

**PERCEPTIONS OF LESOTHO SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ON  
THEIR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS TO ENHANCE  
LEADERSHIP**

**By**

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## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that the research reported in the thesis entitled "*Perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on their professional development needs to enhance leadership*" is my original work. The thesis has not been previously submitted to any academic institution for examination. This thesis is free from unauthorised information unless explicitly acknowledged as being sourced from other people. I, therefore, wish to confirm that all sources cited in this thesis have been acknowledged.

Matanki Irene Mabeleng

Date: 28 November 2023

Signature: 

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my late parents, Mrs. Mamolato Grace Shoao and Mr. Lenonya Robert Shoao, who had always believed in me and wished I could achieve this level in my educational journey. I am certain that this accomplishment would have filled them with pride.

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## **ABSTRACT**

School leadership plays a critical role in effective management of teaching and learning. Principals are entrusted with a huge responsibility of managing schools although they face a variety of challenges running the schools effectively in the 21st century. The professional development of principals is, therefore, crucial to their success as leaders since it extends their knowledge and improves their job performance. This study explored the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on their professional development needs to enhance leadership. Constructivism paradigm was used as a lens for this study. The research was informed by constructivism theory as well as complexity leadership theory. A qualitative research approach was employed, and a multiple case study was adopted to gather data from twelve individual principals from twelve schools. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and purposive sampling was used to identify and select individual principals who were knowledgeable and had insights to share regarding their professional development needs. Thematic data analysis approach was employed to extract meaning from the collected data. The major findings of the study revealed that principals lack exposure to professional development programmes, and this adversely affects school leadership. The study further exposed that principals need capacitation in digital literacy skills, financial management skills, legal skills as well as management and instructional leadership skills. Additionally, the study found that principals experience numerous challenges in their leadership role, and these have a negative effect on their performance. It further revealed financial constraints and lack of support from the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) as some of the factors hindering principals' professional development. The study recommends that professional development programmes be arranged for principals to address their needs to enhance school leadership. Additionally, short training courses could be arranged by MoET to capacitate principals in the areas where they lack skills. The findings of this research contributed to the body of knowledge on the professional development needs of school principals. The study has the potential to raise awareness of the professional development needs of Lesotho secondary school principals, which is the area of focus that previous research conducted in Lesotho failed to address. The results of this study could assist MoET in development of professional development programmes for newly appointed principals to advance their leadership skills. To further enhance leadership, teacher training institutions could also use the results of this research to upgrade pre- and in-service leadership training programmes that could be used to assist principals in their leadership positions. The results of the research will as well assist policymakers and the Ministry

of Education and Training in Lesotho on how to structure professional development programmes to meet the needs of secondary school principals.

**Keywords:** *School leadership, Professional Development, Constructivism, Complexity leadership, Education Management.*

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease of 2019
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DEM	District Education Manager
HOD	Head of Department
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IE	Inclusive Education
IT	Information Technology
LESPA	Lesotho Principals Association
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
NEP	National Education Policy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PD	Professional Development
SDG4	Sustainable Development Goal 4
SL	School Leadership
TSC	Teaching Service Commission
USA	United States of America

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study explores the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on their professional development needs to enhance leadership. To improve both learning and teaching in schools, principals deal with many complicated and challenging duties. Therefore, their professional development is crucial to improve their competencies to enable them to cope in their leadership positions. According to Mestry (2017), the 21st century principals perform many roles which make their duties more complicated and challenging. This scholar alludes to a principal's typical day being filled with varied activities they perform in their management activities, such as drawing schedules, producing reports, dealing with relationships with parents and the community at large, as well as handling various unpredicted learner and teacher emergencies and conflicts. Professional development of school principals plays a major role in assisting them to enhance school leadership.

The principals play the most significant part in the school achievement. Gupta and Gupta (2018) assert that school principals are entrusted with the responsibility to equip learners with relevant knowledge and skills. Acton (2020) supports the idea that as the education field advances, there is change in the accountabilities of school principals from duties of management towards leading transformation and implementing change. However, Acton (2020) further brings to view that school principals are not equipped with managerial skills, yet the expectation is for them to lead schools effectively in the face of numerous challenges as well as externally and internally imposed pressures. To enhance school leadership, principals need to be capacitated with the skills and knowledge to enable them to handle the leadership position.

This chapter discusses the research background, the statement of the problem as well as the motivation and rationale to undertake this research. It further highlights the main research question and subsidiary questions. Then the aim of the study, its objectives as well as its significance are presented. The definition of the key terms and the theoretical framework used as a lens for the study are also provided. In addition, the research design as well as the methodology used in this study are presented. The chapter presents an outline of the research report and as well discusses the legal framework for professional development in Lesotho.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Professional development is defined by Ekinici and Filiz Acar (2019) as a technique for supporting the improvement of knowledge, values, and attitude. According to Antley (2020), professional development is defined as an ongoing education and career training after entering the workforce to assist in developing contemporary skills as well as assisting individuals to stay updated on current trends. Professional development for school leaders has been a global concern in various countries such as Iran, Pakistan, and America. For instance, Karam et al. (2020) researched on factors affecting school principals' professional development in Iran. The results revealed that the education system of Iran needs to change to realise the inspirational ideas of the Islamic Revolution and the changing environment of the future. Thus, the results suggested that school leaders should be given the right to decide on the new educational system and should be provided with innovative solutions and skills to perform their responsibilities and functions (Karam et al., 2020). Nasreen and Odhiambo (2018) indicate that in Pakistan, schools undergo an era of change in which the National Education Policy (NEC) supported the significance of instituting continuous professional development for school principals (Nasreen & Odhiambo, 2018).

Abida and George (2018) also researched on the ongoing school principals' professional development based on the existing practices in Pakistan. The study exposed that principals were dissatisfied with the continuing professional development opportunities due to several constraints such as time, finance, and workload. The scholars advised on the value of creating effective continuing professional development for school principals to achieve the required results. Rowland (2017) states that in Washington D.C, scholars have focussed on the professional development of teachers rather than that of principals although they play a critical role in reaching the nation's goal of high achievement for all learners. However, some initiatives to improve principals' professional development have been taken (Rowland, 2017).

The principals' professional development has also remained a topical issue in Nigeria. Peretomode and Dinzei (2019) explored public and secondary school principals' professional development. The study revealed the need for ongoing assessment of school principals' areas of weakness to regularly arrange suitable professional development programmes to enable them to remedy the areas of deficiencies to cope with the transformations and challenges of this era (Peretomode & Dinzei, 2019). In South Africa, Maphoto (2018) attests that many school principals are in dire need of being developed professionally. The findings from the scholar further indicate that the Department of Basic Education seemed to be reluctant to ensure that principals are professionally

developed. This, therefore, encourages principals to find ways of establishing self-directed professional development strategies informally (Maphoto, 2018). Nhlumayo (2020) attests that to transform education, as well as to meet the needs of the developing country, it is significant to capacitate principals with relevant competencies to address the growing challenges through the appropriate implementation of professional development.

In Lesotho, secondary school principals are considered leaders as well as managers (Lesotho Government Gazette Extraordinary, 2010). The schools in Lesotho comprise the following: public, church-owned and privately-owned schools. The Ministry of Education and Training possesses a small number of public schools. All schools are managed by the school boards whose functions include managing and running the schools efficiently (Ntsoaole, 2012). The Education Act (2010) indicates that, among the nine members of the school board, a secondary school principal is appointed by the school proprietor as the secretary of the school board.

The principals of secondary schools lead the schools in collaboration with deputy principals as well as Heads of Departments (HODs) (Education Act, 2010). For effective performance in their leadership role, principals need capacitation and sufficient training on leadership (Education Act, 2010). According to MoET (2018), the following key competencies must be acquired by the principals to effectively perform their roles: leadership, organisational skills, human resource skills, vision, strategic planning, skills to manage the finances, and complex information systems and information skills. As expressed by Heystek and Madalińska-Michalak (2023), the education system still embraces the conventional view that appointment in the position of the school principalship requires knowledgeable and experienced teachers as well-suited candidates, and Lesotho is not an exception (Mphutlane, 2018).

It could further be argued that principals are entrusted with the responsibility to improve learner performance through the continued support of teachers with learning materials as well as teaching facilities (Teba-teba & Makura, 2021). However, a study conducted by Ralebese (2019) on principals' perceptions concerning the role they play as leaders of reforms in curriculum found that principals have positive opinions about their leadership of curriculum implementation although they lack sufficient in-service training and knowledge to manage it. Maphoto (2018) also established that to improve school effectiveness in the 21st century, it is crucial to provide principals with the necessary opportunities for professional development training on leadership and management. Therefore, the research aims to explore the perceptions of Lesotho secondary

school principals to gain understanding from their side on what constitutes their professional development needs.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

In recent years, the world has transformed drastically (Adam & Muthiah, 2019). In the 21st century, school principals perform numerous roles, and their responsibilities are more demanding, challenging and complex (Mestry, 2017). According to these scholars, a principal's daily work is generally filled with various managerial activities, including but not limited to, drawing plans handling reports and dealing with relationships with parents and the community, as well as managing unpredicted student and teacher emergencies and conflict. Researchers such as Barret and Breyer (2014) and Tingle et al. (2019) state that the school's mission, vision, and values are safeguarded by the principals through providing direction to the staff to reach the intended objective. Principals are, therefore, expected to demonstrate leadership qualities that would enable them to sustain effective school performance in the complicated settings in which they perform their duties. That means principals should be well-founded and equipped with a range of leadership skills (Barrett & Breyer, 2014).

The issue of professional development for school leader has, therefore, been a global concern in various countries including Lesotho. However, various scholars concur that Lesotho school principals experience challenges in supervising classrooms and managing school finances and lack appropriate skills to manage curriculum change to mention a few (Sefeane, 2013; Kaphe, 2017; Mphutlane, 2018). Kaphe (2017) and Sefeane (2013) recommend a need for constant professional support by the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training to enhance effective school management. This research study, therefore, aims at exploring the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals' perception to gain understanding from their points of view on what constitutes their professional development needs to enhance effective leadership in schools.

## **1.4 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research project was guided by the following critical research questions:

### **1.4.1 The main research question**

What are the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on their professional development needs to enhance leadership?

### **1.4.2 Subsidiary questions**

1. What are the realities of professional development for school principals in Lesotho?
2. What are the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on the needs and challenges regarding professional development for their leadership roles?
3. How should professional development leadership programmes be enhanced to effectively develop and meet the needs of secondary school principals?

## **1.5 THE RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

Having stated the research questions, the study was guided by the subsequent research aim and objectives:

### **1.5.1 Research aim**

Investigate the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on their professional development needs to enhance leadership.

### **1.5.2 Research objectives**

1. Establish the realities of professional development for school principals in Lesotho.
2. Investigate the perceptions of secondary school principals on the needs and challenges regarding professional development for their leadership roles.
3. Explore how professional development leadership programmes should be enhanced to effectively develop and meet the needs of secondary school principals.

## **1.6 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

The inspiration to undertake this research was influenced by the realisation that principals face challenges in their leadership roles. Principals lead schools in the 21st century which is characterised by numerous transformations taking place in the education system. For instance, in Lesotho, every transformation that is introduced in the education system and directly affects the schools, such as the introduction of a new curriculum, is the responsibility of the principals. The principals struggle with adapting to the 21st century school leadership which has brought many changes including the use technology to undertake most of the school activities. In the context of education in Lesotho, principals perform the roles of teachers as well as heads of the schools. This implies that they need capacitation in various areas to effectively perform their leadership roles. Therefore, it was significant for the researcher to conduct the study in Lesotho to find out how principals perceive their professional development needs to enhance school leadership. Another reason that influenced the study to be conducted in Lesotho was the scarcity of research on principals' professional development needs of secondary school principals.

A study conducted in Bahrain revealed that principals lack knowledge and skills to implement Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure in schools (Razzak, 2015). Additionally, the researcher realised that many principals lack leadership skills due to being new in the position. Therefore, they find it difficult to perform effectively in their leadership roles. Since they perform multiple roles of being teachers as well as leaders, they experience work-life balance challenges which cause stress for majority of the principals. This is in line with Bottery (2016) who argues that extra working hours is a source of additional anxiety for the school principals since they have insufficient time to engage in their private lives. This is illustrated by the results of a research conducted in Turkey. The study indicates that school principals concur that the job they perform is challenging. Therefore, it is difficult to assign time to personally develop owing to the substantial extent of work requiring them to spend most of their time finding solutions to the challenges they experience in schools (Sincar, 2013). This is corroborated by Beam et al. (2014) who posit that both novice and experienced principals experience the imbalance of their duties and issues of management of time during their job performance. The scholars add that principals find it hard to balance times for their family time, graduate studies to advance their knowledge as well as administer their duties. This results in principals being subjected to very stressful conditions.

The Lesotho education policies on professional development of principals pay much attention to teachers' professional development and do not directly indicate how principals should be developed to enhance school leadership. In their study, Adam and Muthiah (2019) acknowledge that for daily running of schools, there is a huge demand for competent school principals owing to the present era of technological learning. In the previous years, the deliberations made were that preparation programmes for principals have not succeeded to sufficiently prepare them to improve student performance. Bottery (2016) affirms that failure for individuals to sufficiently prepare themselves for their leadership responsibilities as leaders of schools leads to unsustainability in their roles. This is mainly attributed to inability for principals to develop the required comprehensive and co-ordinated professional development training programmes which are aimed at enhancing their effective leadership skills (Fink & Silverman, 2014). In line with this view, research undertaken by Salahuddin (2012) in Bangladesh revealed insufficient training on professional leadership for school principals. This means that principals need to be equipped with essential expertise to assist them in handling the 21st century school leadership responsibilities. Therefore, the aim of the study is to investigate the perceptions of Lesotho school principals on their professional development needs to enhance leadership.

The research has the potential to provide an input into the body of knowledge on the professional development needs of secondary school principals. The primary aim of this study is to explore the perceptions of secondary school principals on professional development to enhance leadership. Therefore, the study has the potential to assist the policymakers in Lesotho and the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) on the ways in which the professional development of school principals should be structured to meet their needs. The findings could also assist MoET to review secondary school principals' needs in order to organise tailor-made professional development for principals to enhance school leadership.

The study is likely to establish the professional development needs of Lesotho secondary school principals, which is the area of focus that former research conducted in Lesotho failed to address. The results of this study will also assist MoET in development of professional development programmes for newly appointed principals to advance their leadership skills.

In addition, the results of this research have the potential to shed some light on the principals' professional development training programmes. To further enhance leadership, teacher training institutions could also use the results of this research to upgrade pre- and in-service leadership training programmes that could be used to assist principals in the leadership positions.

Furthermore, this study has generated information on the factors hindering professional development (PD) for Lesotho secondary school principals and the strategies to enhance principals' PD. The findings of this study could also update the school principals on the PD programmes that could be implemented to enhance their leadership.

## **1.7 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

Delimitations are referred to as the features that control the scope of the study and define its boundaries as decided by the researcher (Leedy & Ormrod, 2020). In this study, the delimitations were the restrictions the researcher set to limit the study's scope. The study targeted the secondary school principals in the two districts of Lesotho. The study was delimited to the two theories, constructivism and complexity theory which were used as a lens. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2020), the delimitations also incorporate the theoretical stance taken when conducting a study. The theories assisted in explaining the professional development needs of secondary school principals. The study was also restricted to 12 secondary school principals. By using these 12 participants, the researcher was able to gather enough data to achieve the goal of the research, which was to explore the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on their professional development needs to enhance leadership.

## **1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

The key terms that have been utilised throughout this research are provided below to enable deeper understanding of the study. These are: perceptions, secondary school principals, professional development needs and school leadership.

### **1.8.1 Perceptions**

Perception is defined by Ayub and Salehi (2017) as the steps involved in acquisition of information. Acquiring information can stem from individuals' exposure to different environments. Anoth Saifuddin (2020) also describes perception as a process beginning from the employment of the five senses in receiving a stimulus, organising, and interpreting it to form an understanding of what is sensed. According to Arifin, Fuady and Kuswarno (2017), perception is concerned with items, actions and relations attained by deduction of information, experience, and

interpretation of messages. Arifin et al. (2017) further argue that perception is the ability of the senses to translate stimulus or the process into human senses. Therefore, in this study, principals' perceptions on their professional development were influenced by their settings as well as the experiences they have in those environments.

### **1.8.2 Principals**

According to Mphutlane (2018), principals are referred to as heads of schools. The scholar affirms that the success and failure of individual schools is dependent on the efficiency of the principals as the chief accounting officers of the schools. The author further contends that principals are expected to possess knowledge in various school management areas. They must also possess a robust sense of efficiency in administrative competencies for effective administration of the schools. A similar opinion is expressed by Federici and Skaalvik (2011) who posit that the responsibility of the principal is to administer every aspect of all operations in the school, as well as potential progress. Mestry's (2017) denotes that the principal is the instructional leader whose role comprises development of a common vision, supplying relevant resources, establishing a favourable learning environment for both staff and learners, as well as mentoring and coaching the staff members. According to this author, it is essential to provide professional training to principals to ensure effective administration of schools. This, according to the author, will enhance principals' self-confidence and allow them to perform their duties in the management position with a great level of confidence and determination (Hutton, 2013).

### **1.8.3 Professional Development**

As defined by Mitchell (2013), professional development is a process of acquisition and improvement of skills, knowledge, and attitudes for better performance in the workplace. Professional development is also viewed as development of new knowledge and competencies relevant to enhance individual workers' careers and job responsibilities on an on-going basis (Bjekić, Stojković & Kuzmanović, 2016). Therefore, for school principals to perform their roles effectively, professional development is necessary.

#### **1.8.4 Leadership**

According to Kesting et.al. (2016), leadership is defined as the procedure whereby individuals are motivated and influenced by someone in the leadership position to achieve organisational goals by motivating and influencing them to work hard. Kesting et al. (2016) further state that leadership is a way of encouraging and boosting self-esteem as well as motivating employees to achieve organisational responsibilities and objectives. Motivation of employees greatly depends on the leadership style and skills that the leaders possess (Malik, 2012). This scholar refers to leadership as a process in which an individual in the leadership position manipulates other employees towards achieving organisational goals. For schools (as organisations) to perform well, the school leaders should possess the necessary skills and knowledge essential to improve and develop the schools by participation in professional development activities.

### **1.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW**

The research has employed two theories as a lens. These are constructivism theory by Jean Piaget (1955) and complexity leadership theory by Marion and Uhl-Bien (2002). These theories have been used to provide a conceptualisation of the perceptions of principals on their professional development through their interaction with their social context. According to Piaget (1955), individuals create knowledge and construct meaning from their experiences. The constructivism learning theory explains that learning occurs through construction of knowledge in the mind. Constructivism further argues that individuals actively receive knowledge and form new knowledge from the previous forms of knowledge. Constructivism is mainly concerned with explaining the way people create an understanding of situations to form meaning.

Complexity leadership theory was initially proposed by Marion and Uhl-Bien (2002). They argue that leadership is influenced by connections in a complicated network. The theory is influenced by networks among different agents. These networks, according to the scholars, shift the focus from an influential leader to leadership behaviours that are linked with managerial roles. The two theories were linked to provide different explanations on how the research is organised to conceptualise principals' perceptions on their professional development needs to enhance school leadership. The theories also guided the principals to construct their perception of meaning from the environment in which they live.

The two theories have been employed in this study to complement each other in explaining the principals' perceptions on their professional development needs to enhance leadership. The principals perform their leadership roles in complex environments. According to complexity leadership theory as expressed by Drucker (2012), organisations in the contemporary period operate in complicated and competitive environments. Complexity theory assisted in the understanding of principals' perceptions which are constructed from their interaction with the environments. The two theories jointly provide a lens on perceptions of principals on their principals' professional development needs to enhance leadership.

## **1.10 THE METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW**

In this section, the research paradigm, approach, design, the data collection techniques as well as the data analysis procedures employed in this study were presented. The research used a qualitative method. A multiple case study was applied, and semi-structured interviews were employed to generate data from the participants. The research also used document analysis to verify data from the face-to-face interviews. The research sites used in the study were 12 secondary schools located in two districts of Lesotho and the research participants were 12 principals from each individual school. Data was analysed thematically.

## **1.11 ORGANISATION OF THE CHAPTERS**

This study comprises six chapters arranged in the following way:

### **Chapter 1**

The chapter presents the introduction and background of the study, the problem statement, and the literature review. It further highlights the research questions, the aims and objectives and the significance of the study. It also discusses the theoretical framework and the research methodology used in the study.

### **Chapter 2**

It discusses the international as well as the local review of literature from the perspectives of various scholars. The professional development of school principals is analysed and discussed.

The chapter further highlights the 21st century leadership and its challenges. The factors that hinder principals' professional development are also discussed.

### **Chapter 3**

The theories that underpin the study are discussed in this chapter. These are constructivism theory by Jean Piaget (1955) and complexity theory of leadership by Marion and Uhl-Bien (2002).

### **Chapter 4**

This chapter discusses the research design and research methodology that the study is grounded in. It also presents and discusses the constructivism research paradigm and the qualitative research approach. The interviews and the document analysis are also discussed as qualitative methods of analysing data. The trustworthiness of the study and the ethical considerations observed in the study are highlighted in this chapter.

### **Chapter 5**

It presents and discusses the findings of the study. The themes and the sub-themes are discussed in correspondence with the aim and objectives of the research study. The findings discuss how secondary school principals perceive their professional development needs to enhance their school leadership. Data was generated using face-to-face interviews and document analysis.

### **Chapter 6**

This final chapter provides the outline of the journey I took, and the lessons learnt when this study was undertaken as well as contribution to the body of knowledge. It also stipulates the limitations that I observed as I conducted this study.

## **1.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter set the scene for this research on the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on their professional development needs to enhance leadership. The introduction and background, problem statement, research questions, rationale for the study were highlighted. The chapter also presented delimitation of the study and definition of operational terms. An overview of a theoretical framework and the research methodology were presented. The next chapter provides the literature review in the study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter expounded on the statement of the problem that influenced the research to be undertaken. This chapter presents and reviews literature from both the local and international perspectives on the perceptions of secondary school principals on their professional development needs to enhance leadership. Denney and Tewskbury (2013) define a review of literature as a comprehensive outline of earlier research on a particular issue stating what is known and unknown about the researched topic to set up the rationale on the new investigation. Snyder (2019) states that a literature review can be broadly described as an orderly way of collecting and synthesising data from previous research. According to the American Psychological Association (in Meesala, 2014), scholars assess the body of literature through identification of relationships, inconsistencies, and gaps to propose the subsequent step required to solve the problem in research.

From the provided definitions, the literature review sets a wide context of the study, evidently showing what is involved and what is not involved within the investigation scope. It further validates the conclusions reached and critically scrutinises the research methods used in the study to better understand whether the claims are definite (Snyder, 2019). In this study, the reviewed literature concentrates on the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on their professional development needs to enhance leadership. The literature review also assisted me to explain the problem as well as provide a theoretical background to the study. The reviewed literature justified how the findings relate to the frame of knowledge in my area of research and established the link between what to examine and what has been discovered to refine the research. The review of literature was based on the views of scholars which the researcher found to be appropriate and relevant for this study.

This chapter consists of seven sections which include: the legal framework on professional development, school leadership in the 21st century, conceptualisation of professional development for principals, an overview of principals' professional development programmes, factors affecting principals' professional development and strategies to enhance principals' professional development and the role played by principals in school-based professional development.

## **2.2 LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR PRINCIPALS IN LESOTHO**

In Lesotho, school principals are entrusted with the responsibility to lead and manage schools. According to the Lesotho Education Act (2010), principals, mainly in secondary schools, are considered as teachers, leaders, and managers. Nonetheless, Phamotse (2011) posits that the concept of leadership was brought about by the British colonial government. The Lesotho Education Act (2010) highlights that the Ministry of Education and Training represents the Lesotho government as the chief investor in the education system.

The schools are classified under the following categories: public, independent, or private and special schools (Education Act, 2010). The public schools' admission requirements comply with the policies determined by the Ministry of Education and Training and are compelled to follow government rules and regulations. These kinds of schools receive funding from the government and the teachers are in the Teaching Service. The independent schools' admission policy is determined by their governing bodies. The schools are managed by their own constitution approved by the Ministry of Education and Training. The special schools are those that are categorised under public or independent schools. They obtain services that enhance practitioners to provide non-educational services to improve the quality of special learners. They offer a specialised curriculum authorised by the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training, inclusive of the needs of special learners (Education Act, 2010).

The government of Lesotho owns a lesser number of schools whereas a greater part is owned by the churches and private individuals. According to Khama (2019), in general, the government operates as an educational superstructure entrusted with the responsibility to, among others, formulate the general educational policies on national curriculum development, train teachers, conduct national examination as well as plan and finance education. Since leadership is considered as a practice geared towards influencing others to achieve a shared school vision, schools need leaders with a wide range of competencies to facilitate school effectiveness (Ayiro, 2014). These include - among others - the ability to plan, communicate effectively, delegate responsibilities, and discipline both teachers and learners (Francis & Oluwatiyin, 2019; Mustamin & Yasin, 2012; Piaw et al., 2014; Victor, 2017). To undertake the leadership role successfully, the principals need suitable training and skills to perform the responsibilities of leadership they are entrusted with. It is, therefore, crucial to discuss the policies on professional development of principals to

understand its significance. The following policies, regulations and acts are discussed in the subsequent sections:

- The Teaching Service Regulations, 2002
- The School Supervision and Management Regulations, 1988
- The Education Act, 2010
- The Education Sector Plan (2016-2026),

The legal framework on professional development will therefore be discussed to shed light on their contribution to PD for school principals in Lesotho.

### **2.2.1 Teaching Service Regulations, 2002**

In Lesotho, the principal is regarded as the head teacher whose role is to ensure the overall leadership of the school. On top of the responsibility as a leader, the principal is also a teacher (Teaching Service Regulations, 2002). Therefore, some of the regulations that refer to teachers are inclusive of the principal. In terms of school principals' professional development, the Teaching Service Regulations (2002) state that a teacher who wishes to further their studies needs to apply for a study leave through the Chief Education Officer. This means that principals are allowed to professionally develop themselves through in-service training. When granted the study leave, a teacher may study with or without pay and may be allowed to further studies in any training course conducive to the interest of the service (Teaching Service Regulations, 2002). The regulations further state that a teacher is not expected to take a scholarship or an invitation to attend a training course or seminar unless he or she has been granted study permission. Since the nature of the work the principals perform considers them as teachers well as leaders, these regulations are relevant to their service. However, there are no regulations that are specific for the principals' professional development.

### **2.2.2 School Supervision and Management Regulations, 1988**

According to Motsamai, Jacobs and Wet (2011), besides the duty as a teacher, the principal is entrusted with the following duties, among others: to maintain order and discipline in the school, to ensure cooperation and co-ordination of efforts among the members of the school staff and to establish and maintain a record of pupils enrolled in the school. The principal also performs the

following duties: supervision of instruction in the school, advises and assists teachers in cooperation with the Head of Department (HOD) and submits annual budget reports to the school board (School Supervision and Management Regulations, 1988). In terms of PD for principals, the regulations state that a teacher shall be granted study leave to further their studies. Since the principals also play the teaching role, they are professionally developed through furthering their studies with any higher institution of their choice. This corroborates the Education Act (2010) as it states that in Lesotho, principals are developed professionally by engaging in in-service training.

