

**Approaches to enhance the emotional intelligence skills of
School Management Team members for improved
leadership practices**

by

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DATE: 26 July 2024

DECLARATION

I, **Anton Pretorius**, declare that the thesis (or interrelated, publishable manuscripts/published articles or mini-thesis) that I herewith submit for the Doctoral Degree, **Doctor of Philosophy with specialisation in Education Management and Leadership** at the University of the Free State, is my independent work, and that I have not previously submitted it for a qualification at another institution of higher education.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anton Pretorius". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and 'P'. Below the signature is a horizontal dashed line.

Student's Signature

26 July 2024



Date

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ABSTRACT

School Management Team (SMT) members, the leaders of schools, face enduring and daunting educational challenges that may hinder the successful and effective teaching and learning of a school, and the school's goals. Additionally, their duties and responsibilities have drastically increased over the last few years which leads to more pressure and demands placed on these SMT members individually and as a team. It seems that leadership practices may be hindered by the increase of challenges and duties. However, with the introduction of emotional intelligence skills, SMT members' leadership practices may be improved. Therefore, this research was aimed at investigating how approaches to enhance the emotional intelligence skills of SMT members can improve leadership practices in secondary schools.

This qualitative investigation, guided by a phenomenology research design, was executed at five secondary schools in the Motheo District, Bloemfontein, Free State. The SMT members as well as teachers from the respective schools participated in the study regarding the emotional intelligence skills and leadership practices of SMT members. A total of 14 individual interviews were conducted with school leaders (4 principals, 3 deputy principals, 5 HODs and 2 teacher part of the SMT), and three focus group interviews with a combined total of 15 teachers. Additionally, open-ended questionnaires were handed out for completion to 4 retired school principals and 4 teachers who were unable to participate in the focus group interview. After data collection, the data were analysed using thematic analysis. The theoretical perspectives and different emotional intelligence models of Mayer and Salovey, Goleman, Bar-On and Petrides and Furnham were reviewed. Additionally, the different leadership practices from literature from various researchers over the years were also studied. These emotional intelligence models and leadership practices from literature served as foundation to establish a conceptual framework for this research.

The research findings revealed that with the enhancement of appropriate emotional intelligence skills, SMT members' leadership practices can be improved. Moreover, educational leadership challenges can be managed effectively. Additionally, improved leadership practices from SMT members may result in successful school management and leadership which leads to effective teaching and learning in secondary schools. It

is recommended that SMT members as well as teachers consider enhancing specific and appropriate emotional intelligence skills through workshops, seminars, courses, and training necessary for specific leadership practices.

KEY CONCEPTS

Emotional intelligence; leadership; leadership practices; school leaders; principal; deputy principal; head of department; teacher; school management team.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EI	Emotional Intelligence
HOD	Head of Department
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
SASP	Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

School leaders encounter daunting challenges in the workplace which may lead to inadequate school management and leadership. However, this is not only limited to school principals, but affects the entire school management team (SMT) in combating numerous educational challenges. The consequences of ineffective leadership and management from a school's SMT may therefore have severe negative consequences. Nevertheless, the enhancement of appropriate emotional intelligence (EI) skills amongst SMT members may lead to improved leadership practices necessary in schools.

The 21st century presents a wide variety of challenging tasks to employees in various occupations and work settings. Schools, which are expected to be dynamic and vibrant as ever – and even more so in the contemporary fast paced and competitive global environment – are no exception. Often, it is school leaders, namely the principal and his/her SMT, which are confronted by various daunting challenges in their profession. According to Allen (2022:101), school leaders' jobs have expanded and become more overloaded in recent years. With this increased number of responsibilities and workload, SMT members may find it difficult to manage their jobs, and thus may risk being labelled as ineffective school leaders. Numerous empirical studies have shown that the teaching profession can be regarded as one of the most stressful careers (Bayar, 2016:194; Glickman & Burns, 2021:18; Sánchez-Núñez, Patti & Latorre-Postigo, 2023:54; Yoke & Panatik, 2015:227). Correspondingly, the teaching profession has also been ranked as one of the worst professions in terms of physical health and psychological well-being (Jones & Ali, 2021:2). Therefore, grave consequences may arise when SMT members do not possess the necessary skills to manage these educational challenges, including negative effects on their physical and emotional well-being, as well as their effectiveness in leading and managing the school.

In the recent past, for example, Bayar (2016:194) did a comprehensive study with 200 school leaders, focused on school principals, and found that more than 50% of them

were on the verge of resigning from their position. In a similar study, Turk and Wolfe (2019:148) found that approximately 3 out of 10 principals resign within their first year, while this number increases to 5 out of 10 after three years. The main reasons for resigning seem to be that school leaders are lacking the necessary training to manage the educational encounters effectively, ultimately eroding their job performance and resilience (Turk & Wolfe, 2019:148). Additionally, it is expressed by Allen (2022:10) that school leaders have “a tremendous responsibility to get it right” – besides constant changes in education, there has been a drastic escalation of expectation for success, increasing the demand for the job. This could have serious implications and pose further challenges for schools in terms of individuals leading and managing the school, as well as their leadership practices. Thus, accentuating the significance argued by Blose, Mkhize, Ngidi and Myende (2022:2) that the management and leadership of a school act as a vital part for the success thereof.

In South Africa, the leadership responsibilities in schools are being shared amongst the SMT which, in short, consists of a team of teachers leading and managing the school (thus, ‘school leaders’). The enormous tasks and challenges SMT members face in the education system may drain them emotionally (Bayar, 2016:194; Chen & Guo, 2020:83; Yoke & Panatik, 2015:227). Several scholars point out that the most common challenges SMT members face are related to the workload, which includes an overwhelming amount of administration, managing discipline issues of both students and staff, pressure from the Department of Education, parents and community, student performance, the implementation of change, creating a safe environment for teaching and learning and a lack of support (Hickman, 2017:1; Turk & Wolfe, 2019:148; Yoke & Panatik, 2015:227).

The consequences of this type of situation are far-reaching as school leaders are drained not only physically but emotionally, leading to greater stress, pressure, and sometimes burnout. In fact, Gómez-Leal, Holzer, Bradley, Fernández-Berrocal and Patti (2021:2) warn that stress-producing situations that school leaders encounter and manage daily can likely result in burnout. A study by Rodriguez (2022:109) reported that school leaders who experience emotional exhaustion are more susceptible to negative emotions, meaning they less frequently experience positive emotions such as joy or hope. According to Allen (2022:102) and Bayar (2016:194), some school

leaders may find it such a challenging task to manage stress and pressure that resignation from leadership and manager positions may seem like the better option, which can, in turn, lead to feelings of failure. Although not all SMT members may be on the verge of resigning, the ones persevering may experience severe challenges in coping, and consequently their leadership practices may suffer. EI skills may be a necessary skill to help grow SMT members into the leaders that schools need. It has been argued that school leaders face the pressure to become more emotionally intelligent leaders (Gómez-Leal et al., 2021:2; Singh & Dali, 2013:503) – someone able to understand, identify and manage their own emotions and those of others (Goleman, 2001:29; Salovey & Mayer, 1990:198).

Hence, this study investigates how approaches to enhance the EI skills amongst SMT members can result in improved leadership practices in secondary schools. Developing necessary and appropriate EI skills for the improved leadership practices needed in the challenging educational environment may lead to more effective management and leadership in schools. The sections to follow outline the background of the research, followed by the research questions and objectives and, lastly, a brief overview of how the research was conducted, including the research methodology.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Although improvements have been made, it has been reported that the education system in South Africa is still in a state of continuous deterioration (van der Vyver, Fuller & Khumalo, 2021:128). Gogo, Mkhize and Bhengu (2022:250) agree by stating that South Africa carries a reputation of poor learner achievement. However, a key factor made by van der Vyver et al. (2021:118) that may contribute to more successful and effective education is more effective leadership. To reiterate, studies performed by both Van der Vyver et al. (2021:131) and Gogo et al. (2022:250) supported the perception that valuable leadership is a crucial factor for the quality of teaching and learning in a school and the success thereof. Ultimately, the main objective and vision of any school is, and should be, operational and successive teaching and learning where learners are academically developed and given the opportunity to be successful.

For leadership to be effective in schools, leadership practices also need to be successful. Leadership practices, in short, are the behaviours and approaches school leaders use to influence other educational stakeholders to achieve desired objectives (Danbaba, Panshak & Ibrahim, 2021:196; Leithwood, Sun & Schumacker, 2020:573). The main aspects of effective leadership practices from years of research from different schools all over the world (Day, Sammons & Gorgen, 2020:16; Gogo et al., 2022:250; Joubert, 2018:75; Leithwood, 2012:15; Leithwood et al., 2020:573; Marishane, 2018:137; Sánchez-Núñez et al., 2023:54; Janse van Vuuren & Van der Bank, 2023:8) are summarised into four domains: (1) setting direction, (2) people development, (3) teaching and learning management, and (4) implementation. A discussion in greater detail on these domains will be done in the literature review as well as the sub-skills and practices under each domain.

In South Africa, drastic changes in the education sector occurred after 1994, one of which as mentioned by van der Vyver et al. (2021:130) was the decision-making process based on a school-based system of management and leadership rather than one that is centralised (also RSA, 1996). This means that all educational stakeholders, such as the principals, educators, parents, and learners, are part of all the decisions relating to the school. According to the National Development Plan, this was one of the requirements (Presidency Republic of South Africa, 2012; van der Vyver et al., 2021:129) for improved quality of education. Furthermore, the Department of Education (DOE, 1996) acknowledged the notion that the leadership and management in schools should not only include a few but engage all members (van der Vyver et al., 2021:130). One noteworthy advantage of this changed education system, as mentioned above, is the sharing of the workload which, in theory, according to van der Vyver et al. (2021:131), leads to the empowerment of all stakeholders involved, especially the deputy principal, heads of department (HODs), and teachers. However, one downside of this approach in education is the lack of training and skills from relevant stakeholders to be included in those tasks and decisions regarding the management and leadership of a school. Also, once these leadership practices are developed, as mentioned earlier, for effective leadership in schools, there is still one crucial factor lacking for educational stakeholders: EI skills. As a result, EI skills may be seen as a missing factor for improved leadership practices for effective leadership and management in schools.

Rodriguez (2022:109) claims that a significant correlation exists between a school leader's EI skills and educational leadership practices. Unfortunately, in the past, the study of school leaders' emotions on leadership practices was absent in educational leadership literature, despite its importance. According to Gómez-Leal et al. (2021:2), for instance, it is indispensable for school leaders to work and engage with emotions. According to Chen and Guo (2020:83), research on the emotional aspects of school leadership remains limited. This is quite strange, as researchers point out that there is an immense pressure for school leaders to be emotionally intelligent leaders, provide guidance and be responsible for effective and successful learning and teaching (Allen, 2022:101; Singh & Dali, 2013:503).

In addition, EI intervention studies suggest that enhanced EI skills can improve areas in leaders' lives which include wellbeing, mental health, relationships, work performance and personality traits (Drigas, Papoutsis & Skianis, 2023:9; Carden, Jones & Passmore, 2022:161; Kaoun, 2019:203; Schutte, Malouff & Throsteinsson, 2013:64). Furthermore, a study by Clarke (2010:466) found a significant improvement in leadership practices after EI training programmes. Clarke (2010:467) indicates that after an EI training programme, leaders demonstrated improved conflict management skills, empathy, relationships (social skills) and the skill to know when and how to utilise emotions to stimulate creativity, optimism, and motivate colleagues. Additionally, Issah (2018:3) found that leaders with higher emotional intelligence may have the expertise to effectively communicate and create an environment of open and effective communication. This was echoed by Mendelson and Stabile (2019:12) who stated that emotionally intelligent school leaders have the ability

to communicate and understand others, express himself or herself adequately and appropriately, perceive his or her own place in the grand scheme of things appropriately, and manage his or her stress adequately and appropriately.

According to Goleman (1998:85), effective leaders all have one thing in common: elevated levels of EI. In a systematic study by Gómez-Leal et al. (2021:17), EI-skills such as self-awareness, self-management, empathy and several other skills were found to be essential to relationship management and that these were frequently mentioned as necessary and crucial skills for effective school leadership (also in Sánchez-Nunes et al., 2023:54). Accordingly, SMT members' goals and the

importance of leading and managing schools should be academic and focused on learner growth and success. However, in achieving this vision, the many educational challenges might make it difficult and sometimes impossible for SMT members to lead and manage the teaching and learning programme of the school. Therefore, to successfully manage and master these challenges and expectations from external sources, SMT members need to enhance their EI skills through various approaches which may improve their leadership practices. Not only are these developmental skills crucial to the success of school leaders (Turk & Wolfe, 2019:151), they enhance a school leader's ability to build responsive relationships with their colleagues which leads to a working environment based on trust and respect (Goleman, 1998).

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The higher the hierarchy in school leadership, the more pressure, stress, responsibilities, and expectations are placed on SMT members, and the more challenging managing people becomes. School leaders' emotions can have either a positive or negative influence on their staff; thus, emotionally intelligent SMT members must be able to better manage their emotions when facing emotionally challenging situations in order to not affect those around them negatively (Finnigan & Maulding-Green, 2018:38). Similarly, Bariso (2018:97) indicates that everyone interacting with a leader is affected by the EI skills he/she possesses. On the other hand, Fulcher-Gutierrez (2017:96) recognises greater success in healthy relationship building and maintenance with leaders with higher EI skills. Thus, a lack of EI skills or poor EI skills may lead to problems with relationships for SMT members, ineffective management of pressure and stress, inability to cope with the changing demands, inability to motivate staff, difficulty adapting to change and much more (Fulcher-Gutierrez, 2017:96; Gómez-Leal et al., 2021:3; Finnigan & Maulding-Green, 2018:38).

Bayar (2016:194) and Turk and Wolfe (2019:148) both indicate that school leaders, especially principals, leave their jobs due to the inability to manage the educational challenges effectively. Literature indicates, though, that a convincing and positive relation between EI skills and educational leadership practices exist (Clarke, 2010:466; Issah, 2018:3; Rodriguez, 2022:109). Furthermore, once effective leadership practices are utilised, there may be more effective and successful schools which translates into more efficacious teaching and learning (Gogo et al., 2022:250;

Van der Vyver et al., 2021:131). As Gómez-Leal et al. (2021:3) point out, there is a need for emotionally intelligent leaders in schools. Additionally, despite the wealth of evidence in research and literature of the need for EI skills, proportionate EI training in educational and educational leadership programmes is still lacking (Rodriguez, 2022:6). It therefore implies that SMT members may lack approaches through which to enhance the necessary EI skills needed for improved leadership practices which will result in effective educational leadership and management. These are basic skills required in schools to be considered successful regarding teaching and learning. Therefore, to close the gap in research in this area, this study aims to investigate how approaches to enhance EI skills amongst SMT members can improve leadership practices in secondary schools.

1.3.1 Research questions

Aligned with the main purpose of this study, the following research questions have been formulated. The questions are divided into two categories: A primary research question followed by five secondary research questions:

Primary research questions:

How can approaches to enhance the EI skills of SMT members result in improved leadership practices?

Secondary research questions:

- What are the key educational challenges faced by SMTs that require appropriate EI skills and leadership practices?
- Which EI skills are most appropriate for SMT members for improved leadership practices?
- How can EI skills assist SMT members in different leadership styles?
- Which leadership practices are deemed crucial for SMT members?
- How can EI skills assist SMT members with and improve leadership practices?

1.3.2 Research objectives

To investigate how approaches to enhance the EI skills of SMT members can improve leadership practices in schools is the main aim of this study.

To achieve the main aim of this study, the following objectives were formulated which seek to:

- Explore the key educational challenges faced by SMTs that require appropriate EI skills and leadership practices.
- Identify and describe which EI skills are most appropriate for SMT members for improved leadership practices.
- Analyse how EI skills assist SMT members in different leadership styles.
- Identify and explore which leadership practices are deemed crucial for SMT members.
- Describe how EI skills can assist SMT members with and improve leadership practices.

1.4 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

There are key concepts relevant to the study and EI as skills as a leadership tool for SMT members, the following section will clarify and define these concepts.

1.4.1 Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Emotional intelligence is defined by Salovey and Mayer (1990:198) as “the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions”. Emotional intelligence was derived from social intelligence by Professor Edward Lee Thorndike in 1920 (Punia, Dutta & Sharma, 2015:967) which will be extensively elaborated in the literature review in Chapter 2.

1.4.2 School Management Team (SMT)

The school management team (SMT) refers to a team consisting of educators who are managing and leading the school. According to the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (RSA DoE, 2016a:s. 5.2) the SMT consists of the school principal, the deputy principal and departmental heads (HODs). This team is mostly responsible for the decisions being made at school.

1.4.3 Leadership

Leadership in general may be impossible to comprehensively define in a way that includes the wide variety of features and characteristics of a leader and leadership. Leadership is referred to by Ghasabeh, Soosay and Reaiche (2015:460) as the ability to influence followers in order to achieve and implement desired changes and outcomes. However, a more relatable definition for leadership for this study, specifically, educational leadership, is provided by Bush (2013:6) as: “people who bend the motivations and actions of others to achieve certain goals; it implies that taking initiative and risks”.

1.4.4 Leadership practices

The behaviours school leaders use to influence others, such as parents, staff, educators and other educational stakeholders, to achieve a desired educational goal and objective are referred to as leadership practices (Danbaba et al., 2021:196; Leithwood et al., 2020:573). Additionally, Danbaba et al. (2021:196) state that leadership practices are the manner and approach which school leaders adopt and utilise for implementation in providing direction towards the school’s objectives.

1.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ADOPTED FOR THE STUDY

In considering the frameworks for the study, the researcher opted for frameworks relevant to the significant concepts of the title, these are emotional intelligence and leadership practices. Based on these assumptions, as well as the EI frameworks of researchers in this field, Mayer and Salovey (Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 2016:294; Mayer & Salovey, 1997:12), Goleman (Goleman, 2001:29; Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2013:39), Bar-On (Bar-On, 2006:23) and Petrides and Furnham (Petrides, 2011:656; Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018:27) were selected. Additionally, the frameworks of leadership practices by Leithwood et al. (2020:573), Day et al. (2020:18), Janse Van Vuuren and Van der bank (2023:8), Botha (2018), and Mestry and Ngcobo (2018; in Joubert, 2018) were used. These frameworks provided a sufficient conceptual and theoretical foundation from which to understand the components and dimensions of EI and how they relate to specific emotional intelligence skills that are relevant to the leadership practices of SMT members. A brief discussion on the conceptual framework of the study follows.

1.5.1 The conceptual framework

A conceptual framework is often referred to as a plan for the researcher's study – how to organise their study, including a synthesis of how to explain the phenomenon being studied (Jabareen, 2009:51; Maja, 2016:10). Thus, this study adopted a conceptual framework for organising interrelated variables regarding the phenomenon being studied: How can approaches to enhance EI skills among SMT members improve leadership practices in secondary schools? The framework consists of concepts related to EI skills and leadership practices. Therefore, the study focused on the examination of specific components and dimensions of EI skills, such as self-awareness, social awareness, self-management and relationship management and leadership practices such as setting a vision, building relationships, developing people and implementation. Due to the objective of this research, the researcher adopted a subjectivist inductive research approach, using a conceptual framework. Thus, the researcher did not begin with a hypothesis or use an existing theory to evaluate a phenomenon but started with the desire to understand and explain the specific phenomenon (Varpio, Paradis, Uijtdehaage & Young, 2020:993). The phenomenon being how approaches to enhance the EI skills of SMT members can result in improved leadership practices in schools. The next section encompasses a discussion on the research methodology of the study. A comprehensive outline of the research methodology is discussed in Chapter 4.

1.6 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research refers to a systematic investigation to describe, discuss and explain an observed and identified phenomenon (Muzari, Shava & Shonhiwa, 2022:14; Ugwu, Ekere & Onoh, 2021:117). On the other hand, methods are the techniques and tools that researchers use to collect information on the identified phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:57). The research methodology is referred to as how a person will conduct such research systematically. Research methodology is defined by Muzari et al. (2022:14) as “a process used to gather information and data with the intention of making decisions about the research”. To add, Nieuwenhuis (2019:57) explains a research methodology as a bridge that brings a researcher's philosophical perspective and method together. Based on this description, the aim of methodology, as supported by Muzari et al. (2022:14), is to provide a description, analysis and conclusion a wide

range of approaches used to gather information, taking into consideration their respective strengths and limitations. In the following sub-sections, the research methodology for this research is discussed briefly. In Chapter 4, a detailed description and discussion on the methodology for this research is provided.

1.6.1 Research paradigm: Interpretivism

The selected the research paradigm for this study was interpretivism. Interpretivism refers to studying towards an understanding of human experiences (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022:11; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:33; Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:421; Pham, 2018:3; Nieuwenhuis, 2019:66). Additionally, interpretivism allows individuals and their experiences regarding the phenomenon to be studied within their social contexts, allowing greater opportunity to understand the perceptions the individuals have regarding their own activity (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:67). Therefore, interpretivism as the research paradigm for this study is deemed appropriate since the researcher seeks to gain a thorough and in-depth understanding of how and which approaches could be used to enhance the EI skills among SMT members for improved leadership practices in secondary schools.

1.6.2 Research approach: Qualitative

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative research approach was selected. A qualitative researcher is interested in an individual's beliefs, experiences, opinions, feelings and meaning systems from the perspective of the individual (Aten & Denney, 2023:3; Mohajan, 2018:24; Muzari et al., 2022:15; Taherdoost, 2022:54). A notable aspect of qualitative research is the great emphasis placed on understanding the phenomenon in its own right – taking on the perspective of the participant rather than an outside perspective (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:59). Lastly, to obtain an extensive understanding of a particular phenomenon is the aim of a qualitative research approach (Aten & Denney, 2023:3; Cain & du Plessis, 2013:30; Mohajan, 2018:24; Muzari et al., 2022:15) – the phenomenon being how approaches to enhance EI skills of SMT members could improve leadership practices. Therefore, adopting a qualitative research approach was deemed most appropriate or this study since comprehensive, rich, and descriptive information from participants is being sought.

1.6.3 Research design

This study is guided by a phenomenology research design. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016:497), a phenomenology design “uses the perspectives of individuals as the entry point for understanding the larger significance of a specific phenomenon”. Furthermore, a phenomenological researcher search to identify, comprehend, analyse, and describe the aspects of all the participant’s perceptions and experiences thoroughly (Fraenkel, Wallen & Huyn, 2012:432; Nieuwenhuis, 2019:85; Taherdoost, 2022:56). Thus, the researcher considered a phenomenological design applicable for this study since investigating and describing the phenomenon being studied was the researcher’s intention. Consequently, through a phenomenological design, the researcher was able to collect valuable information from individuals experiencing the phenomenon and provide a detailed report of the quintessence of these experiences for all the individuals (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:85; Taherdoost, 2022:56).

1.6.4 Research population

The population from which the participants for this study were selected are secondary school educators in Bloemfontein, in the Motheo District of the Free State province, South Africa. The research population of a study refers to a collective group about which the research is concerned and which the study seeks to understand (Casteel & Bridier, 2021:343). Furthermore, the specific population of interest is the target which the study intends to study, and which usually shares similar characteristics (Gisbey, 2015:8; Majid, 2018:3). The population from which participants were selected (school educators) included school principals, deputy principals, HODs, and post level one teachers from secondary schools in Bloemfontein. The reasons for the selection of the mentioned population are that the study seeks to investigate how approaches could enhance the EI skills of SMT members for improved leadership practices in secondary schools. These participants represented the population from which individuals were selected to participate in the study, since the entire population is not required to gather information (Neuman, 2014:2460).

1.6.5 Selection of participants

Purposive sampling was used to select participants to be part of the study. For this study, five secondary schools in Motheo, Bloemfontein, were used. The study had a

total of 37 participants which included four principals, three deputy principals, five HODs, 21 teachers and four retired school principals.

Additionally, teachers are silent observers since they are at the receiving end of school leaders' leadership practices. Consequently, they are likely to be able to share good practices as well as informative and thorough details and experiences related to leadership skills and EI skills observed. The teachers therefore participated in focus group interviews. There were altogether three focus group interviews with a total of 21 teachers.

1.6.6 Data collection methods and procedures

Three data collection methods were used for this qualitative research study namely individual interviews, focus group interviews and open-ended questionnaires. These methods as well as the reason for adopting these methods for this study are shortly discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

1.6.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

Referred to as a two-way street, interviews are conversations where the researcher (interviewer) inquire from the participants to obtain data regarding the ideas, opinions, views, behaviours and experiences of the participants relevant to the phenomenon being studied (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:108). The primary objective of an interview in a qualitative study is to "see the world through the eyes of the participant" (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:108). For this study, a semi-structured interview was applied to gather data. As explained by Nieuwenhuis (2019:108), this is a type of interview where the researcher does not strictly follow prepared questions, rather containing pre-set open-ended questions which are used, followed by further probing and clarification.

Therefore, this data collection method was deemed appropriate since interviews can provide descriptive and in-depth information that can assist the researcher in understanding the participants' experiences and knowledge regarding the phenomenon being studied (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:108). Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals, deputy principals, and HODs as, according to the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (RSA DoE, 2016a), the SMT of a

school consists of the principal, deputy principal and HODs – that order also being the hierarchy.

1.6.6.2 Focus group interviews

A focus group interview is defined by Gundumogula (2020:299) as an interview with a group of individuals discussing specific topics. The amount and richness of information that can be collected, especially if the groups share similar interests is considered a great advantage of focus groups interviews. Thus, the focus group interviews in the included all the teachers who took part in the study.

Teachers do not serve on the SMT of a school, meaning they are altogether front row observers to, and experience the EI skills and leadership practices of the SMT in their schools. Therefore, focus group interviews were deemed appropriate for this study, and particularly appropriate for the teachers that were selected for this study since they all share similar interests in the context of the study. Additionally, informative, and in-depth data was collected since none of the SMT members that they work under were present – allowing freedom to speak where they could share their opinions and experiences with the people they are experiencing it with most of the time.

1.6.6.3 Open-ended questionnaires

A questionnaire is defined as a pre-designed document with questions, in this case open-ended questions, set up in such a way that specific information could be obtained regarding a particular topic (Jain, 2021:542; Mwita, 2022:620). Open-ended questionnaires were distributed to the retired school principals. A total of four retired school principals received and completed the questionnaires. Retired school principals have vast experience and knowledge regarding school leadership and principalship. Therefore, they were approached for the study as they could share extensive knowledge and experiences regarding EI skills and leadership practices.

The open-ended questionnaires were an effective data collection method for this study since it provides participants with the opportunity to answer and share their experiences, opinions and knowledge regarding the phenomenon being studied on their own time and as freely as possible without any concerns regarding team members, Department of Education or the school governing body. Lastly, another

reason questionnaires were distributed is because, geographically, interviews would have been difficult since the retired school principals were not at specific schools anymore. Thus, questionnaires allowed the researcher and the participants to communicate via email and/or phone, and participants were able to complete questionnaires electronically and send it back via email.

1.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Individual interviews with the SMT members and focus group interviews with the teachers were recorded with the participants' permission. Thus, audio recordings, as suggested by Ravitch and Carl (2016:364), were transcribed verbatim using transcription as a data analysis technique. Thereafter, to analyse the data collected from the abovementioned methods were analysed using thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis is a method of seeking participants' understanding, experiences, thoughts, views and behaviours regarding the phenomenon being studied (Braun & Clarke, 2006:6; Nowell, Norris, White & Nancy, 2017:2). The definition of thematic analysis is provided by Braun and Clarke (2006:6) as "a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data". It is claimed that thematic analysis should serve as the foundation of qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006:6). Thus, using thematic analysis was considered suitable for the study since it has the potential to capture nuanced data and proved informative and thorough in understanding the dataset – the interviews, focus groups and questionnaires.

1.8 QUALITY ASSURANCE OF RESEARCH

To guarantee the quality and integrity of this research, trustworthiness was ensured. It is recommended (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:121) that criteria should be met to ensure the trustworthiness for a qualitative study. The criteria include: credibility, which refers to the findings being truthfully defined and explained; dependability is achieved when the study may be described as one that can frequently be repeated; transferability is the extent to which the findings of the study is applicable to other contexts, and confirmability is achieved when the findings are based on the participants' narratives and words rather than potential research bias (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017:188). Each criterion and how it was achieved to ensure the quality assurance of the research is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Permission and authorisation for this study to be conducted was granted by the Ethics Committee of the University of the Free State. Additionally, permission was granted from the Free State Department of Education to allow for conducting the study at selected schools. Thereafter, school principals were approached and asked for permission, followed by selected participants at selected schools. Additionally, for the retired school principals, each individual was personally contacted via email and/or phone call to ask permission to engage in the study.

Moreover, participants were thoroughly informed about the study, as well as the option to withdraw at any point during the study which is referred to as the cornerstone of ethical research (Cropley, 2019:78). To add, consent was gained from participants, and anonymity and confidentiality were ensured in which the participant's identity remains unknown, and their responses will not be made available to any unauthorised user (Cropley, 2019:78; Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018:211; Maree, 2019:47). Lastly, protection of participants against any harm was guaranteed; participants were not exposed to any risk of unfamiliar pressure, humiliation, or damage to self-esteem.

1.10 VALUE AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to investigate how approaches can enhance crucial EI skills among SMT members for improved leadership practices in schools. Thus, the study provided the opportunity to offer vital information to any schools' (primary and/or secondary) SMT members and teachers on how enhanced EI skills improve leadership practices which lead to successful and effective educational leadership and management.

Moreover, SMT members, educators and/or future school leaders may discover differences in how approaches to enhance EI skills may improve leadership practices. Therefore, school leaders may discover different methods and/or strategies in dealing with and managing educational challenges whilst ensuring effective educational management and leadership. Lastly, the findings and information from the study may also encourage teacher preparation institutions, colleges, and universities to investigate and/or include approaches to enhance the necessary EI skills for improved leadership practices in education for educators in undergraduate training and/or

educators doing postgraduate training in specific fields such as education leadership and management.

1.11 LAYOUT OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Orientation and Overview

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Presentation

Chapter 6: Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

Chapter 7: Conclusions, Findings and Recommendations

1.12 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In conclusion, SMT members are under enormous pressure in dealing with educational challenges. If not better equipped to do so, retention rates may decrease as resigning from leadership positions may appear to be an effortless way out, affecting all educators in leadership positions – from school principals to deputy principals, HODs and teachers in any internal leadership position in their specific schools. Thus, this chapter identified and discussed the need for school leaders to enhance their EI skills for improved leadership practices, and additionally, deal more effectively with any educational challenges. Furthermore, the conceptual framework for this study was introduced as well as the research questions and objectives. Lastly, a brief outline of the research design and methodology used in this study was presented. The following two chapters will include the literature review and conceptual framework for this study as well as relevant literature and theories related to this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1, the background of this study was discussed. This also included other important aspects regarding the study such as the research problem, aim, research methodology and ethical considerations. In this chapter, a thorough and detailed literature review has been done on the models and frameworks of emotional intelligence (EI) which is based on the work of leading scholars namely: Mayer and Salovey (Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 2016; Mayer & Salovey, 1997), Goleman (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2013; Goleman, 2001), Bar-On (Bar-On, 2006), and Petrides and Mavroveli (Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018). Also, a literature review is done based on crucial leadership practices identified by various leading researchers in the educational field which includes Leithwood (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2020), Day (Day, Sammons & Gorgen, 2020), Janse van Vuuren and van der Bank (Janse van Vuuren & van der Bank, 2023:8), Botha (Botha, 2018) and Mestry and Ngcobo (Mestry & Ngcobo, 2018 in Joubert, 2018). This chapter entails a comprehensive overview of the literature relating to EI and leadership practices in education where crucial concepts and aspects are identified which contribute to the conceptual framework presented in the next chapter.

2.2 OVERVIEW OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SKILLS

In the following sections, an overview of EI will be given which includes the origin of EI and the different models of EI used in literature.

2.2.1 Origin and history of emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence has become a significant known factor in effective leadership practices across various fields, including education. Within education, specifically in schools, the overall success and effectiveness of the teaching and learning is strongly dependent on the role the School Management Team (SMT) plays. Also, the successful leadership and management in a school and the effectiveness thereof by

the SMT plays a strong role. Therefore, it is imperative to enhance EI skills amongst individuals in leadership positions to improve leadership practices.

In literature, EI can be traced back to 1920 (Lozano-Peña, Sáez-Delgado, López-Angulo & Mella-Norambuena, 2021:1; Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2008:505) when Professor Edward Lee Thorndike (1920:228) explained his concept of social intelligence as “the ability to get along with others” (see also Mayer et al., 2008:505; Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2023:53; Punia, Dutta & Sharma, 2015:967). Thus, credit for EI was given in literature to Thorndike as he first referred to social intelligence as the ability to understand and manage people regardless their age, by acting sagaciously interactions and human relations (in Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2023:53; Punia et al., 2015:967). However, further research into social intelligence was limited for many years. Only in the 1990s, John Mayer and Peter Salovey, both majored in psychology, were amongst the first to conceptualise EI (Salovey & Mayer, 1990:189). Thus, the earliest definition in literature is that of Salovey and Mayer (1990:189; O’Connor et al., 2019:2) who defined EI as “the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions”. Nevertheless, it is only in 1995 when psychologist Daniel Goleman published his book: “Emotional Intelligence: Why it Can Matter More Than IQ” that EI became popularised, of course influenced by the earlier works of Mayer and Salovey (Dhani & Sharma, 2016:190; Livesey, 2017:24; Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2023:54).

2.2.2 Different models of emotional intelligence

In literature and research over the last few decades, a few prominent models of EI have been at the forefront. In short, one model examines EI as an ability whereas the other describes EI as mixed and a combination of traits and competencies (Bru-Luna, Martí-Vilar, Merino-Soto & Cervera-Santiago, 2021:1; Maddocks, 2023:1). The ability-based model of EI from Mayer and Salovey’s theory of EI argues that EI is purely based on mental ability (a system of mental abilities) – also seen as natural (Bru-Luna et al., 2021:2; Mayer et al., 2016:290; Pierkarska, 2020:309). On the other hand, the mixed model of EI from the works of Goleman and Bar-On argues that EI is a combination of mental abilities and personality – a mixed array of abilities, traits, competencies, as well as overlying personalities (Maddocks, 2023:1; O’Connor et al.,

2019:3). Lastly, a third model of EI was proposed by Furnham and Petrides (Furnham & Petrides, 2003:816; Petrides & Furnham, 2000:314) to distinguish between first two models of EI. The trait model of EI was developed which refers to the individual perceptions of their own emotional abilities (Furnham & Petrides, 2003:816; Petrides, Furnham & Mavroveli, 2007:152; Pierkarska, 2020:310). Thus, whether the focus is on mental abilities or personality traits is the most distinguished factor separating these models of EI (Lubbadeh, 2020:41), and how and what they measure. The trait model of EI, an individual use self-report tools to evaluate their perception of their ability of EI skills, whereas the ability model of EI measures an individual's maximal performances in various situations, testing their emotional abilities, and the mixed models of EI include the measurement of both – traits, social skills and competencies with an intersection of personality (Hajnci & Vučenović, 2020:120; Maddocks, 2023:2; O'Connor et al., 2019:3; Petrides, 2011:660; Pierkarska, 2020:311). Each model from the respective authors will be discussed in more detail below.

2.2.2.1 Mayer and Salovey's Model of Emotional Intelligence – Ability Model

Mayer and Salovey revised their original definition of EI in 1997 since it mainly involved the perception and regulation of emotion, thus ignoring thinking about emotions. Therefore, the more comprehensive and inclusive definition of EI from Mayer and Salovey (Livesey, 2017:23; Mayer et al., 2008:510) is as follows:

Emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

This definition was modified after the development of their model of EI, namely the Four-branch Model of Emotional Intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997:10; Mayer et al., 2008:507; Mayer et al., 2016:294). As the name suggests, this model consists of four branches, set out in order from the easier and fundamental psychological processes to more complex psychologically interconnected processes.

The first branch is perceiving emotions accurately. This refers to the ability for an individual to recognise and differentiate between emotional states in themselves together with those in other individuals (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019:3; Mayer et al.,

2016: 294). Furthermore, Mayer et al. (2016:294) argue that the process of this branch starts with the individual identifying their own emotions through thoughts, feelings, and bodily arousal. Based on self-experience, the ability for an individual to recognise emotions in other people becomes proficient through cues. Thus, an individual will be in control to respond and convey emotions accurately and appropriately to the surrounding cues which the individual identified in others. Lastly, such a person will also be capable of distinguishing between specific, honest and dishonest, expressions of feelings (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019:3; Mayer & Salovey, 1997:11-12; Mayer et al., 2016:294).

Emotion's facilitation of thinking, the second branch, is referred to by Kanesan and Fauzan (2019:3) as "the ability to use emotion in facilitating the thinking process such as reasoning, problem-solving, and interpersonal communication". The argument by Mayer et al. (2016:294) is that an individual will prioritise their thinking on crucial information in their surroundings based on the use of emotion. Thereafter, the individual will be able to generate emotions as assistance in judgments and memory processing. The individual will then examine the generated emotion to decide. Then, by using different emotions, they can view and think from different perspectives. Therefore, being flexible during the establishment of a plan should not be a problem for an emotionally intelligent person (Mayer & Salovey, 1997:11-12; Mayer et al., 2016:294).

Thirdly, understanding and analysing emotions, and employing emotional knowledge, is accounted for individuals' expertise to categorise the emotions as well as understand the meanings behind them (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019:3; Mayer et al., 2008:507). The emotionally intelligent individual will confidently identify and recognise similarities and differences between emotions which is fundamental to understanding emotions, according to Mayer et al. (2016:294). Once an individual succeeds at this level, he/she will be able to interpret the emotions as well as their origin, such as the frustration of a teacher accompanied by a learner's unwillingness to work. Thereafter, being able to understand complex or blended feelings will not be an impossible task for the individual, which leads to the ability to acknowledge and recognise the transitions of emotions (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019:3; Mayer et al., 2016:294).

Lastly, reflective regulation of emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth is referred to an individual's capability to modify his/her own emotion which involves prevention, enhancement or reduction (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019:4; Mayer & Salovey, 1997:11-14). This allows an individual to accept positive and negative emotions which leads to being able to either partake or disregard an emotion based on its practicality. Meaning, the individual will, after mastering this, be able to enhance positive emotions and ignore or manage negative ones (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019:4; Mayer & Salovey, 1997:14; Mayer et al., 2016:294).

Additionally, each branch further contains representative abilities of EI which are discussed in more detail below (Mayer & Salovey, 1997:10; Mayer et al., 2008:507; Mayer et al., 2016:294):

Regarding the first branch (perceiving emotions accurately), the following basic psychological attributes are listed: Being able to identify emotional states in oneself and in others, the ability to convey those feelings accurately, and ability to distinguish amongst different emotions.

Moving to the second branch (emotional facilitation of thinking), being capable of utilising emotions to prioritise thinking towards significant information, being able to use emotions that are vivid and available to make good judgements, the ability to use emotions to change colleagues' perspectives positively and optimistically, and to use emotions to employ specific problem-solving techniques are the four emotional abilities listed under this branch.

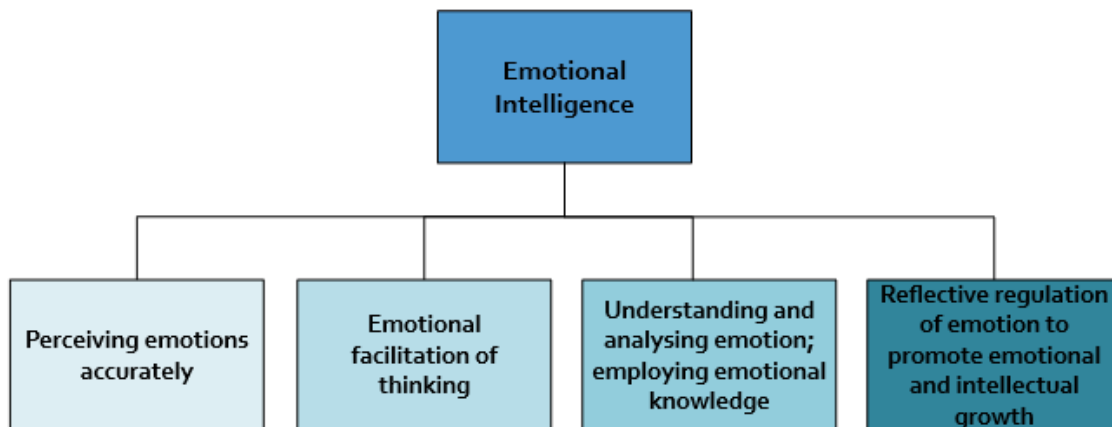
The following abilities are listed under the third branch (understanding and analysing emotions and employing emotional knowledge): Being able to classify and acknowledge emotions and their link between the words and emotions themselves, the skill to clarify the message emotions communicate, the ability to comprehend intricate emotions, and being able to recognise the transition of emotions.

Referring to the last branch (reflective regulation of emotion to promote emotional and intellectual growth), the following abilities, which are the more difficult and complex psychological processes, are: Being able to be open-minded to feelings both positive and negative, the skill to effectively partake or ignore from certain emotion based on a judged informativeness, the ability to effectively monitor one's own and others'

emotions, and being able to control the emotions not only in others but in oneself as well through examining undesirable emotions and escalating positive ones.

The figure below (Figure 2.1) displays Mayer and Salovey's Four-branch Model of EI (Mayer & Salovey, 1997:12; Mayer et al., 2008:8; Mayer et al., 2016:294).

Figure 2.1: Mayer and Salovey's Four-branch Model of Emotional Intelligence.



2.2.2.2 Goleman and Boyatzis Model of Emotional Intelligence – Mixed Model

The following mixed model of EI is that of Goleman presented in 1995. This is one of two major mixed models of EI used in research and literature over the years – the other being that of Bar-On which will be discussed after. The original model of Goleman's EI consisted of 27 emotional competencies. Nevertheless, it was reduced to 19 competencies after much research, and this resulted in the Goleman-Boyatzis Model of EI. However, before getting into more detail regarding their model of EI, first, it is important to note how they defined EI.

The following definition for EI from Goleman and Boyatzis was given (Livesey, 2017:26):

Emotional intelligence is observed when a person demonstrates the competencies that constitute self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills at appropriate times and ways in sufficient frequency to be effective in the situation.

This definition originates from that of Goleman's original definition (Goleman, 1995; Lesha, 2020:172) which is defined as "a set of skills and competencies that contribute to human performance in all areas of life". An emotional competency is defined by

Boyatzis (2009:750) as a skill which is a collection of interrelated but diverse behaviours arranged around an underlying idea known as the intent (also in Livesey, 2017:26).

Figure 2.2: Goleman and Boyatzis Model of EI (adapted from Livesey, 2017:28).



Nonetheless, regarding Goleman and Boyatzis' model of EI (Goleman, 2001:29; Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2013:39; Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019:5; Lasha, 2020:172; Livesey, 2017:27; Lubbadah, 2020:42; Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2023:55), it consists of four main domains with various sub-skills listed under each. Under *awareness*, self-awareness and social-awareness represent two domains, whereas under *management*, there are two domains: self-management and relationship management. *Self-awareness* refers to the ability to identify what one is feeling and realise what its impact may be if reacted on (Afrifa, Fianko & Dzogbewu, 2021:39; Lubbadah, 2020:42; Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2023:56). On the other hand, *social awareness* implies the skill of identifying, comprehending and reacting to others' emotions (Fianko, Afrika & Dzogbewu, 2020:42, Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2023:57). The third domain, *self-management*, is referred to as the capability to control one's own emotions as well as impulses whilst focused on achieving the goals set (Lubbadah, 2020:42; Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2023:57). Lastly, *relationship management* is being

able to regulate the emotional state of the team (Livesey, 2017:27; Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2023:57). In Table 2.1 (section 2.4.1), Goleman and Boyatzis Model of EI is presented with its underlying sub-skills.

Under the domain of *self-awareness*, emotional self-awareness according to Goleman (Goleman et al., 2013:39; Livesey, 2017:27) is noted as the skill to recognise and apprehend the emotions one experiences, but also the impact it may have on personal performance. *Self-assessment* is a person's capability to be mindful and understand his/her strengths and weaknesses (Goleman et al., 2013:39). Lastly, having "a sound sense of one's self-worth and capabilities" is called *self-confidence* by Goleman et al. (2012:39).

Empathy, under social awareness, is an individual's ability to show true interest in others' concern and understanding their feelings as well as their perspectives. *Service orientation* refers to the ability to recognise and consider the needs of others. Being able to identify and understand key relationships, the dynamics and politics in an organisation is referred to *organisational awareness* (Goleman et al., 2013:39; Livesey, 2017:27; Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2023:55).

Moving on to the third domain, *self-management*, the EI sub-skill of *emotional self-control* is being able to manage and shield negative and disruptive emotions. Acting consistently with the values of honesty, integrity and trustworthiness displays *transparency*. The skill to always see and persist in the positive during challenging and bad situations, is known as *optimism* whereas *adaptability* is being able to modify and adjust to evolving situations effectively. *Achievement* refers to an individual's need to keep improving performance to meet the inner set standard of perfection. Lastly, *initiative* is the ability to act quickly and take opportunities when they arise (Goleman, et al., 2013:39, Livesey, 2017:27).

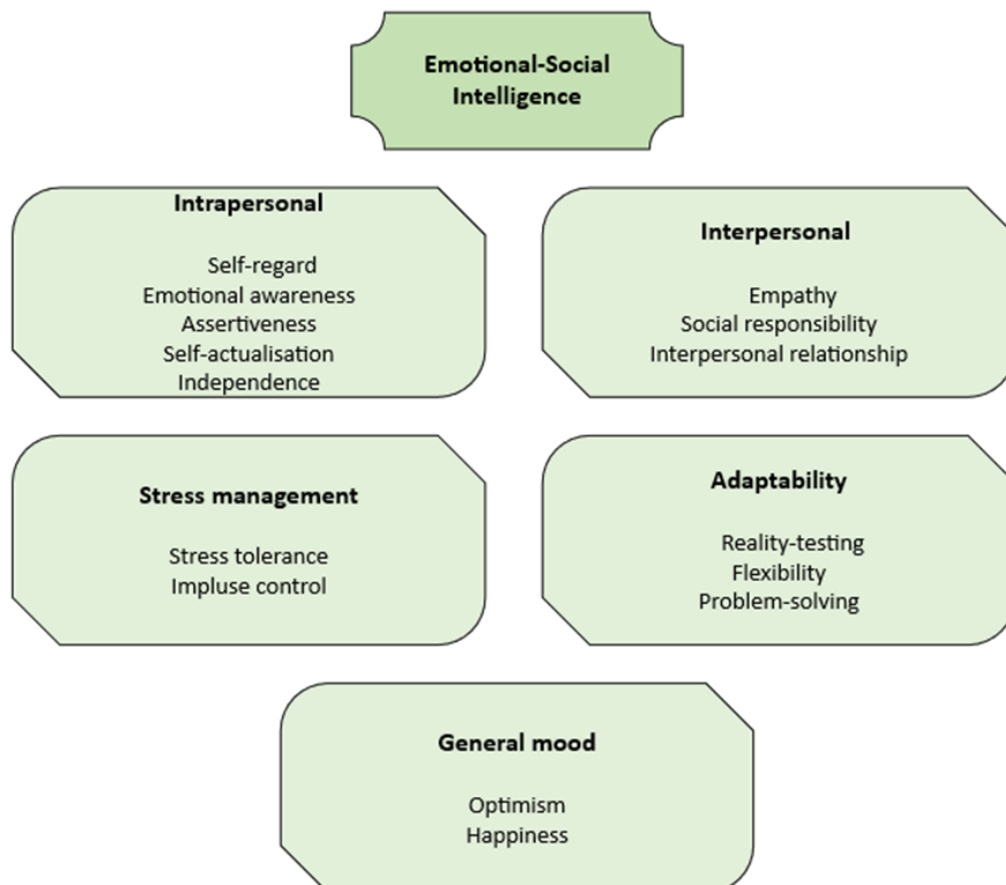
The last domain, *relationship management*, consist of seven EI sub-skills. *Developing others* is the ability for an EI leader to support and enhance others' needs and abilities. Being able to lead by example – inspiring and guiding colleagues towards a vision – refers to *inspirational leadership*. On the other hand, *influence* is the ability to persuade colleagues. Being a *change catalyst* is the skill to initiate, lead and preserve new changes. The ability to identify conflict and resolve it effectively, thus resulting in

positive outcomes, is referred to as *conflict management*. *Building bonds* is to be able to build and maintain relationships with colleagues. Lastly, *teamwork and collaboration* is the skill for a leader to collaborate with team members towards shared goals (Goleman et al., 2013:39; Livesey, 2017:27).

2.2.2.3 Bar-On’s Model of Emotional-Social Intelligence – Mixed Model

Another popular mixed model of EI used in literature is that of Bar-On (2006). This model is referred to as the Bar-On Model of Emotional-Social Intelligence (ESI) (Bar-On, 2006:13; Maddocks, 2023:2). According to Bar-On (2006:13), EI in his model is defined as “a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands” (Bru-Luna et al., 2021:2; Lubbadeh, 2020:41; Maddocks, 2023:2). In Bar-On’s model of EI there are five key components with 15 emotionally and socially intelligent sub-skills. In Figure 2.3 below, Bar-On’s Model of Emotional-Social Intelligence is displayed.

Figure 2.3: Bar-On’s Model of ESI (adapted from Bar-On, 2006:23)



Regarding the first component, *intrapersonal* refers to the awareness of one's inner self, including one's strengths and weaknesses – also referred to as self-awareness and self-expression (Bar-On, 2006:14; Pretorius, 2021:48; Punia et al., 2015:981). The first sub-skill under intrapersonal is *self-regard* which refers to the skill to accurately be conscious, understand and accept oneself. With respect to *emotional self-awareness*, it is the expertise to identify and comprehend one's emotions, while on the other hand, being *assertive* is the ability to convey one's emotions and self accurately. Additionally, *independence* refers to being self-reliant and not emotionally dependent on others. Lastly, *self-actualisation* refers to striving for one's personal goals and substantiating one's potential (Bar-On, 2006:23; Pretorius, 2021:48; Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2023:58; Tripathy, 2018:17).

Continuing down the figure (Figure 2.3), *interpersonal* is an individual's ability to identify, be aware and understand others' emotions – also referred to as social awareness and interpersonal relationships (Bar-On, 2006:14). *Empathy*, in short, refers to the skill to sense and understand the feelings of others. *Social responsibility* is an individual's ability to associate with his/her social group and be an effective member through cooperation. Lastly, *interpersonal relationships* refer to the skill to establish and maintain healthy and satisfactory relationships (Bar-On, 2006:23; Pretorius, 2021:50; Tripathy, 2018:17).

Regarding *stress-management* which is also referred to as emotional management and regulation (Bar-On, 2006:23), this element encompasses stress tolerance and impulse control. Whereas *stress tolerance* is noted as the skill to manage one's own emotional states effectively and constructively, *impulse control* refers to controlling those emotions (Bar-On, 2006:23; Pretorius, 2021:50; Tripathy, 2018:17).

With respect to *adaptability*, also referred to as change management (Bar-On, 2006:23), *reality-testing* is the skill to objectively validate one's thoughts and feelings with the outside world. On the other hand, *flexibility*, is being able to successfully adapt one's thoughts and feelings evolving situations. Lastly, *problem-solving* is to be able to find solutions to problems effectively with regard to one's personal and interpersonal character (Bar-On, 2006:23; Pretorius, 2021:50; Tripathy, 2018:17).

The last component under Bar-On's model of ESI, is *general mood*. Under general mood, *optimism* is the ability to always be positive and have a positive perspective in any situation, especially difficult ones. To add, when one feels peaceful with oneself, others, and life in general, it is called *happiness* (Bar-On, 2006:23; Pretorius, 2021:50; Tripathy, 2018:17).

2.2.2.4 Petrides and Furnham's Model of Emotional Intelligence – Trait Model

The last model of EI prudent to this study is a trait model of EI which was developed by Petrides and Furnham (Bru-Luna et al., 2021:2; Petrides, 2011:656;). As mentioned earlier, this model defines EI as a trait which, according to Bru-Luna et al. (2021:2), is defined as “a persistent behaviour pattern over time, and it is associated with dispositional tendencies, personality traits or self-efficacy beliefs”. Thus, trait EI is related to a self-report of one's own emotional related perceptions (Petrides, 2011:656; Petrides et al., 2007:153; Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018:24; Pierkarska, 2020:310). Trait EI, simplified, regards an individual's beliefs about their emotions (Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018:24). The trait model of EI consists of four significant factors with 15 emotion-related facets. The four main factors are: (1) well-being, which represents traits relevant to personality dispositions; (2) self-control, which consists of self-efficacy in feeling and regulation; (3) emotionality, which represents the self-efficacy in perception and interpretation of emotions, and (4) sociability, being the representation of self-efficacy in interpersonal interactions, management, and regulation of others' emotions (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019:6; Lubbadah, 2020:43). In the section to follow, the 15 facets under trait EI will be named and explained, alphabetically. Since trait EI refers to an individual's perspective and belief regarding their own emotion, and involves taking self-report instruments, the 15 facets will be explained in how individuals view themselves within the particular facet (Petrides et al., 2007:171; Petrides, 2011:662; Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018:25).

