

**THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERS'  
PRACTICES ON SCHOOL CULTURE  
AFFECTING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: A  
LESOTHO PERSPECTIVE**

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Signed..........

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## **ABSTRACT**

Poor academic performance in high schools continues to be a concern to Lesotho. It is this apprehension, which has prompted this study. On the research front, the disquiet has been with scarcity of investigations on what school principals, through their leadership practices, could do to influence a school culture that supports high academic performance of learners. As a result, the main aim of the study was to investigate and identify the leadership practices of school principals that are intended to create and nurture a culture conducive to high academic performance in high schools in Lesotho. The study also compared the leadership practices at schools that perform academically well with those typical of schools that display poor academic performance.

There are conflicting views on the influence of school principals' leadership practices on school culture, which supports high academic performance of learners. Some researchers maintain that the influence is little, but significant. However, principals are held accountable for the advancement of schools and academic performance of learners. It is therefore, in order that principals, through their leadership skills, should effectively utilise human and material resources for the wellbeing of the schools they lead. Leadership and school culture are considered as intertwined processes, which exhibit reciprocal effects. The challenge has been to investigate what principals could do to create and maintain an environment that enables teachers and learners to work effectively.

The study adopted a positivist approach, which employed a quantitative research designed to identify and describe the leadership practices of school principals and the cultures prevailing at schools. A questionnaire was developed and used to collect data from 120 respondents comprising teachers and principals chosen from 20 high schools in the Maseru district of Lesotho. The data collected were analysed and interpreted statistically for the results to be displayed in tables.

Given the scope of the research and the limiting factors therein, the results of the study cannot be generalised to other settings of a similar nature. However, the study has made recommendations that may help to alleviate the problem of poor academic

performance in schools. The study has also contributed to the existing knowledge by providing further areas of research in the field of educational leadership and management.

## ABSTRAK

Swak akademiese prestasie in hoërskole is nog steeds 'n probleem in Lesotho. Dit is hierdie besorgdheid wat tot hierdie studie gelei het. Op die navorsingsfront bestaan daar kommer as gevolg van die gebrek aan ondersoek oor wat skoolhoofde, deur hulle leierskapspraktyke, kan doen om 'n skoolkultuur te beïnvloed wat sterk akademiese prestasie van leerders ondersteun. Gevolglik was die hoofdoel met hierdie studie om die leierskapspraktyke van skoolhoofde te ondersoek en te identifiseer wat kan lei tot die skep en instandhouding van 'n kultuur bevorderlik vir sterk akademiese prestasie by hoërskole in Lesotho. Die studie het ook die leierskapspraktyke by skole wat akademies goed presteer, vergelyk met dié tipies by skole wat akademies swak presteer.

Daar bestaan teenstrydige standpunte oor die invloed van skoolhoofde se leierskapspraktyke op 'n skoolkultuur wat die sterk akademiese prestasie van leerders ondersteun. Sommige navorsers huldig die standpunt dat die invloed klein, maar betekenisvol is. Skoolhoofde word egter verantwoordelik gehou vir die vordering van skole en die akademiese prestasie van leerders. Dit is gevolglik in orde dat skoolhoofde, deur hulle leierskapsvaardighede mens- en materiële hulpbronne doeltreffend sal aanwend ter wille van die welstand van die skole wat hulle lei. Leierskap en skoolkultuur word beskou as vervlegde prosesse wat wederkerige resultate oplewer. Die uitdaging was om vas te stel wat skoolhoofde kan doen om 'n omgewing te skep en te handhaaf wat onderwysers en leerders in staat stel om effektief te werk.

Die studie het 'n positivistiese benadering gevolg, met 'n kwantitatiewe navorsingsmodel wat ontwerp is om die leierskapspraktyke van skoolhoofde en die heersende kulture by skole te identifiseer en te beskryf. 'n Vraelys is ontwikkel en gebruik om data van 120 respondente, bestaande uit geselekteerde onderwysers en skoolhoofde afkomstig van 20 hoërskole in die Maseru-distrik van Lesotho, in te samel. Die versamelde data is geanaliseer en statisties geïnterpreteer, en die resultate is in tabelle voorgestel.

Gegewe die omvang van die navorsing en die beperkende faktore daaraan verbonde, kan die resultate van die studie nie veralgemeen word om op ander soortgelyke omgewings van toepassing te maak nie. Die studie het egter aanbevelings gemaak wat moontlik mag help om die probleem van swak akademiese prestasie by skole te verlig. Die studie het ook 'n bydrae gelewer tot bestaande kennis, deur verdere navorsingsareas op die gebied van opvoedkundige leierskap en bestuur te lewer.

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1	Cronbach's alpha estimate for questionnaire items	73
Table 4.1	Distribution of post levels of respondents	77
Table 4.2	Gender of the respondents	78
Table 4.3	Qualifications of the respondents	79
Table 4.4	Teaching experience of the respondents	80
Table 4.5	Statistical mean scores of the views of principals and teachers on the presence of leadership practices and school culture	86
Table 4.6	T-test for independent samples of principals and teachers on the presence of leadership practices and school culture	88
Table 4.7	The p-values for the sections of the questionnaire	89
Table 4.8	A comparison of views of respondents on the prevalence of leadership practices and school culture as observed at schools performing poorly as well as at schools performing well	91
Table 4.9	The t-test analysis for schools performing poorly and schools performing well	93
Table 4.10	The mean scores of the responses of teachers classified under poorly performing schools and schools performing well	95
Table 4.11	The mean scores for principals classified according to poorly performing schools and schools performing well	96
Table 4.12	A comparison of statistical means of teachers and their principals	97
Table 4.13	The t-test analysis of the observations of teachers	99
Table 4.14	The t-test analysis of observations of principals	101
Table 4.15	A comparison of the p-values taken from Tables 4.9, 4.13 and 4.14, summarising the main findings	102
Table 5.1	A summary of the responses of principals and teachers concerning the prevalence of leadership practices and school culture conducive to high academic performance	106
Table 5.2	A summary of the mean scores and t-test analysis for poorly performing schools and well-performing schools as derived from Tables 4.8 and 4.9	108
Table 5.3	A summary of separate statistical analysis made on teachers and principals classified under poorly performing schools and well-performing schools derived for Tables 4.10 to 4.15	111

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Three levels of school culture	25
Figure 2.2	The dimensions of school culture	27
Figure 2.3	An instructional leadership model	46
Figure 2.4	Leithwood's transformational leadership model	49
Figure 2.5	A model of distributed leadership	52
Figure 2.3	Categories of core practices of leadership	61
Figure 4.1	Graphic illustration of the distribution of the post levels of the respondents	78
Figure 4.2	Graphic illustration of the number of female and male respondents	79
Figure 4.3	Graphic illustration of the qualifications of the respondents	80
Figure 4.4	Graphic illustration of the teaching experience of the respondents	81

# TABLE OF CONTENT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ABSTRAK.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii
CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION.....	1
1.1    INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2    STATEMENT AND BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM .....	1
1.3    THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH .....	4
1.4    SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY .....	5
1.5    THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE .....	5
1.5.1    Theoretical framework.....	5
1.5.2    Educational theories underpinning the study.....	6
1.5.3    Theoretical background .....	6
1.6    RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE.....	8
1.6.1    Positivistic paradigm perspective .....	8
1.6.2    Quantitative research method.....	10
1.6.3    Method of data collection.....	10
1.6.4    Research population and sample.....	11
1.6.5    Literature review.....	11
1.7    ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	12
1.8    DEMARCATING THE RESEARCH AREA.....	12
1.9    RESEARCH OUTLAY.....	13
1.10    SUMMARY .....	14
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SCHOOL CULTURE AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP.....	15
2.1    INTRODUCTION.....	15

2.2	SCHOOL CULTURE .....	15
2.2.1	Definition of school culture.....	16
2.2.2	The concepts <i>school culture</i> and <i>school climate</i> .....	18
2.2.2.1	The origin of the concepts school culture and school climate .....	19
2.2.2.2	The importance of school culture and school climate.....	19
2.2.2.3	Differentiating between school culture and climate .....	20
2.2.2.4	Transformation of school culture and school climate .....	22
2.2.2.5	Why the focus of the study is on school culture.....	22
2.2.3	Levels of school culture.....	23
2.2.3.1	First level: Basic underlying assumptions .....	25
2.2.3.2	Second level: Values and norms .....	26
2.2.3.3	Third level: Expressions of culture .....	26
2.2.4	Dimensions of school culture.....	27
2.2.4.1	Dimension I: Professional orientation .....	28
2.2.4.2	Dimension II: Organizational structure .....	28
2.2.4.3	Dimension III: Quality of the learning environment .....	28
2.2.4.4	Dimension IV: Student-centred focus.....	28
2.2.5	Importance of school culture.....	29
2.2.5.1	Conditions prevailing at schools that have strong cultures.....	31
2.2.5.2	Summary of conditions prevailing at schools that have a strong school culture .....	33
2.2.6	Schools with a poor school culture .....	34
2.3	SCHOOL LEADERSHIP .....	35
2.3.1	School leadership and school culture that support academic performance .....	36
2.3.2	Definition of school leadership .....	37
2.3.3	Leadership and management .....	40
2.3.3.1	Distinction between leadership and management.....	41
2.3.3.2	The importance of leadership and management at a school .....	42

2.3.3.3	Concluding remarks .....	44
2.3.4	Models of leadership at schools .....	44
2.3.4.1	Instructional leadership .....	45
2.3.4.2	Transformational Leadership .....	48
2.3.4.3	Distributed leadership .....	51
2.3.5	Leadership model to use .....	54
2.4	THE ROLE OF PRINCIPALS IN NURTURING SCHOOL CULTURE .....	55
2.4.1	Contextual factors within the school environment .....	56
2.4.2	Strategies employed by principals to create a culture of learning .....	57
2.4.3	Summary of the roles of principals in creating a culture of learning.....	58
2.3.4.1	Articulating and communicating a vision, mission and goals shared by all members:	58
2.3.4.2	The management of the curriculum and instructional process, which includes:.....	59
2.3.4.3	Promoting a culture of learning includes:.....	59
2.3.5	Model of leadership practices aimed at creating a culture of learning.....	59
2.3.5.1	Setting direction:.....	61
2.3.5.2	Developing people: .....	62
2.3.5.3	Developing the organisation .....	64
2.4	CONCLUSION.....	65
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .....		67
3.1	INTRODUCTION .....	67
3.2	THE AIM OF THE STUDY .....	67
3.3	RESEARCH DESIGN AND PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE.....	67
3.4	QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD .....	69
3.5	RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLE.....	70
3.6	QUESTIONNAIRE AS A METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION.....	71
3.6.1	Validity .....	72
3.6.2	Reliability.....	73

3.6.3	Pilot Study .....	74
3.7	COMPUTATION OF DATA .....	74
3.8	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	75
3.9	SUMMARY .....	75
CHAPTER 4:	PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH DATA.....	76
4.1	INTRODUCTION .....	76
4.2	THE PURPOSE OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH.....	76
4.3	PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH DATA.....	76
4.3.1	Demographic data of the respondents .....	77
4.3.1.1	Distribution of post levels .....	77
4.3.1.2	The gender of respondents.....	78
4.3.1.3	Qualifications of the respondents.....	79
4.3.1.4	Teaching experience of the respondents.....	80
4.3.2	Views of principals and teachers on the presence of leadership practices and school culture that supports high academic performance .....	81
4.3.2.1	Prevalence of leadership functions as observed by the principals and teachers .....	82
4.3.2.2	Prevalence of school culture as observed by principals and teachers .....	84
4.3.3	Statistical significance of the prevalence of leadership practices and school culture as observed by principals and teachers .....	87
4.3.4	Comparison of the views of respondents on the prevalence of the leadership practices and school culture with regard to schools performing well and schools performing poorly.....	90
4.3.5	The t-test analysis of the mean scores of observations according to poor performing schools and good performing schools .....	92
4.3.6	Views of teachers and principals on the prevalence of leadership practices and school culture as observed at schools performing poorly as well as at schools performing well .....	94
4.4	CONCLUDING REMARKS .....	103
CHAPTER 5:	FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS .....	104
5.1	INTRODUCTION .....	104
5.2	FINDINGS.....	104

5.2.1	Theoretical framework.....	104
5.2.2	Findings on the prevalence of the leadership practices at schools .....	105
5.2.3	Comparative findings on the leadership practices and school culture prevailing at poorly performing schools as against those at well-performing schools .....	107
5.3.	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	112
5.4.	CONCLUSION.....	114
	SUMMARY .....	116
	OPSOMMING .....	118
	BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	120
	ADDENDUM A: Letter to respondents to obtain their consent.....	127
	ADDENDUM B: Consent form for participants for research study .....	128
	ADDENDUM C: Letter from MOET .....	129
	ADDENDUM D: Questionnaire for leaders.....	130
	ADDENDUM E: Questionnaire 2 for teachers .....	134

# **CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The leadership role of school principals becomes increasingly important as far as the performance and effectiveness of schools is concerned. The need for schools to be led by effective leaders who can provide direction, interact and inspire others to work effectively is a necessity, more especially when there are schools where the academic performance is questionable. Through their leadership practices, principals are charged with the responsibility to deal with diverse factors within the schools to create an inviting culture of teaching and learning, which should consequently have a positive impact on academic performance (Lucas & Valentine, 2002:3). This study seeks to investigate what principals are able to do through their leadership practices to develop a school culture conducive to high academic performance.

## **1.2 STATEMENT AND BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The education system in Lesotho is organised into three phases, namely primary, secondary and higher education. The primary education extends over a period of seven years, at the end of which learners write the Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE). The secondary education comprises junior and senior levels and extends over a period of five years. Junior secondary education covers a period of three years at the end of which learners sit for the Junior Certificate (JC) examinations. Senior secondary education is a two-year programme. At the end of senior secondary education, all learners sit for the Cambridge Overseas Schools' Certificate (COSC) examinations. COSC is an examination that is taken after 12 years of schooling. It can be equated to the South African Matric or Grade 12 examination. All the COSC examinations are conducted by the Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECoL), but the syllabus and question papers are developed by the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). Schools that offer both junior and senior secondary education are referred to as high schools (Sebatane, 1998:255; Lefoka & Sebatane, 2003:2; Ntoi 2007:3).

When learners have completed the first two phases successfully, they can advance to the last phase, higher education, which is provided by tertiary, vocational and technical training colleges. In this study, the focus will be on high schools, and specifically on senior secondary education.

Academic performance of learners at the end of secondary education (COSC examinations), which seems to be of poor quality, is a concern to the Lesotho government. The indication is that only 21% of the students in junior secondary education manage to proceed to the senior secondary level (COSC), of whom only 8% eventually manage to pass the COSC examinations (Ministry of Education and Training, 2005:42). In addition, analysis of the COSC examinations results in the Mophale's Hoek district in Lesotho revealed that only one high school out of twelve had a consistent pass rate of 97% for a period of five years (2002–2006), while the other eleven schools had either displayed a fluctuating performance or scored below 30% (Mokhethi, 2007:1). The poor academic performance may indicate the need to deal with factors within the schools' environment that could be associated with their performance.

The poor academic performance at senior secondary education level is not a concern only in Lesotho; South Africa has similar experiences. Niemann and Kotze (2006:610) acknowledge the existence of excellent schools in South Africa, as well as dysfunctional schools that achieve a less than 30% pass rate in their Matric results. At dysfunctional schools, the poor academic performance is associated with the culture of teaching and learning, which is considered to have broken down. Dysfunctional schools that display a poor culture of learning are most prevalent amongst post-primary schools in South Africa (Kruger, 2003:206). Collapsed cultures and poor academic performance of schools is a matter of concern to educators as well as principals (Masitsa, 2005:206). While admitting that principals and teachers have to deal with complex situations at schools (Lucas & Valentine, 2002:3), the indication is that school culture may be one of the contributing factors to poor academic performance at high schools.

Schools with poor teaching and learning cultures are characterised by disputed and disrupted relations pertaining to authority between principals and educators and/or

learners, poor school attendance by both learners and teachers, acts of violence, absence of visionary leadership, low morale and signs of desperation in the school community (Moloi, 2005:85–86; Kruger, 2003:207; Peterson, 2002:2). The presence of these challenges at schools, which in some cases are left unattended, gradually weakens the culture of learning and teaching, eventually leading to poor academic performance in Grades 11 and 12 (Masitsa, 2005:205). On the other hand, these challenges indicate the imperative to improve the culture of teaching and learning, which will in turn have an impact on the overall quality of academic performance at schools (Kruger, 2003:206; Oluremi, 2008:303). The process of improving the culture of a school, as supported by Lucas and Valentine (2002:4), is regarded as the key leadership role of principals intending to effect change on a number of processes, including the academic performance of students.

Associating academic performance closely with the school culture, while there are other factors that could be contributing towards the differences in performance between schools (Coppieters, 2005:130), only serves to provide a vantage point from which the principal's leadership practices could be assessed. Academic performance is the prime business of every school; therefore, it is in order that all the initiatives of principals should converge into improving the culture of learning.

It has been a concern for a long time that research has not adequately addressed the relationship between leadership practices and school culture (Lucas & Valentine, 2002:3–4). Four years later, Niemann and Kotze (2006: 610) and Robinson (2006:64) also shared the same sentiments that little research has been done to reveal the leadership practices of school principals aimed at cultivating a culture that supports high academic performance. The challenge of establishing school culture conducive to teaching and learning (Van Deventer & Kruger,2003:3) and the need for principals to account for the performance at schools (Steyn, 2008:890) are strong reasons advanced for reassessment of how leadership behaviour of school principals impacts on school culture (Oluremi, 2008:304). As such, little is known about the leadership practices of principals on school culture, which could result in an improvement in students' academic performance at secondary schools.

The primary problem that the study aims to research is what principals can do to develop a school culture conducive to good academic performance at schools in Lesotho. The study will also compare the leadership practices and school culture at schools that consistently perform well and at schools where academic performance seems to be poor or inconsistent in senior secondary examinations in Lesotho. Therefore, the study will be guided by the following questions:

- What do the concepts *school culture* and *school leadership* entail?
- What leadership practices of principals are observable at high schools in Lesotho that have a culture conducive to good academic performance?
- What leadership practices of principals are observable at high schools in Lesotho that have a poor or fluctuating culture of academic performance and how do they compare with schools with a culture of good academic performance?
- What leadership practices can be adopted by principals to cultivate a culture conducive to improved academic performance at high schools in Lesotho?

### **1.3 THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH**

The aim of the research is to find out if there are leadership practices implemented by school principals that cultivate a school culture conducive to producing good COSC examination results at high schools in Lesotho. To achieve this aim, the study will investigate the leadership practices at schools that perform academically well, as well as at schools that do not perform well academically. More specifically, the researcher intends to be guided by the following objectives:

- To provide a theoretical perspective on the concepts *school culture* and *school leadership*
- To investigate the leadership practices of principals at high schools in Lesotho with a culture of good academic performance
- To investigate and compare the leadership practices of principals at high schools in Lesotho with a poor culture of academic performance with those at schools with a culture of good academic performance

- To make recommendations based on the research findings on leadership practices that can be adopted by principals to cultivate a culture conducive to improved academic performance at high schools in Lesotho

## **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The information that will be collected from the results of the study can lead to recommendations that might help to alleviate certain problems at schools in Lesotho. The results of this study may be useful to school principals and teachers as well as other stakeholders in education, such as educational planners and inspectors (learning facilitators) of schools. It may also benefit in-service training for school leadership, as well as provide additional information to teacher training institutions about the possible relationship between school culture and leadership. The results of the study may also provide a basis for further research, which will be discussed in the last chapter. The study is therefore in line with the thinking that suggests that research is undertaken for developing new ideas and theories, adding new information to the existing body of knowledge and filling the gaps identified by other writers (Maree, 2007:254).

## **1.5 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Theories, concepts or variables that underpin this study are intended to provide knowledge and understanding about leadership being investigated (Sinclair, 2007:39). The theoretical framework for this study, which adopts a descriptive approach, lies within the existing research findings in the area of educational leadership and management.

### **1.5.1 Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework that underpins educational leadership provides a vantage point to understand practices, interpret behaviour of members and guide decision-making processes in an organisation (Bush, 2006:3). The diversity of problems at schools, the nature and location of schools, and the quest to find solutions to the problems have led to plethora of theories in the field of education (Robinson, 2006:64; Bush, 2008:9). Despite many theories available, there is no single theory

that can encapsulate all the problems at schools; as such it would be naïve to disregard other theories (Bush, 2008:9).

### **1.5.2 Educational theories underpinning the study**

The study, in the main, is guided by collegial management or participative leadership theory. The theory predominantly promotes professional growth of teachers by enabling them to assume leadership roles and participate in decision-making. The concern in this study is to find the extent to which research has provided guidance for school leadership to enhance a collaborative spirit and the sharing of knowledge among members, which consequently cultivate values guiding the school processes. The assumption in this theory, namely that devolution of power induces increased teacher participation and commitment in the teaching and learning process is a shift in the thinking of school leadership to endorse higher academic performance (Bush, 2006:8-9; Singh, 2005:11). As much as teachers are given greater autonomy, the theory still holds the school principals accountable for providing direction by advocating for a shared vision (Singh, 2005:11).

While acknowledging that the participative theory is suitable for this study, there are limitations inherent to many of the educational theories. Robinson (2006:65) criticises the manner in which the leadership theories are developed without considering the impact of leadership on the academic achievement of learners as the focus of the research. The participative theory is also criticised for its emphasis on consensus regarding time-consuming decision-making. On the other hand, the theory is marvelled for its relevance for small groups such as schools (Bush, 2006:9). Reference to other theories, such as instructional leadership is done to supplement and offset the limitations. The main purpose of the study is to explain and provide knowledge and understanding of the leadership practices of school principals that may enable them to cultivate a culture that supports good academic performance.

### **1.5.3 Theoretical background**

Educational leaders are regarded as having a direct influence on the way in which schools function and are managed. The principal can be held accountable for the

academic performance of the learners and the general advancement of a school (Kruger, 2003:206). They are strategically positioned in the leadership hierarchy of the school to enable them to direct, create and maintain a school culture that enables educators and learners to work effectively (Oluremi, 2008:302). This study investigates what educational leaders do to influence school culture at high schools in Lesotho. It also aims at recommending to principals what they can do to sustain and improve the culture of learning at high schools in Lesotho.

The ability of principals to deal effectively with cultural issues emanates from the leadership qualities and knowledge they possess which enable them to integrate well with teachers and students (Steyn, 2005:47). The quality of leadership has a significant bearing on the advancement of the school and the learners' academic performance (Bush, 2007:391). Research also indicates the imperative need for schools to be led by effective leaders equipped with skills that would enable them to nurture a sound school culture (Niemann & Kotze, 2006:610). Regardless of numerous unpredictable conditions in the management process of schools, it is the responsibility of principals to account for the performance and keeping order at schools (Masitsa, 2005:205-206). Principals have to do everything in their power to make the schools they lead academically sound institutions.

Although there are a lot of research work to guide principals in the management and leadership of school, Steyn (2008:896–902) considers the responsibility of the principals as:

- Setting direction;
- Developing people; and
- Developing the organisation.

Leadership practices of principals at schools may affect the beliefs, expectations, attitudes, values, norms and practices of teachers, which in turn, have an influence on the culture formation. The extent of relationship of leadership and school culture renders it impossible to carry out one process without affecting the other (Niemann & Kotze, 2006:612; Schein, 2004:10). The culture of a school also dictates to the principals the manner in which the schools are to be led (Schein, 2004:10). The

relationship may also be governed by the cultural dimensions proposed by Schoen and Teddlie (2008:138–140):

- Professional orientation;
- Organizational structure,
- Quality of the learning environment; and
- Student-centred focus.

The literature above suggests that leadership and school culture may be closely related. Effective leadership may bring about a culture conducive to high academic performance. Even though principals are faced by a myriad of unpredictable challenges, they play a pivotal role in the process of nurturing a school's culture. They are charged with the responsibility to nurture an environment conducive to effective learning. Hence, the study will attempt to explore the leadership practices of school principals aimed at influencing the school culture that may lead to improved academic performance.

## **1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE**

In this study, the researcher intends to explore the solution to the research questions by using the positivist paradigm, which adopts a quantitative research method. The paradigm and the research method chosen will enable the researcher to achieve the aim of the study. The main aim of the research is to identify and delineate leadership practices of school principals that can cultivate a school culture conducive to high academic performance. A comparison between leadership practices at schools that have a culture conducive to high academic performance and those of principals at schools with a poor culture of academic learning will be dealt with.

### **1.6.1 Positivist paradigm perspective**

Positivism has been adopted as the research paradigm in this study to enable the researcher to provide valid and reliable empirical data, which will describe the leadership practices of principals objectively at schools aimed at providing an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. The empirical data will be gathered from the principals and teachers who have observed and experienced the

leadership and cultural practices within their schools for a period of not less than three years. The argument of objectivity is supported by Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004:17) and Kraus (2005:760), who maintain that the main aim of positivism is to provide knowledge that describes reality objectively through observable and measurable data.

The positivistic research paradigm is chosen mainly to enable the researcher to present data in numeric form, which could be analysed and interpreted by using statistical methods to draw conclusions regarding the research questions (De Vos, 2002:79; Kim, 2003:10; Krauss, 2005:759). As a result, the researcher will design and use a structured questionnaire with close-ended questions to collect data and provide uniformity of responses. The use of the questionnaire will also enhance the objectivity of the study by minimising interaction between the researcher and the respondents (Maree, 2007:53, 156).

Even though positivism is criticised for disregarding the contextual experiences of participants in clarifying the problem (Kim, 2003:12), the choice of positivism is convenient for this study. It aims at providing a survey that indicates the presence of leadership practices and a school culture that can yield high academic performance, rather than focusing on a deep understanding of the process of leadership and culture.

Other aspects of reality that are investigated by using the positivistic approach are subjective by nature; a condition, which could compromise objectivity in positivism (Kim, 2003:12). Leadership and culture are examples of such subjective constructs, which in this study are investigated by using the positivistic paradigm. The knowledge gained from this study will be used to predict and/or control the leadership behaviour of principals at schools. The aspects of leadership and culture have been quantified and classified under specific headings in order to separate facts from values (Kraus, 2005:761) and, as such, a number of item questions have been asked to ensure that each heading is adequately addressed to reveal true knowledge.