### **2.2.3 Education Act, 2010**

The Education Act (2010) defines a principal is a teacher in charge of a school. A secondary school principal is also a school board member who is designated by the school proprietor and confirmed by the Minister of Education and Training. All this process is done through engagement of the Teaching Service Commission. Therefore, such candidate is appointed as the secretary of the school board (Education Act, 2010). Principals are further expected to acquire the following key competences to execute their roles effectively: vision, leadership, and management skills, strategic preparation. Principals are further required to be in possession of the subsequent skills: organisational, human resources, interpersonal, management skills for complex information systems, and information management skills (MoET, 2018). Principals are further considered as the executive officers and are expected to ensure effective teaching and learning activities among others (Education Act, 2010). Therefore, their professional development is critical as leaders.

### **2.2.4 The Education Sector Plan (2016-2026)**

According to Education Sector Plan (2016-2026), there are several players in the education sector. In the country, schools in the lower basic and secondary education are possessed by various churches, the government, and the community. The Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training is accountable for approximately all education personnel under government employment. All schools responsible to the Ministry of Education and Training are obligated to respect the government's rules and regulations. Teachers' wages are paid by the government, as well as subsidies for learners' fees, particularly at free lower basic education.

As defined by the Lesotho Education Sector Plan (2016-2026), there is need to enhance the education of teachers by means of participation in both pre-service and in-service training. This

could further be done through ongoing Professional Development to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). SDG 4 expresses a vision to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2016). SDG 4 targets expansion of opportunities across all phases of education from pre-primary to higher and adult education (UNESCO, 2016). The targets broaden the scope of education as a global project to encompass outcomes in literacy, numeracy, and wider learning including global citizenship, sustainability, and gender equality. Therefore, education is noted in several other SDG 4 targets. Teacher training institutions in Lesotho are, therefore, expected to provide teachers with both in-service training and continuing professional development and follow-ups need to be made on the teachers they capacitated.

The Lesotho government appreciates that educational growth is reliant on an efficient education system that comprises quality teachers to produce skilled future citizens who can contribute immensely to the advancement of the country's economy. The following are highlighted as the four crucial issues the education system in Lesotho is expected to support teachers in their roles:

- *Learning and teaching:* To ensure more effective learning and teaching in the way knowledge acquisition for both the young and adult learners is ensured. Learners must attain knowledge and competencies appropriate for employment, self-fulfilment, and a decent life. There is a need for an improved understanding of the learning procedures and developing practical all-encompassing and participative leadership strategies. Additionally, in order to improve the learning results, there is a need to invest in teaching through capacitation of teachers.
- *Teacher training:* Teachers need to be equipped with knowledge through pre-service as well as in-service training, ongoing professional development, and any other suitable learning devices to harness ICTs and distance learning. These are considered critical to close gaps in teacher supply and quality for achievement of SDG 4.
- *Finance of teaching and development of teachers:* SDG 4 targets achievement needs, sufficient, continual, and equity-focussed financing, as well as effective implementation and preparation specifically in the least developed countries' crisis situations.
- *Monitoring and evaluation of development of teachers:* To ensure that educators are strengthened, recruited well, provided with suitable training, and are qualified professionally, as well as filled with motivation and provided with support, there is a need to monitor SDG 4 on teachers and adopt a broader perspective of the 2030 Education Framework.

As highlighted in the Lesotho Education Sector Plan, the following are the Teaching Service Strategic Goals:

- Achieving teacher supply, quantitative and qualitative developments.
- Attaining unbiased spread of teachers, mainly the qualified teachers and those who teach rare skills subjects.
- Enhancing teacher management quality.
- Diversifying the kinds of service providers in teacher development.
- Enhancing teacher motivation.
- Increasing equality in the admission of men and women in the teaching profession.
- Facilitating resolution of conflict, settlement of complaints, disputes conciliation and the decree of law in the Teaching Service Department.

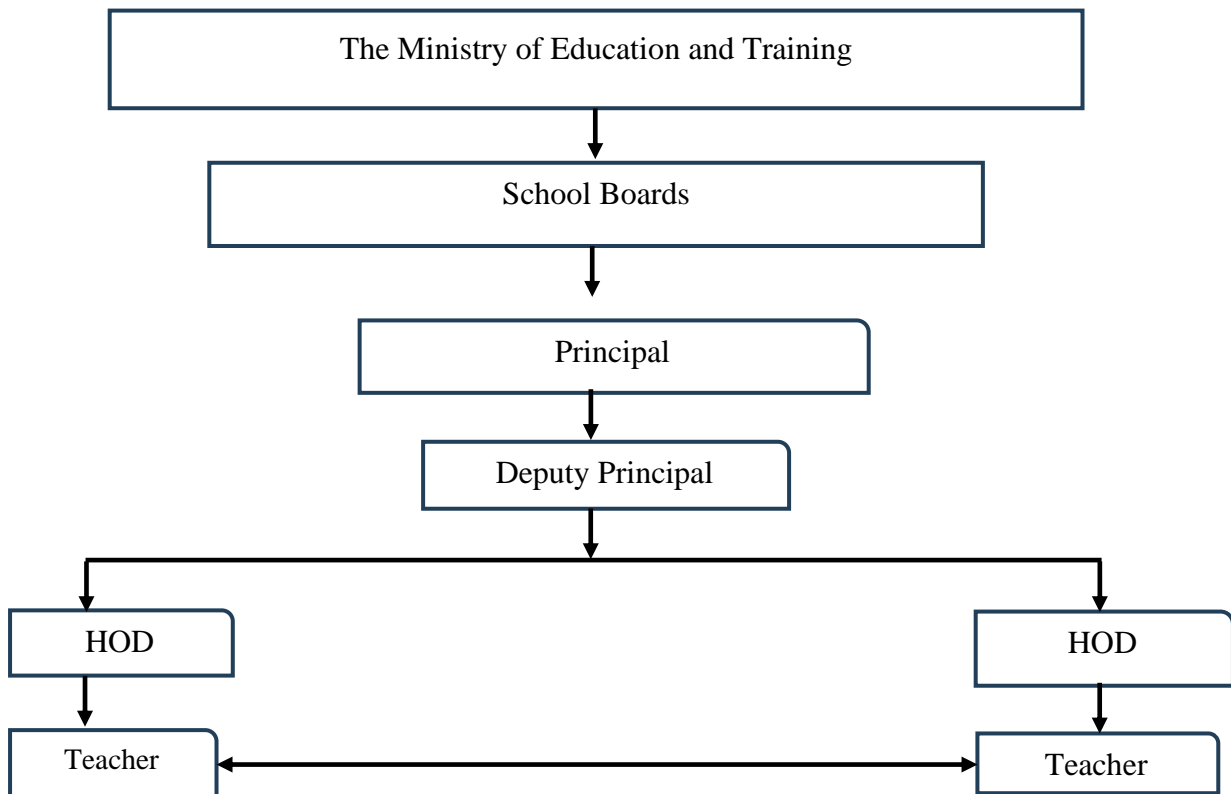
However, the following critical challenges were observed regarding training of teachers:

- Mismanagement of teacher supply to meet the needs of the nation brought by lack of planning to meet the national objectives.
- The absence of the policy on Continuous Professional Development leading to uncoordinated training.
- Inadequately trained teachers in new all-encompassing procedures to provide for every learner with special educational needs.
- Insufficient capacitation of teachers in ICTs-based instruction.
- Lack of funds directed towards Continuous Professional Development.
- Lack of professional standards.

According to the Education Sector Plan, teachers need training on the following:

- Training on Inclusive Education (IE) through pre- and in-service training.
- Continuous Professional Development or In-Service Training.
- Integration of ICT into teacher training programmes.
- Coordination of teacher training in the ministry by formulating the working teacher training policy.
- Engagement of the private sector in financing teacher development.
- Development and implementation of professional standards.

The following school organogram illustrates the structure of Lesotho schools' leadership:



**Figure 1: Lesotho School Management Organogram adapted from (Tlali & Matete, 2020)**

Figure 1 illustrates that the principal is second in command after the school board. To carry out their roles effectively, principals work in collaboration with the deputy principals (DP) and the Heads of Departments (HOD). HODs work directly with their department and account to the DP who in turn reports to the principal. Due to varied activities and mounting pressure from stakeholders, principals are often strained to perform effectively in their roles (Sepiriti, 2021). Therefore, the collaboration among all stakeholders enhances school leadership.

### 2.3 CONCEPTUALISATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The chapter offers a detailed explanation and discussion on the subsequent key concepts used in the study: professional development, school principals and school leadership.

### 2.3.1 Professional development

Kennedy (2016) views professional development as a series of regular training activities undertaken with the purpose of capacitating individuals to expand their job experience. Thus, professional development is a means of supporting people in the workplace to have an improved understanding of the environment in which they operate, the job they perform and how to advance it (Kumar, 2015). Professional development is categorised into formal and informal types. According to Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012), formal PD refers to the activities that are sponsored and structured to achieve a specific educational purpose. As explained by the scholars, learning occurs in prescribed settings such as classrooms, conferences, and workshops. The results of these activities often generate grades, certificates, continuing education credits, or diplomas. On the other hand, informal PD, involves the unstructured activities that are dependent upon the learners themselves. These include observation, trial and error, requesting assistance, communicating with others, listening to stories and researching (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012, p. 4). Although these activities may not appear to facilitate learning in a traditional sense, they serve an important function in PD.

The primary aim of professional development, as posited by Bjekić et al. (2016), is to keep staff equipped, disciplined, and empowered. Additionally, Bjekić et al. (2016), indicate that professional development comprises two connected components: occupational role and personal development, with the intention of improving individual and school performance.

Educational leaders play a major role in school tasks, instructional practices, and learners' success (Goldring and Preston & Huff, 2012). Therefore, the school leaders' professional development is significant to enhance school leadership (Goldring et al., 2012). The key objectives of school leaders' professional development are listed below:

- providing management and leadership with relevant skills and knowledge,
- building collective leadership and high-quality organisational cultures,
- enhancing skills of leadership and outcomes of student learning as well as school performance (Goldring et al., 2012).

According to Mizell (2010), professional development is usually defined as undertaking of prescribed training programmes which include, but are not limited to, seminars, conferences, and workshops. Professional development could also be organised through collaborative learning in

network teams or training courses at a college or university. However, Mizell (2010) further argues that that individuals acquire knowledge informally through engaging in debates and deliberations amongst colleagues and reading independently, researching on various topics, or through peer learning. In line with this argument, Goss (2015) stresses that principals should be developed and capacitated to lead changes and advance their teaching performance in schools. The scholar also points out that the achievement of school goals can solely be ensured through skilful and effective leadership. Zbar (2013) also reinforces the above opinion by stating that principals need to acquire skills to manage organisational transformation. As pointed out by the author, principals are expected to demonstrate the capability to have a clear vision so that they can introduce change. The scholar further brings to view that as teachers and principals take part in professional development, they must exercise their innovative knowledge to work effectively.

### **2.3.2 School principals**

As defined by Marno (2018), a principal is a professional in the school organisation responsible for supervision of all organisational sources in collaboration with teachers to achieve educational goals. Murno (2018) further describes the principal as a supervisor for the professional development of the educational personnel. The school principals understand the needs of the schools they lead and promote teacher professionalism. A similar view is that the principal plays the central role in ensuring that learning and teaching progressions are enhanced as highlighted by Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2020). Beach (2020) states that school leadership is crucial due to its significant function of transforming the education systems. Beach (2020) further maintains that it is through effective leadership that the learner's educational achievement is realised. Scholars such as Kiat et al. (2017) validate that the role of principals is to create conditions conducive to improved curriculum management. Beside their demanding duties and heavy workloads due to budgetary issues, maintenance of the school, student discipline and other administrative matters, principals are progressively expected to cooperate in teachers' professional learning and academic achievement of the learners (Gumus & Belibas, 2020). Further to this, the principals are answerable for the general management of teaching and learning in their respective schools. Kiat et al. (2017) further point out that with this change in responsibilities, principals are expected to assess instruction and assist teachers to work towards school improvement.

As posited by Leithwood et al. (2020), attention has been paid on the claim for effective school management as an empowering factor in the development of quality teaching and learning. According to these scholars, this received additional attention specifically in the 1990s through contemporary approaches to organisational and management theories (Gobby, Amanda & Blackmore, 2018). Scholars such as Anwar and Parveen (2022) have corresponding views that school principals' performance is associated with quality teachers, the outcomes of learners and the overall performance in education. This, therefore, indicates the significance of providing ongoing professional development for school principals to enhance school leadership.

Prastiawam et al. (2020) identified duties of the principal as stated below.

The principal is entrusted with the following responsibilities:

- Supervising classroom teaching.
- Evaluating teaching programmes.
- Developing programmes for implementing teaching activities.
- Managing learners' evaluation programmes.
- Coordinating use of teaching tools.
- Assisting teachers in improving teaching.
- Assisting teachers in diagnosing learners' learning difficulties.
- Organising and supervising students' discipline.
- Conducting school administration.

According to the Lesotho Basic Education Act (2010), school principals are entrusted with the responsibility to:

- oversee daily school administration and leadership,
- manage the school board's accountability for controlling the utilisation of school funds,
- maintain the accounts of the school revenue and expenditure,
- develop school budget annually in preparation for submission to the school board for authorisation,

- maintain records of management for the school as stated in the regulations made by the Ministry of Education,
- ensure that meaningful learning and teaching take place in school,
- discipline all teachers under their management using the code of conduct for disciplinary cases,
- maintain and enforce discipline in the school which they are given the responsibility to lead,
- provide accurate statistical returns as may be stipulated in the regulations within two calendar months of the beginning of a new school year,
- provide a statement of school finances to the school board for authorisation within three months of the end of every school year,
- perform all assigned responsibilities proposed by the Ministry of Education and the school board.

These views correspond with Constantia et al. (2021) who concur that the role performed by principals in ensuring improvement of the quality of education for all includes influencing activities which are geared towards school improvement as well as reinforcement and motivation of students. Senol (2019) also emphasises that principals need to have a positive effect on the school culture and improvement of learners' learning and success. Therefore, the principals' professional development is crucial to their continual achievement as school leaders. Karacabey (2020) supports this view by indicating that school principals are accountable for the ongoing smooth and suitable administration of the school. Further to this, school principals should have an effective leadership structure and should support teacher professional development. As stated by Gemua and Bellibas (2020), contemporary investigations on leadership have provided influential evidence indicating that effective school leadership is a requirement for improvement of school results.

### **2.3.3 School leadership**

According to Kristiawan, Safitri and Lestari (2019), leadership is defined as a process of influencing organisational members through use of various approaches to attain the set goals. In education, leadership is defined as a manipulation of subordinates in the school environment with the main purpose to accomplish educational goals (Conolly et al, 2017; Jonson, 2020). In support

of this view, Roll (2019) refers to leadership as a quality that enables individuals to influence the performance of others to achieve a goal or to get them to do things that they have the skill or motivation to do. This implies that effective school leadership is crucial as it contributes to accomplishment of educational goals. This idea is further corroborated by Prastiawam et al. (2020) who indicate that success in the educational goals highly depends on school principals as educational leaders. The scholars further concur that the school principal is an organisational leader who oversees the management of all school possessions and collaborates with teachers in teaching learners to achieve educational goals. Thus, upgrading the competencies of principals is achievable by means of formal tutoring such as undergraduate and postgraduate programmes designed for them according to their field of expertise (Prastiawam et al. 2020). Prastiawam et al. (2020) also point to the fact that the principal must be equipped with administrative skills, a great commitment, and the highest level of flexibility in performing the leadership duties. This suggests that effective leadership is essential in creating a learning environment in which all learners have access to high-quality education, supporting effective strategies for teaching and learning, as well as keeping pace with transformation across the educational institutions.

According to Tajeddini (2016), leadership is used as a strategy to motivate individuals in an organisation to collectively work towards achieving a common goal and the organisational vision. Scholars concur that a leader must have a clear vision concerning the future as well as precise and clear aims that influence the subordinates to establish their objectives and long-lived vision. That is, leadership is viewed as a procedure for influencing employees in an organisation with the purpose of raising their abilities for the success of the organisations as posited by several scholars such as Demir & Budur, (2019); Torlak & Kuzey, (2019); Ali & Khan, (2020); Mohammed et al., (2020). As expressed by Bezzina, Paletta and Alimehmeti (2018), one of the principal elements of successful schools is high quality leadership. The scholar declares that principals, as leaders of schools, impact significantly and positively on students' results.

Education leaders perform a critical role in influencing effectiveness of schools (Ibrahim et al. 2018). Notman and Henry (2011) state that the value of leadership lies in the hands of school principals. Noman, Hashim, and Abdullah (2018) further posit that the ability to excel relies on leaders understanding the vision and mission of the institutions they lead. That means this responsibility should be managed effectively. However, in this period, the notion of educational leadership should also become the responsibility of each teacher (Ahmad & Hamid, 2021). According to literature, teachers show strong involvement in leadership roles as well as cooperate with the principals in decision-making for improvement of schools. Ahmed and Hamid (2021)

further emphasise that the schools' development and excellence are interpreted through the collective commitment of teachers and administrators.

Studies on school leadership have revealed that the principal's leadership is the most significant element in preserving school culture, environment, and academic excellence (Yusaini & Izham, 2020). According to El-Awad, (2023), school leaders play a key part in developing a culture of cooperation and unity, which in turn supports the increase in knowledge, skills, and expertise among teachers to work effectively and efficiently. Therefore, the school leaders' function is considered as the best example to adopt the culture of collaboration among the staff members (Rahayu et al., 2022). School leaders, according to Thien and Tan (2019), should have the ability to inspire the school community towards realising the success and excellence of the school. As such, they are responsible for actions that can yield change and progress. As a result, it is significant to inculcate effective leadership practices towards a positive change in schools (Thien & Tan, 2019). As asserted by Salwa, Kristiawan and Lian (2019), the principal is viewed as the most persuasive factor in ensuring that quality education is accessed by learners. Thus, their main responsibility is to encourage, and direct teachers, learners, parents, and other stakeholders to collaborate for achievement of school goals.

According to Nazim and Mahmood (2018), leadership is considered as a crucial element of directing processes. It is considered as the ability by the managers to direct the subordinates to achieve the organisational goals. A good leader needs to change his style keeping in view the conditions of the situation (Nazim & Mahmood, 2018). The following various leadership styles are discussed: instructional, transactional, transformational, and collaborative leadership:

### **Instructional Leadership**

The instructional leadership is one the most critical leadership styles of the school principals to enhance learning (Sharif et al., 2020). According to Sharif et al. (2020), it is a universal notion that the principal is solely the instructional leader in a school. Instructional leadership has been popular globally and has been adopted by many countries (Sharif et al., 2020). This style of leadership consists of direct and indirect activities that affect the learning outcomes through provision of direct assistance to teachers. This implies that the principals are entrusted with the responsibility to work together with teachers to provide support and guidance in creating the best teaching practice, hence the need for professional development to improve their leadership skills. Principals who use this model of leadership communicate with their staff members and collaborate to set clear goals aiming at the achievement of learner performance.

### **Transactional Leadership**

According to Nazim and Mahmood (2018), transactional leaders enhance the motivation of the employees by providing contingent rewards. If the work is not properly carried out, there can be negative outcomes too. The main goal of transactional leadership is to make the employees work towards acquiring rewards. If the work is not done properly, there can be negative consequences too. The principals as the transactional leaders set the goals and provide clear relationships between performance and employee rewards. This, therefore, implies that the principals need to be capacitated to be able to perform their leadership role.

### **Transformational Leadership**

A transformational leader makes the process of changes smooth by focusing on the expansion of the organisational vision and encouraging the subordinates to pursue that vision. Transformational leadership comprises of four scales: inspiration, intellectual stimulation, charisma and individual consideration. It is important for the organisation to ensure employee satisfaction, leadership behaviour and loyalty (Nazim & Mahmood, 2018). As expressed by Nazim and Mahmood (2018), the way employees perceive the support of the superiors also plays a vital role in obtaining the desired work outcomes. Successful organisations normally have the contented employees whereas; poor job satisfaction can cripple the organisation (Nazim & Mahmood, 2018).

### **Collaborative Leadership**

Collaborative leadership is one of the leadership styles which promote and advance the organisations. Collaborative leadership is referred to as the involvement of employees at different levels in the organisation to identify problems and analyse situation to achieve solutions. Employees decide to achieve solutions and assist their managers to solve problems (Arbabi & Mehdinezhad, 2016). The principals as a collaborative leaders work towards improvement of the schools. This means that they need to collaborate with all staff members to improve teaching and learning.

## **2.4 SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

Robins and Judge (2015) define leadership as the capability to influence members of the organisation to achieve a goal. The responsibility of educational leadership has undergone various changes in the period of globalisation brought by the various expectations and needs of the

education stakeholders (Senol, 2019). This, according to Senol (2019), influences the requirement for professional development of educational leaders to fulfil their responsibilities. Since principals are entrusted with the massive responsibility of managing schools efficiently, their professional development is very important on their success as leaders. Therefore, participation in professional development programmes extends their knowledge and improves their job performance (Senol, 2019). Rowland (2017) maintains that to cope with the management of education in the 21st century, school principals should be equipped with competencies through professional development programmes. However, Rowland (2017) states that most principals lack access to professional development involving the changing technology and evolving instructional strategies. The 21st century has brought about new transformations in the education systems affecting the school leadership. Roll (2019) opines that the era has been characterised by continuous changes which have affected the role of leadership in contemporary organisations. The current global changes, according to Fry and Egel (2021), demand improved leadership capacity to successfully lead a sustainable education system. Due to these changes, school principals are confronted with new-fangled demands, difficult decisions as well as extra accountabilities more than they have ever experienced (Mestry, 2017). Kaume-Mwinzi (2016) concurs that the 21st century has piloted the new revolution in education leadership structures, therefore, individual leaders must work towards enhanced collaboration, communication, creative learning, openness, invention as well as incorporation of ideas.

To lead implementation of the ever-changing digital period, school principals are entrusted with the responsibility to play the role of technology leaders (Mullen, 2019). Mullen (2019) further states that for school principals to excel in their leadership roles, they ought to consider the 21st century priorities such as innovation and technology which must be strongly practised. Therefore, professional development in technology abilities should be availed for school principals to turn into creative technological leaders in the digital education setting (Agur & Koc, 2019). However, one critical challenge that the communal school system is confronted with is the pressing need to change the traditional classrooms into the 21st century learning environments (Tesik, 2017).

As stated by Battons (2018), school principals must be equipped with the competencies relevant for them to face the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) as well as its challenges. The scholar finds it crucial for principals to work towards transforming educational organisations. Resonating with this view, the study conducted by Gurfidan and Koc (2016) investigated the connection among support services, technology leadership as well as school culture on teachers' integration of technology. The results revealed that a conducive school environment has a potential to produce

positive results and contribute towards effective leadership behaviours, satisfactory support, and motivation for the improved utilisation of technology.

Further to that, Naidoo (2019) asserts that it is significant for the principals to possess managerial skills in areas such as proper handling of employees, properties, finance, and discipline for both teachers and learners for them to become effective leaders since these issues are regularly dealt with in their day-to-day running of the school. More recently, scholars like Adams, Kho and Yap (2022) explored the challenges of continuous professional development management at secondary schools in Indonesia. This study recommended that action should be taken in designing appropriate professional development programmes for school principals. As stated by Fizudin et al. (2022), this will provide the educational contribution to appropriate stakeholders and authorities. Naidoo and Potokri (2021) emphasise the needs for educational leaders to acquire the 4IR skills hence the need for professional development in the rapidly changing world. In the same vein, the effectiveness of the schools depends on the leaders who are kept updated (Naidoo & Potokri, 2021).

Nowadays, school principals are supposed to become outstanding and exceptional leaders due to the rapid increase of transformation in the education system (Pollock & Wang, 2020). For instance, when schools were experiencing challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, principals and other educators were considered the first people to respond to this situation (Johnson, Campbell & Pollock, 2020). In dealing with the unprecedented challenges brought by the pandemic, principals were expected not to only use their current skills and knowledge of teaching students during the pandemic, but to also develop new knowledge and skills in performing some of their current roles.

In their study, Asio and Bayucca (2021) explored the ways in which the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic transformed delivery of quality education to the learners. This study analysed the digital competency level for school managers, how ready their schools were and the anticipated challenges in terms of delivering distance learning. The findings revealed different results that the administrators have on the digital competence aspect based on the statistical analysis. However, from the challenges that were perceived, internet connectivity seemed to be the major concern. Other challenges involved planning, expertise, devices, and funding for distance learning. To support this view, Blake (2020) speculates that to maximise the principals' management roles, there is a requirement for advancement of their technological competence. The scholar argues the necessity for schools to take advantage of the technologies available in delivering education by

employing the advanced technology competencies. Nevertheless, several researchers found that there are differences in the behavioural intention to implement ICT (Ibrahim et al., 2018). Another consideration is that schools experience a challenge of inadequate technologies, therefore, they are not prepared for the implementation of online education. Besides that, Basilaia and Kvavadze (2020) posit that the success of virtual teaching in schools is influenced by having an effective digital environment and support. Additionally, researchers such as Burdina et al. (2018) suggest that in the e-learning curricula for primary schools, there is a need to introduce effective teaching methods.

In support of this view, Paletta (2019) asserts that school principals are regarded as agents of change and the role they play is an evolving one which focusses on educational leadership and school improvement. The research study by Paletta (2019), which was conducted in the Italian context, analysed the rising transmission of responsibility arrangements in school administration and the effects on practices of leadership. The findings of the study, which focussed on school leaders, exposed that accountability is liable to offer an opportunity for improvement of the school if school principals neutralise their possible administration. The scholar further argues consistent integration of accountability into principals' leadership practices with respect to the administrative notion of the school as a professional learning community is crucial.

Ugwu, Makore, Ralitshego, Maboka and Pansiri (2022) conducted a study in which the effect of school leadership (SL) models in the post-colonialism era in influencing African beliefs among learners was explored. The study found that leadership in the traditional African context was categorised under humanitarianism, communism, and ethical virtues. The scholars believe that leaders are expected to guide their staff to attain their goals of effectiveness, excellence as well as integrity.

Another study by Starcey et al. (2017) explored principals' leadership roles and the transformation in the school setting due to technologically savvy natives and society. The study revealed that the leaders are anxious about utilisation of social media platforms in the teaching space and that they need to become more acquainted with it for effective implementation of technology in the teaching space. In order to lessen apprehension, principals need to modify their thoughts about communal media utilisation, hence the need for available professional development in technology skills and flexibility for principals to perform the role of more visionary technology leaders in the 21st technological educational setting.

### **2.4.1 The 21st century school leadership challenges**

The challenges of school leadership are inclusive of the following: lack of digital competencies, insufficient leadership training programmes, multiple responsibilities, discipline, and social problems as well as financial constraints.

#### **2.4.1.1 Lack of digital competencies**

As viewed by Schrum and Levin (2016), leadership is more complicated due to continuous changes that take place in the education system. School principals' leadership and vision for utilisation of the latest technologies largely depends on the influence they have on technological and pedagogical support together with the relevant technology infrastructure. This, according to scholars also depends on appropriate technology infrastructure. Regarding complexity, as stated in a study by Chua Reyes (2015) on the ways in which school principals steered Information and Communication Technology educational reform, the school principals described emerging roles and uncertain abilities regarding technology leadership. The principals further showed that their roles have transformed from managing teachers who have been viewed as knowledge deliverers towards leading teachers who are viewed as facilitators (Chua Reyes, 2015). However, a different point of view has been stated by Starkey et al. (2017) who indicate that an educational leader whose target is to lessen the utilisation of digital devices encounters complications (Starkey et al., 2017).