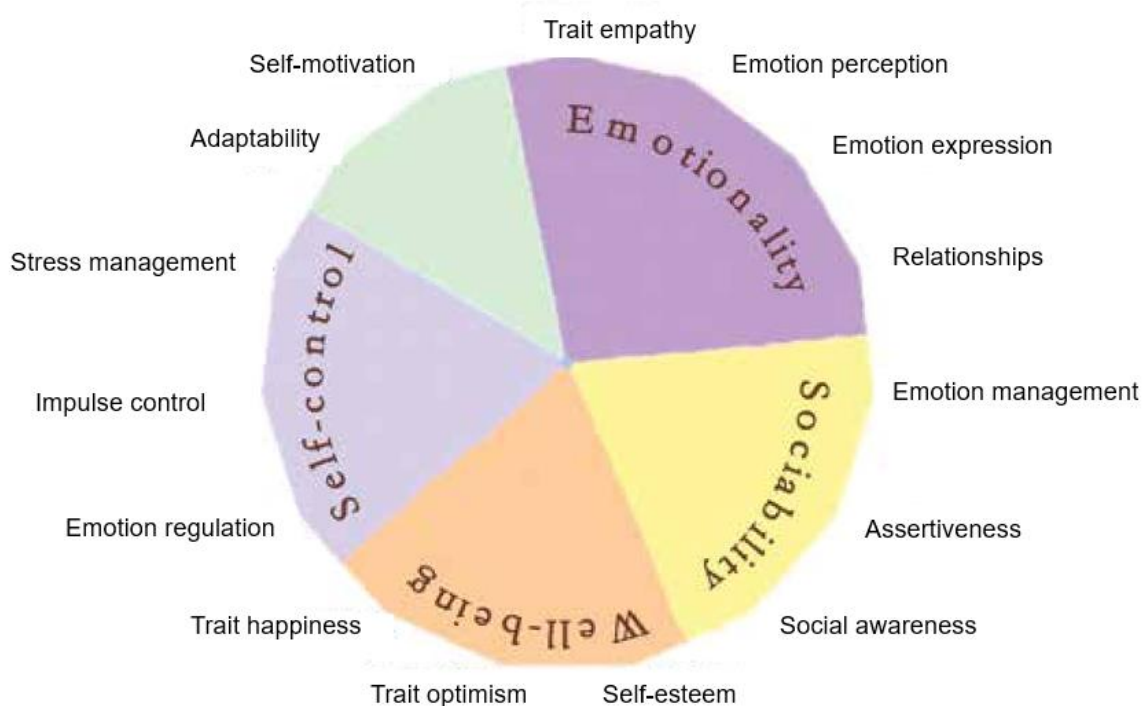
In *adaptability*, individuals are considered to be open-minded and able to adapt to latest circumstances. For *assertiveness*, this refers to individuals who are willing to stand up for what is right. While *emotion expression* is an individual's skill to articulate his/her feelings to others, *emotion management* is the expertise to influencing people's feelings. *Emotion perception* refers to people's capability to be knowledgeable of and understanding the emotions of themselves and other people.

Emotion regulation is to master the skill to be composed with one's own emotions whereas *impulse control* refers to the ability not to give in to his/her urges. For *relationships*, this means being able to maintain personal and fulfilling relationships. An individual who is successful and self-confident refers to *self-esteem*. On the other hand, *self-motivation* is to be driven, goal-oriented and not giving up when challenging situations come up. *Social awareness* in individuals in trait EI is viewed as accomplished networkers with superior sociality.

Stress management is being able to manage and withstand pressure and regulate stress. Trait *empathy* in an individual is viewed as someone being able to understand others' perspectives. Individuals who view themselves as cheerful and satisfied with their lives in general are referred to as possessing the trait *happiness*. Lastly, trait *optimism* is individuals' ability to always see the good and positive side in any situations, especially bad ones, and life in general.

In the figure below (Figure 2.4), the trait EI model is presented with the four factors and their underlying facets. Note that adaptability and self-motivation is not sorted under one of the factors, however both supply directly into the global trait EI score (Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018:27).

Figure 2.4: Trait EI Model (taken from Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018:27).



2.2.2.5 Summary of emotional intelligence models

Academic arguments are ongoing on whether EI skills are seen as a mental ability (natural) (Mayer et al., 2016:290), part of one's personality (Bar-On, 2006:23; Goleman et al., 2013:39; Maddocks, 2023:1), or a trait based on the perceptions of one's own emotional abilities (Petrides et al., 2007:152). Thus, EI skills are divided into three models, namely ability-based, mixed-method or trait, as discussed in detail above. Each model represents the authors with years of research consisting of various EI skills with underlying abilities. Regardless, numerous cross-references can be made between these models where similar EI skills are mentioned. For instance, referring to the first EI skill listed by Mayer and Salovey (Mayer et al., 2016:295), perceiving emotions accurately, and referring to the ability to identify and differentiate between emotions is like Goleman and Boyatzis' (Livesey, 2017:28) EI skill self-awareness in their model. This further relates to Bar-On's intrapersonal skills in his model, such as emotional awareness being the underlying skill (Bar-On, 2006:14), and emotion perception in Petrides and Furnham's' trait model (Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018:27). Nevertheless, the next section elaborates on the necessity of EI skills for school leaders such as the SMT members, whereafter a number of approaches according to literature on how to enhance one's emotional skills will be presented and discussed.

2.2.3 Why SMT members need to enhance EI skills

As mentioned earlier and in Chapter 1, as school leaders, SMT members face daily educational challenges and issues (Allen, 2022:101; Blaik-Hourani, Litz, Ali, Azaza & Parkman et al., 2023:263; Chen & Guo, 2020:83; Gómez-Leal et al., 2021:15; Hale, 2022:85). Thus, being emotionally intelligent has become an unavoidable necessity for school leaders today (Blaik-Hourani et al., 2023:263). On the other hand, Hale (2022:85) discovered that school leaders' success and emotional well-being is greatly affected by the demonstration of EI skills and regarded as crucial due to the continual increase in educational demands. For instance, a positive correlation has been found between school leaders who are emotionally intelligent and school improvement, fulfilment of school leaders' duties and responsibilities, increase in professional performance, and a positive working climate (Blaik-Hourani et al., 2023:263; Mendelson & Stabile, 2019:15; Pellitteri, 2021:48; Salip & Quines, 2023:2). Moreover,

two studies (in Blaik-Hourani et al., 2023:264) found that school improvement relied on the school leaders' EI – capturing the importance of social skills to develop organisational collaboration. Blaik-Hourani et al. (2023:264) highlight the need for a school leader to understand, motivate, adapt, have patience and empathy, and cooperate with team members if they wish to achieve the goals of the school.

2.2.4 Approaches to enhance emotional intelligence skills

Although developing a person's EI can be difficult, evidence from literature suggests it is possible (Kaoun, 2019:200). Furthermore, based on ample studies on EI since 1990, it is claimed that a person's capacity for EI "is firm, but not rigid" (Kaoun, 2019:203). Thus, a person's capacity for EI does not mean it cannot change; however, it will take long-term enhancement as well as dedication and guidance (Kaoun, 2019:203). In a study by Kim, Abate, Slimak and Euler (2022:35), it was found that about 50% of top educational institutions in the US offered a variety of EI training programmes. Furthermore, it was also found that most EI education programmes have demonstrated improvement in EI (Kim et al., 2022:35). This section will therefore discuss a number of approaches based on research into how EI can be enhanced among individuals.

2.2.4.1 Emotional stimuli

According to Drigas, Papoutsi and Skianis (2023:9), individuals, and leaders, are brought into contact with an abundance of information and stimuli daily. Therefore, paying more attention to emotional triggers and interpreting emotional stimuli may allow individuals to understand what their emotions-responses-reactions are (Drigas et al., 2023:9). To add, Drigas et al. (2023:9) advise leaders to monitor how their bodies respond to assorted emotional triggers. The reason being, as discovered in the findings of another study, Drigas, Papoutsi and Skianis (2021:66) state that an emotional stimulus impacts an individual's behaviour. Thus, school leaders keeping track and paying attention to certain emotional triggers and how they respond may allow them to be familiar with those triggers which allow leaders to recognise and regulate their emotions (Drigas, Papoutsi & Skianis, 2021:66).

Additionally, several studies (Finnigan & Maulding-Green, 2018:47; Israelashvili et al., 2019:1468; Keating & Cook, 2023:9) discovered that EI will increase and improve over

the years as individuals are exposed to it. It was indicated by Keating and Cook (2023:9) that individuals who are exposed to the emotions of others consistently will eventually improve in identifying those emotions more accurately. For instance, SMT members who collaborate more frequently with other people, such as teachers and parents, may become better at identifying and managing emotions as they are exposed to them more. For example, a school principal who is dealing with tricky situations and has been exposed to more anger or frustration, will more likely be able to identify these emotions and know better how to manage them.

2.2.4.2 Physical cues

Another strategy for developing EI proposed by Drigas et al. (2023:9) is to observe and be attentive to cues of others such as facial expression, body language and tone of voice. By doing this, school leaders will become more familiar with and be capable to recognise and discern the emotions of others as well as their own. In practice, school leaders may become increasingly able to identify when a colleague or team member may be experiencing a certain emotion, such as being upset or frustrated, since physical cues will be present. It has been argued by Drigas et al. (2021:61) that an individual's intention can be indicated within a social situation through these verbal and non-verbal cues. Thus, it is advised to expand an individual's emotional vocabulary to detect and assign the correct emotion consistently which may allow an individual to develop their EI skills, such as identifying and understanding certain emotions (Drigas et al., 2023:9). Therefore, SMT members may learn to anticipate, identify and/or recognise certain emotions in others more easily, thus allowing them to respond and manage them more appropriately without damaging the relationship.

2.2.4.3 Self-evaluation

A study by Carden, Jones and Passmore (2022:161) found that doing self-evaluation and seeking feedback may increase EI skills, especially self-awareness. Self-awareness has been identified as the cornerstone of EI (Carden et al., 2022:162; Goleman, 1998:82; Issah, 2018:4; Pretorius, 2021:64). For doing self-evaluation, one needs the feedback of others which may be difficult at times. Moreover, to do effective self-evaluation, individuals are encouraged to do introspection and reflection on past experiences and assessing their behaviours, reactions, emotions and more (Carden

et al., 2022:161). This may mean being more open to criticism as well since it may lead to opportunities of growth (Kazak & Ciner, 2021:302). This is equally important since Kazak and Ciner (2021:302) reported that school leaders' unwillingness to accept critique was regarded as an undesirable leadership skill. On the other hand, if done effectively, self-reflection is to be considered the "heart of development" (Carden et al., 2022:161) since identifying thoughts, feelings and understanding the intentions, emotions and actions of others aligns greatly with the components of EI.

Similarly, Drigas et al. (2023:9) suggest that individuals seeking to develop their EI do self-assessments. By doing this, individuals will be more aware of their strengths and weaknesses, their motivations and behaviour. Thus, school leaders may become more aware of their strengths which will allow them to practice when they are appropriate while focusing on their weaknesses and seeking ways to enhance them. It has been argued by Issah (2018:4) that leaders will be able to support others more effectively when they are aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

2.2.4.4 Transcendence

Although being emotionally intelligent requires self-motivation and self-perfection, it also encompasses the skills to motivate and empower others through these skills (Drigas et al., 2021:64). By developing this area which contributes to overall ability and a variety of EI skills, Drigas et al. (2023:10) suggest leaders start paying attention to others; to recognise their needs to grow. Thus, leaders will be able to support them more sufficiently. Furthermore, this also includes for leaders to create opportunities, use positive encouragement, consider a team's or a colleague's potential, set goals for individuals and give credit for good and demanding work (Drigas et al., 2023:10). By doing these little practical behaviours, it may increase a school leader's overall EI, such as how to motivate members, assisting them to understand their emotions, recognising individuals' strengths and weaknesses, knowing how to approach certain people and much more.

2.2.4.5 Development of EI is a process

Although many approaches may be used by a school leader to develop his/her EI, it is important to remember that it will be an ongoing developmental process (Carden et al., 2022:161). Furthermore, Goleman (2011:100), the author who popularised EI,

advised individuals seeking to develop EI to be practical in the sense of knowing what one wants to do and when, and not trying to learn too much all at once. For example, if a school principal has a bad habit of multi-tasking, for example, reading emails or replying to school messages while a teacher speaks, they can instead put away the phone when someone arrives to discuss an issue. This allows the school leader to focus on a certain behaviour to change, and by persisting in the new habit, it may become second nature (Goleman, 2011:101).

2.2.4.6 Training

Various practical activities, tasks and/or approaches have been discussed through which school leaders can enhance their EI skills. However, another approach school leaders can also consider is physical training focused on EI skills which have been showing promising results (Boyatzis & Saatscioglu, 2008; Clarke, 2010; Grégoire & Mikolajczak, 2011; Schutte, Malouff & Thorsteinsson, 2013). Boyatzis and Saatscioglu (2008:95) analysed 17 cross-sectional and longitudinal studies over 20 years of a programme on developing EI, as well as social and cognitive intelligences. Boyatzis and Saatscioglu (2008:97) found statistically significant improvement on all 21 EI competencies; and later, when reduced to 16 EI competencies, all showed improvement. It was concluded by Boyatzis and Saatscioglu (2008:93) that emotional competencies can be enhanced in adults.

Similarly, Clarke (2010:463) did a study with a two-day training program intended to enhance targeted EI skills. Final results from the study suggested that understanding emotions and the EI ability can be developed in a two-day intervention training. Although statistically significant changes in EI showed after the first month of training, after six months of training, further changes were detected. Clarke (2010:466) suggested that the EI training acted as a platform to begin enhancing specific EI skills. Another study on EI training was conducted by Grégoire and Mikolajczak (2011:832). Their study included a 15-hour intervention focused on five core emotional competencies with a four-week email follow-up. The study by Grégoire and Mikolajczak (2011:832) concluded that EI can be trained and enhanced among adults. Additionally, other benefits were also found with the training of EI, such as a decrease in stress.

Additionally, Schutte et al. (2013:64) found promising evidence after investigating numerous studies on EI training and interventions. The evidence suggested that EI training and interventions may increase EI as well as improve outcomes relevant to EI such as work performance, personality traits, mental health and relationships (Schutte et al., 2013:64). However, research on how EI training and intervention programmes impact on individuals' EI skills enhancement is lacking. The study by Boyatzis and Saatscioglu (2008) was on MBA students at university whereas Clarke's (2010) study was on project managers. To add, Grégoire and Mikolajczak's (2011:832) study included randomly selected adults who volunteered to participate in the study. Additionally, Schutte et al.'s (2013) investigation on numerous studies on EI training programmes found promising results in different areas, including education, mental health and sport. Although no study was particularly focused on SMT members, which was and is currently a gap in research, it is evident that through EI training programs and interventions EI skills can be enhanced in individuals.

There are numerous ways EI training and interventions can be done. Based on these four studies mentioned above, there were a variety of approaches. For Boyatzis and Saatscioglu (2008) EI training was a required course for MBA students. Both the studies of Clarke (2010) and Grégoire and Mikolajczak (2011) included EI training as a two-day programme and/or intervention which included teaching EI through common teaching methods, also to experience and practice several tools to develop EI competencies. Lastly, Schutte et al.'s (2013) investigation found different approaches to enhancing EI such as skills-based training, self-reflection techniques, and didactic training.

Today, there are numerous training programs available on EI and/or specific EI competencies, as well as different approaches, from didactic teaching to private seminars, webinars or courses. Interestingly, EI skills can even be enhanced through a game that was developed in 2021, specifically designed to develop EI skills (see Santos, Jesmin, Martis, Maunder, Cruz, Novo, Schiff, Bessa, Costa & Carvalho, 2021). It is important to note, however, that it is unlikely that there will be immediate effects on trained abilities except the ability to understand emotions, as found by Clarke (2010:467); thus, an ongoing process of practicing the trained EI skill is needed, possibly through on-the-job learning (Clarke, 2010:67; Carden et al., 2022:161). Lastly,

the advice from Goleman (2011:101) can also be followed, which states that since there are many EI skills, an individual should not attempt to learn them all at once but rather focus on one or two specific EI skills to enhance at a time.

2.3 OVERVIEW OF LEADERSHIP APPROACHES

The concept of leadership itself is difficult to define because researchers and scholars cannot agree on a definition in available literature (Daniëls, Hondeghem & Dochy, 2019:111). The main argument is focused on what to include in the definition of leadership – whether it is the traits, abilities, characteristics or personality of an individual, and if decided, the other argument is how many. It is impossible to include all the abilities and skills into one definition, and deciding how to determine which ones are important to include, thus numerous leading authors in leadership have articulated leadership differently (Daniëls et al., 2019:111; Gumus, Bellibas, Esen & Gumus, 2018:26; Ngcobo & Mestry, 2018:5; Sari, Sowiyah & Hariri, 2022:2404).

For Burns, one of the most prestigious authors on leadership in literature, leadership is defined as “an internal relationship between a leader and his followers, where the leader motivates his followers and causes a change in their behaviour” (Bsoul, 2022:27; Burns, 1996:150). In short, leadership refers to a process where an individual influences, whether a social influence or a team of followers, towards achievement of a goal or task (Bsoul, 2022:27; Gumus et al., 2018:27; Sari et al., 2022:2404). Similarly, it was concurred by Shula, van Wyk and Heystek (2022:1) who suggested it as a kind of behaviour undertaken by an individual with the purpose of getting others to follow said idea. Correspondingly, Ngcobo and Mestry (2018:5) define a leader as “an individual in a group given the task of directing and coordinating task relevant group activities”.

Accordingly, it has been found that the essence of numerous definitions regarding leadership included the following two aspects: setting direction and being influential (Gumus et al., 2018:27). Additionally, Bush (in Daniëls et al., 2019:11) outlined three elements of leadership: (1) a process of influence to structure and organise the processes in the organisations, (2) leadership related to organisational values and committing people to these values, and (3) the essentiality of vision for effective leadership. Thus, it can be summed up that leadership refers to an individual being

capable of influencing his/her followers in such a way that the accomplishment of a goal or task set out by the leader is most evident (Bsoul, 2022:27; Daniëls et al., 2019:111; Gumus et al., 2018:27; Ngcobo & Mestry, 2018:5; Sari et al., 2022:2404).

2.3.1 Educational leadership

In the educational context, school leadership is defined by Bush and Glover (2014:554) as follows:

Leadership is a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes. Successful leaders develop a vision for their schools based on their personal and professional values. They articulate this vision at every opportunity and influence their staff and other stakeholders to share the vision. The philosophy, structures and activities of the school are geared towards the achievement of this shared vision.

Additionally, Daniëls et al. (2019:111) provide their definition of educational leadership which refers to a process of influencing but not limited to all educational stakeholders which leads to a valuable learning environment that all educational stakeholders encounter as beneficial. Furthermore, it keeps the school and entire organisational process running smoothly and effectively. It is necessary, however, to note the difference between educational leadership and management.

Thus, Bush (2007:392) put it very simply, that educational leadership would refer to leadership with change whilst management would refer to maintenance. This is in accordance with Bsoul (2022:28) who notes that educational leadership involves developing projects, finding solutions, motivating people to perform and be innovative; this can all be categorised under change. Conversely, school management is used to refer to managing the running of the school and its daily affairs (Bsoul, 2022:28) – maintaining (Bush, 2007:392). Correspondingly, Botha (2018:9) highlighted the main difference in leadership and management by stating that “... leadership relates to mission, direction and inspiration, whilst management involves designing and carrying out plans, getting things done and working effectively with people”. Although both leadership and management are distinct, they should be given equal prominence, according to Bush (2007:392), if schools are to be effective and successful. Botha (2018:9) concurred that a school leader today should ought to be a manager and a leader.

Various leadership models have been researched and implemented in both the private and education sector for many years. However, a number of leadership models have gained popularity in the education context – some of the models specifically created and developed for school leadership. In a study by Hale (2022:86), it was argued that school leaders might experience difficulties to manage and lead their school when they do not consider their leadership style and how it may affect teachers' job performance.

2.3.2 Ineffective school leadership and management

When effective school leadership and management lacks, there are major educational problems and challenges associated which are difficult to find solutions to. According to Salip and Quines (2023:2), effective leadership is considered crucial to answer and find solutions to the issues causing organisational failures. There are two realisations in school leadership and management mentioned by Hoosier (2019:30): (1) school leadership is different from teaching, thus requiring separate and specialised training, and (2) effective school leaders and managers are required to ensure the finest education for learners. Therefore, school leaders need to realise that being a full-time and qualified teacher may not be enough and require additional and continuous professional development. Additionally, Hale (2022:92) argues that teachers and school leaders who continue their learning in leadership through postgraduate education will more likely be able to support and implement effective teaching and learning strategies. Also, when school leaders fail to ensure a vision and implementation of processes towards the vision which involves the best education for learners, the school leadership and management may be seen as ineffective. Evidence from Hale's study (2022:91) proves that effective leadership is required and crucial for ensuring, creating, and implementing a learning environment where all the learners experience high-quality teaching and learning.

It has been argued by Bush (2019:20) and Hoosier (2019:31) that when schools are ineffective and fail in terms of effective teaching and learning, the biggest contributing factor is often the lack of effective and adequate school leadership and management. It has also been found by Bush and Glover (2014:553) that school leadership, after teaching (classroom), is the biggest impact, on student learning and academic success. Furthermore, their findings (Bush & Glover, 2014:554) also indicated that the more school leaders are involved with the essential aspects of school teaching and

learning, such as curriculum planning and implementation, and professional development, the higher the results for difference-making in students. Thus, a lack of effective school leadership may significantly influence student academic achievement, which is and should be one of the main goals and vision any school should work towards: Learner academic achievement. It is concurred by Yusniarti, Arif, Junaidi, Iswantir and Ayu (2022:215) that the quality and success of education in a school is commonly associated with the level of academic achievement.

Additionally, Salip and Quines (2023:1) concluded from previous research that a negative school climate was the result of poor leadership and management. In fact, it has been indicated that functional leadership is a critical aspect influencing the working climate (Salip & Quines, 2023:5). Furthermore, a poor and negative school climate may result in further negative consequences, both for the staff and learners, such as intense arguments, unresolved and unhealthy conflict, decrease in work performance and poor learner achievement (Salip & Quines, 2023:1). However, teacher and work performance may increase once they are exposed to and experience an effective support system (Yusniarti et al., 2022:216).

In another study by Liu and Hallinger (2018:642), it was found that teachers showed half-heartedness to commit to the implementation of a vision which was not based on shared decision making. One teacher from the study (Liu & Hallinger, 2018:643) stated that “the principal can order the teachers to attend activities and events by his authority, but he cannot order them to be enthusiastic if they disagree with the direction of the project”. Therefore, school leaders who are unable to set a direction with the school or sets direction on his/her own without the consideration of the opinions, feelings and knowledge of the rest of the staff may ultimately lose them. Surprisingly, teachers not only feel left out but when they are unsure what to work towards, they may also have negative experiences; for example, Hale (2022:102) concluded that the rest of the staff members’ productivity and performance is negatively affected when they are not clear on what the school and the school leaders’ objectives are.

2.3.3 Different leadership styles

To have a fundamental leadership style is critical for SMT members. According to the literature, the following leadership styles are most prominent in education today: (a)

transformational leadership, (b) transactional leadership, (c) instructional leadership, (d) situational leadership, and (e) distributed leadership. Therefore, an overview and discussion of these five models of leadership will be given. Thereafter, an overview of crucial leadership practices necessary for SMT members for successful and effective management and leadership in schools will be discussed.

2.3.3.1 Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership has gained significant popularity in literature and research, not just in the private sectors but education as well (Al-Husseini, Beltagi & Moizer, 2021:673). The concept was first introduced in 1978 by James Burns (Basar, Mansor & Hamid, 2021:1940; Burns, 1978) and refers to a leadership style where the leader is cooperative with his/her followers or team to encourage their development of potential – in short, a process where people are transformed (Al-Husseini et al., 2021:673). Additionally, according to Basar et al. (2021:1940), transformational leadership is “an ability to support employees’ awareness of the organisation’s interest and help employees to develop their own personal interests”. Thus, this involves leaders who constantly provide encouragement, motivation, support, set high standards of behaviour and work, and effective execution of duties (Al-Husseini et al., 2021:673; Basar et al., 2021:1940).

The researcher who further developed the concept of transformational leadership after its introduction was Bernard Bass in 1985 (Basar et al., 2021:1941). According to Bass (Bass, 1999:12; Al-Husseini et al., 2021:673; Basar et al., 2021:1941; Hakro, Hakro & Solangi, 2023:153; Ravet-Brown, Furtner & Kallmuenzer, 2023:5), transformational leadership consists of four aspects, namely intellectual stimulus, individual consideration, idealised influence and inspirational motivation.

Regarding the first aspect, intellectual stimulus, refers to leaders’ ability to promote creativity and innovation amongst their team (Hakro et al., 2023:153). As a result, the school leaders may encourage teachers and the rest of the team to ask new questions and seek new and additional solutions to challenges whilst having the best interest of the school in mind (Basar et al., 2021:1941). Leaders who consider their teams’ characteristics as well as their need and problems refers to individual consideration, the second aspect (Basar et al., 2021:1941). Therefore, the leader will understand and

address the teams' individual needs and concerns, acting as a mentor and assisting in solving and developing them (Hakro et al., 2023:153; Ravet-Brown et al., 2023:5). Thus, this entails school leaders enhancing, expanding, and developing teachers' potential (Basar et al., 2021:1941). The third aspect of transformational leadership, idealised influence, involves being a role model for the team and followers (Hakro et al., 2023:153). Furthermore, this includes the leader being respected because he/she demonstrates values of trustworthiness, integrity, and selflessness especially when it comes to the needs of the team – leading by example (Basar et al., 2021:1941; Ravet-Brown et al., 2023:5). Inspirational motivation comprises the remaining aspect of transformational leadership and applies to the method by which leaders inspire their team by encouraging them to enhance their performance and potential, and to practice autonomy, where they are allowed to make mistakes and develop (Basar et al., 2021:1941).

2.3.3.2 Transactional leadership

Together with transformational leadership, discussed earlier, transactional leadership has been extensively studied in a variety of functional organisational settings (Abbas & Ali, 2023:125). As the concept of transformational leadership was unpacked, the conclusion can be drawn that transformational leadership is people-oriented, however transactional leadership is quite the opposite, in that it is task-oriented (Abbas & Ali, 2023:125). Thus, in transactional leadership the leader utilises rewards, agreed upon between the leader and subordinate, to achieve expected outcomes (Bsoul, 2022:30; Kleefstra, 2019:181). According to Berkovich and Eyal (2021:131), it is “an exchange relationship in which the leader makes clear what is expected of followers”. As stated by Abbas and Ali (2023:125), this exchange is an attempt using money or rewards, or sometimes taking corrective measures, to motivate the team to achieve the outcomes.

Nevertheless, Arikan (2020:48) articulates that this exchange or ‘transaction’ is solely based on what is agreed upon once the task is finished, thus no deeper commitment or contribution is involved – both parties are aware of what the transaction is and will only focus on that while keeping each other accountable. The transactional leadership style consists of two dimensions, namely (a) contingent reward, in other words, establishing objectives and creating rewards, and (b) active management, meaning to continuously observe performance and act quickly when deviations occur (Berkovich

& Eyal, 2021:131). Contingent rewards, according to Arikan (2020:49), refers to a clear goal being set, both parties being aware of it, the performance takes place, and once achieved, the promised reward being delivered. However, if the goal is not achieved, or any expectations are not met under the contingent reward dimension, punishment or criticism may occur (Arikan, 2020:49).

Under active management, the leader monitors the process and immediately intervenes (during the process) when something is not correct, thus correcting mistakes. Additionally, passive management is also proposed (Arikan, 2020:49) which refers to when the leader waits until the task is completed before intervening and offering feedback. An example of this type of leadership in school may be when a SMT member needs a thorough and complete report from the teacher on a learner's academic performance and behaviour to be submitted to the parents. The SMT member may offer the teacher a reward such as not doing break-time duty one day or week once the report is complete and correct. Additionally, if the SMT member practices active management, he/she may monitor the process of the report and correct where possible, or passively, the SMT member may only offer feedback or corrections once it is completed. This demonstrates task-orientation, the SMT member does not focus on developing, enhancing, or supporting the teacher during the process, but rather focuses only on the task being done correctly to submit to the parents.

2.3.3.3 Instructional leadership

Instructional leadership is one of the leadership theories developed particularly for school leaders. Research and studies in the 1970s in high schools found impeccable results for running effective schools. However, it was only in the 1980s that Phillip Hallinger and Joseph Murphy (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Seong, 2019:16) conceptualised instructional leadership after thorough testing of the model.

Instructional leadership refers to leadership where the leader, such as SMT members, creates opportunities and conditions for teachers to improve (Li, Cai & Tang, 2023:3443). A broader term for instructional leadership has been provided by Plaatjies (2019:140) who defines it as:

Leadership and management of aspects of a school that directly influence learner achievement. It covers all the managerial and leadership tasks that are all involved in teaching and learning delivery every day.

More simply put by Aziz, Asimiran and Hassan (2021:3436), instructional leadership refers to leadership practices by school leaders, especially the school principal, associated to the development and strengthening of teaching and learning in schools. These practices are referred to by Mannie (2022:7) as an influential method in which the school leaders provide direction for the school, motivation for the employees, and coordination for school and classroom-based strategy implementation with the goal of enhancing teaching and learning in general.

The model of instructional leadership of Hallinger and Murphy (Aziz et al., 2021:3438; Hallinger, 2003:332; Plaatjies, 2019:140; Seong, 2019:16) consists of three dimensions: (a) clarifying the mission for the school, (b) oversee the instructional programme, and (c) fostering the school climate.

Looking at these dimensions in more detail, firstly, clarifying the mission for the school is considered rather a significant and vital aspect of the leader's role (Turkoglu & Cansoy, 2018:38). This requires the principal's cooperation with staff members ensuring the school has a clear, defined, and measurable goal; one most probably aligned and focused on the academic progress of the learners (Seong, 2019:16). Both Turkoglu and Cansoy (2018:38) and Seong (2019:16) agree that the school principal should take responsibility by ensuring that the mission and goals for the school are clearly defined as well as communicated to the entire school community. By doing so, a noteworthy advantage has been highlighted by Turkoglu and Cansoy (2018:38) which is that a common purpose in the school community is created – everyone being aware what they are working for and towards. An example of this could be a school principal setting a goal such as achieving a matric pass rate of 100% with 95% bachelor's pass every year.

The second dimension, managing the instructional programme, requires the school leaders to be actively involved in the school's instructional advancement. This includes school leaders such as the SMT since expecting the school principal to be the only person engaged is unachievable (Seong, 2019:17). This includes the school leaders

collaborating with teachers in areas related to curriculum and instruction (Turkoglu & Cansoy, 2018:38). For example, this could include mid-term meetings reviewing learner progress and assessment achievements, identifying at-risk learners, and implementing strategies for improvement. This must occur with the help of the SMT, such as the deputy principal and HOD who work more closely with the teachers to collect this type of information and report back to the school principal.

Lastly, promoting the school climate is just as important as the other two dimensions since not having a positive and safe school climate would mean that teaching and learning cannot be promoted (Hale, 2022:104; Salip & Quines, 2023:5). Additionally, the principal, in cooperation with the SMT, should develop high standards and express what is expected of learners and teachers by explaining the policies and practices announced in school (Turkoglu & Cansoy, 2018:39). This includes staff development programmes that should be implemented, sufficient and careful use of school time being prioritised, standards being established, and what the school expects from the learners being clearly communicated (Turkoglu & Cansoy, 2018:39; Seong, 2019:17).

2.3.3.4 Situational leadership

Developed in 1969 by Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard, a leadership style that conforms specifically to a situation is known as situational leadership (Daniëls et al., 2019:114; Nordin, Mustafa & Razzaq, 2020:452; Sari et al., 2022:2405). Situational leadership refers to a leader practising his/her leadership according to the demands and needs of a specific situation (Nordin et al., 2020:452). Based on this leadership theory, the focus is on the team members – the followers (Sari et al., 2022:2405). Furthermore, supporting this notion, Nordin et al. (2020:452) claim that situational leadership is an approach which requires leaders to understand their behaviours as well as their colleagues' attitudes on a deeper level in order to apply their leadership practices appropriately and effectively in specific situations.

The model of situational leadership theory consists of four leadership styles (Reed, 2021:5; Sari et al., 2022:2405). These four situational leadership styles are (a) instruction, (b) consultation, (c) participation and (d) delegating. The type of situational leadership style will be determined by, firstly, the degree of direction, task behaviour,

the leader provides, and secondly, the degree of socio-emotional, relationship behaviour the leader provides (Pearson, 2022:3, Sari et al., 2022:2405).

In the first situational leadership style, instruction or 'telling' (Sari et al., 2022:2405) refers to high task and low relationship behaviour from the leader – taking a more directive and less supportive approach (Pearson, 2022:4). This occurs due to low levels of readiness in the follower, thus a call for more focus on a task – such as what, where and when – than a relationship is required from the leader (Raza & Sikandar, 2018:80).

The second type of style is consultation, also known as 'selling', where the follower demonstrates moderate levels of readiness, but is still unable to complete the task as the necessary skill may be lacking. However, the follower is willing and eager to learn and complete the task. Thus, a high task and high relationship level will be the approach from the leader (Pearson, 2022:3; Sari et al., 2022:2405). When the leader approaches a low task and high relationship leadership style, which involves participation, the follower usually has the capabilities but is unwilling or insecure. Thus, the follower will be included in the decision-making process and provide input, but the leader will function as the facilitator and encourage the follower's involvement (Pearson, 2022:3).

Lastly, the leader will use the delegating style once the follower demonstrates high levels of readiness, thus posing the skills and knowledge to complete the task as well as the motivation to complete the task. Therefore, a low task and low relationship behaviour will occur because the leader gives the follower the responsibility for making the decisions as well as implementing the task (Pearson, 2022:3; Sari et al., 2022:2405).

2.3.3.5 Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership is another popular leadership style in schools since expecting school principals, including SMT, to do everything and take responsibility for everything is unattainable (de Jong, de Kleijn, Lockhorst, Brouwer, Noordegraaf & van Tartwijk, 2023:1; Liu, Bellibaş & Gümüş, 2021:434). As the name suggests, distributed leadership refers to a leadership style where responsibilities as well as decision-making are shared, distributed between school leaders and teachers (de Jong et al.,

2023:2; Hickey, Flaherty & McNamara, 2022:2; Liu et al., 2021:434; Liu, Qiang & Kang, 2023:2). More formally, distributed leadership is defined by de Jong et al. (2023:2) as “a contextually embedded social interaction process in which multiple persons exert influence over others”.

Additionally, more focused in the school setting, and as mentioned earlier, Liu et al. (2023:2) define distributed leadership as “fluid and effective interaction between school administrators and teaching staff, considering the joint involvement of multiple participants in a hierarchy-neutral manner”. Based on these definitions and explanations of distributed leadership, three main components can be identified (Xiu, Liu, Yoa & Liu, 2022:3) which include various leadership sources carrying out the leadership roles, teacher participation when making decisions, and collaboration within the leadership team. Therefore, distributed leadership involves teams of leaders such as the SMT, which South African schools have, who have different portfolios assisting and sharing responsibilities with the school principal.

2.4 OVERVIEW OF LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

Leadership and educational leadership have been explained and defined. However, to clarify leadership practices, Danbaba, Panshak and Ibrahim (2021:196) propose the following explanation: “Educational leadership practices are the patterns of behaviour used by leaders in attempting to influence group members and make decision regarding the mission, strategy, and operations of group activities”. Thus, leadership practices deal with the question of how – how school leaders influence educational stakeholders to achieve the desired educational outcomes, such as student learning (Danbaba et al., 2021:196; Leithwood et al., 2020:573). Furthermore, Danbaba et al. (2021:196) refer to the manner and approach that school leaders use and implement to provide direction to achieve the school goals. In the following sections, different leadership practices proposed by various researchers will be discussed and reviewed.

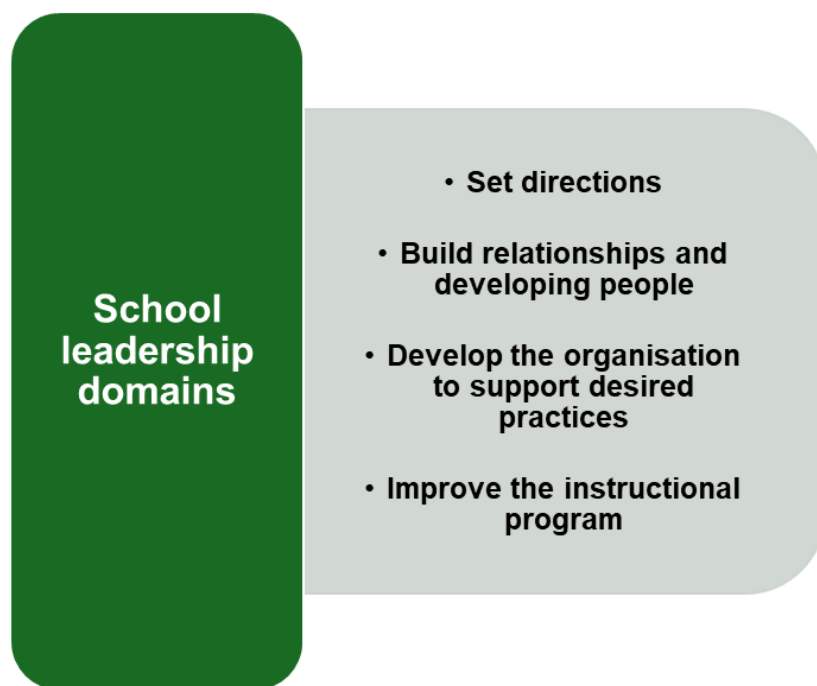
2.4.1 School leadership framework

Leithwood et al. (2020:573) propose the following intergraded school leadership framework based on support from a large body of research (see Leithwood et al., 2020:573). This framework is supported by its theoretical roots in the Ontario Leadership Framework (Leithwood, et al., 2020:574) which has been judged as the

most thorough, fact-based explanation of successful school leader practices available. Based on the school leadership framework, there are 19 specific leadership practices with four domains of leadership practice, namely: (1) setting directions, (2) building relationships and developing people, (3) developing the organisation to support desired practices and (4) improving the instructional program (Leithwood et al., 2020:573). This was also concurred by Danbaba et al. (2021:196) and Day, Sammons and Gorgen (2020:16) that the aforementioned set of core leadership practices from various educational contexts are tested educational leadership practices and form the basis of successful leadership.

The figure below (Figure 2.5) represents the integrated school leadership framework from Leithwood et al. (2020:573; also from Day, Sammons & Gorgen, 2020:16):

Figure 2.5: School leadership framework (adapted from Leithwood et al., 2020:57)



2.4.1.1 Setting direction

In the first domain, setting directions, school leaders, mostly the school principal, should be critical in ensuring that everyone (staff, students and parents) is working towards the same vision (Hitt & Tucker, 2016:545; Leithwood, 2012:13). It has been stated by Hitt and Tucker (2016:545) that setting goals and having a vision provides clarity and purpose in the school environment and organisation. Furthermore, teachers' stress levels as well as their self-efficacy and commitment towards the

school are positively influenced when school principals set clear direction (Day et al., 2020:16).

Effective school principals do not create and develop a vision for the school in isolation (Danbaba et al., 2021:196; Hitt & Tucker, 2016:545; Leithwood, 2012:14). Therefore, school principals should seek input from all stakeholders, including the SMT, once an outline for the vision is defined. This will lead to a stronger design as well as more support, motivation and willingness to buy into the vision, and the goals to achieve them (Hitt & Tucker, 2016:546).

School principals who ensure the practice of setting high expectations, for teachers, students, and themselves, might promote overall well-being and success. Furthermore, they encourage staff to be innovative through taking responsibility to works towards achieving the school's goals and by making their expectations known not just through words, but most importantly through their actions (Leithwood, 2012:16). It has also been found by Day et al. (2020:16) that teachers' work is enhanced when principals assist in developing and inspiring teachers through a shared sense of purpose. However, there are some implications when principals have unreasonably high expectations.

Lastly, communicating the vision and goals of the school constantly is vital for effective school leadership (Leithwood, 2012:16). Once the school's vision and objectives are defined, school leaders should continually communicate different aspects of the vision. Thereafter, updates should be given regularly to maintain and remind everyone of the vision. To add, the importance of the vision and goals for the school should be reiterated (Hitt & Tucker, 2016:548).

2.4.1.2 Building relationships and developing people

After directing towards clear, shared and achievable school goals, school leaders' focus must shift towards fostering relationships and developing his/her team members (Day et al., 2020:16). Although the specific leadership practices in this domain are significant contributors to motivation, the foremost aim for school leaders should be to enhance the skills and knowledge of teachers as well as other staff to accomplish those goals (Leithwood, 2012:17).

As mentioned, school leaders and SMT members develop and give their teachers opportunities to improve and enhance their abilities which will ultimately increase their proficiency and efficacy to achieve the school's overall goals (Hitt & Tucker, 2016:551). Therefore, these leadership practices will see school leaders encouraging their teachers to practice reflection on their own development and goals, encouraging them to pursue their own goals in line with the primary objective and vision of the school, challenging teachers, creating opportunities to develop and encouraging staff to try new things (Leithwood, 2012:18). Additionally, an interesting finding from Özgenel and Karsantik (2020:9) is that when school leaders empower teachers, it contributes as a crucial factor in the prevention of burnout among teachers. This is consistent with the evidence from Nadelson, Turley and DiMasso-Shininger (2022:9) who report that teachers who are empowered and identified as leaders experience less job-related stress.

For modelling the school's values, Leithwood (2012:19) recognises and proposes that school leaders are visible and involved in the school. This can be done through frequent meetings with teachers and parents, being easily accessible, and leading by example, especially representing the desired school values and practices.

To ensure that teachers' trust in their school leaders deepens, Hitt and Tucker (2016:550) argue that school leaders need to genuinely care for teachers as well as their lives outside school. Additionally, trusting relationships with all stakeholders create school effectiveness and efficacy (Leithwood, 2012:19). To add, ideas and suggestions are more easily acted on when there are elevated levels of trust. Thus, ensuring higher trust, school leaders should be competent in their tasks, respect and care for their staff, students, and parents and act in ways that reflect the school's values (Leithwood, 2012:20).

2.4.1.3 Developing the organisation to support desired practices

According to Day et al. (2020:16), the specific leadership practices in this domain are mainly focused on school leaders creating and establishing work conditions in which teachers will make most of their motivations, commitments, and capacities.

A key and challenging task for school leaders may be to create more positive collaboration and achievement-oriented cultures (Leithwood, 2012:21). One way to

achieve this is to practice distributed leadership (Hitt & Tucker, 2016:554; Leithwood, 2012:21). Not only will this allow sharing of responsibilities, but it will also generate chances for team members to grow and evolve (Hitt & Tucker, 2016:554). However, to achieve this, structure within the school needs be created by school leaders that facilitate collaboration. This could be done through engaging and including teachers in decision-making, establishing teams and group structures for problem-solving, creating and providing opportunities for teachers to work together and distributing leadership for selected tasks (Hitt & Tucker, 2016:554; Leithwood, 2012:22). It has been indicated by Nadelson et al. (2022:12) that when school leaders practice servant leadership which includes but is not limited to support, empowerment, and opportunities for development for teachers, there is higher job satisfaction and retention rates among teachers.

Hitt and Tucker (2016:555) point out that effective school leaders view diverse families and communities as a benefit. However, it is required that school leaders operate from an inclusive mindset. This can be achieved through creating a school environment where parents feel welcomed and respected, developing staff commitment to engage with parents and demonstrating the type of leadership which parents trust (Leithwood, 2012:23). Additionally, school leaders should form networks with other school leaders and district leaders as well as members of the educational research community to ensure the school connects to the wider environment (Leithwood, 2012:24).

For learner academic success, a school environment needs to be safe, orderly, healthy and accepting (Leithwood, 2012:24). According to Hitt and Tucker (2016:556), the school vision and goal becomes 'lofty rhetoric' if school safety and order are not ensured. School leaders must therefore ensure the safety and health of a school environment through codes of conduct, fair and consistent discipline practices, regularly communicating the expectations and standards and securing the school's physical facilities from danger (Hitt & Tucker, 2016:556; Leithwood, 2012:24).

Lastly, in this domain, school leaders must carefully consider and manage the school's resources. Effective school leaders, according to Hitt and Tucker (2016:553), carefully allocate the school's budget to professional development of teachers, support for students and other needed expenses supporting the school's vision and goals.

2.4.1.4 Improving the instructional program

School leaders are encouraged to provide teachers with the following to ensure the practice of staffing the instructional program may be successful: professional development, more roles, time for collaboration and planning, shared vision and opportunities to build trusting relationships (Hitt & Tucker, 2016:555; Leithwood, 2012:27).

Actively overseeing the instructional program, observing teachers in the classroom and providing constructive feedback, participating with staff in their improvement work and being a useful source of advice for teachers are all practices that can be summed up as one practice – to provide instructional support (Leithwood, 2012:28).

Regarding the protection of teachers from irrelevant tasks, according to Hitt and Tucker (2016:551), among the main effects on student learning and teacher efficacy is preserving their time. Thus, successful school leaders intervene to preserve their teachers' time as well as energy from irrelevant and unnecessary tasks that may cause distraction from the school's vision (Hitt & Tucker, 2016:551). Furthermore, Leithwood (2012:17) indicates more ways that successful school leaders can enact this practice, such as through recognising individual staff members' achievements, considering teachers' opinions that affect their work, recognising individuality and being fair to everyone.

On the other hand, support must be given to learners as well. This is done through monitoring student learning and school improvement progress. Thus, school leaders continually evaluate the alignment of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Hitt & Tucker, 2016:558). This requires the assistance of the SMT as it will be impossible for only the school principal to do. For instance, as mentioned in the SMT's duties, deputy principals may oversee the HODs who check and evaluate teachers' curriculum teaching and assessment.

2.4.2 Competency framework for school leadership

For successful school leadership in South Africa, both Botha (2018) and Mestry and Ngcobo (2018 in Joubert, 2018) referred to the four core practices from Leithwood (2012) in their books. These, as mentioned earlier, include: (1) setting directions, (2)

developing people, (3) redesigning the organisation, and (4) managing the instructional (teaching and learning) programme (Joubert, 2018:75; Marishane, 2018:137).

A competency framework for school leadership was developed by Janse van Vuuren and van der Bank (2023). Their literature review and findings align greatly with the leadership practices found and developed by Leithwood’s (2012) framework, as well as with what was proposed in 2018 by Botha and Mestry and Ngcobo (Joubert, 2018:75; Marishane, 2018:137). Based on the findings, the following three main leadership competency roles were found: (1) creating a vision and setting strategic direction, (2) preparing the school for implementing the vision and strategies, and (3) implementing the school vision and strategy; each main competency role has underlying competencies with specific leadership practices (Janse van Vuuren & van der Bank, 2023:8). Below is a table (Table 2.1) representing their framework based on literature synthesis and qualitative analysis.

Table 2.1: Competency framework

Competency definition	Underlying competencies
1. Creating a school vision and setting strategic direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a school vision and setting strategic direction • Establishing goals and expectations
2. Preparing the school for implementing the vision and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing school staff • Influencing and communicating • Resourcing strategically • Leading with compassion
3. Implementing the school vision and strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining a student-centred environment • Making decisions • Managing staff • Managing and rewarding teaching and learning • Leading across school boundaries

Under the first main leadership competency role, creating a vision and setting strategic direction, the following leadership practices were identified: creating a vision for the school and strategies, establishing goals and expectations, and planning and organising (Janse van Vuuren & van der Bank, 2023:8). According to Joubert

(2018:75), among the qualities of a successful school starts with an unclouded vision. Furthermore, this should be, firstly, accepted by the staff, parents and learners, and, secondly, regularly communicated. Additionally, having clear goals and expectations are two important components under the school's mission (Joubert, 2018:75). These will serve as a predetermined direction and destination in which both the school leader and followers would like to move (Marishane, 2018:137).

Continuing to the second competency role, preparing the school for implementing the vision and strategies, there is a lot of focus on what Leithwood (2012:17) referred to as "building relationships and developing people". The reason for this claim is due to the focus by Janse van Vuuren and van der Bank (2023:8) on behaviour and other people for school leaders in this competency. The following four leadership practices are identified under this competency are (Janse van Vuuren and van der Bank, 2023:8): (a) developing staff, which includes training and coaching, delegating and empowering, and identifying and deploying potential; (b) influencing and communicating, behaviours and competency dimensions, including communicating, persuading, motivating, inspiring, and negotiating. Moving to the third competency, (c) resourcing strategically, the competency dimensions identified were acquiring and securing resources and allocating them strategically. Lastly, (d) leading with compassion consists of demonstrating empathy, being supportive and displaying sound interpersonal skills.

Regarding building and developing people, it has been found by Shula et al. (2022:6) that when teachers are empowered by their school leaders, there is an increase of shared decision-making and teamwork. Thus, when school staff and teachers are developing, responsibilities can effectively be shared. This leads to the gathering of valuable opinions, views and solutions especially during complex decisions instead of everything relying on one or two SMT members. It has therefore been argued by Mosoge and Mataboge (2021:94) that school principals should empower and provide opportunities for teachers as well as deputy principals and HODs to develop their leadership practices. The reason, according to Mosoge and Mataboge (2021:94), is that no school principal can manage all the responsibilities and tasks of a school alone. Thus, allowing and creating opportunities for other school leaders and teachers to grow and develop may increase the overall effectiveness of the school's management

and leadership. This aligns with the findings of Mosoge and Mataboge (2021:9101) who found that empowered SMT members were ready to commit and promote the school's vision and goals, take on extra responsibilities and tasks and be accountable. Similarly, Nadelson et al. (2022:9) claimed that when teachers are identified as leaders by their school leaders, this may cause teachers to assume more responsibility. It is important to note, however, that Shula et al. (2022:5) argue that true staff development is only possible once teachers are regarded and valued as professionals.

The third and final leadership competency role for school leadership is implementing the school vision and strategy (Janse van Vuuren & Van der Bank, 2023:8). This competency includes five competencies. First, (a) maintaining a student-centred environment includes the following leadership practices: ensuring safety, maintaining order and discipline, and fostering inclusivity and unity. Secondly, (b) making decisions, being decisive and courageous, consulting, and enabling experimentation and innovation proves important. Next, underneath (c) managing self, the following leadership practices were identified: integrity, taking initiative, growing and developing self, showing resilience and tenacity, and demonstrating focus and dedication. Moving to (d) managing and rewarding teaching and learning, this competency included monitoring and moderating, rewarding and celebrating, and restructuring and reengineering as specific leadership practices. Lastly, (e) leading across school boundaries included leading interdepartmental coordination and leading across external school boundaries (Janse van Vuuren & van der Bank, 2023:8).

It has been argued by Cornelissen and Smith (2022:63) that researchers are unable to identify exactly what leadership practices school leaders need to be effective leaders. The reason is that school leadership is “complex because it is collaborative, not static or have one best approach or model” (Cornelissen & Smith, 2022:63). It is suggested by Cornelissen and Smith (2022:63) in their study of South African schools, that school leadership should be open to change and adjust their leadership practices and responses to specific or certain contextual situations. Their study (Cornelissen & Smith, 2022:69) found that there is no definite or apparent leadership approach, instead the most valuable leadership approach was determined by the appropriateness of the given situation.

The work of Botha (2018) and Mestry and Ngcobo (2018 in Joubert, 2018), as well as the findings from Janse van Vuuren and van der Bank's study (2023), positively comments on the core purpose and requirements for school principals in the Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship (PSASP) (RSA DoE, 2016b:s. 5). According to the PSASP (RSA DoE, 2016b:s. 5), there are eight key areas for principalship which the school principal ought to be familiar and knowledgeable with in order to carry out the practices: (a) leading teaching and learning, (b) directing the school's development and vision, (c) oversee instruction quality and ensuring accountability, (d) developing and empowering self and others, (e) managing the school as an organisation, (f) collaborating with the community, (g) supervising the school's human resources (staff), and (h) overseeing and advocating extramural activities.

Additionally, Bush (2019:4), through years of investigation on educational management and leadership in South Africa, also proposed three dimensions within educational leadership which greatly relate to the leadership practices in literature: (1) leadership as influence, (2) leadership and values, and (3) leadership and vision. Based on his first dimension (Bush & Glover, 2014:554; Bush, 2019:4), influence, leadership requires individuals such as principals, deputy principals and HODs to have social interaction to exercise influence over a team of followers to achieve desired outcomes and objectives. When it comes to leadership and values, research done by Bush (2019:4) indicates that teachers are more likely to follow school leaders when change is self-initiated instead of 'values' being chosen and imposed on school leaders from the Department of Education. The third dimension, vision, is regarded as a vital component of school leadership (Bush, 2019:5). Furthermore, Bush and Glover (2014:555) found that when school leaders exclude teachers, the team followers, from the vision building process, negative effects arose. In another study in South Africa, Shula et al. (2022:5) found that when teachers are included, actions such as collaborative decision-making and teamwork greatly benefit the school.