Even though the researcher has taken care to ensure that data are obtained objectively by maintaining minimal interaction with the respondents by using a

questionnaire, there is a risk of subjectivity inherent to the study itself. The study requires teachers to observe their principals' leadership practices; as a result, the perception of teachers about their principals may be influenced by a number of personal factors such as attitudes, relationship and background knowledge of leadership and culture. To compensate for this problem, the use of a well-constructed questionnaire that can yield data that best describe the state of leadership practices of school principals will be done (Henning *et al.*, 2004:17).

### **1.6.2 Quantitative research method**

Researchers choose methods that best address the research questions, as well as cater for other requirements of the research (Henning *et al.*, 2004:31). The quantitative research method chosen for this study is founded on the positivist paradigm perspective, which has been explained in the preceding paragraph (cf. 1.6.1). The study is a descriptive research, which adopts a survey design (Maree, 2007:152) aimed at providing empirical data revealing the presence of leadership practices of school principals intended to cultivate a school culture that supports the high academic performance of learners. As a result, the method enables the researcher to use a questionnaire to collect information in a survey comprising 20 schools; a population too large to observe directly.

### **1.6.3 Method of data collection**

In this study, data will be collect by means of a questionnaire that has been adopted and adapted from similar studies carried out on leadership and school culture. Participants will respond to a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions and provide responses on a Likert-type scale. The researcher will be able to elicit more responses and keep respondents interested, as Likert-type items are easily responded to, because the respondents are already provided with answers (Maree, 2007:167). Before conducting the main study, the questionnaire will be piloted at two schools to provide information that could be used to eliminate ambiguities. Issues of validity and reliability of the questionnaire will be provided in statistical procedures (SPSS for windows version 20.0) followed to analyse the data. Cronbach's Alpha, a statistical value, which determines the internal reliability of the questionnaire, will be calculated for each set of questions (cf. 3).

#### **1.6.4 Research population and sample**

Since 2009, 153 high schools in Lesotho have been able to present candidates for the COSC examination. The research population will be provided by schools in the Maseru district, in the central region of Lesotho. The choice of the district was motivated by a number of reasons that will enable the researcher to complete the study. In the district, 40 out of the 153 schools are easily accessible by road transport. The district comprises urban as well as rural areas, a condition that resembles the relief features of the country and socio-economic factors. Schools that serve as the sample population will be chosen purposively and conveniently to ensure that the set criteria are met and that the sample is representative of the entire population. A sample of 20 high schools (50% of the entire population of schools) will be selected, depending on their academic performance, as well as that the principals and teachers have served for at least three years at each school. The principal and five randomly selected teachers will respond to the questionnaire, totalling 120 respondents. The selected schools will include schools that perform well, as well as schools that perform poorly. The sample will be chosen from public schools belonging to different proprietors. Public schools are schools that are funded by the State, draw their syllabus options from the same curriculum profile, and the students sit for common examinations organised and monitored by the ECoL. Although many schools in this area comply with the criteria set, some schools could not be included in the sample, as their principals were new to those schools.

#### **1.6.5 Literature review**

In order to address the first research questions, a literature review was done, whereby information from various published documents such as books, journals, dissertations, education publications, periodicals, media reports and information on the internet were consulted. Data collected provided a comprehensive literature study revealing the meaning of the concepts *school culture* and *school leadership*.

## **1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The study has been approved by the Ethical Committee of the University and the clearance number is 2011-0010. The permission to conduct research at schools was also granted by the Ministry of Education and Training in Lesotho.

The study is highly sensitive and requires of the principals to subject themselves to the scrutiny of their teachers. It therefore became imperative before administering the questionnaire at schools to make prior appointments with persons concerned. Pre-coordination meetings were held with each group of respondents to assure them of the confidentiality of the information provided and how they are supposed to complete the questionnaire.

The following ethical considerations were observed by the researcher and the respondents:

- The findings of the research will remain anonymous;
- Participants in the research will remain anonymous;
- Participation in the research is voluntary;
- Questionnaires will be administered during non-teaching hours;
- Questionnaire will be filled anonymously;
- All questionnaires will be treated confidentially and used for research purposes only; and
- All participants will sign consent forms confirming their participation in the study.

All the questionnaires were answered by the respondents and returned to the researcher, indicating cooperation on the side of the respondents.

## **1.8 DEMARCATING THE RESEARCH AREA**

The scientific field of this study is Education Management and Leadership. Management and leadership is a sub-discipline of Education. The focus of the study in this sub-discipline is on the leadership practices of school principals aimed at creating a school culture conducive to high academic performance. The leadership

role of principals is regarded as a vital process, which sustains the livelihood of the school. The entire school community relies on how efficient the principal is in managing both human and material resources to realise organisational goals and ensuring that an inviting atmosphere for learning prevails (Oluremi, 2008:302). Leadership at schools cannot happen without affecting the culture of the school. As such, Niemann & Kotze (2006:611–612) consider them as inseparable processes that cannot happen with the exclusion of the other.

The research was conducted at high schools in Lesotho, particularly in the Maseru district in the central region of Lesotho. The district includes 40 of the 153 high schools in the entire country. The sample of population of teachers and principals was chosen from 20 schools out of 40 in the district. The schools were purposively selected to ensure that they meet the required stipulations. Due to the relief of the country, only schools that were easily accessible by road transport were considered for the research sample. Based on the above-mentioned conditions under which the study was conducted, the results of the study cannot be generalised to other educational settings of similar nature.

## **1.9 RESEARCH OUTLAY**

In order to achieve the stated objectives, the report on the research evolved as follows:

Chapter 2 focuses on the literature review of what the concepts *school culture* and *leadership* entail.

Chapter 3 presents the research design and methodology that the researcher used to address the research questions.

Chapter 4 provides a presentation, analysis and interpretation of the results from the empirical survey on the leadership practices of school principals on school culture conducive to effective teaching and learning that result in good academic performance. A comparison of the leadership practices of principals at schools that perform well, as well as leadership practices at schools with a poor or fluctuating performance will also be presented.

Chapter 5 gives a summary of the research in the form of findings, conclusions and general recommendations.

## **1.10 SUMMARY**

Chapter 1, provides an introduction and background of the research problem of the study. The problem in this study deals with the concern about poor academic performance at high schools in Lesotho. Academic performance at schools is attributed to a number of factors, but many writers maintain that school culture significantly affects the school's performance. Consequently, cultivation of a positive academic culture at schools is regarded as the responsibility of the principals who, through their leadership practices, have to provide guidance and ensure that resources are utilised properly. The main question addressed in this study is to find out if there are leadership practices implemented by school principals to cultivate a school culture conducive to good academic performance at high schools in Lesotho. The study will investigate the leadership practices at schools that perform academically well, as well as at schools with poor academic performance.

The research paradigm adopted for this study is the quantitative research approach. The researcher intends to provide information regarding the research question from which conclusions could be drawn, leading to recommendations that could alleviate leadership problems encountered at schools in Lesotho. Questionnaires will be used for data collection and the data will be presented in numerical form for ease of statistical analysis. Due to a number of limitations associated with the study, the results of the study will not be generalised to other educational settings.

Consequently, the next chapter will focus on the theoretical perspectives of the concepts of school culture and school leadership.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SCHOOL CULTURE AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This literature review aims at providing an argument grounded in the existing literature in support of this study's research question. The main question addressed is to investigate leadership practices of school principals to cultivate a culture conducive to good academic performance at schools.

Leadership and culture are regarded as related concepts, in the sense that leadership influences the formation of culture (Karakose, 2008:570). The two concepts are also considered as intertwined processes, as one concept cannot happen to the exclusion of the other. The school leadership has to take cognisance of the prevailing school culture as it may dictate the leadership behaviour to be adopted (Niemann & Kotze, 2006:612). The process of building a strong school culture depends on how resourceful and visionary the school leadership is. Similarly, it is unlikely that principals can perform their leadership functions without having an influence on the culture of the school. Hence, principals need to understand that, coupled with their leadership responsibility, they have to create an environment that enables the leader and staff to reach a joint, common definition of the teaching and learning process (Schein, 2004:10–11; Karakose, 2008:570). This review will address the major issues related to school culture and school leadership practices that are intended to provide an environment conducive to high academic performance.

### **2.2 SCHOOL CULTURE**

School culture can be seen as an element that can pervade and influence all aspects of a school. It can affect the way teachers and students perceive issues, think, make decisions and react to the work situation (Hinde, 2004:1; Kruger, 2003:207). In some instances, it can be used as a measure to determine how successful the schools are in implementing and achieving the intended goals (Brown, 2008:1). It can also be

used as a feature that can distinguish between schools that perform poorly and well (Kruger, 2003:207). Although school culture appears to be an important aspect, its impact on the academic performance is less noticeable. Its effect is blurred and reduced by a number of factors that surround academic performance. The factors may include the type of leadership, how learners are monitored and evaluated, curriculum choices and the way teachers and students relate to one another (Craig, 2006:1).

School culture is not a static entity. It is an entity that continually changes as people within an organisation interact and attempt to solve their problems. The process of creating school culture and the manner it influences actions of the members of the school community is a self-repeating process (Hinde, 2004:2). As much as the culture of a school exerts an influence on the behaviour of its members; similarly, members of the school community, through their attitudes, beliefs and concerns determine what is desirable in the culture of a school (McGee III, 2006:87). It may then be argued that the existence of culture at a school depends on the actions of the school community. At the same time, the actions of the people are largely directed by the culture of the school.

### **2.2.1 Definition of school culture**

The field of education seems to lack a precise definition of school culture that is universally accepted. Almost 20 years ago, Stolp (1994:1) raised concern that the definition is clouded by numerous nouns such as climate, ethos and saga, which are used as synonyms for school culture. The same sentiment is shared by Hinde (2006:1), who regards the problem of the definition as emanating from the use of the concept and wide application over a number of issues at schools. More recently, Brown (2008:1) also confirmed the concern of other writers in this field that school culture is an elusive element to define. The following definition of school culture may serve to illustrate the difficulty encountered in defining school culture, at the same time providing a working definition.

School culture, broadly defined, encompasses everything that happens within and relating to the school. It includes shared assumptions and beliefs that may not be apparent and observable, but which have a profound influence on the attitudes and

dictate the relationship patterns amongst members. The ideals also define the way members respond and react to various challenges relating to the school (Brown, 2008:1).

These ideals also determine the standards of performance and dictate to members what is desirable, giving an organisation a unique identity, which may be comparable to personality in human beings (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003:19; Tableman & Herron, 2004:1; Niemann & Kotze, 2006:611). Culture creation is a process that induces a lot of interaction among members over a long period. As such, it involves the historical experiences of the members (heroes and heroines) that are handed down and reinforced from one generation to another through symbols, story-telling, rituals and ceremonies celebrated at the school (Tableman & Herron, 2004:1). The historical acts of heroes and heroines of the past serve to sustain motivation and provide a basis for future actions of members within an organisation (Peterson, 2002:1).

History keeps the memories and achievements associated with heroes and heroines alive, providing consistency in carrying out actions and accentuating the values that are considered important and worth pursuing. Other components of a school culture that are of importance are rituals and ceremonies that are held and celebrated to acknowledge and recognise the achievements and contributions of the members to the school (Peterson, 2002:1). Recognition of achievements motivates and reinforces aspects the school considers worthy to pursue.

Another variation in defining culture is provided by Peterson (2002:1) and Niemann and Kotze (2006:611), who do not only consider culture as a set consisting of norms, values and beliefs, but also regard it as an entity that attaches a unique identity to each school. It also dictates desirable standards of behaviour to members of the school community as well as what to expect in future. It provides norms, which might not necessarily be written down, but provide guidance as to how challenges and problems that are pertinent and common to them could be handled. The interaction of members in any school situation is mainly guided by the school vision, mission and goals, which are aligned with the needs and aspirations of the community

served by the school (Hinde, 2006:2); resulting in a unique culture that distinguishes the school from others.

The unique characteristics of each school may indicate that the evolution of a culture is largely influenced by several factors, among others, the vision, goals and interaction of members and challenges the school faces. Schools pursue and apply strategies that are best suited to their own context to realise its goals; a condition that provides a distinguishing mark in the culture of a school.

In the light of the plethora of definitions of school culture discussed above, it may not be possible to provide a precise definition of school culture, but it could be maintained that school culture comprises shared ideals, assumptions, pattern of values and beliefs and set of norms and practices. Assumptions and beliefs influence the attitudes, norms and practices of members of the school community. It also acts as an entity that identifies each school from another. It provides standards of performance and expected behaviours. Within the culture of each school, patterns of behaviour, recognition of achievements and values are historically transmitted from one generation to another through storytelling, and the celebration of rituals and ceremonies.

### **2.2.2 The concepts *school culture* and *school climate***

*School culture* and *school climate* are sometimes used as synonymous concepts, even though there is evidence that these concepts differ and appeal to different settings within the school environment (Stover, 2005:35). The same assertion that school culture is confused with other concepts is supported by Craig (2006:1-2) who mentions *atmosphere* and *climate* as alternative terms that bear resemblance to school culture. The terms *atmosphere* and *climate* add further confusion, as they sometimes give the impression that school culture could be considered more as an environmental condition than an educational concept. Lack of a clear distinction between the concepts of *school culture* and *school climate* may bring confusion in the use and application of the concepts within an educational setting. Hence, more clarity will be provided.

### *2.2.2.1 The origin of the concepts school culture and school climate*

School culture and school climate are considered as concepts originating from different schools of thought, probably representing different research traditions and ideologies intended to address different issues within the school environment (Schoen & Teddlie, 2008:133). When viewed from an anthropological perspective, school culture could be described as an entity which results from the interaction of members in a given school community in their attempt to solve problems that commonly confront them. It is described as a social entity which dictates to members patterns of relationships, common values and how the school community could cooperatively work together to pursue organisational goals (Niemann & Kotze, 2006:611). It attempts to address the values and norms that influence the behaviour of the members at the school (Schoen & Teddlie, 2008:133). On the other hand, it is not explicit how the school climate originated, even though it is a concept that has existed for a longer time than school culture (Van Houtte, 2005:81). Considering school climate as a perceptual measurement of cultural values, Van Houtte (2005:72) maintains this attribute can be closely viewed from a psychological perspective of individuals or groups within the school community.

### *2.2.2.2 The importance of school culture and school climate*

Many research studies consider school culture and climate as factors used to measure, determine and assess the success of important school initiatives, such as the progress and academic achievements of learners (Schoen & Teddlie, 2008:133). In some cases, the concepts have been used interchangeably as if they are synonymous and almost mean the same thing. However, some writers regard the two concepts as appealing to different aspects that may determine the success of the school (Stover, 2005:31; Van Houtte, 2005:81).

School culture is considered as an attribute within the school that aims at establishing common behaviour among members. Words like as 'shared', 'system' (Van Houtte, 2005:74), 'pattern' and 'set' (McGee III,2006:38), which are frequently used to qualify the nouns cited as basic constituents of the definition of culture give the impression that culture attempts to bind people towards a common destiny. The shared meanings, values, beliefs and assumptions that may not be apparent,

ultimately have profound influence on the behaviour of members within the organisation. The influence of these elements mentioned in the definition of culture is manifested in the norms of the society; the way people think, approach work situations and reaction to varied situations and relationships existing between individuals and various groups within the school environment. Culture, as confirmed by Stover (2005:31), attempts to provide justification for the behaviour of members within a given community.

School climate, on the other hand, is regarded as the way individual people perceive the cultural values, norms and beliefs that exist within the school (Van Houtte, 2005:75). It seeks to express the way people feel about the manner in which the school conducts its business. School climate, in its broad sense, consists of three approaches, of which the second and the third approaches are more commonly used and portray climate as a perceptual factor of individuals in an organisation (Van Houtte, 2005:72). Considering school climate as the perceptual approach makes it a property that surrounds people rather than an integral part of an organisation.

#### *2.2.2.3 Differentiating between school culture and climate*

Climate can be regarded as an expression of feelings and attitudes of members of the school community, a condition that may lead to different interpretation of the given situation. It may also lead to a situation whereby a number of climates could exist within the same school community (Tableman, 2004:2). Perceptual experiences of teachers towards the school leadership and learners may not necessarily be the same as that of learners towards their teachers and principal. It may imply that culture could be closely associated with the activities happening within the organisation itself, while school climate could be linked to how the members of a school community feel and observe those cultural attributes (Van Houtte, 2005:75).

An individual's perception of a situation is mostly not void of the influence of a number of personal traits, such as personality, socio-economic status, age, level of literacy and experience. Many personal traits associated with perception provide chances that the feelings of students about the school may differ greatly from that of their teachers, simply because teachers view school processes from a different angle than those of their learners. It could also be maintained that even amongst the

staff the perceptions about a given situation may differ. The presence of different personalities within the schools environment provides for different perceptual information against the actual situations. In support of the varied perceptions of different groups within the school environment, Van Houtte (2005:75) alludes that perceptually observed data may lead to errors. If the school climate is a concept based on the perceptions of individual members, it could be seen as the property attributed more to individuals than the school (Van Houtte, 2005:75).

Considering the way a school culture originates, it is proper to regard it as the property of the organisation (Van Houtte, 2005:81). For example, if academic results of the school are bad, this situation prevails at the school and appeals to the cultural attributes. On the other hand, if someone expresses a feeling of disappointment about the poor results, the expression of opinion or feeling becomes an element of climate. The opinions about the results may be an indication to the school leadership to examine the cultural factors that influence the behaviour of the staff carefully if meaningful change is envisaged. In essence, climate clarifies the way members feel about their working relations, the manner they engage in teaching and learning and the way school grounds are maintained. On the other hand, school culture seeks to find the root cause of behaviour in the organisation; why the behaviour of the people is the way it is perceived (Stover, 2005: 31–32).

Another argument regarding the relationship of the two concepts is provided by Schoen and Teddlie (2008:139), who consider school culture and school climate as constituting different levels of the same paradigm, but emanating from different schools of thought. The argument raised by other proponents is that culture is a level of climate, while others hold an opposite view. However, the argument of levels leads to the claim that a better understanding of a school culture could be gained through effective assessment and observation of the climate of the school; hence, portraying climate as the level of school culture (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003:14; Gruenert, 2008:58). A number of research studies, as argued by Schoen & Teddlie (2008:137) seem to validate the fact that climate constitutes the second level of school culture and the findings on school climate seem to address the issues of values explained in the second level of school culture

The findings from the research pertaining to both these terms (culture and climate) provide evidence leading to the presence of the difference between school climate and school culture; however, little it may be, it is important. Both school culture and school climate can be improved by the members of the school community.

#### *2.2.2.4 Transformation of school culture and school climate*

Researchers maintain that school culture is largely manipulated by leaders who inject new ideas and provide guidance to their followers through well-articulated visions and goals (Tableman, 2004:6). The possibility that culture could be transformed is an important notion, which may lead to effectiveness and improvement. Even though culture is considered a malleable entity that could constantly be changed by people, it is a demanding task, as it involves considering a number of issues that are pertinent to culture formation (Hinde, 2004:2). However, it is much easier to change climate than culture, as the concepts differ greatly in terms of the depth and influence they have at a school and the time taken for each to form (Gruenert, 2008:58). Dealing effectively with school culture will, in turn, have a positive impact on the climate of a school (Stover, 2005:31-32), but the opposite may not be true. If the school leadership intends to improve conditions within the school setting, it is advisable to pay attention to the cultural issues for a long-lasting solution.

#### *2.2.2.5 Why the focus of the study is on school culture*

The intention of this study is not to provide an argument on school culture and climate, but the comparison made serves to highlight the complexity encountered in defining the term “school culture” and the confusion people harbour in using and distinguishing between the two concepts. It also provides the reason why the research is based on school culture rather than climate. A school culture originates from the attempt by members of a school community striving to resolve the problems that commonly confront them. This can be seen as a driving force leading to improvement and effectiveness at the school. During the process of solving problems, members develop distinctive patterns of thinking and ways of managing their daily activities, as well as the way they interact and relate to one another. The process of culture building takes a long time resulting in cultural attributes being

deeply rooted in the organisation. On the other hand, climate is regarded as an organisational mood, taking a much shorter time to observe. It can also change quickly. It has been pointed out that if one wishes to study and understand the culture of a school, it is advisable to consider and observe the climate prevailing within the organisation (cf. 2.2.2.1 and 2.2.2.2.).

School climate as an entity based on how individuals within a community perceive a given phenomenon may differ greatly from person to person, depending on the maturity and personality. On the other hand, school culture may be regarded as the property of an organisation that attempts to interpret the interaction of the people based on assumptions, values and norms (cf. 2.2.2.3). Ultimately, improving school culture is more of a must than an option, though it should be borne in mind that the process of changing the way people think and feel may be a very difficult and daunting task for principals, requiring energy and time.

Notwithstanding the views of many writers in this field, the two concepts complement each other in many ways, but it is imperative to make an informed decision on the appropriate ground from which leadership practices could be assessed. The above discussion clarifies that it is easy to observe the climate of a school, but the perceptual observation of the situation may not lead to a lasting solution. Based on the above argument, the researcher chooses school culture as a vantage point to view the impact of leadership practices of school principals aimed at providing an inviting environment conducive to high academic performance. It is also important to have a deeper understanding of what school culture entails, as explained in the subsequent sections.

### **2.2.3 Levels of school culture**

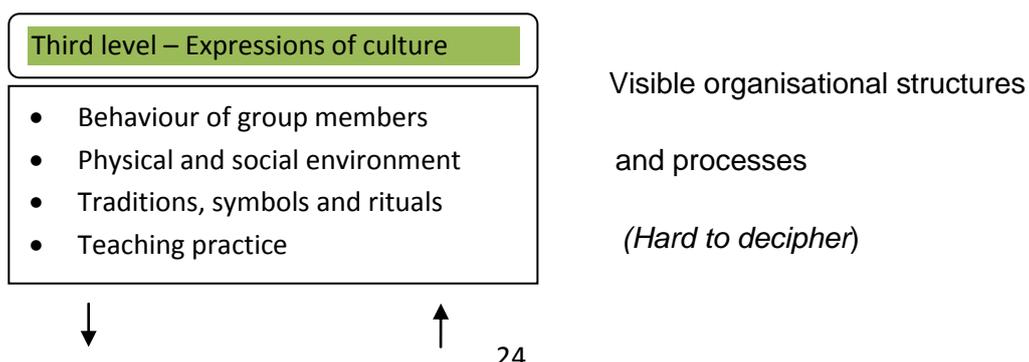
In the preceding discussion, school culture is described as consisting of a number of factors that need to be recognised and taken into consideration in the process of influencing meaningful change in the improvement or maintenance of an environment conducive to learning. It may also be noted that culture does not manifest itself as observable and visible artefacts only, but includes beliefs, assumptions and attitudes that unconsciously influence the way things are done. It

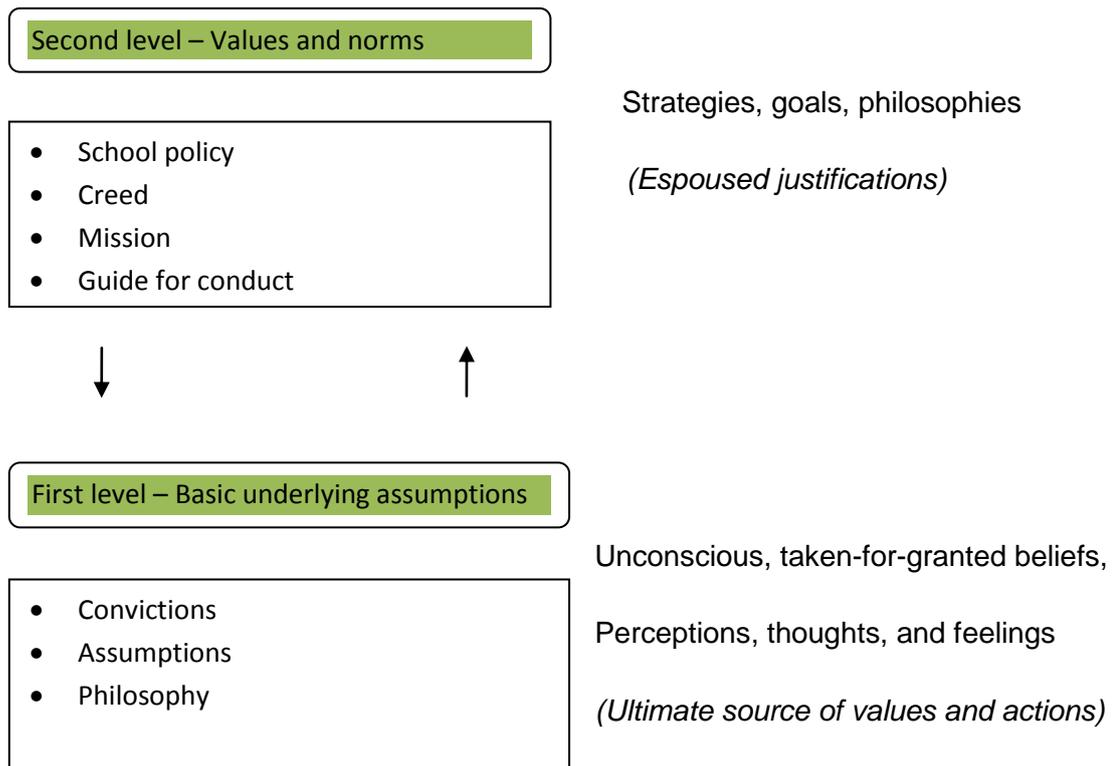
may then imply that culture could be viewed as an entity that exists in multi-standards or levels.

The earlier understanding portrayed culture as consisting of explicit and implicit levels. Visible and observable creations such as the behaviour of members, patterns of relationships, rituals, appearance of buildings and grounds constitute explicit nature of school culture (Davis & West-Burnham, 2003:130). Observable symbols and stories that are passed down from one generation to another convey messages of what is considered valuable, reinforce the mission, and motivate and align the behaviour of members in the same direction (Peterson, 2002:1). The implicit side of culture comprises deeply rooted underlying assumptions, expectations, attitudes and values of individuals and teams formed over a long period of time (Davis & West-Burnham, 2003:130). Attempts to clarify the concept of school culture led to the model that defines school culture in terms of three levels, as proposed by Van Deventer and Kruger (2003:21); Schien (2004:26) and Van Houtte (2005:77) in Figure 2.1:

- the first level comprises basic underlying assumptions;
- the second level consists of values and norms; and
- the third level constitutes expressions of culture.

