Having the instructional leadership skills will capacitate the principals to support teaching and learning processes. Literature indicates that the skills and capacity of school leaders is vital for the success of reforms (Lai, 2015; Hourani & Stringer, 2015).

5.6.2 Redesign in-service training program

The results indicated that principals indirectly lead the implementation of the new curriculum due to having insufficient information about it. As such, I recommend thorough new curriculum training for principals that encompasses its theoretical underpinnings. This training should empower principals with knowledge about the new curriculum, which will improve their expertise and reduce their reliance on teachers. According to Jansen (1998), it is important to make agents aware of the reasons for bringing educational reforms into schools. Moreover, principals need training in change management. This would enable them to lead this reform strategically. This training should put greater emphasis on change theories that principals can adopt in their schools. Having the knowledge and skills for managing change would capacitate principals to be effective leaders who work to ensure quality teaching and learning.

5.6.3 Situation analysis of school context

Given the numerous challenges that principals encounter, I recommend that the MoET should undertake a situation analysis of the school contexts in which the

principals work. Conducting a situation analysis of the school contexts would help the MoET to establish the challenges that principals encounter and mitigate them. In this case, the situation analysis of the school contexts would help to shed light on the amount of resources and funds needed for the effective implementation of the new curriculum. To mitigate these challenges, the MoET should take decisive steps to allocate resources and funds to schools to meet the needs of the new curriculum in schools.

5.6.4 Review of policies

This study further recommends that the MoET should review or develop policies, which target the support of the principals. This study found that the implementation of the new curriculum is hampered by the unavailability of resources and funds in schools. Therefore, existing procurement policies should be reviewed to make the supply of school resources, related to the new curriculum, easy for the principals. Moreover, the MoET should review school funding policies in order to timely avail enough funds to schools to meet the financial demands of the new curriculum. The timely procurement of school resources and adequate financial support to schools would aid the smooth implementation of the new curriculum.

The findings suggested that principals received inadequate training on the new curriculum. Therefore, this study recommends that the MoET should develop policies for the strategic professional development of principals. Such professional development policies should ensure that training for principals is ongoing, needs specific and context-specific. Having policies in place for professional development would mean that deliberate efforts are geared towards the improvement of school leadership. The aim of such professional development policies should be to build the principals' capacity as leaders of curriculum reform.

5.6.5 Focus of future research

To support this study, future research should focus on how principals facilitate curriculum reform by incorporating the surveys of teachers' perspectives, as well as principals' perspectives. Such surveys would offer researchers an opportunity to compare between the teachers' perspectives and the principals' self-reports. Other future studies should focus on including observations of principals in action – with a

larger sample, in order to make empirical claims.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Faculty of Education

21-Aug-2017

Dear **Mr Moeketsi Ralebese**

Ethics Clearance: **Principals' perspectives regarding their role as leaders of curriculum reform in Lesotho**

Principal Investigator: **Mr Moeketsi Ralebese**

Department: **School of Education Studies (Bloemfontein Campus)**

APPLICATION APPROVED

With reference to you application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: **UFS-HSD2017/0936**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours faithfully

Prof. MM Mokhele
Chairperson: Ethics Committee

Education Ethics Committee
Office of the Dean: Education
T: +27 (0)51 401 9683| F: +27 (0)86 546 1113 | E: NkoaneMM@ufs.ac.za
Winkie Direko Building | P.O. Box/Posbus 339 | Bloemfontein 9300 | South Africa
www.ufs.ac.za

APPENDIX B: MINISTRY PERMISSION

03/10/2017

The Principal

_____

Maseru 100

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: RESEARCH

Principals' perspectives regarding their roles as leaders of curriculum reform in Lesotho

Mr.Moeketsi David Ralebese is a student who is conducting a research on the above stated topic. He therefore wishes to carry out a research at your school.

You are kindly requested to provide him with the information that he may require.

Thanking you in advance for your usual support.

Yours Faithfully
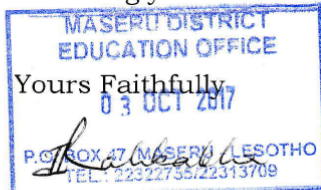
LEPEKOLA RALIBAKHA (MR)
DISTIRCT EDUCATION MANAGER - MASERU

APPENDIX C: MINISTRY LETTER

Private Bag A197

Maseru 100

02 October 2017

Senior Education Officer

The Ministry of Education and Training

Maseru 100

Lesotho

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear Sir/Madam

I hereby request permission to conduct research with selected primary school principals within your district.