2.5 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the literature related to EI and leadership practices. This entailed the four EI frameworks from Mayer and Salovey (Mayer et al., 2016), Goleman (Goleman et al., 2013), Bar-On (2006) and Petrides

and Furnham (Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018). Thereafter, different approaches to enhance the EI skills of school leaders according to literature were reviewed and presented. Following this was a review of different leadership approaches for SMT members in schools. Afterwards, a comprehensive overview on different leadership practices were presented and discussed based on literature. These leadership practice frameworks were based on the work of Leithwood (Leithwood et al., 2020), Janse van Vuuren and van der Bank (2023), Botha (2018) and Mestry and Ngcobo (2018 in Joubert, 2018).

In the next chapter, the educational challenges that SMT members face according to literature are outlined and discussed briefly, followed by a detailed and thorough discussion on the literature relating to how enhanced EI skills can assist and improve leadership practices among SMT members. Lastly, Chapter 3 ends with a presentation of the conceptual framework used in this study.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2, a literature review, the different models and frameworks of emotional intelligence (EI) and leadership practices were analysed and discussed in detail. Regarding EI, four models that have been developed over the years by Mayer and Salovey (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 2016), Goleman (Goleman, 2001; Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2013), Bar-On (Bar-On, 2006), and Petrides and Mavroveli (Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018) were explained and discussed thoroughly. The importance for SMT members to enhance their EI skills was also discussed, as well as the approaches guided by literature on how EI skills can be enhanced and developed. Next, a detailed and in-depth review of leadership styles and leadership practices for SMT members in education was done, based on the work of Leithwood (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2020), Day (Day, Sammons & Gorgen, 2020), Botha (2018) and Mestry and Ngcobo (2018 in Joubert, 2018). By doing this, EI skills and leadership practices appropriate to SMT members could be identified and discussed.

In this chapter, a brief overview is provided on the duties and responsibilities of SMT members as well as common educational challenges they encounter. Through this an accurate and appropriate conceptual framework is then established. Although a comprehensive overview was given on the EI skills and leadership practices in Chapter 2, various EI skills may not be applicable. However, by examining the duties and responsibilities as well as educational challenges SMT members encounter, appropriate EI skills that need to be enhanced for improved leadership practices can be highlighted and aligned. Thus, the chapter concludes with a presentation of a conceptual framework based on appropriate EI skills for improved leadership practices for SMT members which could result in more effective school leadership and management.

3.2 SMT DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The school principal, deputy principal and HODs, which is referred to as the SMT of a school (RSA DoE, 2016a:s. 5.2), faces numerous daily educational challenges on top of their required responsibilities. The duties and responsibilities for each SMT member are thoroughly stated in two key policy documents that guide school leadership in schools in South Africa, namely the Personal Administrative Measures (PAM) and the Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship (SASP). These two policy documents illustrate the extensive requirements and expectations for these members which, in turn, exemplify what is expected from them as leaders – their EI skills and leadership practices every day at school.

Although the second policy, SASP (RSA DoE, 2016b), only focuses on school principals, it is still an appropriate indication of what is required of school leaders. Also, as the PAM (RSA DoE, 2016a:s. A.5) indicates, at times other SMT members such as the deputy principal or HOD are required to take over the role of the principal in his/her absence. Therefore, the SASP could be applicable to other SMT members as well since it may be required of them to step into the role at certain times. The SASP (RSA DoE, 2016b:s. 5) highlights key aspects required for school principals focussing on professional leadership and management. These include (a) leading teaching and learning which includes a few primary leadership styles, (b) directing the school's development and vision, (c) oversee instruction quality and ensuring accountability, (d) developing and empowering self and others, (e) managing the school as an organisation, (f) collaborating with the community, (g) supervising the school's human resources (staff), and (h) overseeing and advocating extramural activities (RSA DoE, 2016b:s. 5).

The PAM document policy briefly exemplifies and serves as evidence of how school leaders' jobs became more expanded and overloaded over the last few years (Allen, 2022:101). Yet, school leaders are expected to perform their duties effectively and flawlessly, whilst facing enormous pressures since, according to Blose et al. (2022:2), the leadership and management of a school is crucial for school success. It seems that the main aspect for SMT members according to the PAM document is that of collaborating with other teachers and SMT members, for example, guiding inexperienced teachers, supervising teachers in different departments, other

educational stakeholders or working together with the deputy or school principal. This is also evident for school principals in the SASP (RSA DoE, 2016b) where the eight crucial aspects for management and leadership focus on collaborating with other educational stakeholders.

However, this could have potential implications for SMT members who are ultimately trained as teachers. It was indicated by Naidoo (2019:2) and Sepure and Mohlakwana (2020:1) that no additional training or qualifications are needed for teachers to become school leaders. Although these policies serve as a great and thorough guide for school leaders on what is expected and what is required, the EI skills and leadership practices may still lack (Tapala et al., 2021:783). This could result in ineffective management and leadership in schools. However, enhancing EI skills for improved leadership practices, SMT members may strive and be more successful in their respective roles. As a result, schools could function more effectively and successfully since SMT members' leadership practices could be improved through the enhancement of specific and appropriate EI skills. With a comprehensive outline of expectations and recommendations for SMT members, there may be additional educational challenges SMT members face daily. These challenges will be addressed and discussed in the section to follow.

3.3 EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES SMT MEMBERS ENCOUNTER

The educational challenges faced by SMT members necessitate sound and specific EI skills. The next discussion highlights and analyses the educational challenges SMT members most commonly encounter. This provides a better understanding of what SMT members encounter and which EI skills may be needed to deal with these challenges that hinder leadership practices and ultimately the management and leadership of a school.

3.3.1 Implementation of change in schools

Change in the world cannot be denied or avoided. Moreover, change in schools should not be avoided since it may lead to failure (Lastovska, Surikavo, Silina-Jasjukeviča & Lūsēna-Ezera, 2023:648). As stated by Lastovska et al. (2023:648), when change is avoided, the school's goals may not or cannot be fully reached. One of the challenges for school leaders implementing change is getting the rest of the school, the staff

members, and parents, to buy into and implement said change. This is a common educational challenge for SMT members since change may cause either a positive or negative reaction (Lastovska et al., 2023:648). However, regardless of the attitude towards change, SMT members need to realise the importance of getting the rest of the teachers to buy into change because they are ultimately the “main recipients of change” (Lastovska et al., 2023:649).

Although teachers may resist change, one of the ways that school leaders can successfully implement change and persuade teachers in their schools is through effective communication (Fuller & Sada, 2022:191; Lastovska, et al., 2023:663). When communication about change is effectively done, there is understanding amongst teachers for the reasons and effects of said change (Lastovska et al., 2023:663). Also, school leaders who are willing to communicate and listen to others make change in their school more possible and profound (Fuller & Sada, 2022:191). Communication, which includes regular feedback, openness to opinions and ideas, makes teachers more positive and willing towards change, and implementing the change recommended by their school leaders (Lastovska et al., 2023:661).

On the other hand, it is also important to note that school leaders’ goals should not just be to get teachers and the rest of the school on board when the implementation of change occurs. School leaders need to be more supportive during the stage of change as well. One other important finding from Acton (2021:47) is that support during the change is important where school leaders provide support to teachers through textbooks, technology, development, and services, for instance.

3.3.2 Workload

It has been noted by Turkoglu and Cansoy (2020:177) and Wieczorek and Manard (2018:15) that multiple tasks and heavy workload on school leaders was a daily challenge which tends to prove overwhelming. Another study by Naidoo (2019:9) indicates that school leaders, particularly school principals, have “unrealistically high” amounts of work. It has also been found by Wang, Pollock and Hauseman (2018:74) that the intense workload keeps school leaders from completing their daily routine and common daily tasks. The effects of this workload on SMT members may therefore be overwhelming, resulting in stress and pressure which may negatively affect their work,

health, and leadership effectiveness. This is in line with what Bayar (2016:194) and Wang et al. (2018:75) observed, that due to increased workload, school leaders were more vulnerable to negative consequences such as work-related stress. It is important to note that numerous studies (Bayar 2016:194; Turkoglu & Cansoy, 2020:178; Wang et al., 2018:75) found that school leaders under extensive stress from their workload resulted in burnout and mental health issues whilst, consequently, resignation amongst SMT members, especially school principals, was more likely.

Additionally, teacher neglect is another issue as SMT members are unable to allocate time to all their teachers (Taole, 2022:17). To add, this may result in teachers being left unmonitored and feeling unsupported. On the contrary, Leaf (2023:187) found that school principals desire deputy principals to support teachers more, develop staff and deliver professional development; however, this is impossible due to their workload and time taken up elsewhere, such as student discipline, student academic achievement and monitoring HODs. Additionally, Mestry (2019:102) also found that a heavy workload made it very difficult for the entire SMT to focus on instructional matters – in other words, providing support and guidance to teachers. For example, it has been found that the main responsibility of HODs was curriculum delivery, and that if teaching and learning needs to be improved, the HODs would have to spend more time on supervising the curriculum and teachers allocated to them (Bush & Glover, 2016:216; Mthiyane, Naidoo & Bertram, 2019:58; Tapala, van Niekerk & Mentz, 2021:777). However, HODs are full-time teachers as well, making it very difficult for them to perform all their duties and responsibilities successfully and effectively.

One of the other responsibilities of SMT members, according to the PAM (RSA DoE, 2016a:s. A.5) document is to make sure workloads and responsibilities are equally and fairly divided amongst teachers. Workload allocation to teachers is a sensitive subject and, if not done in a manner where all parties can agree, it may lead to severe negative consequences such as conflict, decrease in job satisfaction and lack of motivation. However, when SMT members use fairness, equity, communication and transparency, workload and duties allocation to teachers have shown to be more successful (Mophosho, 2014:29). Additionally, when SMT members included teachers in the decision-making process through having meetings to discuss and negotiate workload allocation, there proved to be more willingness and openness to acceptance

without negatively impacting the teachers. This may also lead to more transparency and fairness as all teachers are allocated the same number of extra responsibilities and duties (Mandu, 2019:40; Mophosho, 2014:29).

3.3.3 Balancing of responsibilities

Compared to the workload and demands SMT members encounter, balancing of responsibilities particularly refers to SMT members' difficulties in balancing their work and personal lives. Literature indicates that another foremost challenge that SMT members face, despite the workload, is getting the balance right between work and their personal lives – including time for their families (Elomaa, Eskelä-Haapanen, Pakarinen, Halttunen & Lerkkanen, 2023:871; Taole, 2022:18; Wieczorek & Manard, 2018:15).

It has been observed by Taole (2022:19) that school leaders, mainly school principals, work after hours and on weekends to fulfil their duties and responsibilities, thereby compromising on family time. In this study (Taole, 2022:19), it was also found that one principal was not even able to attend family gatherings or funerals over weekends as to ensure work gets done. In another study by Turkoglu and Cansoy (2020:183), it was found that school leaders plan their private lives according to their school responsibilities. SMT members may end up neglecting time with families to complete administration tasks. Interestingly, Elomaa et al. (2023:871) describe the importance of family time as fuelling power for school leaders to recharge and lessen work-related stress. One suggestion to find that healthy balance is for SMT members to compartmentalise; keeping work issues at work and personal issues at home (Pretorius, 2021:120). Therefore, the importance of SMT members' needs and obligations to establish the balance between work and family time is not just for the benefit of their families but equally important for their own personal well-being as well.

3.3.4 Department of Education and district officials

The Department of Basic Education and district officials are expected to support school principals (Cibane, 2020:27; Department of Basic Education, 2013; Steyn & Fuller, 2023:298). Unfortunately, based on numerous studies, SMT members, especially school principals, do not receive the necessary support from district offices to ensure effective teaching and learning is taking place (Bantwini & Moorosi,

2018:757; Cibane, 2020:37; Sell, 2020:39; Shongwe & Mutambara, 2023:272; Steyn & Fuller, 2023:296). Although the lack of support and other challenges from district-based officials may be a worldwide phenomenon experienced by school principals, it can still have serious negative effects such as poor academic achievement amongst learners (Sell, 2020:39; Steyn & Fuller, 2023:297). It came to light that district officials may experience challenges themselves such as lack of resources, for example, motor vehicles to do school visits or shortage of district personnel (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018:763; Sell, 2020:40). Regardless, the section to follow discusses some of the common challenges SMT members experience from the Department of Education and district officials.

3.3.4.1 Administration

In a recent study by Steyn and Fuller (2023:300), it was found that administration causes school principals to be overwhelmed and find it difficult to adapt. To add, it was indicated that school principals spend most of their time in administrative duties and meeting expectations from the district officials. Besides the large amount of administrative work, another study by Turkoglu and Cansoy (2020:185) noted that official correspondence required quick responses or submissions. As a result, this may cause principals to neglect more necessary daily school requirements in order to comply with departmental officials. Similarly, another study found that principals saw departmental officials' correspondence as frustrating and akin to crisis management (Pretorius, 2021:106). The reason for this is because an email may occur at any time of the day requiring principals to complete and submit immediately. Furthermore, these principals admitted that shortcuts are often taken to meet deadlines, resulting in poor quality of work (Pretorius, 2021:106). Moreover, school principals indicated in a study that most of these documents and reports sent by district officials are duplicates and take a lot of time which is taken away from their primary roles at the school (Steyn & Fuller, 2023:300). It was also noted by Steyn and Fuller (2023:300) that these vast amounts of administrative duties impact the school leaders' leadership negatively.

3.3.4.2 Communication and meetings

In a recent study by Steyn and Fuller (2023:299), it was found that school principals experienced communication with district officials as poor and unclear. To add, the lack

of feedback from district officials was also a major concern for school principals (Steyn & Fuller, 2023:299). Additionally, it was found in another study (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018:763) that school principals find it difficult and challenging to get district officials to respond to issues and deal with changes that need immediate responses. Regarding meetings that SMT members are required to attend, it is often considered to be 'useless' (Cibane, 2020:62). According to findings from Cibane's (2020:62) and Sell's (2020:15) studies, SMT members often find nothing meaningful from meetings based on improving their school's teaching and learning and, instead, would only receive blame and shame when performing poorly.

3.3.4.3 Resources

The provision of resources is a common challenge for school principals, especially in poorer school communities (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018:762; Steyn & Fuller, 2023:300). Besides school principals that must deal with problems such as classrooms, equipment and maintenance, the other most common challenge that numerous school principals face is human resources – in other words, the lack of teachers provided from the Department of Education (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018:762; Steyn & Fuller, 2023:300; Tsakeni et al., 2021:1311). It is stated that school principals find it difficult to appoint new and additional teachers as their schools grow because of lack of funding which leads to overcrowding in classrooms and teachers teaching subjects they are not qualified to teach (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018:762; Steyn & Fuller, 2023:300). A negative consequence for the lack of teachers is also reported by Bantwini and Moorosi (2018:762) as leading to inferior quality of teaching and learning in schools. Similar findings were reported by Tsakeni et al. (2021:1312), stating that a high teacher-learner ratio places more pressure on teachers and may negatively impact the quality of teaching and learning.

Not only is the lack of teachers therefore a challenge for schools, but the prolonged periods that it takes to appoint school principals also impact teachers and the rest of the SMT negatively (Khumalo, 2021:9). According to Khumalo (2021:9), the leading and management of a school is at risk when school principals are not immediately appointed. Furthermore, this also creates expectations which are not always met, for instance, when an acting principal is not eventually appointed but rather a new candidate is given the position (Khumalo, 2021:9).

3.3.5 Learner academic achievement

Numerous research studies indicate a strong and positive relationship between the leadership of a school and learner academic achievement (De Nobile, 2018:409; Jackson, McBrayer, Pannell, Cleveland & Miller, 2021:1; Leithwood, Sun & Schumacker, 2020:571; Memela & Ramrathan, 2022:2; Naidoo, 2019:1; Wang et al., 2018:87). It is argued by Naidoo (2019:1) that poor leadership in schools leads to poor learner academic performance. Supportive of this statement are Memela and Ramrathan (2022:3) who argue that learner performance in schools is an indication of poor school leadership and management. Furthermore, findings from their study (Memela & Ramrathan, 2022:4) confirmed the role and importance school leadership plays in learner academic performance.

Amongst the highest of expectations from school principals and their teams are good academic outcomes and high learner performance (Naidoo, 2019:1). Medford and Brown (2022:8) indicate that another reason this is important for school principals is because learners' poor academic achievement displays a poor image of their respective school, and of the principal. For school effectiveness and academic performance to be achieved, Wang et al. (2018:870) highlight how important the leadership a school is. In other research, it was discovered by De Nobile (2018:409) that effective school leadership, from principal to department heads, contributed positively to learner academic achievement as well as learner wellbeing. Thus, the pressure on school principals and SMT members to ensure academic outcomes and objectives are achieved is enormous.

Another study made a significant finding regarding the pressures to perform on school leaders (Cibane, 2020:64; Pretorius, 2021:109). It was found by Cibane (2020:64) that school principals are under constant pressure for results, especially grade 12 results. Comparable results were reported by Sell (2020:118) who stated that the setting of unrealistically high academic standards is asking the school principals to do something beyond their capabilities. The expectations from the Department of Education, School Governing Body (SGB) and parents are mounted on school leaders' shoulders since results and academic achievement as well as improvement are expected. This corresponds with findings from Turkoglu and Cansoy (2020:180) who found that school leaders are exposed to high demands from educational stakeholders and are

expected to respond to these demands and provide results. According to another study, one principal highlighted a major problem with these expectations; ultimately, the focus of school leaders tends to shift towards "...coach[ing] learners to pass exams" (Pretorius, 2021:109) instead of preparing the overall balanced learner for life after school, which includes wellbeing, emotional readiness, cultural competency, and resilience. Another problem, however, is that school principals are left unsupported when it comes to improving these results (Cibane, 2020:65). Findings therefore correlate with that of Sell (2020:117) who reported that school principals have a negative bearing of the support they get from district officials, such as in the way they communicate.

3.3.6 School culture

Schools are a unique combination of diverse cultures, values, socioeconomic status and living styles which should be cherished and respected. According to Atasoy (2020:257), a school culture is defined as

the historically rooted and socially transmitted set of deep patterns of meaning including the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, traditions, and myths understood by principals, teachers, students and other stakeholders of the school community.

Nevertheless, school leaders have the massive responsibility of ensuring that a school culture is created, maintained, adapted, and developed that is inclusive, accepting and supporting towards all to guarantee effective teaching and learning takes place. That is, however, the ultimate objective of a school – to ensure the learners achieve their greatest potential.

Naidoo (2019:3) states that school principals and leaders face daily challenges to ensure a positive school culture for effective teaching and learning. It is expected that school leadership, particularly school principals, demonstrate specific leadership skills and qualities to achieve and maintain an educational environment where teaching and learning may flourish (Atasoy, 2020:258; Naidoo, 2019:3). It is similarly argued by Shelbi and Alhosani (2022:6656) that the importance of ensuring a good and effective school culture as it can be used as a tool by school leaders to guide and influence teachers.

A successful or positive school culture is described by Tingle, Corrales and Peters (2019:4) as the commonly shared support, goals and values between both the learners and teachers which allows an atmosphere where both feel a sense of belonging. According to Shelbi and Alhosani (2022:6656), work and the achievement of goals will come much easier with a school that shares a positive culture.

The responsibility to ensure and create this positive culture in the school, however, is not just that of the principal but multiple stakeholders (Tingle et al., 2019:4). It is argued by both Aquino, Afalla and Fabelico (2021:1326) and Tingle et al. (2019:5) that school leadership cannot possibly be attributed to a single individual – the school principal, particularly – when it comes to ensuring a positive school culture where teaching and learning can flourish. Nevertheless, it is still the responsibility of the principal to set the expectations, tone of the school, and lead by example which is an overall key factor in teacher morale and the culture of the school (Tingle et al., 2019:4). This is supported by Shelbi and Alhosani (2022:6656) who argue that it is the school leadership's responsibility to associate all the individuals with the shared school culture. Basically, this requires the school principal to lead by example and ensure everyone buys into the culture. However, at the same time, they need the support of other leaders, such as the SMT, through delegation to promote and implement the desired school culture which will confirm effective teaching and learning.

3.3.7 Teachers

One of the main arguments from Aquino et al. (2021:1325) is that encouragement and enrichment from school principals for teachers should be a necessity. Furthermore, school principals are expected to be team players which Aquino et al. (2021:1326) believe will have an impact on the quality of instruction as well as academic performances (Medford & Brown, 2022:8). It is not always that easy, as a study by Wang et al. (2018:84) found that difficult, unwilling to change, and disrespectful teachers had a severely negative affect on school principals' job satisfaction. Additionally, Medford and Brown (2022:9) also found that school principals face serious challenges in managing negative and unacceptable teacher behaviours. Furthermore, this could lead to seriously negative effects such as school principals choosing to resign and remain teachers (Pretorius, 2021:24; Wang et al., 2018:77).

According to Bayar (2016:194), a study conducted with 200 school principals showed that problems and challenges with teachers were a recurring issue, and that most principals would rather leave their administrative positions. It was found that issues such as staff satisfaction, stress management, poor working conditions, motivation, distribution of responsibilities, poor relationships, lack of support from leaders, teaching subjects and workload were amongst the main reasons for teachers' dissatisfaction and causes of stress at their school, which made it more challenging for the SMT (Aydin & Kaya, 2016:189; Harmsen, Helms-Lorenz, Maulana & van Veen, 2017:28; Pretorius, 2021:111). In a study by Tapala et al. (2021:779) it was found that HODs spend much time resolving conflict among teachers. Additionally, Leithwood (2016:124) found that teachers do not support the role of deputy principals or HODs, especially where they must be observed teaching since they believe that they do not influence their teaching and classroom practice.

However, both Aquino et al. (2021:1326) and Medford and Brown (2022:9) discovered that when school leaders reached out to establish a relationship, use encouragement, motivational strategies and directing teachers towards their greatest potential, that work productivity and performance among teachers improved significantly. This is consistent with findings of a study by De Nobile (2018:401), which revealed that encouragement and support from school principals had a positive impact on teachers' confidence and professional development. In another study by Mohammed and Abdulia (2022:217), it was found that by only focussing on the motivation of teachers, there was noteworthy improvement in their commitment, dedication, productivity, willingness to do more, job satisfaction and academic performance.

The SMT collaborates with teachers daily, as each individual member has teachers under their command and care. In general, therefore, it seems that teacher problems and challenges which may cause severe consequences if not looked after may be avoided and managed effectively by the SMT.

3.3.8 Parents

Pressure on school principals might have increased over the years since society has become more complex; thus, schools play an essential role in response to the needs of the learners and their parents (Elomaa et al., 2023:877). Memela and Ramrathan

(2022:2) mention that a crucial part of the school leadership process is guiding parents towards achieving educational objectives and goals. It is not always that easy, as school leaders, to deal with parents' often negative attitudes, lack of support and involvement in the school and their children on a daily basis (Elomaa et al., 2023:879; Medford & Brown, 2022:1; Schreiber, 2019:51). Additionally, one of the daily challenges for school leaders noted by Memela and Ramrathan (2022:2) is resolving conflict with parents.

Therefore, it is likely that school leaders may face more stress and pressure due to the challenges from parents which may affect them negatively. It was showed by Wang et al. (2018:82) that a lack of respect from parents negatively affected school leaders' job satisfaction. School leaders, particularly the principal, deals more frequently with parents, and managing parents' relations and queries compared to other stakeholders (Naidoo, 2019:1; Schreiber, 2019:44). However, it is confirmed by Benoliel (2020:298) that it is not just the school principal dealing with parents, but the rest of the SMT as well as teachers.

On the other hand, it is vital for parents to be part of the school and be involved. This correlates with the work of Schreiber (2019:51) and Yulianti, Denessen, Droop and Veerman (2022:98) who found that parent involvement is a strong indicator for learners' academic success. The research by Memela and Ramrathan (2022:2) and Sibanda (2021:1) also indicated that lack of support from parents was a reason for the poor performance of learners and the state of the school. On the other hand, schools need to consider socio-economic backgrounds as well as the circumstances of some parents. For instance, it was indicated by Sibanda (2021:4) that one of the reasons for the lack of parental involvement was due to poverty, full-time employment, single parents or even children being the heads of households, in some instances.

For the benefit of the school, it is argued by Basson and Mestry (2019:3) that school leaders and parents establish a relationship of mutual trust and understanding. The principal, however, has a crucial role in establishing and laying the foundation of the relationship between the rest of the SMT members, teachers, and parents (Basson & Mestry, 2019:6; Yulianti et al., 2022:98). Similarly, Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2020:8) indicate that strong relationships with parents is one of the leadership practices that successful school leaders engage in. One other strategy from

Schreiber's (2019:113) findings was having an open-door policy, which resulted in parents feeling more comfortable to support and share any suggestions with the school. Additionally, parental involvement seemed to increase when schools allowed and involved parents in social tasks (Mhlanga, 2019:51). Lastly, effective, and regular communication between parents and school leaders who share the school vision and are welcoming ensured an increase in parental involvement (Nguyen et al., 2022:474; Yulianti et al., 2022:98).

The results from these findings suggest that parents may be a great challenge for the SMT as their daily tasks; however, if they manage to get it right with the parents – building relationships and getting them involved with the school – the benefits for the school are much greater.

3.3.9 Summary of educational challenges SMTs encounter

This section addresses and discusses common educational challenges, according to literature, that SMTs encounter daily. Some of these challenges are with implementing change, workload, and educational stakeholders such as the Department of Education, teachers and parents. Along with these challenges, and the added responsibilities and duties of a SMT member, there is enormous pressure and stress to perform effectively and successfully as a school leader to ensure the success of a school, which comes down to professional management and leadership. However, with the enhancement of EI skills, there may be improved leadership practices. In the next section, the discussion is based around the combination of how appropriate and specific EI skills and leadership practices may ensure SMT members are better equipped to deal with any educational challenges and/or perform their duties and responsibilities more effectively, sufficiently, and professionally. By doing this, there could be an increase in positive and effective management and leadership in a school.

3.4 HOW ENHANCED EI SKILLS MAY IMPROVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Goleman (1995:34) proposed that the EI plays a crucial role in an individual's success in his/her personal life as well as work environment. The argument is that, at best, 20% of the intelligence quotient (IQ) contributes as a factor to the determination of life success (Goleman, 1995:34; Lubbadah, 2020:44). Thus, 80% is left to other factors to

contribute to life success; therefore, Goleman (1995:34) argues that EI may play a significant role in the success of an individual in life – work, leadership, personal and so on. According to Coleman and Ali (2022:2), a lot of research and studies have been done in the last 30 years regarding the potential value and impact EI has on an individual's personal and professional performance. Numerous studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between EI and leadership (Afrifa et al., 2021:37; Blaik-Hourani, Litz & Parkman, 2021:497; Gómez-Leal et al., 2021:12; Lubbadeh, 2020:44). According to Lubbadeh (2020:44), EI plays an indispensable role in leadership effectiveness. It has been noted by Debes (2021:150) that effective leaders are set apart from others because of their high EI. Additionally, studies have discovered that EI enhances a leader's ability to solve, organise and approach any issues and challenges that challenge them and their team (Lubbadeh, 2020:44). Furthermore, Afrifa et al. (2021:37) discovered that emotionally intelligent leaders understand their team members better, which results in open-mindedness, broader thinking and perspectives, and better decision-making. Lastly, leaders with higher EI were considered more influential since understanding their team members' emotions produced findings of more support and responsiveness towards the goals and objectives set by the leader and/or organisation (Lubbadeh, 2020:44).

In the educational context, EI and educational leadership have also obtained positive results in research. For instance, Blaik-Hourani, Litz, Ali, Azaza and Parkman (2023:255) argue, with compelling evidence, that school improvement and effectiveness is only actualised when school leaders are emotionally intelligent. Furthermore, Mendelson and Stabile (2019:13) found that almost 14% of the performance rating of a school leader can be attributed to the EI he/she possesses. To add, two studies by Blaik-Hourani et al. (2023:259) and Tai and Kareem (2019:470) indicated that successful schools had school leaders who demonstrated various EI skills. Thus, the argument around a school leader's level of EI and the effective management and leadership of a school, and its performance is strongly supported. On the contrary, it has been proposed by Tai and Kareem (2019:472) that one of the reasons for dysfunctionalities in schools may be a lack of EI since the presence and role of emotion in traditional leadership and management has been ignored, overlooked, and neglected in the past.

3.4.1 Challenges

It is noted by Coleman and Ali (2022:3) that EI is of value particularly during challenging times since educational leaders manage stress, frustration and disappointment much better. Furthermore, it has been found in their study (Coleman & Ali, 2022:3) that colleagues and team members place immense value on their leaders when EI is demonstrated during challenging times. This may lead to an increase of trust, commitment, and confidence in their leaders with an added effect of more support for their leaders. This is also confirmed by Pellitteri (2021:46) who found that when a school leader stands up and acts during challenging or critical times, feelings of hope and confidence may be assured in the team. Additionally, it also ensures school leaders stay resilient and optimistic (Olmo-Extremera, Townsend & Segovia, 2022:12). This is particularly crucial for SMT members to be able to shift their perspectives during challenging times, to be optimistic and stay focused on the main goals.

3.4.2 Leaders' awareness of strengths and weaknesses

Being aware of one's strengths and weaknesses may be greatly beneficial both personally and professionally (Dierdorff, Fisher & Rubin, 2019:2892; Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2023:65; Tamunomiebi & Owzorji, 2018:131). One effective method is to do self-assessment, which is a sub-EI skill under self-awareness. When school leaders are more aware and understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, they are more likely to be successful and effective in managing and leading the school (Dierdorff, Fisher & Rubin, 2019:2892; Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2023:65; Tamunomiebi & Owzorji, 2018:131).

One important aspect of doing self-assessment was highlighted by Tamunomiebi and Owzorji (2018:131), indicating that it leads to improving a school leader's self-awareness. By being more emotionally intelligent and self-aware, school leaders may generally improve themselves by working on their weaknesses. According to Dierdorff et al. (2019:2913), school leaders who are more aware and understanding of their strengths and weaknesses will be able to make better decisions, deal with demanding situations more effectively, and be more effective team members. The reason being, school leaders will know when a situation falls in their areas of weakness, thus, being

able to ask for assistance or to delegate duties or activities to team members who may have a knack for the particular situation (Dierdorff et al., 2019:2913; Tamunomiebi & Oworji, 2018:131). Self-assessment may therefore be of terrific value for SMT members, when done accurately (Dierdorff et al., 2018:2892), and may improve their leadership practices. Also, SMT members may become more aware in their areas of leadership practices and which areas to improve on. One finding from Pretorius and Plaatjies (2023:61) indicated that a school leader may change their weakness into a strength once self-assessment is done and continuous development of the particular weakness occurs.

3.4.3 Assertiveness

One of the required leadership practices for successful and effective school management and leadership is communication (Day et al., 2020:16; Leithwood et al., 2020:573). However, one component for effective communication required by a SMT member is assertiveness. Assertiveness is defined by Sitota (2018:41) as the ability to “communicate opinions, needs and feeling in a direct, honest and appropriate manner”. There are advantages when SMT members are assertive, for example, it has been found by Lazenby (2015:79) that school leaders who were more assertive dealt with conflict situations more effectively and successfully compared to school leaders being less assertive. Furthermore, school leaders’ assertiveness led to an increase in mutual respect and authenticity which resulted in more support from teachers (Rofiki, Diana & Amin, 2022:4027). This was also confirmed by Lazenby (2015:79) who reported that assertive school leaders were seen as more competent, and thus more respected and supported. One downside, however, is that assertive school leaders may be seen as unsympathetic and dominating in certain situations (Lazenby, 2015:81). On the other hand, when school leaders are assertive, they can stand up for what is right regarding the needs of the school, which occasionally requires unsympathetic and dominating decisions (Rofiki et al., 2022:4031). It has been reported by Naidoo (2019:8) that when school leaders lack or are weak in the area of being assertive, they may give in more easily to the pressures of other educational stakeholders, such as parents, other SMT members or the governing bodies which may not always have the best interest of the school at heart. These educational stakeholders may not always be aware of the needs of the school since they are not

always physically present; thus, SMT members require a certain degree of assertiveness to effectively practice the leadership needed for a successful school (Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2023:67).

3.4.4 Emotional self-awareness

Being emotionally self-aware does not just refer to identifying the emotions in oneself, but more importantly to understand such emotions as well as the impact it may have (Goleman et al., 2013:39; Livesey, 2017:27). Thus, when SMT members are not aware of the impact their emotions may have on the working environment it may lead to catastrophe. In fact, Tamunomiebi and Oworji (2018:133) claim that a school leader lacking this may be considered blind – meaning, situations may get managed ineffectively and negatively without SMT members being aware, which may impact the staff members negatively. This is supported by Burns (2017:45) who reports that negative emotions and behaviour from school leaders result in a decrease in job satisfaction as well as motivation amongst staff members. Moreover, it is reported in another study (Bower, O'Connor, Harris & Frick, 2018:126) that school leaders who acted on negative emotions resulted in a loss of trust from their teachers. However, leaders who showed significant ability to manage their own emotions were found to be better able to recognise and avoid negative emotions and feelings when they did arrive – which may have a negative impact on the person and/or the work environment (Afrifa et al., 2021:37; Lubbadah, 2020:44).

Also, when SMT members are able to be emotionally self-aware and understand these emotions, they may experience the impact it may have, and there might be more success in their leadership practices, as well as in the management of their schools. There are numerous strategies SMT members can use to manage their own emotions (Hauseman, 2021:631). Some of the most common strategies in literature, according to Hauseman (2021:631), include suppressing true emotions by concealing it with a mask, talking to colleagues about emotionally challenging situations, talking to family members, various activities to distract themselves, situation selection or situation modification.

In a study by Buskila and Chen-Levi (2021:166), it was reported that a positive working environment is more likely to occur when a school leader is more emotionally

expressive. To add, these leaders are also seen as more charismatic which may lead to more support and trust amongst staff members (Buskila & Chen-Levi, 2021:166; Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2023:66). Moreover, it was confirmed by Bower et al. (2018:127) that when SMT members were more emotionally expressive, their teachers experienced them as more approachable and compassionate; thus, it might also explain the increase in trust and support. In addition, when SMT members can identify an emotion they experience and understand that emotion, they are more likely to manage such emotions – especially negative ones such as anger in tricky situations where anger may cause negative consequences (Tamunomiebi & Owzorji, 2018:134).

It is also confirmed in a study by Bajali (2019:54) that when school leaders can firstly identify and understand the emotions they experience, they will more likely be able to regulate them well. A negative consequence of not being able to do this is confirmed by Buskila and Chen-Levi (2021:173) in their study when school leaders experience negative emotions and do not understand the impact they may have, and being unable to regulate the emotion, negative feelings may be directed towards teachers which will create stress. Therefore, being emotionally self-aware may positively impact SMT members' leadership practices. Once SMT members are able to identify and understand their own emotions and the impact they may have on their leadership practices, they are more likely to make conscious decisions regarding this and have better control over negative emotions with negative consequences (Bajali, 2019:54).

3.4.5 Identifying emotions

Identifying the emotions of others has a close relationship with identifying emotions in oneself. Moreover, it has been claimed by Mayer et al. (2016:294) that once an individual is able to identify the emotions in themselves, they would master the ability to identify the emotions in others. Additionally, Israelashvili, Oosterwijk, Sauter and Fischer (2019:1468) conclude a strong and positive relationship between one's ability to identify the emotion in oneself and the ability to identify as well as understand the emotion in others. For SMT members, this may become crucial since studies (Pellitteri, 2021:49; Rizvi, Rizvi & Jamal, 2023:51) indicate that when a school leader was able to recognise the emotion in others, the teachers felt more supportive, and this resulted in a stronger relationship as well. Also, Lubbadah (2020:44) notes that leaders with high EI were more successful and effective in influencing and understanding team

members' emotions, which resulted in more support from team members towards the goals set by SMT members. If this is not the case, where SMT members neglect teachers' emotional needs due to their inability to identify and address those emotions, Rizvi et al. (2023:51) pointed out that teachers experience more burnout.

It may not always be as easy as it sounds. According to other studies (Finnigan & Maulding-Green, 2018:47; Israelashvili et al., 2019:1468; Keating & Cook, 2023:9), this resistance is developed over years through experience and exposure. It was claimed in a study by Keating and Cook (2023:9) that with consistent exposure to the emotions of others, identifying those emotions became more accurate. Additionally, Israelashvili et al. (2019:1462) point out that the conceptual emotional knowledge of an individual also assists in more effective emotional identification in others. Therefore, being exposed to different emotions over time may lead to better knowledge and understanding of emotions and how to identify them. Thus, it may be argued that when SMT members improve at this ability, there may be more success in their leadership practices in areas such as communication, motivation, support, and relationship building with teachers.

3.4.6 School change

The research of Blaik-Hourani et al. (2023:262) shows the positive impact emotionally intelligent school leaders had during times of school transformation and change. Furthermore, Tai and Kareem (2019:471) reasoned that EI skills among school leaders, such as recognising and expressing emotion of oneself and others, the use of emotions to establish strong healthy relationships, motivation and the use of emotions to create a cooperative working environment, would shape a positive attitude towards change.

According to Issah (2018:3), people's resistance to change can be divided into two categories: the rational and irrational resistance to change. When colleagues, team members or followers experience feelings of being left out or non-involvement, rational resistance occurs. On the other hand, irrational resistance refers to members resisting for its own sake, such as feelings of resentment or fear of not being recognised (Issah, 2018:3). However, Tai and Kareem (2019:477) argue that school leaders' ability to recognise and express emotions may allow them to identify any resistant and negative

behaviours or feelings towards change from teachers. This, in turn, may allow SMT members to make better judgements and decisions to overcome and effectively deal with and manage any resistant, negative behaviours or emotions toward the proposed change for the school. This is where expressing emotions may also assist SMT members in addressing emotional issues to the right person and at the right time, especially in the beginning stages of change when emotional processes are higher than rationality (Tai & Kareem, 2019:477). Furthermore, Issah (2018:3) argues that emotionally intelligent school leaders will be able to use their social skills to persuade and inspire individuals towards change. To add, emotionally intelligent school leaders may also be able to identify and understand the emotions of their team, thus allowing them to provide sufficient support especially during changing situations (Issah, 2018:4).

A study by Fannon (2018:72) confirmed a positive and strong association between school leaders' EI and transformational leadership. Transformational leadership, as explained earlier, is related to working with others towards change; thus, the higher the EI of SMT members, the higher the leadership practices that encompass transformation, such as setting a vision, influence, executing change and inspiration. Additionally, in another study, the conclusion was made that a degree of EI is required among school leaders to transform the school as well as the school community into a positive climate to achieve the vision and goals of the school (Salip & Quines, 2023:1).

3.4.7 Adaptability

In a demanding and complex educational environment, it is vital for SMT members to be able to adapt (Fernandes, Wong & Noonan, 2022:485). It has been claimed by Sánchez-Núñez et al. (2023:54) that the educational environment is adaptive, and if SMT members fail to adapt, they may cause more harm than good to their schools. As mentioned earlier, adaptability is the ability to change according to changing situations (Goleman, et al., 2013:39, Livesey, 2017:27). Adaptability is an EI skill listed by Goleman (in Livesey, 2017:27), Bar-On (2006:23) and Petrides and Furnham (Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018:27). Through EI skills, SMT members are more likely to be adaptable, thus new and demanding situations which may disrupt the teaching and learning of a school can easily be adapted to and resolved. It has been indicated by Lastovska et al. (2023:651) that older and more experienced teachers and school

leaders are less open and willing to adapt, resisting new ways or unconventional methods. However, it is still necessary for SMT members since adaptability may find new and better solutions to problems (Fernandes et al., 2022:485). Furthermore, SMT members being adaptable will build up their resilience, and encourage and motivate staff members to take up innovation and find creative methods to effectively resolve any unforeseen challenges that may arise (Bagwell, 2020:32).

Regarding SMT members and/or teachers who may struggle to adapt to new situations, Granziera, Collie and Martin (2019:63) suggest methods such as role-playing, scenario-based learning and workshops where teachings focus on specific skills. To add, another method of making adaptability easier is mentorship, when a SMT member works with more experienced school leaders, observing and/or asking for advice and guidance (Granziera et al. 2019:64). Additionally, Yukl and Mahsud (2010:86) propose that SMT members analyse situations before acting or implementing. By doing this, the situation's possibilities, risks and solutions can be analysed which make adapting easier as well as effective for them.

Therefore, it is important that SMT members find ways to improve and develop their adaptability because they cannot expect staff members to adapt if they are unable or unwilling to adapt (Issah, 2018:4). SMT members who are emotionally intelligent are more likely to be adaptable which results in finding new and improved solutions which may increase the teaching and learning of a school (Fernandes et al., 2022:488). Also, Hale (2022:106) found that school leaders with higher EI were more capable of adapting both to the school's goals and to changing circumstances.

3.4.8 School climate and performance

A school, or organisational, climate is defined by Salip and Quines (2023:4) as "how everyone who works there feels about it". Based on the literature (see Salip & Quines, 2023:4), there are five factors that affect the climate of an organisation: (a) effective leadership, (b) collaborative teachers, (c) parental involvement, (d) ambitious instruction, and (e) supportive environment. Based on the work and literature on EI, it may be concluded that school leaders' EI can assist in all the above factors to ensure a positive and healthy working climate. Furthermore, Salip and Quines (2023:7) found a significant relationship between school leaders' EI and organisational climate. Thus,

SMT members' EI facilitated productivity among teachers which results in higher motivation and commitment which leads to a better school climate (Salip & Quines, 2023:7). Additionally, EI coupled with leadership practices such as communication and establishing healthy relationships may prove necessary tools for developing and maintaining a positive and healthy school climate (Salip & Quines, 2023:7).

The evidence suggests that when a school climate is good, it may lead to greater performance. A study on SMT members has shown that school improvement depends on their EI skills (Blaik-Hourani et al., 2023:263). It was revealed that SMT members should be able to understand, adapt, manage stress, regulate emotions and cooperate with team members to influence their behaviour and direct them towards achieving the desired and set objectives (Blaik-Hourani et al., 2023:263). Furthermore, EI skills such as assisting other to de-stress, motivating colleagues, professional communication, and providing mentoring were found to be pivotal for school improvement (Blaik-Hourani et al., 2023:264). Besides, a study by Tai and Kareem (2019:477) found a strong relationship between school leaders' level of EI and high performing schools. Additionally, Al-Qadri and Zhao (2021:371) supported with their research that EI indeed has a positive impact on academic performance. Hale (2022:94) found that highly emotionally intelligent school leaders could pave the way to better student performance since developing a positive and significant school climate and environment for effective teaching and learning is greatly impacted by the school leader's EI.

3.4.9 Mentoring

Regarding mentoring, school leaders' EI will determine if mentorship can be successful and effective or not (Blaik-Hourani et al., 2023:264). A mentor can be referred to as a 'parent figure' (Combrinck & Daniels, 2023:2). More formally, it can be defined as a person guiding, advising, supporting and assisting another person (Combrinck & Daniels, 2023:3). Mentoring can be considered an important leadership practice as well, being closely related to developing others under leadership practices, as mentioned by numerous researchers (Day et al., 2020:16; Leithwood, 2012:24; Nadelson et al., 2022:9; Özgenel & Karsantik, 2020:9).

When school leaders can provide mentorship, there may be an increase in teacher efficiency and well-being (Combrinck & Daniels, 2023:2). It was also found from various studies (Combrinck & Daniels, 2023:2; Echon & Cabal, 2022:175; Wold, Moon, Schwan, Neville & Outka, 2023:120) that mentorship will ensure teacher well-being. Teachers will feel supported, and relationships will be established (Bukko, Liu & Johnson, 2021:60; Combrinck & Daniels, 2023:10). It was found by Echon and Cabal (2022:175) that teachers especially experienced burnout and fatigue when the demand for school became overwhelming. However, with mentorship and developed relationships, there is a support and guidance system from teachers and school leaders with experience and knowledge who have most likely been through what they are experiencing (Combrinck & Daniels, 2023:3).

It was noted by Wold et al. (2023:121) that teachers, especially new teachers, may be isolated and may have colleagues without any mentorship. Thus, it seems that with mentorship, teachers will feel more included in the school system and more supported since there will be a school leader who can guide and assist regarding any issues. EI skills such as social awareness (Goleman et al., 2013:39), social responsibility (Bar-On, 2006:23), and sociability (Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018:27) can greatly assist SMT members in being more effective mentors for teachers. This can further improve leadership practices such as building relationships and developing people (Leithwood et al., 2020:573; Janse van Vuuren & van der Bank, 2023:8).

3.4.10 Teacher support, well-being and relationships

EI from leaders has the ability to reduce and help manage the stress of team members which can be significantly increased during challenging times (Coleman & Ali, 2022:3; Puertas-Molero, Zurita-Ortega, Chaçon-Cuberos, Martínez-Martínez, Castro-Sánchez & González-Valero, 2018:524;). It was found that more than 80% of the participants of a study indicated that an emotionally intelligent leader would improve the team members' emotional wellbeing, reduce work anxiety and stress (Coleman & Ali, 2022:3). Additionally, another study from Rizvi et al. (2023:51) found that teachers tend to thrive at work, gain confidence to be innovative and enhance their self-efficacy when school leaders provide them with support. Furthermore, findings from their study (Rizvi et al., 2023:51) showed that once teachers' needs were neglected, there was an increase in burnout among teachers. With improved EI, SMT members may have the

necessary skills such as empathy, identifying the emotions of others, and understanding the emotions of other to provide the support needed by teachers. These are all EI skills listed by Mayer and Salovey (Mayer et al., 2016:294), Goleman (Goleman et al., 2013:39), Bar-On (2006:23), and Petrides & Mavroveli (2018:27).

Regarding empathy, it was found by Bruesch (2021:60) that when school leaders practice some degree of empathy, they were seen as more approachable by teachers. Thus, it may encourage teachers to share any concerns freely and safely with their school leaders. Additionally, with an increase in empathy from school leaders, their relationships with teachers seemed to become stronger and more trusting (Jiang & Lu, 2020:5). This could lead to teachers feeling more supported by their school leaders (McKeown, 2022:71). On the contrary, it was suggested by Bower et al. (2018:124) that school leaders must find a balance in being empathetic as being too empathetic may lead to other problems. In two studies, it was found that when SMT members were too empathetic, other teachers took advantage of this, thus getting away with various transgressions. Also, this caused lower job satisfaction, motivation, and trust among teachers when other teachers got away with this behaviour towards the school leader (Bower et al., 2018:124; Pretorius, 2021:123).

According to Pellitteri (2021:49), school leaders with high levels of EI will more likely be able to identify and be attentive to the emotional needs of individuals and use his/her understanding of these emotions to be an effective guide and/or engage successfully. Additionally, it has been indicated by Salip and Quines (2023:5) that a supportive school environment strengthens healthy mutual relationships. This further results in teachers being more motivated, committed and cooperative towards school objectives (Salip & Quines, 2023:5). On the other hand, constantly meeting the emotional needs of teachers and being empathetic may cause school leaders to become emotionally drained as well, leading to burnout and stress (Pollock, Nielson & Wang, 2023:13; Wang, Pollok & Hauseman, 2023:132). Therefore, healthy relationships are just as crucial for school leaders since it will provide support for them as well as assist in staying motivated and optimistic (Wabule, 2020:83).

Besides the focus of EI on school leaders, Bayraktar, Yalçinkaya and Eytimiş (2021:2242) discovered that individuals with a higher degree of EI demonstrated and achieved better scores in coping with stress and problem-solving. Thus, not just school

leaders, but teachers being more emotionally intelligent may also become more aware of themselves and their environment, being able to evaluate challenges and problems and increase problem-solving (Bayraktar et al., 2021:2242). Equivalent results were achieved by Hale (2022:97) who found that emotionally intelligent school leaders will more likely be able to identify their behaviours, triggers and events that can lead to and cause negative experiences and unhealthy stress.

It was found by Maamari and Majdalani (2017:18) that higher EI showed better social relationships within the working environment as well as higher levels of empathy. Additionally, Hale (2022:104) found that the reason for the higher level of productivity in one school was the EI of the school leaders which led to more healthy and caring working climates and better engagement. Özgenel and Karsantik (2020:9) also concur that support provided by school leaders led to burnout prevention among teachers. Therefore, EI such as relationship management (Goleman et al., 2013:39) may provide school leaders with the necessary skills to couple with their leadership practices, such as building relationships (Leithwood et al., 2020:573; Janse van Vuuren & van der Bank, 2023:8), to provide effective support to their teachers.

3.4.11 Teacher motivation

According to Chinhengo (2023:30), teacher motivation refers to a teacher's confidence in their capability to perform their duties. Also, Wu (2023:73) defined teacher motivation as "the teachers' attitude towards work and their desire to participate in the education process within the school environment". However, it may sometimes be the responsibility of the SMT to motivate and encourage their staff and team – a crucial EI skill listed by all four leading authors on EI (Bar-On, 2006:23; Goleman et al., 2013:39; Mayer et al., 2016:294; Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018:27). A study by Wu (2023:81) found that there is a positive relationship between a school leader's EI and teacher motivation. It has also been noted by Blaik-Hourani et al. (2021:498) that teachers' self-efficacy, motivation and inspiration are impacted by school leaders demonstrating the EI skills of motivation, efficacy and managing emotions. Supporting this notion is Debes (2021:150) who reported that when school leaders' EI is higher, the teachers' attitudes were more positive. This is crucial since Chinhengo (2023:30) and Wu (2023:73) claim that whenever teachers are satisfied, positive and motivated, they

bring their best to the working environment which leads to great benefits for the learners as well as the school.

Motivation, according to the literature (Chinhengo, 2023:25; Wu, 2023:73; Davis, McBrayer, Miller & Fallon, 2022:4), can be either extrinsic or intrinsic. In short, extrinsic motivation is when an individual is driven to achieve something like a goal to receive a reward or salary (Chinhengo, 2023:25; Wu, 2023:73), whereas intrinsic motivation is when an individual engages in pursuing a goal because it is personally rewarding; in other words, to obtain a sense of accomplishment and self-actualisation (Wu, 2023:73). To ensure school leaders motivate their staff members effectively and appropriately, they need to know their staff members. Thus, the EI skills of building bonds and social awareness may be crucial and be intertwined with this skill to become effective motivators. This will also assist with the improvement of leadership practices such as building bonds and implementing the school vision (Janse van Vuuren & van der Bank, 2023:8).

It has been found by Davis et al. (2022:3) that individuals are motivated differently, thus it is important for SMT members to know how and what motivation methods to use. Hence, when SMT members have a good relationship with their staff members, they will discover what may motivate them as well as when it will be appropriate. This has some correlation with the findings of Sheperd-Jones and Salisbury-Glennon (2018:117) who found that school leaders who could relate to teachers, meaning being aware, understanding and attending to their needs, showed an increase in motivation.

Therefore, it is important for SMT members to be able to motivate their staff members which may lead to greater benefits for both parties as well as the school's vision and goals in general. Thus, the EI skill of motivation may increase the leadership practices of SMT members to achieve the goals and vision more easily and effectively.

3.4.12 Conflict management

Conflict management should be considered a crucial skill for SMT members. Conflict is defined by Clifford and Ejike (2022:209) as "a situation of unease, which could manifest in the form of grievance, fight, quarrel and other forms of emotional outburst". Conflict in schools is inevitable (Clifford & Ejike, 2022:207; Sepiriti, 2023:6), thus SMT members should be prepared when conflict situations arise. The reason conflict is

unavoidable is that a school consists of a variety of people from various background and cultures working together towards the school's vision and goals (Clifford & Ejike, 2022:207). Therefore, if SMT members, being entrusted to lead and manage the teaching and learning, are not able to effectively resolve conflict, it may result in ineffective teaching and learning within the school (Sepiriti, 2023:1). Ineffective management of conflict may also lead to a negative school culture, low productivity, decrease in motivation and job satisfaction, increase in stress and tension and hindering school goals (Clifford & Ejike, 2022:207; Etomes & Molua, 2019:193; Sepiriti, 2023:6). However, it was found by researchers that when EI is higher in school leaders, there is better management and resolving of conflict (Hale, 2022:106; Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2022:248; Sepiriti, 2023:6). When SMT members have EI skills, they may be able to identify and understand emotions, both their own and others, more accurately which will allow them to be more appropriate and considerate, especially in conflict situations. To add, emotionally intelligent SMT members may also be better at managing their own emotions, such as anger, during conflict situations.

There are numerous conflict management strategies, and some common ones from the literature include accommodating, compromising, negotiating, listening, giving the opportunity for the other party to share their side, putting aside differences and dominating (Adams & Plaatjies, 2021:1248; Chiedozie & Chidi, 2020:110; Clifford & Ejike, 2022:212; Larasati & Raharja, 2019:192). In the end, it is vital for school leaders to have sufficient knowledge on conflict management, and to apply whatever strategy a school leader thinks is the best fit for the situation since there is no single best strategy (Chiedozie & Chidi, 2020:110).

When conflict is managed well and effectively, it may be of great benefit. Thus, conflict should not be seen as negative and should not be avoided, as it creates an opportunity for personal growth (Clifford & Ejike, 2022:207). Moreover, it is claimed by Sepiriti (2023:9) that effective conflict management may result in a more positive school culture and environment. For teachers, Etomes and Molua (2019:116) note that work productivity increased once school leaders managed conflict better. Therefore, conflict management seems to be a vital skill for SMT members which can have great benefits, personally as well as for the organisation (Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2021:254); however,

at the same time, if not managed well it may be disastrous and lead to severe negative consequences (Clifford & Ejike, 2022:207).