These levels will be discussed after the illustration in Figure 2.1 to explain how they consequently led to other models of school culture. It should also be noted that Schoen and Teddlie (2008: 137) and Schien (2004:25-29) use different headings; “Espoused Values” and “Artefacts” for the second and third levels respectively, as indicated in Figure 2.1.





Adopted from Van Deventer and Kruger (2003:21); Schien (2004:26); Van Houtte (2005:77).

**Figure 2.1: Three levels of school culture**

The following is an explanation of the levels of school culture as shown in the above figure.

### 2.2.3.1 First level: Basic underlying assumptions

The first level, which consists of basic assumptions and beliefs, is considered the most abstract level of culture (Van Houtte 2005:77). This level is deeply entrenched in the organisation. In most cases, assumption and beliefs do not appeal to the conscious minds of the members of the school community; yet they have a profound influence on how people think and make decision and handle the work situation (Maslowski, 2006:7). This level forms the basis of a school culture and becomes the target of researchers aiming at getting a better insight into assessment of the culture of a school (Van Houtte, 2005:77).

### *2.2.3.2 Second level: Values and norms*

The second level may be considered less abstract compared to the first. It consists of values that determine the standards of performance (Van Houtte 2005:77) and norms (Maslowski 2006:8). Values indicate desirable modes of behaviour and practices to the members of the community with which the school is identifiable (Van Houtte 2005:77). Some values such as respect, honesty, hard work, collegiality, cooperation, and punctuality may be considered important and be pursued by the school. The values may also influence the behavioural norms of members, serving as a template on which the vision and goals of the school are articulated. In most cases, reference is made to values when formulating code of conduct (disciplinary rules) intended to guide and regulate behaviour of members of the school community.

### *2.2.3.3 Third level: Expressions of culture*

The third level, which is normally referred to as the expression of culture, consists of artefacts that are symbolic and easily observable. This level starts from the mood in classrooms, the symbols and signs enhancing the school buildings and grounds and the manner in which ceremonies are held and achievements celebrated. During orientations, new staff members are exposed to this level of culture. The language and stories told in the staffrooms also portray the mood at this level (Schien, 2004:25; Van Houtte 2005:77).

The above exposition provides a clearer picture of school culture as a multidimensional concept, which does not consist only of visible and observable creations, but existing more profoundly as underlying assumptions, beliefs and values that influence attitudes, perceptions and decision-making processes. However, the school community consists of a number of role-players who contribute differently to the school culture. It is on this basis that further refinement at the concept of school culture becomes important in clarifying the roles of the principal, teachers and learners in relation to teaching and learning; hence the following consideration of the dimensions of school culture.

## 2.2.4 Dimensions of school culture

The dimension of school culture is a model that has been postulated by Schoen and Teddlie (2008:138–140) in response to the challenge to clarify the concepts of school culture and school climate. After a careful review of the literature on both school culture and climate in relation to the academic performance of learners, the writers have classified different themes into four main groups known as “The Dimensions of Culture”. The model has been validated by assessing how comprehensive it is against other frameworks related to the operations of schools. The new model of school culture is not void of the model of levels of culture depicted above, as it maintains that the shared basic assumptions and espoused beliefs form the basis of the following dimensions: (I) Professional Orientation, (II) Organizational Structure, (III) Quality of the Learning Environment, and (IV) Student-Centred Focus (Schoen & Teddlie, 2008:133–134). This model of the dimensions of school culture is another method that provides a better understanding of school culture as a factor that determines and sustains the practices pertinent to schools. It specifically provides activities that should be engaged if good academic performance is to be realised at schools.

The new integrated model of culture: The Dimensions of Culture is given below in Figure 2.2.

<b>I. Professional Orientation</b> The activities and attitudes that characterise the degree of professionalism present in the faculty	<b>II. Organisational Structure</b> The style of leadership, communication & processes that characterise the way the school conducts its business
<b>III. Quality of the Learning Environment</b> The intellectual merit of activities in which students are typically engaged	<b>IV. Student-Centred Focus</b> The collective efforts and programmes offered to support student achievement

**Figure 2.2: The dimensions of school culture** (As proposed by Schoen and Teddlie, 2008:138-140)

The subsequent discussion is an explanation of the dimensions as proposed in figure 2.2:

#### *2.2.4.1 Dimension I: Professional orientation*

Professional orientation addresses the professional issues that relate to the work of teachers. It considers the assumptions and expectations teachers make about their learners. It pays attention to the perceptions of principals and teachers as professionals, as well as how they relate and cooperate as members within their respective departments. The dimension addresses issues that mostly relate to the first level; basic assumptions.

#### *2.2.4.2 Dimension II: Organizational structure*

This dimension addresses issues of the second level of school culture, emphasising the leadership practices of principals aimed at guiding the school business. It attempts to find how principals involve and encourage various stakeholders in decision-making, providing guidance by articulating and advocating for the vision and ownership of school goals. It is also concerned with communication patterns and relationships that exist amongst members of the school community and how they relate to the external environment. It considers available policies, guiding various activities at a school.

#### *2.2.4.3 Dimension III: Quality of the learning environment*

Particular attention is given to the way learners acquire, internalise and use the knowledge gained. It is mainly concerned with how the teaching and learning business is conducted, including the curriculum options and the opportunities available to learners to acquire, use and apply the knowledge. The emphasis is to ensure that learners benefit from the learning activity.

#### *2.2.4.4 Dimension IV: Student-centred focus*

The focus in this dimension is to determine the extent to which learners are supported to ensure that effective learning takes place. It involves the examination and assessment of organisational structures and services offered to enhance academic achievement. The services referred to could be the kind of programmes, policies and the manner in which achievement and good work are recognised and celebrated. The manner in which test scores are utilised to help learners to improve

their academic work is also very important. It involves the examination of the relevance of pedagogical methods used in classrooms to enhance the culture of learning.

The two structures given in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 are not necessarily different, but could be viewed as alternate ways of approaching culture building at a school to enhance the quality of education. The dimensions provide a closer look at roles and how the principals, teachers and learners engage with one another in the process of building a culture of learning have an impact on academic performance. An attempt has been made to integrate all levels of culture within each dimension, with Dimension I emphasising the philosophical aspects and assumption of teachers about learners, the way teachers perceive themselves as professionals regarding their duties and capabilities. The structure further emphasises the relationship between leadership and culture as inseparable concepts in the process of learning. Dimension II portrays aspects of leadership and management obtainable at an effectively run school. The aspects of this dimension relate more with the second level in Figure 2.1. The last two dimensions encapsulate the expectations and real activities that ought to happen at the school in relation to teaching and learning. It may be assumed that school culture provides a lens through which leadership practices could be construed in relation to teaching and learning.

Based on the discussion in the above paragraphs, it could be assumed that a positive school culture and leadership are necessary conditions for an organisation to function properly. It is therefore necessary to find out whether schools' leadership does have influence on the school culture, which may consequently result in good academic performance.

### **2.2.5 Importance of school culture**

School culture has been described as an element that permeates and influences all aspects at the school (cf. 2.2.1 above) and seeks to understand the way people behave. It is a platform from which various innovations can be launched. It is further maintained that school culture is a factor that identifies one school from another. The norms in the culture of a school give rise to pertinent rules and forms of behaviour that guide their functioning and distinguish the school from others. School culture,

whether strong or weak, influences the way the principal, teachers and learners engage in the teaching and learning process (Karakose, 2008:571). While admitting that schools have different cultures, it is maintained that school culture is one of the important factors that could determine the learning activity at schools.

The culture of a school can be energising, urgent, encouraging active participation in the process of learning and teaching, or a deterrent that hampers initiatives at the school (Hinde, 2004:3; McGee III, 2006:40). Schools that have a strong culture are characterised by a friendly atmosphere in which teachers and students feel motivated and work cooperatively to advance the learning process (Karakose, 2008:571). Schools that have a strong culture of learning are also noted for high academic achievement of learners (Ellison, 2006:231). It may thus be noted that school culture whether strong or weak, may have serious implications for the academic performance of learners.

Institutions known for good performance take pride in people who share common values and pledge their commitment to the schools they serve. The values they pursue guide their behaviour and attitudes; to them values help to focus their attention in the same direction and commonly defined patterns of relationships. At these institutions, performance, which is measured in terms of academic achievement, is a result of endorsing certain elements in their cultures, which include teacher satisfaction, setting high standards of achievement for learners and good management of resources (Brown, 2008:2).

The basis for a strong culture is provided by a well-articulated vision of the school leadership and values that members consider important for the organisation. The process of nurturing a healthy school culture largely depends on the actions, traditions, symbols, ceremonies and rituals that are closely linked to the vision of the school. The activities and ceremonies practised keep members focused, working towards common goals, which reinforce positive attitudes towards learning (Craig, 2006:5). The principals and teachers have to work cooperatively to ensure that the school culture becomes a condition that focuses their attention on issues that are of value to them.

### *2.2.5.1 Conditions prevailing at schools that have strong cultures*

There are schools whose cultures qualify them as professional learning centres. Peterson (2002:3) acknowledges that research on successful schools depicts the following cultural aspects:

- Presence of a vision and values underpinning norms of learning and improvement;
- Members are committed and held accountable for performance; and
- Presence of harmonious relations and inviting atmosphere

The leadership of schools strives towards attaining a good team spirit, which makes all the members of the school community committed to the values pursued by the school.

The importance of culture within an organisation is further emphasised by Bush (2003:160-162), who points out that schools particularly value hard work, commitment and development:

- A process emphasising cultivation of values and beliefs that encourage norms of hard work, commitment and development; and
- An endorsement of commitment by celebrating the achievements through rituals and ceremonies.

In addition to the attributes mentioned by the previous writer, Bush (2003:160–162) maintains that the school community is motivated and encouraged to take risks by recognizing its contribution and accentuating values and beliefs considered important for the school.

According to Brown (2008:2), a positive school culture is seen more as an entity that aids teaching and learning, which embraces:

- Cultivating shared beliefs and values aimed at advancing the learning capabilities of learners;
- Setting high standards of performance for learners;
- Allowing effective and charismatic leadership;
- Recognising role models to embody values and norms; and

- Providing an inviting atmosphere that entices the staff to take risks and work cooperatively.

Apart from emphasising beliefs, values and norms and the presence of an inviting environment, as mentioned earlier, the writer considers standards of performance and good leadership as other important factors associated with the positive academic culture of a school. The writer is also supported by Van Deventer and Kruger (2003:23) who maintain that a positive school culture has a determinant effect on the actions of the staff towards teaching and learning and the way leadership practices are executed.

In addition to what the above writers have mentioned, some scholars agree that there are benefits that are derived from a school with a positive learning environment. For example, Hinde (2004:3) and Brown (2004:4) are of the view that communication modes and open dialogue within the school should support the school culture.

Unlike other writers, Brown (2004:4) sees a positive school culture as a challenge to the leadership to ensure that the following conditions prevail at schools:

- An inspiring vision that is supported by aggressive goals shared by the principal and teachers;
- Good management of human and material resources;
- Paying attention to curricula issues and assessment modes intended to support the needs and interests of learners; and
- Leadership that supports staff and students initiatives, accentuating cordial relations and providing opportunities for staff to participate in leadership roles.

A detailed account of practices that need to exist at an effectively run school is given; the practices are aimed at supporting effective instruction and providing motivation to all members of the school.

The advocacy for a strong and positive school culture has also been carried out by Craig (2006:2) who cites research work as suggesting the following benefits of positive school culture:

- Encouraging teamwork and providing opportunities for staff to build collegial and collaborative relationship, which consequently improve communication and problem solving skills;
- Supporting individual and/or group efforts aimed at improving performance;
- Building commitment and accountability for the performance;
- Helping students and teachers identify with the school;
- Amplifying energy and motivation of staff members and students; and
- Paying attention to what is important and valued by the school.

The account given above indicates that writers in this field recognise culture as an important entity at schools. The aspects that prevail at schools with a positive culture appear repeatedly as a way of stressing the purpose and significance of culture at a school. Although the writers have viewed the aspects of school culture from different angles, it has not been possible to dissociate school culture from leadership. On several instances leadership has been depicted as a pivot for a positive school culture, hence the following summary.

#### *2.2.5.2 Summary of conditions prevailing at schools that have a strong school culture*

The following summary provides common characteristics of a positive school culture, as expressed by the writers in the above paragraphs, which are expected to prevail at a school aspiring towards a strong school culture:

- Culture stems from the vision (shared sense of purpose) of an organisation;
- Presence of shared beliefs throughout the school;
- Members are held together and subscribe to the common values and norms of commitment, collegiality, trust and hard work;
- Strong leadership that encourages cordial and collegial relationship, risk-taking and participation in decision-making and problem-solving;
- Leadership that provides support and motivation to members of the school;
- Recognition of heroes and heroines as role models and acknowledging their actions as illustrating the expected behaviour in future;
- Celebration and recognition of achievements and successes of others;
- Presence of an environment that is inspiring and motivating;

- Teachers and learners focus their attention on what is ideal and important for the organisation;
- Opportunities for staff to reflect, indulge in collective inquiry, and share personal experiences;
- The presence of set standards for high academic performance; and
- Teachers are committed to and can be held accountable for the performances of learners.

The creation of school culture is a dynamic process, which results from what people do. The knowledge of conditions leading and/or prevailing at schools whose cultures are considered negative may provide proper guidance to principals who wish to improve the culture at their schools. Hence, the subsequent paragraphs deal with the negative aspects of school culture that may hinder the process of nurturing a healthy environment.

### **2.2.6 Schools with a poor school culture**

School culture is an entity that distinguishes one school from another. No two schools could have identical cultures. It may also imply that there are as many different cultures as there are schools, but the cultures could be better viewed as either positive or poor. The formation of school culture follows that same route, whether positive or negative, but that which constitutes the difference in the cultures is attributed to the school leadership. A poor culture of learning and teaching at a school which is considered as a situation where effective teaching and learning does not take place properly (Van Deventer & Kruger 2003:4) arise due to the failed initiative of leadership to provide guidance. Van Deventer and Kruger (2003:4), Peterson (2002:1) and Hinde (2004:3) associate the following conditions with a poor school culture of learning and teaching:

- Teachers and learners attend school irregularly;
- The environment is not inspiring to either teachers or learners and a feeling of dejection prevails;
- The presence of rival groups;

- Poor discipline of learners; consequently resulting in vandalism, gangsterism, rape and drug abuse;
- High dropout rate of learners and high turnover of staff;
- Absence of vision and values guiding norms and practices;
- Tendency of blaming one another for poor performance; and
- The negative attitude of teachers towards change initiatives.

In the preceding paragraphs (cf. 2.2), it could be noted that, to a large extent culture formation has been associated with leadership. Equally likely, the culture of the school may also exert an influence on one's leadership style, a situation, which portrays both culture and leadership as an intertwined process exhibiting a symbiotic relationship. It is therefore in order for school principals who intend to influence their school cultures to know and recognise factors that have an impact on the culture of the school. It also gives the impression that the initiatives of the principals culminate in the creation, changing, and/or maintenance of a positive school culture.

On the other hand, the kind of culture existing at a school has an impact on how members act, interact with one another and react to new situations. School principals should know and be aware of the prevailing culture, as it can exert a lot of resistance or accelerate initiatives to improve the school. However, principals should consider the task of nurturing school culture, which consequently influences academic performance, a challenge that requires a lot of energy, time and taps on their initiatives as school leaders. Since leadership and school culture have been considered as related concepts, it is therefore valuable to discover what principals can do to bring about a culture conducive to high academic performance.

### **2.3 SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

The discussion on school leadership is intended to highlight the association of the concepts of leadership and school culture as applied at schools. Emphasis will also be placed on scrutinising various leadership models and practices adopted by school principals in the management process of schools.

### **2.3.1 School leadership and school culture that support academic performance**

Leadership entails the process influencing culture (Schein, 2004:1). Even though leadership in this study is considered at the higher level of school hierarchy, leadership can in fact happen at various levels within the school in an attempt to address a number of challenges and exerting influence on different followers.

Teachers in classrooms also fulfil leadership functions by motivating and encouraging learners to recognise the importance of learning (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003:70). The recent thinking regarding school leadership holds principals accountable for the academic performance of learners, even though principals' attention is divided between numerous challenges facing the schools. The presence of these challenges makes leadership an essential component at the school and it becomes imperative for principals to pay more attention to improving conditions that enhance effective teaching and learning (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003:1; Steyn, 2008:889).

School leadership is a demanding activity that involves, among others, the identification, acquisition, allocation, coordination and effective use of material and human resources aimed at establishing ideal conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning. Leadership practised with the intention of improving the culture of learning encourages active participation of members, which finally enhances the leadership capacity within the school (Davis & West-Burnham, 2003:9–14). Leaders at schools should be aware that whatever they do has a bearing on the attitudes, values and norms of members, which in turn, may influence academic performance.

It is not a common phenomenon for a professional learning community to continue to thrive in the absence of strong leadership by the school principal. Principals should attempt to pursue a vision that members of the school support. They should provide opportunities for teachers to assume leadership roles in decision making and matters related to teaching and learning (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003:1; William, Brien, Sprague & Sullivan, 2008:4).

While admitting that numerous studies confirm that leadership is important for the functioning of schools, the extent thereof and how it affects academic performance, are perceived differently by a number of writers. For example, Leithwood and Riehl (2003:3) admit that school leadership has a small but significant impact on students' academic performance. On the other hand, Steyn (2008:891) regards the influence of leadership on learning as considerable. On the same note, Lucas and Valentine (2002:3) also acknowledge that the impact of leadership upon student achievement is largely cultivated by the school culture. Even though leadership may not be dealing directly with learners, principals are mainly preoccupied with activities that promote the vision and create general acceptance of the school goals, ensuring that resources are effectively utilised to enable teachers to carry out their work effectively (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003:3).

All schools are led by principals, but the difference that exists at schools may be associated mainly with the quality of leadership. The advancement of culture at schools is also dependent on how diligent the principals are in executing leadership functions (Steyn, 2008:891). What remains a challenge is to prove that principals make a measureable difference insofar as the teaching and learning process is concerned, consequential to improved academic performance.

### **2.3.2 Definition of school leadership**

Leadership can be defined simply as the ability and influence exerted over others to do the intended work (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003:70). It may also be considered as a process of articulating a vision and ensuring that the followers are prepared to share in it (Plachy, 2009:54). A person acting in the position of leadership demonstrates a set of skills that are associated with leadership (Davies & West-Burnham, 2003:3, 8). As a result, the definition of leadership or leader could be viewed as involving the following:

- The leader;
- The follower; and
- The purpose.

The above definition may imply that in the process of executing leadership functions, there is interaction between the leader and the followers aimed at achieving a particular purpose. The need for the leadership to establish an intimate relationship with the followers is supported by Plachy (2009:52) who regards both the leaders and their followers as having common aspirations for the school.

The presence of interaction between a leader and his/her followers with a purpose of achieving a desired end is supported by Karakose (2008:570), who regards leadership as a process which involves power and the ability to influence others.

The ability of a leader to influence does not only culminate into engaging people to realise organisational goals, but what the leader and followers do also have a consequential effect on the culture of the school; as such, leadership could also be seen as a process of cultivating a new culture (Schein, 2004:1).

It is a concern to some writers that the definitions of leadership appear arbitrary and subjective (Bush, 2003:5–6), but the writer also supports the idea that leadership influences the development of values within the school culture and regards leadership as:

- An act of influence;
- A process dealing with values; and
- A process concerned with vision.

The element of values, as mentioned by the writer in the above paragraph, is important and may serve as an indication that leadership and school culture are related. It may also imply that any attempt to change the values may as well affect the norms and practices of teachers and learners at a school. The values could be personal as well as professional, but without them, it becomes impossible to realise a good culture within a school.

The relationship of leadership and culture is further endorsed by Dunning (2009:76) who considers leadership as a blend of vision and cultural attributes and states that:

- The vision of the school should incorporate the beliefs and assumptions and values of the members; and

- The goals should emanate from the vision.

From the above it becomes clear that leadership is one of the concepts that are difficult to define; perhaps the elusive nature of the concept is due to its importance and wide application in organisations. Leadership is considered as a process that enables the leader to provide direction and exert an influence over followers to have a common understanding and definition of the challenges and issues confronting them (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003:2). Based on the definitions provided in the above paragraphs, there is consistency in the elements that constitute leadership, which may be important in providing a working definition of leadership. Hence, the subsequent paragraphs attempt to depict the definition.

Firstly, the leadership process should start by providing direction, whereby the school leadership articulates a clear vision and advocates for its acceptance by teachers. The vision should incorporate the cultural issues such as beliefs, assumptions and values, which consequently influence norms, actions and thinking of staff and learners. The principal has to understand the existing culture at the school properly, as it can be either an obstacle or accelerator of the process of envisaged change. The vision provides the basis for generating goals that all staff and learners should strive to achieve.

Secondly, the definition provides that principals, as school leaders, work with and through people. It is crucial for principals to solicit support of their followers in pursuit of school goals. Principals could win the support of staff by engaging in healthy dialogue where ideas of the staff are valued. The influence exerted by the principal is directional as it leads towards the realisation of the set goals. Constant support, follow-up activities, sharing of ideas and decisions based on experiences can motivate and enhance the commitment of the staff.

The fact that principals have to work with their staff may indicate that leadership is a function comprising a number of roles, which could be delegated to others at the school. What remains to be seen is how effective principals are in delegating their leadership roles and the support they provide to their staff to ensure that school goals are realised.

Lastly, it is important to consider that leadership is not void of human influence and the situation at hand. The personality and experience of leaders are crucial in determining the quality and the style of leadership. A leader is expected to be visionary and a person of multiple talents capable of dealing with varied situations to realise school goals. The situation also has a profound influence on how leadership functions are executed. It is advisable for a leader to consider all factors that prevail within and around the school as these factors become determinants of how leadership functions are executed and the way the entire team is led.

### **2.3.3 Leadership and management**

The recent thinking in education holds the school principals accountable for the quality of performance of the learners (Bush, 2007:391). As such, the principals have to utilise both human and material resources profitably while responding to a number of unpredicted demands to provide an inviting environment, which supports effective teaching and learning. Consequently, this can lead to the improved academic and social growth of learners. The conditions under which the principals execute their leadership functions make leadership and management crucial for the wellbeing of schools (Steyn, 2008:889-890). Leadership and management functions are both executed by the same person, the principal, who may not be conscious of the concept he is applying when dealing with challenges. In reality, the two concepts are so intertwined in application that it is not easy to discern between them as in most cases they are applied simultaneously and/or used to address the same challenges. Leadership and management are both important to organisations and if one is applied at the expense of the other, the practice could render the school dysfunctional (Dunning, 2009:76).

The concepts of leadership and management are sometimes used interchangeably as if they are synonymous concepts, while in essence they are different concepts (Bush, 2003:7). Many writers in this field do not provide a clear distinction between these concepts; some agree that leadership and management are different functions, while others consider them as complementary, contributing to the wellbeing of an organisation (Ribbins, 2007:353). While maintaining that the concepts are essential for the wellbeing of an organisation, Ribbins (2007:353) holds the view

that management and leadership may be different functions. It is therefore important to give a clear explanation of the two concepts *leadership* and *management*.

### *2.3.3.1 Distinction between leadership and management*

The endeavour to distinguish between leadership and management is motivated by the quest to isolate the leadership functions clearly from those of management, which will be referred to in the investigation in this study. The main distinction between leadership and management lies in the manner in which the concepts are applied in practice and the way they are defined (Reynolds & Warfield, 2010:62). The concepts are functions comprising different roles and responsibilities, inducing different reactions and abilities from the incumbent, even though the functions are performed by the same person. Leadership may be referred to as a way of expressing desired actions in an organisation, encapsulated in the form of vision, while management is regarded as the manner in which those actions could be put to practice to realise the vision in the organisation (Plachy 2009: 53).

Leadership can also be described as a process that requires a leader to exert influence on others to act in manner that is desirable and consistent to the goals of the school (cf. 2.3.2). Leaders should have vision and courage to initiate change by setting new targets. It requires leaders to be industrious and have the necessary skills, as well as motivate the staff to pledge its commitment in pursuit of the same set of goals. On the other hand, the manager's role is seen more as a function that ensures proper implementation of the intended initiatives rather than a process that initiates change (Bush, 2007:392). Leadership is associated with the process of infusing an organisation with values and purpose that create a positive attitude and develop norms and practices common to all staff.

Management, on the other hand, relates to the process of implementing actions aimed at achieving the stated goals (Bush, 2003:7–8). The distinction between the two concepts is further emphasised by Steyn (2008:895), who regards the role of an education manager as that of maintaining order and stability and ensuring that tasks are implemented and accomplished, while the education leader's role focuses on generating agreement on actions, participation in decision making and planning.

Leadership is largely preoccupied with defining the policy of the school, while management deals with the technical issues that assist in the implementation of the school policy (Dunning, 2009:76). For example, as a point of departure for a leader, it is essential to articulate a vision and advocate its acceptance, while a manager directs actions aimed at accomplishing the vision (Plachy, 2009:52). Managers are concerned with providing efficiency, planning, producing procedures and regulations to guide the process of implementation, control and consistency, while leaders challenge the situation by projecting into the future, embarking on creativity and advocacy for the vision (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003:70).

### *2.3.3.2 The importance of leadership and management at a school*

The recent thinking in school leadership shows an increasing demand for schools to be led by quality leaders, while in the past the role of principals was seen as that of quality managers (Reynolds & Warfield, 2010:62). The system of education requires school principals who can ensure that high standards of academic performance are attained, regardless of the conditions under which they operate, emanating from several factors such as demographics, educational demands and devolution of power (Steyn, 2008:895; Reynolds & Warfield, 2010:61). When discharging their duties, it is important for principals to resort to their former experiences, background knowledge regarding leadership and the values and beliefs they harbour about their institutions and their personalities (Murphy, Elliot, Goldring & Porter, 2007:181). The blending of these factors may enable principals to deal effectively with each situation at their schools.