My name is Moeketsi David Ralebese, and I am presently studying for a Masters degree with the University of the Free State. As part of my Masters programme, I am required to conduct research on an aspect of interest with a view to making a contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the issues under study. The title of my research project is:

Principals' perspectives regarding their roles as leaders of curriculum reform in Lesotho.

The purpose of the study is to explore the perspectives of Lesotho primary school principals on their roles and responsibilities in the implementation and leadership of the new integrated primary school curriculum. I am particularly interested in how principals view their roles as leaders of curriculum reform in Lesotho and the

challenges and opportunities they encounter in fulfilling their roles. The study has the potential to benefit principals, teachers and curriculum developers by pointing out challenges, the successes and the needs for supporting and improving the curriculum leadership in Lesotho This study will enable participants in this project to reflect on their leadership practices. The principals from the five centres will benefit from this project since they are directly involved in the project and research findings will be shared with them. The Lesotho ministry of education will also benefit as the findings will be shared with its authorities for possible policy amendments.

.

The study will involve distributing questionnaires to one hundred principals to explore their views and beliefs regarding their roles as leaders of curriculum reform and interviews with ten principals to explore the challenges and opportunities they encounter in their leadership. The interviews are expected to last no more than 60 minutes per session.

I undertake to observe confidentiality and to protect participants from physical and/or psychological harm. No names of the schools and/or persons shall be used in any reports of the research. All participants will be asked to participate voluntarily in the study and may withdraw at any time should they so wish. Upon the completion of the study, I undertake to provide the Ministry of Education and Training with a copy of the research report and to share my findings with principals in Maseru (and possibly other districts as necessary).

If you need any further information and/or have suggestions, please contact me and/or my research supervisor Prof. L. Jita at JitaLC@ufs.ac.za or +2751 401 7522

I hope my request will reach your favourable consideration.

Yours sincerely

Moeketsi D. Ralebese Cell: +266 59000678 (E-mail: dmralebese@gmail.com)

APPENDIX D: PRINCIPALS' LETTER

<div align="right">

Private Bag A197

Maseru 100

Date ....

</div>

The Principal

XX primary school

Maseru 100

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Sir/Madam

I am presently studying for a Masters degree with the University of the Free State. As part of my programme, I am conducting a research study entitled:

Principals' perspectives on their roles as leaders of curriculum reform in Lesotho.

The purpose of the study is to explore the perspectives of Lesotho primary school principals on their roles and responsibilities in the implementation and leadership of the new integrated primary school curriculum.

You have been identified as one of the principals, also known as curriculum leaders and whose views and leadership practices I would like to learn from and then come up with strategies for improvement. The study has the potential to benefit principals, teachers and curriculum developers by pointing out challenges, the successes and the needs for supporting and improving the roles of curriculum leaders in Lesotho.

The study will involve: 1) filling a questionnaire, which may take about thirty minutes, to explore your views and beliefs regarding your roles as a leader of curriculum reform; 2) if need be, an interview will be conducted to explore the challenges and opportunities you encounter in your leadership. The interview is expected to last no more than 60 minutes.

I undertake to observe confidentiality and to provide the Ministry of Education and Training with a copy of the research report and to share my findings with principals in Maseru (and possibly other districts as necessary).

If you need any further information and/or have suggestions, please contact me and/or my research supervisor Prof. L. Jita at JitaLC@ufs.ac.za or +2751 401 7522

I hope my request will reach your favourable consideration.

Yours sincerely

Moeketsi D. Ralebese Cell: +266 59000678 (E-mail: dmralebese@gmail.com)

APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM

If you agree to participate in the study please complete the attached the consent form

<u>Study title</u>: *Principals' perspectives regarding their roles as leaders of curriculum reform in Lesotho.*

- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the abovementioned research study.

- I understand what the study is about, why I am participating and what the risks and benefits are.

- I give the researcher permission to use recording device.

- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my participation, subject to the stipulations he has indicated in the above letter.

Participant's Signature:... Date:...................

Researcher's Signature:..................................... Date:...................

APPENDIX F: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW

1. How did you come to know about the new curriculum?

2. Why did the ministry of education implement this new curriculum?

3. What is expected from you as a principal in this new curriculum? What are your foremost tasks in implementing the new curriculum in your school?

4. What positive things has the new curriculum brought for you as a principal? If you are invited to share with other principals your success experiences in the implementation of the new curriculum, what accomplishments would you talk about?