3.4.13 Teamwork

Teamwork is considered a crucial aspect for school success (de Jong et al., 2023:1; Dugang, 2020: 92; Kramer, 2023:6; Liu et al., 2021:434). Based on available literature, the ability to work in teams is considered a vital EI skill (Goleman et al., 2013:39; Livesey, 2017:27) as well as a leadership practice (Day et al., 2020:16; Hallinger, 2011:127; Joubert, 2018:75; Leithwood, 2012:17; Marishane, 2018:137; Janse van Vuuren & van der Bank, 2023:8) for effective and successful school management and leadership.

It is strongly argued and confirmed by various researchers (de Jong et al., 2023:1; Dugang, 2020: 92; Liu et al., 2021:434) that a school cannot be managed by one or two persons, thus teamwork serves an important purpose. When school leaders can work in teams, and manage and lead teams, there may be greater benefits for the school. It was found by Dugang (2020:92) that when there is teamwork, the school's goals are more easily achieved. The reason for this is that the vast variety of people focused on the same task bring different and extensive ideas, knowledge, experiences, strengths, and solutions to the table (Dugang, 2020:92). Additionally, teamwork fosters relationships which, when strong and healthy, result in a more intense focus and determination on the task – in this case, the goals (Dugang, 2020:93).

Ultimately, whether a school will work as a team or not is mostly within the power of the school principal. Also, the school principal's ability might be a strong indicator of an effective team or not since he/she would be responsible for managing and leading the team. Therefore, it was found in a study by Kramer (2023:6) that successful school leaders are those who are open-minded and willing to learn from others, thus a crucial necessity for teamwork. Consequently, the conclusion may be made that when a SMT member develops his/her ability to work in teams, and manage and lead teams effectively, there may be great benefits for the school at large.

3.4.14 Communication

Communication is crucial for school success (Hitt & Tucker, 2016:548; Leithwood, 2012:16; Mohamed & Abidin, 2021:25; Shell, Hurt & White, 2023:107). It was reiterated by Mohamed and Abidin (2021:25) that the lack of communication in a school will lead to failure in achieving the goals and objectives. It is the responsibility of the school leaders to ensure there is adequate and effective communication (Turkoglu & Cansoy, 2018:39). When there is effective communication, it was found that understanding and clarification amongst staff members can be achieved (Fuller & Sada, 2022:19; Lastovska et al., 2023:663). Furthermore, when there is clear and effective communication, there is an increase in teamwork since trust and cohesion of the team increases (Shell et al., 2023:111). To add, Shell et al. (2023:111) also confirm that effective communication ensures teachers are aware of their expectations, motivated and determined towards the school's goals and show increased focus on the task. Clear and regular communication from school leaders with individual teachers results in school leaders being seen as more approachable and sensible; teachers can therefore trust the school leader to speak regarding any issues (Shell et al., 2023:111).

Being able to communicate effectively is therefore essential for school leaders. Thus, with improved EI skills, it may lead to an improvement in communication amongst school leaders which may, in turn, improve their leadership practice communication which is highlighted as crucial for SMT members by various researchers (Day et al., 2020:16; Hitt & Tucker, 2016:545; Leithwood, 2012:13; Turkoglu & Cansoy, 2018:39).

3.4.15 Autonomy and innovation

Teacher autonomy refers to a teacher's ability to work independently within a framework of their professional competence (Kara & Bozkurt, 2022:300). In short, teacher autonomy entails that a teacher is free to make decisions regarding their educational activities and their control over their actions (Kara & Bozkurt, 2022:300; Yorulmaz & Colak, 2023:538). Autonomy in schools is important for several reasons, thus SMT members need to be able to practice teacher autonomy.

When SMT members are able to practice teacher autonomy, there is an increase in trust (Paradis, Lutovac, Jokikokko & Kaasila, 2019:399; Yorulmaz & Colak, 2023:538).

It was found by Kara and Bozkurt (2022:302) that autonomy encourages teachers to take opportunities and use innovative ideas. This of course means that when trust is strong, teachers are not afraid or do not need the authorisation of school leaders (Saylik & Şahin, 2021:141). It was also found that when autonomy is significantly practiced, there is an increase in teachers' confidence, independence, self-efficacy, and motivation (Yorulmaz & Colak, 2023:550). On the contrary, when teacher autonomy is lacking, there may be signs of loneliness, resistance to change and lack of cooperation amongst teachers (Kara & Bozkurt, 2022:300). It was found by Kara and Bozkurt (2022:300) that teacher autonomy results in outstanding initiative taken by teachers.

It was also found by Tura and Akbasli (2022:204) and Lastovska et al. (2023:648) that when innovation is promoted in schools, it leads to new ideas, different and creative approaches, and development. To add, it was found that innovations made by teachers had positive impacts such as learner academic success as well as school efficiency (Tura & Akbasli, 2022:205). There may however be some resistance to innovation from SMT members. The reason being that schools may not always have the resources to implement new ideas. Also, it was shown by Lastovska et al. (2023:451) that, with age and experience, teachers tend to become less open to innovation – meaning that they may be comfortable in what they know and what is working. However, teachers are still encouraged to be innovative, and SMT members tend to be more supportive and open towards this when there is a very good reason behind innovation, and when teachers are committed and participate (Lastovska et al., 2023:463).

3.4.16 Delegating responsibility

Delegating duties and responsibilities is crucial for school success (de Jong et al., 2023:2; Manundu, Mulwa & Mwanza, 2022:351). Delegation can be referred to as the assignment of work to another person, normally from a person in a leadership position (Manundu et al., 2022:351). Delegation is also closely related to distributed leadership for school leaders which is, in short, to share work duties and responsibilities since it is very difficult (if not impossible) for one person to do everything (Amels, Krüger, Suhre & van Veen, 2021:744; de Jong et al., 2023:1; Liu et al., 2021:434; van Wyk, 2020:12).

One of the crucial points for delegating work is to avoid burnout. It was found by Manundu et al. (2022:352) that when school leaders do not delegate work and take on most of the tasks and responsibilities, it may lead to an increase in stress from the overload of work. This could lead to burnout since they have so much to do. However, when delegating, SMT members can focus on more important and crucial tasks necessary for the effective management of a school (Manundu et al., 2022:352; Van Wyk, 2020:18). On the other hand, teachers also benefit from the delegation of work. It was reported that when teachers are given tasks and responsibilities, there is greater empowerment, growth, and development both professionally and personally (Amels et al., 2021:745; Liu et al., 2023:2). Moreover, de Jong et al. (2023:1) claim that shared responsibilities result in innovative solutions for challenges at school. Furthermore, delegating responsibilities was also found to increase teacher motivation (Liu et al., 2023:2; Manundu et al., 2022:352). This is because teachers experience opportunities in the workplace and feel recognised and included in school affairs (Liu et al., 2023:2). The advantage of this is that teachers are willing and encouraged to work collaboratively to improve the teaching and learning at the school (Liu et al., 2023:3).

Therefore, SMT members need to ensure that they can practice delegation since it provides many benefits for both them and teachers. With the increase in EI skills in SMT members, delegation may be more likely as well as more effective since EI skills such as social awareness and relationship management may assist greatly to practice delegation.

3.4.17 Decision-making process

A great part of a SMT member's day, especially for school principals, is making decisions. They must ensure the best decisions are made for effective teaching and learning in a school. It was argued by Hussain, Hamid and Arif (2019:648) that failure may occur when school leaders make poor decisions. Thus, including teachers in the decision-making process may ensure success and effectiveness (Hussain et al., 2019:648; Shikokoti, Okoth & Chepkonga, 2023:9). It was also claimed by Shikokoti et al. (2023:29) that school leaders tend to be more effective in schools when they include the teachers in the decision-making process. There are several benefits and advantages for including teachers in the decision-making process. A few researchers (Anna, 2019:68; Hussain et al., 2019:648; Shikokoti et al., 2023:29) reported that when

teachers are included in the decision-making process, there is an increase in job satisfaction, motivation, sense of belonging, and self-esteem. This is because teachers experience and feel their efforts are being recognised when they are part of the decision-making process (Shikokoti et al., 2023:28). Additionally, findings also indicate that SMT members should involve other stakeholders when making decisions since their own experience and knowledge are not always sufficient (Beyers & du Plessis, 2023:42). Thus, teachers may have greater information regarding certain challenges and issues in the school than school leaders (Anna, 2019:68). This is also supported by Shikokoti et al. (2023:31) who found that new ideas may arise when teachers are included in decision-making.

On the other hand, SMT members, especially school principals, are required to make certain decisions autonomously (Beyers & du Plessis, 2023:43; Shikokoti et al., 2023:32). One reason for this is that too many opinions may lead to indecisiveness as well as cause certain groups to overpower and force their opinions and ideas on others (Shikokoti et al., 2023:32). Also, SMT members may not always have the time and opportunity to involve the rest of the staff in decisions as urgent and immediate action is sometimes required (Beyers & du Plessis, 2023:43). Additionally, school principals are held responsible for anything that happens in their school, thus they must ensure that effective teaching and learning occur. Therefore, some decisions that school principals make are influenced by the account they must give to various stakeholders such as the Department of Education, parents, learners and teachers (Beyers & du Plessis, 2023:37; Wang, Hauseman & Pollock, 2022:42). Moreover, it was found by Beyers and du Plessis (2023:37) that rules also affect school principals' decisions as certain decisions must be made and are determined according to laws and policies.

Regarding school principals being held accountable for the teaching and learning in a school, it was also found that they cannot take high risks and make decisions without meticulous calculations (Beyers & du Plessis, 2023:45). It was found that teachers are seldom punished for anything they do wrong, whereas school principals often fear the repercussions of wrong decisions (Beyers & du Plessis, 2023:45). Thus, other SMT members such as the deputy principal, HODs and even teachers are more willing to take risks whereas school principals must give account and are constrained by various laws and policies (Beyers & du Plessis, 2023:45).

Therefore, SMT members with higher EI skills may have more success and effectiveness with leadership practices such as decision-making. With the necessary EI skills such as social awareness and relationship management, they might make better decisions as well as ensure more effective collaboration with the rest of the staff in making decisions. It was found by Anna (2019:67) that the job of management for school leaders requires EI skills such as interpersonal skills. When EI skills such as interpersonal skills, social awareness and relationship management are employed, there are fostering and productive relationships and collaboration, leading to good quality decisions being made due to effective collaboration. These skills can form friendship, trust, respect, empathy and showing of faith in teachers and create a more positive work environment (Anna, 2019:68).

3.4.18 Staff performance

It was found by Atolagbe, Ojo and Oparinde (2020:103) that a school leader's ability to manage people, establishing strong and healthy relationships, will determine the success of a school. Job performance is a fundamental objective for any organisation, including schools (Lee, Yen, Yu & Lin, 2023:2). According to Debes (2021:149), EI is referred to as the "best practice to distinguish outstanding performance from average one". Not only has EI been of value for personal performance, according to Coleman and Ali's (2022:4) study, there is a positive relation between the EI of leaders and team members' job satisfaction, performance and retention rates. Lee et al. (2023:2) also concur that, besides trust, which is also influenced by EI, the EI of a leader greatly affects team members' job performance. It has been found by Yusniarti et al. (2022:221) that the EI of a school leader, if well developed, has a positive effect on teachers' performance. Furthermore, the most significant finding from Yusniarti et al. (2022:221) in terms of EI skills and job performance was the ability to control emotion. This refers to STM members being able to better control and manage emotions, especially negative emotions which may have a negative impact on teachers' performance if not managed effectively.

The reason for the above mentioned, according to Mendelson and Stabile (2019:14), is that SMT members who possess higher levels of EI are able to create more healthy and positive cultures which result in teachers performing at higher levels. This is concurred by Salip and Quines (2023:5) who claim that supportive school

environments lead to strong relationships which result in teachers being more cooperative and committed towards the schools' objectives. This is similar to what a variety of other studies also found (Atolagbe et al., 2020:104; Brezicha & Fuller, 2019:26; Chombo, 2020:1669), where strong relationships led to teachers being dedicated and an increase in trust in the school leader in managing and leading the school. Additionally, Lee et al. (2023:1) suggest that team members who identify with their leaders' EI lead to a higher trusting relationship, and job performance is hugely facilitated through trust in leaders. On the other hand, Bayraktar et al. (2021:2229) and Lee et al. (2023:3) argue that individuals who can identify and manage their own emotions better, displaying higher EI, may find better solutions in difficult and challenging times. Thus, besides SMT members, teachers having increased EI as well may result in better work performance as well as increased personal and work satisfaction. In a study by Lee et al. (2023:3), it was indicated that the increase in the EI of the leader as well as the EI of the colleagues will have a positive and significant influence on their job performance.

3.4.19 Parents

It was discovered by Pellitteri (2021:50) that teacher-parent relationships may be improved in this way since SMT members with better EI skills may be able to better recognise and understand the emotions and perspective of parents, which may be used to converse with the parents effectively and successfully. For example, angered or negative emotions from the parent which are responded to empathically may reduce the situation intensity as well as creating a space for effective reasoning and communication (Pellitteri, 2021:50). In another study, Finnigan (2016:105) found that school leaders' high level of social skills can aid in calming people experiencing strong emotions. Furthermore, these school leaders scored high in the EI skill emotion management which revealed a higher ability to calm people in emotional situations as well as control their own emotions (Finnigan, 2016:105).

Supporting this notion is Al-Qadri and Zhao (2021:373) who reported that more emotionally intelligent individuals are able to ignore and suppress negative emotions like frustration and tension, particularly during tense moments, and focus on positive emotions such as empathy and trust. Therefore, EI skills may provide SMT members with the ability to manage difficult and emotionally charged parents more effectively

during tense moments by focusing on positive emotions. On the other hand, parental involvement is important for school success as well as an effective learning and teaching environment for learners. It has been noted by Salip and Quines (2023:4) that parental and school leaders' collaboration and cooperation can result in positive and greater school academic and physical performance. As discussed earlier, EI skills such as social awareness and relationship management may greatly assist SMT members with leadership practices such as building relationships which include different educational stakeholders (Janse van Vuuren & Van der Bank, 2023:8).

3.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopted a conceptual framework which is defined by Jabareen (2009:51) and Ringelstein and Patel (2023:11) as a "network of interlined concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon". Additionally, Maja (2016:10) refers to a conceptual framework as a plan for the researcher's study which involves organising the research, including a synthesis on how to explain the phenomenon being studied. It was also further explained by Adom, Hussein and Agyem (2018:439) that a conceptual framework links the concepts, findings and important theories used as an explanation by the research to explore the research problem under study. This is concurred by Luft, Jeong, Idsardi and Gardner (2022:6) when they explain that the main purpose of a conceptual framework is to articulate the concepts that are being studied in the research as relates to literature.

A conceptual framework is important and serves many benefits to research (Adom et al., 2018:439; Luft et al., 2022:6; Ringelstein & Patel, 2023:11; van Wyk, 2020:74). Firstly, it greatly assists the researcher in identifying and constructing his worldview on the phenomenon to be investigated (Adom et al., 2018:439). Secondly, it can provide structure and assist the researcher to focus on and consult appropriate and relevant literature (van Wyk, 2020:74-75). Thirdly, a conceptual framework is more extensive, encompassing both established theories related to the research problem as well as the ideas of the researcher (Luft et al., 2022:6). Thus, the reasons for why the research topic is worth studying, the researcher's ideas and assumptions, and how he conceptually grounds his approach is also accentuated (Adom et al., 2018:439; Ringelstein & Patel, 2023:11).

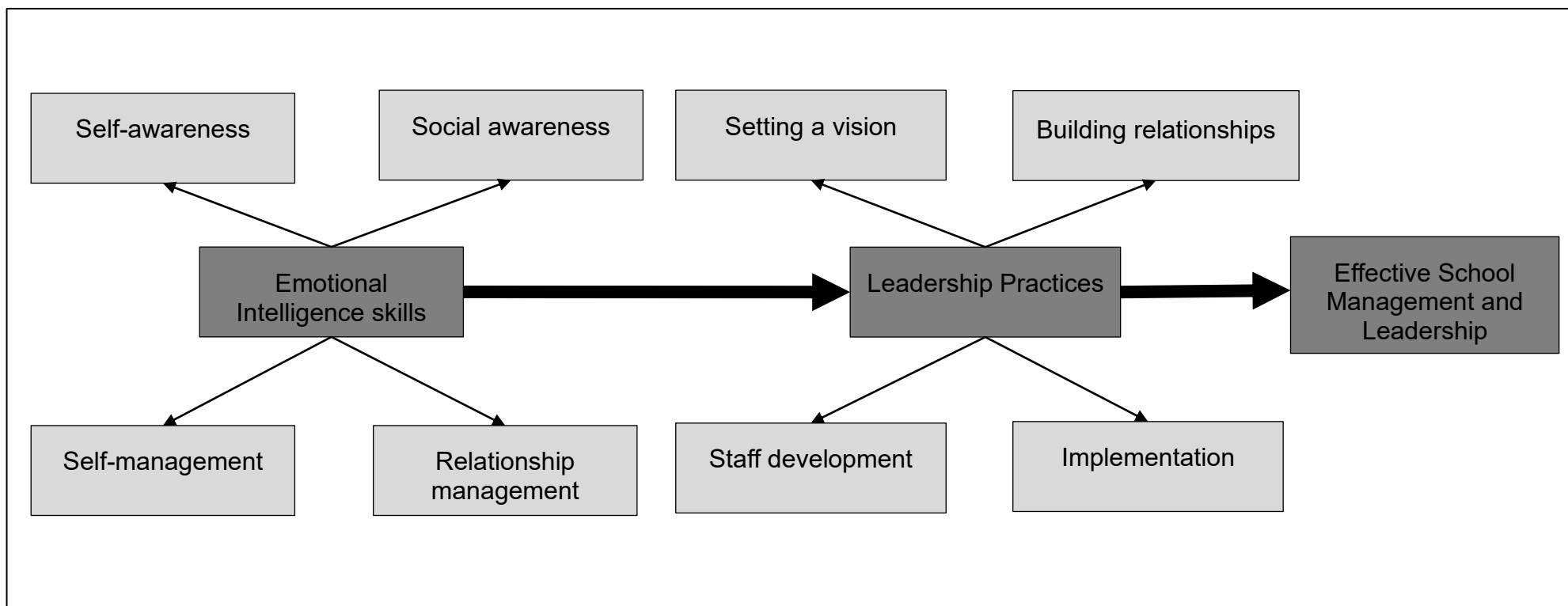
Important and relevant literature related to the research phenomenon, namely how approaches to enhance the EI skills of SMT members can improve leadership practices, has been reviewed and discussed in depth in Chapter 2. Thereafter, the duties and responsibilities of SMT members as well daily educational challenges they encounter were reviewed. In order to be more aware and understanding what SMT members are experiencing and what is expected from them, more accurate and appropriate EI skills can be identified for improved leadership practices and for effective school management and leadership. Following this, a comprehensive and in-depth exploration and review on how various enhanced EI skills can improve different leadership practices needed by SMT members for effective school management and leadership was provided.

Therefore, the conceptual framework of this study is concerned with the concepts that constitute (a) emotional intelligence skills (Mayer & Salovey, 1997:14; Goleman, 2001:29; Bar-On, 2006:23; Petrides et al., 2007:153; Mayer et al., 2008:507; Petrides, 2011:656; Goleman et al., 2013:39; Mayer et al., 2016:294; Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018:27), and (b) educational leadership practices (Botha, 2018; Day et al., 2020:16; Leithwood, 2012:13; Leithwood et al., 2020:573; Mestry & Ngcobo, 2018 in Joubert, 2018; Janse van Vuuren & van der Bank, 2023:8).

Based on the four models that have been reviewed, there are four core concepts relating to EI skills that arose and are intertwined between the different EI frameworks, namely: (a) self-awareness, (b) social awareness, (c) self-management, and (d) relationship management. Under each of these main domains of EI, there are several EI sub-skills as reviewed during the literature review. Also, the study utilised these four main EI domains as a foundation to determine which EI sub-skills under each domain SMT members find most important and why.

Regarding the second main concept related to this research, (b) educational leadership practices, there were also four core leadership practices that came forth from the literature review based on different frameworks of leadership practices for SMT members, as mentioned previously. The four core leadership practices were (a) setting a vision, (b) building relationships, (c) staff development, and (d) implementations. The following figure (Figure 3.1) depicts the conceptual framework as a diagram:

Figure 3.1: A conceptual framework of emotional intelligence skills for improved leadership practice



The diagram starts on the left with the four main proposed EI skills domains that arose from the literature review, namely self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationships. These are the EI skills proposed as necessary, which SMT members should focus on and enhance to ensure the improvement of their leadership practices; thus, the arrow moving to the right. Here, the leadership practices that might be improved are setting a vision, building relationships, staff development and implementation. Lastly, there is a final arrow to the right that suggests, ultimately, that when SMT members enhance their EI skills, leading to the improvement of the necessary leadership practices, there may be more effective and successful school management and leadership. This was reviewed earlier and analysed in terms of how different EI skills, when enhanced, can improve various leadership practices for SMT members which ultimately leads to better school management and leadership.

3.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

This chapter presented the conceptual framework for the study. Firstly, an overview of the duties and responsibilities, and educational challenges SMT members encounter was provided. Through this, the appropriate EI skills which were comprehensively presented in Chapter 2 can be determined for improved leadership practices. Thereafter, literature on the appropriate EI skills and how they may improve and assist SMT members with various leadership practices were discussed in detail. Lastly, a conceptual framework was presented entailing necessary and appropriate EI skills for improved leadership practices that may lead to more effective school management and leadership. In the next chapter, the research methodology is discussed.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous two chapters provided a comprehensive account and discussion of the literature regarding and aligned with the research questions and objectives. To add, the conceptual framework was presented. In this chapter, the research methodology will be described and discussed thoroughly. Therefore, this research methodology chapter entails an extensive discussion of the researcher's research paradigm, approach, and design. Thereafter, the selection of participants, how data was collected and analysed, the quality assurance of the research and ethical considerations are discussed. However, first, a brief overview of research methodology is provided.

4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology can be broken down into two components, namely research and methodology. Research, as mentioned in Chapter 1 (*cf.* 1.6), refers to a meticulous and systematic investigation to provide information on an identified and/or observed problem by the researcher. This entails the collection of information regarding a phenomenon to answer and draw conclusions on the research questions (Muzari, Shava & Shonhiwa, 2022:14; Ugwu, Ekere & Onoh, 2021:117). On the other hand, methods encompass the tools and techniques that are used by researchers to collect information regarding the identified research phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:57). Hence, a research methodology is described as a link between the methods and the researcher's philosophical stance (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:57). Furthermore, as explained by Muzari et al. (2022:14), research methodology is the description, analysis, and conclusion through the use of various methods to obtain information, while considering the advantages and limitations of the respective methods. In the next section, the researcher's identified research paradigm is described and discussed following the research approach and research design, respectively.

4.2.1 Research paradigm

In literature, the concept of a research paradigm tends to be used to refer to the fundamental reflection of the researcher's thoughts and ideas about the environment in which they live and desire to stay (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:420). To add, Jayasuriya (2023:11) concurs that a research paradigm is the way a researcher understands the reality of the world based on the assumptions of ontology, epistemology and methodology (to be discussed). The interpretivist research paradigm was adopted for this study. In the following sections, an in-depth discussion is provided regarding interpretivism.

4.2.1.1 Definition and aim of interpretivist paradigm

Interpretivism is used to study towards an understanding of human experiences, subjectively (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:421; Pham, 2018:3; Ugwu et al., 2021:120). According to Pervin and Mokhtar (2022:421), an interpretivist paradigm is fundamentally predicated on the notion that understanding people's meaningful perceptions, ideas and thoughts can be achieved through studying their cultures. Moreover, a greater opportunity to achieve this comprehension is created since interpretivism allows individuals to be studied within their social contexts (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022:11; Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:421).

Primarily, as a result of the nature of interpretivism, the main aim is to attempt to provide understanding and interpreting meaning from human behaviour in relation to the phenomenon being studied rather than generating conclusions through prediction or generalisation (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:421; Ugwu et al., 2021:120). Therefore, as articulated by various researchers (Creswell, Ebersön, Eloff, Ferreira, Ivankova, Jansen, Nieuwenhuis, Pietersen, Plano & Clark, 2017:62; Junjie & Yingxin, 2022:11; Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:421), an interpretivist researcher's aims encompass (a) to provide an understanding, (b) gain insight and (c) to interpret the motives of why and how individuals comprehend and explain the situations they encounter. Furthermore, and also noteworthy, an additional aim of an interpretivist researcher is the aim to "understand how this glossing of reality goes on at one time and in one place and

compare it with what goes on in different times and places” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:22).

4.2.1.2 Philosophical beliefs for interpretivism

According to Gemma (2018:2), what a researcher believes to be knowledge, reality and truth is referred to as their research philosophy. This is crucial since it outlines the beliefs and values that inform the research design, approach and the collection and analysis of data; these complementing philosophical principles (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020:39; Gemma, 2018:2; Singh, 2019:2). It is also argued that a research path can be smoother when a researcher is mindful of the philosophical underpinnings of the research process (Singh, 2019:2). Thus, the following philosophical underpinnings regarding interpretivism are discussed to supply a deeper explanation of the researcher’s choice of research methodology.

(i) Ontology

Ontology is defined as the nature of reality, thus being concerned with the essence of the phenomenon being investigated (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020:40; Junjie & Yingxin, 2022:11; Ugwe et al., 2021:118). In other words, ontology is concerned with what there is to be known about that reality being studied. An interpretivist adopts a relativist ontology. This means that the phenomenon has multiple realities to be subjectively interpreted, since it varies from person to person, as well as that these realities are socially constructed within the human mind – meaning the reality is in accordance with how each individual has experienced the phenomenon being studied (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022:11; Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:421; Ugwe et al., 2021:118). Therefore, the researcher adopted a relativist ontology since he believes that the phenomenon being studied has multiple realities, differs from participant to participant since each individual experiences it differently, and, lastly, that through human interactions (between researcher and participant) these realities can best be explored to uncover insightful and unexpected truths (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:33).

(ii) Epistemology

Epistemology can be defined as the process by which we become aware of reality and encompasses how the researcher is aiming to develop and capture the knowledge to reach reality (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020:40; Junjie & Yingxin, 2022:11; Ugwe et al., 2021:118). Furthermore, as affirmed by Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:26), it is mainly used to provide descriptions on how humans come to know what they know. There are a number of epistemological beliefs with different assumptions that a researcher can take, however, an interpretivist research paradigm draws on the subjectivist epistemology (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022:11; Nguyen, 2019:6).

A subjectivist epistemology refers to an approach where reality is “constructed between the researcher and the researched and shaped by individual experiences” (Creswell & Poth, 2018:74). Thus, the reality needs to be interpreted (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020:42; Nguyen, 2019:6). Therefore, the researcher draws on conclusions and creates meanings subjectively through individual understandings and reasoning of information collected through interaction with participants (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022:11; Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:424). Creswell et al. (2017:61) identified one key advantage of this interaction between researcher and participant, namely that, besides understanding the meanings between the phenomenon and the participants’ social context, the researcher’s comprehension of the whole is improved. Before proceeding to the methodology of interpretivism, it is concluded that the epistemological position for this study is a subjectivist epistemology.

(iii) Methodology

It is necessary here clarify what is meant by the term methodology since it is common to use it interchangeably with the term methods; however, a clear distinction between the two terms exists. Methods, as described by Muzari et al. (2022:16), refer to the tools used by researchers to collect data. These may be, for example, interviews, questionnaires, observation, or visual data; using these tools to collect information from individuals or groups, researchers are able to gather information about their social reality (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2022:40; Muzari et al., 2022:16). On the other hand, methodology is the strategy used to bring the philosophical stance (ontology and

epistemology) and method (tools) together (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:57). Thus, the methodology outlines the plan of the research as well as guides the researcher to choose suitable methods (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2022:40; Singh, 2019:6).

The choice of methodology will depend on the kind of paradigm the researcher uses. Since an interpretivist paradigm is used for this study, a naturalistic methodology is assumed. By using a naturalistic methodology, the researcher utilises data collected through interviews, text messages and reflective sessions whilst acting as a participant observer (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:33; Nguyen, 2019:6). Therefore, in this study the naturalistic methodology is adopted, and data has been collected through interviews, focus groups and questionnaires which is discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

4.2.1.3 Characteristics of interpretivism

Before proceeding to examine the advantages and disadvantages of using an interpretivism paradigm, it is necessary to highlight the characteristics covered by Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:35) and Ugwe et al. (2021:120-121).

It is believed that realities are multiple and socially constructed. Moreover, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:35), as well as Ugwe et al. (2021:120), assert that interpretivism encompasses the “admission that the social world cannot be understood from the standpoint of an individual”. Additionally, there is a greater need to gain a better comprehension of an individual rather than universal laws. Furthermore, knowledge is moulded through the findings and conclusions, thus the individuals’ words function as evidence of realities. However, the acceptance of the context is obligatory for knowledge and knowing. A last characteristic mentioned by Creswell et al. (2017:61-62) is that interpretivism is an inductive process, oriented towards discovery and process.

One of the greatest advantages that make interpretivism stand out is the detailed, thorough, and comprehensive explorations and descriptions it produces (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:68; Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:423). Thus, the researcher is not just able to describe people but deeply comprehend them within their social-cultural contexts (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:422). Moreover, due to the interactive interview

process, researchers have the opportunity to probe participants' thoughts, perspectives, emotions and values. Therefore, data gathered is considered to be rich in detail as well as valuable because the researcher can investigate the things that cannot always be observed (Pham, 2018:4; Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:422). This, in turn, will assist academics with enhanced and valued insight for future research.

Although detailed information can be obtained, it is considered a limitation for its lack of ability to generate theories that could be generalised to other people, larger populations, or contexts (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020:42; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016:56). Another concern that may occur is the strong perspective of the self from researchers which might cause them to overlook the powerful perceptions of other people (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:422). To add, there is the risk of the researcher being influenced by personal emotions, feelings, ideas, views, and values since the ontological assumptions of the researcher are subjective rather than objective.

4.2.1.4 Addressing the limitations of interpretivism

Since a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied is the goal, to avoid generalisation, multiple schools and different school members at each school will be studied. Through this, a deep understanding as well as various perspectives regarding the phenomenon being studied will be gained. Additionally, multiple data collection methods were used – one such method being open-ended questionnaires which provide the ability for participants to answer anonymously, thus creating an opportunity to answer freely without the concern of being observed. Although there are many critiques of the reliability and validity of qualitative research as proposed by an interpretivist paradigm, how the credibility of the data will be assured will be discussed under quality assurance of the study later in this chapter.

4.2.1.5 Reasons for adopting the interpretive paradigm

This study seeks to investigate how approaches to enhancing EI skills among SMT members could result in improved leadership practices in secondary schools. Therefore, an interpretive research paradigm will be most appropriate as the researcher seeks to investigate and, thus, gain a thorough and in-depth

comprehension of the phenomenon (Pham, 2018:4; Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:422). As mentioned, an interpretivist paradigm primarily focuses on interpreting and understanding human behaviour in relation to the phenomenon. Also, one of its major advantages is to provide detailed and informative explorations and descriptions. Therefore, an interpretivism paradigm is most suitable for this research since an in-depth, detailed, informative investigation is required into the phenomenon as well as its alignment to best answer the research questions.

4.2.2 Research approach adopted: A qualitative approach

This research adopted a qualitative research approach which will be thoroughly discussed and explained in the sections to follow.

4.2.2.1 Qualitative research approach

A thorough, working definition for qualitative research is given by Creswell and Poth (2018:42-43) as follows:

Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, to collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change.

A qualitative research approach is referred to as an approach used to investigate the lived experiences of individuals relevant to the phenomenon being studied in order to provide a descriptive interpretation of that phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018:43; Nieuwenhuis, 2019:59; Taherdoost, 2022:54; Zarestky, 2023:127). The lived experiences here, as mentioned by Frost, Hammack, Wilson, Russel, Lightfoot and Meyer (2020:248), are referring to the individuals' sociological and psychological, personal and subjective perspectives, descriptions, opinions, understandings, and interpretations regarding the studied phenomenon. Back to the definition of a

qualitative approach, one foremost difference in qualitative research is that it is based on words (linguistic) rather than numerical data (Zarestky, 2023:127). Also, data analysis for qualitative research is meaning-based rather than statistical. Therefore, simply put, qualitative research uses words to explain and describe a phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:59).

From the discussion above regarding what qualitative research refers to, it can be seen that the main aim of qualitative research is to obtain an extensive and meticulous description, explanation and understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Muzari et al., 2022:16; Mwita, 2022:621; Taherdoost, 2022:54; Zarestky, 2023:127). Additionally, this would be obtained by studying the phenomenon through the lived experiences of participants. Therefore, the purpose of qualitative research is to acquire the explanation and understanding of the phenomenon being studied to aid in having a thorough comprehension of the social world in which we live and the causes of the current situation (Creswell & Poth, 2018:43; Nieuwenhuis, 2019:59; Zarestky, 2023:127). Thus, qualitative research tends to enhance the understanding of a specific phenomenon through the experiences, perspectives, and understandings of participants.

4.2.2.2 Characteristics of a qualitative research approach

The characteristics of a qualitative research approach have evolved over time, and depending on the research some characteristics will receive different emphases. Although many characteristics for qualitative research are present in qualitative research, not all are present. In the following list, several characteristics for qualitative research are presented, as summarised by Creswell and Poth (2018:43-44), with no specific order of importance:

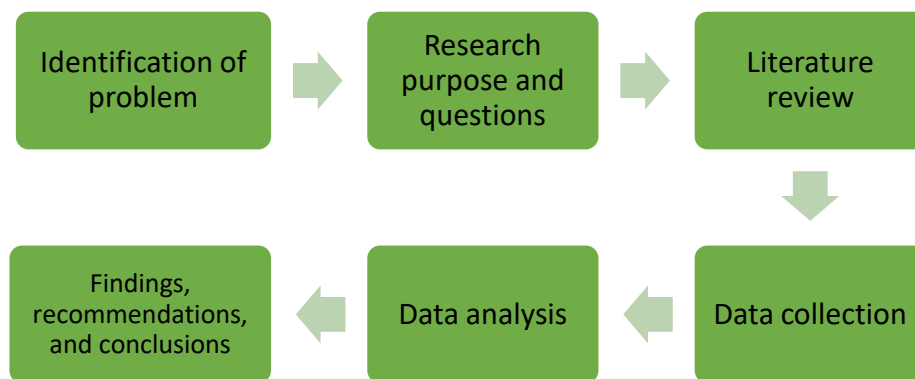
- *Naturalistic*: Research is focused on the natural setting rather than doing the experiments or research in a lab. Thus, researchers will often capture information from participants where they experienced the phenomenon being studied rather than bringing the participants to the researcher, such as an office or lab. Therefore, for this study, the researcher went to the identified schools to gather data.

- *Researcher as key instrument*: In qualitative research, the researcher collects the data themselves. The researcher can observe the behaviours of participants by using more than one method of data collection.
- *Multiple perspectives and meanings*: The focus of researchers for the entire qualitative research study is not the meaning they bring to the research or even from the literature, but the meaning of the phenomenon being studied from the participants. Furthermore, the participants' meaning suggests multiple perspectives on the studied topic.
- *Emergent design*: This means that the prescribed research process may change or be adjusted as the research continues. This is to ensure the main aim and objectives of the research can be best achieved.

4.2.2.3 Flow of the research process in a qualitative approach

The flow of the research process used in qualitative research and for this study is represented in the diagram below:

Figure 4.1: Research process for qualitative research



Adapted from: Creswell & Poth (2018:51); Sileyew (2019:3).

The research process for qualitative research, as shown in Figure 4.1, is as follows:

Stage 1: Identification of problem – The phenomenon to be studied is identified. Furthermore, the research provides background information of the problem to be studied as well as why it is a problem and factors for the possible cause thereof. In

this study, the phenomenon being studied is the approaches to enhance EI skills among SMT members to improve leadership practices in secondary schools.

Stage 2: Research purpose and questions – The research aim and questions are presented and discussed as well as why the identified phenomenon is worth studying.

Stage 3: Literature review – An intensive literature review is done by the researcher. Other studies and research will be drawn on with the intention to determine and specify what is known and done on the research problem. Additionally, a literature review is done to empirically show that a problem in need of study exists, and why it would be an extension of the prior knowledge (Creswell & Poth, 2018:51).

Stage 4: Data collection – After the data collection methods and participants involved are discussed, the researcher gathers data based on the research objectives and questions.

Stage 5: Data analysis – The vast majority of data collected is then reduced through analysis and interpretations are made to answer the research questions.

Stage 6: Finding, recommendations, and conclusions – Finally, important findings and results obtained through the study are presented and discussed. Thereafter, recommendations are made, and conclusions are drawn.

4.2.2.4 Advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research approach

The advantages of using a qualitative research approach encompasses the following (Bazen et al., 2021:241; Muzari et al., 2022:15; Taherdoost, 2022:59): (a) a rich and in-depth account of information is produced; (b) collected data can be simplified and managed without damaging the complexities and context; (c) participants are most likely to contribute usefully and effectively to the research because of the relationship established between researcher and participant; (d) participants' experiences and perspectives can be easily understood because of the methods qualitative research offer, even when insufficient data exist, and the use of multiple of methods; (e) human experiences and knowledge in exact situations can be understood holistically, and (f) qualitative research offers flexibility, thus the research structure and/or process can be

changed or modified to answer research questions which can address complex issues as well.

The following are disadvantages for using a qualitative approach (Mwita, 2022: 622; Taherdoost, 2022:59): (a) contextual sensitivities and factors may be neglected since the focus is on meanings and experiences of participants; (b) the smaller sample size used means that the results cannot be applied and generalised to the total population; (c) findings are limited to a specific group of people since the social world is viewed as dynamic and not static; (d) qualitative data collection methods and analysis are time consuming, as well as data interpretation may be difficult; (e) researcher bias may be an issue and influence both sample selection and data interpretation, and (f) because of the complexity of findings, it is impossible to simplify without numbers (quantitative).

4.2.2.5 Addressing the limitations of qualitative research in this study

Although multiple methods of data collection are used which can be time-consuming, semi-structured interviews were only conducted with SMT members. Thus, data collection was not time-consuming since open-ended questionnaires were completed by teachers and retired principals while still producing in-depth information. To ensure a bigger sample size, five schools were selected which included four principals, three deputy principals, five HODs, and 17 teachers were selected to participate. Additionally, four retired school principals were selected. Moreover, themes were used to organise data which ensures simplicity as well as eliminating research bias with data interpretation.

4.2.2.6 Reasons for adopting qualitative research approach

A qualitative research approach was adopted for this study since the main aim of this research is to investigate the approaches to enhance EI skills among SMT members to improve leadership practices. Therefore, meaning and understanding is what the researcher sought to enhance EI skills in SMT members, which in turn may improve leadership practices. Similarly, as proposed by Creswell and Poth (2018:45), qualitative research is done when a specific problem needs to be investigated, the problem being mentioned earlier. Moreover, there is a need to explore, investigate and understand the problem thoroughly and in detail, thus a qualitative approach is the

direction to go. One major deciding factor to use a qualitative research approach for this study is because quantitative measures and the statistical analysis would adequately fit or answer the main research question (Creswell & Poth, 2018:46).

4.2.3 Research design adopted: Phenomenological approach

Out of the five broad approaches (narrative studies, phenomenology, ground-theory, ethnography, and case study), the phenomenology approach was adopted as the research design for this study. In the following sections, a brief description of a phenomenological study is given, followed by the aim. Thereafter, the limitations of this phenomenological study are addressed and, lastly, the reasons for choosing phenomenology for this study are provided.

4.2.3.1 Description of phenomenology

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to research in which the researcher uses the research subjects' meanings and experiences to gain a comprehensive understanding of a specific phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:85; Muzari et al., 2022:15; Zarestky, 2023:131). As discussed by Aten and Denney (2023:3), phenomenology "seeks to explore and understand the unique meaning assigned to experience by persons who have lived through a common phenomenon".

4.2.3.2 Aim of a phenomenological study

As discussed in the definition of phenomenology, the basic aim is to describe the participants' experiences and perspectives on a specific phenomenon (Taherdoost, 2022:56; Zarestky, 2023:131). To add, the aim is further explained by Zarestky (2023:131) as "to represent the phenomenon with fidelity to the way people lived it". In this case, this entails how and why EI skills among SMT members can be enhanced to improve leadership practices in secondary schools. Additionally, this being the aim of the study, phenomenology seeks to describe what all the participants, SMT members and teachers from each school have in common regarding the phenomenon under study (Taherdoost, 2022:56).

4.2.3.3 Limitations of phenomenological study addressed

A phenomenological study may be time-consuming and have the risk of participants withdrawing since the researcher is required to ensure that the participants relive the experience they have had in their minds, in particular, situations relevant to the phenomenon (Fraenkel et al., 2012:433). However, to save time, a voice-recorder was used in the semi-structured interviews which allowed the researcher to retrospectively search and work through the participants' statements and responses. Additionally, the open-ended questionnaires allowed the researcher to search through the data effectively. Moreover, research bias, own perspectives and interpretations of data can be a negative implication when using phenomenology (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:85). Therefore, the researcher set aside personal biases, to "suspend personal judgements", as advised by Nieuwenhuis (2019:85), and also by focusing and being aware of the main goal of a phenomenological study which is to describe the participants' meanings and experiences.

4.2.3.4 Reasons for adopting phenomenology as research design

A phenomenological study is most appropriate because it seeks to describe the meaning of several individuals' experiences relating to the phenomenon, unlike other approaches such as a narrative study which reports the life of a single individual (Taherdoost, 2022:56). Additionally, Zarestky (2023:131) argues that phenomenology is an approach mostly used by researchers who investigate broader or more complex concepts. In this case, the approaches to enhance EI skills among SMT members to improve leadership practices in secondary schools. Thus, this study required the meaning of several individuals' experience regarding the phenomenon, and the researcher produced a composite description of the experience of all individuals (Taherdoost, 2022:56; Zarestky, 2023:131).

As regards to the phenomenological approach, to specify, the transcendental phenomenology approach was selected for this study. With this approach, the focus is on the descriptions of the participants instead on the interpretations of the researcher (Aten & Denney, 2023:3; Creswell & Poth, 2018:80; Nieuwenhuis, 2019:86). This is unlike the alternative, hermeneutical phenomenology where the researcher's opinions

are essential as the researcher seeks to interpret the descriptions and co-construct meaning (Aten & Denney, 2023:3).

4.2.4 Selection procedures

In the next sections, the selection procedures for the population as well as participants for this study will be discussed in detail.

4.2.4.1 Population of the study

The population in a study refers to the entire group of people important and relevant to the phenomenon being studied, and to which the research can make broad generalisation (Casteel & Bridier, 2021:343; Rahman, Tabash, Salamzadeh, Abduli & Rahaman, 2022:46). Furthermore, the researcher selects from this population the identified number of participants since the entire population is not required to gather information (Neuman, 2014:2460; Rahman et al., 2022:46). Therefore, the population selected from which the sample size had to be selected is secondary school educators. The population can be of any size, and all the participants in the identified population must have at least one characteristic that sets them apart from other populations (Casteel & Bridier, 2021:343). This population's main characteristic was that they were educators in secondary schools – thus not primary school educators or university lecturers.

4.2.4.2 Selection of participants

Having discussed the population for this study, this section deals with the selection of participants – sample size, who exactly and why. Furthermore, Nieuwenhuis (2019:91) notes that there are no rules when it comes to sample selection, however, the research questions determine the selection of participants. The sample size is selected from the population, as explained earlier, and a sampling method is used to select the participants. For this study, the purposive sampling method was used and will be discussed in more detail in the next paragraph.

Purposive sampling, also known as judgement sampling (Muzari et al., 2022:16; Sakyi, 2020:190), is where participants are intentionally selected (Casteel & Bridier,

2021:343) because, as stated by Creswell and Poth (2018:156), they “can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study”. A frequently applied method in qualitative research as well as when detailed and rich information may be sought to address the research aim and questions as precisely as possible is purposive sampling (Sakyi, 2020:190).

Therefore, for this study, the following participants were selected from the population (educators) using the purposive sampling technique to represent the sample:

- (a) four secondary school principals,
- (b) three secondary school deputy principals,
- (c) five secondary school HODs,
- (d) 17 post level one teachers, and
- (e) four retired school principals.

The above-mentioned sample group allowed the researcher to gather an extensive account of the EI skills needed to improve leadership practices for SMT members. Besides secondary school educators, the characteristic that was looked for in this sample was educators in leadership positions, thus the SMT – principal, deputy principal and HODs. School principals were selected because they are at the forefront of the management and leadership exercise, with the overall responsibilities. They are exposed to educational challenges on a daily basis which require utmost EI skills and leadership practices to ensure effective school management and leadership. Deputy principals do not have the same pressures and responsibilities but, being second in command, they are entrusted with numerous duties and responsibilities aligned with those of the principal (as discussed in detail in Chapter 3). Also, deputy principals may take up and deal with other educational challenges which the principal does not since principals may focus more on those issues directly affecting the school. Hence, deputy principals may also share a vast amount of experience and knowledge regarding EI skills and leadership practices. Lastly, HODs also serve as leaders and managers in their respective departments, dealing with teachers, learners and parents. Also, HODs must work together with the deputy principal and principal. However, HODs have different duties and responsibilities from that of a principal or deputy principal but may

require different EI skills and leadership practices to carry out their assigned duties (as discussed in Chapter 3). Thus, selecting HODs to take part in the study was also deemed appropriate as they share a different perspective on different EI skills and leadership practices required compared to that of principals and/or deputy principals.

Additionally, teachers are not situated under this criteria – leadership positions – however, teachers with at least two years of teaching experience were selected. The reason for this is that teachers are at the receiving end of school leaders' (SMT) leadership approaches as silent observers of their leadership as well as EI skills. Consequently, they are able to share good practices as well as informative and thorough details and experiences related to leadership skills and EI skills. Therefore, as proposed by Creswell and Poth (2018:156), all participants have experienced the phenomenon being studied, and this was most certainly the case also for the teachers selected, for the reasons mentioned above. After careful reflection and consideration, it was decided that retired principals have also be selected to take part in the study. They add much value to the study since they also have a lot of experience and knowledge regarding EI skills and leadership practices obtained during their years as principals. Lastly, some retired principals have more experience regarding EI and leadership practices since they served their full terms, whereas other school leaders are still active in their duties.

4.2.5 Data collection procedure

Interviews (Appendix E), focus groups (Appendix F) and questionnaires (Appendix G) were applied as data collection methods for this study as these three methods were deemed most applicable to address the research questions and objectives. To add, these methods also aligned with the research paradigms, approach and design. Each method will be discussed in detail in the sections to follow. Notably, interviews were conducted with the SMT members, focus groups interviews with teachers, and questionnaires were handed out to be completed by teachers who were unable to take part in the focus group and retired principals.

4.2.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

Having a social interaction between two people, a two-way conversation (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:108), or two-person dialogue (Muzari et al., 2022:17) to gather specific information relevant to a phenomenon being studied is referred to as an interview. A number of researchers (Muzari et al., 2022:17; Mwita, 2022:619; Zarestky, 2023:129) concur that interviews are considered a regular and important data collection tool in qualitative studies. The aim of an interview aligns with that of a qualitative study – to obtain rich, detailed, and comprehensive information that will assist in providing an accurate and inclusive description of the phenomenon (Muzari et al., 2022:17). Thus, through interviews, the participants' experience, opinions, beliefs, and perspectives are gathered to be comprehended by the researcher which will, in turn, assist with the overall aim. In qualitative research there are various types of interviews to be used, and the type implemented for this study was semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews are when questions, preferably open-ended, are formulated by the researcher prior to the interview (Bazen, Barg & Takeshita, 2021:242). Furthermore, in a semi-structured interview there is opportunity for probing, getting clarification, and asking follow-up questions; thus, the researcher should be attentive to the participants' responses to identify these opportunities (Bazen et al., 2021:242; Nieuwenhuis, 2019:108). Through this process, the researcher has the power to control and guide the interview into certain directions and focus on issues and aspects important to the study – aligned with the research questions and aim (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:1002). Also noteworthy, Nieuwenhuis (2019:108) warns of the participants, or the conversation, being side-tracked, thus the more reason for the researcher to be focused and attentive since it is his/her responsibility to guide the participant back to the purpose of the interview.

(i) Advantages and disadvantages of semi-structured interviews

The advantages of interviews (Bazen et al., 2021:242; Creswell & Poth, 2018:164; Nieuwenhuis, 2019:108; Mwita, 2022:620) include that it (a) offers flexibility, thus misunderstood questions can be rephrased, and new or follow-up questions can be

asked as interesting or certain issues arise; (b) the interview can be conducted in the language of the participant's preference, moreover the usage of language can be altered to suit the educational and/or ability level of the person being interviewed; (c) the conversation can be controlled and guided by the researcher through the line of questioning, and (d) rich and informative data can be collected.

Having discussed the advantages of using interviews, the disadvantages (Creswell & Poth, 2018:164; Nieuwenhuis, 2019:108; Muzari et al., 2022:17; Mwita, 2022:620) are that it (a) can be a lengthy process – time consuming; (b) the researcher's presence may cause bias in responses or statements; (c) being too flexible or unable to bring the conversation back to the main focus, the interview may collect irrelevant information, and (d) due to large amounts of data being collected, significant and noticeable themes might unintentionally be omitted.

(ii) Reasons for adopting semi-structured interviews

One of the reasons why interviews are conducted is to obtain those elements from people which cannot be obtained simply through observations (Fraenkel et al., 2012:451). Furthermore, as mentioned, interviews grant the opportunity to gather extensive, rich accounts of details regarding the phenomenon – especially when the relationship between researcher and participant is well-respected with mutual interest in the topic (Creswell et al., 2017:93). Moreover, through semi-structured interviews the researcher has the power to set questions in advance, focused and aligned with the research aim and questions. Additionally, follow-up questions can be asked when new or interesting issues or topics arise during the interview, as well as getting more clarification on certain topics.

(iii) Application of semi-structured interviews in this study

In this study, a total of 14 individual interviews were conducted with SMT members from different secondary schools. This included four interviews with school principals, five HODs, and two post level one teachers who served on the SMT team at their schools. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and focused on the EI skills and leadership practices for school leaders. To ensure no data was lost, the interviews were recorded using a mobile device with the consent and permission of the

participants. These recordings were then transcribed verbatim. This is further discussed in the data analysis section.

4.2.5.2 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews were conducted with teachers from different schools. As mentioned, teachers had to have more than two years of teaching experience. This was deemed sufficient experience to address questions relating to the school leaders' EI skills and leadership practices, whereas teachers who were newer might not have had adequate time to observe their school leaders in this regard.

A focus group interview can be seen as an extended version of the interview method (Gundumogula, 2020:299), or rather, as an interview but with a group of people; it is however defined as "an informal discussion among selected individuals about specific topics" (Gundumogula, 2020:299). The assumption that focus group interviews are an effective data collection tool due to the possibility of receiving a wide range of responses, activating forgotten details of experiences, and releasing inhibitions that may prevent participants from sharing (Muzari et al., 2022:18). Thus, researchers argue that focus group interviews provide extensive data which may be difficult to obtain with other collection methods (Bazen et al., 2021:242; Creswell & Poth, 2018:208; Nieuwenhuis, 2019:110). Focus groups are also commonly used with qualitative research since it provides leverage for the researcher in understanding a social phenomenon more deeply (Quitoras & Abuso, 2021:3; Tümen-Akyildiz & Ahmed, 2021:6).

(i) Advantages and disadvantages of focus group interviews

Focus group interviews, when compared to other data collection methods, have advantages and disadvantages that need to be addressed. One of the major advantages of focus groups, according to Creswell and Poth (2018:208), is that excellent and rich information can be obtained especially when the participants in the focus group share similarities and are cooperative. This is unlike individual interviews where participants may be hesitant, shy, unconfident or scared to provide information. Tümen-Akyildiz (2020:325) and Tümen-Akyildiz and Ahmed (2021:9) agree that a large amount of information can be gathered rapidly, and that the information is deeper

because of the social interaction among participants. Nieuwenhuis (2019:111) and Tümen-Akyildiz and Ahmed (2021:6) also agree that in-depth information is received because participants can expand on each other's ideas, opinions and remarks, and create different ideas and perspectives which is not possible with other methods, such as individual interviews.

Conversely, one of the biggest disadvantages of focus groups interviews is that all participants must be able to meet at the same day and time which can be particularly difficult to accommodate (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:112). Additionally, information collected may be biased since group members may accept the answers of other participants which may dominate the discussion – for instance, some may be more outspoken individuals than others (Bazen et al., 2021: 242; Tümen-Akyildiz & Ahmed, 2021:9). Furthermore, an inexperienced researcher conducting a focus group interview may not control the discussion in a such a way that provides informative and high-quality data (Tümen-Akyildiz & Ahmed, 2021:9). Lastly, the findings from a focus group interview ought not to be usable to generate conclusions about the total population (Tümen-Akyildiz & Ahmed, 2021:9).