Principals, through their leadership skills, are expected to be proactive people who could project into the future and bring about change at their schools. They have to be influential people who can channel the behaviour of members towards ownership of school goals and programmes that are pursued at the school. Their influence on relationships could be manifested in the support given to staff, interaction, teamwork and improved dialogue between people (Magno, 2009:26). On the other hand, the main task of managers is to ensure that programmes are implemented properly, the effective utilisation of resources and exercising control. Managers may not necessarily be concerned about the future, but their central role would be ensuring

that plans and monitoring systems are set up and adhered to for attaining the organisation's vision (Reynolds & Warfield, 2010:62). The school system nowadays requires principals who are able to challenge the situation and take risks to move schools to greater heights.

Both leadership and management are crucial to the wellbeing of an organisation (Bush, 2007:392; Dunning, 2009:76). The application of each is largely determined by the situation prevailing at the school and the way the leader assesses the situation as different occasions may induce different responses from the school leadership (Bush, 2003:8). Good leadership at the school is an ideal condition, which facilitates effective management to occur. Most importantly, leadership focuses on setting direction, projecting into the future, as well as mobilising people to embrace the school goals (Karakose, 2008:570).

In addition, principals who wish to do well at their schools must have the ability to manage the school programmes and exhibit leadership skills aimed at establishing cordial relations between staff members, as well as create an inviting atmosphere, which induces staff commitment. They must be visionary leaders capable of empowering their followers by effectively delegating some of their leadership roles (Magno, 2009:26). While admitting that there is a distinction between leadership and management, the concepts largely overlap (Bush, 2003:8). Too much reliance on either management or leadership at the expense of the other may derail the organisation's objectives (Dunning, 2009:76). Both concepts should be applied fairly in all situations if schools intend to establish a sustainable culture of lifelong learning and teaching (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003:70).

Although the field of education is full of conflicting ideas related to leadership and management, the need for effective leadership at schools is widely acknowledged, as the two concepts, leadership and management, are a driving force with which the goals of education are realised (Bush, 2007:391). The close relationship between leadership and management causes principals not even to be aware of the concept they apply at each moment (Bush 2007:393). What principals have in mind is to pursue their daily business on behalf of the school and its learners.

### 2.3.3.3 Concluding remarks

The above discussion explains the thin line that separates leadership and management, although the two concepts are a necessary condition for an effectively run organisation. The major distinction between the two concepts lies in the presence of vision in the case of leadership, while management is concerned with the maintenance and sustainability of the vision in an organisation. In practice, school leaders intuitively switch between the two concepts when they manage their schools.

Leadership functions may vary according to the individual leader's abilities and personality as well as the prevailing situation. The scope of work of school principals does not only call for quality managers, but requires leaders who are capable of taking their schools to greater heights. The capacity to lead schools largely depends on the ability of the principal to integrate various models of leadership tailored to address the needs of his school; hence, the following leadership models may be of value to practising principals.

### 2.3.4 Models of leadership at schools

The field of education contains several models of educational leadership, which arise in response to several challenges and situations found at schools. The reaction of school leadership to the challenges is induced by the quest to provide an environment that allows effective education to take place (Bush, 2003:15). There are many conflicting views about the way leadership affects the academic performance of learners; in some cases, the effect is considered indirect. It is possible that leadership affects other factors within the school culture, which ultimately result in improved academic performance (Kruger, Witzier & Slegers, 2007:3). The same sentiments concerning an indirect impact are also shared by Murphy *et al.* (2007:181), who maintain that principals' attention may be divided between several factors within the school. These, in turn, have an impact on learners' academic performance.

For the past two decades, instructional and transformational leadership models have popularly been used to address different aspects regarding educational leadership

(Hallinger, 2003:330). The research done on effective schools recognises the supportive role of school principals as instructional leaders in promoting a sound culture that allows for the effective participation of teachers and learners in the teaching and learning process (Kruger, 2003:206).

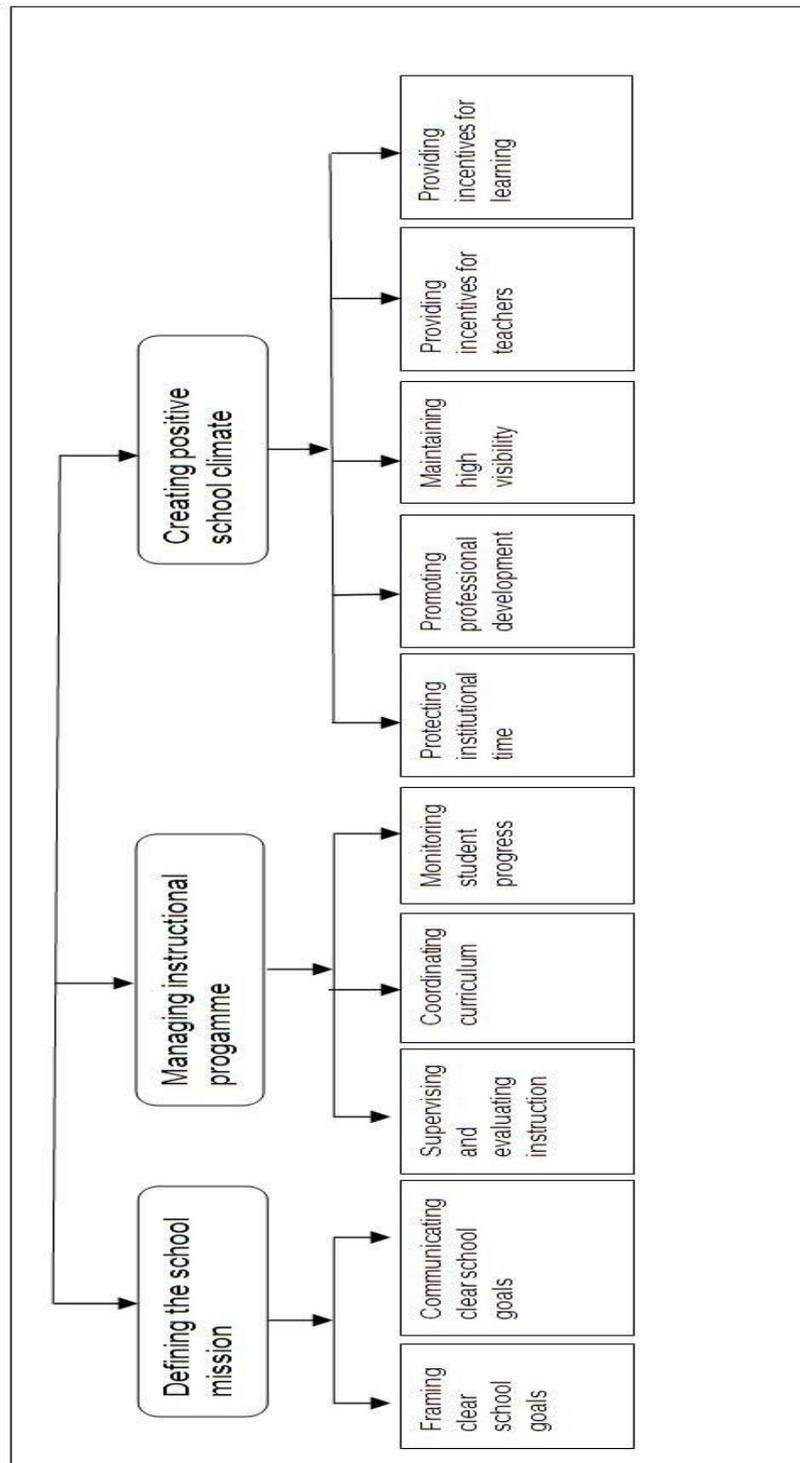
Conversely, transformational leadership is concerned with efforts to initiate change by articulating a shared vision and advocating commitment towards change (Hallinger, 2003:331). Even though it is generally accepted that leadership and management are essential tools at schools; unfortunately, there is no consensus on the best leadership model that can advance the professional learning process at schools (Bush, 2007:393). Subsequently, an account of different leadership models will be dealt with. The intention is to provide a basis from which the best leadership model could be adopted to advance the teaching and learning process at schools that may result in high academic performance.

#### *2.3.4.1 Instructional leadership*

Instructional leadership is regarded as a leadership model that is goal-driven, focusing on the management of the teaching and learning process (Bush, 2003:15–16). It focuses on the strategies adopted by the principal with the intention of setting high standards of performance for both teachers and learners (Kruger *et al.*, 2007:3). Although the model seems to emphasise teacher behaviour, principals are also expected to deal with issues within the culture to enable the staff and learners to pledge their contribution to school programmes with the aim to improve students' academic performance (Hallinger, 2003:332).

The school principal, through expert knowledge and charismatic leadership, provides guidance by articulating a school vision, which incorporates the assumptions, beliefs and experiences of the leader and the staff (Southworth, 2002:77-78). Instructional leadership in a broad sense defines the role of the principal aimed at influencing the school curriculum and empowering teachers to deal effectively with pedagogical issues (Hallinger, 2003:331). Instructional leadership could be well presented in the model proposed by Hallinger (2003:336), which provides the three major tasks for the school principal, as:

- Defining the school mission;
- Managing the instructional programme; and
- Promoting the school climate.



**Figure 2.3: An instructional leadership model** (Adopted from Hallinger, 2003:336)

The above diagram sums up the details of factors defining the parameters within which an instructional leader executes leadership functions. Below is an explanation of the structure as provided by Hallinger (2003:332) and Southworth (2002:77–78):

### **Defining the school mission:**

The principals in this task are concerned with:

- **Framing clear school goals**
- **Communicating clear school goals**

The principal works cooperatively with the staff to develop measurable goals, tailored to enhancing effective teaching and learning process, and promote the academic performance of the learners at a specific school. Working with teachers, the principal also advocates the acceptance of the goals.

### **Managing the instructional programme:**

This process entails:

- **Supervising and evaluating instruction**
- **Coordinating curriculum**
- **Monitoring student progress**

By working with teachers, the principal should ensure that learners are provided with suitable curriculum modes, while checking that learners are properly supervised. The principal should also demonstrate the expected behaviour relating to pedagogic methods. The keeping of academic records of learners should also be done with the intention of providing feedback to learners for the purpose of academic growth.

### **Creating school climate:**

This section involves:

- **Protecting instructional time**
- **Promoting professional development**
- **Maintaining high visibility**
- **Providing incentives for teachers**

- **Providing incentives for learners**

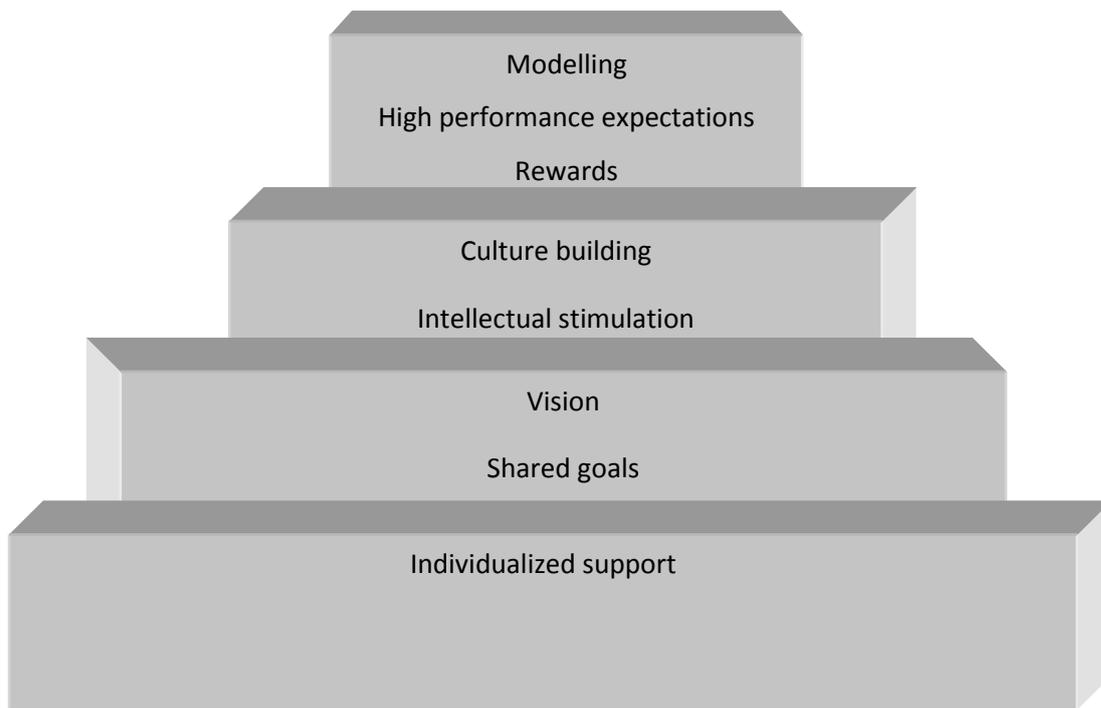
The allocation of work on the school timetable should provide enough time for teachers to do their work. Open communication channels and healthy dialogue are encouraged to promote the sharing of ideas and experiences amongst the staff.

The principal influences the instruction indirectly by offering support and encouragement to staff members to develop their pedagogic strategies. Assurance is given that the practices are aimed at achieving the stated goals and conform to the set standards of performance. The presence and availability of the principal at all times, offering support to the staff, serves as motivation. Positive behaviour is reinforced by recognising and rewarding good work.

Pedagogic knowledge and the ability of the principal to get involved with teachers in creating a culture that supports high academic performance are crucial. It should be noted that schools have to respond to diverse needs, which may call for other strategies (Hallinger, 2003:334); dwelling on instructional leadership alone may render it difficult to manage the schools. The limitation on the side of instructional leadership allows for further investigation into other models that could also render good leadership at schools.

#### *2.3.4.2 Transformational Leadership*

The transformational leadership model manages the change initiatives at a school by capacitating members with the knowledge and skills that enable them to drive the change process (Magno, 2009:24). The model is based on the premise that leadership consists of a number of roles that could be shared among the members in an organisation. It is further assumed that the model is based on the following eight dimensions represented in Figure 2.4, as proposed by Bush (2007:396) and Hallinger (2003:336). The dimensions are better understood when read from the bottom upwards.



**Figure 2.4: Leithwood's transformational leadership model** (Leithwood *et al.*, 1998, as adopted by (Hallinger, 2003:337)

The following exposition is an explanation of the dimensions referred to in the above diagram.

### **Individualised support**

Transformational leadership aims at understanding the needs, behaviour and maturity level of individual members with the purpose of providing relevant support and capturing the interests of teachers to continue to learn and share their experiences (Hallinger, 2003:337–338).

### **Shared goals**

An attempt is made to link the personal goals of members to the shared organisational goals to induce interest and participation of members (Hallinger, 2003:337–338). Principals work with their staff in the development of goals to solicit ownership of the vision and commitment to the goals and attainment of the set targets (Murphy *et al.*, 2007:181–183).

## **Vision**

Effective principals mark their starting point by working tirelessly on developing and articulating a school vision that reflects high standards of performance (Murphy *et al.*, 2007:181–183). The leadership also advocates for the acceptance of the vision by the staff (Pounder, 2008:3).

## **Intellectual stimulation**

The promotion of professional competency of the staff is attained by providing opportunities to staff to participate in decision-making, encouraging risk-taking (Hallinger, 2003:337–338) and presenting interesting and challenging tasks, which induce problem-solving skills and the sharing of ideas (Pounder, 2008:3).

## **Culture building**

Teachers afforded the opportunity to learn and participate in various activities at the school, consequently reciprocate by infusing the organisation with values that support high standards of commitment towards learning and motivation to students (Flores, 2004:299).

## **Rewards**

The leadership functions are shared and distributed amongst the staff, encouraging greater participation and unleashing the leadership talents of the staff; as a result the achievements are not attributed to one person, but considered as a concerted effort by the entire community (Lucas & Valentine, 2002:21).

## **High performance expectations**

The principal emphasises the importance of learning and encourages a high level of commitment and accountability for quality work (Pounder, 2008:3).

## **Modelling**

The leader attains ownership of his vision and commitment of the staff by personally demonstrating the actions, behaviour and values that are considered desirable to the school (Murphy *et al.*, 2007:181–183; Pounder, 2008:3).

As much as transformational leadership appears to be a comprehensive model that seeks to empower followers to drive the process of change, it is criticised for providing more opportunities for the leader to dictate terms to followers. In some cases, leaders pursue their own interests, infused in the vision, under the pretext of advancing the process of change. The followers are persuaded to buy in the ideas of the leader (Bush, 2007:397). Although the model is concerned with the change process, it does not seem to be addressing the process of student learning adequately. The presence of limitations associated with this model necessitates the need to further explore other leadership models that may be complementary to the afore-mentioned models.

#### *2.3.4.3 Distributed leadership*

Distributed leadership refers to a model that considers leadership as a function consisting of a number of roles. The presence of a number of roles within the leadership function implies that a number of people in an organisation are required to share and participate in the leadership functions. The model further pays particular attention to the way members interact in an organisation; seeking to relate the interaction of principals and followers to the situation in which leadership activities are carried out (Spillane, Camburn & Pareja, 2007:109–110). According to Bennett, Wise, Woods and Harvey (2003:7) the definition of distributed leadership advocates the following three aspects: an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals; openness of boundaries of leadership; and the distribution of expertise to the many. These categories of leadership are summarised in Figure 2.5 below:

<b>1. An emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration amongst groups and individuals</li> <li>• Collective effort enhances production</li> <li>• Promotion of values</li> </ul>
<b>2. Openness of the boundaries of leadership</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion of other members of the community</li> <li>• Distribution of leadership roles to all</li> </ul>
<b>3. Distribution of varieties of expertise among individuals and/or groups:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revealing of latent talents in members</li> <li>• Providing opportunities to learn from others</li> <li>• Enhancement of performance standards and skills</li> </ul>

**Figure 2.5: A model of distributed leadership** (Derived from the explanation provided by Bennett, Wise, Woods and Harvey, 2003:7)

Below is an explanation of the above distributed leadership model based on discussions according to Spillane *et al.* (2007:109–110)

**Leadership as a property resulting from interaction of individuals or a group:**

This dimension comprises:

- **Collaboration between groups and individuals**
- **Collective effort enhances production**
- **Promotion of values**

Staff members are encouraged to work together and share experiences for enhancing production. A concerted effort of the staff promotes dialogue, infuses desired cultural values at the school and improves relations.

**Leadership is seen as a means of opening up leadership boundaries:**

This dimension has the following headings:

- **Inclusion of other members of the community**
- **Distribution of leadership roles**

The concern in this dimension is to attribute leadership roles to all, rather than to people serving in designated positions. The leadership boundaries may stretch to include the role of students and/or even parents.

**Leadership as a distribution of varieties of expertise among individuals and/or groups:**

This dimension deals with:

- **Revealing latent talents in members**
- **Providing opportunities to learn from others**
- **Enhancement of performance standards and skills**

Assigning leadership roles to members of the school community provides them with opportunities for learning and opportunities to reveal their latent talents. The process allows for the sharing of ideas and experiences. The opportunity afforded to members to participate in leadership roles motivates the members to perform to the best of their ability for recognition and may consequently lead to high standards of performance if skilful people drive and lead the implementation of these programmes.

There are a number of shortfalls associated with distributed leadership. For example, the model does not seem concerned with the articulation of vision and setting goals (Bennett *et al.*, 2003:8-9); a condition that can provide for the autonomy of principals over their followers. The condition may also lead to a situation where the followers lack ownership and enthusiasm to implement the set goals.

It has been mentioned earlier in this chapter (cf. 2.3.3.2) that leadership and management are intertwined processes that are necessary for effective leadership at a school. Principals may not even be aware whether they are leading or managing, as they have to respond to a number of issues pertaining to the school. The diversity of the leadership functions necessitates the support, involvement and participation of the staff and learners in various leadership roles if principals are to realise quality leadership (Spillane *et al.*, 2007:111). Activities such as sustaining the school vision, decision making, supervision and the implementation of the instructional process are some of leadership and management roles that require the support of the entire staff.

The support may not necessarily be rendered by people in formal leadership positions; sometimes classroom teachers may cooperate and appreciate leadership functions and management work (Spillane *et al.*, 2007:115).

A school is an open organisation, which in some cases, responds to policy issues dictated by the state and expectations of the society. The change initiative may emanate from an external source, inducing a response mainly from higher authority, portraying leadership as a top-down model, with little acceptance by the followers. Similarly, a challenge may be experienced from within the school, rendering the process to be driven bottom-up. It is crucial for the school principal to consider all the factors relating to the school environment and judge how to facilitate the process of nurturing a school culture that encourages the staff and learners to pledge their commitment to the programmes of the school.

### **2.3.5 Leadership model to use**

The above arguments offer insight into three leadership models. The models seem to complement one another, even though each accentuates different aspects of leadership. Transformational leadership attempts to distribute leadership among the staff members as a way of capacitating them with the necessary skills to effect a change on the culture of the organisation. Instructional leadership, compared with the other two models, appears to concentrate most of the leadership powers on the principal, who in turn, has direct control over the quality of learning and teaching.

The third model, distributed leadership, relates more to transformational leadership, but does not seem to pay attention to the development of a vision and its acceptance by the followers. The transformational and instructional models emphasise the development of school vision as the springboard of leadership actions. A transformational leader does not prescribe a specific approach to teachers to be adopted to realise their goals, but invests in the professional leadership growth of staff members and provides a favourable environment at the school that enables staff members to deal with change effectively. What needs to be addressed is to recommend the best model of leadership which principals can find useful in tackling different challenges in discharge of their duties.

Principals at schools either respond to a number of challenges arising from different aspects within the school itself, or externally imposed challenges. The ability of principals to recognise and have a full comprehension of the variables that appeal to the school business is an advantage. The contextual variables within schools may include teachers' experiences, the background of learners and availability of resources, while externally imposed conditions may be expectations of parents about the academic achievement of their children and legislative requirements of the state (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003:1).

Another powerful force to reckon with is the culture prevailing at a school, which determines the attitudes and norms of the staff and learners, and the leadership approach the principal should use. All these variables become a prescriptive force in the manner the leadership functions are executed. Depending on the prevailing situation, principals may be obliged to resort to code-switch the leadership models to address the challenges adequately. The view of integrating different models is supported by Hallinger (2003:345) as a way of providing synergy of leadership for the promotion of organisational stability and improving organisational performance.

Given the background within which principals are expected to exercise leadership functions, it may be assumed that there is no single model that could be considered the best to accommodate all the challenges, but integrating various models may provide a solution. Hence, the leadership models adopted by the principals will depend on the leader's experience, the maturity of the followers and the prevailing situation at the school.

## **2.4 THE ROLE OF PRINCIPALS IN NURTURING SCHOOL CULTURE**

Schools are complex environments where a number of planned and unanticipated situations occur every day. The complexity of these situations emanate mainly from moral issues, interpersonal relations, instructional and managerial demands and conformity to social and political pressures dictated by the local communities served by the schools (Lucas & Valentine, 2002:2). All these situations require the attention of school principals to guide and manage all the processes at schools effectively. Research confirms that the leadership role of principals at schools is essential

(Ovando & Cavazos, n.d:9), although the leadership practices adopted by principals and the manner in which the principals influence academic performance have not explicitly been dealt with (Kruger *et al.*, 2007:2; Lucas & Valentine, 2002:3). Leithwood & Riehl, (2003:3) hold a different view, namely that the effect of leadership on student learning accounts for one quarter of all the factors that can influence learning. The scenario presents a challenge to the researcher to provide more clarity on the contribution of leadership in creating a culture that supports high academic performance.

No matter how the leadership role of principals is viewed, principals are ultimately entrusted with the responsibility to account for the performance of students (Steyn, 2008:890); a process that requires principals to maintain high standards of teaching and learning and create a safe and orderly atmosphere for members to do their work effectively. The process of creating a school culture in which principal and teachers feel committed and share common beliefs and values that foster the success of all students should be a priority for principals who wish to succeed as school leaders (Ovando & Cavazos, n.d:11; Lucas & Valentine, 2002:3). Based on this discussion, principals could be regarded as having an influence on the well-being of schools in general. The subsequent discussion is aimed at providing an account of what principals can do to provide a culture at schools that may affect good academic performance.

#### **2.4.1 Contextual factors within the school environment**

The process of improving and changing the school environment to one in which the principal and teachers can work effectively is not easy to attain. The process often entails unanticipated, rapidly changing and uncertain conditions that induce leadership skills and commitment from principals. What is of paramount importance for the principals is their ability to identify and align these conditions to the school goals and devise ways and means to equip the members of a school community with techniques that will enable them to deal effectively with the challenges in such environments (Lucas & Valentine, 2002:2). What makes a leader even more effective in any given situation is the ability to recognise and analyse specific situations, some of which may be useful to retain for the benefit of the school. It is

also important, irrespective of any leadership model, for the leadership to pursue certain values considered important to establish consistent norms and practices amongst the staff and learners. The leadership should remain focused in its direction and provide guidance to its followers, while dealing flexibly with differing contextual factors aimed at nurturing the culture that supports high academic performance (Lewis & Murphy 2008:133).

While appreciating that principals have to deal effectively with the challenges at schools, it is also worth noting that leadership and culture are closely linked; as such, principals' behaviour and actions are considered crucial in influencing a school culture that supports educational excellence (Ovando & Cavazos, n.d:11). Leadership and culture are the two factors that may have a determining effect on the advancement and performance of the schools (Flores, 2004:299). Principals who succeeded in improving academic performance achieved that by dealing extensively with factors within the culture that encourage active participation of the staff and learners (Lucas & Valentine, 2002:3). Recent research on educational leadership advocates the exploration of the relationship between leadership, learners and teachers' practices, beliefs and values that influence learning (Mulford & Johns, 2004:3). What remains to be shown is what principals who manage to cultivate a culture at schools do to produce conditions that support high academic performance.

#### **2.4.2 Strategies employed by principals to create a culture of learning**

The significance of the leadership role of principals at schools has attracted the attention of a number of writers in the field of educational leadership and management. The following are some of the practices that principals can adopt in their endeavour to create a culture conducive to effective learning:

- Articulating and advocating for a shared vision;
- Motivating students, staff and parents; and
- Utilizing human and material resources (Karakose, 2008:571; Southworth, 2002:77).