A study conducted by Gulpan and Baja (2020) in the Philippines contends that the school principal's role has changed from that of a leader of the curriculum to that of a leader of technology. In order to effectively lead technological transformations and revolution in schools, it is essential for the principals to be equipped with technological leadership skills. The study also investigated the utilisation of information technology on decision-making, policymaking and initiating actions. The results revealed that to a reasonable extent, principals manifest technological leadership alongside making decisions, developing policies, and initiating actions.

Another study conducted in Sweden shows the significance of school leadership for the strategies employed in implementing digital skills for learning and teaching in Swedish schools (Petersen, 2018). There seemed to be an emerging necessity for PD in digital competencies of the school principals in managing technology in schools (Pettersson, 2018). This is corroborated by Karakose, Polat and Papadakis (2021) in qualitative research examining perspectives of teachers

on the digital leadership positions and technology competences during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. The results exposed the adequacy of the extent of the utilisation of digital technologies by school principals during the COVID-19 period. Additionally, the findings revealed that technological leadership is necessary in determining how the school principals contribute towards the conception of digital learning culture in schools. The findings also discovered that the technological leadership skills were classified under three groups namely, the use of technology, management skills, and individual people's skills.

#### **2.4.1.2 Insufficient Training Programmes for leaders**

There is a huge demand for school principals to manage schools and ensure day-to-day effective school supervision because of the present age of digital learning. According to Bottery (2016), leadership becomes unsustainable when there is inadequate preparation of principals for their roles. The findings of the research undertaken in Nigeria by Abdurashed and Bello (2015), revealed that to ensure application and integration of technology in both administration and education, principals need the necessary training. According to Abdurashed and Bello (2015), the education boards in Nigeria lack the proper framework for arrangement of programmes like workshops and seminars to train school principals to effectively handle their leadership positions and to enhance instructional leadership skills.

A study by Tingle, Corrales, and Peters (2019) on leadership development programmes of school principals indicates the failure of leadership preparation programmes offered by universities. The programmes appear not to properly train principals for their leadership roles. The findings indicate that principals consider organisational leadership, school culture and strategic operations as influential for their effectiveness as school leaders. Moreover, the results discovered the significance of the support provided by the supervisor and the relationships built with partners as critical to their constant achievement of leadership.

Many factors hinder the achievement of the quality of school principal management. Hendarman, (2018) points to the fact that a considerable number of principals lack the ability to influence academic achievement, self-drive, work discipline and display narrow educational insights. This, according to the author, is caused by lack of competency influenced by internal and external

factors. Low professionalism also has influence on the low efficiency for school principals in enhancing the quality of education (Hendarman, 2018).

#### **2.4.1.3 Multiple Responsibilities**

The 21st century school principals are tasked with multiple roles and their accountabilities are complicated, more demanding and challenging than ever before. In addition, they are overloaded (Mestry, 2017). The author refers to the principal's day as one always filled with varied managerial activities which include, drawing schedules, writing reports, managing relationships with parents and the community at large. The principal also deals with numerous unexpected disciplinary cases involving learners and at times teachers. In Bahrain, for instance, the expectation is that principals need to perform more roles in the integration of Information Technology (IT), despite their extensive input in provision of incentives, moral support, and training opportunities for teachers (Razzak, 2015).

In North Dakota, principals who lead rural schools revealed that they spent a considerable amount of their time handling learners' discipline, yet instructional leadership is the key component of the role they must play (Parson et al., 2016). The principals maintained that the other supervision obligations often demand their full concentration. This causes them to be confronted with misalignment between their action plans and daily tasks (Parson et al., 2016).

DeMatthews et.al. (2021) emphasise that principals perform different and numerous tasks. Their responsibilities include, among others, management of the school, directing, as well as supervising the teaching activities, external partners, networking, and collaboration with the parents. Principals also oversee the management of finances and human resource management. DeMatthews et al. (2021) continue to state that principals are legally responsible for all issues that result from the schools they lead. On top of that, they have a pedagogical role to play.

#### **2.4.1.4 Disciplinary issues**

In their leadership roles, the principals are challenged by the disciplinary issues of the school. In Virginia, US, research findings revealed that beginner principals emphasised that dealing with students' discipline is the greatest challenge they face (Beam, Claxton, & Smith, 2016). In Nigeria,

the outcomes of the research by Abdulrasheed et al. (2016) pointed out that the behaviour of learners which include disciplinary issues as well as continuing dropout rates are the main problematic situations that the school management is faced with (Abdulrasheed et al., 2016). In the same manner, principals in countries such as Turkey are faced with undesirable actions in schools inclusive of smoking and abuse of drugs by learners (Bayar, 2016).

#### **2.4.1.5 Financial constraints**

The principals in Kenya greatly rely on financial support from the parents for the portion of the expenditure required to support the school (Abaya, 2016). That is, principals seem to randomly obtain some funds from the government although the amount is deemed insufficient to perform all the activities of the school (Abaya, 2016).

Another study conducted in Indonesia by Shaturaey (2021) defined the circumstance of the present Islamic education in that country and the findings revealed that the government desires to conduct further educational improvements in public education through training and re-training of teachers. The national education system in that country is challenged by dropout rates, insufficient resources, incompetent teachers, as well as challenges of school fees payment.

The significance of knowledge on financial management is reviewed in the prominent and growing empirical literature (Luhmann et al., 2018). Despite several plans to adopt knowledge regarding finances, the efficiency of financial instruction is discussed in various central ways (Kaiser et al., 2022).

### **2.5 PRINCIPALS' ROLE IN LEARNING AND TEACHING**

School principals perform an essential part in learning and teaching. In other words, they are considered as the change agents who engage in harnessing resources for the production function. The role of principals has been subjected to scrutiny over the past decade (Li, Hallinger and Ko, 2016). The scholars further indicate that school principals are role models for the improvement of the professional growth of teachers, therefore, their professional development is crucial for the effective running of their schools. Research shows that principals' school leadership is very important for improvement of teaching and learning (Park, Lee & Cooc, 2019).

In support of this view, Nwagwu (2018) stresses that the concept of education on its own implies the presence of learning and teaching. Thus, the term school paints a picture of a teacher and a learner on a shared setting. The objective of the study by Timson and Ndupuechi (2019) in Nigeria was to explore capacity building skills for principals in conjunction with teachers' job performance. The study revealed sufficient capacity building skills for principals. Timson and Ndupuechi (2019) recommended that it is the responsibility of the Nigerian governments and other stakeholders in education to make efforts to avail resources to enable principals and teachers to attend additional seminars, workshops, and conferences. According to literature, training and retraining of teachers should be encouraged to prepare them for the changes in the 21st century teaching strategies.

According to Bellibas (2015), developing tangible instructional leadership models and exploring how they are associated with teaching and learning practices has been a concern for research in instructional leadership. However, as opined by Bellibas (2015), there is scarcity of investigation on the ways the internal school society responds to the issue relating to the influence principals have on classroom instruction. The objective was to comprehend how instructional leadership is observed in high schools in Turkey. The results revealed that perceptions of the participants on instructional leadership were influenced by the view that principals indirectly influence teaching, while they have direct involvement on instructional issues.

In Germany, many principals lack extensive formal training on management and leadership to effectively perform their duties (Klein & Schwanenberg, 2022). The study by Klein and Schwanenberg (2022) investigated the areas in which schools could be improved. The scholars found that German principals have professional development needs which are connected to individuals, and school-based associated factors. According to Klein and Schwanenberg (2022), despite lack of trainings, principals reported only moderate professional development needs, in order to improve experience and individual self-efficacy. This is maintained by Weissblueth and Linder (2017) who posit that principals are in a unique position, given that they have the most direct and immediate influence on teachers.

Effective schools have strong leadership support for teaching and learning, and, among all factors, leadership comes after classroom teaching in its effect on student learning (Berkovich & Bogler, 2019). Thus, school leaders have an indirect yet powerful impact on student attainment through their interactions with teachers and their ability to shape school culture. Stephanie et.al. (2020) maintain that to ensure learners' access to strong educational opportunities, principals play an

essential part. They also ensure shaping of the vision for academic achievement for all learners. Principals further establish a conducive environment for education; promote leadership in teachers so that they feel empowered to appreciate the schools' visions; guide instructional decisions that advance teaching and learning; and manage individuals, data and processes to foster school improvement (Stephanie et al., 2020).

Hancock, Müller, Wang and Hachen (2019) further researched on the ways in which school principals influence the learners' achievement. In the USA and Germany, according to the scholars, principals experience challenges in hiring and retaining individuals for management positions. Previous investigation has confirmed that paperwork expansion and responsibilities serve as obstacles to individuals interested in joining the profession. Research shows that school principals' stress is largely caused by many responsibilities and inadequate resources. This stress, according to Hancock et al. (2019), impacts negatively on the school performance and its culture. The study aimed to find the main causes of stress, strategies for stress mitigation, and the stress management limitations among principals in both the USA and Germany. In a similar manner, Day (2017) explored how the former and current New Zealand high school principals viewed the challenges they experienced in their daily running of schools and the professional learning they consider assisting them with in addressing the challenges they encounter. According to this scholar, the topic was deemed significant due to the most important part principals play in ensuring that schools are improved (Day, 2017). Therefore, it is imperative to clearly understand their roles to provide high-quality professional development to enable them to carry out their duties effectively. As argued by Miller (2018), the principals' opinions are not prominently heard in the literature. Moreover, internationally, there is a concern on the high turnover for principals. This, according to the scholar, is attributed to the stressful roles they perform. Identification of both the cause of this stress and the appropriate support needed are essential in ensuring the welfare of principals. Besides that, there is concern regarding lack of aptly qualified candidates for principalship positions. This could be due to the potential leaders observing principals' workloads and lack of work-life balance, which may influence their reluctance to apply for these roles if they are not properly guided (Morris, 2014).

Additionally, principals perform a critical part in defining learners' achievement owing to their responsibilities. Several principals have the potential to construct a conducive climate that fosters excellence in both teaching and learning. As leaders of schools, principals perform a crucial task in ensuring that the school vision and goal are fulfilled using a specific approach in accomplishing the target (Berhane & Kilango, 2022). This substantiates Berhane, Ephrem an Gaikar (2021), who

contend that school principals are regarded as the leaders of curriculum design, differentiation of the fundamentals of comprehensive instructional practices, and guidance of teachers professionally. School principals further participate decision-making processes to have a sense of proprietorship in parents, teachers, students, and community members (Berhane, Ephrem & Gaikar, 2021). The scholars further validate that specific styles of leadership for school principals have a positive impact on learning and teaching environments leading to improved learners' academic performance (Berhane, Ephrem & Gaikar, 2021). In their study, Zhao and Westburry (2021) evaluated principals PD needs in South Carolina in the United States regarding management, instructional leadership, and program administration.

According to Hancock et.al. (2019), the significance of effective school leadership towards schools' achievement is acknowledged in both Germany and the Unites States of America. In both countries, attraction and retainment of qualified school principals is an ongoing challenge. The research conducted by Hancock et al. (2019) revealed several factors associated with work that affect the motivation of teachers to become principals. The researchers acknowledged the differences and similarities in the factors that shaped the motivation of principals in the two countries. Through the conducted survey, the findings offered opportunities for the two countries to learn from each other concerning the strategies that would attract teachers for principalship.

Kim and Lee (2020) also conducted a study exploring the connection between instructional leadership of principals and engagement of teachers in different kinds of professional development in the following countries: Japan, South Korea and Singapore. The findings discovered a variation between the principals' instructional leadership and teachers' involvement in professional development. Kim and Lee (2020) view principals' instructional leadership as an influence on teachers' participation in the programmes such as peer observation, coaching and mentoring in comparison with additional forms of professional development. The study expands research across the general features of teacher education by including evidence on the connection between principals' management and professional development of tutors in the three Asian countries.

Yokota (2021) examined the procedures associated with four leadership development dimension such as recruitment and selection as well as professional knowledge and evaluation in Japan. The research study revealed the following:

1. principals' recruitment and selection based on superiority,
2. unreliable nature of professional learning opportunities,

3. restricted principals' autonomy over personnel and financial issues,
4. principals' evaluation systems as opposed to those for teachers in general.

Bulimo (2017) investigated the perception of school managers on the factors influencing access to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes. The absence of effective CPD policy was revealed as a factor with the highest influence on participation in CPD while on the other hand, failure to align the CPD content to the training needs of the manager had the lowest effect.

## **2.6 CONCEPTUALISATION OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The value of principals' professional development (PD) has been generally given attention (Jayaweera et al., 2021; Rodriguez et al., 2021; Rowland, 2017). However, literature has demonstrated that the issue of the professional development of school leadership has not been given enough attention (Rowland, 2017). An illustration of this view is that during the 1990s, in the United States, numerous participatory research versions were intended for school leaders with the purpose of explaining the problems they met in their daily practice. Since 2000, professional development needs of school partnerships have been improved (Acton, 2021, Rowland, 2017). According to literature, school principals, in a similar manner as teachers, require ongoing professional development in line with the changing demands they are entrusted with (Acton et al., 2017). This is due to the drastic change in their roles in the last decade (Daniel & Griffith, 2017).

There is a critical need to equip novice principals with opportunities for their continuous development professionally to enable them to face the effects of reform and globalisation on school advancement (Ng & Szeto, 2016). In Hong Kong, for example, the study by Wong and Liu (2018) revealed the significance of equipping the newly appointed principals with the administrative and human resources skills to empower them to manage school finances, handle legal matters and manage curriculum and leadership of classroom instruction (Wong & Liu, 2018).

Campbell et al. (2017) stress that it is crucial to provide principals with external support and mentoring at various phases in their profession. Networking with other principals is regarded as the crucial part of high-quality PD to reflect critically and assist in identifying gaps in skills and knowledge (Service & Thornton, 2021). According to Faizuddin et al. (2022), professional

development is further considered significant to enhance principals' performance in various institutions as well as the outcomes of students' learning. However, it is often more complex than it might be expected to arrange effective professional development programmes for principals.

The study by Faizuddin et al. (2022) explored the challenges of management of professional development for Indonesian secondary school principals. The results revealed that challenges are encountered in management of professional development programmes at schools. The challenges comprise heavy workload, resistance to transformation, lack of follow-ups, inappropriate recruitment, and undefined training syllabus. The study recommended that in order to enhance professional development, there should be programmes such as self-initiated approaches, establishment of professional recruitment system, development of professional skills, and ongoing training programmes to advance schools organisations.

According to Sarmurzin, Menlibekova, and Orynbekova (2023), the professional development of school principals becomes significant due to the increasing problems brought about by uncertainty. According to Sarmurzin, Menlibekova, and Orynbekova (2023), improvement of schools depends on the qualified principals who work continuously to enhance their professional development. Schools are not likely to improve in the absence qualified school leaders who continuously participate in professional development. The study' objective was to explore principals' professional development in Kazakhstan, Asia. The findings stress that providing professional advancement preparation programmes for school principals is critical. According to these scholars, school principals lack induction programmes offered before their appointment into the services. Furthermore, current professional development programmes appear not to achieve the principals' needs.

In Australia, the impact of COVID-19 on school principals was explored by Riley, See, Marsh & Dicke, (2021). The recommendations have been to consider professional development of school principals. Corresponding with this view, Harris and Jones (2020) opine that several available training programmes and courses before COVID-19 are not enough to conquer the contemporary problems facing principals. The COVID-19 situation demonstrated that schools require leaders who can take more rapid and strong actions as well as being ready to take responsibility for the consequences and uncertainty during the pandemic. Sum (2022) therefore proclaims that the education leadership of Kazakhstan schools found the principals 'professional development as a major connection in their professional activities, and that little attention was given to more

important concerns. However, the outbreak of coronavirus emphasised the need for school principals to be equipped with skills to deal with unpredictable situations.

A study on the professional development of educational administrators conducted in Sri Lanka by Jayaweera, Karunathilake and Weligamage (2021) found that officials were less worried with the quality of school leaders' professional development than they were with meeting regulatory obligations. It is stated that the differences and irregularities regarding the scope and content of existing programmes are obvious, which certainly underlines the need for a more complex, comprehensive, and long-term system of training school leaders to improve the effectiveness of school management. It is known that in advanced countries, there are well-established regulations for professional development, as well as practices and institutional development programmes for school principals. This demonstrates that professional development is a fundamental and key aspect of inclusive development in Sri Lanka and that it should be considered as a priority in the field of education (Jayaweera et al., 2021).

Continently, Ncube (2019) also researched on the role played by school leadership in the improvement of secondary schools' performance in the Bulawayo province in Zimbabwe. The research further exposed that most of the challenges the schools faced were general, while the most common ones include lack of motivation, negative attitudes, lack of financial support and limited influence of learners. The expectation was for school principals to implement appropriate leadership styles to effectively address the challenges they are faced with in leading the schools. The study suggested flexible leadership styles to be adapted to each school's special situation to advance secondary performance.

### **2.6.1 The importance of PD for principals**

School principals work under a lot of pressure to achieve goals and offer individual learners support to achieve instructional goals. Professional development and continued education for principals are significant to enable them to succeed in their career goals (Antley, 2020). Professional development for principals is directly linked to the process of continuous learning to enhance knowledge and skills (Mourao, 2017).

According to Kheswa, Sandlana, and Kwatubana (2014), professional development of principals is crucial to improve educational practices. Professional development of principals incorporates numerous stages such as enrolment, induction, preparation programme, licensure, as well as

ongoing professional development (Gordon, 2020; Steinberg & Yang, 2020). According to these scholars, effective principal initiation programmes for novice principals comprise coaching, mentoring, taking part in collaborative groups and peer networks to exchange thoughts and perspectives from co-workers. The scholars further demonstrate that programmes such as coaching and mentoring are essential and need to be given special care in appointment of mentors to deliver professional development. An ongoing principals' professional development needs to engage them in a series of continuing improvement and offering support such as continued coaching or mentoring to assist principals in spreading their attention beyond the competencies in management towards instructional leadership. However, (Gordon, 2020; Steinberg & Yang, 2020). suggests that job-embedded support and training are necessary for several principals.

The study by Ifeanyi and Meenyinikor (2019) explored professional development packages of novice principals. The results revealed that novice principals participated in professional development programmes such as mentoring, peer-observation, conference, staff-meetings as well as training on-the-job. The study indicated that the effects of professional development packages on the newly selected principals contributed to their effectiveness in management of the schools. In support of this view, Magnus et al. (2019) also conducted research in Nigeria investigating the leadership needs of principals to enhance effective management of secondary schools in Rivers State. The findings exposed that principals require skills for effective communication. Additionally, the findings revealed the need for both the teachers and principals' involvement in the inspection of schools, administration, and ongoing professional training. The study recommends the need for principals to be permitted to take part in implementing the curriculum and developing policies. The study further exposed that there is a need for provisions of continuous professional development for principals to allow them to lead schools effectively.

## **2.7 AN OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMMES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

This section provides an overview of PD programmes to understand the realities of PD for school principals. According to Aydin et al. (2021), every educational system that claims to be successful needs to signify continuous change and transformation to truly live up to its claims. Isfahani et al. (2019) emphasise that the specialised competence for school principals is central to their professional development. According to the author, the principals need specialised skills to accomplish the goals.

A study conducted in Australia shows that the national education programme for improvement of schools largely paid attention to the ways school principals can achieve the agenda. Since principals are confronted with growing demands, their significance is also rising. A study conducted by Lipscombe et al. (2020) highlighted the initial conclusions reached from a bigger project on Australian middle schools' leadership, through an analysis of important documents such as texts on policy documents, websites as well as reports. The results of the studies by Hallinger, (2018); Mowat and McMahon (2019) demonstrate the effectiveness of leadership models and professional learning programmes which are regularly considered to have extra complications than it could be presumed by both policymakers and educational leaders. Thus, comprehensive leadership training programmes are necessary to equip principals with the necessary skills of leadership.

As shown by literature, a connection is made between leadership training and better school performance to achieve good academic results. However, clarification is not made on the effectiveness of school principals' professional training programmes to enhance school leadership (Faizuddin et al, (2022). Apart from supervision of previous PD practices, the programmes require continuous supervision for future enhancement. These programmes include, among others, workshops, conferences, seminars, in-service training, online and physical training, clusters, coaching and mentoring.

### **2.7.1 Workshops**

Literature recommends the need for education officials to prescribe effective professional development for educators and principals (Johns & Sosibo, 2019). These professional development activities are designed to provide in-service training workshops. The workshops aim to impart new knowledge and re-skill the implementers to improve teaching and learning (Murphy et al., 2020) which would eventually advance the economic prospects of the country. Schools can only be effective when professional development efforts for the principals and teachers are deliberate (Bush, 2020). It is worthy to note that as they deal with curriculum reforms, principals experience extraordinary changes. Hence, the role played by the principal is full of uncertainty and complications (Shava & Tlou, 2018), although they turn into as agents of change in facilitation of reform in learning and teaching in schools (Alsharija & Watters, 2020; Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2019). Principals should be furnished with skills in the arrangement of in-service

training, predominantly through the attendance of workshops, with appropriate leadership competencies to address the needs of teachers and students (Gumus & Bellibas, 2020). For example, reforms on curriculum are done in conjunction with precise efforts to prepare for development of school principals (Alsaleh, 2018; Shafeeu, 2019). Nevertheless, priority is not provided for school leadership during the implementation of reforms, particularly in the developed countries (Pont, 2020).

In countries like Lesotho, for instance, there is lack of initiative on the development of strategic policy aimed at preparing and developing principals to lead their schools and strive towards implementation of curriculum reforms (Moorosi & Komiti, 2020). Therefore, it is significant for the workshops to be arranged for principals to enhance their leadership skills. According to Selepe (2016), the regularly used professional development programmes in several countries are workshops and other training programmes. The author regards workshops as brief educational programmes aimed to equip principals with applied skills and updated understanding of techniques and new information related to their teaching practice. These programmes are regularly considered for individuals working collectively in the same field (Selepe, 2016).

### **2.7.2 Conferences**

Research shows that to effectively enhance leadership in schools, current professional development approaches such as job-embedded learning, peer coaching, mentoring, and action research as PD programmes effective for principals to enhance leadership (Zepeda, 2019) and need to be integrated into principals' programmes. According to the scholar, incorporating the traditional types of PD for principals is viewed as more effective than the more contemporary approaches. Many scholars support the notion that more practice-centred and modern approaches to PD, such as mentoring, school-based PD activities, and action research have a better potential to improve leadership practices for principals (Zepeda, 2019). It must be noted that the traditional PD activities, such as workshops, conferences, and seminars are simple and not expensive to organise and distribute to a bigger group of participants. For most non-western countries such as Turkey, many principals are not adequately prepared for their leadership positions, thereby increasing the provision of in-service training programmes. As a result, reaching out to as many school principals as possible might have a positive impact on leadership practices in such situations. The researchers, therefore, recommend that the economic, social, and cultural contexts

need to be taken into consideration when planning PD activities for principals (Zepeda, 2019). Therefore, the design of training programmes should be influenced by the analysis of school leaders' professional development needs for enhancement and ideal learning methods.

Effective school principals' leadership training and practices need to be associated with better quality performance in schools and academic results. Researchers further argue that little is known about the effectiveness of the contents of leadership training programmes to school leadership practices (Grissom et al., 2019). The most dominant PD programmes in the in-service training of school principals in Turkey were the traditional seminar-based approaches (Gumuse & Ada, 2017). The scholars were sceptical about the effects of PD on leadership practices. Nonetheless, the analysis showed that present PD activities obtainable to Turkish school principals influence some positive changes to their learning-centred leadership practices. The study by Gümüs and Bellibaş (2020) adds to that line of research by examining the impact of PD on principals' learning-centred practices as it attempted to respond to the question on whether participating in many PD programmes has a potential to advance principals' leadership practices. In this country, principals lack prescribed preparation before appointment into the position.

### **2.7.3 Seminars**

In the African context, the study conducted in Nigeria by Peretomode and Dinzei (2019) examined professional development needs of both private and public secondary school principals and found that there was no prominent variation between public and private secondary school principals on the following needs: instructional supervisory skills, communication skills, information, and communication technology development skills, as well as disciplinary skills. The recommendation of the study was that workshops, seminars, and conferences need to be organised often as a means of upgrading school principals' skills on professional development required to undertake their professional responsibilities effectively, notwithstanding their academic qualifications, age, sex, and experience of teaching.

#### **2.7.4 In-service training**

In the world of work of organisations and educational institutions, training is essential (Kalangi et al., 2021). The purpose of the institutions' training is to upgrade a range of skills and techniques for undertaking specific day-to-day duties (Khurotin & Afrianty, 2018). Training is regularly undertaken by educational institutions to advance personnel who lack skills in performing the duties assigned to them properly (Sunasi, Kusjono, & Nuryana, 2019). The scholars, therefore, influence the administrators of the educational organisations to enable career training and development for the employees to acquire skills for efficient performance outcomes.

In countries such as Kenya, Githiari (2017) researched on the ways in which secondary school principals in Nairobi County obtain the leadership competencies essential for effective school management. The results revealed that principals developed leadership competencies through in-service, pre-service, and training on the job. In training before service, exposure to a single component course in education management was provided to the principals with a bachelor's degree. The course was further accessible in another area of specialisation at master's level in both the private and public universities for the principals with master's degrees.

In Lesotho, Ralebese (2022) conducted a study exploring the opinions of primary school principals concerning the job-embedded training offered in the administration of integrated curriculum. The findings revealed that the principals were insufficiently provided with training to manage the new integrated curriculum implementation due to a limited training time in comparison to the one organised for teachers. Additionally, teachers had the opportunity to be trained before the principals could receive training. This, therefore, prompts principals to heavily depend on teachers for both information and the strategies to use in the administration of the curriculum. That means the dynamics of the integrated curriculum implementation were acquired by the teachers, yet the principals were the supervisors. The study recommended that that policy reform and curriculum supervision authorities need to implement a new approach to ensure that principals are empowered with appropriate leadership skills.

#### **2.7.5 Coaching or mentoring**

According to Joo, Sushko and McLean (2012), coaching and mentoring are interchangeably used since they are similar in nature although they are dissimilar in name. As defined by Serrat (2017),

coaching and mentoring are intended for the improvement of individuals' skills for effective performance. Both notions according to Serrat (2017), allow realisation of individuals' capability with the main emphasis on abilities, performance and fostering professional relationships. Kennedy (2014) explains coaching or mentoring as a connection between individual principals to improve the skills needed for daily running of the school. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2020) expressed that both coaching and mentoring are viewed as actions to advance educational leaders' knowledge, capability, skills, and attitude change. That means principals require ongoing professional development through arrangement of in-service training and support through coaching and mentoring programmes which are significant to enhance school leadership (Sutcher et al., 2017). However, the review revealed that from 2015 to 2016, only 20 states needed a certain kind of support for novice principals (Goldrick, 2016).

In their study, Tahir et al, (2021) report on the professional development as well as school leadership programmes needed for capacitation of the principals in Malaysian schools. It emerged from the findings that programmes such as mentoring were regarded as the highly desired programmes for leadership development. The programmes permitted access to knowledge, supervision, and leadership skills for experienced principals. Financial management skill was considered the most needed course for principals. The study, therefore, recommended improvement of professional development programmes for school principals in Malaysia. The recommendation is in line with Zachariou, Kadji-Beltran and Manoli (2013) that it is crucial to arrange programmes for principals' professional development.