(ii) Reasons for adopting focus group interviews

Tümen-Akyildiz and Ahmed (2021:7) argue that a group of individuals who share the same interest may provide rich data, and the researcher may understand the group dynamic better. In this case, all the teachers not serving on the SMT share similar interests, such as being constant observers, and directly experiencing the emotional intelligence skills and leadership practices of SMT members under which they are being led. Furthermore, being in similar positions, informative and detailed data can be collected since all the participants were teachers and none were in leadership positions. To add, this allowed and encouraged participants to speak freely since no one in a leadership position was present which might have discouraged participants from disclosing information. To sum up, focus group interviews were the appropriate choice for this study, especially for the teachers who were identified to participate in this study as it allowed detailed, fast, and extensive data to be collected.

(iii) Application of focus group interviews in this study

In this study, a total of three focus group interviews were conducted with a total of 15 teachers. The first focus group interview consisted of four teachers, the second of seven teachers, and the last focus group interview contained four teachers. As mentioned with the disadvantages, the biggest challenge would have been to get all the teachers to be available at the same time and on the same day. To avoid this, the researcher asked the assistance of the respective school principals or deputy principals to organise this. This was helpful since school leaders have better access to all the teachers. For example, one deputy principal addressed this in their staff meeting one morning, explained the purpose of the study and asked for volunteers. This was also done after individual interviews with school leaders, thus establishing the relationship and providing a complete understanding of the purpose of the research which led to them being more open and willing to assist in asking their teachers to take part in a focus group interview. Additionally, the school principals allowed and gave permission to conduct the focus group interviews during school hours which was also greatly beneficial in terms of the number of teachers in participation, whereas after school hours, there might have been fewer teachers willing to participate. To highlight, data collection occurred during examination times when teachers had no classes to teach and more free time at school between marking and invigilating examinations. This did not affect their marking as the focus group interviews were planned well in advance and only teachers who did not have invigilation or an excessive amount of marking on set dates participated.

The focus group interviews last approximately 45 minutes. Additionally, one challenge the researcher encountered was with the second focus group interview which consisted of seven teachers. At first, this seemed very advantageous; however, after the interview, the researcher concluded that seven members were perhaps too many since one or two participants hardly gave input or shared any experiences or opinions. In contrast, the focus groups with four members encouraged all participants to share and participate. Also, members in a smaller group were more considerate toward their fellow teachers in answering questions and providing opportunities to answer.

4.2.5.3 Open-ended questionnaires

Open-ended questionnaires were handed out to retired school principals to complete. A total of four questionnaires were given to the retired principals identified. A questionnaire is referred to as a designed document with a set of written questions aimed at obtaining information regarding a specific topic given to participants to be completed (Afolayan & Oniyinde, 2019:55; Jain, 2021:543; Mwita, 2022:620). There are different types of questionnaires, but for this study, open-ended questionnaires were used. An open-ended questionnaire means that the questions are open-ended, offering more flexibility to address the research questions of the study (Braun, Clarke, Boulton, Davey & McEvoy, 2021:642). Furthermore, using an open-ended questionnaire provides the opportunity to obtain gather copious amounts of information (Mwita, 2022:620), and rich and detailed information (Braun et al., 2021:643) since participants are allowed to share opinions, experiences, views, and feelings regarding the studied phenomenon.

(i) Advantages and disadvantages of open-ended questionnaires

There are advantages and disadvantages of open-ended questionnaires from various researchers (Afolavan & Oniyinde, 2019:56; Braun et al., 2021:643-645; Jain, 2021:54; Mwita, 2022:620) to consider.

One the one hand, (a) the rich and informative amounts of data collected can be advantageous; (b) flexibility allows the researcher to control key aspects relating to the studied phenomenon; (c) great anonymity and privacy is offered for participants which also allows participants to respond freely and with sufficient time.

On the other hand, disadvantages may include that (a) ambiguity in questions may lead to unanswered questions or irrelevant and redundant information. (b) Questionnaires also tend to have lower response rates or incomplete responses. Lastly, (c) the researcher is limited to the information and knowledge given by participants and have no way to know if the information is truthful.

(ii) Reasons for adopting open-ended questionnaires

Mainly, the reason open-ended questionnaires were used for this study is due to the flexibility and opportunities to share it offers. The open-ended questionnaires were designed in such a way as to focus on specific aspects of the research questions and aim regarding the phenomenon. Furthermore, it was also used since participants could freely answer and share their experiences, opinions and views as much as possible, and not be limited to yes or no answers. Additionally, questionnaires offered participants the chance to answer privately and anonymously without being pressured or intimidated by other members. For example, a teacher could answer truthfully regarding the leadership and EI skills of SMT members without concern for others and what they may think. Consequently, valuable and honest information with respect to the phenomenon being studied can be collected. Additionally, retired principals may make it difficult to collect data geographically. Thus, open-ended questionnaires could be emailed to retired principals, also allowing them adequate time to consider and provide their inputs.

(iii) Application of open-ended questionnaires in this study

Open ended questionnaires were completed by retired school principals. After talking to one retired school principal with whom the researcher is acquainted, the principal offered assistance in asking permission to share the numbers and/or email addresses of other retired school principals in his network, with the researcher. Thereafter, the researcher reached out to these principals via email and sent the questionnaires after requesting their participation in the research study. The retired principals were very willing to take part in the study and also to share their vast experience and knowledge.

The questionnaire allowed retired principals to complete it on their own time and answer as much as they would like. This led to vast and rich amounts of data. Additionally, questionnaires tend to have a high incomplete rate; however, the researcher addressed this by corresponding with the participants via email or calling beforehand, introducing himself and explaining the purpose of the study. This approach served to ensure that questionnaires were completed thoroughly. Also, extensive time was given to participants, and this also allowed questionnaires to be

completed thoroughly and in detail since there was no sudden completion date. This, however, did set the researcher back in terms of data analysis as questionnaires were received while data analysis was already in progress. Nevertheless, rich, detailed and completed questionnaires were received.

4.2.6 Data analysis

The concept data analysis applies to organising the gathered information for analysis – reducing it into themes to provide descriptions and conclusions (Creswell & Poth, 2018:181; Nieuwenhuis, 2019:123; Taherdoost, 2022:55). For Muzari et al. (2022:19), analysis is “the reasoning strategy with an objective of splitting a complex whole into its parts in order to understand the relationships of the parts”. Nevertheless, based on these two meanings, data analysis is a technique where the researcher must explain and discuss the data gathered from participants, and is best done when reducing the data by looking for specific meanings – those most appropriate and valuable to the research (Muzari et al., 2022:19; Taherdoost, 2022:55).

There are various data analysis techniques to be used which are mostly determined by the research objectives, aim and methodology. Each data analysis technique has its own unique steps and approach to inquiry. Therefore, before getting into the data analysing technique used for this study, a general analysis procedure, obtained from Creswell and Poth (2018:203) and Nieuwenhuis (2019:124), used in qualitative studies is represented below:

- Step 1: Organising and preparing the data.
- Step 2: Reading through all the information and highlighting (memorising) emergent ideas.
- Step 3: Coding data into categories.
- Step 4: Describing and classifying codes into themes.
- Step 5: Developing and presenting interpretations.

The following sections discuss how the data gathered in this research study was analysed.

4.2.6.1 Transcriptions

Since the interviews conducted were recorded, the audio of these recordings needed to be transformed to text, referred to as transcription (Collins & Hardie, 2022:123; McMullin, 2023:140; Nieuwenhuis, 2019:135). According to a definition provided by McMullin (2023:140), transcription is “the transformation of recorded audio (usually spoken word) into a written form that can be used to analyse a particular phenomenon or event”. Therefore, the individual interview and focus group interview audio files were firstly transcribed into text, or written words, before being analysed. The process of transcription is an extremely time-consuming and tedious one (McMullin, 2023:141); however, it means that further in the analysis process, data can be accurately and effectively analysed and interpreted. Software and companies are available to transcribe data, however it can be expensive and needs to be thoroughly verified by the researcher again to ensure authenticity.

On the other hand, hiring an external person to do the transcription may also result in key elements in the conversation that give meaning to the spoken word being lost, such as “well... er ... I suppose” or laughter or silence before answering (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:135). Therefore, transcriptions were done for this study by the researcher himself. By doing it this way, the written text is an accurate representation of the interviews, and the researcher is allowed to omit misspoken words or corrections from the interviewee, and focus and record what was intended (McMullin, 2023:141). Additionally, any interviews that were conducted in Afrikaans, according to participant preference, were first transcribed and then translated into English with the assistance of a qualified person.

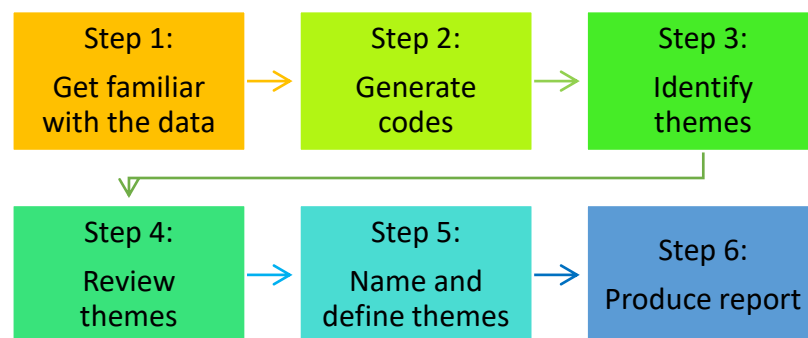
4.2.6.2 Thematic analysis

From the many methods of data analysis, thematic analysis was chosen for this study. Thematic analysis is a commonly used data analysis technique in qualitative studies (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018:808; Kiger & Varpio, 2020:847; Lochmiller, 2021:2029). Thematic analysis is defined by Kiger and Varpio (2020:847) as “a method for analysing qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyse, and report repeated patterns”. Thematic analysis requires the identification of

reoccurring patterns, generating codes, and constructing themes with the aim of describing the data (Elsevier, 2022:77; Kiger & Varpio, 2020:847; Lochmiller, 2021:2029).

The reasons for adopting thematic analysis for this study include its flexibility; it being used and appropriate for a wide range of research questions, designs, and sample sizes, and because it is a powerful method that enables the researcher to understand participants' experiences, views, and thoughts (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018:808; Elsevier, 2022:78; Kiger & Varpio, 2020:847). Therefore, both semi-structured interviews with the SMT members and open-ended questionnaires were analysed, after being transcribed, using thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006:15-23) suggest the following procedure for doing thematic analysis, and this was followed for this study as indicated in Figure 4.2 below.

Figure 4.2: Thematic analysis step-by-step procedure.



In the first step, the researcher gets familiar with the data, with repeated and active reading through the written scripts from the individual interviews, focus group interviews and questionnaires. In doing so, the researcher becomes familiar with the data. Although it may be tempting to start generating codes, it is advised by Braun and Clarke (2006:15; Kiger & Varpio, 2020:849) that the researcher first work through and familiarise him-/herself with the entire data set.

In the second step, the first true analytical step in the process begins where codes are generated. According to Kiger and Varpio (2020:850), a code is defined as “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon”. Therefore, codes are used to mark important parts of the data with symbols, descriptive words or unique identifying

names (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:136). Codes can be generated by capturing the repetition of certain ideas, concepts, meanings, or experiences expressed by participants (Elsevier, 2022:78). Thereafter, a code could apply to and represent a single word, sentence or paragraph of the qualitative data – the researcher’s identification of patterns begins (Lochmiller, 2021:2031). It is, however, important that the codes are defined and applied to the entire data set (Kiger & Varpio, 2020:250).

Identify themes, the third step, involves examining the codes and organised data to look for patterns which will lead to the identification of themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020:250; Lochmiller, 2021:2031). These patterns will serve as the basis for themes; pattern being defined by Lochmiller (2021:2031) as “repetitive, regular, or consistent occurrences of action/data that appear more than twice”. Additionally, this is done through constant analysing, combining, and comparing the codes with one another (Kiger & Varpio, 2020:250).

Afterwards, in the fourth step, the themes are reviewed to establish whether each theme has adequate data to support it, or whether some themes are too small or large, and coherence in each theme as well as between themes. Additionally, themes can also be renamed, modified, re-sorted, divided, or combined (Braun & Clarke, 2006:19; Kiger & Varpio, 2020:251).

In the fifth step, once the researcher is satisfied with the themes after reviewing, the themes are named and defined. Each theme is discussed in detail, such as in relation to its importance to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006:20; Kiger & Varpio, 2020:251).

In the final step, the findings are described and presented, which gives rise to the themes. Moreover, literature can be included and referenced to give strength and support to the analysis and validating why particular themes were created and selected (Braun & Clarke, 2006:22; Kiger & Varpio, 2020:251; Lochmiller, 2021:2032).

4.2.7 Quality assurance of the research

The following principles regarding quality assurance to ensure the quality and integrity of the research were adhered to by the researcher. These included trustworthiness,

credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, which are discussed in detail in the sections to follow.

4.2.7.1 Trustworthiness

The ultimate goal of qualitative researchers is to achieve trustworthiness in their research (Carcary, 2020:166; Stahl & King, 2020:26). Trustworthiness means that the researchers and readers feel confident in the research (Stalsh & King, 2020:26), and it is seen as worthy to attend to (Nowell et al., 2017:2). Additionally, Ravitch and Carl (2016:205) argue that trustworthiness is a method where the researcher can confirm that the findings are truthful and faithful to the participants' perspectives and experiences. To achieve trustworthiness in a qualitative study, criteria are proposed. Lincoln and Guba (1985:290) were among the first to propose these criteria which consist of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (also in Creswell & Poth, 2018:248; Nieuwenhuis, 2019:143; Tümen-Akyildiz, 2020:325; Stahl & King, 2020:26). Therefore, this study adhered to these four criteria to ensure the trustworthiness thereof.

4.2.7.2 Credibility

Credibility, in short, is referred to as the truth-value of findings (Muzari et al., 2022:18). Both Nieuwenhuis (2019:144) and Stahl and King (2020:26) argue that credibility encompasses the following questions: (a) "How congruent are the findings with reality?" and (b) "How do I ensure that the reader will believe the findings?" According to Nieuwenhuis (2019:144), credibility can be ensured through various methods such as well-established research methods, using research design appropriate to the research questions, purposive sampling, detailed data collection, and frequent debriefing sessions between researcher and supervisor. Furthermore, one more common way to ensure credibility is triangulation which was achieved in this study and is discussed below.

(i) Triangulation

Triangulation in research refers to the use of multiple and different data collection tools to obtain identifiable and verifying patterns (Creswell & Poth, 2018:254; Stahl & King,

2020:26). By using multiple data collection techniques, the researcher can view, compare, and understand the phenomenon from multiple sources. Also, another major benefit of using triangulation is the reduction of research bias, since information is obtained from a diverse range of individuals, settings, and sources (Muzari et al., 2022:18). Therefore, triangulation was used for this study to ensure credibility by using three data collection techniques: (1) semi-structured individual interviews, conducted with SMT members (the principals, deputy principals and HODs), (2) focus group interviews with teachers, and (3) open-ended questionnaires that were completed by teachers who were unable to participate in a focus group interview and retired school principals.

4.2.7.3 Transferability

The stance of transferability is somewhat ambiguous in qualitative research. In short, transferability refers to when the study's findings can be ascertained to another study (Muzari et al., 2022:18; Stalh & King, 2020:27). Although qualitative researchers reject and do not aim for generalisation, patterns and descriptions from one context may be applicable to another (Muzari et al., 2022:18; Nieuwenhuis, 2019:144; Stalh & King, 2020:27). After all, as argued by Stalh and King (2020:27), the goal of qualitative inquiry is to transfer findings from one context to another to expand understanding.

Thus, Nieuwenhuis (2019:144), supports this by stating that transferability does not generalise the finding, but invites readers to compare between the findings of the study and their own experience. Nonetheless, Nieuwenhuis (2019:145) proposes two strategies to ensure transferability which were used in this study. The first was thick descriptions, and this was achieved where the researcher provided a comprehensive and thorough account of the participants, context, and research design – giving readers the opportunity to make their own judgements about transferability. The second was purposive sampling (as discussed earlier), in which the researcher carefully selected the participants who most appropriately and accurately fit the notion that they somehow represent the population in terms of the phenomenon being studied.

4.2.7.4 Dependability

Dependability, also referred to as 'consistency' (Korstjens & Moser, 2017:122) or 'reliability' (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:145), is when the findings of the research can be repeated if the research were to be conducted with the same subjects and context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:290). Muzari et al. (2022:19) argue that a demonstration of credibility strongly goes toward establishing dependability. Furthermore, dependability is ensured through the research design and its implementation, the details of data collection, and the implementation of findings (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:145).

(i) Audit trail

Another strategy called an audit trail was used to establish dependability. An audit trail refers to a process in qualitative research where a detailed record of how the study was conducted and how conclusions were drawn is documented by the researcher (Carcary, 2020:167). For this study, the entire research process has been recorded and documented by the researcher which involves the research design, details of data collection, analysis, and researcher's choices and interpretations that led to the research findings being transparent. The documentation includes, as proposed by Carcary (2020:168), raw data (documents), data reduction and analysis notes including summaries, data reconstruction (notes), process notes including research methodology notes, trustworthiness notes, and instrument development information.

4.2.7.5 Confirmability

When referring to confirmability, it means that the findings and interpretations are directly, thoroughly, and objectively derived from the participants, the data gathered, and not from the researcher's bias, motivation, or interest (Muzari et al., 2022:18; Nieuwenhuis, 2019:145; Stahl & King, 2020:28). One of the strategies to ensure confirmability, as proposed by Nieuwenhuis (2019:145), which was used in this study was triangulation. Through triangulation, research bias is reduced – how triangulation was applied in this study was discussed earlier. Moreover, Nowell et al. (2017:3) indicate that confirmability is ensured once credibility, dependability and transferability is achieved. Additionally, an audit trail was used as a strategy for dependability which

ensures confirmability – in the form of evidence recorded and documented regarding the research process.

4.2.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations in research are vital and important to highlight since research deals with humans, and the best interest of participants should be the main aim (Muzari et al., 2022:19). As advised by Ravitch and Carl (2016:377), it is necessary for the researcher to understand, consider and approach their role with humility. Furthermore, as suggested by Nieuwenhuis (2019:47) and Muzari et al. (2022:19), the researcher read, interpreted and applied the three ethical principles as guidance which are: beneficence, respect for people, and justice. Therefore, the following principles regarding ethics in research were applied and will be further discussed.

4.2.8.1 Permission to conduct the study

Firstly, ethical clearance to conduct the study was authorised and permitted by the Ethics Committee of the University of the Free State (ethical clearance number: UFS-HSD2022/1768/3) (Appendix A). Secondly, the Free State Department of Education granted permission to conduct the study at selected schools and participants (Appendix B). Thereafter, school principals were approached either through a face-to-face meeting, where possible, a phone call or an email to ask permission for them to participate in the study as well as the identified participants. After permission was given by school principals, other participants such as the deputy principal, HOD and teachers were also individually requested, and granted permission to participate in the study.

4.2.8.2 Informed consent

Before the commencement of the study, all participants were informed thoroughly regarding the nature of the study, the participation requirements, confidentiality and the researcher's as well as the research supervisor's contact information (Appendix C and D).

4.2.8.3 Voluntary participation

All participants were thoroughly informed before the study commenced as well as throughout the study and assured that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw from the study during any stage. Furthermore, participants were also made aware that they can refrain from answering any specific questions should they not want to.

4.2.8.4 Confidentiality and anonymity

Anonymity refers to the participants' identities remaining unknown (e.g., when using questionnaires), whereas confidentiality is that the identity of the participant will be known to the researcher, but the data will be de-identified and the identity of the participant will be kept confidential (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018:211). For this study, pseudonyms were created and attached to participants to ensure confidentiality. Therefore, the anonymity and confidentiality of participants in this study were protected and preserved by not revealing their true identities or names during the data collection, data analysis or reporting of the findings. The use of pseudonyms for participants is discussed in detail in Chapter 5, where codes were allocated to participants. Also, in the focus group interviews, participants were referred to as Teacher 1, Teacher 2 and so on.

4.3 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Chapter 4 outlined the map for this research, how the research was conducted to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives of the research as mentioned in Chapter 1. This study adopted an interpretivist research paradigm, a qualitative research approach, and a phenomenological research design. The population from which the sample for this study was selected was discussed. Furthermore, purposive sampling was used since the researcher required the participants to fit certain criteria for the study. Continuing to data collection, individual interviews were conducted with SMT members, focus group interviews with teachers, and questionnaires were administered to teachers unable to partake in a focus groups, and retired school principals.

To ensure quality assurance of the research was guaranteed, trustworthiness was maintained, which included the achievement of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Furthermore, ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee for the University, and permission was granted from the Free State Department of Education. Lastly, specific ethical principles were followed to ensure the ethical considerations of the research were addressed, which included informed consent, voluntary participation and confidentiality and anonymity. In the following chapter, the data collected will be presented and analysed.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the findings from the data collected will be presented to respond to the research questions and aims of the study. The data collection methods and analysis were discussed in detail in Chapter 4. The findings as well as the biographical information of participants are presented in this chapter.

5.2 BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF PARTICIPANTS

A total of 14 individual interviews were conducted at participating schools. These interviews consisted of the SMT, which included four school principals, three deputy school principals, five HODs, and two post level one teachers who were also part of the SMT at one school. Nine of the participants who participated in the individual interviews were male whereas five were female. These participants' ages varied from 30 to 63 years. Their total years of teaching experiences varied from nine years to 41 years. Moreover, their total years of experience in a leadership position ranged from three to 35 years.

Additionally, three focus group interviews were conducted which consisted of a total of 15 teachers who were not part of the SMT at their respective schools. Focus groups were only possible at three schools. Out of the 15 participants, 12 were female and three were male. Their ages ranged from 20 to 60 years, and their years of teaching experience from one year to 31 years. There was also a total of eight open-ended questionnaires completed by participants, four from teachers who were unable to do a focus group interview at their school and the other four questionnaires from retired school principals.

For the retired school principals, two stood out regarding their experience as school leaders. Although stated in the table below that retired principals two (RP2) and three (RP3) have 4 years and 20 years of experience as a school principal, respectively, they went on to higher positions after that, for example, retired principal 2 (RP2) went

on to hold a provincial departmental director position for another five years whereas retired principal 3 (RP3) went on to be a principal mentor for a university-school partnership programme for nine years. Below, in Table 5.1, a full description of participants' biographical information can be found.

Table 5.1: Participants' biographical information.

School 1 (S1)	Gender	Age	Years teaching	Years in leadership role
Principal (P)	M	63	40	23
Deputy Principal (DP)	F	44	27	13
HOD (H)	M	30	9	3
Teacher (T1)	F	26-30	6-10	n/a
Teacher (T2)	F	26-30	1-5	n/a
Teacher (T3)	F	31-35	11-15	n/a
Teacher (T4)	F	26-30	1-5	n/a
School 2 (S2)	Gender	Age	Years taught	Years as principal
Principal (P)	M	50	23	20
Deputy Principal (DP)	M	59	33	23
HOD (H)	M	60	35	18
Teacher (T1)	M	56-60	31+	n/a

Teacher (T2)	F	26-30	6-10	n/a
Teacher (T3)	F	31-35	1-5	n/a
Teacher (T4)	F	36-40	11-15	n/a
Teacher (T5)	M	20-25	1-5	n/a
Teacher (T6)	F	31-35	11-15	n/a
Teacher (T7)	F	20-25	1-5	n/a
School 3 (S3)	Gender	Age	Years taught	Years as principal
Principal (P)	F	53	30	23
Deputy Principal (DP)	M	57	33	17
HOD (H)	F	40	18	8
Teacher (T1)	M	36-40	11-15	n/a
Teacher (T2)	F	46-50	21-25	n/a
Teacher (T3)	F	31-35	6-10	n/a
Teacher (T4)	F	51-55	26-30	n/a
School 4 (S4)	Gender	Age	Years taught	Years as principal
Principal (P)	M	64	41	35
HOD (H1)	M	59	37	23

HOD (H2)	M	62	33	2
Teacher (T1)	F	35	13	3
Teacher (T2)	F	41	22	3
School 5 (S5)	Gender	Age	Years taught	Years as principal
Teacher (T1)	F	20-25	1-5	n/a
Teacher (T2)	F	26-30	6-10	n/a
Teacher (T3)	F	31-35	6-10	n/a
Teacher (T4)	F	36-40	16-20	n/a
Retired principals (RP)	Gender	Age	Years taught	Years as principal
RP1	M	69	38	23
RP2	M	76	46	4
RP3	M	69	41	20
RP4	M	70	40	16

To avoid confusion of the participants, codes (e.g., S1/P/DP/H/RP/T1;2) were designed and assigned to participants for the research to identify and distinguish between them. The first part of the code (S1) indicates the school that participated, whereas the second part of the code refers to the position (P for principal, DP for deputy principal, H for HOD, RP for retired principal, and T for teacher). When a

number is allocated, this indicates the number participant of the same position at the school such as T1 (Teacher number 1) or H2 (HOD number 2). Lastly, to clarify and distinguish between the focus groups, the code F was used, for example, S2/F/T2 refers to school two, focus group and teacher number two in the focus group.

5.3 THEMES FROM DATA COLLECTION

After all the data was collected from individual interviews, focus groups and open-ended questionnaires, it was analysed using a qualitative data analysis method, as discussed earlier. From the raw data, themes were identified and defined which are as follows: (1) Leadership challenges SMT members face; (2) EI skills for SMT members for self-awareness; (3) EI skills for SMT members for social awareness; (4) EI skills for SMT members for self-management; (5) EI skills for SMT members for relationship management, and (6) leadership practices for SMT members. The first theme entails common and frequent educational challenges that SMT members face. The second to fifth themes all encompass EI skills for SMT members. The second theme deals with self-awareness, which focuses more on the SMT member him-/herself as an EI skill, whereas the third theme entails EI skills needed by SMT members to react and interact with other people effectively and appropriately, in other words, social awareness. The fourth theme, referring to self-management, encompasses the EI skills for a SMT member to manage their own emotions and seeing that it does not interfere with what needs to be done. The fifth theme entails EI skills for SMT members to manage, build and maintain relationships with others. Lastly, leadership practices, the sixth theme, deals with leadership practices as deemed necessary and important for SMT members. In Table 5.2 below, a summary of the main themes as well as sub-themes can be found.

Table 5.2: Themes and sub-themes created from data analysis.

Themes	Sub-themes
Theme 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of change • Department of Education and district officials

Leadership challenges SMT members face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal transitioning • Parents • Managing teachers' workloads
Theme 2 EI skills for SMT members for self-awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessment • Assertiveness • Emotional self-awareness
Theme 3 EI skills for SMT members for social awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying emotions • Empathy
Theme 4 EI skills for SMT members for self-management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional regulation • Optimism, resilience and managing criticism • Adaptability • Balancing work and personal responsibilities
Theme 5 EI skills for SMT members for relationship management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building bonds • Conflict management • Motivation • Staff development • Teamwork
Theme 6 Leadership practices for SMT members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Autonomy and Innovation • Delegating responsibilities • School culture, expectations, and vision • The decision-making process

5.3.1 Leadership challenges SMT members face

The first theme identified relates to the leadership challenges that SMT members face, as a team and individually, to create a positive and thriving working school environment. Under this section, the SMT members, teachers and retired principals shared their experience and knowledge regarding leadership challenges they have experienced as well as valuable insight in dealing with these challenges.

5.3.1.1 Implementation of change

The data indicated that change is important and although change is not always easy (S1/H; S2/F/T1), it is necessary in most cases. An HOD with a master's degree in education claimed that the working environment is much more challenging, especially after COVID-19 (S1/H). Therefore, changes had to be made to get the best results even if it is difficult – not just for teachers, but for the SMT as well (S1/H). This is also supported by a deputy principal (S3/DP) who claimed that change is inevitable and that one should always be prepared.

What helps one HOD (S1/HD) during times of change, is the attitude he has, noting that he sees it as an opportunity, which helps him to be more effective and open to change. Also, he stated (S1/H) that this is the message he tries to give to his teachers in his department as well regarding change: *“Change is inevitable, we should embrace it”* (S1/H). More importantly, this HOD claimed that, for others to change, leaders need to be open and able to change as well. Although change is inevitable, according to the HOD above, a principal claimed that change should not be done for the sake of change, but only if a system is not working, then changes can be made (S3/P).

A deputy principal (S1/DP) stated that you must be strict when leading staff during change. For example, when there are changes in her department regarding submission, she gives a date which is fair and realistic when things need to be done regarding change which teachers find difficult. To add, she explained that one needs to be strict, especially when the change is to the benefit of the school and not per person to get their way.

One principal (S1/P) with more than 20 years of experience in leadership and management of a school, shared one of his methods in dealing with change. He stated that by giving teachers a choice, change can be effectively implemented. For example, one change he brought in was that everyone must serve on a committee at the school, such as prize giving, marketing, sport, staff tea and so. By doing this, he never experienced any resistance from teachers since they wanted to feel like part of the school as well as part of the decision-making process. By giving them a choice of what they want to be part of, it makes it easier for them too. Although this method is very effective with one aspect of change in this school, he (S1/P) also added that being consistent regarding any other changes that affect people at the school makes it easier. An HOD agrees (S3/HD): “... *we needed consistency and apply the same thing*”.

On the other hand, nine teachers from three different schools agreed on the same thing regarding change: communication. When change was communicated to them in advance, and when teachers can see the benefit it has for the school, change was easier for them. To add, eight teachers (S1/T1, T3 & T4; S3/F/T1; T2; T3; T4; S4/T2) agreed that when there was open communication where they were allowed to give inputs, share concerns and opinions, change was easier and more understandable, and did not come as a “*surprise*” (S1/T1). Two teachers (S2/F/T2; S3/F/T2) strongly stated that thorough communication is needed, which is usually the problem because change was not communicated beforehand, and the teachers were just informed at late notice about the changes. A HOD (S3/HD) also stated that a major problem regarding change is that it is “... *precipitated*”. To avoid any surprises, a HOD with 18 years of school leadership experience gave a solution by stating that “*it is important to inform the people who will be affected*” (S2/HD).

Besides clear communication, three teachers (S2/F/T1; T4; T5) agreed that any changes should be made gradually: “*I feel change should be gradually, because people do not like change. Any type of change should be applied gradually and not too much once*” (S2/F/T1). Another principal (S2/P) also claimed that communication was the key factor for him when it came to persuading people regarding a change happening. He stated that during communication “... *they become aware it is for the*

bigger picture", thus for the benefit of the school. Similarly, another principal (S3/P) stated that she also tries to explain and show the positivity of the change that is necessary. A deputy principal (S3/DP) with 17 years of school leadership experience also claimed that explaining the importance of change is an effective way to implement change: *"Guide or explain to them why it is important. Would call them individually and talk and try to explain to them why it is happening and why it is best for the school at the moment"* (S3/DP).

Regarding communication with change, a deputy principal (S2/DP) with more than 30 years of experience stated that honesty will be the best way to deal with change, especially with someone reluctant or resisting change: *"Going to be best to be honest"* (S2/DP). One other suggestion regarding change from a teacher with more than 20 years of experience (S4/T2) is for a school leader not to have a dictatory approach to change: *"Not to just come in and change everything because you can"*. This agrees with the principal's (S3/P) opinion earlier regarding change only when it is necessary. Moreover, the teacher (S4/T2) shared the reason she believes the principal at her school was so successful with change is because he came and improved on existing systems and did not completely change everything according to his will.

Four teachers from a focus group (S5/F/T1; T2; T3; T4) agreed that although change is necessary and/or inevitable, the aftercare should be just as important. These teachers shared a big change recently in their school – although it was necessary, the support from the SMT members after the change was implemented was lacking and even non-existent. Therefore, the change suddenly after implementation was seen negatively and teachers were left stranded without knowing how to cope and deal with the change.

All four retired principals (RP1; RP2; RP3; RP4) shared noteworthy principles when dealing with change which aligned greatly with the findings above. Some of these principles that worked for them were open communication, keeping everyone informed, including all educational stakeholders in the decision-making process, honesty and being approachable. One retired principal (RP2) stated the following on why staff members were keen and open to change: *"...because they were part of the process"*. Another retired principal (RP1) shared that whenever anyone was still

negative or against any change, especially parents – because this retired principal was part of a big change where two schools were merged into one – was to invite them to discuss the issues. This was also claimed by another retired principal (RP2) who claimed that a difference of opinion is never based on age or experience, but rather because they do not understand the idea.

5.3.1.2 Department of Education and district officials

Under this sub-theme, challenges that school leaders face with the Department of Education and/or education authorities were identified. Also, ways in dealing with these challenges, particularly with the Department of Education and/or education authorities, were also identified and presented at the end of this sub-theme.

(i) Administration

Three out of the four school principals (S1/P; S2/P; S3/P), one deputy principal (S3/DP), and two HODs (S2/H; S3/H) all claimed that one of the biggest challenges they encounter with the Department of Education is the amount of administration required to be completed. See two responses below:

“... is the absolute paper war we have. Usually, certain information that they want from us that they already have” (S1/P).

“Administrative work. It is a lot” (S3/DP).

According to the participants, the main issue with admin responsibilities required from educational authorities is unrealistic timelines and unnecessary or redundant information. Three participants (S1/P; S3/DP; RP3) agreed that the educational authorities would send something that requires feedback in an unrealistic timeline. See below one response from a principal:

“Target dates and times. They will send something at 8:00 a.m. and need to send it back at 12:00 p.m., the problem is that it is not achievable. Certain things cannot be done in 4 hours” (S1/P).

To add, these participants agreed that they cannot always put everything on hold at school immediately when the educational authorities want something. For example, a principal (S1/P) stated that, sometimes, the teacher he requires to complete the forms required from educational authorities is busy teaching. On the other hand, they might be in class themselves, busy teaching, as one deputy principal raised this point (S3/DP). Another instance of taking teachers out of class is the unnecessary meetings and/or courses from the Department of Education. A HOD (S4/H) shared that the department would sometimes require the entire SMT to be at a meeting during school hours. Since they are a smaller school, that is almost half their teaching staff, meaning half their teachers are gone for a meeting which could have been done over an email. A principal also shared his frustration when the department does not plan properly, and teachers need to be out of the classrooms for courses:

“... because it takes teachers out of the classrooms for courses from which they do not benefit anything. And it removes the child from teaching” (S2/P).

This also leads to contradicting messages since principals and teachers need to be in class, but then they must leave for these meetings at unrealistic times (S3/H). Lastly, it is not just teachers, as it was found that school principals must sometimes leave school for the entire day to attend meetings (S3/P; S4/H).

(ii) Delayed feedback

Another challenge three principals from different schools experienced was the delay in feedback from the department. One principal shared an experience where it happened on a few occasions with vacant positions at his school:

“Get a vacant position, struggle months to fill it. That post stays open, the person does not get appointed... the things do not happen on time” (S1/P).

Likewise, another principal (S4/P) shared a similar experience and frustrations regarding the filling of vacant positions being a very long process. Similarly, a retired principal (RP3) claimed that in one instance, it took two years for the department to finalise an appointment of a teacher to a position. Although feedback is sometimes positive from the educational authorities, it just takes a long time: *“The route where*

things must go on before you get feedback, and feedback is mostly positive, the route just takes long” (S2/P).

Besides delayed feedback, another challenge school leaders encounter, especially principals, is teacher provision. Three senior participants (S1/P; S1/DP; RP3) shared this common challenge from the Department of Education, which is teacher provision. The deputy principal claimed that the school is growing in numbers (learners), but the department does not provide more teachers. The negative consequences are that the teacher-learner ratio becomes difficult to manage.

(iii) Unrealistic academic expectations

A few participants shared a concern from departmental authorities regarding unrealistic expectations. One principal (S1/P) claimed that the department wants certain percentages with matriculants passing, but it is not achievable given the situations of their schools. He also claimed that the Department of Education is only task-oriented and wants results. The HOD from the same school agreed with these expectations of unrealistic academic achievements, but because of their school’s socio-economic status, it may not be achievable:

“... they do not realise that our children come from different socio-economic backgrounds, our demographic backgrounds of our school are very complex” (S1/H).

Surprisingly, two teachers (S5/F/T3 and T2) from a focus group interview from another school also claimed that departmental authorities want unrealistic achievements which is not possible with their school, and the children they have – specifically, their socio-economic background is not being considered. They are working with learners coming from difficult backgrounds, not just financially but which may have a profound impact on their academic performance.

(iv) Managing these challenges

The most common approach from most participants dealing with education authorities were having a good relationship with them (S1/P; S1/DP; S1/H; S2/P; S3/P):

“... but if you have a good relationship with people in different sections... you get things reasonably done and quicker” (S2/P).

Participants note that having good personal relationships with the educational authorities they are working with comes with its benefits. For example, an HOD (S1/H) stated he can contact his subject advisor any time for assistance. Also, as mentioned above, one principal (S2/P) stated that having relationships with people in different sections of the department is effective when it comes to getting feedback more quickly. Lastly, a principal stated that her circuit manager is always helpful (S3/P).

Another principal (S1/P) shared advice, which is to be the better person and try to build a good relationship because it will not help to fight over these challenges; it will only disadvantage the school. A retired principal (RP2) shared that in being *“open and frank in your approach”* the department was more approachable. To add, he also never had any problems with teacher unions because once a problem is understood, everyone can work towards a solution (RP2).

However, for one other HOD (S2/H), a good relationship was not needed. He shared that if they just do their things and do not disturb the department, then the department will not disturb them. Unfortunately, it did not work for all school leaders, as one retired principal (RP3) claimed that the departmental frustrations caused him to go into early retirement.

5.3.1.3 Principal transitioning

One unexpected finding from a number of participants was the major challenges the staff and a school itself face when waiting for a new school principal. At the time of data collections, two schools were in the process of waiting for the official appointment of a new school principal. This caused a lot of challenges for the SMT and staff, as found in one focus group where a teacher stated that the acting principal cannot implement any new changes, ideas, systems, or ideas since the principal has not been officially appointed (S3/F/T3). Two other teachers in the same focus group added that this has a knock-on effect to the rest of the SMT and staff because everyone is unsure what to do, cannot make decisions, and that they cannot really plan anything (S3/F/T1; T2). A similar finding was gained from another school where a teacher shared her

experience when their school did not have an official school principal. The teacher claimed that they could not do anything, planning-wise, or implement any new ideas (S2/F/T6).

One teacher with more than 25 years of teaching experience shared her frustration with this process and why nothing is happening. The reason, she stated (S3/F/T4), why nothing is happening, is because there are too many people who want to be 'leader' and make their own decisions. To add, another teacher (S3/F/T3) shared that because the principal is not officially appointed, she still must teach her classes whilst acting as principal. Thus, the teacher claimed that they never see the principal and feel too guilty to ask anything whenever they do see her (S3/F/T3). Lastly, the teacher did show understanding that it is not the principal's fault that they are not seeing her, because the teacher claimed the principal cannot delegate since nothing is official yet.

At another school, similar findings were gleaned. A teacher from the focus group study (S5/F/T4) claimed that they are in a difficult position. Another teacher from the same group (S5/F/T3) agreed and claimed that although someone is acting as principal, there is some leadership, but the person also cannot say officially 'I am in charge'. Thus, the teacher shared her frustration and understanding that the acting principal cannot keep the balance of keeping everyone happy from parent to Department of Education when they are not officially appointed.

5.3.1.4 Parents

It seems that one common challenge with parents from a few participants is the unrealistic perspective they have about their own children. Two HODs (S2/H; S3/H; RP3) from different schools claimed that parents have a different perspective of their children and that the parents never seem to try and understand the teacher's side in difficult situations. A retired principal (RP3) also shared his frustration during principalship with parents choosing and covering for their children once they overstepped the rules. One HOD shared that they have cameras in the classrooms and as soon as you show them what their child did, then the meeting changes completely (S3/H). This is also a problem for other teachers with specific subjects, such as mathematics, because the parents would force their children to take these

subjects. In the end, they are failing and in some cases are not really interested in the subject, which makes it difficult for the teacher to support the child and would thus look for fault with the teacher when they are failing (S3/F/T1; T3).

The biggest challenge for most of the schools, based on all the participants from different schools as well as two retired principals (S1/P; S1/DP; S3/P; S3/F/T1; S5/F/T4; RP1; RP4), seems to be the lack of involvement of parents with schools. One deputy principal stated that it is very difficult to get into contact with parents. They have a number for a learner's parent on their system, but most of the time, it is not working. She shared her frustration:

“Big frustration is the phone numbers that change every so often. It is a great frustration to get hold of parents” (S1/DP).

A principal (S3/P) and teacher (S5/F/T4) from different schools also find parental involvement with the school a challenge. The principal shared that parents only come to school when called in regarding an issue. A teacher from a focus group, where all the participants agreed with her, stated that parental involvement is so bad at their school that parent's evening, to discuss learners' academics, is a waste since only one or two would show up. They may not even show up for prize giving.

On the other hand, whenever parents are involved, two deputy principals from different schools (S1/DP; S3/DP) claimed that they do complain a lot. One deputy principal shared that the problem with that is that it tends to be time-consuming. The reason being that they do not always have the answers or solutions, which makes it time consuming:

“... a few compliments and a lot of complaints. It is important not to ignore those complaints and concerns, but do not always have the answers or solutions which makes it time consuming” (S3/DP).

Regarding parents' complaints, one principal (S1/P) shared that at the beginning of every school year, he has a meeting with the parents. This tends to help because at the meeting, expectations are set as well as the importance of the school which, in the end, is for the child. The principal claimed that because of this, he does not really have

big issues with parents such as other schools since they appreciate it. This is an effective method since another school principal (S2/P) also shared that how things work at school and the expectations of both children and parents are sent out to parents. To add, he also shared that once parents buy into the vision of the school, it goes well and they do not really have challenges or problems with parents.

Ultimately, it is not that difficult to persuade parents into the vision of the school because, if the vision of a school is about the child and his/her academic and personal growth and development, like it should be, then there should be no problem with parents buying into the vision of a school (S2/P). However, one other way of getting parents involved and to build a good relationship is communication. Most participants (S1/T3; S2/P; S2/H; S2/F/T3; S3/P; S3/F/T1; S4/H1; S4/H2; S4/P) agreed that communication with parents allows the school and parents to know and be aware of any changes and progress with the child. This communication involves emails, phone calls, meetings or even talking for a few minutes next to the sports field, as one principal claimed (S2/P), because through these exchanges, parents are informed and you as a teacher are also informed. All four retired principals (RP1; RP2; RP3; RP4) also shared that regular and open communication, which includes honest feedback, had great success for them in dealing with parents. This created trust and made the relationships between teachers and parents stronger.

5.3.1.5 Managing teachers' workloads

One retired principal (RP3) admitted that a lot of conflict was raised when it came to distributing workloads to staff members. The most common aspect that most participants agreed upon when it comes to the workload, whether it is a SMT member or teacher, was fairness (S1/P; S1/F/T; S2/P; S2/DP; S3/P; S3/DP; S3/F/T2; S4/H2). One of the main reasons for equal and fair distribution of work that came forth is not to burn out staff members (S1/F/T2; S3/DP; S3/H; S4/P; S4/T1; S4/T2). Also, it is important not to cause any dissatisfaction amongst staff members which may escalate into negativity (RP4). However, this is not always easy or possible since, according to one principal (S1/P), it cannot be measured, thus he makes sure it is fair and appropriate to the person. A retired principal (RP3) also claimed that it is very difficult to compare workloads between teachers. A principal (S2/P) from another school also

claimed that when the work is distributed, he makes sure it is according to the strengths of the teacher. Again, it is not always possible, but it is not going to help to give all the unpleasant responsibilities to one person (S2/P). This is also aligned with what one retired principal (RP1) used during his years of service, which was putting people in the correct positions according to their strengths and talents.

What another principal does when it comes to work distribution is having individual meetings, which is an effective way (S3/P; S3/F/T2). Firstly, teachers are given the opportunity to list the activities they would like to be involved with. Thereafter, the principal has individual meetings with each teacher regarding work responsibilities and distribution. The list is a good guide which she uses and, wherever possible, she would negotiate and adjust but, in the end, the decision is made based on what is best for the school (S3/P). The reason it may be so effective, according to a teacher (S3/F/T2) in a focus group from the same school, is that there is more transparency, they have a choice, and they are recognised in the decision-making process.

To relieve some stress and avoid burnout amongst teachers, a principal (S4/P) is in the process of giving one admin period to his teachers. He recreated the entire management system by creating additional management positions in the school. Through this, work and responsibilities were distributed to more staff members, and by creating one admin period, staff members had more time for planning and getting additional responsibilities done (S4/P; S4/T1). One problem, however, was noted from a teacher's response (S4/T1). Although it was of great benefit for admin and planning, when it came to addressing other people when they do not do their work, it was a problem since the teacher does not have the official label of being in a management position (S4/T1).

5.3.2 EI skills for SMT members for self-awareness

The findings under this theme present and describe the EI skills under self-awareness, and how valuable it may be for SMT members. The three EI sub-skills from data collection that formulated the sub-themes are self-assessment, assertiveness, and emotional self-awareness.

5.3.2.1 Self-assessment

Identifying strengths and weaknesses was only asked of SMT members and retired principals. These participants had a great understanding and knowledge regarding their strengths and weaknesses. How each participant does self-assessment might be different, but all participants were able to list their strengths and weaknesses. The most common method is the SWOT analysis mentioned by an HOD with a master's degree (S1/H). Although he admitted that it is difficult to do, once someone masters the skill thereof, the person benefits greatly. He highlighted the importance of being able to do self-assessment:

“When you know what your strengths and weaknesses are then you will be able to manage any situation” (S1/H).

This was also demonstrated from other participants in leadership positions when explaining how their strengths assisted them in the workplace and how they became more aware of their weaknesses (S1/P; S1/DP; S2/P; S2/DP; S2/H; S3/P; S3/DP; S3/H; S4/P; S4/H2; RP1-4). Based on these explanations from participants, it also confirmed that participants were capable of doing self-assessments. The reason being that they were able to identify their strengths and weaknesses with ease and have the knowledge and understanding of how to use their strengths in the workplace. To add, they were aware when something falls within their weaknesses and saw it as opportunities to gain experience and develop.

On the other hand, teachers in focus groups were also asked about the importance of SMT members doing self-assessment. Most participants agreed that self-assessments are very important and of great value. The teachers claimed that by doing self-assessments, these leaders will be able to apply their strengths more effectively in situations (S1/T2; S2/F/T7). They will also be aware of their weaknesses and what to work on (S1/T1; S1/T3; S2/F/T7; S4/T1), so that they can work with different people and be open to going to other people when dealing with something that is their weakness (S1/T2; S2/F/T1 & T7; S3/F/T2; S4/T1; S4/T2). Here is one response:

“... so that they can apply their strengths to make school better and not spend so much time on situations that extracts their weaknesses, but rather pass those situations on to someone else with better strength” (S1/T2).

5.3.2.2 Assertiveness

Valuable findings regarding assertiveness were mostly captured from participants who were in higher leadership positions, such as principals, deputy principals and retired principals. One principal (S1/P) shared an incident earlier in his career which demonstrated the ability of assertiveness. He constantly had issues with a colleague and, in the end, he called him in and had an honest conversation with him. The principal further explained that the rules in a school, which have been set and decided on democratically, make it easier to address someone when they are doing something wrong, thus being honest and fair (S1/P).

A few participants claimed that honest and immediate conversations are necessary. One cannot beat around the bush (S3/P), and findings indicate that leaders, particularly school principals, need to be honest and straightforward in these conversations because they are ultimately held responsible for any problems (S1/DP; S3/P; S4/P). Lastly, one retired principal (RT1) stated that a school leader needs to address any issues immediately, whereas another retired principal (RT2) indicated that working within the procedures and policies when any issue occurs with staff members made it easier to be assertive. One teacher from a focus group (S3/F/T1) also claimed that when school leaders have policies and procedures in place, it may help them to be more assertive as well as be protected since teachers will be aware of what is expected. A few teachers agreed (S3/F/T1-T4) that they want school leaders to be assertive and want someone to tell and address them when they are doing something wrong:

“... rather call me in when I am wrong, talk nicely to me but strict. I am a grown up. If I cannot handle it, then I do not belong here” (S3/F/T4).

5.3.2.3 Emotional self-awareness

A few participants (S1/P; S2/DP; S4/P; S4/T2) claimed that being emotionally aware of one's own emotions is important for leaders, otherwise a leader will work with a mask which is not always good. Staff members will notice that (S1/P), and one deputy principal stated that a person cannot live a lie (S2/DP). One principal learned over the years that staff members appreciated it when a leader is emotionally aware of his/her own feelings because that means he/she can effectively and appropriately express them. The benefit of this, according to this principal, is that staff members also see that the leader is just human – making them “*legit*” (S1/P) instead of having a front, mask, or living a lie (S2/DP).

Several participants highlighted the importance of being emotionally self-aware. By being emotionally self-aware, a leader will be able to deal with his/her emotions, especially negative or strong ones (S1/DP). Also, a leader will be aware of what he/she is capable of and how far one can go (S1/H). A similar finding was noted with a principal (S3/P) who claimed that a person will know how they are feeling about certain things, and thus be aware and know how far one can push himself or what will be immediate triggers. Another principal (S2/P) shared that a leader will be able to function more successfully in demanding situations when he/she is aware of and understands their own emotions which they experience in those difficult situations. A teacher shared a similar reason for leaders to be emotionally self-aware: “*So that they can handle situations well and be aware when they should take a step back*” (S1/T1).

Additionally, one HOD (S2/H) claimed that being emotionally self-aware will assist a leader to better understand and know other people's emotions and feelings. This is similar to what a teacher (S5/F/T1) stated – that a leader will not be able to identify others' emotions if they cannot first identify their own emotions.

Another crucial aspect of being emotionally self-aware is understanding the impact one's emotions can have in the workplace as well. Thus, several participants (S1/P; S1/DP; S1/H; S3/H; S4/P) seemed to have a higher degree of being emotionally self-aware since they can identify their emotions and understand how it may impact their work. One teacher claimed that a leader will burn him-/herself out because they cannot

be their best self (S4/T2), whereas another teacher stated that it will influence one's decisions if they are not aware of their emotions (S5/F/T3). Other explanations from participants showing their understanding regarding the impact of emotions on their work were as follows:

"It makes you negative. Then you just do not feel like coming in early anymore" (S1/DP).

"It prevents impulsivity and impulsive behaviour" (S1/H).

5.3.3 EI skills for SMT members for social awareness

Participants' opinions, understanding and experiences regarding the EI skill social awareness are presented under this theme. The two sub-themes formulated under this specific EI skill is identifying emotions and empathy.

5.3.3.1 Identifying emotions

Being able to identify and understand the emotions of others might not be always easy. Two retired principals (RP2; RP3) honestly admitted that it was not easy for them, whereas another retired principal (RP4) claimed it was easy for him because he is an emotional person. However, when having a relationship with a person, it might be easier. According to one deputy principal (S1/DP), she can identify emotions, if something is wrong or off in her staff members in her department since she works closely with them; however, she admitted that it is quite difficult with staff members she is not close with or working with. A retired principal (RP2) also claimed that although it was not always easy, when someone cares about a person, it may be easier, meaning having a relationship with the person improves the likelihood of understanding them. One HOD (S1/H) also shared a similar explanation regarding knowing people in his department, he stated:

"We are not all the same. We are unique. That is what makes it so great. That way you get to know other people, their character traits, inner character traits... so it helps, enables me to thoroughly analyse people in my department" (S1/H).

On the contrary, one principal (S2/P) claimed that it is something he mastered over the years. Through failures and mistakes, and with experience, he claims that he is more capable than he was in the past at identifying emotions in people, especially negative emotions, even if he does not know the person that well. It is important to learn and develop this skill, as one teacher (S1/T1) claimed, it will help with building relationships. One HOD (S4/H2) stated that he can identify immediately when something is wrong, and based on experience, staff members appreciated it and it makes relationships stronger.

5.3.3.2 Empathy

Many participants agreed that empathy is important and that school leaders should be empathetic. A principal claimed (S1/P) that, in the workplace, Jesus is first, then family, then comes work. Thus, when staff members come to him with any personal problems, he is not hesitant to provide support and understanding as well as granting leave days for staff members to deal with such issues, if required. To add, he shares that staff members should feel safe and should not feel that their school principal will make any decisions that may disadvantage them. Although being empathetic may have great benefits for the staff, the principal (S1/P) admitted that it can be emotionally draining. He stated the following:

“A principal is almost like a doctor. No one comes to you with good news. It is something that can drain you emotionally because if teachers come then they have a problem or something bad happened to them” (S1/P).

Five participants (S1/P; S1/T3; S1/DP; RP2; RP3) also added that being empathetic is not always enough, a school leader needs to provide support as well and come up with solutions, if required. One retired principal (RP2) stated that he also hoped to be part of the solution rather than just being empathetic which teachers find supportive and helpful (S1/T3). Additionally, one other principal (S2/P) may be ahead with providing solutions, as he focuses on putting structures in place to support his staff members whenever anything bad may occur. He (S2/P) shared that being empathetic is not the important part, the important part is the support afterwards. This principal (S2/P) also stated that it does not matter what the situation may be, a school leader

needs to support a teacher as far as possible because they must come back and work with the children again. One principal (S3/P) claimed that a happy teacher will give everything in class. On the other hand, two other SMT members (S2/DP; S2/H) claimed that sometimes nothing can be done, but just listening, emphasising with the staff member, and understanding their situation is already enough to provide support.