The successful implementation of the leadership aspects mentioned above requires the principal to win the support of teachers. Principals must be prepared to devote a

lot of their time to assist and demonstrate desirable values and norms, which ultimately have an impact on the culture of the school.

On the other hand, the strategies adopted for instructional leadership according to Bush (2003:16), comprise the following:

- The process of articulating the school mission;
- Supervising the teaching and learning process and monitoring the academic progress of learners; and
- Creating an inviting environment for learning

The principals in this case are encouraged to work with teachers and exemplify the expected teaching strategies to manage the instruction programme. Their continued interaction provides opportunities for staff to learn from one another, resulting in more proficiency. Established collegial relations are crucial and aid the development of values such as trust and respect, and attitudes that improve the school culture effectively.

Even though Kruger (2003:207) proposes that issues of managing curriculum modes, pedagogy and monitoring learner progress are made to appear as stand-alone aspects, they are the constituents of the instructional process. In the account given above, school principals are encouraged to set the direction by advancing the vision, mission and goals of a school. Thereafter, principals and teachers should interact to shape a culture that allows for effective learning.

### **2.4.3 Summary of the roles of principals in creating a culture of learning**

The discussion on leadership and school culture above point to some important generalisations, which in simplest terms, provide guidance to school principals; hence, the following activities may be of some help to promote a healthy environment at schools:

*2.3.4.1 Articulating and communicating a vision, mission and goals shared by all members:*

- The vision should be aligned to the beliefs, values and priorities of the school community.

#### *2.3.4.2 The management of the curriculum and instructional process, which includes:*

- Supervising the teaching and learning process;
- Mentoring of teachers;
- Monitoring and assessing the academic achievement of learners and using feedback to help learners to improve; and
- Holding teachers accountable for the academic achievement of learners.

#### *2.3.4.3 Promoting a culture of learning includes:*

- Inculcating values and norms that support high academic performance;
- Encouraging and providing opportunities for the professional learning of teachers, sharing of ideas and building collegial and collaborative relationship among staff;
- Providing opportunities for teachers to participate in decision-making and encourage risk-taking and support for new initiatives;
- Setting high standards of performance for both learners and teachers and accountability for performance;
- Motivating staff by providing professional support and recognising achievements and good performance; and
- Mobilising both human and material resources and time.

### **2.3.5 Model of leadership practices aimed at creating a culture of learning**

At effective schools associated with good academic performance, leaders have a sense of commitment, an obligation to motivate teachers and learners and an urge to nurture environments conducive to learning for the entire community (Flores, 2004:302). It is maintained that all successful principals apply the same basic leadership practices in all educational contexts to sustain good performance. What differentiates one school from another is the manner in which principals fulfil their leadership roles that are largely influenced by a school's priorities, personality and experience of the leader. These leadership practices can then be classified into three broad categories, namely setting direction, developing people and developing the organisation (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003:2-3; Steyn, 2008:296–902). The categories are presented in Figure 2.6 shown below:

<b>1. SETTING DIRECTION</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating and sharing a focused vision and mission to improve student performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aligning vision and mission, priorities and values to the context of the school</li> <li>• Endowed with charismatic leadership</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultivating the acceptance of cooperative goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing and valuing collaboration and caring about one another</li> <li>• Valuing people required to build trust and support</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating high performance expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating high performance expectations of staff to improve student performance</li> <li>• Informing staff about performance expectations</li> <li>• Working effectively with adults</li> </ul>
<b>2. DEVELOPING PEOPLE</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing leadership among members in professional communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willingness and know-how to share leadership</li> <li>• Distributing <b>instructional leadership</b></li> <li>• Empowering staff</li> <li>• Providing opportunities for staff to innovate, develop and learn together</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing an appropriate model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modelling, teaching and helping others to become better followers</li> <li>• Setting appropriate examples consistent with school leaders' values</li> <li>• Managing time effectively to meet school goals</li> <li>• Being a <b>transformational leader</b></li> <li>• Cultivating higher levels of commitment to organisational goals</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultivating learning among all members in the professional community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitating learning among all staff members</li> <li>• Implementing good teaching practices</li> <li>• Facilitating change to cultivate an effective learning environment</li> <li>• Instituting structures of relationships to improve student performance</li> <li>• Monitoring of student performance</li> <li>• Behaving in ways consistent with leaders' personal values, attitudes and beliefs</li> <li>• Promoting ethical practice</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing individualised support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquiring and using resources intelligently to support and monitor high levels of staff performance and needs</li> <li>• Demonstrating respect for and concern about people's personal feelings and needs</li> <li>• Providing emotional, psychological and logistical support</li> </ul>

<b>3. DEVELOPING THE ORGANISATION</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing technical skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing site-based management</li> <li>• Working with teams</li> <li>• Planning strategically for the future</li> <li>• Applying educational law to specific conditions</li> <li>• Maintaining effective discipline</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasising learner-centred leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focusing on learner-centred leadership</li> <li>• Employing <b>instructional leadership</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening the school culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating and maintaining a safe learning environment</li> <li>• Promoting ethical practices</li> <li>• Resolving conflict</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring organisational performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using indicators to determine the school's effectiveness</li> <li>• Monitoring both staff and learner performance</li> </ul>

**Figure 2.6: Categories of core practices of leadership** (As proposed by Steyn, 2008:896–902 and Leithwood and Riehl, 2003:3–4)

The subsequent paragraphs attempt to provide an explanation of what principals can do to apply the practices stated in the figure above in their endeavour to provide an environment conducive to high academic performance.

#### *2.3.5.1 Setting direction:*

In this category, school leaders' actions are aimed at developing goals based on the vision of the school and generating acceptance by the staff. This category consists of:

- **Creating and sharing a focused vision and mission to improve student performance:**

The leadership works together with teachers in developing a school vision and mission. The leadership should ensure that the vision encapsulates the assumptions, beliefs and values considered crucial to induce desirable behaviour from members. The vision should also consider the challenges and priorities of the school. In this case, the leader should be able to exercise a lot of influence to inspire followers through his personality and experience (Steyn, 2008:898).

- **Cultivating the acceptance of cooperative goals:**

The school leadership should provide opportunities for the staff to interact and share their experiences. The interaction, which is guided by the shared school goals, helps to build cordial and collegial relations, trust and a friendly atmosphere. Providing support and appreciating achievements may induce greater commitment towards the goals of the school (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003:3–4).

- **Creating high performance expectations:**

This process demands from leaders to set high standards for quality performance (Steyn, 2008:898). The school leadership should be concerned with helping the staff to live up to the challenge and aspire to realise the expected outcomes (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003:4).

#### *2.3.5.2 Developing people:*

It has been pointed out in the definition of leadership (cf. 2.3.2) that effective leadership is able to work with and through people to realise its goals. It should be a concern to the leadership of a school to persuade its followers to support its initiatives. The process of involving the followers in the leadership roles and the implementation of policies help to improve relations and the professional skills of teachers (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003:4).

- **Sharing leadership among members of professional communities:**

In this process, it is encouraged that school principals share some of the leadership responsibilities with the staff as a way of enabling professional growth and empowerment of the staff. Providing opportunities for the staff to participate in the leadership process of schools also promotes team spirit and sharing of ideas, encourages innovations and increases confidence of the staff in handling problems and instructional process (Steyn, 2008:898).

- **Providing an appropriate model:**

School principals are expected to demonstrate through their own actions what the expected standard of performance should be. Working cooperatively with teachers, they should demonstrate the skills needed to provide professional and pedagogical proficiency and instil a sense of commitment. In this case, the principals should be seen to act like a transformational leader (Steyn, 2008:899; Southworth, 2002:84).

- **Cultivating learning among all members in the professional community:**

School leaders are preoccupied with the process of transforming schools into learning communities by providing a clear vision, articulating how the process of learning would be managed. It is advisable that school leaders should cooperatively develop goals for learning, and encourage and support the staff to engage in learning. Teachers should be encouraged to do research on new teaching strategies to improve the performance of learners. If teachers support the values of learning, they would in turn be able to endorse and instil them in students and change the culture of the school accordingly. The cooperation the leadership enjoys from the staff helps to sustain the ethical and professional practices of teachers (Steyn, 2008:900; Flores, 2004:300).

- **Providing individualised support:**

Leaders at schools should show particular interest in individuals and/or groups to understand their concerns, needs and personalities. Paying attention to teachers and students enables school principals to provide the necessary support and encouragement, which would enable them to identify with the school (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003:4; Steyn, 2008:901). Leaders may award incentives to teachers for good performance and develop structures that may be used to monitor the progress of individual teachers. Since people are not the same in terms of maturity level, attitudes and the way they carry out duties, leaders should acknowledge that people are unique and that each one of them act in a unique way.

### *2.3.5.3 Developing the organisation*

The leadership focus should be aimed at maintaining a balance between the internal processes and external relationships that influence the business of the school to become a professional learning community. The principals should be able to inspire teachers' commitment to the school goals and to encourage teachers and learners to improve their performance (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003:4). It should be a concern to the principals to create and develop cultural values, norms and practices that support good relationships, commitment and effective participation. Innovative thinking and risk-taking, participation in decision making, providing time for parties to do work, and the support and appreciation of achievements are some of the practices that warrant serious consideration (Ovando & Cavazos, n.d.:11) if schools are to become stimulating environments for teachers.

- **Developing technical skills:**

It is crucial for school principals to possess leadership skills that will enable them to lead, deal effectively with challenges and involve others in the running of the school. The ability to work with and through people in the establishment of relationships with various groups, as well as doing effective planning and maintaining order are some of the essential skills needed for effective leadership (Steyn, 2008:901). Involving the staff in leadership issues does not only ensure the attainment of goals but promotes the professional growth of the staff.

- **Emphasising learner-centred leadership:**

The aim of the leadership is to promote effective teaching and learning which will influence learners' performance. In this case, the learner becomes the central focus, guiding teaching and learning activities. The principal and the staff should have positive assumptions and attitudes about the learning ability of their learners; as such, the school will pursue values that emphasise high academic achievement. The school principal as instructional leader working in collaboration with the staff focuses on how to improve their interaction with the learners in the classroom situation. The principal monitors and supervises learning by getting performance reports and providing feedback to help teachers and learners to

improve (Steyn, 2008:901). The emphasis in this area is to ensure that learners succeed academically.

- **Strengthening the school culture:**

School leaders that are concerned with the growth of their organisations constantly challenge the existing situation. They consistently attempt to modify the manner resources are used and challenge the way work is performed aiming at influencing beliefs, values, attitudes and norms that foster the spirit of cooperation, cordial relations and commitment to the school goals (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003:5). This will assist teachers to reflect on their professional and ethical practice and the way they perceive themselves in the discharge of their duties. According to Steyn (2008:901), principals who wish to effect changes in their organisation by emphasising the delegation of leadership roles, developing the professional skills of the staff acts as transformational leaders.

- **Monitoring organisational performance:**

The leadership ensures that teachers and learners pledge their commitment towards the set goals and standards of performance. The school should adopt strategies to monitor progress towards the attainment of goals. Based on the data collected and its analysis, the school leadership can identify areas where it can offer guidance and support (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003:6; Steyn, 2008:901).

The structure in Figure 2.6 provides a summary of the leadership practices and the manner in which they could be adopted and applied at schools by principals who wish to create a school culture that allows for effective teaching and learning, resulting in improved academic performance. The aspects discussed in the structure will be used in the empirical research.

## **2.4 CONCLUSION**

In Chapter 1 (cf. 1.3), it has been pointed out that poor academic performance at high schools in Lesotho and in South Africa is a concern. Although several factors are associated with academic performance, it is possible that the absence of a good culture of learning and teaching contributes towards poor performance.

The literature review done in this chapter confirms the presence of a relationship between leadership and culture (cf. 2.3.1). The two processes are largely considered as intertwined, which therefore implies that a culture conducive to good academic performance is cultivated by the school leadership. It is crucial that schools should be led by visionary principals who can prioritise organisational needs, set direction by articulating the vision and develop aggressive goals for learning. In the leadership process, principals realise the school goals by effectively delegating leadership functions and offering support to staff. Hence, establishing and encouraging collegial relations is also crucial.

It is further maintained that there is no best leadership model, as each situation presumably calls for a particular response. Adopting and integrating different leadership models might be helpful in addressing the challenges confronting leaders. The variation in leadership strategies in dealing with challenges may account for the differences between school cultures at different schools. Even though the application of leadership functions differs from school to school, leadership functions intended to create the school culture that supports high performance can be reduced to three basic functions, namely setting direction, developing people, and developing the organisation. Furthermore, principals can engender a positive school culture by taking into account the following dimensions of culture: professional orientation, organisational structure, the quality of the learning environment and student-centred focus. What remains a concern in this study is to find out what school leadership can do to cultivate a school culture that influences academic performance positively.

The next chapter will deal with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the empirical data.

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

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents and explains the research design and methodology that the researcher used in the study to provide data to identify and analyse the leadership practices of principals aimed at cultivating a school culture that enhances academic performance. A comparison between practices of principals at schools with a culture of good academic performance and schools with a culture of poor academic performance has been done.

### **3.2 THE AIM OF THE STUDY**

The main aim of this study is to:

- investigate the influence that the leadership practices of school principals have on a school culture that affects academic performance; and
- compare the leadership practices of principals at schools with a culture of good academic performance with the leadership practices at schools with an unsatisfactory academic performance.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE**

The term *design* refers to the basic plan or strategy in which the researcher specifies basic operations and decisions to address the research problem adequately (De Vos, 2002:79). It also reflects how sampling has been done, stating variables that will be measured and the techniques that will be used to gather data and how that data will be analysed (Maree, 2007:70). In this study, a survey design that employs the quantitative research methods has been used as a method for gathering data.

The study adopts a positivistic research paradigm. A paradigm is described as a set of beliefs or assumptions that guides the thinking about reality, the manner the research is conducted and the methodology to follow (Plack, 2005:223).

The positivistic paradigm assumes reality as governed by fixed laws and knowledge about the reality is gained through the objective observation and measurement of data (Krauss, 2005:759; Henning et al, 2004:17). By observing and measuring leadership practices and cultural issues in schools, the study will reveal the leadership practices of school principals aimed at nurturing a school culture supporting high academic performance.

Although the paradigm emphasises the testing of the existing theory (Henning et al, 2004:17), the data gathered on the leadership practices will be compared and verified against the theoretical background provided in the literature review in Chapter 2 to establish the extent to which the empirical data are supported. The theoretical background points at information that all leadership practices of school principals, in their endeavour to lead, are viewed as a process that culminates into the building of a school culture. All the leadership practices at a school are summed up into three main leadership functions, namely setting direction, developing people and developing the organisation (cf. 2.4.4). Where these practices are taken care of, they yield a culture that could be viewed against the background of the following cultural dimensions: professional orientation, organisational structure, quality of the learning environment and student-centred focus (cf. 2.2.4). While the empirically observed data will be used to describe, predict and control the behaviour of school principals, it will also be used to reveal what causes them to behave the way they do (Plack, 2005:226).

The positivist paradigm also assumes reality as quantifiable (Plack, 2005:227), a condition which enables the researcher to attain objectivity in measuring the data. As discussed in the above paragraph, the variables under investigation are broken down into subheadings to isolate facts from values (Plack, 2005:226). This process enables the researcher to adopt a well-structured questionnaire to provide guidance and ensure that the phenomenon being measured allows the researcher and the respondents to work independently of one another (Krauss, 2005:759). Based on the positivist paradigm, the researcher intends to investigate the research questions by using the quantitative research methodology.

### **3.4 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD**

Quantitative research is founded on positivism, as explained in Chapter 1 (cf. 1.6.1). The main reason for using a quantitative method was to enable the researcher to provide an objective description of leadership practices aimed at cultivating a culture at schools conducive to high academic performance. Objectivity in this method is achieved when the researcher collects data from measurable and observable quantities of the phenomenon. It is a concern in this method that interaction between the researcher and the respondents is very limited, and is achieved by the use of a structured questionnaire to collect numerical data; hence, the use of a questionnaire was of vital importance in this study (Maree, 2007:53, 156). The method is also convenient for presenting, analysing and interpreting the numerical data using statistical methods to arrive at generalisations about reality (De Vos, 2002:79, Kim, 2003:10; Krauss, 2005:759). Even though it has been mentioned that the results of the study would not be generalised for other educational settings (cf. 1.8), the results will be applied at the schools where the study was conducted.

The intention of the researcher was to collect observable data regarding the prevalence of leadership practices and school culture from a number of schools; as such, a survey research design was considered the most suitable method for this study. It enabled the researcher to collect data from 20 schools, a population too large to observe directly. This study was conducted at high schools in Lesotho, specifically targeting schools in the central region of Lesotho, in the district of Maseru; as such, it became imperative for the researcher to begin by selecting and determining the size of a sample population that represented the entire population before administering data collection instruments (Maree, 2007:155). The data generated and collected this way are used to describe the leadership practices of school principals influencing a school culture that affects academic performance. In addition, the data are also used to reveal the difference between the cultural and leadership practices of principals at schools that perform well and schools where the performance is unsatisfactory.

### **3.5 RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLE**

The research universe of the study comprised all the high schools in Lesotho. All high schools in Lesotho offer subject options based on the same curriculum and the candidates sit for the same examinations conducted by ECOL. However, it was not possible for the researcher to reach all the schools; consequently, a sample population was selected and used. The subsequent paragraphs explain the method employed to select the sample population.

Since, 2009, 153 high schools in Lesotho have been preparing candidates for the COSC examinations. The study targeted schools in the central region of Lesotho, particularly the Maseru district as the target population. This region has the highest population of schools in Lesotho per district, namely 40 out of 153 schools (ECOL, 2009). The schools in this district are situated in the lowlands and rural areas, providing a good representation of high schools in the entire country. Most schools in the district could be accessed easily by road transport without incurring many costs. The researcher also capitalised on the rapport established through interaction with the principals to gain acceptance of the study.

The schools that served as the research sample were purposively selected to ensure that they met the set criteria and were representative of the entire population. The schools were selected on the basis that principals and some of the teachers at the identified schools had served at the schools for at least three years. It was also considered that the schools should have been presenting candidates for COSC examinations since 2009. Three years had been considered a reasonable time to enable teachers to gain enough exposure to and experience of the culture at the respective schools. Because the participants have the relevant experience, the researcher had the advantage of being able to administer the questionnaire at any time of the year, rather than waiting for the end of the year. Other criteria for the selection of schools were based on dependable academic performance according to the COSC examinations of each school. The sample population included schools with constantly good academic performance records as well as those that seemed to perform poorly, in order to enable the researcher to draw comparisons between the schools.

The sample population of the study from the selected schools comprised 20 principals and 100 teachers responding to the questionnaire. From the group of teachers identified as the target population, five teachers from each school were selected randomly. A sample is considered as a portion or subset of the population bearing most of the qualities the researcher is interested in (De Vos, 2002:199). There is no fixed size of a sample; the sizes may differ according to a number of factors, such as the nature and size of the population and the type of the research conducted. However, it is encouraged that, for a smaller population, sample size must be reasonably larger and more representative of the entire population to enable the researcher to make accurate predictions using accurate information. The sample population of schools, which constituted 50% of the schools in the district of Maseru, was considered a fair proportion for this study. Other factors such as costs, accessibility of schools and time required to administer the questionnaire were also considered as some of the limiting factors, but the researcher took care to ensure that desired level of accuracy was not compromised (De Vos, 2002:200).

### **3.6 QUESTIONNAIRE AS A METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION**

In a quantitative study, questionnaires, checklists, indexes and scales are suitable methods for data collection (De Vos, 2002:171). In this study, a questionnaire was used for collecting data from principals and teachers at high schools in Lesotho.

The questionnaire used in this study was divided into three sections. Section A provided general guidelines for completing the questionnaire. In Section B, respondents were requested to provide biographical information. Section C provided the items, which required respondents to state how they observed and experienced the leadership practices of principals and a school culture affecting academic performance. This section consisted of two parts; the first 30 items addressed issues of leadership practices aimed at establishing and maintaining a school culture conducive to good academic performance. Questions were grouped into three main functions of leadership as:

- setting direction;
- developing people; and

- developing the organisation.

The second set of items was intended to reveal the kind of school culture prevailing within the schools and the questions classified under the following dimensions of school culture:

- professional orientation;
- organisational structure;
- quality of the learning environment; and
- student-centred focus.

The respondents expressed their views by using a five-point scale rated as follows:

1	=	Rarely
2	=	Once in a while
3	=	Sometimes
4	=	Fairly often
5	=	Very frequently

In order for the questionnaire to be of scientific value, it has to portray the following qualities:

### **3.6.1 Validity**

Validity concerns the degree to which an instrument measures what is intended to measure. The concept of validity in most cases addresses two issues, the concept measured and accurate measurement (De Vos, 2002:166). The two types of validity explained below were considered relevant to this study:

- ***Content validity:***

The researcher took care that the concepts that were investigated were adequately addressed by providing a sufficient number of items under each (De Vos, 2002:167). The items in the questionnaire were grouped under specific headings (cf. 3.6.1) to ensure that the main features of school leadership as well as school culture were covered extensively.

- **Face validity:**

It refers to what an instrument ‘appears to measure’ (De Vos, 2002:167). According to members in the Department of Education Management and Leadership, as well as members of the Department of Statistics at the University of the Free State the questionnaire was able to measure what it was intended to measure.

### 3.6.2 Reliability

It refers to how dependable an instrument is in producing similar results when used repetitively under comparable conditions (De Vos, 2002:168). Reliability of an instrument affects its validity (Maree, 2007:218). A well-constructed questionnaire adopted from standardised questionnaires that have been used in similar studies on leadership and culture was used to enhance reliability. Pretesting (discussed in 3.6.3 below) of the questionnaire and assuring the respondents of their confidentiality and anonymity also served to increase reliability.

Cronbach’s Alpha reliability estimate, a statistically calculated value has been used to determine the internal consistency or variance of a set of questionnaire items. The overall Alpha for the questionnaire items was 0.975, which proved that the questionnaire was highly reliable. The calculated values of the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient for various headings are given in Table 3.1 below.

**Table 3.1 Cronbach’s alpha estimate for questionnaire items**

<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>CA</b>
setting direction	10	0.934
developing people	12	0.937
developing the organisation	8	0.928
<b>School culture</b>		
professional orientation	4	0.749
organisational structure	4	0.821
quality of the learning environment	4	0.780
student-centred focus	3	0.715

### **3.6.3 Pilot Study**

After the research instruments had been constructed, it became imperative to pre-test the questionnaire to ascertain that the instrument would provide valid and reliable information that would help the researcher to address the research question adequately. The questionnaire was piloted at two schools in the southern region of Lesotho, where a total of two principals and ten teachers responded to the questionnaire. One of the schools consistently performed well academically, while the other represented schools with poor academic performance. 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. It also helps the researcher to correct identifiable errors before the main study is conducted (De Vos, 2002:210). Based on the results obtained from the pilot study the researcher was able to:

- clarify the wording of questions;
- correct the omissions; and
- get overall reactions and comments on the length of the questionnaire.

### **3.7 COMPUTATION OF DATA**

The statistical computation of the raw data was done by Department of Statistics at the University of the Free State using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS for Windows, version 20.0). A number of aspects of measures of central tendency such as frequency, mean, standard deviation and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient were calculated and used in the analysis of the data (De Vos, 2002:235-239; Maree, 2007:186-188). A comparison between poorly performing and well-performing schools was done. Although analysis of data is important, De Vos (2002:223) warns that it does not provide answers to the research questions. The analysed data will be useful to the researcher to determine appropriate conclusions and recommendations in relation to the research questions.

### **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The study is intended to reveal the leadership practices of the principals and invites teachers to respond to the questionnaire, a situation that may induce sensitivity from the principals. As such, a briefing session was held with principals and teachers at their respective schools where forms of consent were signed before filling in the questionnaire. The session was done to explain the purpose of the study and to ensure that respondents understood what was expected on how to complete the questionnaire; hence minimising the risk of not filling in the questionnaire properly. To allay the fears of the principals and teachers, the researcher also assured the respondents in writing that information provided would be treated confidentially and used for the research only (Henning et al., 2004:73). Disclosure of names or any form of identification that could be associated with the participants was not requested in the questionnaire. Participants were informed about the importance of the study in relation to leadership and management at schools.

It was noted that the study might also be influenced by a number of personal traits such as attitudes, relationships with principals and academic knowledge in the field of education management and leadership. This problem was discussed during the briefing session where the participants were encouraged to provide fair information. The ethical considerations were observed by the researcher and the respondents (cf. 1.7).

### **3.9 SUMMARY**

This chapter presented the research methodology, which adopts quantitative research design based on the positivist paradigm. The chapter further discusses the procedures adopted to ensure that the questionnaire is valid and reliable for data collection. Respondents are assured of confidentiality of the information they would give. In the subsequent chapter, the presentation and interpretation of the results will be provided.

## **CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH DATA**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to present, analyse and interpret the results from the empirical research undertaken to determine the influence of leadership practices of principals on school culture, which consequently affects academic performance. A comparison of practices of principals at schools that have a culture of good academic performance and at schools with a poor academic performance will be addressed.

### **4.2 THE PURPOSE OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

The main objectives of this empirical investigation are to:

- investigate the leadership practices of school educational leaders on school culture that affects academic performance;
- present the data collected by means of a questionnaire; and
- analyse and interpret the data collected against the background of the theoretical framework;

Conclusions, findings and recommendations will be discussed in the subsequent chapters of the dissertation.

### **4.3 PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH DATA**

A questionnaire was completed by 20 school principals and 100 teachers at high schools in the district of Maseru in Lesotho. Section A of the questionnaire provided general guidelines for completing the questionnaire, while Section B required demographical data of the respondents. Section C sought the views of the respondents on leadership practices and school culture prevailing at their schools.

The respondents expressed their views by selecting options on a five-point scale which represented the following ratings: 1 – Rarely (does not occur); 2 – Once in a while (happens sometimes, but not very often); 3 – Sometimes (occasionally happening); 4 – Fairly often (happens to a large degree); 5 – Very frequently (happens all the time). The higher the score, the better the perception and views about the practices are at a school. These ratings will also be used to describe the extent to which the respondents considered the practices occurring at the schools positively or otherwise.