### **2.7.6 Induction**

To promote effective leadership skills and reinforce instructional practices, professional learning for principals is essential (Herman et al., 2017). The scholars further emphasise that principals need to be provided with various professional development programmes comprising of coaching or mentoring to enable them to perform well in their roles (Herman et al., 2017). Principals are significant as their role is to enhance high achievement of learners (Gates et al., 2020). Several districts report the connection for school leadership with school development in their strategic plans, district goals and initiatives (Gates et al., 2020). The opportunities for professional knowledge are normally rigorous in the career of the principal or appointment at a school (Gates et al., 2020). These primary career prospects may be mainly significant, since less than half of the

districts in the current study of principals reported reasonable or high fulfilment with their pool of principal applicants (Gates et al., 2020).

## **2.8 SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS**

This section discusses the professional development needs of principals for effective school leadership. Greer et al. (2020) define professional development needs as the gaps that occur between the skills that the employees already possess and those that they need to improve in order to perform their duties effectively and satisfactorily at all times. Mariyanah et al. (2021)) concur that the accomplishment of educational goals is very reliant on the leadership of principal as the one educational leader. Hayat et al. (2015) established in their study that the professional development needs of high school principals include several key types namely, educational, organisational, leadership, communal participation, and technology; and career advancement strategies including participation in seminars, workshops, national and regional conferences, college courses, counselling, principal brainstorming sessions, coaching, paying visits to other schools, and placements.

In another study, Brauckmann, Pashiardis and Arlestig (2020) examined the prevailing opinions of researchers on the problems of establishment of more context-sensitive preparation programmes for school leaders during the period of New Public Management in Education. According to the scholars, principals should be encouraged to reflect on the relevance of PD approaches to their personal needs. Bezzina, Paletta and Alimehmeti (2018) emphasise that effective leadership is the key element of successful schools and that leaders have the most constructive effect on student results. However, it is not clearly known how principals effectively utilise their time daily and how this differs across schools. This study illustrates that Italian principals undertook many leadership performances and engage with the various categories of their work, despite performing it in a very centralised and prescribed context. The results of the study suggest comparisons across the eight principals and the exceptional ways in which they lead the schools.

In Germany, most of the states have embarked on the implementation of preliminary training for school principals which is organised before their appointment into the position of principalship as well as shortly after their appointment (Tulowitzki et al., 2019). Nonetheless, the recent implementation has been carried out in several programmes and, ultimately, it would extend to a great number of principals without any preparatory training for the principalship position (Klein

and Schwanenberg, 2022). Thus, more research is necessary in the field of principal PD in Germany. The provision of PD programmes for principals is like a series of private and public programmes not aimed at addressing their requirements (Klein et al., 2022).

Concerning the areas that need to be addressed through development of relevant PD programmes, one of the ways could be evaluation on the extent to which principals already acquired relevant competences required for leadership standards. Another way is to provide empirical research results on effective school management to deliver PD programmes in those areas where many principals lack the leadership competences. Klein et al. (2022) argue that in Germany, there is lack of prescribed standards for school leadership and lack of research undertaken on effective leadership, and lack of regular evaluation of systematic evaluations of principals PD programmes to assess their PD needs (Klein et al., 2022). Therefore, the PD programmes principals engage in are determined by their observed PD needs. The findings of the study could be used as a guide for the factors that might have an impact on the PD needs of the German principals. Klein and Bremm (2020) posit that several studies paying attention on the PD needs were conducted in the United States (US) in which organisational and instructional upgrading have been a part of principals' job for a long time. In the US, it is mandatory for principals to participate in regular training programmes, and they receive adequate support from the district administration. In Germany, as expressed by Wiesner et al. (2015), schools are progressively anticipated to assess their results to create strategies for enhancement during the past two eras, including changes in the role of principals (Wiesner et al., 2015). The professional development needs of principals explored in the subsequent chapter include, but are not limited to, technological skills, computer literacy, financial management and legal knowledge.

### **2.8.1 Digital literacy skills**

As opined by Ugur and Koç (2019), technology has transformed the way people interact. This transformation is also obvious in education. The study by Ugur and Koç (2019) tracked the ways in which the leadership roles of the principals have transformed in the school environment due to civilisation and digital communities which have become technologically confident. The findings show that principals need to transform their mentality about utilisation of social media platforms to ease their apprehension on the use of technology. To ensure development of principals who are regarded as visionary leaders of technology in the digital educational setting, professional development in technology competencies needs to be more reachable and flexible for principals

Ugur and Koç (2019). The focus of the 21st century principal needs to be on the implementation of technology in the school environment. Furthermore, in the information and digital age, a principal is also supposed to become an instructional and a visionary leader with the ability to make use of technology for management.

Fullan (2016) contends that principals are not sufficiently prepared to manage transformation at their schools which renders their role a complex issue. According to Blaik and Stringer (2015), schools in Abu Dhabi are undergoing an era of transformation and reform. To improve their abilities in the management and initiation of change considering the reforms, the Abu Dhabi Education Council began a plan for professional development of principals. The study was conducted to explore how principals perceived their professional development. The results identified areas of improvement regarding design associated to content and process (Spanneut, Tobin & Ayers, 2012.). The recommendations also show the need for a more practical perspective in designing professional development that provides support for school principals to implement change. This change would also inevitably involve adoption of technology to run schools and to keep abreast of developments.

In a similar vein, Gürfidan and Koç (2016) also researched on the connection between school culture, technology leadership and support services on integration of teacher technology. The study found that effective school leadership is influenced by a positive school climate together with enough support and encouragement for the increased utilisation of technology. Recent studies on school leadership discovered that to maximise the use of technology, technology leadership puts teaching and learning at the heart of technology integration to maximize the opportunities for digital learning settings (Sterrett & Richardson 2019).

### **2.8.2 Discipline management skills**

Discipline from ancient times has never been an easy task for any leader. Secondary schools inherit discipline problem from the primary school or families where the children come from. Kristiawan et al., (2017) studied the preparedness of deputy principals in the management of discipline under the following objectives: 1. to establish the level of preparedness of deputy principals in the management of discipline and 2. to examine the extent to which deputy principals apply the discipline policy guidelines in managing discipline in secondary schools. The study revealed that

discipline is an important aspect of the life of any school, and that teaching and learning can only take place effectively in a disciplined environment.

A study conducted in Virginia in the US revealed that handling discipline issues involving learners is a challenging issue for both the novice and experienced principals (Beam, Claxton, & Smith, 2016). The findings revealed that resolving disciplinary issues between American and African American students is questionable since it was important to ensure that all learners are treated equally (Madsen & Mabokela, 2014). Resonating with this view, the principals in Nigeria pointed out that one of the major challenges they encounter in school management is dealing with the learners' disciplinary cases which include continuous dropout rates (Abdulrasheed et al., 2016). Meanwhile, the most prominent disciplinary issues that the principals in Kenya deal with are inclusive of school fights that happen out of the school, hence the difficulty in disciplining such learners (Abaya, 2016). Another similar experience of learners' discipline in Turkey points to the fact that principals are faced with a situation requiring them to deal with the mounting number of unwanted conducts in their schools consisting of smoking and drug abuse (Bayar, 2016).

In South Africa, Van Wyk and Pelsler (2014) indicated that the policies on discipline are likely not to be effectively implemented due to insufficient bases, lack of obligation and training of school principals. According to the authors, school principals should be thoroughly capacitated through training programmes for them to develop and implement discipline policies in schools. School principals need to be actively involved in their role especially the one involving sharing of knowledge on the school disciplinary policies implementation in collaboration with other personnel in the administration of the school. Many procedures were proposed to effectively outline disciplinary policies (Van Wyk and Pelsler, 2014). However, it could be argued that how the policies were implemented in the different schools is another matter which could be dependent on whether the principals were fully capacitated to implement the policies. Fitria (2017) adds that, as a leader, the principal performs a major role in the expansion of the strategies meant to model discipline of learners in the school as well as to supervise the designed course or programme while the role of the teacher is application of the strategy to the learners.

Arhipova, Kokina and Rauckienė-Michaelsson (2018) further emphasise that work in the 21st century is more complicated rather than being routine. The evolving nature of the school environment has brought new demands on principals. In this period, knowledge of school management, handling school finances and dealing with legal issues, are the focus for the preparation of school principals. According to the scholars, the changes in education have

developed the need for a robust emphasis on expansion of instructional leadership skills to encourage effective teaching and learning. Principals need to adopt a shared accountability not only for learners' intellectual and educational development, but also for their personal, emotional, and physical development. The study found that school principals need to advance their management skills in employee management, and financial and communication management for successful school leadership. It is observed that the disciplinary situation of schools creates major challenges too for principals as they are confronted with very stressful state of work characterised by handling learners' disciplinary issues (Beam et al., 2016).

### **2.8.3 Financial management skills**

Financial management incorporates planning, organising, controlling as well as management of financial resources to accomplish organisational objectives (Ekpenyong, 2016). Financial management also entails management of resources to guarantee elimination of fraud, ensure efficiency and control excess spending. In secondary schools, financial management is a key responsibility of all principals in that they need to show the capability to increase and mobilise funds to ensure effective and efficient use of school funds. Therefore, the principalship is regarded as the chief executive position occupied by an individual with the accountability of controlling, planning, inspiring, directing, organising, and coordinating all organisational resources inclusive of finances, at the expense of the school to ensure attainment of educational goals and objectives (Ofojebe & Nnebedum, 2016). This means that financial management competences are required for principals to ensure achievement of anticipated goals or results of education with the smallest number of obtainable resources.

According to Hutton (2013), for principals to lead schools effectively, professional training is critical since its main purpose is to enhance principals' self-confidence and ability to accomplish their managerial duties with the highest level of confidence and willingness. In Kenya, principals rely greatly on financial assistance from the parents to control the financial expenditure required for maintaining the schools. However, principals occasionally obtain some funds from the government although the sum is often insufficient to accommodate the overall running of schools (Abaya, 2016). Comparable results were conveyed by the research conducted in Kenya which revealed that several principals show passiveness concerning the implementation of new programmes in fear that the already existing funds would be exhausted (Mingaine, 2013). In a

similar manner, in Nyamira County, Kenya, principals seemed to encounter financial challenges preventing them from effective execution of their duties (Onderi & Makori, 2013). The authors further explain that due to fewer learners because of the free funding system in Kenya, the schools in the county are restrained financially. As a result of this financial struggle, schools incidentally lack human resources such as teachers to guarantee that learning takes place (Onderi & Makori, 2013). A study conducted in the northern region of Nigeria revealed that criticism is hurled at principals for inadequate funding offered to the schools, and that this has a negative impact on the principals' leadership and affects their capability to run schools owing to restricted resources (Abdulrasheed & Bello, 2015). This suggests that owing to the meagre financial resources availed to schools, it is imperative that principals are equipped with prudent financial management skills to ensure the school finances can still go a long way in engendering an effective and financially viable administration.

#### **2.8.4 Management and Leaderships skills**

Leadership is a process of manipulating employees in an organisation with numerous methods that have been determined to accomplish the goals by using all accessible resources proficiently (Kristiawan, Safitri, & Lestari, 2017). According to Salwa, Kristiawan, and Lian (2019), the principal is one of the factors that inspires success in all education efforts and the most influential in creating quality education processes and outcomes. The principal is accountable for encouraging, directing, guiding, and stirring the learners, teachers, parents, and stakeholders to work together and participate in achieving goals (Kristiawan et al., 2017). As explained by Pianda (2018), the achievement and development of the school is strongly influenced by the leadership pattern of the principal. It is crucial, therefore, for principals to have the ability to undertake their duties with a full sense of responsibility in their role as leaders and to understand that the school is an organisation comprising numerous elements which are dependent on the principal's achievement as a school leader.

From a global perspective, principals need to be equipped with the skills and training on management opportunities to facilitate development of leadership skills. For instance, these could include both interpersonal and personal skills (Rosário, Mireia, Ilídia and José (2020). Furthermore, there should be training organised for principals focussing on instructional and distributed leadership practices. According to the scholars, the principals prefer reflective and

collaborative methods to be included in designing their leadership training programmes. The practical implications for designing orderly professional development practices, in a lifetime perspective, are also discussed in literature (Rosário et al., 2020). According to literature, in countries such as Portugal, there is scarcity of research undertaken regarding the training needs of principals from their perspectives (Serrao et al., 2020). Literature shows that principals need capacitation with the competencies to effectively lead schools as well as be granted opportunities for training programmes to ensure development of their personal, interpersonal, and socio-emotional skills.

Moreover, there is a huge demand globally for effective school leaders to perform management activities as well as the day-to-day school administration because of the contemporary period of technology and digital learning. There have been deliberations indicating failure of principal preparation programmes to adequately prepare them to ensure learners attain improved performance. A study conducted in the United States, at Highline Public Schools, revealed low self-efficacy and job satisfaction among principals (Fink & Silverman, 2014). This is mainly due to inability for the principals to obtain essential, harmonised, and fixed professional training to supplement and boost their leadership skills (Fink & Silverman, 2014). In the research carried out in Bangladesh, it was discovered that principals lack capacitation in management issues through professional development training programmes, taking into consideration that the secondary schools' management appoint to leadership positions principals with a bachelor's degree in education instead of a professional management degree (Salahuddin, 2012).

A study by Mashaya, Nsibande and Mkhondo (2022) investigated school principals' professional development in the Shiselweni region of Eswatini. The study revealed that there are several PD programmes arranged for principals to be equipped with the relevant skills of management through professional development. These programmes include instructional leadership, financial, personnel and organisational management. Furthermore, school principals, according to the study, experience numerous different challenges comprising financial constraints, inadequate resources, and teacher resistance to change. This suggests that the Ministry of Education and Training in Lesotho needs to develop a professional development policy for school principals and teachers for more answerability due to what has been learnt both locally, regionally and internationally. The lessons from the different parts of the world – as exemplified by the literature – show that principals should not be thrown into the deep end to either swim or drown in their responsibilities but need to be continually assisted to cope with the demands of their roles as leaders. Many school

outcomes are dependent on principals' skills and abilities to create a functional teaching and learning environment.

In Lesotho, Komiti and Moorosi (2020) investigated the career development of women principals. The study was aimed at exploring the ways in which women principals construct career development experiences exploring their choice of teaching careers, in what ways the careers help them to transition from teaching to principalship as well as career development opportunities that are available in a specific situation. According to this study, career advancement opportunities include self-initiated programmes that focus on improvement of qualifications, being granted the opportunity to carry out the leadership roles, as well as developing self-confidence to vigorously request a promotion. However, in Lesotho, there is scarcity of research studies on how principals are professionally developed to enhance their leadership skills. Literature reveals that, as the main centres and providers of knowledge and skills, schools depend mostly on principals for self-renewal, strategic direction, and innovation in teaching and learning (Berkovich & Bogler, 2019). Thus, professional development of principals is significant for them to effectively accomplish leadership goals.

In recent years, there has been growing attention in the educational management and leadership field through numerous studies (Skordoulis et al., 2016; Knapp & Hopmann, 2017; Melissopoulos & Stravakou, 2018). Studies further highlight that management has a positive influence on organisational learning and results (Drosos et al., 2021; Harris & Jones, 2018). Nonetheless, a few studies investigated the degree to which leadership training programmes advance school principals' performances (Gumus, & Bellibas, 2020). The results are especially significant in non-Western contexts where there is often lack of pre-service training for principals. The researchers investigated the extent to which professional development programmes are accessible to school principals to influence their leadership practices. The study by Gumus and Ada (2017) indicates that the principals require participation in formal pre-service training in their principalship positions, however, none of these programmes are adequate for principals' PD opportunities.

The school leaders matter most in organisational performance (Eacott & Asuga, 2014). Therefore, if there is lack of significant training and expansion of school leaders and government initiatives aimed at creating high-quality education, systems are unlikely to flourish (Eacott & Asuga, 2014). According to Moorosi and Bush (2020), educational organisations, especially in the African context, are seen as the worst culprits in deploying unqualified principals due to the assumption that the experience in the teaching role is adequate to prepare them for leadership. Bush (2020)

argues that principals are appointed based on their teaching experience as the literature has reliably shown despite lack of leadership development programmes in some universities in various countries,

Scholars emphasise that for principals to perform well in their positions as school leaders, they should be equipped with training on distributed and instructional and leadership practices (Serrao et al., 2020). In the school environment, the principal is charged with the responsibility of improving the ability of all staff for attainment of high levels of student learning (Fiarman, 2017). Research shows that for this to be realised, principals need to have the leadership capacity for ensuring a strong focus on instruction and continuous learning through the building of collaborative cultures within the school, as well as learning when and how to seek support from outside the school (Fullan, 2014, Baum & Krulwich, 2017).

As the chief accounting officers, principals have a great impact in influencing the progress of schools (Kusumaningrum, Sumarsono & Gunawan, 2018). That is, the school principals are expected to acquire organisational skills, high level of commitment, and flexibility in performance of their duties. Therefore, principals need to be provided with training on managerial skills to advance their performance.

In line with the expressed viewpoint, the study by Mahmud and Sanusi (2021) aimed at exploring how training and managerial skills have an impact on principals' performance. The findings revealed that training and principals' managerial skills have an impact of on their performance. This, therefore, demonstrates that if principals engage in regular training activities, they could acquire advanced leadership and organisational skills. Thus, the principal's managerial skills have an influence on the increased performance of the school (Mahmud & Sanusi, 2021).

## **2.9 FACTORS AFFECTING SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

In their research study, Isfahani et al. (2019) investigated the factors that impact on school principals' professional development. A current study conducted in Indonesia by Fizudin et al. (2022) found that there are challenges of managing ongoing professional development for principals at secondary school level. The results exposed the challenges in management of professional development programmes in schools comprising of workloads, resistance to change, as well as almost no track of performance, improper enrolment, and uncertain training syllabus.

Recommendations made to improve PD programmes include creation of personal strategies, development of professional skills, establishment of a professional recruitment system, creation of continuous training programmes, and optimisation of school organisations (Fizudin et al., 2022). The results of this study have the potential to become an additional guide to implement efficient PD and can be the best platform for improvement of the professional development of educational leaders. Therefore, equipping principals with management approaches to cope with continuing challenges requires purposeful development of capacitation procedures (Bush, 2018).

### **2.9.1 Financial constraints**

As already seen in the previous literature reviewed, school principals in Kenya heavily rely on financial assistance from parents to handle the expenditure required to maintain schools. However, the funds received from the government are often inadequate to cater for all school needs (Abaya, 2016). Likewise, in Nigeria, the issue of lack insufficient funds was discovered where most principals lamented the insufficient funding offered to schools and this lack of funds was observed to have a negative effect on the principals' capacity to manage schools owing to the restriction of resources (Abdulrasheed & Bello, 2015).

### **2.9.2 Lack of support**

A study by Adams and Muthiah (2020), stresses that the principals' leadership is often affected by inadequate support offered by the Ministry of Education and parents. This, as the scholars contend, has a direct impact on how effective the principals' leadership is in navigation of the school towards success. The study suggests that the Ministry should play the role of being the central constituent in the development of the strategies to accomplish improvements in principals' leadership. When principals are well developed, they form a connection between the schools and the societies in which they live (Adams & Muthiah, 2020). Thus, the Ministry can be a good or a bad influence on the current critical challenges that the principals face in performing their duties (Abaya, 2016). Previous studies indicate that principals perform their duties in the organisations

in which the policies are imposed on them, resulting in negative effects upon the schools and vulnerability due to the country's political influence (Abaya, 2016).

### **2.9.3 Busy schedules**

Principals encounter challenges that hinder the improvement of classroom instruction. As pointed out by Lewis, Scott and Spiegelman (2020), principals face challenges in practising instructional leadership. The challenges include, but are not limited to, lack of educational resources and funding as well as high teacher turnover. In conceptualising principals' challenges, Rahman, Tahir, Anis and Ali (2020) assert that they are characterised into two key components: the internal and the external challenges. Principals internally encounter the challenges of insufficient knowledge and skills to become effective instructional leaders, and they are further challenged by heavy workloads, among others. Some of the external challenges include lack of cooperation from teachers as well as lack professional development. In addition, lack of support from parents is another challenge faced by principals and this affects their instructional leadership (Rahman, Tahir, Anis and Ali, 2020). The lack of cooperation from teachers, coupled with the lack of support from parents, would suggest that principals' workloads intensify as they may not be able to receive the required assistance from these important partners and stakeholders.

## **2.10 STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE PRINCIPALS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Previous studies have established that knowledge and skills in technology have been fundamental in school leadership (Raman, Thannimalai and Ismail, 2019). Therefore, the programmes that prepare principals for leadership need to be grounded on technology use for improvement of its integration in the classrooms. However, research further suggests ways in which principals should be developed professionally (Raman, Thannimalai and Ismail, 2019). The study was on the experiences of newly appointed principals' leadership in the rural public schools in a mid-western U.S. state, and it was revealed that the principals' work is challenging due to an imbalance of both their professional and private lives, which becomes a challenge for them to meet their community's expectations.

According to Githiari (2017), research conducted in Kenya revealed that principals experience criticism regarding cases of maladministration resulting in institutional mishaps, tragedies, conflicts, and even social and economic corruption that Kenya has observed. The study sought to

discover the ways in which principals obtain the leadership competencies needed for effective leadership of secondary schools in Nairobi County. The study found that the principals attained leadership capabilities by participating in pre-service, in-service, and training on the job. The strategies used to boost principals' professional development included the following: networking, induction of the newly appointed principals and peer support.

### **2.10.1 Networking**

Networking is considered as a way of enhancing principals' self- efficacy (Shantal et al., 2014; Ng & Szeto, 2015). The scholars further demonstrate that networking allows principals to be in constant touch to share the required advice with one another (Shantal et al., 2014). Moreover, networking allows every principal who is a member of the network to stay up to date on the leadership acts of everybody in the network. A qualitative study conducted in Hong Kong on the professional needs of novice principals concurs that joining peer networks and working with mentors has the potential to impact positively on principals (Kong, Ng and Szeto, 2015). In addition, principals' self-efficacy is influenced by the inspiration provided by co-workers within the network (Shantal et al., 2014).

Nurdiant and Nurdin (2020) maintain that principals are often challenged by administering school processes and leading the instructional leadership. Various PD models to train educational leaders for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) transformations have been identified. The models encompass in-service training, group learning, cohort meetings, learning by exposure, formal leadership training for new principals, obligatory leadership courses through the leadership training centre, consistent training, meet with people, and coaching. As can be observed, some of these models (such as cohort meetings and group leaning) encourage networking among principals. Forging such networks could be vital as they may create platforms through which school leaders share experiences and solve problems together. Embedded in the school leadership networking are the essential leadership responsibilities for principals to benchmark their skills and work towards improved leadership practices (Nurdiant & Nurdin, 2020).

### **2.10.2 Induction of newly appointed principals**

Induction programmes for newly appointed principals are a range of orientation activities, professional development, and problem-solving practice in the learning or guidance and counselling processes for novice principals in schools where they are assigned. Several countries conduct induction programmes for newly appointed principals and become successful (Bush, 2018), yet in Indonesia, the government does not have an induction programme yet. According to research, novice principals must be equipped with the skills to become comfortable to perform their new roles, and lead through transformation. Research has shown that parents, teachers, students, as well as the government have high expectations about the performance of the principals. Therefore, newly appointed principals need induction programmes to provide them with support to perform their roles effectively (Susilowati, 2021).

School principals have an exceptional role to lead the schools. Thus, being school principals has never been an easy task, especially for newly appointed principals (Susilowati, 2021). Since promotion from being a teacher to becoming a principal imposes several challenges, induction programmes are needed. These programmes prepare novice principals to succeed as leaders who are capable of performing their roles effectively. Therefore, novice principals require professional development processes which help them to adapt from being teachers to assuming responsibilities of school principals (Susilowati, 2021).

As posited by Susilowati (2021), being a school principal is difficult, particularly in the initial stage of the appointment. In Indonesia, before principals are assigned the role of principalship, they participate in Principal Candidates Preparation Programme, a procedure for ensuring that the recruitment of principal candidates is smooth. They also participate in training workshops to enhance competence and school management skills. Nonetheless, principals still find numerous difficulties in leading schools, associated with adapting to the new environment which comprises infrastructure, learners and teachers, school funds and school leadership. Majority of inexperienced principals commence their leadership responsibilities in schools with insufficient expertise, supervision, and direction. Therefore, it is crucial to arrange training programmes necessary to equip new principals with the requisite skills and opportunities to practise learned leadership theories. Moreover, novice principals need to acquire leadership skills under the guidance and supervision of experienced principals as their mentors (Shanatal et al., 2014).

### **2.10.3 Peer support**

In their study, Tingle, Corrales, and Peters (2019) posit that to ensure school principals function effectively, school leadership development programmes need to be incorporated into the curriculum. From the survey that was conducted with principals, the results showed that principals regard training activities associated with school culture and strategic processes as influential on the effectiveness of their leadership. Furthermore, data highlights the significance of supervisor support as well as building relationships with peers as crucial to principals' ongoing achievement as leaders.

The results of the study by Acton (2021) indicate that principals acquire inadequate professional development and support to become front-runners of transformation. Their professional learning as managers of change is acquired through the experience they gather on the job, and from training and networking with reliable co-workers. According to Acton (2022), this causes knowledge gaps in principals' comprehension of the process of change. Further to this, Acton (2022) articulates that school leaders are entrusted with the accountability to implement transformation in schools. Therefore, perceptions from knowledgeable principals may assist in guiding the professional development practices to provide the essential skills to lead effective school improvement.

## **2.11 THE PRINCIPALS' ROLE IN SCHOOL-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The notion of principals' support of teacher professional development has gained considerable attention among scholars in the Educational Management and Leadership field (Liu, Hallinger & Feng, 2016). There is increasing pressure on both the schools and principals to strive towards improvement of learning in many countries. As postulated by Karacabey (2020), the responsibility of ensuring that teachers are capacitated lies with them while school principals are regarded as the leaders who offer opportunities for teachers' support and professional development. The scholar further indicates that school principals are part of the individuals whose mandate is to control the work environment of teachers and the rest of the school workers. Karacabey (2020) further indicates that the principal's additional duty is to provide resource support for teachers.

### **2.11.1 Support**

The most significant part that the school principal is expected to play is to offer support and foster the development of others. The development is usually considered at the level of the student. This, according to research, is not sole focus of the principals as the expectation is for them to also focus on the development of teachers in their schools (Sterrett & Richardson, 2020). This suggests that in order to achieve improvement of goals, teacher professional development is a crucial factor for improvement of the quality of the school (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). The principal is placed in a situation where they must ensure initiation and support of this effort to improve the learning experience. To support this view, the reviewed literature designates principals as supporters of teaching and learning which are critical to improving school performance (Park, Lee, & Cooc, 2019). As such, effective principal behaviours encompass impacting on teachers and their working conditions. These behaviours incorporate, among other things, creating robust mission and vision, including teachers' decision-making, providing constructive feedback, and providing necessary mentoring support to both experienced and new teachers in the same way (Fuller, Pendola, & Young, 2018). By assisting the support of teacher development, the principal reinforces learning, together with teaching inside the school.

This is supported by Richardson and Sterrett (2018) who indicate that current research is scarce on the way principals offer support for professional knowledge in the digital learning atmosphere. Principals could assist in reinforcing teachers by using relevant and customised professional learning opportunities. In schools, principals should engage in setting up professional development programmes, and actively facilitate professional development for their employees (Zide, 2016).