5. What problems has this curriculum brought for you as a principal? Are there factors that hinder your leadership of this new curriculum? How do you deal with such issues?

6. How do you assist teachers who encounter problems with the new curriculum? Give practical examples.

7. How do you point out teachers' strengths and weaknesses after classroom observations?

8. What are your comments about the training that you received regarding this new curriculum? In which areas do you need further assistance /training? Why?

9. How do you ensure that teachers actually implement the new curriculum effectively? Probe for programs to empower teachers.

10. How would describe your feelings regarding your leadership in implementing the new curriculum? How do you generally feel during this time of implementing the new curriculum?

11. What suggestions can you make regarding principal leadership in schools during this time of implementing the new curriculum?

APPENDIX G: PRINCIPALS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Participant

I am Moeketsi D. Ralebese and I am doing Masters in Education at the University of the Free State. I am currently conducting a research titled: *Principals' perspectives regarding their role as leaders of curriculum reform in Lesotho*. You have been selected to take part in this study that collects information about Principals' perspectives regarding their roles and responsibilities in the implementation of curriculum reform in Lesotho. Your answers will be helpful in revealing challenges and opportunities in the leadership of curriculum reform. The information obtained through this questionnaire will remain confidential and be used for the purpose of this study only.

Section A: Biographical information

Please indicate the best option with X in the appropriate box

GENDER

Male	
Female	

AGE

26-30	
31-40	
41-50	

51-60	
61-65	
>65	

EXPERIENCE AS TEACHER

1-3 years	
4-6years	
7-10years	
11-15 years	
>16 years	

EXPERIENCE AS PRINCIPAL

1-3 years	
4-6 years	
7-10 years	
11-15 years	
>16	

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

Certificate	
Diploma	
Degree	
Post graduate degree	

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

Leadership/ management training	Yes	No

Section B

Mark the most suitable response with an X. (1= never; 2= seldom; 3= moderately; 4= mostly).

I. UNDERSTANDING CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS	1	2	3	4
5 I know the requirements of the new curriculum				
6 I lead the teachers to understand the requirements of the new curriculum				
7 I use the new curriculum requirements as a guide when I observe and assess teaching and learning processes				
8 I encourage teachers to change their teaching strategies to meet the new curriculum requirements				
9 I explain to the teachers what is expected from them in the new curriculum				

J. UNDERSTANDING NEW METHODS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING	1	2	3	4
4. I understand new teaching methods that teachers have to use in the new curriculum				
5. I know the new learning styles brought by the new curriculum				

6. I share my knowledge of the new curriculum with the teachers				

K. ORGANISING THE DELIVERY OF NEW CURRICULUM	1	2	3	4
3. I prepare a clear plan to implement the new curriculum				
4. I ensure that the school policies and systems align to the new curriculum				

L. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING CHANGE	1	2	3	4
4. I encourage teachers to be innovative when implementing new curriculum				
5. I effectively promote change in the school community				
6. I actively communicate information about the new curriculum				

M. ENSURING THAT CHANGE IS UNDERSTOOD AND ACCEPTED	1	2	3	4
5. I make professional development plans for individual teachers on the new curriculum				
6. I ensure that all teachers are actively involved in the professional development programs				
7. I ensure that professional development is on-going and based on the needs of the new curriculum				
8. I ensure that teachers understand the change, the need for change and the change process brought by the new curriculum				

N. FOSTERING COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS	1	2	3	4
4. I establish open communication with the wider community about the new curriculum				
5. I involve parents in school programs that facilitate implementation of the new curriculum				
6. I introduce new curriculum to the wider community through regular meetings and other communication channels/platforms				

O. MONITORING AND EVALUATING TEACHER PERFORMANCE	1	2	3	4
5. I conduct regular classroom observations and give feedback about teaching the New Curriculum				
6. I evaluate and review classroom practices of teachers to ensure that they align to New curriculum				
7. I develop a curriculum implementation plan for the school				
8. I guide the teaching and learning processes of the New Curriculum				

P. LEAD AND MANAGE CHANGE	1	2	3	4
5. I make use of change theory to manage curriculum reform in the school				
6. I believe in change and I am able to guide teachers to implement changes				

7. I am able to deal with obstacles and uncertainties brought by curriculum reform				
8. I am responsible for making sure that curriculum changes take place				

Thank you for taking time to fill this questionnaire!!!!