The next section is devoted to the analysis of the results of the questionnaire.

### **4.3.1 Demographic data of the respondents**

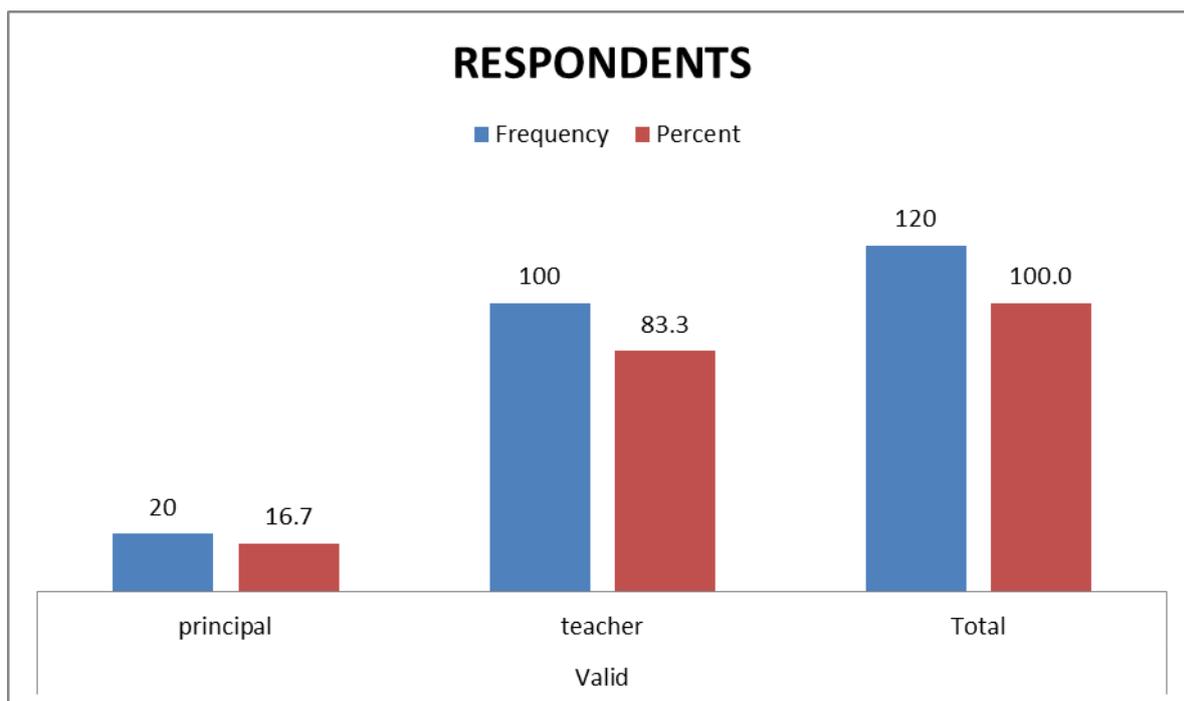
The tables and figures illustrated in this section will provide different kinds of demographic information on the respondents in this study.

#### *4.3.1.1 Distribution of post levels*

The following table illustrates the distribution of post levels of the respondents in this study

**Table 4.1 Distribution of post levels of respondents**

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Principal	20	16.7	16.7	16.7
Teacher	100	83.3	83.3	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	



**Figure 4.1: Graphic illustration of the distribution of the post levels of the respondents**

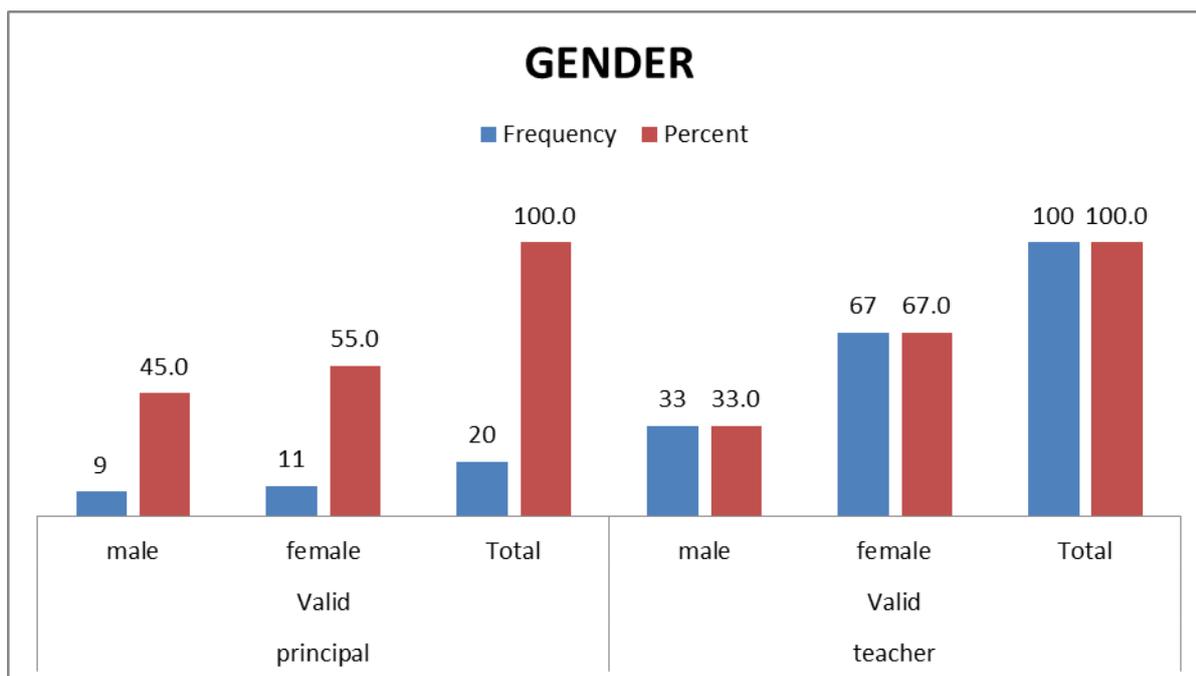
Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 illustrate that of the 120 respondents, 20 were principals and 100 were teachers. All the questionnaires were answered and returned.

#### 4.3.1.2 *The gender of respondents*

The following table and figure illustrate the gender of the respondents classified as principals and teachers.

**Table 4.2 Gender of the respondents**

Leader			Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Principal	Valid	Male	9	45.0	45.0	45.0
		Female	11	55.0	55.0	100.0
		Total	20	100.0	100.0	
Teacher	Valid	Male	33	33.0	33.0	33.0
		Female	67	67.0	67.0	100.0
		Total	100	100.0	100.0	



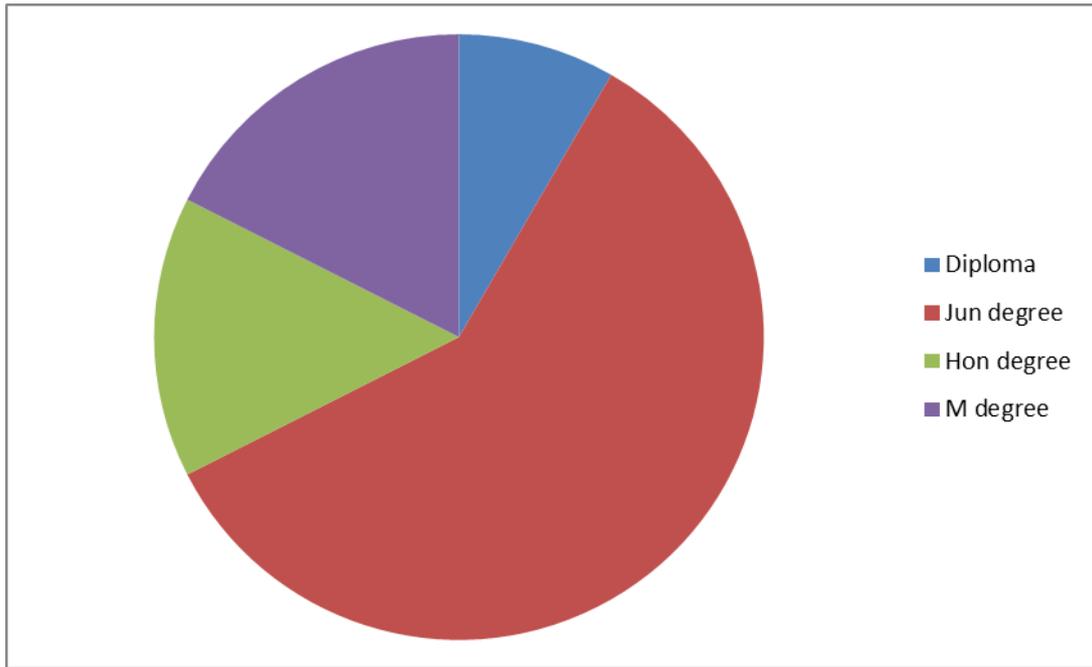
**Figure 4.2: Graphic illustration of the number of female and male respondents**

Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2 show that 55% of the principals and 67% of the teachers were females. This condition is normal, as the population of female teachers is larger than that of male teachers at schools.

#### 4.3.1.3 Qualifications of the respondents

**Table 4.3 Qualifications of the respondents**

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Diploma	10	8.3	8.3	8.3
Jun degree	71	59.2	59.2	67.5
Hon degree	18	15.0	15.0	82.5
M degree	21	17.5	17.5	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	



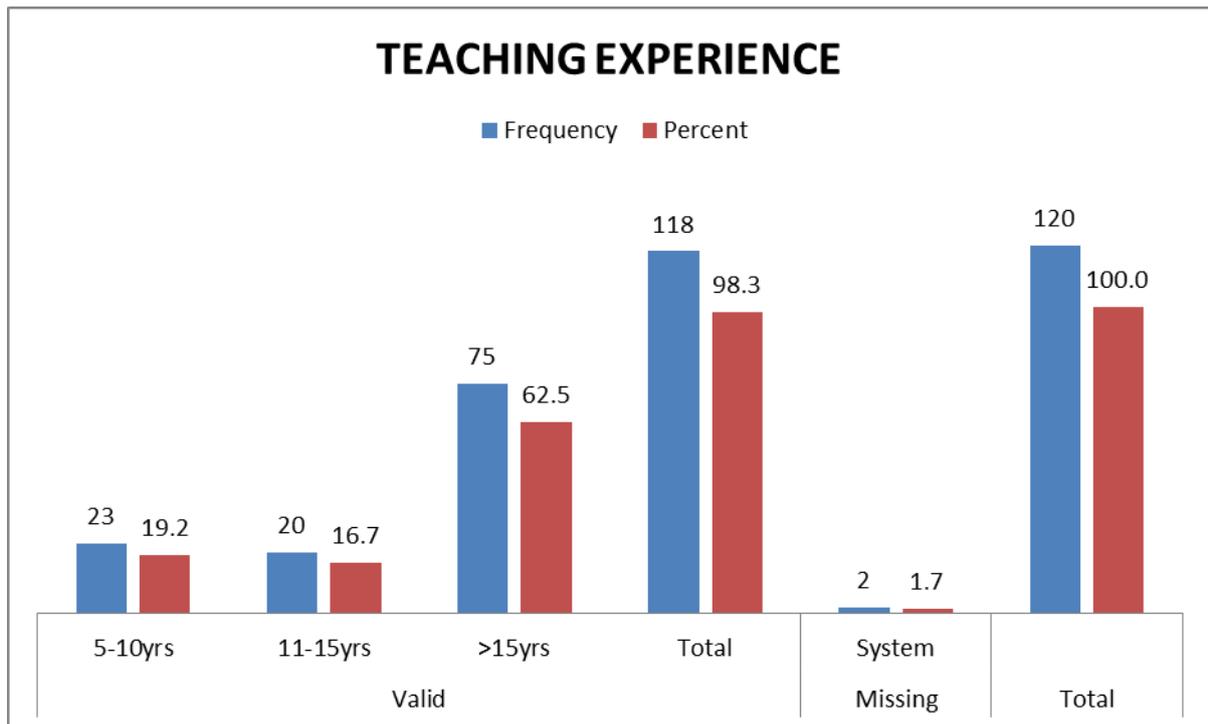
**Figure 4.3: Graphic illustration of the qualifications of the respondents**

Table 4.3 and Figure 4.3 show that the largest population is that of junior degree holders, totalling 59,2%. All the respondents are qualified to teach at high schools.

#### 4.3.1.4 Teaching experience of the respondents

**Table 4.4 Teaching experience of the respondents**

Experience	Frequency	Percentage
5 – 10 years	23	19.2
11 – 15 years	20	16.7
➤ 15 years	75	62.3
Total	118	98.3
Missing	2	1.7



**Figure 4.4: Graphic illustration of the teaching experience of the respondents**

The data in Table 4.4 and Figure 4.4 show that a significant proportion of the respondents (98,3%) had teaching experience of more than 10 years, while 19,2% of the teachers had teaching experience of 5 to 10 years. Two respondents did not indicate their teaching experience.

The above demographic data prove that all the respondents have filled in and returned the questionnaires. The population comprises both female and male teachers who have the requested teaching experience of more than three years at their respective schools. The next section is devoted to the views of respondents regarding the presence of leadership practices and prevalence of school culture that supports satisfactory academic performance.

#### **4.3.2 Views of principals and teachers on the presence of leadership practices and school culture that supports high academic performance**

In Chapter 2 it has been pointed out that the leadership practices of school principals could be classified into three leadership functions, namely *setting direction*, *developing people* and *developing the organisation* (cf. 2.4.4). The four dimensions of school culture were also presented as *professional orientation*, *organisational*

*structure, quality of the learning environment and student-centred focus* (cf. 2.2.4). The analysis of the results of the empirical research will be based on these functions and dimensions. Even though there are a number of items that address each heading in the questionnaire, the analysis and interpretation will not address those individual questions, as the statistically calculated scores given in the subsequent tables provide overall scores for each heading. The statistical data will form the basis of the discussion in this chapter.

The subsequent discussions are based on the mean scores provided in Table 4.5. The mean scores are compiled from the ratings given by the respondents on each item, indicating the extent to which the observed leadership practices occurred at the schools. The ratings are in the form of numbers indicating the degree to which the event occurred and each number represents the explanations given (cf. 4.3).

#### *4.3.2.1 Prevalence of leadership functions as observed by the principals and teachers*

Table 4.5 provides the scores on the three leadership functions: *setting direction, developing people* and *developing the organisation*. The interpretation of the scores, which is based on the five-point scale, will also indicate the extent to which each function is carried out at schools. In addition, the interpretation of the results will also reveal whether the perceptions and observations made by teachers would be consistent with those of the principals.

- *Setting direction*

The mean score for the principals in this function is 4.0500, while that of the teachers is 3.5400. The principals consider themselves as to be setting direction often (often happening), while their teachers felt that the process of setting direction done sometimes (occasionally done).

- *Developing people*

The mean score for principals (4.3500) indicates that the function of developing people is done fairly well, while the teachers considered that this happened only occasionally (score was 3.5900) by the principals.

- *Developing the organisation*

Principals consider this dimension as an area in which leadership practices are applied well. It is the leadership function with the highest mean score (4.4500). Teachers have also scored the highest in this function with a mean of 3.6000. Although the dimension was rated highly by both groups, teachers still consider the function as happening occasionally.

The statistical scores suggest that principals consider their best leadership practice to be developing the organisation, with a mean score of 4.4500, followed by the *function of developing people*, which scored 4.3500, and lastly the function of *setting direction*, scoring 4.0500. The scores could be interpreted as indicating that principals largely view themselves as performing fairly well in their leadership practices as indicated in the scores that are higher than 4. On the other hand, teachers consider their principals as fulfilling leadership functions occasionally, scoring higher than 3. The teachers also ordered the leadership practices the same way their principals did, indicating that principals performed well in developing the organisation (3.6500), followed by the functions of *developing people* (3.5900) and *setting direction* (3.5400).

The above statistical data show that principals rate their performance of leadership practices higher than the teachers do. This observation is confirmed by the overall mean score for the three leadership functions as observed by the principals, calculated as:

$$\frac{4.0500+4.3500 + 4.4500}{3} = 4.2833$$

The overall mean for the three dimensions as observed by the teachers is

$$\frac{3.5400 + 3.5900 + 3.6500}{3} = 3.5933$$

The overall mean of 4.2833 for the three leadership functions indicates that the principals thought that leadership practices at their schools were adequate. The teachers, on the other hand, held a different view and thought their principals performed these functions only occasionally, as indicated by the overall mean score of 3.5933.

Although the ratings given by the principals and the teachers differ, the extent to which the functions are rated proves that the functions are fulfilled sufficiently at schools. The two overall mean scores of approximately 4, which indicates that the practices are taking place fairly often.

#### *4.3.2.2. Prevalence of school culture as observed by principals and teachers*

The culture at schools has been observed, based on the following school culture dimensions: *professional orientation*, *organisational structure*, the *quality of learning environment* and *student-centred focus*. The scoring also indicates the extent to which the dimensions exist in the schools.

- *Professional orientation*

According to the mean score of 4.0500, the principals considered this area as being performed fairly well at schools. The teachers, on the other hand rated practices in this dimension as only taking place occasionally (mean 3.6667).

- *Organisational structure*

Both the principals and teachers rated this dimension as only average, with mean scores of 3.9000 and 3.6162, respectively.

- *Quality of the learning environment*

Both principals and teachers rated this dimension as taking place occasionally, as indicated by their scores of 3.9000 and 3.5758, respectively.

- *Student-centred focus*

The principals' mean score of 4.6000 and the teachers' mean score of 4.0505 indicate that the cultural issues in this dimension are adequate.

The principals rated the prevalence of school culture that supports high academic performance higher than their teachers did. The principals considered the culture in the dimension of *student-centred focus* (4.6000) and *professional orientation* (4.0500) as fairly strong. On the other hand, teachers consider culture to be the strongest in issues regarding *student-centred focus*, with a score of 4.0505, while

other dimensions such as *professional orientation* (3.6667), *organisational structure* (3.6162) and *quality of the learning environment* (3.5758) were considered to be only average.

The following are the overall means calculated from the scores as provided in Table 4.5 below:

The overall scores for principals are

$$\frac{4.0500 + 3.9000 + 3.9000 + 4.6000}{4} = 4.1125$$

The overall mean score for teachers is

$$\frac{3.6667 + 3.6162 + 3.5758 + 4.0505}{4} = 3.7274$$

According to these overall mean scores, the principals considered school cultural dimensions to be practised regularly at schools, while teachers rated these cultural dimensions only average. The two overall mean scores could be approximated to 4, confirming that school culture prevails to some extent at schools. Both the principals and teachers ordered the dimensions the same way; firstly, *student-centred focus*, *professional orientation*, *organisational structure* and lastly, *quality of learning environment*.

The following table illustrates the mean scores of principals and teachers on the presence of leadership practices and prevalence of school culture conducive to high academic performance.

**Table 4.5 Statistical mean scores of the views of principals and teachers on the presence of leadership practices and school culture**

Leader		Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Score	Principal	20	4.2500	.63867	.14281
	Teacher	100	3.5000	.85870	.08587
SetDirect	Principal	20	4.0500	.82558	.18460
	Teacher	100	3.5400	1.08637	.10864
DevPeople	Principal	20	4.3500	.58714	.13129
	Teacher	100	3.5900	1.06453	.10645
DevOrg	Principal	20	4.4500	.75915	.16975
	Teacher	100	3.6500	1.08595	.10860
ProOrient	Principal	20	4.0500	.82558	.18460
	Teacher	99	3.6667	.98974	.09947
OrgStr	Principal	20	3.9000	1.07115	.23952
	Teacher	99	3.6162	1.05663	.10620
QLEnvir	Principal	20	3.9000	.85224	.19057
	Teacher	99	3.5758	1.00093	.10060
SCFocus	Principal	20	4.6000	.68056	.15218
	Teacher	99	4.0505	.98327	.09882

Based on the findings in Table 4.5, the principals observed that both the leadership functions (overall mean 4.2500) and school culture dimensions (overall mean 4.1125) were practised adequately at schools. Teachers also confirmed that the prevalence of these leadership functions (overall mean 3.5933) and school culture dimensions (overall mean 3.7274) existed at schools to some extent. While acknowledging that both the principals and teachers confirmed that the presence of leadership practices and school culture conducive to high academic performance at schools, they differed on the extent to which these practices exist at the schools. Hence, the difference in scoring necessitates the need to determine how significant the difference is statistically.

### **4.3.3 Statistical significance of the prevalence of leadership practices and school culture as observed by principals and teachers**

Statistical analysis of data attaches significance and value to the data and conclusions made regarding the study. In this study, the t-test for independent samples has been calculated to assess whether the differences portrayed in the means scores for various groups are statistically significant (Johnson & Christensen, 2008:515-516). For the means of samples to be credible, the statistic value (p value), which predicts the probability of variables compared has to be less or equal to 0.05 ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) (Maree, 2007:207) for it to reject the null hypothesis, which assumes the groups to be the same. The t-test is best suited for a population whose variables display normal distributions (Maree, 2007:226). The p-value is also dependent on the sample size as, for a large population a small change in the mean may translate into a big statistical significance. In this study, the t-test values have been calculated for the various groups, as shown below.

**Table 4.6 T-test for independent samples of principals and teachers on the presence of leadership practices and school culture**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
TotalScore	Equal variances assumed	4.439	.037	3.701	118	.000	.75000	.20263	.34874	1.15126
	Equal variances not assumed			4.501	34.361	.000	.75000	.16664	.41148	1.08852
SetDirect	Equal variances assumed	6.528	.012	1.985	118	.049	.51000	.25689	.00128	1.01872
	Equal variances not assumed			2.381	33.664	.023	.51000	.21420	.07454	.94546
DevPeople	Equal variances assumed	6.854	.010	3.093	118	.002	.76000	.24572	.27342	1.24658
	Equal variances not assumed			4.496	48.197	.000	.76000	.16902	.42019	1.09981
DevOrg	Equal variances assumed	3.543	.062	3.139	118	.002	.80000	.25482	.29539	1.30461
	Equal variances not assumed			3.970	36.559	.000	.80000	.20152	.39152	1.20848
ProOrient	Equal variances assumed	2.459	.120	1.620	117	.108	.38333	.23657	-.08518	.85185
	Equal variances not assumed			1.828	31.126	.077	.38333	.20970	-.04428	.81095
OrgStr	Equal variances assumed	.992	.321	1.093	117	.277	.28384	.25962	-.23033	.79800
	Equal variances not assumed			1.083	27.002	.288	.28384	.26200	-.25375	.82142
QLEnvir	Equal variances assumed	.737	.392	1.352	117	.179	.32424	.23984	-.15075	.79923
	Equal variances not assumed			1.505	30.604	.143	.32424	.21549	-.11548	.76397
SCFocus	Equal variances assumed	.921	.339	2.383	117	.019	.54949	.23063	.09274	1.00625
	Equal variances not assumed			3.028	37.124	.004	.54949	.18145	.18189	.91710

As a result, in Table 4.6, the values in column 1 are large; the variances are assumed equal; and the associated readings are used to determine the p-values in the column 5 (two-tailed significance). The table provides information regarding the

presence of statistically significant differences between the principals and teachers' observations. The presence of the difference is always predicted by the p-value, which should be less than 0.05.

In Table 4.7, the p-values have been taken from column 5 in Table 4.6, as illustrated below:

**Table 4.7 The p-values for the sections of the questionnaire**

Setting direction	0.049
Developing people	0.002
Developing the organisation	0.002
Professional orientations	0.077
Organisational structure	0.277
Quality of learning environmental	0.179
Student-centred focus	0.019
Total score	0.000

Although the total score ( $p=0.000$ ) confirms the presence of a significant difference between the teachers and principals in the way they observe the leadership functions and the dimension of school culture, some sections such as professional orientation, organisational structure and quality of learning environment reflect no significant difference according to the p-values, which are greater than 0.05. In the case where no significant difference is reflected, teachers and principals stated that the practices were carried out the same way, even though the mean scores reflected a difference. In other cases where statistically significant differences are observed, this indicates that the principals and teachers did not agree on the degree to which such practices occurred at schools. In the sections where there is a significant difference, the principals rated the leadership practices higher than the teachers did. The presence of a significant difference is confirmed by the mean scores in Table 4.5, where the principals rated themselves as performing the practices above average, while the teachers reported that the practices were perceived only occasionally.

The difference in scoring provided by the principals and teachers may have resulted from the perception and perspectives from which the principals and teachers

observed the leadership practices. Teachers and principals carryout different leadership roles at the schools, as such, their understanding, knowledge and appreciation of the leadership practices may differ. The difference in scoring observed only indicates the degree to which those leadership practices and school culture prevail at the schools. The scores also confirm the presence of the leadership practices and the culture at the schools. The subsequent section will attempt to make a comparative analysis and interpretation of the views of respondents at poorly performing schools and at schools performing well.

#### **4.3.4 Comparison of the views of respondents on the prevalence of the leadership practices and school culture with regard to schools performing well and schools performing poorly**

The schools that were investigated were grouped into two groups: poorly performing schools and schools performing well. The results displayed in Table 4.8 below are the observations of teachers and principals within each group.

**Table 4.8 A comparison of views of respondents on the prevalence of leadership practices and school culture as observed at schools performing poorly as well as at schools performing well**

School		Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
TotalScore	Poor	66	3.5152	.88130	.10848
	Good	54	3.7593	.84530	.11503
SetDirect	Poor	66	3.6667	1.04268	.12834
	Good	54	3.5741	1.09203	.14861
DevPeople	Poor	66	3.6061	1.03595	.12752
	Good	54	3.8519	1.03536	.14090
DevOrg	Poor	66	3.6364	1.11819	.13764
	Good	54	3.9630	1.00870	.13727
ProOrient	Poor	65	3.6462	1.00671	.12487
	Good	54	3.8333	.92655	.12609
OrgStr	Poor	65	3.4769	1.09127	.13536
	Good	54	3.8889	.98415	.13393
QLEnvir	Poor	65	3.4308	1.03031	.12779
	Good	54	3.8704	.86975	.11836
SCFocus	Poor	65	3.9692	1.03031	.12779
	Good	54	4.3519	.82776	.11264

The analysis of the means in Table 4.8 above indicates that the respondents perceived a difference in leadership practices and the presence of school culture between poorly performing schools and schools performing satisfactorily. The total mean scores (3.7593 for respondents at good schools and 3.5152 for those at poorly performing schools) reflect little difference between the two groups of schools. The same pattern of narrow margin runs through all the subsections, where the principals' leadership practices and school culture are considered to occur only occasionally. An exception to the pattern is observed in two subsections: *setting direction* and *student-centred focus*. In setting direction, the mean for schools performing poorly (3.6667) is higher than that of the schools performing well (3.5741), even though the difference is small. A slightly bigger gap is observed in the dimension of student-centred focus, where the mean scores for poorly performing schools and schools performing well are 3.9692 and 4.3519, respectively.