Moorosi and Komiti (2020) explored the influence of female school leadership in the improvement of learning and teaching in the Mohale's Hoek District. The results revealed that learners' performance was enhanced in the schools where principals were continually supportive to the teachers by offering both the learning materials and teaching facilities. The study further shows that the principal is viewed as an accountable officer who inspires the teachers and engages learners to participate actively in their work by rewarding best performers. This positive support spurs learners to learn, thus promoting vigorous competition among them. The study recommends that the school principals need to develop regular visits to the classrooms to assess the way learning and teaching is conducted.

In Lesotho, Habi (2022) explored the practices of leadership in well performing primary schools in the rural areas in Qacha's Nek. According to this study, the principal's role was to ensure all learners have access to education and for advancement of the learners' possibility for leadership. The study found it is significant to explore rural high school principals' enactment of leadership, and the way they use their experiences of leadership to produce a conducive learning atmosphere for both teaching and learning. The research findings revealed that principals play a vital part in changing the schools they lead into conducive learning environments through their leadership. For the rural principals, leadership is regarded as a joint effort and cooperation on decision-making. Furthermore, if principals comprehend their leadership and experience, it allows development of good interpersonal relations with staff members and other stakeholders. Thus, to ensure the best academic performance, staff members need to be motivated and supervised to perform well in their work. Many challenges associated with leadership were also identified, and these include too much workload, unavailable resources, and restricted official visits (Habi, 2022).

Effective leadership in schools is considered to have a positive influence on learners' performance. According to Service and Thornton (2020), in New Zealand, there is lack of a deliberate process to sustain the effectiveness of school principals in their careers. The study discusses the opinions of new and old New Zealand secondary school principals regarding the complexity of their position and the assistance they consider relevant to assist them in making sense of their position and its challenges. The study advocates that as principals construct knowledge from learning on the job, there is a slight chance to critically reflect on the support needed for ongoing learning and development.

## **2.12 SCHOOL-BASED PD PROGRAMMES**

School-based professional development is viewed as an active decision-making process from when the teaching career begins. In their new position, beginning teachers need to fulfil an array of responsibilities, meet diverse challenges, and face new potentials (Day, 2017). Day posits that research indicates learners' educational results greatly rely on equitable education systems. Teachers are mostly recognised as the most influential and contributing factor to learners' achievements (Day, 2017). Therefore, improvement of the quality of schools is largely reliant on teacher quality and teacher learning with a focus on recruitment, preparation, induction, ongoing professional development, and collective improvement of practice (Darling-Hammond, 2017). According to Needu (2018), teachers need time to appreciate how to tackle complex ideas, gather new competencies, develop new approaches, research, discuss, reflect, evaluate, try new

strategies, and integrate them into their day-to-day classroom activities. Thus, they require engagement in school-based professional development programmes to fulfil their demanding roles. Teachers' professional development programmes which school principals support include, but are not limited to, workshops, departmental meetings, and classroom observations.

### **2.12.1 Workshops**

It is noted that workshops provide an important platform for principals to develop professionally and to discuss important issues with different stakeholders. My own experience of workshops shows that discussions with colleagues, partners and stakeholders are useful in ensuring proper planning and attainment of mutual goals. Scholars indicate that development of teachers' proficiency can be achieved through various kinds of activities, like courses and workshops, attending degree programmes, mentoring and coaching, as well as informal dialogue among the concerned teachers (de Jong, 2019).

### **2.12.2 Collaborative learning**

Professional development assists teachers through the sharing of ideas and collaborating in learning. This takes place in the job-rooted contexts connecting the current instructional strategies for teachers, learners and classrooms (Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Madely & Gardner, 2017). Though collaborative learning, teachers can cooperate to positively change the culture and instruction of their departments and schools. Collaboration, as opined by scholars, can be experienced from one-on-one or small group as well as the entire school collaboration and collaboration with other specialists beyond the school (Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Madely & Gardner, 2017).

## **2.13 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed the literature review on school principals' perceptions on professional development needs. The chapter covered global as well as local perspectives of professional

development. To conclude, school principals' professional advancement is crucial in the effective running of schools (Mohd et al (2023). Engaging in professional development programmes equips principals with the necessary competencies they need to adapt in the ever-changing world. However, Lesotho secondary school principals lack capacitation in many areas of leadership (Ralebese, 2019). The reviewed literature indicates a gap of professional development of principals in Lesotho (Moorosi & Komiti, 2020. This, study, therefore., sought to explore the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on their professional development needs to enhance leadership. The subsequent chapter discusses the theories that informed the research.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter presented the literature review relevant for this research. This chapter discusses the theories that underpin the study. A theory is defined as a formal systematic explanation of the events, and predictions of how events relate to one another (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2012). A theory is further viewed as a significant part of scholarly research that provides guidance as well as exploration of the relationships of the phenomena (Harlow, 2009). This study is guided by two theories namely, constructivism theory by Jean Piaget (1955) and complexity leadership theory by Marion and Uhl-Bien (2001). These theories provide a conceptualisation of the perceptions of principals on their professional development through their interaction with their social contexts.

Jean Piaget's constructivism theory emphasises that individuals create knowledge and produce meaning based on their experiences (Paget, 1955). The constructivism learning theory views learning as a process that occurs through 'constructing' information in people's thoughts. Constructivism maintains that learners possess an active part in the thinking about what is learnt, thinking it over again, and drawing conclusions founded on their logical and critical thinking. According to Piaget (1973), individuals receive knowledge actively and then construct the new forms of knowledge from the previous forms of knowledge. Constructivism theories are primarily involved with providing a definition of how individuals understand circumstances and generate meaning. I linked the two theories to provide different explanations on how the study is organised to conceptualise principals' perceptions on their professional development needs to enhance school leadership. The theory also guided the principals to construct meaning of their perceptions from the environments in which they live.

This study is also underpinned by complexity leadership theory. This theory appreciates the active connections that happen inside organisations through transformation, innovation, and evolution focusing on complicated relations and collaboration rather than supervising, regulating, and dictatorship (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009). The complex leadership of school principals was explored in the previous chapter. Therefore, constructivism theory provides a lens through which the perceptions of principals' roles as leaders can be viewed. The subsequent sections define and discuss in detail the two theoretical frames that underpin this study.

### 3.2 CONSTRUCTIVISM THEORY

Constructivism was obtained from the reference of Piaget's opinions as a "constructivist" (Gruber & Voneche, 1977). Jean Piaget (1896-1980) is known as one of the first theorists in constructivism. As a biologist, he was concerned with how individuals adapt to the environment and the way in which former mental knowledge influences behaviours. According to Piaget (1964), construction of knowledge is about developing, changing, and understanding the way an object is created. Through interactions with the environment, individuals change their adopted view of the world. Piaget (1964) pointed out that there is a connection between stimulus and response. He further revealed that a motivation is responsible for creation of a response, which can influence the way the next stimulus is observed. Thus, the way individuals think of a phenomenon is informed by the external stimuli. Brau (2020) views individuals at the centre of knowledge creation and acquisition through an interactive process between their knowledges and thoughts. Constructivism, according to this author, is the perspective on learning which is concerned with how people actively construct and create knowledge out of experiences (Brau, 2020).

The principle of constructivism theory as expressed by Piaget (1955) demonstrates that knowledge is adopted through certain human mechanisms of learning. It is fundamental to realise that constructivism is not an abstract pedagogy. This view is corroborated by Butzler (2014) who established that individuals construct new meaning by engaging in discussion as well as collaborating with others. Therefore, in this study principals construct meaning on their professional development through interacting with their environment where they engage in discussions and conversations as well as their collaboration with their colleagues. Butzler (2014) further posits that constructivism theory is highly supportive of learners' self-constructs by inspiring the learning process whereby they engage in a process of discovering new things and creating meaning. As principals interact with their own world, they discover new knowledge which enables them to understand their setting. In support of this view, the advocates of constructivism posit that individuals of different ages are engaged in language construction. Thus, it is unnecessary to afford them utmost supervision since a little guidance is sufficient for them to create their individual knowledge formed from past experiences (Kirschner et al., 2006).

Besides that, constructivism theory's major concern is to define how people understand situations and create meaning. The theory views individuals as dynamic agents in knowledge construction from meaningful explanations of real-life expressions (Bada & Olusegun, 2015; Gross & Gross,

2016). The scholars emphasise that knowledge construction can be formed from both the existing information as well as the social interaction with the surrounding environment. (Mohammed and Kinyo, 2020). According to Piji Zieber (2009), adults are in possession of considerable knowledge and experience, and for them to understand new situations, they need to construct knowledge built on the already existing body of experience and knowledge. Thus, in this research, the school principals already have knowledge of professional development, and they construct new information and understanding of the phenomenon based on the existing knowledge. Piji Zieber (2009) further assert that constructivist theory is closely reflected on practices for problem solving. The constructivist principles are considered as working in accordance with the general principles of adult education. Construction is a process in which knowledge is both built and continually tested. Therefore, constructivism is a learning approach that considers that people construct or create knowledge based on the predetermined reality influenced by their experiences (Elliott, Kratochwill, Littlefield & Travers in McLeod, 2019).

Constructivism models of learning differ on how knowledge is constructed independently, compared to constructing it through taking signs from experts and can aid learners' efforts to learn (Fosnot, 2005; Rockmore, 2005). This, according to scholars, is called psychological constructivism which refers to transformations in thought resulting from individual experiences. Social constructivism refers to changes in thought because of assistance from others, even though both versions are explanations about creation of thought within individuals. The theory further integrates a comprehensive epistemology which encompasses gaining an interpretation of an idea from various perspectives and demonstrates how people are liable to construct meaning from the natural environment without being directly instructed (Barger et al., 2018). This theory is relevant in this research because it explains the meaning of professional development of the principals constructed from their perspective in different settings. The basic part of constructivism is its support of transmission of knowledge, allowing creation of in-depth comprehension and improved internalisation of information (Ivone et al., 2020). Constructing meaning is an individual's inner field which leads to comprehension by including intellectual processes (Piaget, 1959). Therefore, the main impression in constructivism theory is that human knowledge is created, and learners construct new forms of knowledge from the basis of their earlier experiences.

People acquire knowledge independently in the social learning environments through construction of individual interpretation grounded on the information accessible to them (Piaget, 1959). Piaget's constructivism theory is, thus, regarded as one of the most significant theories (Jonassen, 1991). As opined by Piaget (1959), construction of knowledge is influenced by interpretation of

previous knowledge in which individuals create new knowledge. This knowledge is formed from independent experiences; therefore, the construction process varies from one individual to another (Hmelo-Silver et al., 2007). That is, individuals conceptualise and observe ideas differently based on their previous experiences (Jonassen, 1991). In this study, therefore, individual principals are studied, and their conceptualisation of the studied phenomenon varies according to their previous experiences. Thus, constructivism is grounded on the ways people form individual comprehension and interpretation of the world as they experience ideas and reflect on their experiences (Ekpenyong & Edokpolor, 2016). The scholars further stress that the theory suggests how individuals react in their encounter with something new, how they reconnect to the previous ideas and experience, to believe or abandon the new information as inappropriate. Mukhalalati and Taylor (2029) assert that learning and knowledge construction are facilitated through interaction with the true environment, and they believe that learning and knowledge construction are enabled through experience.

The concept of constructivist leadership, as posited by Lambert (2009), is the reciprocal process enabling construction of meanings that leads towards a shared purpose. According to Abela (2009), constructivism highlights that learners need to actively construct their knowledge. The constructivist view upholds that learning is a process, meaning construction and the way individuals perceive their experience (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Constructivism theory is relevant for this study since it emphasises that construction of knowledge occurs when individuals relate with their natural environment. In this study, the principals' perceptions on their professional development needs were constructed from their interaction with the school environment. According to Lambert (2009), the notion of constructivist leadership is based on similar thoughts that trigger learning. The process of learning in both adults and children occurs through construction of meaning and knowledge, enquiry, reflection, and participation. Lambert (2009) further indicates that schooling must be organised and led in such a way that learning becomes a process that provides direction and momentum to human and educational development.

According to constructivism, individuals and organisations carry past experiences and beliefs which impact on the way they interpret their experiences with new-fangled ideas and events (Lambert, 2009). As the personal perspectives are facilitated with the world through enquiry, meaning is constructed and attributed to the happening, which influences knowledge construction in the process (Lambert, 2009). In this research study, the principals bring their past experiences to construct the new experiences formed from the interaction with their real environment. The

creation of meaning is a cognitive process improved by physical activities (Shepardson cited UKessays, 2018).

According to Piaget (1964), learning is regarded as a demonstration of change and a comprehension of the way an object is created. Individuals modify their adopted perception of the world they live in through connections with the environment. Piaget explained a circular connection between a stimulus and response by showing that a stimulus causes response, and that response has an impact in the way in which the subsequent stimulus is perceived. He further indicates that individual's cognitive schema, which is the way thoughts are created on an idea, is rationalised by external stimuli. Piaget further indicates that representations can be adapted to the stimuli by both the processes of assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation receives data from contact with the environment and ensures that it fits it with the current schema, while accommodation is the procedure of altering cognitive schemas to accommodate original knowledge from the environment.

Constructivism associates learning with meaning which is formed from experience. In this process of knowledge construction, the brain screens information from the outside world to create its exceptional reality (Jonassen, 1991). This means that individuals create knowledge by internal construction of meaning as opposed to acquiring it. In the learning process, individuals frequently build their own understandings of the world from experiences and connections with it. The inner interpretation of individual's data is always open to modification, and there is no independent truth that learners strive to gain knowledge and can ultimately attain it. According to Ertmer & Newby (1993), the environmental influences are crucial in constructivism theory of learning. Knowledge is created from the precise contact between individuals and the environment. All actions are an explanation of the existing environment grounded on the history of prior interactions that individuals are confronted with. The knowledge acquisition will happen in a genuine situation reflecting the ideas acquired in the learning process and will consist of responsibilities relevant to the previous experiences of the learner. Based upon these two factors, Brown et al. (1989) add that the culture and specific environment are the most outstanding and influential contributors. Constructs are strongly engrained in memory with emphasis of training through knowledge that existed in the past. Jonassen (1991) advocates that the approach to constructivism theory is that educating is relevant for more progressive method of knowledge acquisition. Learning is involved in both the elementary and middle stages of attainment of knowledge in an unbiased manner, but as much as fundamentals are existing, constructivism is the suitable procedure of implanting

functional knowledge. According to Jonassen (1991), the way the theory works is shaped by several special components and values of constructivism.

### 3.2.1 Principles of constructivism

Constructivism is anchored upon a number of principles, and these are outlined below.

- *Creation of knowledge:* This is the elementary principle indicating that knowledge is constructed from the previous knowledge. Individuals take bits and combine them in their own exceptional way to build something different from what others may construct. The previous beliefs, experiences, and perceptions are the significant basics for continual education.
- *Learning to learn:* This comprises construction of meaning. Everything that individuals learn affords an advanced comprehension of future ideas.
- *Learning as a dynamic procedure:* It encompasses sensory involvement to construct meaning. Individuals are expected to participate in learning since it is an active activity. Individuals also must interact with the world to engage actively in their own development and learning.
- *Learning as a communal action:* It is directly linked to individuals' interaction with other people. Advanced education observes the significance of learning as a social activity involving conversation, interaction, and group applications to support learners to embrace their knowledge.
- *Learning as circumstantial:* Individuals learn remote facts and theories in their lives. Thus, learning is associated with building from what they already know and believe.
- *Knowledge as personal:* Since constructivism theory is founded on people's individual skills and beliefs, acquisition of knowledge becomes a private matter. Each person is equipped with previous knowledge, therefore acquisition of information and gaining education are different.
- *Learning occurring in the mind:* Engaging in physical activities is essential for learning. Learning involves mental activities rather than only physical activities. Intellectual experiences are necessary for absorbing knowledge.

- *Motivation as critical to knowledge acquisition:* Motivation plays a major role in learning. Failure of individuals to learn results in demotivation. Thus, to ensure learners involvement and commitment, instructors must find approaches to stimulate learners' minds and assist them to develop excitement regarding learning.

According to Piaget (1932), the creation of knowledge takes place in the person's mind. That is, knowledge creation and meaning making is derived from the individual contact and appropriate understanding of the atmosphere (McCray, 2007). That is, the meaning of the acquired knowledge is formed from the unique individuals' environmental experience. Constructivism leadership theory stresses new approaches to leadership development and effectiveness (Johnston, 2018). The theory is appropriate for this research in that it focuses on the way principals perceive their responsibilities and construct meaning from their experiences. The knowledge construction is based on how principals assess their professional development needs (Johnston, 2018). Constructivist leaders are flexible and open to change (Yildirim & Kaya, 2019). They play a crucial role in facilitating organisational change by promoting teacher professional development and establishing a constructive learning environment (Yildirim & Kaya, 2019). Constructivism leadership theory is relevant for this study because secondary school principals constructed meaning on what constitutes their professional development needs to enhance effective leadership in schools.

### **3.2.3 Approaches to constructivism**

Fosnot (1996) states that constructivism theory is divided into two categories namely, social and cognitive constructivism. Cognitive constructivism relates to Jean Piaget's work while social constructivism theory appears in the work of Lee Vygotsky. These approaches to constructivism are mutually inclusive. Both approaches underpin the belief that individuals learn by construction of knowledge. Nonetheless, the two approaches treat the construction of knowledge differently. Cognitive constructivists focus on the significance of the mind in the learning process, while social constructivists emphasise on the contribution of the environment and the communication between individuals towards learning. Although Piaget emphasised the role of social interaction, the main intention was to explain development of mental constructions in learners. On the other hand, Vygotsky paid attention to the impact of social interaction on acquisition of knowledge while the cognitive role is not denied (Fosnot, 1996).

There are various ideas on the nature of knowledge acquisition as well as knowledge construction process within constructivism. The two approaches are relevant to this research since the principals constructed their perceptions in the mind after interacting with the social environment.

### **3.2.3.1 Cognitive Constructivism**

According to Mukhalalati and Taylor (2019), constructivism is a cognitive theory learning theory which explains knowledge acquisition and the meaning creation process. Ausubel and Robinson and Piaget and Cook are the leading scholars in the cognitive constructivism theory. The scholars further posit that constructivism theory approaches teaching and learning holistically. It focuses broadly on the inner cognitive mechanisms that trigger the learning processes, involvement, and social interaction. Cognitive constructivism emphasises individuals' inner constructions of knowledge (Cobb, 1994; Moshman, 1982). This viewpoint, resulting from Piagetian theory (Piaget 1977) stresses that individuals' creation of knowledge is inspired by inner cognitive tension as learners attempt to resolve intellectual imbalance. Young, together with old learners transfer meaning of previous experiences compatible with their existing schema. Learners improve their mental constructions developing new understandings out of the previous one achieved through individual or socially facilitated discovery-oriented learning activities (Piaget, 1977). According to social constructivism, in order to construct knowledge, the school principals were influenced by cognitive development. Cognitive constructivism emphasises that the principals' experiences are influenced by the existing knowledge from the current representation in minds. Elliott et al. (2000) stresses that constructivism as a learning approach embracing the notion that individuals form their own ideas, and the reality of knowledge construction is determined by the experiences of the learners. Arends (1998) further emphasises that individual learners' meaning construction results from their experiences which are affected by the interaction with prior knowledge and new happenings. The scholar further states that constructivism's central idea is that individuals construct their own learning, and shape current ideas based on what they learnt previously, which impacts on an improved knowledge constructed from old knowledge (Phillips, 1995).

Piaget's cognitive constructivism theory stresses that people construct their own knowledge, which is instantly comprehended and used, rather than being provided with information (Piaget, 1953). The construction of ideas in cognitive constructivism happens through individuals' private process, while in social constructivism, the construction occurs by human contact with the environment. Thus, Piaget's constructivism deals with the specific individual and the way they

create knowledge. Piaget's theory on cognitive development proposes that people are not provided with information, which they understand and can immediately use. They, however, need to construct their own individual knowledge (Piaget, 1953). The author further states that learners' knowledge is constructed through the process of assimilation as well as accommodation. (Wadsworth, 2004).

Piaget (1953) defines assimilation as a process that involves bringing in original knowledge to individuals' own schemas while accommodation is a process of receiving the new information or knowledge. This process of change occurs when learning to process new information to fit into what is already in the memory. Cognitive constructivism can also be considered as individual constructivism due to its focus on the self-conception and identity of individuals as well as creation of knowledge in the mind. As expressed by Piaget (2005), cognitive constructivism works on the hypothesis that the construction of knowledge is reliant on the relationship between the two cognitive processes namely, assimilation and accommodation, and these processes are accountable for learning to happen. Piaget's (2005) notion of assimilation involves what is comprehended of the new information concerning the previous information or the ideas of meaning making to encompass the newly absorbed information that the learner previously possessed.

According to Fleury (1998) and Girard (2010), constructivism centres on central assumptions that the individual's part is crucial to ensure construction of knowledge. Both the individual learners' private and communal experiences are influential on their learning, and the knowledge expansion does not precisely signify the external truth. Andrews- Hanna et al., (2011) confirm that accommodating such conventions transforms the reality. Utilising the frameworks of education is reinforced by social constructivism principles indicating that individuals must first acquire an understanding of the grounds that motivate learning. Primarily, social constructivism believes that reality is built on human action. That means members of society collaborate in understanding the changing aspects of the environment in which they live (Kukla, 2000). Social constructivism considers reality as a social development occurring in individuals in a social manner (Ernest, 1999). As knowledge is constructed, meaning is created through the interactions with one another as well as the surrounding environment. Moreover, social constructivists regard knowledge as a communal process which is influenced by outside factors. Therefore, there is no room for submissive advancement of behaviours. Learning takes place through involvement in communal relations permitting open education to happen. Constructivism is a viewpoint embracing acquisition of knowledge as a self-initiated process that reunites varied observations of reality that individuals possess.

According to Whalen et al (2019), people are the driving force in the process of developing meaning. That means their participation in discussions inside communities, are attributed to construction of knowledge. Constructivism greatly encourages the process of learning, even though it is not an instructional method (Fosnot, 2013). The author further indicates that constructivism has the potential to produce diverse educational practices from the ones commonly utilised by traditional instructors (Fosnot, 2013). Cognitive constructivism pays much attention to the impression that knowledge needs to be related to the learner's cognitive expansion level. Cognitive constructivism assists learners in obtaining new knowledge by linking what they already know and permitting modification through considering their current aptitude to obtain the updated knowledge.

### **3.2.3.2 Social Constructivism**

Vygotsky is the pioneer in social constructivism, which is a social learning theory that emphasises broader socio-cultural and situated measurement of learning and development (Mukhalalati and Taylor, 2019). According to the authors, people create new knowledge from their interaction between prior skills and knowledge, and those that are learned from the public contact with associates and instructors in social events. In addition, knowledge creation is influenced by the learner's situation as well as real contact within the social world. Thus, constructivism stresses that learners' understandings of the environment are derived from the search for meaning-creation. In this process, learners get absorbed in a construction of specific understandings of their environment (Mukhalalati and Taylor, 2019). Social constructivism interprets the derivation of construction of information resulting from social connection with the society through interactions including sharing, comparisons, and discussions involving learners and instructors (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). Through the collaborative process, the social environment in learning is rendered middle phase in which learners improve individual senses and support others to discover meaning to mutually built knowledge.

Social constructivism is a teaching theory which is beneficial and highly effective for all learners as it incorporates learning through social interaction and collaboration. This kind of constructivism was designed by Piaget who had previously defined his theories involving individuals in cognitive constructivism. Lev Vygotsky, who established social constructivism, demonstrates that social interaction forms the most important part of learning. All Vygotsky's concepts are jointly elaborated in social constructivism as well as expansion of language such as cognitive debate,

culture, internal speech, and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1962). The understanding of Vygotsky's theories and its premise on classroom building where interaction is prominent assists in developing an active teaching space. Vygotsky's constructivism theory entails linguistic features and numerous concepts which fall under social constructivism.

Piaget's theories acclaim the individuals and their own process of knowledge construction from experience. Cognitive constructivism, as defined by Piaget, shows that thought is triggered by linguistic features and progress from internal movement as data is managed and constructed on existing knowledge and through investigation. The investigative learning approaches are like discovery learning. These processes share similar complications, so investigation needs to be wisely planned and organised, specifically for the less organised learners with lack of background knowledge and skill to solve problems (Woolfolk, 2004).

According to Vygotsky (1978), constructivism is largely involved in comprehension of the impact of communal settings on the process of learning, resulting in the type of idea considered as social constructivism. Vygotsky opines that knowledge construction occurs takes independently in learners as they engage in discourse, collaborative learning, and societal collaboration activities. He further asserts that knowledge is formed from comprehension of the historical setting of the evidence, as opposed to it occurring in isolation. Vygotsky's method proposed that the cognitive development process is orderly, happening at precise stages in the individual's development. He further alleged that the input of the teacher is very important in contributing to comprehension of the complicated topics that are difficult for the learner to process on their own. Social constructivism depends not only on individual reasonable perceptive as an overriding foundation of information, arising from social exchanges (Garrison, 1998). Social constructivism and social interaction assist in formulation of more general and reliable knowledge created from consensual allocation and assessment. Social constructivists maintain the claim that individual construction of meaning is to a lesser extent more respected than the widely acknowledged approaches such as segmentation and shaping of reality since the items and proceedings of the world are largely inclined to public process of meaning construction (Prawat, 1996; as cited by Ruzic, 2011). In determining the way knowledge is formed, Larochele, Bednarz, and Garrison (1998) and Von Glaserfeld (1998) developed the following four primary principles:

1. Gathering of knowledge, which is administered by the individual thought, is an active process as opposed to a passive process.

2. Perception is flexible, which means that an individual's understanding is regulated based on circumstances within which it functions.
3. Cognition is an object which is not fixed with an absolute, remarkable vision of the real world, but is an instrument that is amended as the individual advances' mental cognizance.
4. The data processing has circumstances has background in the genetic and nervous elements, and knowledge is dependent on cultural and social interaction for construction.

Social constructivism considers comprehension of the outside world, connotation, and worth, essentially attained by social contact. Hurwitz (2009) highlights two elements of the social constructivism theory.

1. It adopts the view that individuals progress the social contexts, inspect and evaluate their own experiences regarding the outside world.
2. It proclaims that linguistic feature is the crucial section in the arrangement, permitting expansion of a model of reality.

The principle of constructivism theory as articulated by Jean Piaget (1955), demonstrates that individuals acquire information through specific devices. He contends that constructivism is not an untainted teaching strategy. Xu and Shi (2018) define constructivism as a leadership theory explaining the way learners create knowledge in a coached learning situation. Constructivism loops round the thoughts and the way they connect with people's former practices (Baviskar et al., 2009). In line with this viewpoint, Tobias and Duffy (2009) point out that constructivism strategy is a great complement of learning through engaging in physical activities in the classroom activities from the active learning perspective. Tobias and Duffy (2009) further believe that the 21st century constructivism opposes Piaget's constructivism owing to his disbelief in learning through being involved in actions and reliance on automated activities. This states a shift in the pattern from behaviourism to cognitivism, and from the ultimate to constructivism (Orak, 2021). Clark (2018) posits that constructivism seeks to encourage a robust theory for relating the way individuals adopt the interpretation of the environment using evidence to create new and independent knowledge. In addition, Xu and Shili (2018) state that knowledge is an internal process which does not transmit on its own. It is rather exposed, and new meaning is gained through construction, discussion, conversation, and collaboration. Butzler (2014) reveals that constructivist theory is in support of learners' self-construction of knowledge through the learning process in which they discover ideas on their own within a range of theories. Constructivism theory is extensively used in linguistic teaching (Xu & Shili, 2018). The theory supports that all

individuals construct meaning independently. Nevertheless, one key challenge of the implementation of the theory is the improbability in achieving a satisfactory intend concerning linguistic teaching (Riedener, 2019). Therefore, instructors need to consider learners' education progression and retain it under teamwork and communication setting. (Zielinski, 2017). This provides an explanation to preserve the exchange of information among learners through collaboration and communication to achieve meaning.