Although most participants agreed that school leaders should be empathetic, one teacher (S4/T1) claimed that a school leader should not be too empathetic since teachers may take chances and abuse the school leader's empathy. Furthermore, the teacher (S4/T1) stated that being consistent and knowing where to draw the line may prevent teachers from taking advantage. Additionally, one principal (S4/P) claimed that whenever he feels someone is taking advantage, he will address the issue with them immediately. In conclusion, it seems that most SMT members who participated in the study can be empathetic – to be understanding of others' situations based on the experiences they shared with various incidents with staff members (S1/P; S1/DP; S2/P; S2/DP; S2/H; S3/P; S3/DP; S3/H; S4/P; RP3; RP4). Although a few school leaders demonstrated myriad examples of showing empathy, one principal (S1/P) claimed it is not always something that is written in books, but with experience it becomes better.

5.3.4 EI skills for SMT members for self-management

The fourth theme deals with and presents the findings regarding SMT members' self-management. This includes emotional regulation, optimism, adaptability and stress management and work and personal life management.

5.3.4.1 Emotional regulation

One of the most appropriate quotations from a participant regarding the importance of emotional regulation for school leaders was from a teacher who stated that *“they work with people and before doing that you must be able to work with yourself”* (S1/T2). To add, this teacher as well as another teacher (S1/T1) claimed that a school leader who can regulate their emotions will be able to handle difficult situations well and not affect their colleagues negatively. This is similar to a claim by a principal (S2/P), that a SMT member will not be able to do well in difficult and challenging situations such as conflict

or conversations regarding sensitive subjects if they cannot regulate their emotions. Three other participants (S2/H; RP3; RP4) also agreed that if a SMT member is not able to manage their emotions, it may lead to chaos since they may not be analytical, considerate and make good decisions.

Regarding sensitive conversations, a principal (S2/P) mentioned that preparation is a very effective method for emotional regulation for him before meetings. Thus, the principal stated that he is aware and more prepared for what might happen, and what to expect. This allows him to be more in control and stay calm if meetings get heated and so he will not be taken by surprise. One retired principal (RP2) gave a similar explanation for managing one's emotions more effectively which is to "*plan well in advance and be prepared to face any challenges*".

There are many different methods to regulate one's emotions, thus participants in leadership positions suggested some of their own strategies which include: talking to someone else when upset (S1/DP; S3/H); staying quiet and calm when strong or negative emotions arise in particular situations (RP3); not reacting immediately (S1/H; S2/H; RP3; RP4), and lastly, stopping the meeting if emotions run high and to continue talking or dealing with it the following day (S2/H; S3/P; S3/H; S4/P; RP3).

5.3.4.2 Optimism, resilience, and managing criticism

One retired principal (RP2) strongly felt that demotivation and feeling hopeless at times is inevitable. Another SMT member (DP2) reported that it is only normal and human to feel demotivated at times, especially during tough times. There are a few methods that came up that school leaders as well as teachers can employ to stay optimistic, such as taking a day or two to think about it and work through it (S1/DP); to look for the positive in a bad situation or failure (S1/H); talk to colleagues that can be trusted and provide support (S2/P; S3/P; S3/H), or being faithful as a Christian helped one retired principal in difficult times (RP2). One principal also claimed that he enjoys challenging situations: "*The more challenging the situation, the nicer it is for me to go [work]*" (S2/P).

Another deputy principal (S2/DP) who demonstrated resilience as a school leader shared his experience after being promoted very late in his career. He claimed there

is no recipe for this and that one must just decide about one's goal and focus thereon (S2/DP). Regarding criticism, participants claim that criticism should not be avoided since it can serve as an opportunity for growth and development (S3/P; S1/T2; S1/T3; RP1; RP4). The data showed that when criticism is valid and can be justified, a school leader should use that for development (RP1; RP4). One deputy principal reported that when she sees any value in the criticism, she will analyse it and learn from it (S1/DP). However, when criticism is negative, invalid and unjustified, school leaders should ignore it (S1/H; S2/P; S3/DP; S3/H; S4/P; S4/H1). One of the reasons to ignore such criticism, a deputy principal (S3/DP) claimed, is because "... *you will not survive if you have to listen and take everything up*".

It also seems that with experience and years of work, participants may manage criticism better. A few participants (S2/H; S3/H; S3/DP) claimed that in their earlier years of work, they would get frustrated or angry whenever their work was criticised; however, over the years, they realised that it is not worth it and that they can take it as an opportunity to learn and grow.

5.3.4.3 Adaptability

Many participants (S1/P; S1/DP; S3/P; S3/H; S4/P; S4/T1; S5/F/T3 &T4), SMT members and teachers, admitted that they do not like change and find it difficult to adapt to new situations, however they all deem it important. There are many reasons for not liking adapting to new situations, such as one principal (S1/P) who claimed that it is because of his personality – he likes things in a specific manner. However, this principal did show his ability to adapt and found a method to do it: "*If I have a situation I will go sit and work it out, before the time, how to handle the situation. And to know that is the steps*" (S1/P).

Two other SMT members (S1/DP; S3/P) from a different school have a similar approach to adapting by planning, analysing different situations and finding solutions which helps with better adaptation. For two retired principals (RP2; RP4), making the best out of a situation allowed them to adapt better and more effectively in new situations, whereas another retired principal (RP3) relied on expert advice to adapt effectively.

Surprisingly, one other reason participants may not like or find it difficult to adapt is because they are comfortable and like how things are. What is interesting about this finding is that it is mostly reported by older and more experienced participants (S1/P; S1/DP; S2/P; S3/H; S4/P). For example, two principals (S1/P; S4/P) claimed that if something works, they do not 'mess with it'. To add, they also admitted that because it is at the very end of their career, adapting may seem unnecessary and difficult now.

Although adapting may be difficult for some participants, when they try to understand the reason behind it, since it is inevitable (S1/H), it seems that participants are then more able and more likely to find ways to adapt (S1/H; S2/P; S2/DP; S2/H; S3/F/T1; S4/T1; S4/P; RP1). For example, one principal (S2/P) and a retired principal (RP1) both noted that when they understand the situation and the adaptation is necessary and beneficial for the children, then it was much easier. Additionally, insight into why adaptation may be easier for SMT members was provided by two HODs and one teacher (S1/H; S2/H; S5/F/T4) who claimed that because of the recent pandemic where people were forced to adapt, it made it easier now to adapt to different situations. Also, one deputy principal (S3/DP) and a teacher (S4/T3) argued that someone's perception and attitude towards adapting may help. For example, the deputy principal claimed that he loves adapting since it is stimulating, and not the same routine every day.

When referring to adapting school leaders' leadership style, all participants agreed that school leaders need to be capable and that it is crucial to adapt their styles. The reason being, according to many participants (S1/DP; S1/H; S2/F/T1; S2/P; S2/DP; S2/H; S3/P; S3/DP; S3/F/T1; S4/H2; S4/T1), that different situations will require different approaches, and people are different and should be approached differently. For example, certain situations and decisions a principal makes will be democratic and get inputs to make a collective decision, whereas other times, a principal will need to make the decision autocratically (S1/P; S2/P). Both these principals also admitted that it is not something that is a 'quick learn' or that one can learn from books. They learnt over the years and with experience, trial and error, how to effectively adapt their leadership styles to the situation as required.

Although adapting leadership styles is vital and necessary, a few participants also advised that a school leader should not become too adaptable and flexible. This may cause staff members to lose trust in their school leader, according to one deputy principal: *"You cannot be blown around through the wind like a wave, because people will never believe in you"* (S2/DP). Two other participants (S4/H1; S5/F/T3) also advised that a SMT member should have some sense of stability, and maybe a core leadership style from which they can adapt as needed for the situation instead of changing entirely, which may confuse staff members.

5.3.4.4 Balancing work and personal responsibilities

A few participants stated that it is crucial for school leaders to effectively manage and balance their work and personal lives. One reason from a teacher (S1/T1) was that if a school leader cannot balance work and personal lives, it may cause the one to be neglected. A principal (S1/P) admitted that it is difficult to do; keeping work issues at work and not taking it home and vice versa. However, it is important, otherwise a school leader may experience an increase in stress and pressure since the one sphere of their life may consume the other (S1/P; S1/T1; S4/H1). Another important aspect is to find that balance, as noted by a teacher, because SMT members may start to neglect the teachers and this may lead to a feeling that management is unsupportive (S1/T3). On the other hand, when SMT members focus too much on their work responsibilities, it may neglect their families which may cause increased stress and pressure (S4/P).

There are a number of strategies shared by participants to find that balance as well as to manage any stress that may arise. One, as mentioned, is to compartmentalise; keeping work and its issues at work and vice versa, and to not allow work issues and personal issues to overlap (S1/P; S1/H; S4/P). For others, having activities such as exercise or socialising with other people outside of school helps with stress management (S1/DP; S3/DP; S3/H; S4/T1; S5/F/T4; RP2). At work itself, one principal (S1/P) shared the importance of looking after the staff room and creating it as a space where staff members can feel safe, de-stress, and relax in between work responsibilities. It should not be a place for 'fights' (S1/P).

Interestingly, one retired principal (RP3) mentioned that they had a school psychologist available to staff members as well which assisted a lot with staff members' stress and well-being. The psychologist was also part of the SMT, thus any advice, recommendations, and ideas on how to support staff members under intense pressure and stress were constantly available and shared.

5.3.5 EI skills for SMT members for relationship management

The fifth and final theme regarding EI skills for SMT members is relationship management. Participants' understanding, experiences and knowledge regarding SMT members' ability to form healthy relationships with their staff members is presented here.

5.3.5.1 Building bonds

One principal (S1/P) only realised once he came into a leadership position that building bonds and having a good relationship with his staff members were crucial. He realised he needs to shift from a task-focused person to finding a balance between task and human. Thus, he has a meeting with every staff member at least once a year. This principal claimed the importance of the staff and having a good relationship with them by stating the following:

“Biggest secret of a school’s success is the staff. If you do not have the staff. You can be the best, smartest principal, with all the plans. But such principals are gone within two years if you do not have the staff members” (S1/P).

Another principal (S4/P) claimed that a school leader needs to know and have a good relationship with his/her staff members because it will assist in dealing with any situations with them. The reason being, as claimed by two SMT members (S1/DP; S4/P), that everyone is different and should be dealt with differently. Thus, once school leaders know their staff, they will benefit from dealing with them in certain situations and learn how to manage their emotions (S4/P). Also, once a school leader builds relationships with his/her staff members, he/she will be able to adapt and work with different personalities (S1/DP). Another participant (S4/H1) claimed that staff members need to be happy and satisfied at school, thus school leaders need to spend time and

be interested in their staff members to know how they are doing outside of work as well. This may lead to staff members feeling safe and supported at work (S4/H1).

A principal shared a saying he has which is: *“If I can win your heart, I can do with you whatever I want”* (S1/P). The principal explained that when a school leader can win over his/her staff members and have a good, healthy relationship with them, they will be able to conquer anything at school. Also, the staff members will be willing to do anything for their school principal; be supportive, sacrificial, selfless, and more (S1/P).

Relationships for school leaders may not always be so easy. Thus, working with someone who is difficult to get along also evaluates school leaders' EI and ability to build relationships. One principal (S2/P) shared that talking to the person has worked for him in the past. He had a very difficult parent on the board, and in the end, through a meeting with coffee, differences could be talked out. He stated that school leaders do not have to have a good relationship with everyone such as this parent, but once they can agree upon something, they can get them on their side. From his experience, he shared (S2/P) that the common ground was doing what is best for their children at school. Although they did not agree on anything, agreeing on what is the best for the school and the children was what they focused on, which was already a big step according to this principal (S1/P). Another strategy in dealing with difficult people was shared by an HOD (S4/H1). For colleagues at work, he always focused on dealing with facts, not on an emotional or personal level. Similarly, in some way, another principal (S1/P) would refer to the rules or policies of the school when dealing with people who are difficult to have a good relationship with – thus, focusing on the facts and what should be done.

5.3.5.2 Conflict management

One of the most common strategies that came forth from the findings regarding school leaders resolving conflict between colleagues is to provide an opportunity and listen to both parties' sides (S1/P; S1/DP; S1/H; S1/T1; S2/H; S3/P; S3/H; S4/T1; S5/F/T3; RP1; RP2). To add, one principal (S1/P) claimed that it is also crucial to resolve the conflict with the people being involved and not to attract or involve people from outside that have nothing to do with the situation. Additionally, a deputy principal and a HOD

(S1/DP; S1/H) claimed that when dealing with conflict between two colleagues, a SMT member should stay neutral, give advice, and find solutions. However, if solutions cannot be found, one must go higher up, such as the school principal or deputy principal, who should make a call on what he/she believes is best for the school, not for an individual (S1/H). Another HOD (S2/H) stated that it is important to make sure when a person is wrong in conflict situations with other staff members, that they know they are wrong – he claimed that they should not just hear what they want to hear (S2/H). Ultimately, a HOD (S3/H) claimed that it is important for those parties to reconcile to move forward.

When it comes to dealing with conflict with other people, one of the most notable principles from the findings is to talk to the other person in private (S1/P; S1/DP; S1/T1; S2/DP; S2/H; S2/F/T7; S3/P; S3/DP; S3/F/T4; S4/P; S4/H2; S5/F/T3). Although one principal (S1/P) admitted that conflict resolution is not one of his strengths, he also follows two principles aligned with what was stated earlier: (1) deal with it in private with only the involved parties, and (2) always listen to the other person’s side. Various participants, from participants in leadership positions to teachers, gave their advice on conflict which aligns with the principles mentioned above, for instance, the following quotes:

“All people involved should have a meeting with one of the SMT members who are impartial. Each person should get an opportunity to give their side” (S1/T1).

“... be addressed alone and in private” (S2/F/T1).

“Call them in. Get everyone’s side” (S1/DP).

One entire focus group interview of teachers (S2/F) agreed that it should be done in private and with the person involved; it should not be done in front of others or managed generally. One teacher (S2/F/T2) stated that there is nothing that angers a teacher more than a school leader discussing a problem he/she has with one person as a general problem in the staff room.

Participants seem to agree, mostly the teachers, that when SMT members have a conflict situation or problem with someone, to deal with the individual and not deal with

the problem with the whole staff group. All the teachers from one focus group interview (S2/F) agreed that school leaders should not deal with it as a collective problem with the group and rather address the individual privately. The reason is that it can be confusing for other staff members who are not aware of the issue, and also the person who is at fault may not know that it is them (S1/T2; S2/F/T3 & T4; S3/F/T4; S5/F/T2 & T3).

Two principals (S1/P; S3/P) also shared that it is important to be consistent and fair, and once they leave the office, to make sure it is done and not to bring it up again in the future or discuss it with any other staff members. Similar findings from retired principals were found. Collectively, they stated that conflict should be dealt with fairly, based on facts and not to get personally or emotionally involved, and to follow procedures and regulations (RP1; RP2). One retired principal (RP3) claimed that having a conflict resolution policy which is aligned with the code of conduct for teachers was of great benefit when dealing with conflict situations. Additionally, two participants in leadership positions (S2/DP; S3/P) indicated that one should be honest. Also, two retired principals (RP1; RP2) briefly indicated that dealing with only the facts in conflict situations promised great success in conflict resolution.

Another principle in dealing with conflict for school leaders is to do it at the right time and moment, for example two deputy principals (S2/DP; S3/DP) claimed that right there, in front of others, is not the right place. Also, when someone is too emotional and not open to dealing with it, it is also not the right time. Similarly, a principal near retirement (S4/P) claimed that sometimes it is best to continue with it the next morning, once everyone has calmed down and had time to think. On the other hand, one HOD (S2/H) claimed that it is better to deal with it immediately or as soon as possible as people can sometimes just become more upset as time goes on. It was also highlighted that when conflict is resolved, especially with teachers, school leaders should move on and not bring it up again or hold it against a person in future (S3/F/T1; S5/F/T3).

Interestingly, one principal (S2/P) with 20 years of experience as a school principal stressed the importance of some things being non-negotiable. Although he shared that one should listen to the other person's story during conflict, do it privately, and see it

as an opportunity for growth. There are some situations where the principles for conflict resolution will not be followed since these things are not negotiated on. Thus, there will not be any solutions available, for instance, when it is ethical issues where he needs to suspend a teacher or take an action that may hinder or disadvantage learners.

One unexpected finding is that of a principal who claims to enjoy conflict: *“I enjoy conflict, I am not scared of conflict. Conflict is opportunities for growth”* (S2/P). The principal insisted that there is no formula for resolving conflict, and another principal (S3/P) agrees with this. However, conflict management is one of his strengths, and he claimed that the reason he enjoys conflict is because it can help one grow and develop (S2/P). Lastly, he did share that the most important thing in conflict management is to listen – which aligns with the findings as discussed above.

One teacher (S2/F/T7) seemed to know that dealing with conflict can be a challenging task for school leaders, however once these principles regarding conflict management and resolution are followed, it may provide effective ways of resolving conflict such as one teacher claimed: *“... rather look how you can improve instead of cracking down”* (S4/T2). This was also mentioned by one retired principal (RP4) who stated that a collective solution and resolution should be found to protect the relationship going forward. In the next sub-heading the value of conflict and conflict resolution in the workplace will be discussed in more detail.

(i) Conflict value

Several participants believe conflict in the workplace is of immense value and should be seen as positive (S1/DP; S1/H; S1/T1;T3; S2/P). One HOD (S1/HD) claimed to be worried if there is not any conflict in his department because that would mean people are walking around unhappy, not saying what bothers them. Additionally, three participants (S1/T3; S1/T1; S2/P) agreed that conflict provides opportunities to grow. One participant noted: *“... it creates opportunity for creative thinking and for personal and professional growth”* (S1/T1).

The above findings align greatly with what one retired principal claimed regarding the value of conflict. He (RP2) stated that *“strongminded people surrounding you, they will*

sometimes differ in approach, but it is the best way to achieve goals". In addition, three other participants (S1/DP; S2/P; RP3) stated that different opinions and ideas are brought forth to the problem.

5.3.5.3 Motivation

Motivation is important according to several participants (S1/P; S1/DP; S1/T2; S2/DP; S3/DP; S3/H; S4/H1). Also, one retired principal (RP2) stated that *"well motivated people work enthusiastically to achieve their goals"*. Also, another retired principal (RP4) stated that motivated staff are happy staff. To add, one deputy principal (S2/DP) claimed that staff need to be motivated and encouraged to ensure teamwork. Moreover, a principal (S2/P) argued that when a teacher is in a good place, then he/she will flourish in class which will have a positive effect on the learners, thus motivating staff and ensuring they are encouraged is important and necessary.

However, a few participants did agree that the motivation and morale of staff will fluctuate. For example, sometimes it can become difficult and tough during the term (S1/T1; S1/T3), whereas other times, such as during examinations, it may be better since teachers may come in to work later and leave earlier, and not teach full-time (S1/DP). On the other hand, one principal referred to an external factor such as the economy of the country; he argued that the morale of any teacher in the world cannot be of the highest if it is not going so well economically in the country (S1/P). He does, however, focus on a few things he can control to get the motivation and morale of his staff members up, such as creating safe environments at school where the teachers can be the best at what they are doing, making sure it will not cost the teachers any expenses when they have functions, or additional monetary incentives for extracurricular activities (S1/P). Similarly, like a safe environment, another principal claimed that protecting his teachers helps with the motivation and morale of teachers since they will not have to worry about anything such as getting in trouble unnecessarily or unreasonable parents walking over them (S4/P).

When it comes to motivating other as a SMT member, one HOD (S2/H) claimed that it is important to know the staff members or the staff working under your supervision. From there, a SMT member will be able to identify when something is wrong with staff

members or when motivation and morale are low, thus knowing when and how to motivate his/her staff (S2/H). A deputy principal (S1/DP) also agreed with this and stated that it is easier when a school leader knows their staff.

Different strategies came forth from the data that school leaders use for motivating their staff members, attempting to create more encouragement and improving the morale amongst staff. A few participants (S1/DP; RP1; RP3; RP4) claimed that acknowledging and complimenting hard work boost motivation among staff members. Interestingly, one teacher (S1/T2) stated that positive comments help with motivation. For one principal (S2/P), ensuring a teacher is feeling safe by providing structure and protection, for example from parents, ensures motivation amongst his staff. To add, he claimed that a teacher just wants to teach and know what is expected, as soon as a school leader gives them anything unexpected, such as a sporting event the same day, it may decrease motivation.

Additionally, by physically helping and supporting staff members, such as assisting with workload, helps with motivation for one deputy principal (S2/DP), a HOD (S2/H) and a retired principal (RP3). For another principal (S3/P) and HOD (S3/H), providing something small to eat for staff members in the staffroom occasionally to show appreciation may increase motivation. On the other hand, two retired principals (RP1; RP3) both claimed that having a short Bible reading every morning also increased motivation and morale amongst their staff members when they were school principals.

Other examples were also mentioned which include having breakfast together as a department once a term (S1/T1), having a fun day in which teachers wear funny clothing such as funky socks (S1/DP), getting people from outside to deliver speeches and motivation (S1/DP; S3/DP), team building activities once a term (S3/F/T3) and weekends away from school with informal activities (S4/P). For all four retired principals (RP1; RP2; RP3; RP4), getting to know your staff and showing real interest, support, and protecting staff members, being open, compliments and including staff members seemed to boost motivation.

5.3.5.4 Staff development

Various participants, especially participants in leadership positions and previous principals, stated that it is very important to develop staff members. One principal (S1/P) stated that developing others is important because, for example, he is retiring soon and who will then be able to run the school if he is not empowering and developing his school leaders under him? Another reason, according to this principal (S1/P), is that some staff members are very good in certain areas; thus, providing the responsibilities in other areas, they will grow and develop as a school leader who needs to be balanced. Two other participants (S2/H; RP2) agreed that developing other people and providing them with opportunities to oversee something will motivate them and they will see there are opportunities at the school to grow and develop. Staff development should also be prioritised by SMT members, and staff working under these SMT members should be able to apply for promotion after a few years (RP2).

There are diverse ways to develop staff members. For one principal (S1/P), he has a policy which requires staff members to be involved with one sport activity and one cultural activity (to ensure balance). A few school leaders (S1/DP; S1/H; S1/T2; S3/P; S4/T1) provide workshops and sessions to their staff members for development, whereas another principal (S2/P) constantly provides new information regarding any issues in school to his staff members. For one HOD (S2/H), giving everyone an opportunity to be in a leadership position works at their school, for example, every three years, they will rotate the people in subject head positions so that everyone can get the opportunity.

5.3.5.5 Teamwork

All participants deem teamwork as very important. Two teachers (S3/F/TT1; S5/F/T4) stated that as soon as one person is not doing their part, there will be problems. One deputy principal (S2/DP) claimed the following, saying it could not have been truer: *“Teamwork makes the dream work”*. Another HOD (S1/H) stated that *“unity is strength”*. One more principal (S1/P) and deputy principal (S1/DP) believe that one person cannot manage a school, thus everyone needs to be part of and manage the school together. A retired principal (RP4) gave a quote to demonstrate the importance

of teamwork in a school, stating: *“A wagon only moves forward when all the cattle move in the same direction”*.

One of the benefits of teamwork, according to a few participants, is that staff members will get to know each other better and build relationships (S1/H; S1/T4; S2/F/T6; S3/DP; S5/F/T3; RP1). One principal (S4/P) stated that it can be a severe problem for someone if they cannot work with other people in a team because a person needs teamwork everywhere – it is inevitable. Other participants (S2/F/T6; S4/P; RP1) agreed with this, ensuring that working with people will make them successful, and support and morale amongst teams seems to be higher when teamwork is encouraged.

When it comes to teamwork, various SMT members gave advice. Firstly, a principal (S1/P) claimed that work should be distributed equally. Secondly, a deputy principal (S2/DP) argued that someone should not interfere with someone else’s work or responsibilities unless being asked to assist. Lastly, a few participants share the opinion that it is important that everyone in the team have work or responsibilities according to their strengths, otherwise the team may be negatively affected (S2/P; S3/DP).

5.3.6 Leadership practices for SMT members

Under this final theme, leadership practices for SMT members, the most common and important leadership practices were identified from school principals, SMT members, teachers, as well as retired principals.

5.3.6.1 Communication

Most participants claimed that communication is very important in schools. Various participants mentioned communication as an important leadership skill (S1/T3; S3/F/T3). One principal (S1/P), serving for more than 20 years, as well as a retired principal (RP4), stated that communication will determine the success of a school. Furthermore, this principal argued from his vast experience that there is nothing that will make teachers more uncomfortable and uncertain than ineffective and inadequate communication (S1/P). This was supported by another SMT member (S3/H) claiming

that lack of communication may cause division amongst staff since assumptions are made which can be dangerous. On the other hand, when information is communicated clearly and regularly, everyone knows what will happen and when, thus no one can be angry with anyone (S2/H). Thus, a school principal should always inform teachers of any information, or decisions taken within the SMT (S1/P). A deputy principal (S2/DP) and a retired principal (RP3) agreed that communication is the entire school day and advised that SMT members should at least speak to their staff members twice a day, in the mornings and during breaktime.

Three other participants (S1/H; S/T1; S2/T3) argued that communication ensures unity and collaboration amongst staff. On the other hand, when communication is lacking or ineffective, there may be division amongst staff. This was found from one focus group interview (S5/F). The entire group of teachers from the focus group interview (S5/F/T1 - T4) claimed that there is a big communication gap between them (teachers) and the SMT. To add, this caused unwillingness and distrust from teachers in the SMT – to go and ask for anything. The teachers further agreed that they just hear information from other people, thus not always clear or thorough. It is important to note, however, that at the time of interviewing, the school (S5) was still in the process of appointing a principal, thus not having an official school principal has its own challenges, as discussed earlier.

Staff may become divided due to ineffective or no communication. A teacher from a different school (S4/T2) claimed that people feel easily excluded when things are not communicated. This was again demonstrated in one particular incident shared by another focus group where teachers found out about decisions being made by the SMT from the children (S3/F). Furthermore, four teachers (S2/F/T1, T4 & T7; S4/T1) specified that conflict arises when things are not communicated clearly because, as mentioned and similar with an earlier finding, teachers will do things based on assumptions. Two other participants with more than 20 years of experience in leadership, respectively, also claimed that with no communication, a lot of misunderstandings and chaos may occur:

“If there is no communication there is a lot of misunderstandings” (S2/DP).

“... if there is no communication, it will be chaotic. No one will know what to do and will not happen in time that needs to happen” (S4/H1).

One common method of clear and regular communication practiced by most SMT members who participated in the interviews, school principals, deputy principals and HODs, are regular meetings. For example, all four principals and a retired principal (S1/P; S2/P; S3/P; S4/P; RP3) had meetings every morning with their entire staff before school commenced. During these meetings, any relevant information regarding the day was shared. Additionally, one principal (S1/P) also has daily meetings with his two deputy principals to plan the day. A few participants (S1/DP; S1/H; S3/F/T3) also have weekly meetings within their department to discuss any issues, plan for the week, and ensuring that everyone is on the same page. Lastly, groups on WhatsApp Messenger also proved to be an effective method of sharing quick and immediate information with staff, individuals, or specific departments (S1/P; S1/DP; S2/P; S4/P).

(i) Guardian system

One interesting and consistent finding that came up regularly under communication from one school was their guardian system. This school implemented a mentor system, or “Guardian system” (S1/P), which demonstrated a lot of benefits to the staff and the school. All the participants from this school (S1/P, DP, H, T1-4) regularly referred to their guardian system when dealing with educational challenges at their school, particularly when it came to communication. Basically, in this system, every post level one teacher is paired with a SMT member, which can be anyone, and does not have to be in the same department. They meet at least once a month to discuss any issues or catch up in general. One teacher shared that this system is there to *“...share grievances, the good and the ugly”* (S1/T2). Therefore, when meeting with their guardian, a SMT member, they can share or ask any questions, give ideas, share their opinions or anything whatsoever. The SMT members take note and report back at the SMT meeting, if any issue cannot be resolved by the SMT member him-/herself. This allows everyone an opportunity to share and talk since they cannot always see SMT members or even the school principal regularly to sort out any issues. To add, this seems to assist the SMT members as well in dealing with issues, particularly the school principal who cannot always meet with every single staff member regularly.

5.3.6.2 Autonomy and Innovation

Two principals (S2/P; S3/P) and three teachers (S3/F/T1-4) claimed that granting autonomy is very important for both the SMT members and teachers. The reason being it creates trust and allows opportunity for innovation. Two deputy principals (S2/DP; S3/DP) with more than 15 years of leadership experience each also claimed that trust will never be created when a school leader is constantly looking over their shoulder, and that autonomy creates a sense of independence. Additionally, two retired principals (RP2; RP4) also claimed that when granting autonomy, staff members' confidence and self-esteem increase. Also, one retired principal (RP2) shared that a school leaders' teachers can get very creative and innovative when granted the opportunity. Therefore, innovation is encouraged and allowed by SMT members. Two principals strongly encouraged it by stating that if something is stagnating, then it is moving backwards (S1/P) and "... *if they grow and grow in their sections then the school grows*" (S2/P). Two retired principals (RP2; RP3) agreed that education cannot stagnate, and that everything keeps on changing; finding better ways.

There may be conditions to ensure effective innovation. For one principal (S1/P), he created a rule that if a teacher gives a suggestion with something new, then he or she must work on it, implement, and oversee it because the principal stated that too many times teachers just come and give their ideas or plans but it ends up becoming his responsibility. The other principal (S2/P) stated that it does not matter how and what plans and ideas the teacher has in his/her sections, and will support and guide as far as possible, but it must be to the benefit of the learners. He stated that "*If the child is not getting the benefits, then this innovation thing is pointless. It is about the child*" (S2/P).

Several participants also support and see innovation as important because it leads to growth, better practices, and ideas (S1/T1, T2, T3; S2/DP; S2/H; S3/H). One teacher claimed that innovation can lead to better results and have a positive effect on the school (S1/T3). This is supported by a HOD from another school who stated that the school will fall behind others if innovation is not encouraged (S2/H). Also, two retired principals (RP1; RP4) stated that new methods may arise leading to growth and

development. It should be monitored. However, one HOD (S3/H) shared that something should not be changed if it is not necessary, and that there are systems that one should stay with if it works; only change when it can make things better and easier.

5.3.6.3 Delegating responsibilities

One principal (S1/P) was honest enough to state that he did not like to delegate any work. He preferred to do everything himself, because then he knows everything is done correctly. However, in the last two to three years he realised that he is causing trouble for himself and the school because as he gets closer to retirement, who else is going to do these things? Thus, he suggests that SMT members start delegating work and responsibilities as early as possible because other staff members need to grow and develop so that they can potentially take over.

Several participants claimed that delegation is important and should occur because it will develop and prepare other staff members (S1/DP; S1/H; S1/T1, T2 & T3; S3/H; S4/P; S5/F/T4). One HOD (S1/H) stated that the main reason for delegation is to empower and develop other people because, unlike buildings, people may leave and then other members need to take over. Another principal (S4/P) stated that if you do not develop people, they will just be followers and the leader will not move forward. Besides opportunities for growth and development, one HOD (S3/H) claimed, from experience, that once teachers are given work and responsibilities (delegation from SMT members), they feel motivated and like they are part of the school and the vision.

All four retired principals claimed that delegation is crucial. One retired principal (RP1) claimed that it was his mission and vision to get his staff members into leadership positions and provide them with responsibilities. Whereas another retired principal (RP4) claimed that it was a top priority for him when he was principal. Another retired principal (RP2) stated, regarding the importance of delegation for a school principal: *“Your responsibility as a principal is to give people the opportunity to accept leadership but with your guidance and under your control”*.

Another important part of delegation came forth, mostly from teachers, which was that it will avoid burnout for SMT members. One teacher (S1/T3) claimed that when a SMT

members is overworked, it affects their attitude and motivation for work which, in turn, negatively affects the teachers. All the teachers from a focus group interview (S2/F) agreed that the SMT worked themselves 'to death' and burnt themselves out if they do not delegate work or responsibilities. Interestingly, one teacher from the group (S2/F/T4) claimed that these SMT members assume so much work and responsibility on purpose so that other members, such as the school principal, will notice them; another teacher agreed with this (S2/F/T2).

It is important, however, according to one deputy principal (S1/DP), that when a school leader empowers and develops someone through delegation, to just be a "safety net", and not to be involved too much. They should be a guide, otherwise the teacher will not learn and develop. A principal (S2/P) agreed with this, and stated that he will not police his staff members and will help where needed: "... *they must make mistakes. We will sort it out, they must learn*" (S2/P).

5.3.6.4 School culture, expectations, and vision

An important part of establishing a positive school culture was mentioned by a deputy principal (S1/DP) who stated that it provides boundaries and safety for people. Furthermore, an inclusive school culture also allows everyone to feel part of the school. Two other participants (S1/T1; S3/DP) agreed that a school's values, as part of the school culture, are the foundation otherwise the school would not have been there for long. It can be altered or slightly changed over the years, but the core values should still be the same, thus the school will be able to continue for longer (S3/DP).

The data also suggested that out of the school culture and values, teacher expectations are set which will provide direction for teachers. One interesting finding from the data was the expectations set particularly by school principals. One principal with many years of experience (S1/P) uses a code of conduct for teachers. Every year, this is re-evaluated and adjusted, however, in this way, every teacher is aware what is expected of him/her at the school. According to two teachers' responses in a focus group interview (S2/F/T1, T6) from another school, the principal also sets high standards and expectations when it comes to teachers' work. The findings indicate that this can be beneficial for the SMT as well as teachers since there is a sense of

direction and safety. One teacher stated the following: *“I think if we all know what is expected from them it will be better... it makes your work environment easier and lighter”* (S2/F/T6).

It was also found from another focus group that teachers agreed that they prefer and want to know what is expected, thus there would not be any misunderstandings in the workplace. Also, it allows the teachers to be able to do more than what is required, but only once they know what is expected (S5/F/T2, T3). When it comes to the vision of the school, one principal (S1/P) claimed that the vision helps and assists a lot when it comes to making decisions. Firstly, he claimed that the vision of the school is about the child; to grow and develop, thus any decisions he or the SMT must make or policies that are set up are done according to and to benefit the children (S1/P). This principal uses a strategic plan for the school which is renewed every five years. This was also confirmed by the HOD at the same school (S1/H) who stated that, every five years, there are intense meetings revising everything; a new vision or altered one, policies, what work and what did not work are looked at. This, in turn, dictates the school and its decisions, as was also claimed by one teacher (S1/T3).

A few participants (S1/T1; S2/P; S2/H; S3/P; S4/P; S4/T1) shared the importance of a vision which includes providing direction for the school and giving direction for staff members to move towards. One teacher (S4/T1) claimed that a school cannot be successful if no one knows where they are going or what they are working towards. One principal (S3/P) claimed that, besides the direction a vision provides, it also provides safety for her staff members. Lastly, one principal (S2/P) claimed that a vision as well as values in a school allow children to be safe and happy, and happy children will perform better, whereas unhappy children will not perform as well.

5.3.6.5 The decision-making process

All participants agreed that decisions should be made collectively. One principal (S1/P) stated that the SMT do not make any decisions, rather, they have proposals which go to the rest of the staff, and then a decision will be made. A deputy principal (S1/DP) claimed through their guardian system, anyone can share opinions, make proposals and then decisions will be made in the end. Two HODs (S1/H; S2/H) stressed the

importance of the rest of the staff's voice in making decisions because it affects them as well and are part of the school. Three retired principals (RP1; RP2; RP4) also shared the importance of including the rest of the staff in the decision-making process which included shared and new ideas, a sense of belonging and feeling part of the school, and experiences that others may not have.

Although all participants agreed that decisions should be made democratically, everyone also agreed that certain decisions should be made individually, such as by the school principal. One of the reasons for this, as stated by a few participants (S2/F/T3; S3/DP; S3/H; S3/F/T1; S4/T2; S5/F/T2), is that there may be too many opinions and it may never come to a decision or conclusion. One teacher (S2/F/T4) claimed that she was once in such a meeting where something was discussed for an hour, but no decision could be made. All the school principals and previous principals (S1/P; S2/P; S3/P; S4/P; RP2; RP4) concurred, stating that sometimes decisions are made by themselves without any input from the rest of the staff. The reason for this is that they are responsible for everything at the school and sometimes they must decide what they believe is best for the school, regardless of what the staff thinks. One principal (S2/P) claimed that he is not going to negotiate with a teacher how many classes he/she needs to teach. Another principal (S4/P) stated that some information and decisions are sensitive and staff must not or do not need to know about it for their own or others' protection. Additionally, it was claimed by one principal (S4/P) that he does not always have the time or opportunity to discuss and obtain inputs from staff members as some decisions require immediate response and action.

The data also indicated that this is one of the reasons why school principals cannot be blatant risk takers (S1/P; S2/P; S3/P3). Thus, school principals suggest that risks should be meticulously calculated since they are held responsible for everything that happens at school. In the end, school principals (S1/P; S2/P; S3/P) explained that they will have to give account to all educational stakeholders, such as the department, parents, the rest of the staff and teachers when something goes wrong. Therefore, most school principals who participated in the study concluded that risks need to be calculated and provision needs to be made when they do not always work out. On the other hand, it seems from the data that the lower the positions, the easier it is to take

risks, such as the deputy principal, HOD and even teachers (S1/DP; S1/T1; S2/H; S3/DP).

All participants, whether a SMT member or a teacher, seem to have no problem with certain decisions being made without their input. Although, teachers would like to be part of the decisions that affect them since they will mostly have to deal with it. Also, as one teacher (S2/F/T1) stated, school leaders should not be afraid to ask input from staff members, especially regarding things they may not know about, such as marketing. Thus, address it to the person dealing with or in charge of marketing.

5.4 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, a summary of the participants' biographical information, as well as an outline of the themes and sub-themes that were identified and formulated from the data collected was provided. The raw data from individual interviews, focus group interviews and questionnaires was integrated into and presented under these themes. The findings from the raw data will therefore be discussed and analysed further with reference to relevant and existing literature in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 5, the raw data collected through semi-structured individual interviews, focus group interviews and open-ended questionnaires was thematically analysed, as discussed in Chapter 4, and presented thematically. The main purpose of this chapter is to discuss and interpret the data with relevant and existing literature. Through this integration of the raw data and existing literature, an attempt is made to answer the research questions and to achieve the objectives of this study – the main objective of this study being approaches to enhance the EI skills of SMT members for improved leadership practices.

6.2 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data is discussed according to the themes and sub-themes identified and formulated in Chapter 5. The main themes are: (1) Leadership challenges SMT members face; (2) EI skills for SMT members for self-awareness; (3) EI skills for SMT members for social awareness; (4) EI skills for SMT members for self-management; (5) EI skills for SMT members for relationship management, and (6) leadership practices for SMT members.

6.2.1 Leadership challenges SMT members face

Under the first main theme, leadership challenges SMT members face, various challenges were found that are frequently experienced by SMT members. Although different schools participated in the study, surprisingly, all schools and their SMTs face similar challenges with one or two outlying occasions. It seems that the only difference regarding the challenges the SMTs face is the level of intensity thereof, depending on the position one holds, for example, a school principal may experience more stress and pressure with a particular challenge compared to a deputy principal or HOD. This corresponds with the work of Beyers and du Plessis (2022:197) who claim that school

principals face more pressure and stress since they are responsible for everything at school, and are thus held accountable for anything that may occur.

6.2.1.1 Implementation of change

Most participants agree that change is inevitable and should not be avoided since it can bring more success to schools. This is supported by a study which claimed that avoiding change may lead to contradiction of an organisation's goals, being incapable of producing results and preventing overall enhancement (Lastovska, Surikavo, Silina-Jasjukeviča & Lūsēna-Ezera, 2023:648).

The findings indicate that implementing change was not a big challenge for most SMT members. The reason for this may be due to the way they managed, led, and implemented change with their teachers. One of the key factors for implementing change that came forth from the data was communication. This aligns greatly with the findings of Lastovska et al. (2023:661) who found that communication, which leads to a positive school culture, made teachers more positive and open to change in schools. It was found that communication, regular interaction, feedback, keeping up to date, and openness to ideas and opinions, made teachers more open and willing to embrace change. Also, the data indicated that through communication, better understanding regarding the necessity of change was achieved which led to a positive attitude amongst teachers. Again, similar findings were found by Lastovska et al. (2023:663) who argued that successful implementation of change may occur once there is communication between the SMT members and the teachers regarding the reasons and effects of change. Fuller and Sada (2022:191) found that school leaders who are willing to listen to the teachers and the other stakeholders, made school change more profound.

It was also found that when there is a lack of support from SMT members, especially after the implementation of change, teachers' attitudes towards change altered drastically. Teachers need support during change as well, thus SMT members should not aim at just getting teachers on board with change. To ensure effective implementation of change, particularly from the teachers' side, the SMT needs to provide constant and regular support. This correlates with what Lastovska et al.

(2023:650) found that school leaders characterised by support for their teachers indicated more effective change. Also, findings from Acton (2021:47) recommended support especially during the stages of change to ensure effectiveness and success. This includes assisting where possible during change, and making sure individual skills are enhanced as needed for the change (Acton, 2021:47; Lastovska et al., 2023:650). This finding from teachers concluded that they were left stranded to deal with the change and did not know how to cope or deal with the change – they were not equipped.

6.2.1.2 Department of Education and district officials

Under this sub-heading, the challenges that SMTs experience with the Department of Education and district officials will be discussed.

(i) Administration

The findings indicate that SMT members, especially school principals who work more directly with the Department of Education and district officials and thus doing most of the administrative work required, experience the administration workload timeously and unnecessarily. A few principals indicated that district officials would sometimes require information they already have or be able to obtain from the Department of Education itself. Also, it happens that district officials set unrealistic and absurd timelines for the submission of forms and/or reports. This finding correlates with that of Steyn and Fuller (2023:200) who reported administration for school principals to be overwhelming, difficult to adapt and fraught with duplications. To add, this finding is also supported by Turkoglu and Cansoy (2020:185) who also found that departmental officials require quick responses. Unnecessary administration takes up a lot of time from SMT members which could otherwise be used for their primary roles – leading and managing the teaching and learning of the school. This was also reported by one deputy principal who stated that certain tasks need to be put aside so that the required documents can be completed and submitted. A finding from Steyn and Fuller (2023:300) also indicated that school leaders' leadership is negatively affected, which may lead to poor and ineffective management and leadership of the teaching and learning in their school.

(ii) Delayed feedback

In addition, it was found that delayed feedback and unresponsiveness from district officials and the Department of Education was a common finding under various principals. They mentioned that they would find it very difficult to get any response or answers from the district officials regarding issues at their school which required their authorisation and/or support. In one particular case, it was reported that the Department of Education took two years to finalise the appointment of a teacher. This finding is supported by two studies (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018:763; Steyn & Fuller, 2023:299) who both reported findings on school leaders' difficulty in getting a response from district officials.

Surprisingly, the only resource challenge reported by participants was that of teacher provisions. A few participants indicated that the lack of teachers at their school was a major problem and the biggest resource challenge that they face. School principals strive to let their school grow in numbers, however, it negatively impacts their teaching and learning when teachers are not provided as the school grows. Surprisingly, it was reported by three studies (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018:762; Steyn & Fuller, 2023:300; Tsakeni, Munje & Jita, 2021:1311) that teacher provision was the most common resource challenge faced by school principals. One participant also reported that their classes become bigger without providing more teachers. The effect of this is that it leads to decreased quality teaching and learning (Tsakeni et al., 2021:1312).

(iii) Unrealistic academic expectations

The findings indicate that the Department of Education and district officials set unrealistic expectation which SMT members and teachers are not capable of meeting. To add, it was also reported that district officials tend to be task-oriented. Therefore, they focus too much on the achievement of certain results without considering the state of the school. It was indicated by a few participants that because of their school's socio-economic background, they would never be able to achieve the academic goals set by district officials. Findings from Sell (2020:118) indicated that setting unrealistic academic goals is putting school leaders under more pressure and asking for something beyond their capabilities. Additionally, it was also reported by Cibane

(2020:29) that the school principals know what is best for their school since they are in the best position to do so. It seems, however, that district officials are not always aware of the circumstances and the needs of each individual school.

(iv) Managing these challenges

The most notable finding for managing these challenges from the Department of Education and district officials was to have a good relationship with them. Findings indicated that having a healthy and trusting relationship with district officials resulted in more effectiveness and success when dealing with these challenges. Similar findings were found in another study regarding leadership practices which indicated that trusting relationships with different educational stakeholder may create better school efficiency (Leithwood, 2012:19). It seems that when SMT members have good relationships with district officials, there is better communication and understanding from both parties, especially district officials. Also, with strong and healthy relationships, persuasion, motivation and negotiation are more prominent which allows SMT members to be more successful and effective when interacting with district officials and departmental challenges. This is similar to Janse van Vuuren and van der Bank's (2023:8) findings regarding the positive correlation between good relationships and behavioural aspects such as communication, persuasion, motivation and negotiation.

The findings do indicate that most SMT members, especially school principals, can build good and strong relationship with other people – in this case, with district officials. This may indicate that these SMT members have a high level of EI since it allows them to build trusting relationships with other people. This is aligned with the work of Goleman's (Goleman et al., 2013:39; Livesey, 2017:27) EI skill of relationship management, Mayer and Salovey's (Mayer et al., 2016:294) EI abilities of understanding emotion, perceiving emotions accurately and emotional facilitation of thinking, Bar-On's (Bar-On, 2006:23) EI skill of interpersonal relationships, and Petrides and Furnham's (Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018:27) EI skill of sociability. Participants' ability to build trusting relationships and their positive effects to education will be discussed further under the main theme of EI skills for SMT members for relationship management.

Surprisingly, one other finding indicated that having and building trusting relationships does not work for all SMT members. It was found from one retired school principal that these challenges were too much and forced him into early retirement. Interestingly, a recent study from Steyn and Fuller (2023:298) found that some school principals were indeed considering resigning from their positions due the unfortunate negative consequences of these challenges on principals. It was also indicated by Turk and Wolfe (2019:148) that a quarter of school principals leave their positions within the first year – although, it is important to note that this study from Turk and Wolfe (2019:148) was on school principals and everyday challenges, and thus not particularly departmental challenges that forced them to resign. However, it is crucial to be aware that challenges such as the finding indicated above from this study indicate that school principals may be lost through resignation if these challenges cannot be dealt with effectively.

6.2.1.3 Principal transitioning

An unexpected finding from this study was challenges teachers as well as SMT members faced at a school without an official school principal. One other study indicated a similar finding regarding the prolonged periods of school principals' appointment (Khumalo, 2021:9). There were two schools that did not have official school principals at the time the study was conducted. Thus, the school principal was in an acting position, waiting for either official appointment or another candidate to be officially appointed as the school principal. It seems from the findings that the delayed appointment in school principals from the department created negative challenges for teachers as well as the SMT, including the acting school principal, which may result in negative consequences for the teaching and learning.

One of the challenges that came forth for SMTs in a situation like this is that the school principal cannot take proper and effective leadership and management of the school since he/she is not officially appointed. Thus, the school principal cannot implement any changes, new ideas or practices since other SMT members and/or the board of governors may disapprove more easily. A reason for this might be that they would rather wait for an official appointment, otherwise, when a new candidate might be appointed, changes have to occur again. Nevertheless, the findings indicated that this

may have a chain reaction to the rest of the SMT members as well as teachers which creates confusion and uncertainty. They are unsure what to do, unable to make decisions and/or plan accordingly – as one participant stated that everyone is just hanging around waiting. There were also problems with too many people wanting to be the leader of the school. Since the acting principal is not officially appointed, it is easier for other members of the SMT, such as the deputy principal and HODs, not to follow instructions and authority and wanting to impose their own ideas. Hence, it may lead to many leaders doing their own thing which may further confuse teachers as well as create division among staff members.

This finding was unexpected and just again highlighted the significance of the role of a school principal in the leadership and management of a school. Numerous researchers have indicated and demonstrated the vital role of a school principal leading and managing a school (Bloese et al., 2022:2; Danbaba et al., 2021:196; Gogo et al., 2022:50; Leithwood et al., 2020:573; Marishane, 2018:137; Sánchez-Núñez et al., 2023:54; Janse van Vuuren & Van der Bank, 2023:8; van der Vyver et al., 2021:128). It should be noted that further studies with a focus on this phenomenon are required since literature on this is still lacking. Also, this finding cannot be generalised to all schools with acting school principals since certain schools may not experience any challenges when a school principal is in an acting position and the management and leadership of a school may continue as expected.

6.2.1.4 Parents

A common finding from participants under this heading was the lack of involvement and interest from parents in their children's schools. This finding correlates with ample research (Elomaa et al., 2023:879; Medford & Brown, 2022:1; Schreiber, 2019:51) which found that parent involvement in schools is a common and major challenge. However, it is of utmost important as parental involvement showed better academic achievement and success (Memela & Ramrathan, 2022:2; Sibanda, 2021:1). A few participants from different schools indicated that they have academically challenging children (cf. 5.3.1.5 (iii)). To add, these similar schools' participants reported a great lack of involvement from parents, thus, with schools where parents are more involved, there is an increase in their children's academic achievement. A few participants from

different schools also reported that they have children in their schools who are poorer, come from lower socio-economic background and broken homes, thus parents are often also not as involved due to difficult financial circumstances. A similar finding was reported by Sibanda (2021:4) who found that one of the main reasons for parents not being involved in schools were due to single parents, or child-headed homes, and parents working full-time.

On the other hand, some participants from other schools did indicate that parental involvement is not a concern (cf. 5.3.1.5). However, where these parents were involved prompted other challenges such as complaining and conflict. This is in line with what Memela and Ramrathan (2022:2) found, noting the daily resolving of conflict with parents.

A few SMT members also reported success with parents in their schools. The reason for this seems to be effective communication. Most SMT members have regular communication with the parents, particularly at the beginning of a school year. During this meeting, parents are welcomed, and expectations, goals and the importance of their children's academics are discussed. To add, regular communication continues throughout the year, not just from the SMT but teachers as well. This correspond with findings from Nguyen, Havard and Otto (2022:474) who reported that effective communication was a great way of keeping parents involved and, where communication was lacking, there was a lower level of parental involvement.

Another benefit of communication is that it may lead to better and healthier relationships with parents for the SMT. Interestingly, one finding indicated that communication and building relationships with parents do not always need to be formal. Instead talking briefly with parents next to the sport field or at a school event also leads to better relationships, as well as parents informing the SMT regarding any issues. Parents appreciate this instead of SMT members avoiding parents, and parents requiring formal appointments and meetings with the SMT to discuss anything. It was also found by Basson and Mestry (2019:3) that good relationships with parents may lead to better support and involvement from parents. Furthermore, based on this finding, when SMT members are welcoming, such as speaking to parents at sporting events, parents may become more involved. This is what Yulianti et al. (2022:98) also

reported regarding school leaders being more welcoming leading to more parental involvement.

One research study on parents and schools indicated that school leaders may experience and must deal with parents' negative attitudes towards the school which may involve constant conflict situations (Schreiber, 2019:51). However, the findings from this study indicate that one way to ensure that parents are more positive towards their children's school and become supportive is to persuade them into the vision of the school. Additionally, the findings indicated that when a school vision is benefiting the children, which it should (development, growth, and academics of the learners), there will be no problem in persuading parents to buy into the school's vision.

6.2.1.5 Managing teachers' workloads

According to the PAM document (RSA DoE, 2016a:s. A.5), SMT members, especially the school principals with the help of the rest of the SMT, are responsible for and must ensure workloads that are distributed equally. The findings indicate that when it comes to SMT members assigning teachers with their workload, it may cause some conflict between them and teachers. Therefore, when it comes to assigning teachers their workload, SMT members all agreed that being fair and equal made it easier and more effective. Besides being fair and equal when assigning teachers their workload, the findings also reported that perhaps a more important reason for this is to avoid burnout among teachers. It was found by Mandu (2019:40) that teachers being overloaded with duties and responsibilities may experience lower job satisfaction and motivation.

Although being fair and equal when assigning teachers with their workload is important, it is not always easy since the responsibilities and duties cannot always be measured. Also, it was indicated that it is very difficult to compare responsibilities and duties between teachers. However, it was found that SMT members make sure that when responsibilities and duties are assigned, they are appropriate to the individual. Thus, SMT members make sure to assign workloads according to the strengths and talents of their teachers. School leaders directing teachers in their strengths and their potential in certain duties and responsibilities were also found by Aquino et al. (2021:1326) and Medford and Brown (2022:9) which, in turn, produced increased work

productivity and performance among teachers. This would also indicate that SMT members are aware of their teachers' strengths and weaknesses which is an essential EI skill which will be discussed later under the findings regarding EI skills of SMT members.

Another effective method that came forth from the data when it comes to assigning teachers' duties and responsibilities, is communication. When SMT members have meetings with teachers beforehand to discuss their responsibilities and duties, teachers were more likely to be positive and satisfied with their assigned workload. Also, when teachers were given the opportunity to choose their responsibilities and duties, there was more positivity and motivation among teachers. Although SMT members pointed out that it is not always possible to give everyone what they want, but by communicating and negotiating, teachers were more open and accepting of their workload. The findings concluded that teachers feel included and part of the decision-making process, not forced or told what to do, also teachers appreciated that there is more transparency with this method because some teachers may be overloaded whereas others do little to nothing. Similar findings were noted by both Mophosho (2014:29) and Mandu (2019:40), indicating that when teachers were part of the decision-making process, especially something directly related to them, they showed more willingness and openness to duties and responsibilities. This, in turn, leads to transparency, and teachers may not feel as if they are being treated unfairly or feel that they do more than other teachers (Mandu, 2019:40).