Given that the classification of the schools was done based on their academic performance, which differed greatly, it could be assumed that the observation of the

presence of the leadership functions and the school culture and the extent to which they occur and prevail at schools would yield a considerable difference. On the contrary, in some instances, the poorly performing schools reflected higher scores than schools performing well; consequently indicating a need to analyse the responses of the teachers against their principals' within the groups further (poor vs. good). Although the mean scores in Table 4.8 reflect little difference between the two groups, it is also crucial to confirm how significant the scores are by computing the t-test for independent samples.

#### **4.3.5 The t-test analysis of the mean scores of observations according to poor performing schools and good performing schools**

The t-test analysis shown below determines whether mean scores provided in Table 4.8 are statistically significant:

**Table 4.9 The t-test analysis for schools performing poorly and schools performing well**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
TotalScore	Equal variances assumed	1.115	.293	-1.537	118	.127	-.24411	.15878	-.55854	.07032
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.544	115.015	.125	-.24411	.15811	-.55730	.06909
SetDirect	Equal variances assumed	.170	.681	.474	118	.637	.09259	.19544	-.29444	.47963
	Equal variances not assumed			.472	111.136	.638	.09259	.19636	-.29650	.48168
DevPeople	Equal variances assumed	.056	.814	-1.293	118	.198	-.24579	.19004	-.62213	.13054
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.293	113.366	.198	-.24579	.19003	-.62226	.13068
DevOrg	Equal variances assumed	2.317	.131	-1.663	118	.099	-.32660	.19641	-.71555	.06235
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.680	116.843	.096	-.32660	.19439	-.71158	.05838
ProOrient	Equal variances assumed	1.359	.246	-1.047	117	.297	-.18718	.17883	-.54134	.16698
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.055	115.743	.294	-.18718	.17745	-.53866	.16430
OrgStr	Equal variances assumed	2.855	.094	-2.143	117	.034	-.41197	.19225	-.79271	-.03123
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.164	116.185	.033	-.41197	.19041	-.78910	-.03483
QLEnvir	Equal variances assumed	2.659	.106	-2.485	117	.014	-.43960	.17693	-.79000	-.08920
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.524	116.964	.013	-.43960	.17418	-.78456	-.09464
SCFocus	Equal variances assumed	.526	.470	-2.201	117	.030	-.38262	.17381	-.72684	-.03840
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.246	116.883	.027	-.38262	.17035	-.72000	-.04524

According to the analysis in Table 4.9, the variance has been assumed equal, as presented in column 1 and the corresponding p-values in column 5 are used. For the total score, the  $p=0.127$  indicates the absence of a statistically significant difference between the groups. Although the sections of the leadership functions in the questionnaire do not provide statistically significant values, an exception is observed in the last three sections of the school culture dimensions. The following dimensions, organisational structure ( $p=0.034$ ), the quality of learning environment ( $p=0.014$ ) and student-centred focus dimension ( $p=0.030$ ), confirm the presence of a significant difference between poorly performing schools and schools performing well. The presence of a significant difference between the groups in the dimensions of school culture – while the opposite results are obtained for the leadership functions – is a significant finding, which consequently leads to further analysis of the data. This warrants separating teachers from principals to gain a better understanding of the research problem.

It is also observed that in setting direction ( $p=0.637$ ) and professional orientation ( $p=0.294$ ) strongly refute the presence of a significant difference between poorly performing schools and schools performing well. Setting direction requires the principal to provide a vision for the school and advocate its acceptance by all, while working cooperatively with the staff (cf. 2.3 and 2.4). It may not have been easy for teachers to isolate activities in this function, as the promotion of vision relies more on the ability of the school principal to get involved. Professional orientation involves assumptions, beliefs and perceptions of teachers concerning their profession (cf. 2.2.4). This area deals with the deepest level of culture and requires observation of the school processes, while interacting with the community members. These areas present a challenge that could translate into a condition for further research.

#### **4.3.6 Views of teachers and principals on the prevalence of leadership practices and school culture as observed at schools performing poorly as well as at schools performing well**

The analysis according to the groups of teachers and principals is the consequence of the results in Tables 4.8 and 4.9 where the mean scores for schools performing poorly do not distinguish clearly between the given groups. The subsequent analysis

is intended to identify the group that could be responsible for the absence of a considerable difference between the two groups. The following table illustrates the mean scores of teachers.

**Table 4.10 The mean scores of the responses of teachers classified under poorly performing schools and schools performing well**

School		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
TotalScore	Poor	55	3.3818	.87116	.11747
	Good	45	3.6444	.82999	.12373
SetDirect	Poor	55	3.6000	1.06458	.14355
	Good	45	3.4667	1.12006	.16697
DevPeople	Poor	55	3.4727	1.06900	.14414
	Good	45	3.7333	1.05313	.15699
DevOrg	Poor	55	3.4727	1.13618	.15320
	Good	45	3.8667	.99087	.14771
ProOrient	Poor	54	3.5556	1.04008	.14154
	Good	45	3.8000	.91949	.13707
OrgStr	Poor	54	3.3519	1.11858	.15222
	Good	45	3.9333	.88933	.13257
QLEnvir	Poor	54	3.3704	1.05144	.14308
	Good	45	3.8222	.88649	.13215
SCFocus	Poor	54	3.8704	1.04694	.14247
	Good	45	4.2667	.86340	.12871

The total mean scores for teachers reflected in Table 4.10 rate the leadership practices and the school culture at 3.3818 for schools performing poorly and at 3.6444 for schools performing well. These scores in Table 4.10 show a difference of 0.2626, which is higher than the score of 0.2441 obtained from Table 4.8. The larger difference between the scores may indicate that leadership practices are better at schools performing well than at poorly performing schools. In all the subsections, schools performing well reflect higher scores than those of the poorly performing schools. An exception is observed only in the function of setting direction where the score for poorly performing schools (3.6000) is larger than that of schools performing well (3.4667). The mean scores for poorly performing schools are close to 3 on the scale, indicating that some leadership practices do take place occasionally. On the other hand, at schools performing well, the scores are close to 4, implying that the

practices are carried out fairly. The following table illustrates the mean scores of principals according to their respective groups.

**Table 4.11 The mean scores for principals classified according to poorly performing schools and schools performing well**

School		frequency	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Score	Poor	11	4.1818	.60302	.18182
	Good	9	4.3333	.70711	.23570
Setting Direction	Poor	11	4.0000	.89443	.26968
	Good	9	4.1111	.78174	.26058
Developing People	Poor	11	4.2727	.46710	.14084
	Good	9	4.4444	.72648	.24216
Developing Organisation	Poor	11	4.4545	.52223	.15746
	Good	9	4.4444	1.01379	.33793
Professional Orientation	Poor	11	4.0909	.70065	.21125
	Good	9	4.0000	1.00000	.33333
Organisational Structure	Poor	11	4.0909	.70065	.21125
	Good	9	3.6667	1.41421	.47140
Quality of Learning Environment	Poor	11	3.7273	.90453	.27273
	Good	9	4.1111	.78174	.26058
Student Centred Focus	Poor	11	4.4545	.82020	.24730
	Good	9	4.7778	.44096	.14699

From Table 4.11 it is clear that the scores for both groups of principals are almost in the same range (poorly performing schools = 4.181; well-performing schools = 4.3333); implying that the principals at poorly performing schools regard themselves as fulfilling their leadership tasks as highly as the principals at schools performing well. The total mean scores give a difference of 0.1515, which is lower than 0.2441, the value reflected in Table 4.8. The value does also not compare favourably with the difference obtained for the teachers' scores (0.2626). It is also noted that the gap between the observations made by the teachers at schools performing poorly and schools performing well is bigger than that of the principals at those respective schools; a situation which may imply that teachers realise the difference in the performance of leadership practices between the schools, while principals hold a

different view. It may also be noted that observations of the teachers at the poorly performing schools differ greatly from those of their principals. A close comparison of the results from Tables 4.10 and 4.11 is provided in the subsequent table.

**Table 4.12 A comparison of statistical means of teachers and their principals**

Activity	Poorly performing schools			Well-performing schools		
	Principals	Teachers	Difference	Principals	Teachers	Difference
Total score	4.1818	3.3818	<b>0.8</b>	4.3333	3.6444	<b>0.6889</b>
SetDir	4.0000	3.6000	<b>0.4</b>	4.1111	3.4667	<b>0.6444</b>
devPeople	4.2727	3.4727	<b>0.8</b>	4.4444	3.7333	<b>0.7111</b>
DevOrg	4.4545	3.4727	<b>0.9818</b>	4.4444	3.8667	<b>0.5777</b>
ProOrien	4.0909	3.5556	<b>0.5353</b>	4.0000	3.8000	<b>0.2000</b>
OrgStr	4.0909	3.3519	<b>0.739</b>	3.6667	3.9333	<b>0.2666</b>
QLEnvir	3.773	3.3704	<b>0.4026</b>	4.1111	3.8222	<b>0.2889</b>
SCFocus	4.4545	3.8704	<b>0.5841</b>	4.7778	4.2667	<b>0.5111</b>

As shown in Table 4.12, the analysis and interpretation of the results for poorly performing schools – the third column – provides the difference between the principals’ and the teachers’ scores. The values in this column reflect a big difference, which might imply that principals (column 1) rated their leadership practices highly, while teachers held an opposite perception. The wide gap may also demonstrate that the principals and their teachers observe the same phenomenon differently. The gap between the views of principals and teachers at schools performing well is not as wide as is in the first case.

In all the sections, teachers at schools performing well rated the practices much higher than their counterparts at poorly performing schools did, except in the function, *setting direction*. It could also be inferred that the scores of teachers (columns 2 and 5) provide a clear distinction between poorly performing schools and schools performing well; where the scores in column 5 are consistently much higher

than those in column 2. An exception to this pattern is observed only in the function, *setting direction*.

A consistent pattern fails to prevail in the case of the principals. In the sections below, the principals at poorly performing schools fulfil their leadership functions better than their counterparts do. A wider gap exists between principals' views and those of their teachers (columns 3 and 6):

Developing the Organisation	0.9818	0.5777
Professional Orientation	0.5353	0.2
Organisational Structure	0.739	0.2666

The irregular pattern of scores observed on the part of the principals could have led to the absence of a statistically significant difference between poorly performing schools and schools performing well. This inconsistent pattern could also indicate the need to investigate what else influences the principals to behave in this manner.

The results in Table 4.12 also indicate a difference in the manner the teachers and principals observed the leadership practices and the school culture at the same schools. A level of consistency exists regarding the way teachers observed the leadership practices of their principals. Teachers indicated that the practices were performed better at schools performing well than at poorly performing schools. On the other hand, scores of principals are higher than those of their teachers are, but principals' scores do not discriminate between poorly and well-performing schools. The comparison between principals and their teachers could also inform the research on the respondents that could respond well to the questionnaire in future.

#### **4.3.7. The t-test analysis of the means of teachers and principals' observations based on Tables 4.10 and 4.11**

The following table illustrates the statistical significance of the mean scores of teachers, as provided in Table 4.10.

**Table 4.13 The t-test analysis of the observations of teachers**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
TotalScore	Equal variances assumed	.649	.422	1.532	98	.129	-.26263	.17144	-.60285	.07760
	Equal variances not assumed			1.539	95.709	.127	-.26263	.17061	-.60129	.07604
SetDirect	Equal variances assumed	.167	.684	.609	98	.544	.13333	.21907	-.30140	.56806
	Equal variances not assumed			.606	92.089	.546	.13333	.22019	-.30398	.57065
DevPeople	Equal variances assumed	.127	.723	1.221	98	.225	-.26061	.21345	-.68419	.16298
	Equal variances not assumed			1.223	94.648	.224	-.26061	.21313	-.68374	.16253
DevOrg	Equal variances assumed	3.381	.069	1.826	98	.071	-.39394	.21576	-.82210	.03422
	Equal variances not assumed			1.851	97.576	.067	-.39394	.21281	-.81628	.02840
ProOrient	Equal variances assumed	1.832	.179	1.227	97	.223	-.24444	.19926	-.63992	.15103
	Equal variances not assumed			1.241	96.641	.218	-.24444	.19703	-.63551	.14662
OrgStr	Equal variances assumed	6.183	.015	2.822	97	.006	-.58148	.20608	-.99049	-.17247
	Equal variances not assumed			2.881	96.806	.005	-.58148	.20186	-.98212	-.18084
QLEnvir	Equal variances assumed	2.055	.155	2.284	97	.025	-.45185	.19782	-.84447	-.05924
	Equal variances not assumed			2.320	96.982	.022	-.45185	.19477	-.83842	-.06528
SCFocus	Equal variances assumed	.586	.446	2.028	97	.045	-.39630	.19539	-.78408	-.00851
	Equal variances not assumed			2.064	96.993	.042	-.39630	.19200	-.77736	-.01523

As indicated earlier, the t-test analysis is calculated to show whether the results are statistically significant (c.f. 4.3.3). In Table 4.13, the total score is  $p=0.129$ , which shows no statistically significant difference between the teachers at schools performing poorly and at schools performing well. However, the following sections reflect a significant difference: organisational structure ( $p=0.006$ ), quality of the learning environment ( $p=0.025$ ) and student-centred focus ( $p=0.042$ ). The values in these sections compare favourably with the values in Table 4.9, which provides the difference between the poorly performing schools and well-performing schools. Although the statistical calculation rejects the presence of a significant difference with regard to developing the organisation, the value of  $p=0.071$  is close to 0.05, which indicates the presence of a difference. What remains to show is how the scores of the principals are statistically significant.

The following table illustrates the statistical significance of the scores of principals reflected in Table 4.11.

**Table 4.14 The t-test analysis of observations of principals**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
TotalScore	Equal variances assumed	.835	.373	-.518	18	.611	-.15152	.29276	-.76657	.46354
	Equal variances not assumed			-.509	15.861	.618	-.15152	.29768	-.78302	.47999
SetDirect	Equal variances assumed	.031	.863	-.292	18	.774	-.11111	.38034	-.91017	.68795
	Equal variances not assumed			-.296	17.893	.770	-.11111	.37500	-.89930	.67708
DevPeople	Equal variances assumed	3.486	.078	-.641	18	.530	-.17172	.26809	-.73496	.39153
	Equal variances not assumed			-.613	13.126	.550	-.17172	.28014	-.77633	.43289
DevOrg	Equal variances assumed	1.616	.220	.029	18	.977	.01010	.35056	-.72639	.74659
	Equal variances not assumed			.027	11.420	.979	.01010	.37281	-.80679	.82699
ProOrient	Equal variances assumed	.419	.526	.239	18	.814	.09091	.38064	-.70878	.89059
	Equal variances not assumed			.230	13.920	.821	.09091	.39464	-.75596	.93778
OrgStr	Equal variances assumed	4.755	.043	.876	18	.393	.42424	.48443	-.59350	1.44199
	Equal variances not assumed			.821	11.175	.429	.42424	.51658	-.71056	1.55905
QLEnvir	Equal variances assumed	1.203	.287	-1.002	18	.330	-.38384	.38301	-1.18851	.42084
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.018	17.922	.322	-.38384	.37720	-1.17656	.40888
SCFocus	Equal variances assumed	5.678	.028	-1.060	18	.303	-.32323	.30490	-.96379	.31733
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.124	15.842	.278	-.32323	.28768	-.93359	.28712

All the p-values reflected in Table 4.14 (column 5) are greater than 0.05, confirming the absence of any statistically significant difference between the observations made by the principals at poorly performing schools and schools performing well. The information validates the observation made about the mean scores in Table 4.11. Principals at poorly performing schools regarded their leadership practices and the prevalence of school culture to be as good as those of principals at schools performing well are. By contrast, the values obtained from the teachers' observations (Table 4.13) show better p-values (Table 4.14), as it approaches a p-value of 0.05. The results reflected in Table 4.14 provide a clue about the group that could have contributed to the absence of a statistically significant difference in Table 4.9. The problem may be attributed to the observations made by the principals, more especially at poorly performing schools where, in some cases, their scores are higher than those of their counterparts, as illustrated below:

**Table 4.15 A comparison of the p-values taken from tables 4.9, 4.13 and 4.14, summarising the main findings**

	Poor vs Good (Table 4.9)	Teachers (Table 4.13)	Principals (Table 4.14)
Total score	0.127	0.129	0.611
Setting direction	0.637	0.544	0.774
Developing people	0.198	0.225	0.530
Developing the organisation	0.099	0.071	0.977
Professional orientation	0.297	0.223	0.814
Organisational structure	0.034	0.006	0.393
Quality of the learning environment	0.014	0.025	0.330
Student-centred focus	0.027	0.042	0.303

Table 4.15 above provides a summarised comparison of the p-value score for the different groups. The scores for teachers are consistent with the scores reflected in the column 2 (poor vs. good), while the scores for principals are the largest of all the scores provided in the table. The larger the p-value, the stronger it negates the presence of any difference between the groups observed. Teachers in areas such as *student-centred focus*, *quality of the learning environment* and *organisational structure* confirm the presence of a statistically significant difference between poorly

performing schools and schools performing well. The scores in Table 4.9 (poor vs. good) are a combined scoring of both the principals and teachers regarding leadership practices and school culture. The inconsistent scoring between principals and their teachers may have affected the scores in column 1 in the table above; hence, providing the total score, which reflects no significant difference between the two groups in Table 4.9.

#### **4.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Even though the total scores do not confirm the presence of a statistically significant difference, there is evidence that teachers could be a reliable group to appraise their principals. The teachers' scores are consistent and in some areas confirm the presence of a difference between poorly performing schools and schools performing well. The mean scores obtained from the results are approximately 4: indicating that school principals adhere fairly well to leadership practices.

The subsequent chapter will provide the findings, recommendations and conclusions made regarding the study.

## **CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings and make recommendations and conclusions based on the analysis of the research results presented in the previous chapter. In addition, an attempt to connect the empirical findings with the literature outlined in Chapter 2 will be made.

### **5.2 FINDINGS**

The schools that were assigned to the sample population were drawn from the schools in the district of Maseru in the central region of Lesotho. The sample comprised 20 out of 40 schools that had constantly been entering students for COSC examinations since 2009. The schools were purposively chosen and allocated to two groups based on their academic performance. The cut-off point that separated the groupings was set as the average score of 60%, calculated from COSC examination results. Eleven schools were grouped as poorly performing schools, of which nine had an average score ranging from 29% to 50%, while the other two had scores of 57% and 59%. Nine schools were grouped as well- performing, three of them had scored more than 80%; two had a mean score of more than 70%; and the other four had an average score above 60%, but less than 70%. The study could not be extended beyond the district of Maseru because of financial constraints.

#### **5.2.1 Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework for establishing the leadership practices of school principals aimed at creating a school culture conducive to satisfactory academic performance has been outlined in Chapter 2. It portrayed leadership as a complex concept, which in most cases is confused with management; however, the framework delineates leadership practices and categorises them into the following leadership functions:

- Setting direction;

- Developing people; and
- Developing organisation.

The literature suggests that leadership practices culminate in the creation of culture and it is through the initiative of school principals that certain practices permeate and become embedded in the culture of schools (cf. 2.3). The leadership practices aimed at establishing a culture conducive to high academic performance are mediated by the following dimensions of a school culture:

- Professional orientation;
- Organisational structure;
- Quality of learning environment; and
- Student-centred focus.

Based on this theoretical framework, the findings, recommendation and conclusions will be discussed.

### **5.2.2 Findings on the prevalence of the leadership practices at schools**

In this study, a questionnaire was distributed amongst the teachers and principals to determine the prevalence of leadership practice and culture at schools as defined in the section above (cf. 5.2.1). The study also aimed at finding whether leadership practices and school culture prevailing at poorly performing schools were different to those that prevailed at well-performing schools. The questionnaire items were analysed using the SPSS package and the results are shown in tables in Chapter 4. As a starting point, the discussion on the findings is guided by the statistical results in Tables 4.5 and 4.6, summarised in Table 5.1 below:

**Table 5.1 A summary of the responses of principals and teachers concerning the prevalence of leadership practices and school culture conducive to high academic performance**

	Mean scores		p-value	Mean difference
	Principals	Teachers		
<b>Total Score</b>	<b>4.2500</b>	<b>3.5000</b>	<b>0.0000</b>	<b>0.75000</b>
Setting direction	4.0500	3.5400	0.049	0.51000
Developing people	4.3500	3.5900	0.002	0.76000
Developing organisation	4.4500	3.6500	0.002	0.80000
Professional orientation	4.0500	3.6667	0.108	0.38333
Organisational structure	3.9000	3.6162	0.277	0.28384
Quality of the learning environment	3.9000	3.5758	0.179	0.32424
Student-centred focus	4.6000	4.0505	0.019	0.54949

The analysis reflected in Table 5.1 provides a summary of the results of responses of principals and teachers on the prevalence and the extent to which leadership practices and school culture occur at schools. The leadership functions and school culture dimensions have been mentioned above (cf. 5.2.1) and explained in details in Chapter 2 (cf. 2.4.4 and 2.2.4). The total mean scores of 4.25 and 3.5 for the principals and the teachers, respectively, are high scores, which confirms that the principals uphold leadership practices and the presence of a school culture conducive to high academic performance. Both principals and teachers consider the cultural dimension of *student-centred focus* as prevailing. On the other hand, the principals were of the opinion that their initiative could improve regarding issues of *organisational structure* (mean 3.9) and *quality of the learning environment* (mean 3.9)

The scores on the other hand, support the presence of significant differences ( $p=0.0000$ ) between the principals and teachers' observations: the degree to which the leadership practices and school culture prevail was observed differently by the groups. The principals considered themselves as performing their leadership practices fairly well (mean 4.25) in order to nurture good school culture, while teachers held an opposite view, namely that principals only upheld leadership practices occasionally (mean 3.5). It is a concern to have two groups observing the

same phenomenon to have such a diverse view. However, principals and teachers occupy different positions in the school leadership hierarchy. Principals play a leadership role, while teachers act as followers who are constantly influenced by the principal (cf. 2.3.2). Therefore, the differences may be attributed to the fact that they observe and experience the leadership processes from different perspectives.

Although principals differ from teachers in terms of leadership roles, it is also a concern that the principals consistently awarded higher ratings than the teachers did in all instances. The consistency in awarding scores between the principals and teachers may indicate, among others, a lack of understanding of the leadership functions by either the principals or the teachers. One is inclined to suspect that the involvement of teachers in decision-making and encouragement to take up leadership roles may not be sufficient at schools. As a result, the teachers may lack the understanding and appreciation of leadership functions practised at their schools.

Another view might be that since principals are held accountable for the performance of their schools, they might have decided to portray a good image of themselves (cf. 2.3.2). A defensive attitude is portrayed well in the first three sections of the questionnaire: *setting direction*, *developing people* and *developing the organisation*, in which the items directly interrogate the principals' actions on their leadership practices. It is in these sections where the principals differed greatly from their teachers. In other sections, where the questions are less direct and investigated the processes of *culture within the organisation*, the views of both groups are almost similar, except regarding student-centred focus.

### **5.2.3 Comparative findings on the leadership practices and school culture prevailing at poorly performing schools as against those at well-performing schools**

This section presents the findings based on the comparison of the views of respondents on the leadership practices of principals and the school culture prevailing at poorly performing schools as well as at well-performing schools. The two groups of schools comprised both principals and teachers. In an attempt to gain more clarity, further analysis was undertaken by subdividing the groups to find the views of principals and teachers separately within their respective groups.

The following summary of the results indicate conditions prevailing at poorly performing schools and those at well-performing schools, as presented in Chapter 4, Tables 4.8 and 4.9.

**Table 5.2 A summary of the mean scores and t-test analysis for poorly performing schools and well-performing schools as derived from Tables 4.8 and 4.9**

	Mean scores for Schools		p-value	Mean difference
	Poor	Good		
<b>Total Score</b>	<b>3.5152</b>	<b>3.7593</b>	<b>0.127</b>	<b>-0.24411</b>
Setting direction	3.6667	3.5741	0.637	0.09259
Developing people	3.6061	3.8519	0.198	-0.24579
Developing organisation	3.6364	3.9630	0.099	-0.32660
Professional orientation	3.6462	3.8333	0.294	-0.18718
Organisational structure	3.4769	3.8889	0.034	-0.41197
Quality of the learning environment	3.4308	3.8704	0.014	-0.43960
Student-centred focus	3.9692	4.3519	0.030	-0.38262

In Table 5.2 above, the observations of respondents from poorly performing schools and schools performing well on the prevalence of leadership practices that support a school culture conducive to high academic performance provide little difference in terms of the mean scores, which range from 0.09259 to 0.43960 in column 4. According to the scores, the practices are listed as follows in order of priority:

1. Student-centred focus;
2. Developing the organisation;
3. Professional orientation;
4. Developing the organisation;
5. Organisational structure;
6. Quality of the learning environment; and
7. Setting direction.

The narrow gap between the two groups of schools does not indicate significant differences, as indicated by the  $p=0.127$  for the total score. The absence of significant differences implies that neither of the two groups considers itself performing less than the other does. The fact that all the scores, except in *setting direction*, for schools performing well are set higher than those of poorly performing schools, which indicates that by using a bigger population, the study might possibly yield better results. It has been indicated that the t-test analysis works better with larger populations (cf. 4.3.3).