Social constructivism theory supports that the responsibility of the teachers in the learning process is to equip learners with skills to become provocative, creative and collaborative. The teachers need to supervise and manipulate the learning process for intended results (Martin, 2019). Constructivism is considered as the third primary learning theory because it mixes the most probable instructional teaching strategy in it (Duffy & Jonassen, 2013). The other two significant theories were regarded as the most outstanding in comprehension of interactive learning (Winn, 2013). The three theories intersect in several ways (Bergen & Parsell, 2019). However, there are different theories regarding explanation of the process of learning. Vygotsky (1978) alleged that the public contribute immensely on the meaning construction process. He further emphasises that the environment where learners are nurtured up has a great impact on the way they contemplate about ideas.

According to Piaget (1977), as individuals create knowledge based on their personal experience, social interaction transpires as part of the learning process. Piaget also alleged that internal speech is considered necessary in the thinking process and that individuals mature this process. On the other hand, Vygotsky assumed that internal language is a component of the most significant process of knowledge construction and thought. (Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron & Osher (2020) clarify that social constructivism considers the observation that individuals engage in social interaction among themselves and reach an agreement based on their observations. Furthermore, Bada and Olusegun (2015) highlight that knowledge is based on or undertaken by individuals or groups. Regarding ontology and epistemology, an extensive philosophical distinction between cognitive constructivism and social constructivism is observed. Therefore, cognitive constructivism is created on objectivism and theoretical pragmatism. Cognitive constructivism also underlines an unbiased realism which is unmotivated by the opinions and interpretations of the viewer. Social constructivism pays attention to the nature of collaborative learning. According to Vygotsky (1978), knowledge is created from the way individuals interconnect with their culture and the entire community. Additionally, in constructivism, individuals are dependent on others for assistance in the knowledge creation process, which aids

learners to construct own information and realism. Social constructivism, as stated by Lev Vygotsky (1978), is carefully related to cognitive constructivism with the influence of the society as well as peers.

In this research, I explored perceptions of secondary school principals on professional development to enhance leadership. Constructivism theory forms the bases of the study in that it provides a lens on the overall understanding of the research study. The following section discusses complexity leadership theory as another theory that underpins the study.

### **3.3 COMPLEXITY LEADERSHIP THEORY**

Complexity leadership theory was pioneered by Marion and Uhl-Bien (2002). This theory views leadership as a result of co-dependent connections in a complex system. Complexity leadership adopts networks amid diverse agents moving the attention from a persuasive leader to the leadership actions connected with administrative roles. The complexity leadership theory framework was advanced by Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey (2007), and recently revised by Uhl-Bien and Arena (2018) to incorporate three elements namely, operational, entrepreneurial, and enabling leadership.

According to Benmira and Moyosolu (2020), leadership is one of the most complex phenomena. In this study, principals' leadership is seen as a complex phenomenon during the 21st century where many transformations are taking place in the education system. Although it is complex, leadership has been extensively reviewed over time (Benmira and Moyosolu, 2020). Leadership is considered more significant than ever in the fast moving and progressively globalised time. Thus, leadership continues to attract interesting discussions owing to its complexity (Benmira and Moyosolu, 2020). Complexity leadership theory considers leadership is as a collective development process in which individuals and groups of people network and acquire knowledge to produce innovation and adaptive capability (Avolio et al., 2009; Lichtenstein et al., 2006; Hazy and Uhl-Bien, 2014). This theory stresses creating organisational conditions enabling effective, but mostly undetermined, imminent adaptive conditions. This theory suggests that the control of organisational dynamics is not solely the responsibility of the prescribed leaders but also the co-employees are empowered and motivated to acquire knowledge cooperatively and apply current explanations (Marion and Uhl-Bien, 2001).

Complexity leadership theory was founded on a branch of scientific thought, which was used to model connections within complex systems (Uhl-Bien and Marion, 2008). The universal impression of complexity leadership theory was to reflect on what functioned well inside the complex systems and attempt to relate it to principal teams and organisations. The complexity leadership theory proposes an outline of leadership that advances the value and capability of organisation as multifaceted adaptive arrangements exposed to knowledge, information production and inventiveness (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2011). The framework guarantees manipulation of devices in organising the formal organisations to yield results based on the visualisation and assignment of the multifaceted adaptive system, fostering enthusiasm essential in a complex adaptive system. The purpose of the theory is to combine current circumstances instigated by disorder in the organisational structure (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2011). Complex adaptive systems require a great aptitude to comprehend chaos and recently occurring complications. Additionally, complex adaptive systems obtain adaptable, collaborative and more communal structure resonating with new situations instead of strict classified, and organisational supported constructions (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2011). In this study, the principals face new difficulties in their leadership and as a result, they must find flexible ways to adapt to the new situations. Therefore, complexity leadership theory recommends flexibility, enhancement of performance and revolution which occur in everyday connections of individuals in response to pressures and chances in their local situations (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2008). These contexts connect to create strong emergent phenomenon (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009).

The theory assists in understanding how school principals should respond to the pressures they face in their leadership and how they should find ways of surviving such pressures (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009). Complexity leadership is a substitute approach for modern organisations to survive in an unpredictable, chaotic, and competitive environment based on information technology (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009). The theory is relevant to this study in that it contributes to the investigation of the current settings of knowledge-grounded organisations. According to Uhl-Bien & Marion (2009), the requirement for the complexity leadership theory is better comprehended based on the investigation of leadership abilities deemed essential by the information era and the limitations of the obtainable traditional leadership models.

The information age depicts the new knowledge-based competition areas directed by globalisation and technology (Lord & Dinh, 2014). As posited by Burke (2013), several organisations shape an association in dealing with contemporary competitions namely, horizontal, and vertical patterns. Complexity leadership further highlights the collaborative process comprising creating an

organisational co-procedure shared by several complex controls in management caused by competitive and undefined situations needed by the modern era (Lichtenstein et al., 2006). Complexity leadership is presented in the following beliefs (Friedrich, 2010):

- It demands a complex model that incorporates organisational measures comprising mission, goals, and preparation.
- It focuses on the effort to understand organisational leaders' skills to coordinate complex dynamics, establish social, formal and informal group interactions in organisations and provide flexibility and resonance to respond to new conditions.
- It offers a framework of leadership which advances important capability of organisations as complicated adaptive systems exposed to knowledge, originality, and data construction.
- It ensures control devices to manage organisations and deliver results consistent with the mission and vision of the complex adaptive system and subsequently adopt dynamisms necessitated by the complicated adaptive system.
- It aims to incorporate current conditions resulting from chaos in the official organisational structure (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2008). Complicated adaptive systems demand a significantly high capability to appreciate chaos and recently occurring complications.
- More complicated adaptive systems have adaptable, collaborative and a more common structure echoing with innovative conditions instead of strict, ordered, and reliant structures (Marion, 2008).
- Adaptability in organisations implies restricted freedom and minimal restraints to individual actions and the activities of organisational elements rather than controlled dependency in the performances of organisational elements' total independence of acts.

According to Fernsler (2017), complexity leadership theory offers a model for organisations to permit adaptive responses to challenges. It suggests tools for organisations and sub-systems dealing with promptly changing, complicated problems. In education studies, complexity theory is becoming more observable (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The theory also shares the focus that the theory of chaos holds the understanding of the phenomenon to early circumstances that might have consequences in an unpredicted and seemingly haphazard successive behaviour and properties (Mason, 2008). Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008) point out that complexity theory operates at the organisation level, and the description is derived from the activities of the organisation, instead of at the point of separate representatives or groups. According to Walby (2003), complexity theory provides a new set of theoretical tools to assist in explaining the diversity and transformations in contemporary modernisation and globalisation. It, however,

provides a new thinking approach concerning many social transformations. Complexity theory requires the researcher to explore a vigorously interactive system of multiple elements or components (actors) from the inside, rather than from the outside (Haggis, 2008). The major characteristics of complexity theory are the interaction part, the emergence, the connectedness, the feedback, and the context (Haggis, 2008) as well as the issue of unpredictability (Haggis, 2008) and the non-linear aspect (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

As Mason (2008) puts it, complexity theory is mainly concerned with settings, organisations, or complex systems in the view that extremely large numbers of essential elements or agents are linked to an interaction with one another in distinct ways. Haggis (2008) describes the discrete arrangement of interactions as, to a certain extent, shaped by the connections of other larger systems, for instance, the governance, culture, language, and policy systems. As stated by Mason (2008), complexity theory proposes that it is in the dynamic interactions and adaptive orientation of a system that new happenings and behaviours arise, as a result the development of new activities and old ones are changed.

Complexity leadership theory indicates that flexibility occurs in ordinary exchanges of entities replying to environmental work prompts (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009). The exchanges link to create a strong developing phenomenon (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009). In this study, the principals interact with their environment and encounter complicated situations. Complexity leadership incorporates the exploration of communal exchanges at various stages and the impact on invention and emergent results. Invention is a part whereby complexity leadership has uncovered scientific suggestion for effective organisational revolution (Lichtenstein, Uhl-Bien and Marion, 2006).

The 21st century organisations deal with the environmental pressures where competition and globalisation promote change and unpredictability (Cao & McHugh, 2005). As maintained by Anderson (1999), organisations are constructed on complicated dynamic systems in which managers easily interact under purely planned guidelines to assist in fostering innovation and effectiveness in the entire organisational system. Arrow, McGrath and Berdahl (2000) support the idea by showing that minor clusters perform as complex dynamic systems in that they work well in thought-provoking settings of work through application of straightforward directions of performance. Complexity leadership theory emphasises that knowledge is constructed through the communication among managers and their occupations (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007; Uhl-Bien and Marion, 2009). Knowledge acquisition is considered a joint procedure of action and reflection, branded by questioning, experimenting, seeking feedback, reflecting on outcomes, and

deliberating on mistake and unanticipated consequences of action (Edmondson, 1999). Therefore, learning defines a procedure in which information is formed, accepted, and discharged in an organisation (Carley and Hill, 2001). Additionally, learning takes place when people merely understand circumstances, and the information formed permits them to acclimatise to complicated circumstances (Weick, 2007). Thus, as the principals understand their environment, learning happens, and knowledge is formed on how they perceive their leadership roles. Recognising information in a range of situations permits an opportunity for the endurance and efficiency needed for maintaining flexibility and stability in any system (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997; Arjun, Shah, Dhua, Appaiah, & Gadre, 2021). In a nutshell, complexity leadership emphasises on knowledge construction for acclimatisation (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

Research on leadership and organisations emphasises that organisations function in a progressively complicated and dynamic setting (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2011). Schools as organisations also operate under complex situations and the school leaders must find ways to adapt to the situations under which they operate. Drucker (2012) states that nowadays organisations are surrounded by complicated and competitive scheme of the situation identified as the threshold of chaos, mostly resulting from technology revolution and globalisation. That means to a certain degree, organisations need to implement approaches that are creative, innovative, and based on knowledge to increase rapid decision-making. Organisations are expected to transform the outdated administrative structure to current styles of leadership echoing with the modern system of development which are adaptable in terms of reaching decisions in the organisation. This is the way in which the organisation can endure in today's situations which are full of chaos and complexity (Byrne & Callaghan, 2013; Adams & Stewart, 2015). In order for a contemporary organisation to endure technology, invention, and international competition in the changeable environment full of chaos, the administrators need to contemplate complexity leadership. School principals should find ways of survival in the technology-based leadership through complexity theory which is used as a lens in this study.

Complexity leadership was founded on the notion that administration needs to be an easy process. This offers administrators skills to handle uncertain situations that may occur rather than a lot of direction by the topmost supervisors leading to destruction in carrying out the organisational activities (Waldman & Bowen, 2016). Marion & Uhl-Bien (2011) postulate that complicated challenges in organisations should be attempted with complex answers. Complexity leadership style suggests approaches that leaders should adapt to provide solutions to the complications. Lichtenstien and Plowman (2009) reiterate that complexity leadership attempts to minimise chaos

and bring order into the organisation. If chaos is diminished, organisational synchronisation and obligation for production of effective performance occur (Lichtenstien & Plowman, 2009). Complexity leadership is, therefore, observed to encourage investigation, establishing procedures, creating an appropriate chain accountability, encouraging the culture of learning, and recognising responsibility among the managers inside the organisation (Hazy & Uhl-Bien, 2013).

The digital age is characterised by the innovative knowledge-based competitions influenced by the era of technology, globalisation, and democratisation (Lord & Dinh, 2014). Another matter of interest is that organisations should have the ability to adopt thought-provoking issues such as being equipped with knowledge on the current trends and transform based on the prevailing change. Organisations also need to survive in a rapid, and flexible fashion, which is crucial to be accomplished for organisational persistence in the increasingly competitive setting (Balci et al., 2012; Cottam, Ranson & Vounckx, 2015). Thus, organisations in developed countries and economies embolden quick learning to present an exceptional performance needed by the digital age (Lichtenstein et al., 2006). The contemporary era gives rise to novel types of challenges for organisations and forerunners (Baltacı, & Balci, 2016). In recent times, the attainments of organisations have relied on the organisational intelligence, the capacity for knowledge acquisition in the current situations as well as the ability to utilise social assets rather than physical ones (Fidan and Oztürk, 2015; Castells, 2011).

As Mason (2008) argues, complexity theory offers one of the most persuasive theories of change that implies the continuity that is available. Complexity leadership theory emphasises that flexibility happens in individuals' day-to-day interactions in response to triggers in the job situation (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009). The exchanges connect to produce a robust emergent phenomenon (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009). In this study, principals interact with their environment and encounter complex situations. Complexity leadership encompasses the study of social connections at many levels and how they impact on invention and emergent results.

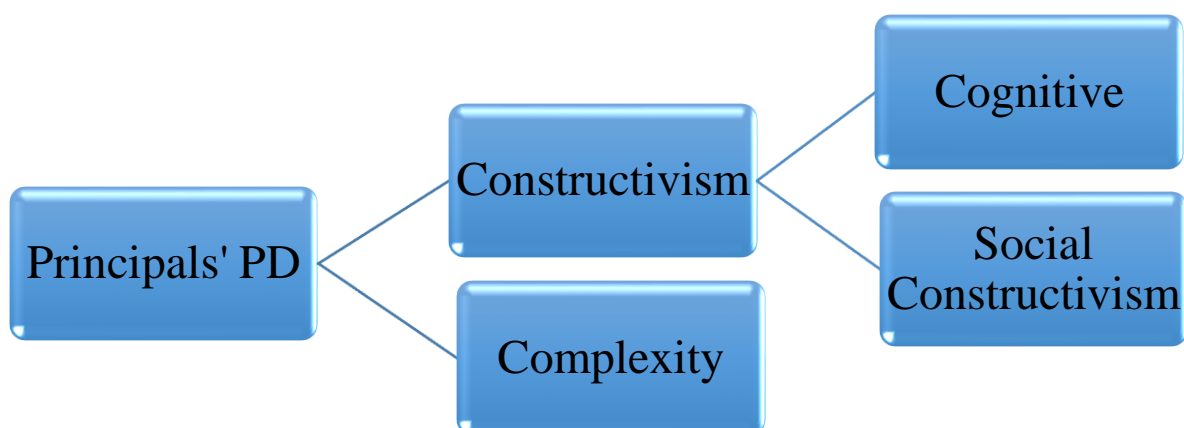
### **3.4 SYNERGY BETWEEN THE THEORIES**

The study has used two theories which provide a contribution to understanding how school principals perceive their professional development needs to enhance their school leadership. Jean Piaget's theory of constructivism stresses that individuals construct knowledge and produce meaning based on their experiences (Paget, 1955). The constructivism learning theory explains

that learning occurs through ‘constructing’ knowledge in people’s minds. According to Piaget (1973), individuals actively construct knowledge and new forms of knowledge from previous forms. The complexity theory (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2002) emphasises that leadership is the result of co-dependent exchanges in a complicated network. Complexity leadership theory proposes that the dynamic interactions and adaptive orientation of a system where new occurrences and behaviours emerge, result in the development of new arrangements and old ones being changed (Mason, 2008). Learning happens when people understand situations, and the knowledge created allows individuals to be familiar with the complex conditions (Weick, 2007).

The two theories have been used in this study to produce a joint perspective on understanding professional development for school leaders. The principals operate in complex situations as viewed by the complexity theory and their perceptions are constructed from their interaction with the environment. Both constructivism and complexity leadership theories, therefore, provide a mutual perspective on principals’ professional development. As expressed by Drucker (2012), organisations in the contemporary era face complications and competitive environments known as the era of chaos which is largely influenced by globalisation and the industrial revolution. In the 21st century which is referred to as the chaos period, organisations need to implement approaches such as construction of information, closely followed data creation grounded on invention for instant decision-making, development and transformation of their outdated organisational structure into up-to-date models by echoing with the new skills and flexible styles of leadership incorporated by critical decision makers if they plan to survive (Byrne & Callaghan, 2013; Fitzgerald, 2016; Adams & Stewart, 2015).

**Figure 3.1 The theoretical Framework of the study**



### **3.5. CONCLUSION**

The two theories were used to form a theoretical framework relevant for this research study as both correspond in that they indicate that principals construct perceptions on their professional development needs from their complex environment. As they interact with their surroundings, they construct new knowledge. Constructivism theory emphasises construction of knowledge from an individual's interaction with their social settings. In the same manner, complexity theory focuses on the complex interactions between individuals and with their complex setting and how they adapt to it. The link between the theories suggests a basis for understanding professional development for school principals. The following chapter presents and discusses the research methodology and design for this research.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapter presented the theoretical framework that underpins the study. The current chapter discusses the research methodology and design that shed light on the whole research project. Research design is an approach used for connecting the research problem with the appropriate empirical research. This means that the research design sets the procedure to be followed on the data needed for the research, the methods used for collection and analysis of data and the ways in which all these will attempt to answer the research questions (Grey, 2014). Research methodology is a term used to explain numerous features of a study, inclusive of the design, the techniques for data collection, the methods employed for data analysis, the selection of participants, as well as details of the specific actions in the study (Khaldi, 2017). Thus, in their studies, researchers are often directed by both research paradigms and designs. In this chapter, the research methodology and design of the study are presented and justified. The chapter consists of the research design, research paradigm, the research sites, and selection of the study participants. It further deliberates on the ways in which the data for the study was generated and analysed. It also clarifies how trustworthiness was ensured as guided by Korstjens and Moser (2017). The ethical considerations are also addressed and discussed. The research paradigm that guides the study is presented in the subsequent section.

#### **4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

The word paradigm originated from Greek patterns of denotation (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). A paradigm is defined as the exact way individuals perceive the world and make sense of it. Paradigms are overall perspectives or beliefs (Perera, 2018). A research paradigm is defined as established mutual beliefs as well as agreements on the way problems are understood and dealt with (Perera, 2018). The research paradigm is further defined as the way scientists provide answers responding to three basic questions on ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Perera, 2018). According to Lincoln and Guba (2013), ontological assumptions lead to epistemological assumptions which bring about methodological suggestions for the selection of the techniques for

data collection. That is, the epistemological description is restricted by the ontological description of the research.

The description of methodology is also inclined to research on the epistemology and ontology descriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Antwi and Hamza (2015) provide another explanation by describing ontology as the researcher's definition of truth and reality. As stated by Lincoln and Guba (2013), ontology deals with the reality of what is available to be known, or the kind of reality. They further explain that ontology is the knowledge as well as what is assumed about reality. Epistemology has been explained by Lincoln and Guba (2013) as the procedure followed by the researcher to unearth the truth or reality, or it is about how individuals acquire knowledge. As such, epistemology observes the connection between the investigator and the participants of the research who are being interrogated (Guba, 1990). According to Gray (2014), epistemology considers the adequate and convincing varieties of information. The question associated with epistemology is whether knowledge is something that can be attained, or whether it is something that must be directly experienced (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Research methodology is explained as the technique utilised in undertaking the study (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). It is also defined as the way in which the world should be studied (Kawulich, 2015). The central inquiry associated with research methodology is the way one should embark on obtaining information (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). The research's organisational feature is expected to link with the ontological and epistemological approaches. This study was underpinned by the constructivist paradigm as discussed below.

The constructivist paradigm is grounded on the principle that individuals search for an understanding of the world through constructing subjective meaning formed from their experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), knowledge is constructed as people interact with their environment and make sense of their experiences. Jean Piaget is known as the advocate of constructivism. The theory explains that people construct knowledge from their contact between their experiences and ideas (Riegler, 2012). The philosophical paradigm of social constructivism emphasises the ability for individuals to construct knowledge of reality. The paradigm basically implies the researchers' views and ideals constructed about the world, their definition of the world and the how they work within it. What the researcher thinks and believes about the investigation of problems provides a guide to their actions. That is, the assumed paradigm guides enquiry of the researchers consisting of the collection of data as well as the procedures adopted for data analysis. Therefore, a research paradigm has significant

implications on all decisions made by the researchers in the process of the study (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). A paradigm describes a researcher's perspective of the world. It is the viewpoint that informs the sense made or the interpretation of the data gathered throughout the conducted study. A research paradigm directly reproduces the investigators' opinions about the world they are surrounded with (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

According to the constructivist paradigm knowledge is regarded as a social construct that is created as people engage in conversations in which they interact between themselves and the environment in which they live (Creswell, 2014). The author further states that constructivist studies rely on the study of social discourse confirmed through data gathered from activities including, for example, observations and interviews. By employing this method of data analysis, constructivist research strives for identification of the human opinions, individual connotations constructed, and viewpoints inside the social settings (Creswell, 2014). The constructivist type of research further relies on both the principles and ideas from the investigated participants to assist the investigator to advance the research. This is done by finding patterns and themes in the complicated opinions instead of gathering data from restricted meanings in a few kinds of ideas (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, the constructivist paradigm's main purpose is to understand the participant's social world and to interpret and understand the world from the perspectives of those dwelling inside it (Creswell, 2014). It, therefore, befits the study to use the constructivism paradigm as the aim is to investigate how secondary school principals in Lesotho perceive and construct meaning on what constitutes their professional development needs.

As data was collected for the study, the researcher had a chance to mingle with participants in their social environments and engaged in face-to-face interactions which assisted me to gather information on their understanding of professional development. The researcher was also able to explore the sense of professional development constructed from the perceptions of secondary school principals. As posited by Creswell (2014), the data generated within the context of constructivist paradigm is underpinned by an array of social phenomenon redirecting the realities of the world interpretations that occur within the interactions among the researched individuals. The social phenomena resulting from experiential explanations is independent and composite (Creswell, 2014), requiring complex implications connected with such experiences. According to Lincoln and Guba (1994), constructivist paradigm considers all human knowledge as socially constructed. This, as posited by the authors, is entirely related to ontology which views everything that exists in the world as created by people in their shared contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). For instance, the constructivist ontology generally refers to contingency, or the idea that reality is made

up of several concrete psychological constructions, and it is reliant on the individuals and groups understanding the constructions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

A constructivist paradigm was appropriate for this study since secondary school principals had to construct their perceptions grounded on the experiences that they have of professional development in the school setting. Constructivism paradigm is regarded as an approach in qualitative research that attempts to comprehend the researched occurrence based on the way the investigated individuals experience such a phenomenon (Adom, Yeboah & Ankrah, 2016). The objective of constructivist paradigm was to pay attention to the opinions of the participants on the situation under investigation as far as possible and provide interpretations and meanings attributed by the participants to the world they are surrounded with (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study, relied on secondary school principals' views when gathering the data that informed it which was then interpreted, and meaning was constructed from the principals' interaction with the environment they lived in. The principals' perceptions on their professional development needs were gathered and the interaction with them allowed them to provide the interpretation of their understanding and experience of professional development for school leaders. According to Adom, Yeboah and Ankrah (2016), through engagement with their own environment, individuals' meaning construction process is realised. Thus, the interaction between the principals and their environment forms their perception of the world they live in and thus, reality is socially constructed. In line with constructivism paradigm, the study focused on interpretation of the meaning constructed from the principals' perceptions in their social contexts. As the interviews were conducted, the researcher realised that participants constructed meaning on the phenomenon under study from the reality of their own experiences.

Constructivist paradigm was relevant for this study because reality was gained through the recorded discourse gained from the principals as the research participants, in which their opinions and the social world were reflected (Hoddy, 2019). Hoddy indicates that there's alignment between the concrete materials and the physical as well as the communal constructions within which the event occurs. The practicality of recognising constructions and devices that contribute to those proceedings is essential, as these structures are linked with a constructivist paradigm. Furthermore, the researcher gathered data which was constructed from the secondary school principals in their school settings. This is in line with constructivist paradigm which seeks to understand the world of the participants to provide the interpretation from their opinions.

To gain in-depth knowledge of the perceptions of the principals on their professional development requirements, individual face-to-face interviews were conducted, and the meaning was constructed according to how they perceived their professional development needs. Thus, as the participants were interviewed, an insight was gained on how secondary school principals perceived their professional development needs. This is corroborated by Kelemen and Rumens (2012) who point out that there are viewpoints connected to the utilisation of an attempt by social constructivism in defining the construction of social matters by individuals to understand what is happening around them through the study of shared discourse resulting from the collected information. In this case, the epistemological assumption of the study is concerned with knowledge gathering depending on independent meanings and social phenomenon as well as activities linked with the individuals being investigated within a distinct social background (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2011). The experiences of the participants in this study were gathered through knowledge construction, interpretations, and reflections.

According to Creswell (2014), the focus of constructivism is on the expansion of subjective meanings and understandings of individual people's skills based on specific issues in their social and historical contexts. This is consistent with this study as meaning and understanding of professional development is socially constructed from their experiences. This is further corroborated by Crotty (1998) who indicates that individuals construct and create an understanding and interpretation of their world. Additionally, different interpretations of the world need to be constructed instead of being revealed by the researchers and the participants (Gray, 2014).

As posited by Lincoln and Guba (2013), the constructivist paradigm considers that the research methodology utilised needs to investigate the thoughts and creation of meaning and making sense of the activities, which are often accomplished in qualitative research comprising the case study method that employs observations and interviews and observations (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, this study aimed at exploring how secondary school principals perceive their professional development needs to enhance leadership. The attention was on the construction of knowledge from their experiences, perceptions as well as beliefs consistent with the constructivism paradigm. As the one-on-one interviews were conducted, it was easy to get into the world of the investigated individuals and connect with their real world. That was consistent with the constructivism paradigm as it seeks to construct and generate meaning consistent with the used methodology.

### **4.3 RESEARCH APPROACH: QUALITATIVE**

Crossman (2017) refers to qualitative research as an approach dealing with the data which does not involve numbers and attempts to understand meaning through social life on targeted populations or places. Bhandari (2021) acknowledges that qualitative research involves the collection and analysis of data to understand opinions concepts, and experiences. Qualitative research is further explained as the investigation of the natural phenomenon in the context from which they emerge and from their perspectives (Ugwu & Eze, 2023). In line with this definition, the aim of this study was to obtain a thorough comprehension of the social phenomena in the principals' natural environments. Thus, principals were studied in their school environments to explore their perceptions of their professional development needs. According to Ugwu and Eze (2023), qualitative studies rely on the direct experiences of people and interpretation of the meaning associated with their experiences. The main aim of qualitative methods is to collect documented data for research in which the data analysis procedures, such as thematic analysis, are employed. Some of the most popular techniques for gathering qualitative data is through in-depth field notes. As data was collected from the field, the face-to-face interviews were conducted which in going deeper into the researched phenomenon.