An interesting finding came forth from one school principal. He rearranged and implemented an entire management structure when he started at his new school. By doing this, more management positions were created where duties and responsibilities could be assigned and distributed more equally and fairly. Thus, the workload of both the SMT and teachers were more evenly distributed which led to an increase in motivation, job satisfaction and less stress amongst all staff members.

6.2.2 EI skills for SMT members for self-awareness

Coming to the second main theme, the findings under EI skills for SMT members for self-awareness will be interpreted and discussed. Overall, the findings regarding SMT

members being more self-aware was positive. The findings show the importance of SMT members being self-aware which may lead to more effective management and leadership as well as improved leadership practices. This is supported by various researchers who argue that self-awareness is the cornerstone of EI (Carden et al., 2022:162; Goleman, 1998:82; Issah, 2018:4; Pretorius, 2021:64) and that leadership practice as well as the SMT member in general may improve and develop (Buskila & Chen-Levi, 2021:166). The sub-headings under this theme include self-assessment, assertiveness and emotional self-awareness.

6.2.2.1 Self-assessment

Based on the findings, SMT members can do self-assessment. Thus, these SMT members are aware of their strengths and weaknesses as leaders. Also, the findings indicate that these SMT members are aware of the importance of doing self-assessment as well as the impact their strengths and weaknesses may have on the school. One finding came forth regarding the importance of doing self-assessment which indicated that a SMT member will then be able to overcome any situation. In another study, it was found that school leaders being aware of their strength and weaknesses will make them more effective team members (Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2023:65). This may lead to overcoming any situation since SMT members can rely on and will not be afraid to ask for assistance in certain situations which fall under their weaknesses.

Not surprisingly, a finding from teachers also claimed that SMT members doing self-assessment must be of utmost importance. The reason for this is that SMT members will be more aware of their strengths and weaknesses in different situations. This would then mean that they will be able to apply their strengths more accurately leading to dealing with demanding situations more effectively and working on their weaknesses. A finding by Dierdorff et al. (2019:2898) claims that when school leaders are unable to do self-assessment, as well as doing so accurately, they may experience difficulties in demanding situations. Moreover, findings from other studies also indicated that when SMT members are aware of their weaknesses, they have greater consciousness thereof and can start working on them, especially harmful behaviours, leading to improving themselves as school leaders (Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2023:65;

Tamunomiebi & Owhorji, 2018:131). In conclusion, the findings indicate that most SMT members had no problem in doing self-assessment. Also, it shows that they understood the importance thereof and were aware of how their strengths and weaknesses may affect the school environment – especially their weaknesses which may have severe negative impacts and consequences.

6.2.2.2 Assertiveness

The findings regarding assertiveness indicated that SMT members were able to be assertive – having honest and direct conversations with colleagues. Also, the findings demonstrate that school principals are more able to be assertive. One may argue that it is in fact necessary and that school principals cannot avoid or lack the ability of assertiveness since they are the main person in charge of leading and managing the school. Therefore, a school principal being assertive is deemed necessary to have conversations that are important and being able to stand up for what is right and needed in the school. The findings indicated that SMT members deem assertiveness very crucial. To add, it was reported that having those tough conversation immediately when necessary and direct, not beating around the bush, showed more success in their schools. The reason for this, as mentioned by a few school principals, is that at the end of the day, they are responsible and held accountable for anything that happens in their school. This finding aligns with that of Rofiki et al. (2022:4031) who reported that school leaders being assertive may make the school more successful because they are able to stand up for what is right and for the needs of the school which they are totally aware of since they are fully involved.

Additionally, teachers also appreciate and want SMT members to be assertive. One finding showed that teachers would rather prefer SMT members to address and talk to them when they do something wrong. Teachers would appreciate SMT members telling them honestly when they are in the wrong or busy doing something wrong instead of avoiding it, which could lead to more confusion. It was also reported by other studies (Lazenby, 2015:81; Rofiki et al., 2022:4031) that school leaders who are assertive, who can have honest and direct conversations, were seen as more competent and were thus more respected. The reason might be that teachers realise they have a leader who will not be afraid to stand up for what is right and say something

that needs to be corrected as well as advocate for the needs and the vision of the school.

6.2.2.3 Emotional self-awareness

An interesting finding regarding self-awareness was that it is deemed necessary, so SMT members do not hide their true self by wearing a 'mask' or putting on a front around school. To add, based on several experiences from SMT members, teachers will notice that, and according to the findings, teachers prefer honesty. In one finding, it was indicated that over the years, a principal realised that by being true to himself and his emotions, teachers appreciated it. The reason seemed to be that teachers see their school leaders as 'just human' as well, and respected the vulnerability they may show in their emotions, leading to an increase in support and trust. In a study published by Buskila and Chen-Levi (2021:166), it was claimed that when school leaders were more emotionally expressive, they were seen as charismatic and more likely to create a positive emotional environment. To add, another study also confirmed that when school leaders talk honestly about their weaknesses and emotions, it revealed approachability and humanity (Bower, O'Connor, Harris & Frick, 2018:127).

It also came forth from the data that when SMT members are more emotionally self-aware, they may deal with and manage their emotions much better. Especially when negative emotions are not understood, they cannot be dealt with which may lead to severe negative consequences. This correlates with what Burns (2017:45) found when school leaders do not understand and are unaware of the impact of their emotions, especially negative ones, it may create an unpleasant working environment for everyone at school, thus, job satisfaction and motivation decrease. Additionally, Bower et al. (2018:126) also confirm that distrust and alienation were experienced by teachers when their school leaders acted rashly with negative feelings.

A final finding regarding emotional self-awareness was that SMT members may be able to predict when negative emotions may arise. Thus, they may know how to deal with it without causing damage, especially in demanding and tricky situations. To add, the finding also showed that SMT members will be more aware of their triggers and how to avoid and/or be conscious of them beforehand. In another study, this was

supported that school leaders who are aware of their emotions will be able to, firstly, identify negative emotions such as anger, secondly, understand such emotion, and thirdly, be more likely to deal with it successfully – especially in difficult situations and, hence, focus on the task at hand (Bajali, 2019:54; Tamunomiebi & Owhorji, 2018:132).

6.2.3 EI skills for SMT members for social awareness

Under this theme, only two sub-themes were identified which were identifying emotions and empathy. Both these, according to the findings, are vital for SMT members which leads to various advantages and benefits not just for them but teachers at the receiving end as well, resulting in greater success for schools.

6.2.3.1 Identifying emotions

The present findings show that identifying the emotions of others may be a difficult ability. Mayer et al. (2016:294) also argue that an individual will only be able to master this ability once he/she can identify his/her own emotions. In another study by Israelashvili, Oosterwijk, Sauter and Fischer (2019:1468), there was a positive connection between one's ability to identify and differentiate one's own emotions and identifying and understanding the emotions of others. However, the findings from this study indicated that having a relationship with someone may make it easier to identify the emotions in a person; noticing the cues since there is a sense of familiarity. This correlates with the findings from other studies (Finnigan & Maulding-Green, 2018:47; Israelashvili et al., 2019:1468) which concluded that school leaders who had higher EI were more likely be able to identify emotions in others when there was a relationship; after numerous interactions with people.

Additionally, one finding also indicated that this skill is mastered over years of experience. This is consistent with the findings of Keating and Cook (2023:9) who reported that, with consistent experience and exposure to emotions, there was more accurate emotion identification in others. Therefore, SMT members may develop and improve this ability over the years in their leadership positions where it may be more crucial, and when working with people becomes more regular. This is of course vital for SMT members to develop this skill. It was indicated by the study that when SMT members are able to identify emotions in others, teachers felt more supported and the

relationship continued to become stronger. Research findings of Pellitteri (2021:49) also point towards school leaders being attentive to the emotional needs of their teachers leading to more support. This study's findings also show that SMT members will be able to immediately pick up when something is emotionally wrong with their teachers, thus immediate support may be provided. When teachers' emotional needs are not recognised and are neglected due to the lack of the school leader's ability to do so, there is an increase in burnout amongst teachers which may lead to lower job satisfaction and motivation (Rizvi et al., 2023:51).

6.2.3.2 Empathy

SMT members being empathetic is vital since the level of trust is enhanced in the rest of the staff members. When school leaders can be empathetic, understand other people's perspectives, feelings and situations (Goleman et al., 2013:39; Livesey, 2017:27), teachers found them more approachable and experienced a safer working environment. This finding correlates with that of Bruesch (2021:60) which reported that teachers experienced school leaders as more available to the staff members. According to the findings of this study, SMT members want teachers to feel welcome to come freely with any concerns instead of staying away. Thus, SMT members need to be able to be empathetic, where teachers will feel safe to come and share any concerns they may have. Additionally, when empathy is practiced by school leaders, their relationships become stronger and more trusting, and teachers feel more supportive (Jiang & Lu, 2020:5; McKeown, 2022:71).

Although having empathetic SMT members has its advantages, being too empathetic may come with other problems. Thus, SMT members need to find that balance. Some challenges from the study that may arise when SMT members are too empathetic are that teachers may take advantage thereof, thus getting away with certain transgressions. Also, there may be some dissatisfaction amongst teachers since certain teachers would be getting away with wrong-doing. This finding is also consistent with what Bower et al. (2018:124) and Pretorius (2021:123) found where school leaders being too empathetic led to some teachers experiencing lower job satisfaction, motivation, and trust. Regardless, a finding also indicated that being empathetic may be emotionally draining. It was found that SMT members are dealing

with problems and challenges constantly, thus teachers with personal problems as well may add to the other common educational challenges and drain SMT members emotionally. In two other studies (Pollock, Nielsen & Wang, 2023:13; Wang, Pollock & Hauseman, 2023:132), it was highlighted that school leaders may experience emotional fatigue and burnout when dealing with educational situations that require intense emotional involvement and investment.

6.2.4 EI skills for SMT members for self-management

Under EI skills for SMT members for self-management, the following sub themes were identified which will be interpreted and discussed: emotional regulation, optimism, resilience and managing criticism, adaptability and balancing work and personal responsibilities.

6.2.4.1 Emotional regulation

A surprising finding claimed that if a SMT member cannot work with him-/herself, then he/she will not be able to work with other people. Thus, emotional regulation, being able to regulate one's own emotions, is considered crucial for leadership and management success in schools. The findings indicated that when SMT members can regulate their emotions, difficult and challenging situations can be managed more effectively and better decisions can be made. To add, SMT members will be more analytical, realistic and think more clearly before making decisions, thus not being emotionally influenced, or making decisions based on emotions. It has been indicated by Lubbadah (2020:42) that school leaders who are able to regulate their own emotions are more focused on the goals and better at achieving the goals set out. Moreover, Bayraktar et al. (2021:2229) and Lee et al. (2023:3) also indicated that school leaders who can manage their emotions well showed better results in work performance, which included making better decisions and finding solutions, especially in demanding situations. The findings from this study also show that when SMT members can regulate their emotions – especially strong, negative or destructive emotions which may cause negative consequences or impact staff members negatively – their surroundings might be better managed. This correlates with studies (Al-Qadri & Zhao, 2021:373; Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019:4; Lubbadah, 2020:44) that

found that school leaders who are able to recognise and regulate the difference between positive and negative emotions showed that they will be able to detach or ignore the negative emotions such as anger or frustration during tense moments and act on the positive emotions.

There are many strategies by which SMT members can regulate their emotions. However, from this study, it was shown that one helpful method is to anticipate difficult situations and to prepare for them well. When SMT members are aware of an upcoming meeting that may be challenging or difficult, such as a teacher who is difficult or a parent, it is suggested that they prepare in advance for such meetings. Findings indicate that when preparing for such meetings, SMT members are more likely to regulate their emotions well, especially negative and strong ones since they are aware of them beforehand. Other methods that were found useful include talking to a trusted colleague, staying quiet and/or leaving a meeting until a school leader has better control over their emotions again, ending the meeting when emotions are taking over, and by not reacting immediately but instead thinking about it and how to respond constructively. Some of these strategies are aligned with what Hauseman (2021:631) found to be common strategies school leaders use to regulate their emotions, which included talking to colleagues or family members, doing other activities to distract oneself, and practicing situation selection.

6.2.4.2 Optimism, resilience, and managing criticism

SMT members will be required to deal with adversity on various occasions. Thus, it is important for SMT members to be optimistic, see the positive in adversity and manage negative criticism well. The findings suggest that feeling hopeless, negative, and demotivated particularly in difficult situations or failure is inevitable and only human. The findings indicate that a few SMT members have a good understanding of what it means to be optimistic based on their explanations. Also, a few methods were suggested to stay optimistic, such as looking for the positives in a situation or talking to trusted colleagues who can offer support. One study (Wabule, 2020:83) also found that relationships with colleagues will assist in school leaders being optimistic since there is support, someone to provide different perspectives, encouragement and motivation. Additionally, seeking out positives may also assist in staying optimistic

since another study (Ogbo, Obiekwe & Perpetua, 2023:57) argued that such an individual believes that a dire situation is only temporary and will not affect other activities since good outcomes do occur.

Being optimistic may also lead to being more resilient, as one finding from a SMT member demonstrated resilience when he was promoted to deputy principal very late in his career. For resilience, it was suggested that SMT members have clear goals and stay focused on them. This is supported by Olmo-Extremera, Townsend and Segovia (2022:12) who found that intrinsic motivation and commitment, such as that noted above, will assist a SMT member in being more resilient and optimistic. Additionally, one interesting finding was that of one principal who claimed that he enjoys challenging and demanding situations. This SMT member may be regarded as resilient and became resilient over the years since he enjoys and seeks out challenging and tricky situations. This aligns with the findings of Olmo-Extremera et al. (2022:12) who reported that resilience can be developed by taking up challenges.

SMT members should also be able to deal with criticism. If they cannot, it may influence their leadership and work negatively. The findings indicated that SMT members should see criticism as an opportunity to grow and develop. This is similar to the findings of Carden, Jones and Passmore (2022:161) regarding self-evaluation where school leaders seek feedback, thus criticism, in order to grow and develop in certain areas. Additionally, it was found by Kazak and Ciner (2021:302) that teachers regard unwillingness to accept criticism as an undesirable leadership characteristic school among SMT members. On the other hand, they should also be able to distinguish between constructive and destructive criticism. Thus, when criticism is deconstructive and negative, it should be ignored. Additionally, the findings indicate that this is easier for more experienced SMT members whereas less experienced teachers may find it difficult to deal with criticism.

6.2.4.3 Adaptability

Although the findings indicate that several participants do not like to adapt to new situations, they do understand the necessity and the importance thereof. Furthermore, the findings indicate that some participants, especially SMT members, are able to

adapt to new situations, as illustrated through various experiences they shared. One finding showed that when they analyse the situation, look at options, solutions, and possible risks, and adapt to the situation, it is much easier. This finding correlates with that of Yukl and Mahsud (2010:86) who claim that adapting is more effective when school leaders analyse the situations and the effects it may have. On the other hand, another finding illustrated that mentorship may also assist with adapting to new situations more easily. This includes asking advice and guidance on specific situations from other SMT members who are more experienced and may have gone through similar difficulties. This finding is also supported by Granziera, Collie and Martin (2019:64) who suggest that one of the methods of improving adaptability as an individual is through mentorship.

The findings indicate that mostly older teachers and SMT members find it more difficult as well as being less open to adapt to new changes and situations. The reason is not that they are incompetent, because these are SMT members with vast experience and knowledge over years. Another study (Lastovska et al., 2023:651) found comparable results, and it was indicated that teachers' readiness and willingness towards change and adapting to new situations decreases with age and experience. One of the reasons for this might be that new situations are seen as unconventional and not worth adapting to. This is also supported by Lastovska et al. (2023:651) who claim that unconventional methods cause older teachers to be more resistant to change.

On adaptability regarding leadership styles, the findings suggested that SMT members need to be able to adapt their leadership style. The reason being, from the findings, that SMT members need to address situations differently, and that each situation requires a different approach. To add, SMT members work mostly with people, thus, being able to adapt in terms of working with people when it comes to leadership styles is also important because not everyone can be managed the same way. This aligns with situational leadership as discussed in the literature review. According to this leadership style, school leaders practice according to the demands and needs of the situation (Daniëls et al., 2019:114; Nordin, Mustafa & Razzaq, 2020:452; Sari et al., 2022:2405). SMT members working with different people is also supported by Nordin et al. (2020:452) who claim that school leaders will understand their staff on a deeper

level since that will determine how school leaders should apply their leadership practices in different situations, appropriately and effectively.

6.2.4.4 Balancing work and personal responsibilities

The findings show why it is crucial for SMT members to manage and have a healthy balance between their work and personal lives. One finding indicates that more stress may be placed on SMT members if this is not balanced well. A study found that when school leaders focus too much on one area, such as their work, increase of duties and responsibilities, it may cause them to neglect their personal lives, causing negative effects such as family conflict (Turkoglu & Cansoy, 2020:183; Wiczorek & Manard, 2018:15). Furthermore, it was shown that stress may cause school leaders to burn out, and in some cases, that resigning was seen as a better option (Bayar, 2016:194; Turkoglu & Cansoy, 2020:178; Wang et al., 2018:75;). Not surprisingly, another reason to find this balance is to avoid teacher neglect. This was also found in Taole's (2022:17) study where school leaders did not have adequate time for teachers, resulting in lower job satisfaction and productivity.

One of the suggestions from the findings is to compartmentalise. This is meant to keep work issues, responsibilities, and duties at work and vice versa – not allowing work issues to mix with personal issues as well as not letting any personal issues influence a school leader's work. A similar finding was found in another study (Pretorius, 2021:120) which saw that when school leaders compartmentalise, there was a more effective and healthy management of work and personal responsibilities. Overall, these findings highlight how crucial it is for SMT members to manage a healthy balance between work and personal responsibilities. When one aspect is neglected, it may cause severe stress and pressure on SMT members which results in a decrease in leadership practices, meaning management of a school is at risk.

6.2.5 EI skills for SMT members for relationship management

Here the findings under the main theme, the EI skills for SMT members for relationship management, will be interpreted which includes building bonds, conflict management, as well as the value of conflict, motivation, staff development and teamwork.

6.2.5.1 Building bonds

Most participants who took part in the study deemed relationships and the ability for them to build relationships crucial. A few principals claimed that the staff of a school is very important and can make a principal successful or not. It is claimed by Atolagbe, Ojo and Oparinde (2020:103) that a school leader's ability to manage and establish relationship with staff will determine the success of a school. On the other hand, Bayar (2016:194) found that one of the reasons why principals failed and resigned from their positions within the first few years was because of poor relationships. Therefore, SMT members will develop in dealing with and managing different personalities when building relationships with different people. This could be advantageous because knowing different people, their strengths, their motives, and their needs will allow SMT members to manage the staff more appropriately and sufficiently. This was also found by two other studies (Davis, McBrayer, Miller & Fallon, 2022:3; Drigas, Papoutsis & Skianis, 2021:66) that when school leaders get to know their staff, there is increased understanding on how to manage different people. Another reason for relationship building may lead to teachers feeling supported. It was found by other studies (Bukko, Liu & Johnson, 2021:60; Combrinck & Daniels, 2023:3) that teachers feel supported when school leaders reach out and build relationships with them which leads to an increase in trust. The same applies to SMT members – when they have strong and healthy relationships with teachers they will be supported as well in anything they do. This is supported by various studies (Atolagbe et al., 2020:104; Brezicha & Fuller, 2019:26; Chombo, 2020:1669) which claim that fostering relationships will lead to staff commitment, dedication, trust and unity when it comes to managing and leading a school.

6.2.5.2 Conflict management

One finding claimed that conflict management and resolution can be an arduous task for SMT members, however it is very crucial for them to develop this skill. The findings did indicate, based on shared experiences and principles, that SMT members do know and are able to effectively manage and resolve conflict situations. The findings strongly suggest that whenever conflict is being managed, that SMT members, or any party, should give the opposing party an opportunity to share or state their case.

Furthermore, it is also suggested that SMT members deal with conflict situations privately, and that it should also stay private. Thus, findings suggest that SMT members should not resolve conflict with a person in front of others, and that it should never be shared with other people. This is supported by similar findings from various researchers (Adams & Plaatjies, 2021:1248; Chiedozie & Chidi, 2020:110; Clifford & Ejike, 2022:212; Larasati & Raharja, 2019:192) who also suggest that once conflict is dealt with, that the other person should get the opportunity to present their information about the situation.

The findings also indicate other principles which SMT members may use to resolve conflict more effectively. This includes being consistent and fair, especially when it comes to dealing with conflict with staff members, to treat everyone the same and be consistent regardless of who the person is or the positions they occupy. When SMT members do not follow this, teachers may experience lower job satisfaction because some teachers get away with certain things whereas other teachers would have been reprimanded and had to deal with the consequences. This is supported by other research which found that when conflict is not managed well and correctly, the result may be lower job satisfaction, motivation, and productivity amongst staff (Clifford & Ejike, 2022:207; Etomes & Molua, 2019:193; Sepiriti, 2023:6).

One interesting finding regarding conflict resolution was that SMT members should wait for the right time. It was indicated that sometimes emotions are too high, and trying to deal with the issue at that exact moment will only make it worse. Also, the right place is such as when a SMT member can see the person in private and not immediately in front of others. One finding indicated that sometimes it is more effective and best to stop such a situation and continue the following day. Additionally, it was also suggested that SMT members do not hold any resolved conflict situations against said individual in the future; when the conflict is resolved, it should never be brought up again. Research also indicates that there is no best strategy for conflict management, thus SMT members should be knowledgeable regarding conflict management strategies which will allow them to use it as the situation sees fit (Chiedozie & Chidi, 2020:110). Hence, SMT members must be able to know when as well where to use which conflict management strategy. This was also found in this

study where one principal claimed that conflict can be dealt with in very different ways, however it is important to know how and when, and that it all depends on the situations – how a SMT member will or should deal with conflict.

Besides having the ability and knowing all the steps to deal with conflict, one finding indicated that a SMT member should also know what is non-negotiable when it comes to conflicting situations. For example, one school principal shared that in a conflict situation when things are done that may disadvantage the school or learners or any unethical issues, that these conflict management principles and strategies may not necessarily be followed. A similar conflict strategy was mentioned by researchers, which is called dominating. This involves school leaders not listening to the views of others and dictating what the other party will do (Adams & Plaatjies, 2021:1248; Chiedozi & Chidi, 2020:110; Clifford & Ejike, 2022:212). This may sometimes seem like a better option since SMT members, especially school principals, are entrusted, responsible and held accountable for the management of a school (Beyers & du Plessis, 2022:197; Sepiriti, 2023:1).

(i) Conflict value

The findings indicate that several participants agree that conflict should not be avoided and should be seen as positive because it can be of immense value in the workplace. This correlates with Clifford and Ejike's (2022:207) study which reported that conflict should be seen as something positive. One of the values of conflict in the workplace is that it can lead to personal growth, provide solutions, ideas, and perspectives to achieving the school's goals. Again, Clifford and Ejike's study (2022:207) also found that conflict in the workplace can lead to personal growth. On the other hand, it is important to note that the findings show that there can be no value to conflict if it is not managed well. To highlight, an important principle for conflict management was mentioned which is listening to the other person. This was one of the strategies mentioned above by various researchers as well. This could imply that when SMT members do not allow the other person to share their side of the story, their perspective, ideas, and opinions, one could never work together towards a solution or compromise – thus, working against the school's vision and goals rather than towards it.

6.2.5.3 Motivation

It is evident from the findings that motivation and encouragement from the SMT members' side is crucial and necessary. Although the findings indicate that the motivation of staff members does fluctuate, whenever staff members are motivated there seem to be great benefits. It was found that motivated and encouraged teachers result in greater teamwork and leads to enthusiastic work towards the school's goals. This is similar to what Davis et al. (2022:3) found who claimed that motivated teachers are less likely to experience severe stress which could lead to burnout, negatively impacting their teaching. Additionally, another finding indicated that when teachers are motivated, they will flourish in the classroom which can only have a positive effect on the learners. This finding correlates with that of Wu (2023:73) that satisfied and motivated teachers bring out the best in their workplace, thus being greatly beneficial to the learners.

One important finding is that it is crucial for SMT members to know their staff as it is believed that motivating them will make it easier and more effective. It was indicated that, firstly, SMT members need to know staff so that they are aware when they might need motivation or encouragement, and secondly, how to motivate them appropriately. It was also highlighted by Davis et al. (2022:3) that it is crucial for school leaders to know how and what motivating practices will motivate teachers. This seems to intertwine with the other EI skills of building bonds and identifying the emotions of others, as discussed earlier. Based on the findings, when SMT members know their staff members, they will be more effective in motivating them since they will discover and know what motivates them, and when it may be necessary and appropriate. This is necessary as another study (Davis et al., 2022:6) found a display in differences when it came to motivating different staff members.

On the other hand, another finding indicated that whenever SMT members are available to genuinely spend with staff members and get to know them and their interests, it increases their motivation as well. It may be because the school leader shows a real interest in an individual which makes them feel supported and that they can trust the school leader. Equivalent results were found in another study (Sheperd-

Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018:117) which determined that relatedness increased motivation, such as being aware, identifying and attending to the needs of teachers.

To add, Davis et al. (2022:6) also found that when SMT members provide individualised support, there was an increase in motivation amongst the teachers. There were several different motivational strategies that were used by SMT members. The SMT members had some sense of understanding what motivates their respective staff members, which may indicate what a good relationship they have with them – knowing what and how to motivate their staff members. The following strategies came forth in the study: acknowledging work, complimenting work, positive comments, having breakfast or snacks for staff, financial incentives, team building activities, providing a safe environment for teachers, and physical support such as helping with duties or responsibilities. These are all examples and can be divided into the two categories that literature divides motivation into: extrinsic and intrinsic motives (Chinhengo, 2023:23; Davis et al., 2022:6; Wu, 2023:73).

6.2.5.4 Staff development

The findings strongly suggest that developing teachers is important. Most SMT members agree and encourage the development of staff members who are not in any leadership roles. One of the reasons the findings indicated for the development of staff members is because then there will always be someone competent enough to do the work and take responsibility. One school principal (cf. 5.3.5.4) realised this when he was close to retirement, that other people will need to be able to take over, thus he started developing them. Another reason for developing staff members is because some teachers will end up being very good in certain areas where SMT members may lack. These findings correlate with what Hitt and Tucker (2016:551) found, that when teachers are empowered, it will increase their proficiency to achieve the goals and vision of the school.

Another reason that came forth from the findings for the importance of developing staff is that it will increase motivation and encouragement amongst teachers. Thus, when teachers are growing, developing, and being empowered, they are more motivated towards their work, taking up more responsibilities and being sacrificial. This was also

found by Shula et al. (2022:6) who claimed that there was an increase in teamwork and decision-making when teachers were developed and empowered. Also, Mosoge and Mataboge (2021:9101) reported that teachers were more committed and motivated towards the vision and goals of the school. There are various methods and practices that SMT members may use to develop their staff members.

6.2.5.5 Teamwork

Teamwork in a school environment is essential, and the finding indicated various reasons why. It was found that without teamwork, there may be problems because a school cannot be managed by one or a small number of people. Also, it was indicated that the best and most effective way to achieving the goals of a school and working towards its vision is when everyone on the team is doing their part. Thus, SMT members are aware of the importance of teamwork, and can work in teams as well as ensure and encourage staff members to work in teams. This finding has been supported by numerous researchers (de Jong, de Kleijn, Lockhorst, Brouwer, Noordegraaf & van Tartwijk, 2023:1; Dugang, 2020: 92; Liu et al., 2021:434) who found that a school cannot be managed by one or two people such as the school principals, thus teamwork is very crucial when it comes to the effectiveness of teaching and learning in a school, which will be achieved through effective leadership and management, including teamwork. Additionally, Kramer (2023:6) found that successful SMT members are open-minded and willing to learn from others, thus those who lack this ability to work in teams may find it difficult to manage a successful school alone.

The findings further indicated that when SMT members can work in teams, achieving goals is much easier and quicker. This is confirmed by Dugang (2020:92) who found a significant relationship between teamwork and goals accomplishment in a school system. This may be because of the vast, various, and different strengths that can be added towards achieving goals in a school. When everyone contributes and are part of the decision-making process, issues and challenges can easily be solved since a team would consist of different and rich knowledge, experiences, skills and attitudes (Dugang, 2020:93). To add, teamwork also fosters relationships which, according to the findings, may lead to more support under staff members, an increase in trust and morale amongst them. It was argued by Dugang (2020:93) that teamwork fosters

relationships and when healthy and strong relationships are created, there is much more focus and clarity on the overall task and goal.

Therefore, teamwork may have great benefits for the staff as well as the school. To ensure effective teamwork and to assist SMT members who find teamwork difficult, there were a few principles that seem to work for some SMT members when it came to teamwork. Firstly, duties and responsibilities should be equally divided in the team, thus the school leader should not be taking over all the duties and responsibilities or overloading only certain teachers with work. This is also confirmed and stated in the PAM documents for school principals (RSA DoE, 2016a:s. A.5) which suggest that school duties and responsibilities are divided equally. Secondly, a SMT member should never interfere with someone's work unless help is requested. Lastly, SMT members should ensure that the duties and responsibilities in teamwork are distributed according to everyone's strengths – even the ones the SMT member are responsible for should play to his/her strengths.

6.2.6 Leadership practices for SMT members

In the last theme, various additional leadership practices for SMT members were identified and categorised under this theme. These include communication, autonomy and innovation, delegation responsibilities, school culture, expectations and vision, and the decision-making process.

6.2.6.1 Communication

All the participants who took part in the study deemed communication critical for school success. Two participants (cf. 5.3.6.1) with more than 15 years of school leadership experience, respectively, claimed that communication will determine the success of a school. It was also confirmed by Mohamed and Abidin (2021:25) that communication is vital for the success of a school, and that a school will most likely fail at achieving its goals when there is a lack of communication from school leaders. One of the benefits of communication according to the findings is that it will ensure understanding and clarity amongst staff members. This is supported by Fuller and Sada (2022:191) and Lastovska et al. (2023:663) who note that effective communication with teachers will ensure they understand and have clarity on any changes or decisions, whereas a

lack of communication regarding decisions may cause confusion. It was also found that when communication is lacking, there will be confusion and division amongst the staff as well as a feeling of exclusion. Shell et al. (2023:111) discovered that effective communication ensures trust and cohesion amongst team members, whether it be staff as a whole or different departments.

Another benefit of effective communication from SMT members is that it will ensure that clear expectations are set for teachers and that they will feel like part of the staff group as well as more motivated and determined towards the goal and vision of the school. Similar findings were made by Shell et al. (2023:111) who claim that when school leaders have clear and regular communication, it can ensure purpose, clarity and focus on the task. The findings further noted that a lack of communication may lead to misunderstandings and chaos. It was advised by most SMT members that took part in the study that they have frequent communication with staff members. Some suggestions and/or practices that SMT members engage in for effective communication that came from the data are having meetings every morning before school with the entire staff, having regular meetings with the SMT, having departmental meetings once a week, and having a group on WhatsApp Messenger for any immediate and quick sharing or getting information amongst staff.

(i) Guardian system

As mentioned in Chapter 5 under this sub-heading, a regular mention in this study was that of a guardian system from one of the schools who participated in the study. It was found that the school principal implemented this guardian system to ensure teachers have a voice. Since it is a big school with more or less 60 staff members, teachers' opinions, solutions, concerns, and so forth may be lost, and the SMT members (especially the school principal) cannot get to everyone in a day or even a week. Thus, teachers are divided up and allowed to choose a SMT member whom they meet regularly and who reports back to the school principal during SMT meetings. Findings on such a particular system are lacking, however the purpose of this guardian system serves the same purpose of that of a mentor since SMT members are there to guide and assist teachers and report to the school principal if they are unable to solve anything for the teachers.

As mentioned, the findings indicated that regular meetings, at least once a month, are held with the school leader and his/her teachers to check up, hear any concerns, issues, or suggestions both personally and for the school. This is supported by various researchers (Combrinck & Daniels, 2023:2; Echon & Cabal, 2022:175; Wold, Moon, Schwan, Neville & Outka, 2023:120) who found that mentorship will ensure the well-being of teachers. Additionally, the findings indicate that through this system there is a voice for teachers. This allows teachers to feel part of the school. This is especially important for new teachers who are still unaware of how the school is managed, also allowing them to build relationships. This is aligned with the findings of Wold et al. (2023:121) which claim that teachers find themselves isolated and this may lead to having no relationships with colleagues. Therefore, through this system teachers may develop relationships with SMT members as well as identify teachers in similar departments with the school leader as a mentor.

6.2.6.2 Autonomy and innovation

Most participants agree that autonomy is important. One of the reasons for autonomy from the findings is to create innovation. It was found by Kara and Bozkurt (2022:300) that significant autonomy in teachers results in remarkable initiative taken by teachers. Furthermore, the findings indicate that autonomy also leads to an increase in trust amongst staff, especially between a SMT member and a teacher such as an HOD and a teacher in that department. This is similar to what Paradis, Lutovac, Jokikokko and Kaasila (2019:399) and Yorulmaz and Colak (2023:538) indicate, where trust strongly correlates to trust among team members, and that distrust can result in negative consequences for all. Trust may further result in teachers being more willing and motivated to be innovative – this was found by Kara and Bozkurt (2022:302) in that autonomy encourages teachers to take opportunities and use innovative ideas. Moreover, autonomy also develops and increases teachers' independence, confidence, and self-esteem. This was indicated in another study by Kara and Bozkurt (2022:300) noting that a lack of autonomy in teachers may result in loneliness, avoiding teamwork, and resisting change which may negatively impact their confidence and independence. This finding is also supported by Yorulmaz and Colak

(2023:550) who found that autonomy enhances teachers' self-confidence, performance, motivation and self-efficacy.

To ensure effective autonomy amongst teachers, the findings suggest that SMT members should not micro-manage teachers, but instead guide and only oversee teachers. Another study indicated that school leaders should grant sufficient autonomy to ensure teachers can plan freely without any fear or worry of checking with or getting authorisation from school leaders (Saylik & Şahin, 2021:141). Thus, SMT members should only step in when their assistance is requested or make recommendations when they notice teachers may be on the verge of serious mistakes. It was also recommended by Basar et al. (2021:1941) that school leaders allow teachers to make mistakes to develop and grow.

Innovation, particularly from the SMT, is strongly encouraged and findings indicate that participants understand the importance thereof. The reason for the encouragement is that innovation brings new ideas, different approaches, and new perspectives to find solutions. This was also found by Lastovska et al. (2023:649), that promoting innovation in schools encourages creative approaches. To add, all these participants also indicated that when innovation is not encouraged in schools, they will fall behind in terms of growth in all areas of school. This aligns with what Tura and Akbasli (2022:204) and Lastovska et al. (2023:648) mention in their research regarding innovation which brings an increase in quality, development, and success in education. Findings also indicate that SMT members fully support their teachers with new ideas, and that teachers are supported during the implementation of their new ideas as long it is to the benefit of the school and the learners. Lastly, findings also indicate that school leaders tend to be more open to innovation and be more supportive when a clear rationale is given and teachers are willing to participate or even take the lead for the managing thereof (Lastovska et al., 2023:662).

6.2.6.3 Delegating responsibilities

Although the findings indicate that SMT members may dislike the practice of delegating responsibilities, it is a necessity. One of the reasons for this is that SMT members want to ensure everything is done correctly since they are held accountable.

This is also supported by Elmazi (2018:3) who claims that school leaders, especially school principals are held accountable for the effective managing of a school, meaning when something goes wrong, they are held responsible and must justify their decisions. However, one of the important aspects of SMT members delegating their work is to avoid burnout. The findings indicated that SMT members sometimes assume so many roles, duties, and responsibilities that they over-work themselves, which causes a lot of stress leading to possible burnout. This was also found by another study (Manundu, Mulwa & Mwanza, 2022:352) noting that school leaders' failure to delegate resulted in work overload and an increase in stress.

Although avoiding burnout is one reason for delegating responsibilities, the findings indicated other vital reasons as well. One of these is for teachers to grow and develop. Once teachers assume responsibility they are empowered, growing, and developing in those areas. This aligns with the findings of two other studies (Amels, Krüger, Suhre & van Veen, 2021:745; Liu, Qiang & Kang, 2023:2) which reported that delegating responsibilities and work to teachers led to the empowerment and growth of teachers which also resulted in a communal working environment and being more likely to work collaboratively to improve teaching and learning in the school. One finding indicated that a school principal realised that empowering teachers was not just for their benefit, but for the school as well because once a school principal leaves or retires, there needs to be staff who can and know how to manage and lead the school effectively. It has been reported by numerous studies that managing and leading a school cannot be done by one person, thus the duties and responsibilities cannot be taken up by one person alone (Amels et al., 2021:744; Manundu et al., 2022:352; van Wyk, 2020:12).

Additionally, when SMT members delegate work to teachers, there is an increase in motivation. It seems that teachers see this as opportunities being created, and thus have a purpose and goal at school instead of not seeing a future. This finding is supported by researchers (Liu et al., 2023:2; Manundu et al., 2022:352) who reported that delegating responsibilities motivated teachers since it strengthens their recognition in the school environment.

6.2.6.4 School culture, expectations and vision

The findings indicate that a school culture is important, preferably a positive one since it acts as a safety system for teachers and SMT members. It was found by another studies (Salip & Quines, 2023:5; Shelbi & Alhosani, 2022:6656) that an effective and successful school culture is a method used by school leaders to guide and influence teachers and create an environment of support. Thus, it could be argued that a school culture is important since it will provide the necessary support for teachers. Moreover, an inclusive school culture will ensure everyone feels part of the school. This is supported by Tingle, Corrales and Peters (2019:4) who found that a successful school culture will ensure school leaders and teachers feel a sense of belonging. Besides school culture, the values that are set and encouraged in a school function as a foundation for school success both past, present and future. This is also supported by Shelbi and Alhosani (2022:6656) who report that a positive school culture will ensure that school goals and the achievement thereof comes easier and more effectively.

Teacher expectations are another reason and essential element of a school culture. Out of the school culture and values, teachers are aware of the expectations. This is aligned with the findings of Shelbi and Alhosani (2022:6656), as mentioned above, where school leaders use an effective school culture to set teacher expectations. This is beneficial not just for SMT members such as the school principal, but also for teachers because it provides direction and sets boundaries. Teachers are aware of what is expected of them and the direction they are heading. The findings also indicate that this would prevent any confusion amongst teachers. This is consistent with the findings of Joubert (2018:75) who reports that teacher expectations will give clarity to teachers moving in the direction and towards the goals everyone works towards.

Lastly, the vision of the school is crucially important. For one, the findings show that it acts as a guidance for SMT members in making decisions – especially difficult ones. Thus, any decisions, not just by the school leader, but the rest of the SMT and teachers, are made according to and aligned with the vision and mission of a school. This is supported by Hallinger (2011:129) and Joubert (2018:75) who found that a school's vision and goals will serve as a basis for making any schooling decisions. One finding also indicated that the vision and mission of the school needs to be

analysed and amended periodically. Besides guidance in decision-making, a school vision provides direction for the entire staff as well. Through this, everyone in the school is aware and understands what they are working towards. This was also found by Hitt and Tucker (2016:545) and Joubert (2018:75) who noted that having a vision and goals in a school ensures clarity and purpose for everyone in the school and serves as a predetermined direction. It was also reported by Hale (2022:102) that teachers' productivity and performance decrease negatively when there is no clear direction given.

6.2.6.5 The decision-making process

All the participants in this study agreed that it is necessary and crucial for SMT members to include teachers in the decision-making process. According to the findings, when teachers participate in the decision-making process, there is a sense of belonging and feeling part of the school process. Several studies found that teachers feel part of the school, involved, and as being recognised when part of the decision-making process (Hussain, Hamid & Arif, 2019:649; Shikokoti, Okoth & Chepkonga, 2023:28). This could lead to higher job satisfaction and motivation amongst teachers as well (Hussain et al., 2019:649; Shikokoti et al., 2023:28). Moreover, new ideas and solutions to challenges may be generated when teachers engage in the decision-making process. The findings indicated that school principals may not always have the answers or experience regarding certain issues, whereas teachers may have knowledge and experience on those issues. This is supported by other studies (Anna, 2019:68; Beyers & du Plessis, 2023:42) which reported that some teachers may have better information regarding a certain issue than a school leader, and that a school leader's experience and knowledge alone will not always be sufficient.

Not surprisingly, all participants also agreed that school principals should sometimes make certain decisions. Although most participants had no problem with this, according to the findings, they would still like to be informed about decisions being made. One of the reasons that came forth for autocratic decision-making is that sometimes too many opinions could lead to prolonged meetings and indecisiveness. This is similar to what Shikokoti et al. (2023:32) found that indecisiveness may occur

when school principals are not actively involved in the decision-making process and this could cause certain groups to overpower decisions.

Additionally, school principals do not always have the time to discuss and get input from staff regarding decisions and may require an immediate response. This is supported by Beyers and du Plessis (2023:43) who found that some situations require immediate action while others can be postponed. Another reason, as mentioned throughout this chapter, is that ultimately, school principals are responsible for everything that happens in a school and are held accountable. Another study also confirmed this, reporting that school principals' decision-making process is influenced since they must provide an account for various stakeholders (Wang, Hauseman & Pollock, 2022:42). Thus, some decisions will be made by the school principals without any staff input since they will know what is best for the school and learners even if it is an unpopular decision at times. This is similar to what Beyers and du Plessis (2023:41) found, that school principals' knowledge and experience will assist them in making autonomic decisions that are best for the school. Lastly, one school principal claimed that some decisions are non-negotiable, thus not requiring staff input, for example how many periods a teacher will teach. Similar findings were made by Beyers and du Plessis (2023:37) who stated that school principals' decisions are sometimes determined by rules in laws and policies.

An interesting finding regarding SMT members, especially school principals, and the accountability of the decision-making process was that of taking risks. The findings show that school principals cannot be considerable risk takers for the same reason discussed above, as they are the main party responsible for the effective teaching and learning in a school. Instead, the findings indicate that school principals should calculate risks and certain decisions meticulously. In the end, they must justify and explain to educational stakeholders such as the department, parents, learners and teachers. Surprisingly, it was found that the lower the rank and responsibility, the more the willingness was to take risks amongst the deputy principal, HOD and even teachers. It can be concluded that these staff members do not have the responsibility like the school principal and would not be held accountable in the same way as the principal. This finding aligns Beyers and du Plessis (2023:45) who found that teachers

are hardly ever punished or have been found to have transgressed legislation, whereas school principals sometime fear the repercussions of wrong decisions. Thus, school principals tend to be more careful with making decisions and taking risks since they are constrained by various laws and policies.

6.3 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The themes and sub-themes as identified and presented in Chapter 5 were interpreted and discussed in this chapter. In this way, it was an attempt to answer the research questions of this study. In the next chapter, the conclusions and recommendations of this study will be discussed. Also, recommendations for approaches to enhancing the EI skills of SMT members for improved leadership practices will be provided, as well as suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary research question for this study was formulated as follows: “*How can approaches to enhance the EI skills of SMT members result in improved leadership practices?*” To address the main research question, five secondary research questions were formulated, as follows:

- What are the key educational challenges faced by SMTs that requires appropriate EI skills and leadership practices?
- Which EI skills are most appropriate for SMT members for improving leadership practices?
- How can EI skills assist SMT members in different leadership styles?
- Which leadership practices are deemed crucial for SMT members?
- How can EI skills assist SMT members with and improve leadership practices?

The data collected was discussed and interpreted in Chapter 6. The findings, conclusions and recommendations that are presented in this chapter are based on the data in Chapter 6. The aim of this chapter is therefore to provide a comprehensive understanding and conclusion to this study. Before commencing with Chapter 7, a brief review of the preceding chapters is presented next.

7.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 provided an introduction and background to this study. Thereafter, the research questions and objectives were presented followed by the research methodology used in this study. This chapter concluded with a brief discussion on the quality assurance and ethical considerations applied throughout the study.

Chapter 2 reviewed theoretical models and frameworks of EI and leadership styles and practices. These included four EI models of leading researchers in the field, namely Goleman, Mayer and Salovey, Bar-On and Petrides and Furnham. Afterwards, approaches to enhance EI skills according to literature were discussed. The last

section presented an overview of leadership styles and different leadership practices for effective school management and leadership.

Chapter 3 continued exploring literature regarding EI skills and leadership practices. A detailed and thorough analysis of the SMT duties and responsibilities was presented as well as general educational challenges they encounter. Thereafter, a detailed discussion was presented on how EI skills and leadership practices complement each other, and how it may assist SMT members in more effective school management and leadership.

Chapter 4 consisted of the research methodology used for this study. It provided a detailed description and discussion on the interpretivist research paradigm, qualitative research approach, and phenomenological research design which was used for this study. How data was collected and analysed was also presented in this chapter. The last section of the chapter contained a detailed discussion of how the quality of the research was assured and how ethical considerations were applied.

Chapter 5 presented the empirical data collected from individual interviews with SMT members, focus groups interviews with teachers, and open-ended questionnaires with retired principals.

Chapter 6 included a critical and detailed discussion and interpretation of important findings. These findings were discussed and interpreted with relevant literature and under themes such as presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 7 provides a summary of the chapters, conclusion of the findings, and recommendations regarding the enhancement of EI skills in SMT members for improved leadership practices.

7.3 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this research, an attempt was made to provide answers to the main research question (*cf.* 1.3.1, *cf.* 7.1): “*How can approaches to enhance the EI skills of SMT-members result in improved leadership practices?*” To answer this main research questions, five sub-research questions were formulated. The findings and conclusions

are presented in the following sections based on the four sub-research questions (cf. 1.3.1, cf. 7.1).

7.3.1 Research findings and conclusions based on the first research sub-question

What are the key educational challenges faced by SMTs that requires appropriate EI skills and leadership practices?

Investigating and determining what educational leadership challenges SMT members encounter in their respective roles may pave the way forward to indicate the necessary and appropriate EI skills as well as leadership practices. Through this, these educational leadership challenges may be managed more effectively or, in some cases, even prevented. Thus, the following educational challenges that SMTs encounter were identified from the data collected.

Regarding the implementation of change in schools it was revealed, firstly, that SMT members understand the inevitability of change and to avoid the resistance thereto. Secondly, SMT members seemed to have no difficulty in implementing change in their schools (cf. 5.3.1.1). In general, implementing change may be a tiresome and arduous task for some school leaders (cf. 3.3.1). However, the findings revealed a few suggestions and/or methods that assisted SMT members in implementing change successfully and without heavy resistance from other educational stakeholders. These included effective communication regarding the anticipated change, support from SMT members during the implementation of change, practicing democratic leadership, and being open to suggestions from other education stakeholders (cf. 5.3.1.1). Based on these suggestions, it can be concluded that EI skills, working with people, and leadership practices may assist SMT members in implementing change. For example, social awareness such as identifying emotions in others (cf. 5.3.3, 5.3.3.1), self-management such as emotional regulation and adaptability (cf. 5.3.4, 5.3.4.1, 5.3.4.3), or relationship management such as building bonds, conflict management and motivation (cf. 5.3.5, 5.3.5.1, 5.3.5.2, 5.3.5.3) are all EI skills and sub-skills that can assist SMT members in implementing change with staff members. As mentioned earlier, this research question aimed at exploring educational leadership challenges

for SMT members, thus how EI skills may assist in dealing with these and how EI skills may assist with leadership practices will be discussed later.

Other educational leadership challenges included dealing with the Department of Education and district officials (cf. 5.3.1.2), principal transitioning (cf. 5.3.1.4), parents (cf. 5.3.1.4) and managing teachers' workloads (cf. 5.3.1.5). Regarding the Department of Education and district officials, it was found that SMT members, especially principals since they are considered the direct channel with the department, experience an overload of administrative tasks which, at times, includes ridiculous timelines (cf. 5.3.1.2 (i)). To add, SMT members shared their frustration with delayed feedback from the department officials (cf. 5.3.1.2 (ii)). Additionally, principals must deal with unrealistic academic expectations which puts pressure on their teachers (cf. 5.3.1.2 (iii)). It was found that these challenges with the Department of Education may hinder SMT members from their main objective as teachers which is ensuring quality teaching and learning. Additionally, principal transitioning was an interesting finding from this study (cf. 5.3.1.3). Without any intention from the researcher, it was found that two schools who participated in the study had acting school principals. It was revealed in this research that the prolonged appointment of school principals causes additional and unnecessary challenges for the school. Examples of these from the research were uncertainty from teachers, lack of implementation of new ideas or plans since everyone waits for the official principal and increased workload which has a knock-on effect to the rest of the staff because, technically, there is one fewer staff member (cf. 5.3.1.3). The main challenge with parents were lack of involvement, which leads to other academic challenges with learners, and unrealistic expectations (cf. 5.3.1.4). Lastly, workload distribution also caused some problems for SMT members such as stress and conflicting situations since they are responsible for distributing work equally and fairly amongst teachers (cf. 5.3.1.5).

It was also noted that most educational leadership challenges require SMT members to constantly work with people. Thus, it can be concluded that most educational leadership challenges SMT members encounter require people skills, such as certain EI skills and leadership practices regarding people management, to ensure these challenges can be addressed effectively. This was especially reiterated under the sub-

theme of managing these challenges (cf. 5.3.1.2 (iv)) from departmental officials as well as dealing with parents (cf. 5.3.1.4). The most notable finding was that SMT members are required to establish and have good relationships with different educational stakeholders. Hence, the necessity of EI skills which improve relationships (cf. 3.4) resulting in improved leadership practices. How EI skills may improve leadership practices amongst SMT members and managing these challenges will be discussed in more detail under the fourth sub-research question. As mentioned earlier, this research question aimed at exploring and identifying the common educational leadership challenges SMT members encounter which can act as an indicator for the necessary and appropriate EI skills and leadership practices.

7.3.2 Research findings and conclusions based on the second research sub-question

Which EI skills are most appropriate for SMT members for improved leadership practices?

Under this research sub-question, the aim was to present and answer which EI skills the participants deemed as crucial for improved leadership practices. The main EI skills are categorised and found under four themes which focus on the four main EI domains, namely self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship management (cf. table 5.2). Each theme and its relating sub-EI skills as identified from the research will be discussed.

7.3.2.1 EI skills for SMT members for self-awareness

Under the first theme, three notable EI sub-skills were identified, namely self-assessment, assertiveness, and emotional self-awareness (cf. 5.3.2). SMT members understood the meaning of self-assessment and its importance for a school leader. The empirical findings indicated that SMT members do regular self-assessment since they were confidently aware and understood their strengths and weaknesses based on various explanations and experiences of situations they shared (cf. 5.3.2.1). It is also noteworthy that self-assessment is one of the closely related methods of self-evaluation to enhance EI skills for individuals (cf. 2.2.4.3). Nevertheless, it can be concluded that self-assessment is a crucial EI skill for SMT members. By doing self-

assessment, SMT members will be aware of their strengths which may assist them in making decisions and taking on challenges aligned with their strengths. On the other hand, being aware of their weaknesses may make SMT members aware of which areas need to be developed. Also, SMT members will know when a situation or challenge requires the assistance of other team members since it may be one of their weaknesses (cf. 5.3.2.1).

The second EI sub-skill for self-awareness is assertiveness. The findings conclude that assertiveness is more common under higher leadership positions such as principals and deputy principals (cf. 5.3.2.2). The reason for this may be that, in these positions, it is required more from these respective SMT members since they are more often required to be assertive – saying what they want and need based on the needs of the school. They are usually the main person in charge, thus dealing with the tough questions since they are ultimately held responsible (cf. 5.3.2.2). Some SMT members might find it difficult to be assertive, however, the findings indicate that when SMT members, such as the school principal, have policies in place, it makes it easier (cf. 5.3.2.2). For example, a code of conduct for teachers or conflict procedures makes it easier for school principals to address teachers when they overstep boundaries (cf. 5.3.2.2).

Emotional self-awareness, the last EI skill under self-awareness, was revealed to be crucial for SMT members (cf. 5.3.2.3). One reason for this is that SMT members can be their true self which has been shown to be appreciated by teachers (cf. 5.3.2.3). Furthermore, this could also lead to better and increased support from teachers, especially when SMT members are aware of any negative and/or strong emotions. Additionally, it was argued that when SMT members are more aware of their emotions, they will also be more aware and understand how it may affect the people around them, especially negative and/or strong emotions (cf. 5.3.2.3). Thus, it can be concluded that emotional self-awareness is deemed a critical EI skill for SMT members since they will be more aware of their emotions which means they can manage them more appropriately – one cannot manage an emotion if they are not aware of said emotion.

7.3.2.2 EI skills for SMT members for social awareness

The second theme of EI skills for SMT members, social awareness, included two crucial EI sub-skills, namely identifying emotions and empathy. Regarding identifying emotions in others, the findings indicated that one factor may determine how well SMT members can identify the emotions in others and that was relationship management (cf. 5.3.3.1). It is believed that when SMT members have a good relationship with teachers, it is easier to identify when something is wrong, whereas when a SMT member is not familiar with a teacher, it may be more difficult to notice or identify when something is off (cf. 5.3.3.1). Additionally, it was indicated that it is a crucial skill for SMT members since it will allow them to respond more appropriately and effectively. For example, if a teacher is feeling sad or depressed and a SMT member can identify that, more support can be given.