Even though the scores for the well-performing schools are slightly higher than those of poorly performing schools, the leadership practices in setting direction provide a different pattern in which the scores display a reverse order. The leadership practices defined in this function are difficult to decipher, as they require the principals to state the vision for the organisation clearly and advocate its acceptance by involving teachers in the development of the mission and goals intended to realise the vision. If such interaction does not occur, it becomes difficult for teachers to predict the intentions and the direction the principals wish to take for their schools (cf. 2.2.5.1, 2.3, 2.4.3 and 2.4.4). It seems that in setting direction the practices are not so pronounced that teachers and principals could not isolate them with ease.

Professional orientation is another area that has proved difficult to assess. Its  $p=0.294$  indicates a strong rejection of the presence of a significant difference between the groups of schools. The assessment involved measuring issues related to underlying assumptions and beliefs of teachers in relation to how professional they are in guiding teaching and learning. It also measures the way teachers perceive themselves as professionals (cf. 2.2.3 and 2.2.4).

The absence of substantial differences regarding how leadership is practised at both groups of schools may also be an indication of a lack of understanding of what leadership entails at schools. For the two groups of schools, which display different academic performances, to observe the leadership processes the same way, while on the other hand admitting that the cultures at those schools are different, is a concern. The literature review in Chapter 2 asserts that the process of nurturing a school culture conducive to high academic performance is cultivated by the school

leadership, but in this case, it does not seem to be the case. Given that both groups suggest that the leadership practices are more or less taking place regularly (total score 3.5152 and 3.7593), this is an indication that principals and teachers need help to improve their leadership skills.

Despite the strong indication that the observations regarding leadership practices from the two groups were the same, other sections of school culture, such as *organisational structure* ( $p=0.034$ ), *quality of the learning environment* ( $p=0.014$ ) and *student-centred focus* ( $p=0.030$ ) provide evidence that these practices within these dimensions of school culture are better at schools performing well than at poorly performing schools, as indicated by the scores. The presence of a significant difference gives hope that further investigations can yield a substantial difference even in other sections of the leadership functions.

Further analysis was done to isolate the problem, which might have contributed to the results of the groups being the same. The subsequent analysis compares the observations of teachers and principals separately within their respective groups (poor vs. good).

**Table 5.3 A summary of separate statistical analysis made on teachers and principals classified under poorly performing schools and well-performing schools derived for Tables 4.10 to 4.15**

Activity	Teachers				Principals			
	Poor <i>mean</i>	Good <i>mean</i>	p- value	Mean difference	Poor <i>mean</i>	Good <i>mean</i>	p- value	Mean difference
<b>Total score</b>	<b>3.3818</b>	<b>3.6444</b>	<b>0.129</b>	<b>-0.26263</b>	<b>4.1818</b>	<b>4.3333</b>	<b>0.161</b>	<b>-0.15152</b>
SetDir	3.6000	3.4667	0.54	0.13333	4.0000	4.1111	0.774	-0.11111
devPeople	3.4727	3.7333	0.225	-0.26061	4.2727	4.4444	0.530	-0.17172
DevOrg	3.4727	3.8667	0.071	-0.39394	4.4545	4.4444	0.977	0.01010
ProOrien	3.5556	3.8000	0.223	-0.24444	4.0909	4.0000	0.814	0.09091
OrgStr	3.3519	3.9333	0.006	-0.58148	4.0909	3.6667	0.393	0.42424
QLEnvir	3.3704	3.8222	0.025	-0.45185	3.773	4.1111	0.330	-0.38384
SCFocus	3.8704	4.2667	0.045	-0.39630	4.4545	4.7778	0.303	-0.32323

From Table 5.3 it can be observed that none of the sections, according to the principals' observations, provide any statistically significant difference, indicating that leadership practices and school culture are considered the same by both groups of schools. It is further noted that the mean scores for principals do not provide a consistent pattern. In some sections, the scores for principals at poorly performing schools are higher than those of principals at well-performing schools (the scores referred to are indicated as positive in the last column). The inconsistency is observed in *developing the people*, *professional orientation* and *organisational structure*, while for teachers, inconsistency is observed in one section only, namely *setting direction*. In the analysis in Table 5.2, the scores for schools performing well

are rated higher than those of poorly performing schools. The same pattern of scores could be expected to prevail in the results in Table 5.3 for principals. Inconsistency of the results in Table 5.3 may indicate incompetency of principals at poorly performing schools in discharging leadership practices, a situation that may warrant further improvement of leadership skills.

The p-values calculated for the observations of teachers are lower than the corresponding p-values for the principals. In some cases the p-values translate to a significant difference between those of poorly performing schools and schools performing well, a condition that places teachers in a better position than principals for assessing the leadership practices of principals at schools. Even though the overall difference between the groups of teachers did not qualify as statistically significant, it does not mean that the findings bear no practical importance, given that the t-test analysis is set at a certain level of confidence (Maree, 2007:210). The little difference shown in the scores may translate to valuable information if further investigation within the groups themselves is done. The observations by the teachers provided better scores than those of the principals, an indication leading to the presence of the difference between well-performing and poorly performing schools.

The questionnaire that has been administered at schools interrogated the actions of principals and exposed them to the scrutiny of their teachers, more especially in the sections *setting direction*, *developing people* and *developing the organisation*. It may have induced a sense of defensiveness and protection of professional competencies by the principals, which is indicated in the higher scores they awarded to themselves, compared to those of the teachers. A defensive mood was further demonstrated by the principals at poorly performing schools, who rated their performance as high and even more than those of the principals at well-performing schools did. It appears to have been a daunting task for principals to appraise themselves, hence the inconsistency of their scores.

### **5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study has revealed the presence of leadership practices of school principals aimed at creating a culture conducive to high academic performance. The practices

have been discussed and prioritised according to their prevalence in the previous section (cf. 5.2.3). It also attempted to show the difference in the execution of the leadership practices between poorly performing schools and those with a high academic performance. Based on the empirical data and findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

It is recommended that, through training, principals should be assisted to improve their leadership skills if the intention is to realise good academic performance at schools. The level at which leadership practices occur at schools is not satisfactory (only more or less adequate) and may not render schools effective; hence, the need to improve the leadership skills of principals.

It is recommended that principals should be assisted to improve their practices, especially in the areas of *setting direction* and *professional orientation*. These areas showed up a lot of inconsistency and largely failed to discriminate between the poorly performing and well-performing schools.

It is recommended that, for further studies, the questionnaire should be administered to teachers only. It has proved to be a cumbersome task for principals to appraise themselves without being prejudiced and protective of their practices.

It is further recommended that another study that employs the qualitative research approach be conducted to clarify inconsistencies, which in this study led to the absence of any statistically significant difference in observations made concerning the leadership practices at poorly performing and well-performing schools. The little difference reflected in the mean scores of the groups provides reason to conduct a qualitative study to reveal information that could distinguish properly between the groups. Triangulation of results would be helpful to bridge the gap between the observations of the principals and those of the teachers regarding the same phenomena.

It is also recommended that the study be conducted as a project on a nationwide scale, as the population of high schools in Lesotho is small (153 high schools). Considering the entire population as the sample will enable purposive sampling to have a more representative population allocated to the groups of schools. The larger

sample will yield an improved quality of results of the t-test analysis, as its results improve with the increase of the number of respondents (cf. 4.3.3). Hence, the use of a larger population will help to produce more consistent and reliable results, which could differentiate between poorly performing and well-performing schools.

#### **5.4. CONCLUSION**

The main purpose of the study was to determine the presence of the leadership practices of principals aimed at creating a school culture that supports high academic performance at high schools in Lesotho. The study also aimed at revealing the differences in the execution of those leadership practices at schools where the academic performance was poor and those that performed well academically. The study has revealed that principals upheld leadership practices at schools, even though the execution of those practices was perceived differently by teachers and principals. The difference in perception regarding the leadership practices and prevalence of school culture by principals and their teachers provides room for further investigations to clarify the phenomenon precisely.

Comparing leadership practices at poorly performing schools to what is happening at well-performing schools has yielded valuable findings, on which substantial recommendations were made. Although the study did not sufficiently yield the required overall significant difference, the condition does not necessarily dictate the absence of the difference between the groups. Rather, the findings of the study are consistent with the literature review (cf. 2.3 and 2.4), which maintains that the leadership role aimed at influencing the school culture may be not so pronounced, as most of the actions of principals are mediated through the teachers. The indirect influence of the principals' leadership practices points to the complexity involved in trying to locate the leadership practices of principals. The research findings have indicated the need to verify certain leadership practices to locate the influence of the leadership practices on school culture intended to improve academic performance properly. It is therefore important that principals are helped to enhance their leadership practices.

Based on the purpose of the study, the research findings and the recommendations made, the study has yielded valuable information that may be useful in addressing the problem of academic performance at high schools in Lesotho. The information may also be used to train teachers and principals to improve leadership skills. One would be inclined to suggest that an intensive study be undertaken, which could employ several research approaches on a larger population of schools to further clarify the issues concerning leadership practices at schools.

## SUMMARY

Poor academic performance in high schools has been a concern not only to Lesotho, but also to contexts such as South Africa. Academic performance which is questionable in many schools also necessitated the need to have schools led by effective leaders who could challenge the situation, provide direction and inspire others to work effectively. The research also points to not only insufficient, but also minimal availability of information on what school principals, through their leadership practices, could do to initiate and entrench a school culture that supports high academic performance of learners. As a result, the study, in the main, set out to investigate and identify the leadership practices of school principals that are intended to create and nurture a culture conducive to high academic performance in high schools in Lesotho. The study also compared the leadership practices at schools that perform academically well with those that have poor academic performance.

Even though there are conflicting views on how principals can influence a school culture that is conducive to high academic performance, it is accepted that the leadership role of principals is vital in the advancement of schools. Some researchers maintain that the influence is little, but significant. It is also maintained that all leadership initiatives of school principals culminate in culture creation; a condition that renders leadership practices and culture building as intertwined processes. School principals are also held accountable for every process relating to their schools. As such, they assume the responsibility to effectively manage and integrate resources to bring about an inspiring environment in which teachers and learners are motivated to do their work. The challenge was to investigate what principals could do to nurture a school environment that enables teachers and learners to work effectively.

It is a common practice that constructs such as leadership and culture are measured qualitatively. However, the study has adopted a positivist approach, which employed a quantitative research design to identify and describe the leadership practices and culture prevailing in schools. Questionnaire has been used to collect data from 120 respondents comprising teachers and principals chosen from 20 high schools, which

were purposively chosen in the Maseru district in Lesotho. The responses were indicated on a five-point Likert scale and the data collected were analysed and interpreted using SSP statistical package. Given the scope of the research and limiting factors therein, the results of the study cannot be generalised to other settings of a similar nature.

The findings of the study indicate the presence of leadership practices intended to nurture and entrench school culture. Although the extent to which these practices occur were viewed differently by the teachers and their principals.

Although the overall results did not provide a statistically significant difference between poorly performing schools and schools that perform well, there is significant evidence indicative of the presence of a better culture in schools that perform well. Further analysis of the data has indicated that teachers could be a reliable group to appraise principals. This is supported by consistent scores leading to substantial difference between the two groups of schools. It has proven to be a cumbersome task for principals to appraise themselves without being prejudiced and protective of their practices.

The study recommends further training to enhance leadership skills of principals. Such initiative may help alleviate the problem of poor academic performance in schools. Additionally, the study recommends further research in which various approaches are used to inquire different ways in which teachers can appraise their principals.

Key words: leadership, management, transformational leadership, instructional leadership, distributed leadership, academic performance, school culture, assumptions, beliefs, values, norms, and school climate

## OPSOMMING

Swak akademiese prestasie van hoërskole kom nie net in Lesotho nie, maar ook in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks voor. Akademiese prestasie, wat in talle skole onder verdenking is, het ook die behoefte laat ontstaan vir skole wat deur effektiewe leiers gelei word, wat die situasie die hoof kan bied, rigting gee en ander inspireer om effektief te werk. Hierdie navorsing dui nie alleen op ontoereikende nie, maar ook die minimale beskikbaarheid van inligting oor wat skoolhoofde, deur hulle leierskapspraktyke, kan doen om 'n skoolkultuur te skep en te vestig wat hoë akademiese prestasie van leerders ondersteun. Gevolglik was die oogmerk van die studie hoofsaaklik om die leierskapspraktyke van skoolhoofde te ondersoek en te identifiseer wat daarop gerig is om 'n kultuur te skep en te kweek wat bevorderlik is goeie akademiese prestasie in hoërskole in Lesotho. Die studie het ook die leierskapspraktyke van skole wat akademies goed presteer, vergelyk met skole wat akademies swak presteer.

Selfs al bestaan daar teenstrydige standpunte oor hoe skoolhoofde 'n skoolkultuur kan help kweek wat bevorderlik is vir goeie akademiese prestasie, word dit aanvaar dat die leierskapsrol van skoolhoofde noodsaaklik is vir die bevordering van skole.

Sommige navorsers huldig die standpunt dat die invloed klein, maar betekenisvol is. Daar word algemeen aanvaar dat alle leierskapsinisiatiewe van skoolhoofde uitloop op die skep van kultuur; 'n toestand waarin leierskapspraktyke en kultuurbou as onderling vervlegde prosesse daarstel. Skoolhoofde word ook verantwoordelik gehou vir elke proses rakende hulle skole. Hulle aanvaar die verantwoordelikheid om hulpbronne verantwoordelik te bestuur en te integreer ten einde 'n inspirerende omgewing daar te stel waarin leerders en onderwysers gemotiveer is om hulle werk te doen. Die uitdaging was om vas te stel wat skoolhoofde kan doen om 'n omgewing te skep en te handhaaf wat onderwysers en leerders in staat stel om effektief te werk.

Dit is algemene praktyk dat konstrunkte soos leierskap en kultuur kwalitatief gemeet word. Die studie het egter 'n positivistiese benadering aanvaar, wat 'n kwantitatiewe navorsingsontwerp gebruik om die heersende leierskapspraktyke en kultuur in skole te identifiseer en te beskryf. Vraelyste is gebruik om data van 120 respondente, bestaande uit geselekteerde onderwysers en skoolhoofde afkomstig van 20 hoërskole, wat doelmatig in die Maseru-distrik van Lesotho geselekteer is, in te samel. Die antwoorde is op 'n vyf-punt Likert-skaal aangedui en die versamelde data is ontleed geïnterpreteer deur 'n SSP statistiese pakket te gebruik. Gegewe die omvang van die navorsing en die beperkende faktore daaraan verbonde, kan die resultate van die studie nie veralgemeen word om op ander soortgelyke omgewings van toepassing te maak nie.

Die bevindings van die studie dui die teenwoordigheid van leierskapspraktyke aan wat bedoel is om 'n skoolkultuur te kweek en vas te lê. Alhoewel die mate waartoe hierdie praktyke voorkom, verskillende deur die onderwysers en hulle skoolhoofde beskou is.

Alhoewel die algehele resultate nie 'n statisties beduidende verskil tussen skole wat swak presteer en dié wat goed presteer, aandui nie, is daar betekenisvolle bewys dat daar 'n beter kultuur heers by skole wat goed presteer. Verdere ontleding van die data het aangedui dat onderwysers 'n betroubare groep sal wees om skoolhoofde te evalueer. Dit word ondersteun deur konsekwente tellings, wat lei tot 'n substansiële verskil tussen die twee groepe skole. Dit het uiteindelik geblyk 'n moeilike taak is vir skoolhoofde om hulleself te beoordeel sonder om bevooroordeel te wees en hulle leierskapspraktyke te beskerm.

Die studie beveel verdere opleiding aan om leierskapsvaardighede van hoofde uit te brei. So 'n inisiatief mag moontlik die probleem van swak akademiese prestasie in skole te verlig. Die studie beveel ook verdere navorsing aan waarin verskillende benaderings gebruik word om verskillende maniere te ondersoek waarin onderwysers hulle skoolhoofde kan beoordeel.

Sleutelwoorde: leierskap, bestuur, transformerende leierskap, instruksionele leierskap, verspreide leierskap, akademiese prestasie, skoolkultuur, aannames, oortuigings, waardes, norme en skoolklimaat

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## **ADDENDUM A: Letter to respondents to obtain their consent**

Dear Principal and Teachers

### **REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL**

I hereby request permission to conduct research among the principal and staff members of the school.

I am a registered part-time student at the University of the Free State pursuing an MEd degree. The research conducted is in the area of school leadership and management. My research topic is the influence of educational leaders' practices on school culture affecting academic performance: a Lesotho perspective.

The study is aimed at revealing leadership practices of principals intended to cultivate and nurture a school culture that can bring about good performance in the Cambridge Overseas Schools' Certificate (COSC) examination results in high (senior secondary) schools in Lesotho. The study will further investigate and compare the leadership practices of principals in schools that regularly perform well as well as in schools whose performance seems poor according to the COSC results.

The findings of the study may serve to improve leadership skills of the practising principals and teachers. The information may also provide additional information for in-service training by Ministry officials and in teacher training institutions. It may provide the basis for further research in the field of education.

The research is highly sensitive, as it subjects the principals to the scrutiny of their teachers. The findings of the research will remain anonymous and I am prepared to observe the following:

Prior arrangements will be made with persons concerned.

Participation in the research will be voluntary.

Questionnaires will be administered during non-teaching hours.

All questionnaires will be treated confidentially and used for research purposes only.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours faithfully

**Mokoqo A.M. (Mr)**

## **ADDENDUM B: Consent form for participants for research study**

**Title of project:** The influence of educational leaders' practices on school culture affecting academic performance: a Lesotho perspective.

**Name of researcher:** Mokoqo A.M.

I confirm that I have read and understood the information on the letter of consent written to the participants by the researcher of the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had them answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.

I agree to take part in the above research study.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

## ADDENDUM C: Letter from MOET



### THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

7<sup>th</sup> February 2012

REF: ED/W/24

Mr. M. Mokoqo  
P.O. Box 202  
Mohale's Hoek 800

Dear Sir;

**RE: Request for permission to carry out a research study in schools in the central region**

Receipt of your request to carry out research study in schools is acknowledged.

The Ministry is deeply concerned about declining schools' performance and we are convinced that your research could provide useful insight into this problem. Accordingly, your request to undertake a research study in the schools located in central region is approved. We are eagerly looking forward to getting findings of the research.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R. Majara'.

**R. MAJARA (Mr)**  
CEO – Secondary

**cc. Chief Inspector – Central**

P.O. BOX 47 MASERU 100 LESOTHO

TEL: +(266) 22322862

[ratsiu.majara@gov.ls](mailto:ratsiu.majara@gov.ls)

## ADDENDUM D: Questionnaire for leaders

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**Title:** The influence of educational leaders' practices on school culture affecting academic performance: A Lesotho perspective.

### Set One

The questionnaire must be completed by the leader himself/herself.

Mark in the appropriate box in each statement below.

#### **Bibliographical details:**

1. Age	21–30 years	1	
	31–40 years	2	
	Over 40 years	3	
2. Gender	male	1	
	Female	2	
3. Professional qualifications:	Diploma	1	
	Junior degree	2	
	Hon. Degree	3	
	Master's degree	4	
4. Teaching experience	5–10 years	1	
	11–15 years	2	
	Over 15 years	3	

**Instructions:**

Rate yourself on a five-point scale as indicated below. To what extent do you say you engage in the following actions and behaviours? Circle the number that applies to each statement.

**Part One: Leadership practices**

(1) Rarely	(2) Once in a while	(3) Sometimes	(4) Fairly often	(5) Very frequently	
<b>I, as leader</b>					
<b>Setting direction</b>					
1. Seek out challenging opportunities that test my skills and abilities.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Describe the kind of future for our school I would like to create together with my staff.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Stay up-to-date on the most recent developments affecting our organization.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Make sure that the projects I manage are broken down into manageable chunks.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Clearly communicate a positive and hopeful outlook for the future of our school.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Look for innovative ways to improve what I do in our school.	1	2	3	4	5
7.					
8. Show my people how their long-term future interests can be realised by enlisting in a common vision.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Look ahead and forecast what I expect the future of our school to be like.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Experiment and take risks with new approaches to my work even when there is a chance of failure.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I am contagiously excited and enthusiastic about future possibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Developing people</b>					
12. Involve others in planning the actions that will be taken.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Appeal to other to share my dream of the future of the school.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Make sure that people are recognised for their contributions to the success of our school.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Challenge the way staff do things at work.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Allow people to use their discretion in making decisions concerning the school.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Ask "what can we learn?" when things do not go as expected	1	2	3	4	5
18. Find ways to celebrate accomplishments.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Get others to feel a sense of ownership for the projects they work	1	2	3	4	5

on at school.					
20. Praise people for the job well done.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Give the members of the teams working on the school projects lot of appreciation and support for their contributions.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Make sure the work group sets clear goals, make plans, and establish milestones for the projects I lead.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Make it a point to tell the rest of the organisation about the good work done by every group.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Developing the organisation</b>					
24. I am clear about my own code of ethics in the school.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Take the time to celebrate accomplishments when project milestones in my school are reached by groups or teachers individually.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Treat others in my school with dignity and respect.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Spend time and energy on making certain that people at my school adhere to the values that have been agreed on.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Let others know my beliefs on how to run the school best.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Create an atmosphere of mutual trust in the projects I lead.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Am consistent in practising the values I espouse.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Develop cooperative relationships with the staff I work with.	1	2	3	4	5

## Part Two: School culture

<b>Professional Orientation</b>					
32. Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Teachers and staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each other's' company.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Teachers and staff are involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources.	1	2	3	4	5
35. The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Organizational Structure</b>					
36. School members are interdependent and value each other.	1	2	3	4	5
37. Members of our school community seek to define the problem/issue rather than blame others.	1	2	3	4	5
38. Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school.	1	2	3	4	5
39. People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here.	1	2	3	4	5

<b>Quality of the Learning Environment</b>					
40. Teachers and staff tell stories of celebrations that support the school's values.	1	2	3	4	5
41. There is a rich and robust tradition of rituals and celebrations including holidays, special events and recognition of goal attainment.	1	2	3	4	5
42. Members of our school community seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what we have always done.	1	2	3	4	5
43. Teachers are held accountable for the performance that supports the achievement of student academic standards.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Student-Centred Focus</b>					
44. The student behaviour code is a result of collaboration and consensus among staff.	1	2	3	4	5
45. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning	1	2	3	4	5
46. Assessment of learners is taken seriously and feedback of results is used to evaluate their academic progress.	1	2	3	4	5

## ADDENDUM E: Questionnaire 2 for teachers

### Set Two

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**Title:** The influence of educational leaders' practices on school culture affecting academic performance: A Lesotho perspective.

The questionnaire must be completed by **teachers**  
Mark in the appropriate box in each statement below.

#### **Bibliographical details:**

1. Age	21–30 years	1	
	31–40 years	2	
	Over 40 years	3	
2. Gender	male	1	
	Female	2	
3. Professional qualifications:	Diploma	1	
	Junior degree	2	
	Hon. Degree	3	
	Master's degree	4	
4. Teaching experience	5–10 years	1	
	11–15 years	2	
	Over 15 years	3	

#### **Instructions:**

Rate your principal on a five-point scale as indicated below. To what extent do you say he or she engages in the following actions and behaviour? Circle the number that applies to each statement.

**Part One: Leadership Practices**

1. Rarely	2. Once in a while	3. Sometimes	4. Fairly often	5. Very frequently	
<b>My principal</b>					
<b>Setting direction</b>					
1. Seeks out challenging opportunities that test his or her skills and abilities.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Describes the kind of future for our school he or she would like to create together with his or her staff.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Stays up-to-date on the most recent developments affecting our school.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Makes sure that the projects he or she manages are broken down into manageable chunks.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Clearly communicates a positive and hopeful outlook for the future of our school.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Looks for innovative ways to improve what she/he does in our school.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Shows the people how their long-term future interests can be realised by enlisting in a common vision.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Looks ahead and forecasts what he or she expects the future of our school to be like.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Experiments and takes risks with new approaches to her/his work even when there is a chance of failure.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Is contagiously excited and enthusiastic about future possibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Developing people</b>					
11. Involves others in planning the actions that will be taken.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Appeals to other to share his or her dream of the future of the school.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Makes sure that people are recognised for their contributions to the success of our school.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Challenges the way staff do things at work.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Allows people to use their discretion in making decisions concerning the school.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Asks "what can we learn?" when things do not go as expected	1	2	3	4	5
17. Finds ways to celebrate accomplishments.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Gets others to feel a sense of ownership for the projects they work on at school.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Praises people for a job well done.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Gives the members of the teams working on the school projects lot of appreciation and support for their contributions.	1	2	3	4	5

21. Makes sure the work group sets clear goals, make plans, and establish milestones for the projects I lead.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Makes it a point to tell the rest of the organisation about the good work done by every group.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Developing the organisation</b>					
23. Is clear about his or her own code of ethics in the school.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Takes the time to celebrate accomplishments when project milestones in my school are reached by groups or teachers individually.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Treats others in the school with dignity and respect.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Spends time and energy on making certain that people at the school adhere to the values that have been agreed on.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Let others know his or her beliefs on how to best run the school.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Creates an atmosphere of mutual trust in the projects he or she leads.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Is consistent in practising the values he or she espouses.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Develops cooperative relationships with the staff he or she works with.	1	2	3	4	5

## Part Two: School culture

<b>Professional Orientation</b>					
31. Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Teachers and staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each other's' company.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Teachers and staff are involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources.	1	2	3	4	5
34. The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Organizational Structure</b>					
35. School members are interdependent and value each other.	1	2	3	4	5
36. Members of our school community seek to define the problem/issue rather than blame others.	1	2	3	4	5
37. Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school.	1	2	3	4	5
38. People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Quality of the Learning Environment</b>					
39. Teachers and staff tell stories of celebrations that support the school's values.	1	2	3	4	5
40. There is a rich and robust tradition of rituals and celebrations	1	2	3	4	5

including holidays, special events and recognition of goal attainment.					
41.Members of our school community seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what we have always done.	1	2	3	4	5
42.Teachers are held accountable for the performance that supports the achievement of student academic standards.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Student-Centred Focus</b>					
43.The student behaviour code is a result of collaboration and consensus among staff.	1	2	3	4	5
44.Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning.	1	2	3	4	5
45.Assessment of learners is taken seriously and feedback of results is used to evaluate their academic progress.	1	2	3	4	5