Qualitative research refers to a process whereby enhanced understanding is attained through creation of new significant differences which result from getting closer to the studied participants (Aspers & Corte, 2019). According to Hamed (2022), the objective of qualitative research method is to address practical issues through involvement of naturalistic and interpretive approaches to various subject matters. This approach involves case studies, experiences of life, and news indicating the practices as well as complications that individuals encounter in their lives by focussing on their deeper interpretations and inspirations which cannot be defined by numbers. Hamed (2022) further indicates that qualitative approach has the potential to detect new concepts and insights to produce new philosophies through the study of a phenomenon. Hamed also asserts that qualitative approach frequently focusses on finding the experiences in a certain setting, in a particular time, not bearing in mind whether the results might transpire in future or in other backgrounds for generalisation. In conducting this study, the researcher had to get closer to the individuals who took part and were studied in their normal settings to explore the meaning and interpretation of professional development. Therefore, it was deemed appropriate to employ a qualitative research approach for this study since principals' perceptions of their professional

development needs were investigated in their natural settings, which are schools, as the context in which they base their perceptions (Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020).

Qualitative research can further be described as a technique used to explore, interpret and make sense of individuals, or groups of people, assigned a shared social problem (Danbolt, 2020). To generate the data from the participants, the researcher had to familiarise herself with their work environment. Qualitative researchers investigate the phenomena in their natural settings and make sense of the studied phenomenon or interpret it to form meanings (Aspers & Corte, 2019). The researcher also had to observe the scheduled times specified by the participants. Furthermore, the responses obtained from the participants through the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

A qualitative evidence synthesis is observed as a type of analysis that gathers the results from primary qualitative research in an orderly manner (Noyes et al., 2019). A primary qualitative research study employs a qualitative way of collection of data and its analysis. Nonetheless, the evidence gathered from a primary qualitative study has a potential of being theoretically rich in its description which has a possibility of making a greater influence on a qualitative evidence synthesis (Noyes et al., 2019).

The aim of the qualitative evidence synthesis is to create a better comprehension of the kind of issues, which are often of a sensitive nature that primary qualitative research regularly addresses. The results of qualitative research offer rich interpretations in relation to the effect of a condition and can further allow for an understanding of the experiences of individuals as well as groups (Flemming et al., 2019). Qualitative evidence synthesis methods can respond to supplementary questions that complement those traditionally responded to through systematic reviews of quantitative evidence, especially the reviews of random controlled trials (Flemming & Jones., 2020). As data was collected data for the study, the researcher had to probe the participants to elicit relevant information. Another feature of qualitative research is that interrogations that seek to improve an understanding of a certain phenomenon of interest and experiences are asked (Toye & Barker, 2020). Based on the chosen method, the process can permit the researcher to go further than the individual findings of studies and yield somewhat better than the sum of the individual parts (Carroll, 2017). In doing this, the results that are not viewed as important may be identified in a particular qualitative study in which more significant explanations can be made (Carroll, 2017).

The research questions, participants, the environment, and the kind of data collected from the qualitative research are used to inform selection of analytic technique (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In a similar vein, Creswell (2014) asserts that when using a qualitative technique, information is gathered directly from people who are involved in the event being studied. Qualitative studies investigate individual people's understanding of a social phenomenon and are mainly exploratory processes whereby the researchers gradually make sense of a social phenomenon through making contrasts, comparisons, classification of the object of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As posited by Mkandawire (2019) in discussing the qualitative method of data collection in research, qualitative design succeeds as a subjective method of making judgements on thoughts, conduct, attitudes, and social interactions. In qualitative research, data collection techniques such as interviews, classroom observations and focus groups are utilised (Mohajan, 2018). According to Wilson and Abibulayeva (2017), qualitative research approach considers the research participants and researchers as the meaning construction agents.

The study adopted the qualitative research design, and it was deemed relevant because it assisted the researcher to gather data that informed the study's findings of from the context of the investigated participants in their workplaces and social contexts. I found qualitative approach relevant for this study as its aim is to study individuals in their natural settings. My interaction with the participants during the interviews assisted me to gain in-depth comprehension of the explored phenomenon from their perspectives. Qualitative research also seeks to understand the meaning that individuals attribute to social problems. This is consistent with Mohajan (2018) who views qualitative research as a procedure of communal action concerned with the way participants make sense of their knowledges to understand the common reality of the world in which they live.

Qualitative method requires the researcher to interconnect with the participants in their natural surroundings in which face-to-face interaction is involved (Creswell & Tashakkori 2007). Data for this study was gathered from individual schools and principals to uncover information from their natural settings on their perceptions of professional development needs to enhance leadership. Conducting the study using a qualitative approach has proved to be advantageous as it involved detailed assessment of the phenomenon under study. This enabled the researcher to generate detailed information that was utilised during the analysis of data. The qualitative method functions inside constructions that are flexible, therefore, it offers much adaptability on the way the research is designed.

Qualitative method is used to explore participants' experiences, thoughts, and beliefs where the investigator is able to get additional explanations that cannot be achieved during the undertaking of the quantitative method (Percy, Kostere, & Kostere, 2015). Furthermore, several opinions of experiences are explored from the perspectives of the participants in the qualitative method as they have their views and beliefs. Furthermore, qualitative method was used because it was found to be the most appropriate research design in responding to the research questions as it generated information on what constitutes the Lesotho secondary school principals' professional development needs. This research design is, therefore, viewed as a blueprint that assisted in responding to the research objectives as well as questions (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

Qualitative research emphasises an investigation and understanding of the connotation which a person or a collection of people assign to social problem (Creswell, 2014). This method enabled me to gather data from the real contexts of secondary school principals in order to understand how they make sense of their environment (Creswell, Plano & Clark, 2018). The strategy enabled me to discover the way the phenomenon studied in the research is perceived and interpreted in the entire world (Yin, 2011). The study used a multiple case study design as expounded in the subsequent section.

#### **4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A research design is an approach used for linking the conceptual problem of the research to the appropriate and attainable experimental research and is an inquiry which provides specific direction for research processes (Creswell, 2014). Creswell further states that the fundamental part of the research design is to interpret the problem into information for analysis to suggest appropriate responses to the critical question of the study. The research design establishes the kinds of analysis to be undertaken to yield the anticipated results (Creswell, 2014). It expresses the kind of data, which is essential, the methods employed in data collection as well as how to answer the crucial questions of the research. As expressed by Jongbo (2014), if the researcher gathers the information necessary to respond to the research questions before a thoughtful research design strategy, the conclusions may probably be weak and unconvincing, hence failure to attain the research objective. The research design for this study was a multiple case study and this is explicated in the subsequent paragraph.

A case study is referred to as an organised examination of a particular individual, a group, an area, or some other parts whereby the researcher gathers in-depth data connecting to many variables (Haele & Twicross, 2017). Case study research is a qualitative method that permits researchers to investigate a complicated phenomenon in a structured and rigorous manner and provide a massive amount of penetration (Haele & Twicross, 2017). The study employed a case study as a technique of investigation to explore principals' professional development from selected secondary schools in Lesotho.

The researcher's purpose in conducting a case study is to comprehend the researched phenomenon by exploring complicated systems not simply detached from their setting (Dillman Taylor, & Blount, 2021). This technique allows researchers to acquire a deep understanding of the phenomenon studied. The researcher found a case study as a relevant approach in this study as the purpose was to explore professional development from the perspectives of the principals. The case study research necessitates a thorough investigation undertaken on an individual, a group, or an event to understand a real-life phenomenon (Coombs, 2022). The method is predominantly beneficial to use when there is a requirement to attain in-depth appreciation of an issue, an event, and a phenomenon the researcher is exploring in its ordinary real-life setting (Crowe et al., 2011). The study is consistent with this approach as the principals were investigated in their real-life contexts which are the schools. Case studies afford researchers a chance for greater in-depth understanding of a topic (Stake, 2010). The case study design was preferred as a research approach that helped me to explore the questions that responded to this study (Yin, 2018).

### **Characteristics of a case study**

- A case study is restricted by time and place. This means the studied phenomenon can be well-defined within specific limits (Creswell & Poth, 2018).
- A case study needs to also have an opportunity to afford a deep understanding of the case.
- Data is gathered through various data collection methods, comprising of but not limited to interviews, focus groups, documents analysis.
- Data analysis varies based on the case that is investigated.
- The effective identification of themes is important in creating effective descriptions in case study research.
- Case studies provide conclusions reached by the researcher based on the meaning resulting from the case study methodology and analysis.

- Case studies can be successfully used to probe in gathering a deep context of the investigated phenomenon.

The study employed a multiple case study as discussed in this section. A multiple case study is defined as a qualitative procedure allowing the investigators to differentiate between cases. This is done to signify a variety of features and extremes to form a deep understanding of phenomenon without compromising the uniqueness of the single cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Thomas, 2011). Multiple cases are usually employed for reproduction of an intervention and to present different contexts. The scholars further indicate that there is a harmony among the cases in a multiple case study, enabling researchers to analyse and find the precise variations that are transferable to comparable settings. As posited by Creswell (2013), multiple-case design investigates an existing phenomenon through comprehensive, in-depth collection of data including various sources of evidence. Diop and Liu (2020) assert that a multiple case study involves examining a phenomenon using several cases in different settings, and every case has its unique views. A multiple case study is considered more reliable because it provides generalisation by delivering more evidence which allows comparison between the studied cases (Cwiklicki & Pilch, 2020). A multiple case study was a suitable design for this research as data was gathered from a sample of twelve secondary school principals as cases.

In this study the two cases that were involved were the two districts in Lesotho where the researcher engaged the principals as the participants of the study. A multiple case study was employed since it allowed me to understand perceptions of secondary school principals on their professional development needs to enhance leadership in schools. The multiple case study is significant since it affords the researchers a confirmed tool to achieve a deep understanding of a specific phenomenon such as the information-seeking on the behaviour of a specific group. This technique was also used in this study as it helped me to have a deep understanding of professional development of secondary school principals from the perspectives of the principals from the two districts.

## 4.5 RESEARCH SITES

A research site is a physical location where the researcher conducts the study. The importance of finding a site incorporates a suitable place and the rationale for the choice of that actual place (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

The research sites for this study were twelve secondary schools in Lesotho, six from each district, namely, Maseru and Butha-Buthe. Thus, the researcher explored how Lesotho secondary school principals perceived their professional development needs to enhance school leadership. The selection of these schools was assumed to provide the researcher with abundant data that would inform the findings of the study. This is aligned with Adams, Barrio, Hightower & Blount (2022) who assert that a qualitative research methodology permits scholars to investigate a complicated phenomenon in an organised, and rigorous way, and offers a huge amount of depth. This is also consistent with Creswell and Plano (2008) who emphasises that qualitative researchers purposively select individual participants or cases to study. The following Fig. shows a glimpse of the map of Lesotho:



secondary schools in the country are owned by various churches, the government as well as the community. However, almost all education personnel fall under the Government employment through the Ministry of Education and Training and are mandated to follow the Government's rules and regulations. The Government pays teachers as well as principals and extends subsidies for learners' fees particularly in free lower basic education.

## **4.6 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES**

The instruments used for collection of data in the study were face-to face interviews and document analysis. According to Yin (2017), a multiple-case study incorporates two or more cases or duplications across the cases to examine the same phenomena. Employment of multiple sources of data in a case study enhances the generated data. This enhances the credibility of the generated data as well as the reliability of the study (Yin, 2017; Niewenhuis, 2011). Furthermore, it is significant to use multiple sources of data collection for triangulation which in turn enhances the reliability of the findings. Therefore, triangulation is essential in that it ensures the trustworthiness of the findings. The study used semi-structured interviews and document analysis to gather data from the twelve school principals from the twelve secondary schools. These data collection methods are described briefly in the following sections.

### **4.6.1 Semi-structured interview**

Semi-structured interview is a qualitative research approach to collecting data (Ahlin, 2019). According to Ahlin (2019), this technique refers to an organised discussion which is guided by new information attained as the interactive conversation takes place. A semi-structured interview provides abundant and comprehensive information from multiple perspectives. Megaldi and Berler (2020) establish that the semi-structured interview enables a researcher to dig deeply as they collect data that answers the critical questions of the study. To understand the viewpoints of the participants within a particular setting, semi-structured interviews were used (Haele & Twicross, 2017). Ahlin (2019) further indicates that this technique allows the researcher to ask relevant follow-up questions that elaborate on the research topic to gain more general knowledge. Although they start with a set of consistent questions which are posed to multiple participants, semi-structured interviews aid the researchers to understand the occurrences (Ahlin, 2019). Semi-structured interview also provides the researcher with an opportunity to gather data using open-

ended questions, to discover participant thoughts and beliefs relating to a specific subject to delve deeper into (Ahlin, 2019).

Semi-structured interview further permits researchers to obtain in-depth data and evidence from participants whereas also considering the main purpose of the study. Semi-structured interview concerns itself with flexibility and adaptability because its direction is fully controlled by the researcher (Ruslin et al, 2022). Semi-structured interview is usually guiding and is typically focused on the main topic that offers an overall pattern (Rusli et al., 2019).

The study employed semi-structured interviews to find information on perceptions of principals on their professional development needs. Magaldi and Berler (2020) consider a semi-structured interview as a descriptive interview which is generally focused on the major topic that permits the researcher to go deep in the discovery of information. A semi-structured interview is an organised conversation guided by new information obtained as the contact between the investigator and the participants unfolds (Ahlin, 2019).

The semi-structured interview schedule was produced for the school principals with the purpose of guiding them to respond to questions that addressed the research problem. The researcher conducted the pre-arranged face-to-face interviews with the school heads to generate data that informed the study.

To ensure that the participants were free to provide relevant information that was needed, the researcher requested them to feel free to speak in the language they were comfortable to express themselves with. Most of the recordings of the participants' recordings were in Sesotho while others were a mixture of both Sesotho and English and the researcher realised that indeed allowing the participants to freely express themselves in the language, they were comfortable with made them feel relaxed to provide the information that was needed based on their experiences. Thus, where Sesotho was used in the participants' responses, the researcher translated word-for-word into English while also making sure that the exact meaning of the participants' responses was kept.

The initial plan the researcher had was to conduct the interviews lasting between thirty minutes to one hour. The reality was that the length of the interviews differed since the minimum time was thirty minutes for some participants while others extended to one hour. The varied length of the interviews depended on the different experiences of the principals as the only participants of the study. All interviews were audio-recorded and data was transcribed from each individual interview so that the researcher could begin the preliminary data analysis.

The semi-structured approach further granted the participants liberty to exchange conversation on the issues of interest and significance to them in their own settings. As the participants were interviewed during the information-sharing process, it was possible that new concepts would emerge. Thus, more clarification was sought through the probing questions. The interviews were conducted in the principals' offices because qualitative research recommends participation in the natural setting. During the interview, probing questions were used to gather more information from the participants. This helped the researcher to get the information that responded relevantly to the questions. However, it was realised that while interviewing the participants, that the probing techniques had to be developed based on the situation that prevailed and the responses obtained from the participants.

The semi-structured interview was used as a technique for gathering rich data from the participants (Wilson, 2013). It is also observed as a time-effective approach of acquiring insight into human knowledge and understanding complex subjects (Wilson, 2013). The reason behind the choice of semi-structured interviews was that it allowed the use of open-ended questions in which the interviewer could have an opportunity to probe on relevant aspects based on the participant's responses. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were considered appropriate for this study to provide insight into principals' professional development needs to inform the findings of the study. This technique also allowed probing, so enough data that responded to the research questions was gathered.

#### **4.6.2 Document Analysis**

Document analysis is defined as a range of material consisting of graphic fonts such as photographs, video, and films (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Similar records encompassing written texts and involving pictorial material can be a basis for qualitative data analysis (Flick, 2018). Document analysis is a significant data collection method that was employed by the researchers for many years. Patton (2015) stresses that this method of data analysis comprises analysing several types of documents including books, journal articles, and institutional reports. All documents encompassing a text are possible sources for qualitative data collection (Patton, 2015). Document analysis pays attention to all types of written communication that may be used to provide a description of the phenomenon under examination (Maree, 2016). Document analysis is also defined by Busetto et al. (2020) as the review of written materials such as annual reports, archives, and policy documents by the researcher to give meaning that informs the research study.

Rapley (2018) views document analysis as the study of documents to understand, describe and explain a social phenomenon in various ways. The aim of using document analysis is to confirm evidence from other sources (Lambert & Lambert, 2012).

A researcher can use a huge variety of texts for research although the most common is expected to be the utilisation of written documents (O’Leary, 2014). Creswell (2015) states that document analysis is a good source for text data in a qualitative study. Creswell explains that in document analysis, the researcher understands the central phenomena through textbooks, essays, newspapers, novels, magazine articles, pictures, songs, and public or private documents. Since document analysis is an important research method, assumed to find an extensive variety of data, the literature on documentary research, however, is inadequate (Tight, 2019). Analysing documents has normally been a method that is not widely used in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative scholars regularly favour the employment of other methods, such as interviews, over document analysis due to their wish to participate more actively in field research. There is a possibility that some researchers avoid analysing documents because they are not aware how valuable this approach could be (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Document analysis is a suitable data collection technique as it allows analysis of documents such as district post-primary plans, policy documents and school-based teacher professional development programmes to shed light on principals’ professional development needs in their leadership roles. The study further used document analysis to collect data to verify and enhance evidence from the interviews. Document analysis was considered suitable for this study as documents such as school reports, minutes and school-based teacher professional development programmes and any other school documents on professional development issues would be analysed to shed light on principals’ professional development and how it enhances their leadership. The analysis of documents assisted me in gathering information that verified and enhanced evidence from the interviews.

Since time was insufficient to conduct the interviews and analyse the documents at the same time, the researcher requested the school principals to look for the relevant documents such as the minutes, the school activity plans, letters, programmes and emails that talked to professional development. However, the principals were reluctant to provide documents to be analysed and taken pictures as evidence because they thought the researcher might be intruding into the school business. The researcher reiterated that she was a researcher from the university as explained in the ethical clearance and permission documents. The researcher explained that the photographs

from the documents would be safely kept, and the information would not be exposed to any unauthorised people. The researcher also explained that their names and those of the schools would not be exposed. The school principals then allowed me access to the documents.

On the next visit to the schools, the researcher anticipated to find all documents prepared and ready for me to analyse them. However, each school provided the documents they had, and some were still hesitant to provide the staff minutes since they thought the researcher was intruding into their schools' confidential information. However, their fears were allayed by ensuring them that the information would not be exposed in any way as it was only meant to validate the data gathered from the interviews. Some principals were convinced; hence they provided all the relevant information needed.

## **4.7 SAMPLING**

Sampling is referred to as the choice of a smaller group of the population of interest in a research study (Turner, 2020). Sharma (2017) refers to sampling as a method used by the researcher to select a moderately reduced number of demonstrative items or people from well-defined people to serve as participants for experimentation as per the aims of the study. Sharma further asserts that researchers generally use sampling as it is impossible to investigate all specific individuals in the population. As much as it is a portion, it is representative of the population and is appropriate for research in terms of charges, convenience as well as time. Consistent with this view, Alvi (2016) explains that a sample is a collection of comparatively lesser number of people selected from a population for investigation purposes and the members of the sample are referred to as participants. Purposive sampling was used to select participants as explained in the following section.

### **4.7.1 Purposive sampling**

Purposive sampling is described as judgmental sampling which refers to a deliberate selection of participants regarding the qualities they possess (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016). Crossman (2017) also states that purposive sampling is selected based on features of the research participants and the purpose of the study. The study employed purposive sampling to identify and select

individual principals who could provide insight into professional development needs and had the relevant information to respond to the research questions.

Purposive sampling is the technique in which the researcher utilises individual judgement to select participants who possess distinct expertise and knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation (Rahi, 2017). Kumar (2014) describes purposive sampling a selection of participants to provide an appropriate information that is relevant to answer the critical questions of the study.

Purposive sampling was employed in this study because the intention was to gain deep knowledge, insight and understanding of the phenomenon which is professional development of secondary school principals in Lesotho (Polit & Beck, 2017). Creswell (2012) states that sampling represents the way participants are selected from a bigger group to strive for a practical conclusion. Through purposive sampling, the researcher purposively selects participants due to their appropriateness in evolving the purpose of the research. The study employed purposive sampling, as the sample was accessible to the investigator. The twelve principals were purposively selected to participate in the study since they had in-depth information on the researched topic. Furthermore, the research study was within their context, therefore, they provided in-depth information that informed the findings of the study.

#### **4.8 SAMPLING PROCEDURE**

The participants of the study were secondary school principals selected from individual secondary schools in Lesotho. The principals were selected purposely from each school. Through selection of principals from different schools, the purpose was to gather data from different contexts. The principals were also relevant participants for the study since they were the source of rich data that informed the study. I further found it significant to elicit information from the secondary school principals as appropriate participants who had experience of school leadership. The twelve schools were selected from two districts in the country and were within reach of the researcher. From each district, six principals were selected purposively as participants in the study. Among the participants, seven were males while five were females. The school principals were selected because they were in leadership positions in the schools, and they provided in-depth information on their leadership experiences. The principals are further responsible for the general running of the schools as organisations.

## **4.9 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis is referred to as a process of searching for patterns, themes, and all relevant features to gain the variation between the elements of the analysis (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Potter (2013) stresses that qualitative data analysis is defined as a process of dividing the data into parts and rearranging the parts into a reasonable whole. Thematic analysis is the data analysis approach that aligns with qualitative studies and was chosen for this research as explained in the following section.

### **4.9.1 Thematic Data Analysis**

This study employed thematic approach for data analysis. This is a qualitative analysis strategy that is used to analyse groups of data by presenting themes that connect to the data. According to Lester, Cho and Lochmiller (2020), thematic approach is primarily used by researchers to create descriptive statements that reflect their understanding of data in response to their research questions. In line with this view, Gray (2011) posits that thematic analysis is essential because it assists researchers to categorise data according to different themes and types. Thematic analysis is a method of categorising patterns and themes within qualitative data (Magaura & Delahunt, 2017). It is also referred to as a method of data description involving interpretation through the process of selecting codes and constructing themes (Kiger & Vapio, 2020). According to Kiger and Varpio (2020), thematic data is analysed using the following steps: acquaintance with the data, generating initial codes, penetrating to search for themes, rereading, and defining the themes as well as generating the report. Thematic analysis was used in this study as meanings were extracted from data patterns on the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on their professional development needs.

As soon as data was collected, the researcher transcribed and engaged in a preliminary data analysis process. The transcriptions as well as analysis of data happened simultaneously. This was carried out through identification of similar themes in the responses. For instance, the researcher investigated the comparisons and distinctions in responses by putting together the information into groups, searched for meaningful patterns, and then analysed data into content and themes. The descriptive statements that responded to the research questions were used. This is aligned with Ashaari and Maideen (2017) who emphasise that identification of themes is an important process to determine the crucial factors of an issue. Themes were produced from the research questions,

reference to literature and the theoretical framework underpinning this study (Ashaari & Maideen, 2017).

To be acquainted with the recorded data from the interviews, the researcher listened to the recordings and transcribed all data. The transcriptions were read and reread to interpret and translate the responses as some of them were recorded in Sesotho.

As explicated by Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017), lack of focus on rigorous appropriate thematic analysis has consequences in terms of the credibility of the research procedure. Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight the six-step guide which is viewed as a suitable framework for conducting thematic data analysis.

*Familiarisation with the collected data:* To become acquainted with the collected data, the researcher listened attentively to the recordings, made transcriptions of all interviews, and read the transcriptions from time to time. Notes were written down and early impressions of the interviews were made. The data from the analysed documents was also produced in a written presentation. This is in line with Cavendish (2011) who views thematic analysis as an ongoing comparative method consisting of reading and reviewing the transcripts in a logical way. The most significant feature of thematic analysis is that the analysis process should be arranged systematically so that the final quality product can be attained (Cavendish, 2011). The key aim of working through the data in that manner was to become completely absorbed in all of it and collect initial points of interest (Chamberlain, 2015).

*Generation of initial codes:* When the researcher was done with data collection and transcription, it was classified into meaning in a systematic way. The importance of coding was to categorise a range of data into slight pieces of meaning. As data was classified, the researcher ensured that it addressed specific research questions. Thus, every piece of relevant data was coded, and the researcher made sure that the codes were developed and modified by engaging in the coding process. As described by Saldaña (2015), coding is a process of categorising different parts of meaning in the research data as well as labelling them with a code. The identified codes can be defined as a word or a phrase that is symbolically assigned to a portion of data based on visual communication. Basically, the coding process is a record of data which enables the researcher to follow it (Saldaña 2015).

*Searching for themes:* According to Braun and Clarke (2006), there are no firm guidelines around what constitutes a theme. What characterises a theme is its importance. At this stage, the researcher interpreted the classified codes in line with the themes and sub-themes of the study. It was realised

that there were some overlaps between the coding stage and the stage of finding preliminary themes. The main purpose of searching for themes was to discover the patterns and connections between and across the whole data set (Chamberlain, 2015). In analysing the codes, attention was paid to how various codes were used and how they were connected to create the main theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As expounded by Braun and Clarke (2006), the theme captures all that is important about the data in relation to a research question and represents patterns responses or meanings within the data set. Thus, it was crucial to understand the codes and connect comparable or multiple codes to produce probable themes in relation to the research questions (Ansari et al., 2015).

*Review of themes:* At this stage, the researcher had to amend and develop the preliminary themes that were identified. Data that was relevant to individual themes was grouped, then different colour codes were used for the data associated with each theme. This step, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is about intentionally bringing together all the main themes and sub-themes that were intentionally brought together to refine the grouped themes and present them in an orderly way. Braun and Clarke (2006) further posit that the themes must be checked for internal consistency as well as differences between them.

*Defining and designating the themes:* In this step, the researcher engaged in the final modification of the themes with the purpose of identifying the essence of what the individual themes described (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This was done to interpret the meaning of the themes and their interaction and relationship with sub-themes. Also, researcher had to ensure that there was a relationship between the themes. At this stage, the crux of what each theme was about was identified and the researcher decided on the characteristic of the data that each theme addressed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes cannot be too diverse and complex. Therefore, the researcher went back to organise data excerpts for each theme and arranged the themes into a comprehensible and consistent report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

*Report writing:* At this phase of the data analysis, the report on the final analysis of the content was produced. The generated report addressed the key areas of my study such as the research questions, theoretical framework as well as literature. The evidence from the review of literature was used to support data from the interview and document analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) express that thematic analysis report should prove to the readers all the quality and consistency of the analysis. Thus, an effort must be made to deliver a concise and coherent report of the story that

the data signified within and across themes by providing enough evidence and particular instances of extracts that captured the essence of the point demonstrated by the author.