One of the key findings under empathy is that SMT members can gain teachers' trust. Also, it was indicated that when SMT members can be empathetic, teachers are more willing and open to approach them and discuss any concerns or issues, especially difficult ones, with SMT members (cf. 5.3.3.2). However, being too empathetic has also shown to be a problem for some SMT members since teachers may take advantage thereof leading to unfair treatment and dissatisfaction under other teachers (cf. 5.3.3.2). Therefore, empathy is a crucial EI skill for SMT members, however a balance needs to be found between strict, fair, and empathetic.

7.3.2.3 EI skills for SMT members for self-management

Under EI skills for SMT for self-management, the first EI sub-skill is emotional regulation. This builds on and intertwines with emotional self-awareness (cf. 5.3.2.3). As mentioned, and supported by empirical findings from this research, SMT members would not be able to regulate their emotions if they cannot first identify and be aware of their emotions (cf. 5.3.2.3). Hence, emotional regulation came forth as a critical EI skill for SMT members. This is shown by a very strong quote from one of the participants, saying “... *they work with people and before doing that you must be able to work with yourself*” (cf. 5.3.4.1). It was shown that when SMT members can work on and manage their own emotions, there may be more benefits in the success and

effectiveness of managing difficult situations and challenges (cf. 5.3.4.1). Consequently, based on the scholarly (cf. 3.4) and empirical findings (cf. 5.3.4.1), when SMT members can regulate their own emotions, effective and analytical decisions are made, situations are more calmly and rationally managed, and their focus on the school goals are not hindered by unmanageable emotions. Lastly, SMT members can also avoid, detach from, or ignore negative emotions which may otherwise negatively impact the school environment (cf. 5.3.4.1).

With self-management comes optimism, resilience, and effective management of criticism (cf. 5.3.4.2). Under this EI sub-skills, it is known that SMT members will face difficulties and challenging situations both professionally and personally. However, it was revealed that with self-management as an EI skill, SMT members find it easier to manage these difficulties more effectively and appropriately (cf. 5.3.4.2). This again relates strongly to the previous EI sub-skill of emotional regulation (cf. 5.3.4.1). When SMT members can regulate their emotions, especially in challenging situations which tempt negative emotions, there is clearer focus on the goals and determination in working towards them (cf. 5.3.4.2). Additionally, it was indicated that SMT members embrace these challenges and difficulties since it leads to growth and development both mentally and emotionally (cf. 5.3.4.2).

The third EI sub-skill that came forth is adaptability. Although several SMT members honestly admitted to being resistant to change, they showed great understanding on the importance of being adaptable (cf. 5.3.4.3). Additionally, the empirical findings revealed that it is usually older and more experienced participants who are not willing to adapt. One reason for this is that they are set in their ways and they know what is working, thus they believe it is not necessary to change what already works (cf. 5.3.4.3). A few suggestions came forth to assist with adaptability, such as planning, analysing the situation, looking at the options and solutions, and possible risks (cf. 5.3.4.3). Interestingly, it was also found that SMT members should not be too adaptable and flexible which may lead to being undecisive and losing teachers' trust (cf. 5.3.4.3).

The last EI sub-skill under self-management is balancing work and personal responsibilities. Although this might rather seem like a leadership practice, it was

decided that it would be themed under EI since it deals mostly with the emotional aspect. This relates to what the scholars refer to as stress management in their models of EI (cf. 2.2). Nevertheless, the findings indicate that it is crucial for SMT members to find the balance emotionally between work and their personal lives (cf. 5.3.4.4). It was suggested that SMT members compartmentalise – dealing with and leaving work issues at work and the same with personal issues. If not, the one sphere may interfere with the other or one aspect may be neglected, with implications such as increased stress, pressure, and burnout among SMT members (cf. 5.3.4.4).

7.3.2.4 EI skills for SMT members for relationship management

The last EI skills for SMT members found in this study was based on relationship management. The first EI sub-skill under relationship management is building bonds. It was found by both SMT members and teachers that building bonds for SMT members is a critical skill (cf. 5.3.5.1). One finding showed that this was particularly important for SMT members in leadership positions who are frequently working with and managing people (cf. 5.3.5.1). Surprisingly, one finding revealed that relationships with staff may determine the success of a school principal (cf. 5.3.5.1). Building strong and healthy relationships with teachers may assist SMT members in dealing with them in different ways and situations. Moreover, knowing different people results in getting familiar with their personalities, strengths, and weaknesses and may assist SMT members in managing staff more effectively and appropriately (cf. 5.3.5.1). Additionally, one advantage of good relationships according to the findings from this research was an increase in support from teachers (cf. 5.3.5.1).

Conflict in schools is inevitable (cf. 3.4.13, cf. 6.2.5.2), and so conflict management as an EI sub-skill is critical for SMT members to ensure effective management in schools (cf. 5.3.5.2). Conflict resolution strategies vary and will depend on different situations, and the findings from this research indicate some methods used by SMT members. These included listening to the other person's side, being fair, focusing on the facts and not the person, and dealing with it at the appropriate time – for example, when emotions run too high, dealing with it the next day when parties can think rationally again (cf. 5.3.5.2). When conflict can be resolved and managed effectively, the findings

revealed that it may lead to growth, innovative solutions, ideas, and different perspectives which all may assist in achieving the school's goals (cf. 5.3.5.2 (i)).

The findings showed that SMT members require the EI skill motivation. When SMT members can motivate and encourage their staff and team members, it may increase their work productivity, job satisfaction and determination in achieving the school goals (cf. 5.3.5.3). Although a few SMT members indicated that there are sometimes very challenging times which makes it difficult to motivate their staff, knowing and being familiar with the staff will make it easier (cf. 5.3.5.3). This EI skill relates strongly with that of building bonds, because when SMT members are familiar with their staff, they are more likely to be aware what will work and when motivation and encouragement may be needed. Additionally, teachers feel more supported when SMT members take time to motivate and encourage teachers, especially during challenging times (cf. 5.3.5.3).

Another crucial EI skill for SMT members is the ability to develop staff members (cf. 5.3.5.4). It was noted by several SMT members that it is necessary to develop the rest of the staff to ensure someone can successfully take on the responsibilities whenever needed. Besides this necessity, it was also revealed that when SMT members develop staff members, it resulted in motivation, encouragement, empowerment and commitment towards the school and its goals among teachers (cf. 5.3.5.4).

Teamwork is the last EI sub-skill under relationship management which is deemed necessary for SMT members (cf. 5.2.5.5). Several participants revealed that it is impossible for one person to manage and lead the school effectively, hence the necessity of teamwork. It was indicated that school goals can only be achieved when everyone is working together towards those goals (cf. 5.2.5.5). This is because various strengths, expertise and knowledge is brought to the table when dealing with challenging situations rather than one person dealing with it alone. Additionally, it was concluded that teamwork also increases motivation, support, and determination amongst staff members (cf. 5.2.5.5).

7.3.3 Research findings and conclusions based on the third research sub-question

How can EI skills assist SMT members in different leadership styles?

Although the findings of this research suggest that SMT members adapt their leadership style, they should still have a core leadership style from which they operate (cf. 5.3.4.3). Nevertheless, whatever leadership style a SMT members is prone to, the EI skills found in this study (cf. 5.3.2, 5.3.3, 5.3.4, 5.3.5, 7.3.2) can assist and/or improve SMT members' leadership styles. In the next sub-sections, the leadership styles according to literature (cf. 2.3) will be briefly discussed in relation to EI skills.

7.3.3.1 Transformational leadership

The first leadership style, transformational leadership (cf. 2.3.3.1), refers to SMT members' ability to support teachers' awareness of the school's interest and help to develop their own personal interests. There are four aspects for transformational leadership (cf. 2.3.3.1). The first, intellectual stimulus, can be improved by EI skills such as social awareness (cf. 5.3.3), identifying emotions (cf. 5.3.3.1) and empathy (cf. 5.3.3.2), where SMT members encourage and promote innovation and creativity amongst teachers. This could be done through these EI skills which will enable SMT members to be more aware of the emotions of others, to seek their perspectives and encourage their views and different solutions. The second aspect, individual consideration (cf. 2.3.3.1), can be assisted by EI skills such as self-awareness (cf. 5.3.2), relationship management (cf. 5.3.5) and building bonds (cf. 5.3.5.1). Through this, SMT members can more accurately identify needs and address problems with teachers individually.

Idealised influence is the third aspect (cf. 2.3.3.1), thus various EI skills such as assertiveness (cf. 5.3.2.2), empathy (cf. 5.3.3.2), emotional regulation (cf. 5.3.4.1), adaptability (cf. 5.3.4.3), building bonds (cf. 5.3.5.1), and conflict management (cf. 5.3.5.2) can assist SMT members here. Through these skills, SMT members can become more respected, approachable, seen as more understanding and open-minded and setting an example. The last aspect, inspirational motivation (cf. 2.3.3.1), will mostly be improved with EI skills such as empathy (cf. 5.3.3.2), adaptability (cf.

5.3.4.3), building bonds (cf. 5.3.5.1) and motivation (cf. 5.3.5.3). Through these, SMT members can motivate team members, allow autonomy and mistakes to occur through empathy and adaptability, and encourage teachers to improve their performance and potential.

7.3.3.2 Transactional leadership

Although transactional leadership is mostly task-oriented (cf. 2.3.3.2) and EI skills are referred to as people skills, it can still assist in getting people to achieve and complete the tasks. There are two dimensions of this leadership style. The first, contingent reward (cf. 2.3.3.2), where SMT members can set clear goals and an agreed upon award can be assist with EI skills such as social awareness (cf. 5.3.3), building bonds (cf. 5.3.5.1) and motivation (cf. 5.3.5.3) where negotiation can take place more effectively, and teachers can be motivated more effectively. The second dimension, active management (cf. 2.3.3.2), can be improved with EI skills such as assertiveness (cf. 5.3.2.2), empathy (cf. 5.3.3.2), adaptability (cf. 5.3.4.3) and conflict management (cf. 5.3.5.3). These might assist SMT members with active management which requires them to intervene when they notice things may turn for the worse, give constructive feedback, and management of any conflict that may arise during the process.

7.3.3.3 Instructional leadership

As mentioned in Chapter 2, instructional leadership was developed particularly for school leaders (cf. 2.3.3.3). Moreover, instructional leadership is aligned with the leadership practices proposed after years of research (cf. 2.4.) which include setting a vision, managing the instructional programme, and promoting the school climate. How EI skills can assist and improve these areas for SMT members will be discussed in detail with the fifth research sub-question. In short, these leadership practices entail constant and frequent collaboration correspondence with different educational stakeholders such as the SGB, parents, teachers, non-teaching staff, learners, and the wider community. Therefore, various EI skills from self-awareness (cf. 5.3.2), social awareness (cf. 5.3.3), self-management (cf. 5.3.4) and relationship management (cf.

5.3.5) can assist and improve different areas in this leadership style and leadership practices.

7.3.3.4 Situational leadership

In short, this leadership styles requires SMT members to adapt and practice leadership in different situations (cf. 2.3.3.4). One may argue that adaptability (cf. 5.3.4.3) can play a key role as an EI skill in assisting with this leadership style. However, other EI skills will also play a critical role, such as self-awareness (cf. 5.3.2), social awareness (cf. 5.3.3), self-management (cf. 5.3.4) and relationship management (cf. 5.3.5) since SMT members are required to read situations, people, and their emotions in different situations. Through this, it will assist SMT members to act and respond more effectively and appropriately.

Additionally, situational leadership has four sub-styles, namely instruction, consultation, participation, and delegation (cf. 2.3.3.4). Thus, whatever sub-style the SMT member wishes to use as an approach in a situation, various EI skills can assist and improve the chosen approach. For instance, an instructional approach where an SMT member takes on a more directive approach can be assisted with EI skills such as assertiveness (cf. 5.3.2.2) and conflict management (cf. 5.3.4.2). Through these skills, SMT members can say what is right and necessary as well as manage any conflict that may arise effectively and functionally. The second approach, consultation, can be assisted with EI skills such as social awareness (cf. 5.3.3), empathy (5.3.3.2), building bonds (cf. 5.3.5.1), and teamwork (cf. 5.3.5.5) since the SMT member can identify when the teacher is willing but requires appropriate intervention and guidance. By participating, the third approach, the EI skills such as building bonds (cf. 5.3.5.1), motivation (cf. 5.3.5.3) and teamwork (cf. 5.3.5.5) can assist SMT members where effective relationship building skills are required since the teacher might be unwilling or insecure. Lastly, delegation, where a SMT member can leave the teacher to take responsibility, can occur with the assistance of EI skills such as adaptability (cf. 5.3.4.3), motivation (cf. 5.3.5.3), and staff development (cf. 5.3.5.4). Through these EI skills, the SMT member is only required to adapt when necessary, motivating differently or only when necessary, since the teacher will already be motivated to

complete the task, and develop the teacher which ultimately means the teacher will be equipped to be left and trusted to act alone.

7.3.3.5 Distributed leadership

As explained and discussed in Chapter 2, distributed leadership requires SMT members to share responsibilities (cf. 2.3.3.5). Thus, various EI skills can assist SMT members predominantly using this approach, such as assertiveness (cf. 5.3.2) for ensuring effective and appropriate communication, when necessary; social awareness (cf. 5.3.3) and building bonds (cf. 5.3.5.1) for delegating accurately and appropriately according to the needs and talents of teachers; teamwork (cf. 5.3.5.5) since everyone is still working together as a team towards a common goal, and staff development (cf. 5.3.5.4) to develop teachers effectively so that distribution of responsibilities can take place successfully.

It can be concluded that numerous EI skills can assist SMT members in various leadership styles. It is also vital for SMT members to know that the EI skill self-assessment (cf. 5.3.2.1) can assist in general with any leadership style since identifying and being aware of one's strengths and weaknesses can assist SMT members in various aspects of the leadership styles. In the following research sub-question, leadership practices that came forth from the research are discussed.

7.3.4 Research findings and conclusions based on the fourth research sub-question

Which leadership practices are deemed crucial for SMT members?

The following empirical findings indicated what SMT members from this research regard as important leadership practices for effective school management and leadership.

As expected, communication is a critical leadership practice for SMT members. One principal claimed that communication will determine the success of a school (cf. 5.3.6.1). It is claimed in this research that ineffective communication will result in teachers being confused, divided, excluded, uncomfortable and unsure of what is

expected. When communication is effective and frequent from SMT members, teachers are aware of what is expected, there is clarity, and it will ensure everyone works towards the same goals of the institution (cf. 5.3.6.1). Additionally, in the research, communication was indicated as crucial in that teamwork, cohesion, and trust amongst staff members increased (cf. 5.3.6.1). The next leadership practice to be discussed is autonomy.

To practice autonomy is crucial for both the SMT member and teachers (cf. 5.3.6.2). When autonomy is granted, it was found that teachers' trust in their leaders increased. Moreover, it is claimed that teachers' confidence, self-esteem, motivation, innovation, and self-efficacy will increase and develop when they are given the opportunity to lead, manage and take on responsibilities on their own (cf. 5.3.6.2). Allowing innovation amongst teachers is regarded as important for SMT members (cf. 5.3.6.2). It was found that when SMT members encouraged innovation, it resulted in new ideas, different approaches to situations, different perspectives, and novel solutions. Additionally, it was claimed that this leads to teachers' growth and development (cf. 5.3.6.2).

Continuing with leadership practices, delegation was another essential skill for SMT members. This strongly correlates with teamwork, as discussed earlier (cf. 5.2.5.5, cf. 7.3.2.4), since it is impossible for an SMT member to manage and deal with everything. Although a few SMT members in the study admitted that delegation is not easy since they know when they do something themselves, it will be correct, it is still very much necessary. Without delegation from SMT members, it is indicated that they will overwork themselves which leads to an increase in stress and pressure and higher risk of burnout (cf. 5.3.6.3). Additionally, it was claimed that when delegation occurs, there is an increase in job satisfaction, motivation, commitment, and determination from teachers towards the school and its goals (cf. 5.3.6.3).

One of the important steps for establishing a well and functional school culture is to ensure safety for teachers. It was found that SMT members need to ensure the school culture is positive and effective (cf. 5.3.6.4). By doing this, teachers feel safe (mentally and emotionally), included, a sense of belonging, and more supported. Moreover, for SMT members, a school culture can be used to influence teachers positively and guide

them towards the school goals. Thus, when SMT members can create a positive and flourishing school culture, teachers will also be aware of what is expected from them (cf. 5.3.6.4).

Additionally, school vision is regarded as just as critical, thus SMT members need to be able to set a school vision and encourage staff members to work towards that (cf. 5.3.6.4). The most critical point that was made for school vision is that it will provide direction and purpose for everyone in the institution (cf. 5.3.6.4). Without a school vision, there is a lack of purpose which may affect work productivity and satisfaction. Additionally, it was also claimed that a school vision will assist and guide SMT members as well as teachers in decisions regarding the needs of a school. When everyone is aware and on board with what they are working towards, the decisions, especially during difficult and challenging times, will be aligned towards achieving the goals and vision of a school (cf. 5.3.6.4). It can thus be concluded that SMT members need to be able to set a vision for the school collaboratively with different educational stakeholders.

The last leadership practice is SMT members' process of decision-making. It was revealed from this research that decisions should be made collectively, especially when it may affect other staff. By using this approach, SMT members may be exposed to better views, opinions, and solutions (cf. 5.3.6.5). However, it was also revealed and recommended that SMT members, especially principals, at times make certain decisions autocratically (cf. 5.3.6.5). The reason for this is that too many opinions and views may be a problem at times resulting in indecisiveness, postponement and confusion. Thus, SMT members need to be able to involve necessary stakeholders in decisions, but also be able to know when certain decisions need to be made by them alone. In the end, the school principal is responsible and will be held accountable for the decisions being made in a school, and they mostly know what is best for the school (cf. 5.3.6.5).

7.3.5 Research findings and conclusions based on the fifth research sub-question

How can EI skills assist SMT members with and improve leadership practices?

This research question was aimed at investigating and analysing how EI skills can assist SMT members with leadership practices. The leadership practices to be discussed and how it can be improved with EI skills are the following, based on the conceptual framework portrayed in Chapter 3: setting a vision (cf. 2.4.1, cf. 5.3.6.4, cf. 7.3.3), building relationships (cf. 2.4.1, cf. 5.3.5), developing people (cf. 2.4.2, cf. 5.3.5), and implementation (cf. 2.4.6). Each EI domain found in this study with its underlying EI skills will be discussed with relation to the different leadership practices. The four main EI domains from this research that will be focused on, as depicted in the conceptual framework, are self-awareness (cf. 5.3.2, cf. 7.3.2.1), social awareness (cf. 5.3.3, cf. 7.3.2.2), self-management (cf. 5.3.4, cf. 7.3.2.3), and relationship management (cf. 5.3.5, cf. 7.3.2.2).

7.3.5.1 Setting a vision

When SMT members can do accurate self-assessment (cf. 5.3.2.1) and understand their strengths and weaknesses, it may assist and improve leadership practices such as setting a vision. Setting a vision requires SMT members to ensure everyone is on board and work towards it (cf. 2.4.1, cf. 5.3.6.4), thus they can use their emotional strengths to work collaboratively, encourage staff members, and ensure effective teamwork. On the other hand, being aware of weaknesses, especially those that may negatively affect or compromise the school's vision and goals, can assist SMT members to identify and work on them (cf. 5.3.2.1). Setting a vision also requires SMT members to set high expectations and this can be done through the EI skills of building bonds (cf. 5.3.5.1), motivation (cf. 5.3.5.3) and staff development (cf. 5.3.5.4).

Assertiveness (cf. 5.3.2.2) may assist SMT members in communicating the vision and goals of the school more appropriately and effectively. With improving assertiveness as an EI skill, SMT members will be able to say what they want and need based on the needs of the school. Thus, stronger leadership may occur where SMT members will not be easily or negatively influenced. Additionally, the EI skill adaptability under self-management (cf. 5.3.4.3) may also assist SMT members since working towards the vision and goals of a school will encounter numerous challenges and problems requiring adaptability from the SMT.

Other EI skills under relationship management (cf. 5.3.5), such as building bonds, conflict management, and motivation are crucial for ensuring a school vision is set and followed. By building bonds (cf. 5.3.5.1), SMT members will receive more support and loyalty from staff in working towards the school's vision and goals. On the other hand, conflict may arise between people and/or with SMT members whilst working towards the goals of a school. Thus, to manage conflict effectively and functionally without compromising the vision and goals of a school will be required by SMT members (cf. 5.3.5.2). To add, motivation (cf. 5.3.5.3) may improve SMT members' ability to encourage staff in working towards the school's vision and goals especially during challenging times.

7.3.5.2 Building relationships

SMT members are required to build relationships as a leadership practice. This strongly relates to most of the EI skills under relationship management, such as building relationships (cf. 5.3.5.1), conflict management (cf. 5.3.5.2) and motivation (cf. 5.3.5.3). However, other EI skill may also assist and improve SMT members' ability to build relationships with different educational stakeholders, such as self-awareness (cf. 5.3.2), social awareness (cf. 5.3.3), identifying others' emotions (cf. 5.3.3.1), empathy (cf. 5.3.3.2) and emotional self-regulation (cf. 5.3.4.1).

Self-awareness will ensure SMT members are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and engage in self-assessment (cf. 5.3.2.1), which can be utilised to improve relationships. For example, if a SMT member is aware that motivation is a strength of theirs, it can be utilised to motivate staff members which may result in improved relationships (cf. 5.3.5.3). When SMT members can identify others' emotions accurately, it will allow them to respond and act appropriately and effectively (cf. 5.3.3.1). Thus, building relationships with these individuals may be easier which will result in more support and trust in SMT members (cf. 5.3.3.1). Additionally, when SMT members can be empathetic their relationships may become stronger since there will be an increase in trust and openness from teachers (cf. 6.3.3.2). As mentioned earlier under social awareness (cf. 7.3.2.2), empathy will ensure that SMT members are more approachable and can be trusted which are evidently key factors for teachers to establish relationships. Unsurprisingly, relationships cannot be built without

communication, thus with improved EI skills, communication from SMT members will be more appropriate, considerate, and effective (cf. 5.3.6.1). Lastly, emotional regulation (cf. 5.3.4.1) will ensure SMT members can manage their emotions appropriately, especially negative and strong emotions, before they can damage healthy relationship with teachers.

7.3.5.3 Staff development

It is important to note that one of the EI sub-skills according to scholarly (cf. 2.2.2.2) and empirical (cf. 5.3.5.4) findings is seen as a leadership practice as well (cf. 2.4.2, cf. 2.4.6). Staff development is an EI skill under relationship management (cf. 5.3.5). SMT members are required and have the responsibility to develop staff members. By enhancing certain EI skills, it may assist and improve SMT members' ability to develop the people working under them. The EI skill of teamwork may assist SMT members in developing staff members. Through teamwork (cf. 5.3.5.5) staff members are exposed to different experiences and knowledge. To add, EI skills may also assist SMT members with other leadership practices found in this research, such as autonomy (cf. 5.3.6.2), delegation (cf. 5.3.6.3), and shared decision-making (cf. 5.3.6.5). Through these practices, staff members can be developed since they will be part of the process and assume new responsibilities which may result in empowerment and development. For teachers to develop and grow professionally, they are also required to receive the necessary support. Thus, EI skills such as identifying others' emotions (cf. 5.3.3.1), empathy (cf. 5.3.3.2), emotional regulation (cf. 5.3.4.1), adaptability (cf. 5.3.4.3), conflict management (cf. 5.3.5.2), and motivation (cf. 5.3.5.3) may assist SMT members in providing the necessary support and guidance to teachers during empowerment and development.

7.3.5.4 Implementation

The leadership practice implementation requires SMT members to establish a positive school culture, make collaborative decisions, innovation, leading across school boundaries, delegation, and autonomy (cf. 2.4.6). Additionally, it also requires the involvement and influence of SMB members (cf. 2.4.6). Thus, with necessary and appropriate EI skills, these leadership practices may improve the overall

implementation of teaching and learning in a school. EI skills such as assertiveness (cf. 5.3.2.2) play a critical role in the leadership practice of implementation since SMT members are required to say what is needed and wanted regarding the school's needs. To add, this will have to be done in an appropriate manner where EI skills such as identifying emotions in others (cf. 5.3.3.1), empathy (cf. 5.3.3.2), and emotional regulation (cf. 5.3.4.1) will assist SMT members in implementing the teaching and learning effectively.

Additionally, adaptability (cf. 5.3.4.3) will ensure SMT members can embrace any sudden changes that are required in the implementation of leadership practices and/or changes to achieve the school's goal. Thus, optimism (cf. 5.3.4.2) as an EI skill will also ensure SMT members have a positive perspective during demanding situations and keep them focused and determined on the goals of the school. Since SMT members, especially the principal, are required to be directly involved with the implementation of teaching and learning, a balance of work and personal lives (cf. 5.3.4.4) under the EI domain self-management (cf. 5.3.4) will play a critical role. Through this, one sphere of life does not negatively influence the other, or one is not being neglected which may result in more stress and pressure for SMT members. Moreover, conflict management (cf. 5.3.5.2) will be necessary since a lot of educational stakeholders are involved which may lead to differences in perspectives and misunderstandings. If not effectively and functionally resolved, it may hinder the implementation of effective teaching and learning. The following recommendations are based on the findings.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are made in this section to assist SMT members and teachers to enhance their EI skills for improved leadership practices:

- Educational leadership challenges may become overburdened, leading to increased stress and pressure on SMT members. Thus, it is recommended that SMT members practice delegation and distribute management and leadership responsibilities and operate as a collective, including teachers.

- It is recommended that policy documents, such as the PAM and the Standard, are re-evaluated to specify more clearly what strategies should be implemented to manage educational challenges.
- SMT members may lack the necessary training for leadership positions, thus it is recommended that the Department of Education should provide training, short-courses and/or programmes for SMT members based specifically on the positions and requirement of a principal, deputy principal or HOD.
- It is also recommended that the Department of Education identify or propose workshops, courses and/or training from an early stage for upcoming SMT members, teachers, willing parties and those heading towards leadership and management positions such as principals, deputy principals and/or HODs. The reason being that it will always be teachers who will start at the bottom, post level one, and work themselves up in these positions.
- SMT members as well as teachers working towards a leadership and management position are also encouraged to attend additional seminars, workshops and/or courses on specific EI skills and leadership practices.
- SMT members are encouraged to do self-assessment and/or self-evaluation since it may lead to better utilisation of one's strengths and identifying areas of improvement. Since there is an extensive number of EI skills, these self-assessments and self-evaluations may identify specific areas of improvement. Thus, SMT members can attend workshops, seminars, and/or courses on specific EI skills.
- Training programmes, courses, seminars, and workshops may not be enough, thus SMT members are encouraged to function as mentors and guide upcoming teachers in these leadership and management roles.
- EI skills can also be enhanced and developed with exposure, thus SMT members and teachers are encouraged to engage in rather than avoid these situations which require specific EI skills and leadership practices.
- SMT members, especially principals, are encouraged to set school goals and vision collaboratively. These should also be re-evaluated and analysed every few years. It is recommended to use a five-year cycle to analyse the school goals and vision and make the necessary adjustments. Moreover, SMT

members and the principal should include all staff members, including teachers, when planning and setting the school goals and vision.

7.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research revealed different areas that justify further research. Examples of these are:

- Mixed-method research approach where the EI skills and leadership practices of SMT members could be quantified – showing the relationship and importance of different EI skills and leadership practices.
- Quantitative or mixed methods may also assist in covering the vast amount of EI skills and leadership practices as identified by scholarly findings. For example, a closed-ended questionnaire and/or survey that can include all EI skills and leadership practices may reveal different and/or other important skills and practices.
- The development of an EI skills programme for the enhancement of SMT members' EI skills.
- The perspective, experiences, and opinions of other educational stakeholders, such as parents, SGB members, and district officials regarding the EI skills and leadership practices of the SMT, especially the principal.
- Including quintile 1 and/or 2 secondary schools as these school face different educational leadership challenges, and their opinions, experiences and understanding regarding EI skills and leadership practices might therefore be different.
- A focus and investigation on different approaches, programmes and/or training of EI skills for SMT members.

7.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Research projects are often subject to unexpected problems and gaps. In respect to this, this research project was no exception. The following limitations were identified and experienced in this research:

- This study was conducted at five secondary schools in the Motheo District, Bloemfontein. Thus, the participants from this study and the findings cannot be generalised and applied to the entire population of secondary school leaders, teachers and/or SMT members. Consequently, the findings may not be considered generally valid. However, it can be of value for schools, SMT members and teachers that found themselves in the same context and subject to similar challenges.
- Another limitation was that of the interview and questionnaire questions. Since there are numerous EI skills, it was impossible to cover and discuss each one separately. Thus, EI skills, where possible, were merged or questions were asked in such a way to reveal necessary and common EI skills.
- Similar to the previous limitation, not all leadership practices could have been covered during interviews due to the sheer amount of leadership practices identified by scholarly findings. Thus, main leadership practice domains, as identified by scholarly findings, were used as an indicator.
- Parents who constantly deal with SMT members such as the principal and deputy principal, would have added valuable information regarding the EI skills of school leaders and their leadership practices.
- A further limitation was the sample size as well as the method of data collection for retired school principals. Four retired principals were selected, and they were given questionnaires to complete. Although the questionnaires were completed thoroughly, an interview or focus group, where possible, could have added more value to the findings. These individuals have years of experience, knowledge and skills which could have been shared in even more detail if the researcher could have asked probing questions regarding certain issues.
- The research was done at quintile 3 to 5 schools, thus if quintile 1 and/or 2 secondary schools were included, different perspectives, opinions and understandings of EI skills and/or leadership practices might have been found. These schools face different challenges than that of quintile 3 to 5 schools, thus maybe revealing different necessary EI skills and leadership practices required for SMT members.

If the researcher had to repeat the research, there would have been more focus on school principals who are the frontrunners of school management and leadership. Although the SMT consists of the deputy principals and HODs as well, the findings from these participants were not as extensive and in-depth. The reason for this may be that deputy principals and especially HODs are still required to teach, more than 80% of their time being in a classroom. Although valuable and different perspectives from these members were collected, they do not necessarily experience or have the knowledge regarding EI skills and leadership practices as compared to school principals who are constantly exposed to this in their role.

7.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

From this study, the enhancement of EI skills amongst SMT members has a positive effect on the improvement of leadership practices in secondary schools. The main aim of this study was to investigate how approaches to enhance the EI skills of SMT members can improve leadership practices in secondary schools. The main objective of this study was thus achieved.

School leaders, the SMT of a school, face enduring and challenging educational problems daily. Without the necessary skills to manage these educational challenges effectively and successfully, it may result in demotivation, less job satisfaction, or even resignation from leadership positions. Furthermore, these may negatively impact the teaching and learning of a school. However, with the enhancement of various EI skills, there may be more success in managing any educational challenges or achieving success in managing and leading a school in general. From the study, various approaches were identified which the SMT of a secondary school can enhance and develop specific and various EI skills. To add, in this study, it was evident that EI skills have an immense and positive impact on SMT members' leadership practices. Based on the literature which paved the way for the establishment of the conceptual framework used in this study, SMT members are advised to focus on the following aspects of EI skills: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management and relationship management. The study has shown that focusing on these main EI skills domains with their underlying EI sub-skills, as identified throughout the study, can improve the leadership practices, namely setting a vision, building relationships, staff

development and implementation. Based on literature and findings from this study, SMT members improving on these leadership practices can ensure the success and effectiveness of a school's management and leadership.

In conclusion, this study investigated the how approaches to enhance the EI skills of SMT members can result in improved leadership practices. Although SMT members and teachers are immensely busy with teaching and ensuring the holistic development of the country's future generations, it is still their responsibility to ensure professional development continues. This includes the responsibility to enhance and develop various skills such as EI skills to ensure the leadership and management of a school continues to thrive and achieve remarkable success.

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APPENDIX A: Ethical clearance



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

26-May-2023

Dear Mr Anton Pretorius

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

Approaches to enhance the emotional intelligence skills of school management teams for improved leadership practices

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2022/1768/3

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Adri Du Plessis

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

**Adri
Du
Plessis**
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APPENDIX B: Approval letter to conduct the research

Enquiries: M.Z. Thango
Ref: Research Permission: A. Pretorius
Tel. 051 404 8808
Email: MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za



John van der Riet Street
Con Grazia no. 7
Langenhoven Park
Bloemfontein
9301

Dear Mr. A. Pretorius

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: MOTHEO DISTRICT

This letter serves to inform you that you have been granted permission to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education within the Motheo Education District. The details in relation to your research project with the University of the Free State are as follows:

Topic: Approaches to enhance the emotional intelligence of School Management Teams for improved leadership practices.

1. **List of schools involved:** Bloemfontein High School, Eunice High School for Girls, Hoërskool Fichardtpark and Sentraal Hoërskool
2. **Target Population:** Four Principals, four Deputy Principals, four Departmental heads and sixteen teachers teaching at the selected schools.
3. **Period of research:** From the signature of this letter until 30 September 2023. Please note that the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project in the approved period, you will need to apply for an extension. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
4. The approval is subject to the following conditions:
 - 4.1 The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
 - 4.2 A bound copy of the research document should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 101, 1st Floor, Thuto House, St. Andrew Street, Bloemfontein or can be emailed to the above-mentioned email address.
 - 4.3 You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
 - 4.4 The ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
5. Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. MZAMQ.W. JACOBS
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 20/02/2023

Enquiries: M.Z. Thango
Ref: Notification of research: A. Pretorius
Tel. 051 404 8808
Email: M.Z.Thango@fseducation.gov.za



District Director
Motho District

Dear Mr. Molo

NOTIFICATION OF RESEARCH: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT IN MOTHEO DISTRICT

This letter serves to inform you that Mr. A. Pretorius has been granted permission to conduct research in the Motheo District under the auspices of the University of the Free State. The details in relation to the research project are as follows:

Topic: Approaches to enhance the emotional intelligence of School Management Teams for improved leadership practices.

- List of schools involved:** Bloemfontein High School, Eunice High School for Girls, Hoërskool Fichardtpark and Sentraal Hoërskool.
- Target Population:** Four Principals, four Deputy Principals, four Departmental heads and sixteen teachers teaching at the selected schools.
- Period of research:** From the signature of this letter until 30 September 2023. Please note the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year nor during normal school hours. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
- Research benefits:** This study will provide the opportunity to offer vital information to secondary SMT members and teachers on how enhanced EI skills improve leadership practices to successfully deal with educational challenges. Therefore, school leaders may discover different methods and/or strategies in dealing with and managing these educational challenges. Lastly, the findings and information from the study may also encourage teacher preparation institutions, colleges, and universities to improve the necessary EI skills.
- The Sub-directorate of Research and policy will make the necessary arrangements for the researchers to present the findings and recommendations to the relevant officials in the Department.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. MZAMO W. JACOBS
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 20/02/2023

APPENDIX C: Participant information sheet

Participant information sheet

Date

The research will be conducted from 01 February 2023 to 30 October 2023

Title of the research project

Approaches to enhance the emotional intelligence of School Management Teams for improved leadership practices.

Principle investigator / researcher(s) name(s) and contact number(s):

Anton Pretorius 2012171050 079 803 4268

Faculty and Department:

Faculty of Education
School of Education Studies

Study leader(s) name and contact number:

Dr. N Gcelu
051 - 401 2955 / GceluN@ufs.ac.za

What is the aim / purpose of the study?

The main aim of the study is to investigate how approaches could enhance the emotional intelligence practices of school management teams for improved leadership practices. SMT members (principals, deputy principals and HoDs) daily challenges which, ultimately leads to exhaustion on different levels: physically, mentally and emotionally. Research has indicated that school leaders may experience burnout, and that resigning from the position is seen as a better option. Very little research is, however, available on how SMT members should deal with the challenges applying Emotional intelligence skills as part of their leadership skills. Therefore, this study aims to investigate and establish how approaches could enhance the emotional intelligence skills of SMT members for improved leadership practices.

Who is doing the research?

Anton Pretorius, student at the University of the Free State, enrolled for Doctor of Philosophy in Education (PhD). I do the research project as part of the requirements to obtain the PhD in Education.

Has the study received ethical approval?

Approved

Approval number: UFS-HSD2022/1768/3

Why are you invited to take part in this research project?

The participants (SMT members and teachers) selected are the best suited to achieve the aim of the study, that is to investigate how approaches could enhance the emotional intelligence of SMT members for improved leadership practices. Four schools will form part of the study. Participants were randomly selected, and the number of participants will be 4 principals, 4 deputy principals, 4 Head of Departments (HODs) and 16 teachers (4 teachers per school).

What is the nature of participation in this study?

The study involves individual interviews with four school principals (one per school), four deputy principals (one per school) and four HoDs (one per school). Moreover, open-ended questionnaires required to be completed by 16 teachers (four per school). The interviews that will be conducted will be semi-structured, and the expected duration of the interview will be approximately 45 minutes. The expected completion of the questionnaires will be approximately 45 minutes. The researcher foreseen no risks to the participants, and they may withdraw at any stage during the study.

Can the participant withdraw from the study?

Statement that participation is voluntary and that there is no penalty or loss of benefit for non-participation. Being in this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What are the potential benefits of taking part in this study?

Describe the presence or absence of possible benefits for participants and/or society. Explain in simple terms that the subject's participation in the study will be kept confidential, but information about him/her will be given to the study sponsor. (NOTE: This information may not be applicable in consent forms for very young children).

What is the anticipated inconvenience of taking part in this study?

Data collection may be during school hours, thus loss of school time. However, precedence will be given to setting meetings for interview after school hours if possible. Furthermore, participants may need to answer questions regarding colleagues which may be uncomfortable, but no names are necessary to be mentioned, and no name will be used during the data collection as well as the study. As explained in detail below, participants' and/or any names mentioned during the interviews and/or questionnaires will be kept confidential, and codes or pseudonyms will be used.

Will what I say be kept confidential?

The names of the participants will be kept confidential, and this implies that their names will not be recorded anywhere. Code numbers or pseudonyms will be used to refer to the participants in the study. Only the researcher will have access to the data. Privacy will be protected and participants may refuse to take part or may withdraw at any stage of the process. Only the transcriber will have access to the data. Confidentiality will be maintained by signing a confidentiality agreement. The article will be reviewed in order to make sure that the research has been done properly. The report will be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

How will the information be stored and ultimately destroyed?

The researcher will store the hard copies of the answers provided for a period of five years in a locked cabinet at the faculty of Education for future research or academic purposes, electronic information will be stored on a password computer. Further use of the data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. If information is not needed anymore, it will be papershreddered.

Will I receive payment or any incentives for participating in this study?

There will be no reward and/or payment offered for participating in the study. As mentioned earlier, the researcher is doing research as a requirement for the Doctorate of Philosophy in Education degree.

How will the participant be informed of the findings / results of the study?

If the participants in the study would like to be informed of the final research findings, or should they require any further information, they may contact Mr. A Pretorius on 079 803 4268 or at e-mail, antonpretorius092@gmail.com

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

APPENDIX D: Letter for consent

CONSENT FOR SMT-MEMBERS AND EDUCATORS TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I agree to the recording of the interview/questionnaire/focus group interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Full Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____ 2023

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): **Anton Pretorius**

Signature of Researcher:



Date: _____ 2023

APPENDIX E: Interview schedule (Individual interviews)

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS SCHEDULE

TITLE: Approaches to enhance the emotional intelligence skills of school management teams for improved leadership practices.

Researcher: Anton Pretorius Tel: 079 803 4268 Email: antonpretorius092@gmail.com

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate in this study.

A. BIOGRAHICAL INFORMATION					
Participant	Gender	Age	Highest Qualification	Years teaching	Years in leadership role
B. LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES FOR SMT MEMBERS					
B1. Resistance to change					
1. Can you explain any new policies, procedures and/or cultural adjustments that have been implemented by the SMT to improve the work environment?					
2. How did the rest of the staff respond to any new changes that have been implemented?					
3. Can you describe how you/SMT lead the staff during the process of change?					
B2. Communication					
1. How important is communication with the rest of the staff to you? Please elaborate.					
2. Can you describe any strategies and principles that the SMT must keep in mind when communicating to the staff?					
B3. Managing conflict					
1. How do you deal with conflict situations at school?					
2. Do you regard conflict in the workplace as valuable, why?					
B4. Workload					
1. Why is managing the workload important?					
2. Can you describe a few strategies that you use to manage workload effectively?					
B5. Morale and motivation					
1. How would you describe the morale and motivation amongst staff?					
2. Which strategies do you use to ensure high morale and motivation amongst staff?					
B6. Inclusivity and diversity					
1. What challenges do you experience in terms of diversity? How do you manage/deal with it?					
B7. Fostering innovation					
1. Do you value innovation? How do you promote and encourage innovation amongst staff?					
B8. Staff development					
1. How do you ensure that staff are continuously developed/empowered?					
B9. Parent and community expectations					
1. Explain a few challenges you experience with parents and the community?					
2. How do you manage these challenges and expectations from parents?					

B10. Educational authorities
1. Can you describe a few challenges you are experiencing with the department of education?
2. What are some strategies that have work for you in dealing effectively with these challenges?
B11. Evolving technology
1. Do you value technology in the workplace? How do you incorporate it in the workplace?
C. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENT SKILLS
C.1 Self-awareness
1. What would you describe your strengths as a leader? How does it benefit you in your work to achieve goals?
2. What would you regard as your weaknesses as a leader?
3. How do you respond to negative criticism?
4. Why is it important for you to be able to recognise and understand your own emotions?
5. What is the impact of your emotions on your thoughts and behaviour?
6. Are you aware or realise immediately when you are experiencing strong emotions? Please elaborate.
C.2 Social awareness
1. Can you tell me of a time you had to deal with inappropriate behaviour amongst a staff member(s)?
2. Can you describe a situation when a staff member came with bad news? How did you deal with it?
3. Please describe a time when you had to deliver bad news to a staff member(s).
4. Is it easy for you to identify and understand the feelings and perspectives of others? Please elaborate.
C. 3 Self-management
1. Which strategies do you use to regulate your emotions particularly in stressful situations?
2. Can you tell me about a time when you felt demotivated. What did you do to overcome this?
3. How do you maintain a good balance between your personal life and work?
4. When confronted with change, how do you adjust/respond to new circumstances?
5. Describe how you resist impulsive urges and reactions particularly negative or destructive ones?
C.4 Relationships
1. How would you handle a dispute between two staff members?
2. Please share your experience during a time when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with.
3. An unreasonable and difficult parent has a meeting with you. The teacher is also present but becomes frustrated and begins to make comments that may be constructed as offensive/negative. How do you handle this situation?
4. How would you encourage, motivate and support the staff members?
5. Describe the value of teamwork and how is it encouraged?
D. LEADERSHIP PRACTICES
1. Are you in favour to involve team members or rest of staff in decision-making and value their input? Please elaborate.
2. How do you ensure the school vision and goals are clearly set and defined? How do you encourage rest of the staff to work towards these?
3. Do you believe you should sometimes make certain decisions on your own? Why?

4. Do you sometimes grant significant autonomy (do their own thing) to your staff? Why?
5. How important is it to prioritise the well-being and development of staff members?
6. Do you take risks and challenge the status quo to achieve/work towards the vision of the school?
7. How important is it for you to engage the rest of the staff and distribute leadership responsibilities?
8. How important are the values in your school culture and how do you drive them?
9. Do you change your leadership approach as situations change or do you believe to stick to a certain approach regardless the situation? Please elaborate.
10. Can you describe a time when a staff member questioned your authority or instructions. How did you respond and manage the situation?

END. THANK YOU.

APPENDIX F: Interview schedule (Focus group interviews)

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

TITLE: Approaches to enhance the emotional intelligence skills of school management teams for improved leadership practices.

Researcher: Anton Pretorius

Tel: 0798034268

Email: antonpretorius092@gmail.com

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate in this interview.

B. LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES FOR SMT MEMBERS
B1. Resistance to change
1. Can you explain any new policies, procedures and/or cultural adjustments that have been implemented by the SMT to improve the work environment?
2. How did the rest of the staff respond to any new changes that have been implemented?
3. Can you briefly explain how SMTs should lead staff during the process of change?
B2. Communication
1. How important is communication between the SMT and the rest of the staff? Please elaborate.
B3. Managing conflict
1. How do you think SMTs should deal with conflict situations at school?
2. Do you regard conflict in the workplace as valuable, why?
B4. Workload
1. Why do you think it is important for SMTs to manage their workload?
B5. Morale and motivation
1. How would you describe the morale and motivation amongst staff?
2. Which strategies do the SMT use to ensure high morale and motivation amongst staff?
B6. Fostering innovation
1. Do you think SMTs should value innovation? How should they promote and encourage innovation amongst staff?
B7. Staff development
1. How do the SMT ensure that staff are continuously developed/empowered?
B8. Parent and community expectations
1. How does/should the SMT manage these challenges and expectations from parents?
B9. Evolving technology
1. Do you think SMTs should value technology in the workplace? How are(should) they incorporate it in the workplace?
C. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENT SKILLS
C.1 Self-awareness
1. Which leadership strengths would be regarded as important for a school leader today? Shortly, why?
2. Do you believe SMTs should be aware of their leadership strengths and weaknesses? Why?
3. How do you think SMTs should respond to negative criticism?
4. Why is it important for SMTs to be able to recognise and understand their own emotions?
5. Can you explain what is the impact of SMTs' emotions on their thoughts and behaviour?
C.2 Social awareness
1. How should a SMT deal with inappropriate behaviour amongst staff members?

2. How would you like a SMT to deal with a teacher who received bad news?
3. Why should it be important for SMTs to identify and understand the feelings and perspectives of others? Please elaborate.
C. 3 Self-management
1. Have you ever seen the SMT/a SMT member in a stressful situation? How did they regulate their emotions?
2. Can you tell me about a time when a SMT member felt demotivated. What did he/she do to overcome this?
3. Why do you think it is important for SMTs to maintain a good balance between their personal life and work?
4. When confronted with change, how do think SMTs should adjust/respond to new circumstances?
C.4 Relationships
1. Have you ever experienced how a school leader handled a dispute between two staff members? Please explain
2. Please share your opinion on how SMTs should work with someone who is difficult to get along with.
3. An unreasonable and difficult parent has a meeting with a school leader. The teacher is also present but becomes frustrated and begins to make comments that may be constructed as offensive/negative. How should the school leader handle this situation?
4. How do the SMTs encourage, motivate and support the staff members?
5. Why should teamwork be valued and important for SMTs? How is it encouraged?
D. LEADERSHIP PRACTICES
1. Should SMTs be in favour to involve the rest of staff in decision-making and value their input? Please elaborate.
2. How important is it for SMTs to ensure the school vision and goals are clearly set and defined?
3. Do you believe that the SMT should sometimes make certain decisions on their own? Why?
4. Is it important for SMTs to sometimes grant significant autonomy (do their own thing) to the staff? Why?
5. Describe the importance of SMTs prioritising the well-being and development of staff members?
6. Should the SMT take risks and challenge the status quo to achieve/work towards the vision of the school? Why?
7. What is your opinion/experience about the importance of SMTs engaging the rest of the staff and distribute leadership responsibilities?
8. Should the values in your school culture be important for SMTs and how do they drive them?
9. Should SMTs change their leadership approach as situations change or should they stick to a certain approach regardless the situation? Please elaborate.
10. How should a school leader respond and manage a situation where a staff member questions his/her authority or instructions.

END. THANK YOU.

APPENDIX G: Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

TITLE: Approaches to enhance the emotional intelligence skills of school management teams for improved leadership practices.

Researcher: Anton Pretorius

079 803 4268

antonpretorius092@gmail.com

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate in this study by completing these questions. Please fill and answer the following questions as thorough as possible.

A. BIOGRAHICAL INFORMATION	
Participant	
Gender	
Age	
Highest Qualification	
Years taught	
Years as principal	
Year retired	

B. LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES FOR SMT MEMBERS
B1. Resistance to change
1. Can you explain any policies, adjustments, procedures and/or cultural adjustments that have been implemented by you/SMT to improve the work environment?
2. How did the rest of the staff respond to any new changes that have been implemented?
3. Can you describe how you/SMT lead the staff during the process of change?
B2. Communication
1. How important is communication with the rest of the staff to you? Please elaborate.
2. Can you describe any strategies and principles that the SMT must keep in mind when communicating to the staff?
B3. Managing conflict
1. How did you deal with conflict situations at school?
2. Do you regard conflict in the workplace as valuable, why?
B4. Workload
1. Why is managing your and/or the staff's workload important?
2. Can you describe a few strategies that you used to manage your and/or the staff's workload effectively?

B5. Morale and motivation
1. How/why is it important to ensure good/high morale and motivation amongst staff?
2. Which strategies did you use to ensure high morale and motivation amongst staff?
B6. Inclusivity and diversity
1. What challenges did you experience in terms of diversity? How did you manage/deal with it?
B7. Fostering innovation
1. Did you value innovation? How did you promote and encourage innovation amongst staff?
B8. Staff development
1. How did you ensure that staff are continuously developed/empowered? Is it important? Why?
B9. Parent and community expectations
1. Explain a few common challenges you experienced with parents and the community?
2. How did you manage these challenges and expectations from parents? What worked for you?
B10. Educational authorities
1. Can you describe a few challenges you experienced with the department of education?
2. What are some strategies that worked for you in dealing effectively with these challenges?
C. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENT SKILLS
C.1 Self-awareness
1. What would you describe your strengths as a leader? How did it benefit you in your work to achieve goals?
2. Were there any areas that were challenging for you as a leader (weaknesses)? How did you overcome/improve on this?
3. How did you respond to criticism?
4. Why was it important for you to be able to recognise and understand your own emotions as a school leader?
5. What was the impact of your emotions on your thoughts and behaviour as a school leader?
C.2 Social awareness
1. Can you tell me of a time you had to deal with inappropriate behaviour amongst a staff member(s)?
2. Can you describe a situation when a staff member came with bad news? How did you deal with it?
3. Please describe a time when you had to deliver bad news to a staff member(s).

4. Was it easy for you to identify and understand the feelings and perspectives of others? Please elaborate.
C. 3 Self-management
1. How did you regulate your emotions particularly in stressful situations?
2. Can you tell me about a time when you felt demotivated. What did you do to overcome this?
3. How did you maintain a good balance between your personal life and work?
4. When confronted with change, how did you adjust/respond to new circumstances?
C.4 Relationships
1. How did you normally handle a dispute between two staff members?
2. Please share your experience during a time when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with.
3. An unreasonable and difficult parent has a meeting with you. The teacher is also present but becomes frustrated and begins to make comments that may be constructed as offensive/negative. How do you handle this situation?
4. How did you encourage, motivate and support the staff members?
5. Describe the value of teamwork and how you encouraged it in schools?
D. LEADERSHIP PRACTICES
1. Were you in favour to involve team members or rest of staff in decision-making and value their input? Please elaborate.
2. How did you ensure the school vision and goals were clearly set and defined? How did you encourage rest of the staff to work towards these?
3. Did you believe that you/SMT should sometimes make certain decisions on your/their own? Why?
4. Did you sometimes grant significant autonomy (do their own thing) to your staff? Why?
5. How important is it to prioritise the well-being and development of staff members?
6. Did you take risks and challenge the status quo to achieve/work towards the vision of the school? Please elaborate
7. How important was it for you to engage the rest of the staff and distribute leadership responsibilities?
8. How important are the values in a school culture and how did you drive them?

9. Did you change your leadership approach as situations changed or did you believe to stick to a certain approach regardless the situation? Please elaborate.
10. Can you describe a time when a staff member questioned your authority or instructions. How did you respond and manage the situation?
You are welcome to add any other relevant information/issues regarding the phenomenon being studied. Also, any advice or questions that you suggest asking for school leaders today.

END.

THANK YOU.

APPENDIX H: Language editing certificate



Confirmation of Language Editing

24 July 2024

To whom it may concern,

CONFIRMATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

In relation to the PhD Thesis of Anton Pretorius (2012171050), entitled:

APPROACHES TO ENHANCE THE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SKILLS OF SCHOOL
MANAGEMENT TEAM MEMBERS FOR IMPROVED LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

To be submitted in fulfilment of PhD in Education at the University of the Free State, I, in my capacity as Language Practitioner, confirm that the abovementioned document has been edited with specific focus on the following:

- Language use and spelling (UK English)
- Coherence and linguistic flow
- Consistency of terminology and formatting

In relation to the above, Track Changes were used in MS Word to indicate changes, and comments were provided where necessary. Please note that changes are made solely at the client's discretion and remain their own responsibility. Any comments provided are purely suggestions and reflect the best efforts and opinions of the Editor and not necessarily subject-specific expertise. It remains the responsibility of the client to confirm the content of their final submission.

For any questions, please feel free to contact me at guillaume.annam@gmail.com during normal business hours.

Kind regards,

A.M. Guillaume
LANGUAGE PRACTITIONER

APPENDIX I: Turnitin summary report

Anton Pretorius_ Final

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