#### **4.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY**

Trustworthiness is defined as the degree of self-assurance in the data, explanation, and approaches employed to guarantee the value of a study (Pilot & Beck, 2014). Trustworthiness is also defined by Amankwaa (2016) as the extent to which researchers establish the procedures appropriate for the research study to be regarded worthy of consideration by the readers. To confirm trustworthiness, researchers should establish the procedures and procedures essential for the study to be worthy of consideration (Amankwaa, 2016). The qualitative research and transparency in undertaking the researcher process is critical to the worth and truthfulness of the results (Cope, 2014). Trustworthiness is defined by Amankwaa (2016) as the extent to which researchers establish the measures obligatory for the research study to be regarded worthy of consideration by the readers. In this study, trustworthiness was ensured through data triangulation by using multiple data sources which were semi-structured interviews and document analysis. To ensure trustworthiness, the following strategies were employed: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability as guided by Korstjen (2019) and Korstjen and Moser (2017).

##### **4.10.1 Credibility**

Credibility is an eternal variable which is individually recognised by recipients and is a subjective characteristic (Shariff et al., 2017). All interviews were audio-recorded and verbatim transcriptions were made, with the consent of all participants. The credibility depends on the source of information, and the medium of received information (Spillane et al., 2020). According to Korstjens (2019), credibility is the self-assurance that can be positioned in the truth of the research findings. It establishes whether the research findings represent credible information drawn from the participants' original data and is the precise understanding of the participants' original opinions. To ensure credibility in this study, the transcriptions were returned to the participants to confirm their responses. To ensure confidence in the research findings, data was collected from different principals from different locations to have a deeper understanding of their

professional development needs. The information was drawn from the participants' original data (Korstjens & Moser, 2017).

#### **4.10.2 Dependability**

Dependability comprises participants' evaluation of the findings, interpretation, and recommendations of the study and are strengthened by the data as received from participants of the study Korstjens (2019). To ensure dependability, multiple sources for data collection were used, and data was verified through listening to the audio records and reading the transcripts from time to time before data analysis. The researcher also used verbatim quotes from the interviews and presented pictures as evidence for document analysis. To ensure consistency, an enquiry audit was conducted to review the research processes.

#### **4.10.3 Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the extent to which the findings of the research can be confirmed by other researchers. It is concerned with establishing that data as well as the interpretations of the findings are not inventions of the researcher's imagination, but plainly derived from the data (Korstjens, 2019). Confirmability is also defined as the degree to which the findings of the study could be confirmed to ensure they are undoubtedly derived from the data and not from the researcher's imagination (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). The researcher ensured confirmability through providing a comprehensive data generation process as well as its analysis and interpretation. Member checks were done to validate the genuineness of the collected data.

#### **4.10.4 Transferability**

Transferability is defined as the extent to which the findings of a qualitative research can be transferred to other environments with other participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). According to the authors, the researcher facilitates the transferability decree by a potential user through thick description. Korstjens and Moser (2017) further state that transferability is not only about explaining the behaviour and experiences of the participants but also their background so that the behaviour and experiences become meaningful to the researcher. Transferability in qualitative

research suggests an application of the findings of one study to another setting or clusters of people (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). It is consistent with the concept of reliability in a quantitative methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Golafshani, 2003). According to Smith and McGannon (2017) and Smith, (2018), the findings achieved in a certain context can offer important lessons to other comparable settings. Transferability was used in the study to provide evidence to the reader to assess the integrity of research outcomes (Cope, 2014).

#### **4.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

According to Arifin (2018), ethical considerations are the protection of research participants through the application of appropriate ethical principles. Ethics are the right principles that administer a person's conduct. Parveen and Showkat (2020) describe research ethics as a set of standards for conduct that discriminates between what is correct and incorrect, and the acceptable and unacceptable conduct. They further point out that researchers should take care of various ethical issues at various levels of the research process (Parveen & Showkat, 2020).

Before conducting the research, the researcher applied for ethical clearance from the University of the Free State and was granted permission to undertake the study. Two authorisation letters were obtained from the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training to conduct the interviews in the two districts of the country. Permission was also sought from the principals of the selected schools where the research was conducted. During the visit to the schools, the researcher produced the permission letters from the Ministry of Education and Training in both districts. The purpose of conducting the study as well as the methodology used to the principals as the sole participants of the study were revealed to the participants. The participants were requested to fill in the informed consent forms and they were made aware that their participation was voluntary. The participants were also made aware that their participation in the study was voluntary. Moreover, they were informed that pseudonyms would be used to ensure confidentiality of their names as well as the names of their schools.

#### **4.12 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed the research paradigm that was adopted in this research study. I further presented the research sites and selection of participants. The data collection methods were also outlined, and justification was provided on why those methods were used. Data analysis methods

were also highlighted, and issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations were discussed. The following chapter presents the results of the study.

## CHAPTER 5

### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the methodology and design of the research. In this chapter, the researcher presents and details the discussion of the findings of the study as well as the conclusions and recommendations for research to be conducted in future. Data was generated using the two methods of data collection: face-to-face interviews and document analysis. The findings of the study explore the perceptions of secondary school principals on their professional development needs to enhance their school leadership. Profiles of the research participants as well as the sites where data was collected will be presented. The themes that emerged from the data are also presented. These are categorised within the realities of professional development of school principals in Lesotho, the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on the needs and challenges regarding professional development for their leadership roles as well as strategies to enhance leadership professional development for secondary school principals.

This discussion of the findings is followed by the conclusion. In presenting and discussing data, the researcher included the verbatim quotes from the principals as the only participants of the study to enhance trustworthiness. The themes emerged from the following research questions:

1. What are the realities of professional development for secondary school principals in Lesotho?
2. What are the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on the needs and challenges regarding professional development for their leadership roles?
3. How should professional development leadership programmes be enhanced to effectively develop and meet the needs of secondary school principals?

To ensure ethical considerations, pseudonyms were used for all the participants of the study as follows: P1 to denote Principal 1, P2 for Principal 2.

## 5.2 RESEARCH SITES AND PARTICIPANTS PROFILES

The first part of the face-to-face interviews requested participants to share their information background on their gender, age, experience as a teacher, and experience as a principal as well as their teaching subjects. To ensure compliance with the research ethics which were discussed in Chapter 4, the participants' pseudonyms are used, and the names of the schools and districts have also been avoided. That is, principal 1 is referred to as P1, principal 2 as P2. The names of schools are referred to as School 1, School 2 while the districts are named D1 and D2.

### 5.2.1. The research sites

This section presents the background information of the selected schools in table 5.2.1. The presentation is followed by a summary of the significance of each category of the table.

**Table 5.2.1: Background Information of the selected schools**

School	District	Number of Deputy Principals	Number of HODs	Number of Teachers	Number of Learners	Number of classrooms
School 1	District 1	1	2	14	332	13
School 2	District 1	1	8	45	1038	26
School 3	District 1	0	4	33	814	17
School 4	District 1	1	6	33	850	18
School 5	District 1	1	4	29	836	16
School 6	District 1	0	5	16	340	10
School 7	District 2	1	4	35	687	22
School 8	District 2	1	5	32	490	16
School 9	District 2	2	8	63	1314	35
School 10	District 2	1	4	35	675	15
School 11	District 2	1	5	30	887	17
School 12	District 2	1	4	35	800	18

HOD = Head of Department

The above table presents the background information of the selected schools. Each category provides unique information that assisted in the discussion and interpretation of the findings of the research. The information further indicates the location where the schools are. Some are in District 1 while others are in District 2. All twelve schools are relatively large and are located in the urban areas of the two districts. School 1 up to School 6 are in District 1 while School 7 up to School 12 are in District 2.

### Number of Deputy Principals

The information on the number of Deputy Principals was significant in this research since it showed how the school leadership is structured. The researcher found it important to include the

information because the school profiles portray that the principals encounter different challenges, hence different PD needs depending on their experiences and the environmental settings in which they work.

### **Number of HODs**

The researcher also included the category on the number to HODs in the school because they formed part of the school leadership. This means that their number might influence the administration of the school. In some schools, the HODs succeed the principals because such schools do not have Deputy Principals while in others there are. Therefore, it is crucial to indicate the number of HODs in each school since they form part of the leadership in the school. In the schools where there are HOD, the results of the study might have a bearing on the challenges the principals face in their leadership positions. Thus, the PD needs and challenges faced by principals could vary based on the assistance they get from several leaders in the school. The principal who leads the school without HODs may find it difficult to handle all leadership responsibilities on his or her own.

### **Number of Teachers**

The information on the number of teachers is relevant and important in this research because it depicts the responsibility of the principal in the school. Thus, running a huge school with many teachers might be challenging. Therefore, including this information could inform the findings of the study. It might also reveal that the PD needs of individual principals may depend on the number of teachers they manage. Managing a small number of teachers might minimise the challenges the principals experience in their leadership roles.

### **Number of learners**

The number of learners has been included to indicate that the principals might experience different challenges depending on whether the school is huge or small. This means it is crucial to demonstrate the number of learners as this might have an impact on the leadership role which might influence the kind of professional development needs for school principals to improve their leadership.

### **Number of classrooms**

It is significant to provide details on the number of classrooms in each school. This information will inform the results of the study since it might influence the school leadership. Many classrooms

mean an added responsibility for the school principal. Therefore, including this information might influence the results of the study.

### 5.2.2 Research Participants' Profiles

This section presents the research participants' profiles. This is indicated in table 5.2.2 followed by a clear description of the importance of each category.

**Table 5.2.2: Participants' profiles**

Participants	Gender	Age	Experience as a teacher (in years)	Experience as a principal (in years)	Highest qualification	Teaching Subjects
P1	M	52	30	4	BA Ed.	None
P2	M	58	38	14	MSc Ed.	Life Skills
P3	M	52	30	12	B.Ed. Hons	Life Skills and Accounting
P4	M	42	15	6 months	B.Ed.	English Language
P5	M	62	42	13	M.Sc. Ed.	Agriculture
P6	M	52	27	4	BTech Ed.	Design and Technology
P7	F	62	25	8	MA Ed.	English Language and Literature in English
P8	M	56	32	3	M.Ed.	Sesotho and Religious Studies
P9	F	62	36	11	B.Ed. Hons	Accounting and Business Education
P10	F	60	39	7	M.Ed.	Languages, Literature and Development Studies
P11	F	57	29	6	B.Sc. Ed	Chemistry and Maths
P12	F	60	34	3	B.Ed.	Sesotho and Geography

Keys: B.Ed. = Bachelor of Education, BA Ed = Bachelor of Arts in Education, BSc Ed. = Bachelor of Science in Education, BTech Ed. = Bachelor of Technology in Education, MSc. Ed = Master of Science in Education, MA Ed. = Master of Arts in Education, M Ed. = Master of Education

The table above presents the profiles of the study participants. The generation of this type of data was relevant and important in this study. Each category provided unique information that assisted in the discussion and interpretation of the findings as outlined below.

### Gender

The information on the gender of the participants has been secured. It was ensured that both genders are represented to assist me to avoid bias as I gathered data. Gathering data from both

genders further helped me to balance the opinions of both males and females with the aim of understanding how they perceive their professional development needs.

### **Qualifications**

It was important to capture data on the qualifications because it provides details on the level of competence of the participants. This could further reveal the level of confidence the school leaders have since opportunities to further their studies also build the level of confidence in them. As school leaders, acquiring the relevant qualifications of teaching influences the achievement of the school. The captured information shows that the principals obtained their professional qualifications from institutions of higher learning. The data further indicates that the principals went through education training and are qualified to teach and lead the schools. I chose the qualification level to find out the extent to which the principals perceive their professional development needs to enhance leadership.

### **Experience as a teacher**

The teaching experience directly influences the way principals think about the experiences they have in the school. As school leaders, they are also entrusted with the responsibility to teach learners, Therefore, their engagement and the number of years in the teaching service determines the experience they have as well as their confidence in the teaching profession. The expectation is that the appointment to principalship is determined by the number of years as a teacher. This, therefore, indicates that the principals who have a longer experience as teachers are knowledgeable and experienced in the education field, so they may provide relevant information to inform the findings of the research.

### **Experience as a school leader**

The number of years in the leadership position is a factor that determines the principal's experience and knowledge of the position. It further indicates that they are in the position to provide relevant information on their experience on professional development for school principals. It is expected that the principals with a longer experience will provide relevant information since they are knowledgeable and have acquired experience of their context. Regarding the principals with a shorter experience, the deputy principals also assisted me to discover how long they have been in the leadership position. Therefore, those whose experience is shorter have been in the deputy principal's position which is not very different to that of the principal in terms of the tasks they perform.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, verbatim quotes of participants' responses have been used. The themes emerged from the collected data which responded to the research questions.

### **5.3 REALITIES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN LESOTHO**

When participants were asked about the realities of professional development for school principals in Lesotho, a number of sub-themes emerged from the data, and these are presented in the sections below.

#### **5.3.1. Understanding of PD for school principals**

When the participants were asked about their understanding of PD, their responses demonstrated an understanding of PD as a programme that improves and upgrades their leadership and management skills in areas such as communication and financial management to effectively perform their roles as principals. The participants further revealed that PD for school principals could be achieved through refresher courses and trainings provided for principals. P1 shared that:

*Professional development is about equipping principals with skills on the areas of management which I think include communication, financial management and others, to help them to coordinate effective performance of schools.*

P3 further shared that the improvement of leadership skills can be attained through refresher courses for principals to perform their daily work. This is what he shared:

*Professional development is referred to as improvement of the leaders or school principals. It may be by holding refresher courses for them to remind them their responsibilities and to equip them with new skills that they can use in their day-to-day work in their schools.*

The same sentiments were shared by P7 who highlighted symposiums, conferences and workshops as activities that can enhance management and leadership skills. This is how she expressed her views:

*My understanding of professional development is I should be equipped with the leadership skills by attending activities like symposiums, conferences and workshops that can help me to sharpen the leadership and management skills because when the school is not run well, it does not perform well.*

P8 reiterated a similar understanding by indicating that that pre-service and in-service training should be provided to enhance leadership in schools. This is what he shared:

*Well, my understanding of professional development for leaders or school principals is providing school leaders or principals with leadership skills through pre-service and in-service trainings to enhance leadership in schools.*

Another similar perspective was shared by P9, as expressed in the following excerpt:

*My understanding of professional development is that as a school leader, one should be provided with necessary skills and knowledge to be able to handle the type of position they occupy. So professional development is all about the skills and knowledge of leadership to improve the school performance.*

P6 also emphasised that to upgrade and sharpen the leadership skills, there should be training organised for principals as shared in this extract:

*Professional development is upgrading of skills that we are supposed to have while already in the position. For example, there are trainings that we should attend, which are relevant to the work that we do that will help us to sharpen our leadership, management and administration skills because sometimes we are appointed as principals without these skills.*

The data gathered from the participants revealed that the principals held a similar understanding of PD for school leaders. The participants' understanding of PD outlines that if they are equipped, improved, and upgraded in areas of management and leadership, they could be effective leaders. Furthermore, the discussions revealed that PD can be enhanced by programmes such as in-service and pre-service trainings. Additionally, the availability of PD training can assist in boosting effective school leadership. From the participants' responses, I could detect that they lacked capacitation through various PD programmes. To effectively run the schools, principals are required to exercise skills in various areas of management such as financial, communication and legal issues, to mention a few. Lack of capacitation in these areas contributes to ineffectiveness in their work. Therefore, PD for principals is crucial to improve school leadership.

According to Kennedy (2016), professional development is viewed as a series of organised training activities with the main purpose of capacitating individuals to increase their job experience. In line with the participants' responses, Kumar (2015) defines professional development as a technique used to support individuals in the workplace to understand more about their work environment, the job they do and how to improve it. The main goal of professional development, as postulated by Bjekić et al. (2016), is to keep staff equipped, disciplined, and empowered. This view resonates with the participants' view of professional development for school principals. Therefore, there is a need for education administrators to prescribe professional development for principals through provision of in-service training workshops (Johns & Sosibo, 2019).

These views are in line with constructivism theory which, according to Brau (2020), is the perspective on learning which is concerned with how people actively construct and create knowledge out of experiences (see 3.2). Brau (2020) perceives individuals at the centre of knowledge creation and acquisition process through the interaction between their experiences and ideas (see 2.3.1). According to complexity leadership theory, leadership is a shared growing process in which individuals and groups interrelate and learn from one another for innovation and flexible capacity (Avolio et al., 2009; Lichtenstein et al., 2006; Hazy and Uhl-Bien, 2014) in Chapter 3 (see 3.3).

### **5.3.2 Principals' Experiences in PD**

When asked about their experiences of PD, the participants indicated that in the previous years, they used to be professionally developed through workshops that were organised by the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), however, workshops were no longer being conducted. The participants further specified that they only attend meetings organised by the District Education Manager (DEM) to present reports and share the challenges they experience in their school leadership roles. Additionally, they disclosed that the Lesotho Association of Principals (LESPA) holds meetings for principals which are not focussed on PD, but rather on motivational talks delivered by invited guests. This is what P2 alleged:

*We are no longer developed as it used to be in the past where there would be many workshops helping beginning principals. However, in this district, the District Education Manager (DEM), holds workshops occasionally for us*

*although it is not about professional development as such. Mostly, it is about reporting our progress at work and the problems we encounter. So, we have four meetings in a year as secondary school principals where we report progress on whether we are coping or whether we have problems so that we can be assisted to cope with the school leadership.*

Similarly, the principals reported that they used to attend workshops which were meant for school principals in the past. P8 shared his experience:

*I remember only one workshop way back in 2013 arranged for school principals. It was organised by the Ministry of Education and was held at Institute of Development Management (IDM). That was the only workshop we had that addressed issues of leadership. I was just a participant and had just been appointed as a principal.*

P10 shared that even when the meetings were held for principals, their main discussions focus on motivational talks instead of PD for principal as indicated in the following extract:

*The Lesotho School Principals Association (LESPA) also holds some meetings for us where they invite experts although most of the time the focus is not on principals' professional development but motivational talks.*

P7 indicated that she had only one experience of PD workshops in contrast to the various workshops she attended while working in Canada as a school principal:

*For school leadership, since I have been a principal in the Ministry of Education, I had one experience. It was organised by Catholic Secretariat, and we attended a workshop in Gauteng but, I have never had such an experience again. I had many workshops while I was in Canada and many of them were held in South Africa.*

Another perspective revealed the absence of refresher courses as one of the ways of capacitating the principal. P3 shared that:

*The refresher courses are no longer held to improve us as it used to be in the past.*

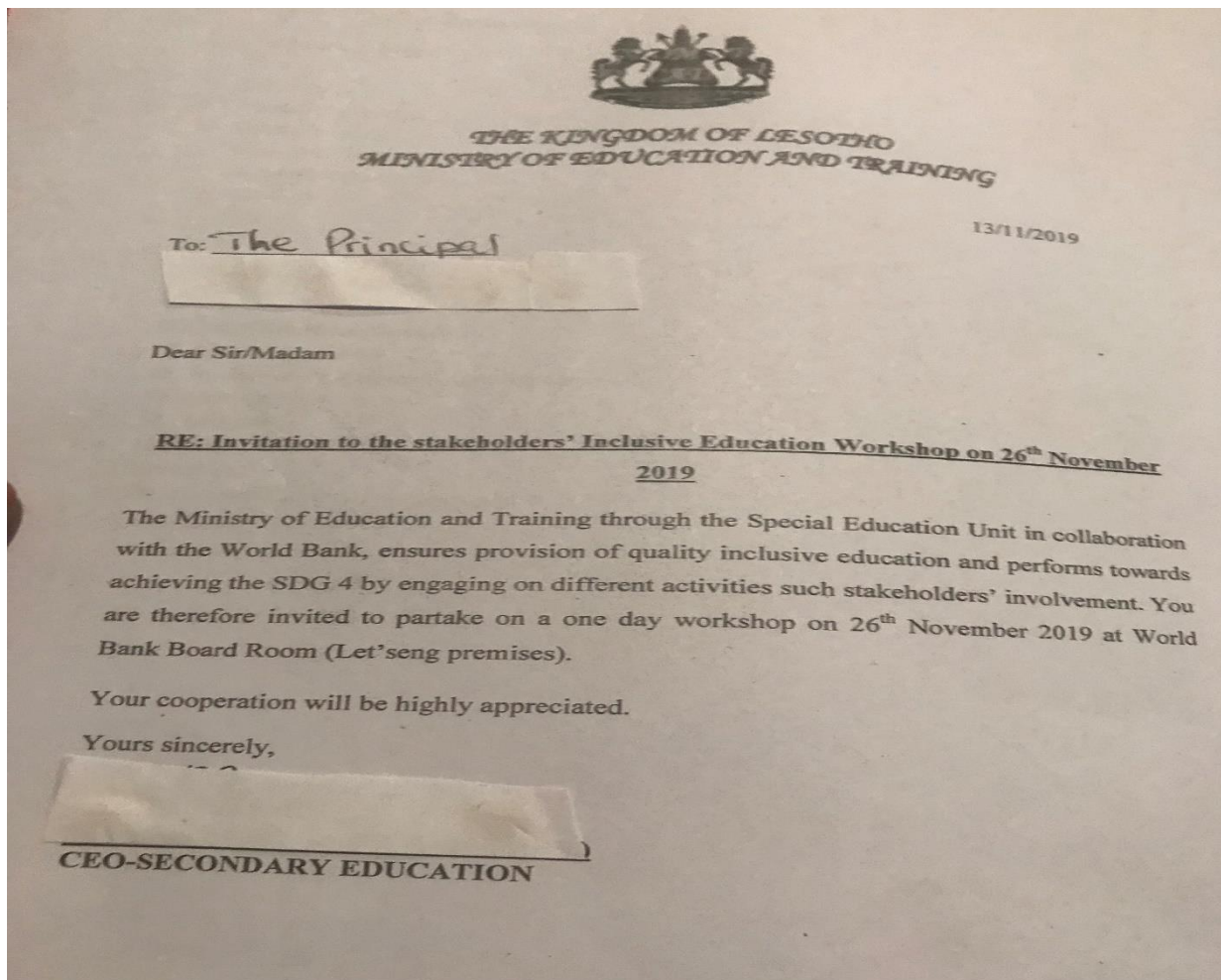
Principals in the participating schools further revealed that in recent times there are no PD programmes organised by the MoET. In emphasising his experience, P8 shared that:

*I will be lying if I can say I attended the one organised by the Ministry of Education. Apart from that, I have only attended the conferences outside the country organised by South African Principals Association way back in 2007. I remember that I attended a conference for four days in Cape Town. From there, I attended the one that was held in Limpopo where my school paid for me. But there is nothing from the Ministry.*

The data generated from the participants indicates lack of PD for school principals in Lesotho secondary schools. The various workshops the school principals used to attend previously are now replaced by meetings that are not aimed at professionally developing them except for compliance on reports on day-to-day school activities. Furthermore, the participants revealed that the principals' association also holds meetings with the sole purpose of providing motivation through invitation of experts. Therefore, the discussions reveal there is lack of PD for school principals, and this means it becomes difficult for them to keep pace with the changing times. From the discussions, I could sense the participants' unhappiness about their lack of experience in PD for principals. This inexperience, therefore, means handling leadership becomes a challenge due to the complexity of their work as financial, technological, legal and communication managers in their schools.

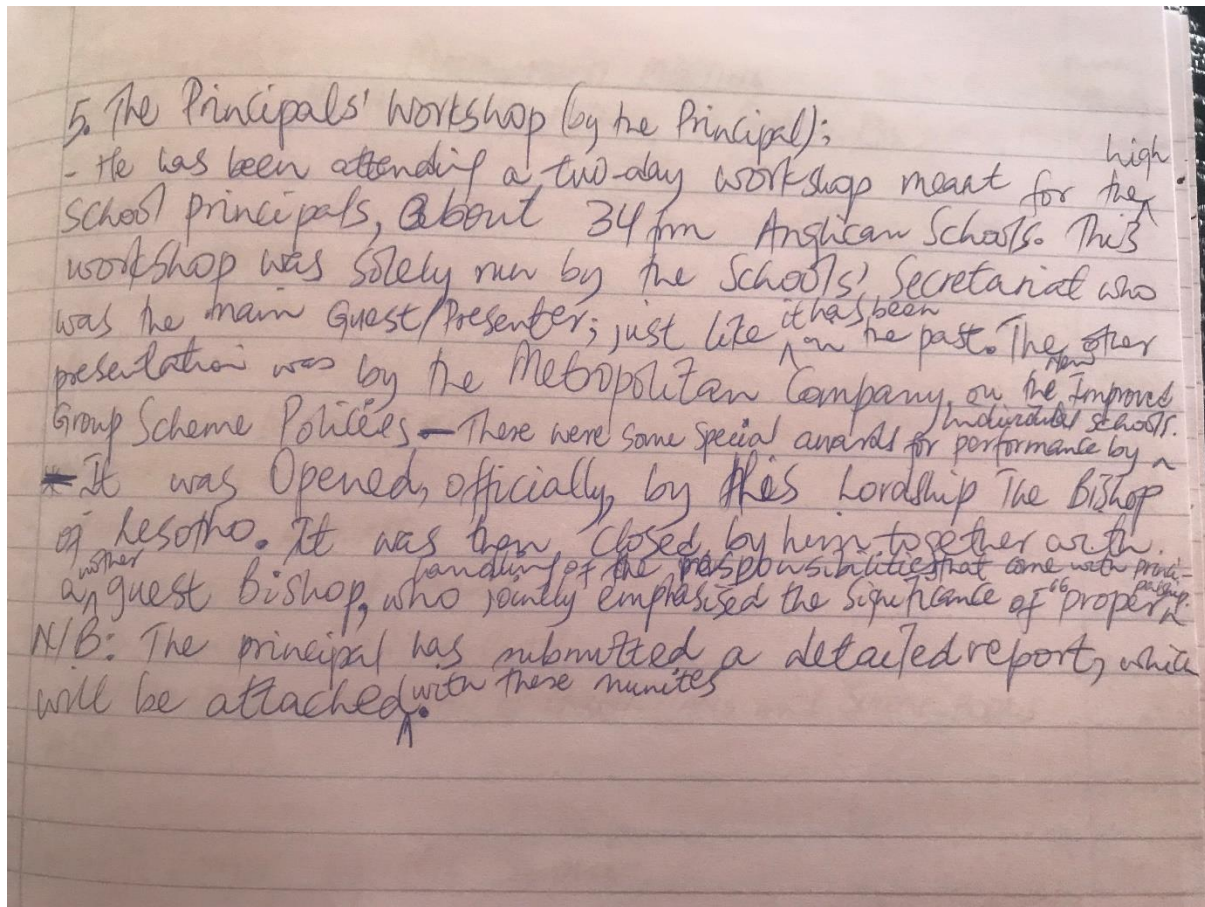
To validate data generated from face-to-face interviews, the documents were also analysed. From the invitation letters that were analysed, it was difficult to find information on PD for school principals. As the participants indicated, they used to attend workshops in the past and such programmes have been replaced by meetings that are held by the District Education Managers. As expressed by the participants, the workshops that they attend are not specifically meant for their capacitation on leadership and management. The invitation letter that I analysed indicated that the principals were invited to attend the inclusive education workshop. This kind of a workshop, according to the document, was meant only for the school principals whose schools offer inclusive education. A document from school 7 showed the following:

**Figure 5.1: Invitation Letter from the MoET**



Another document that was analysed from school 8 was the staff meeting minutes where it was recorded that the principal attended a workshop organised by the school secretariat. This corroborates the data from the interviews as it indicates that the school secretariats also occasionally held workshops for the principals. These, according to the document analysed in school 8, capacitate principals in their leadership roles. As I analysed the minutes, I could not find capacitation of principals by the Ministry of Education through workshops as expressed by the interview data. The following is the evidence that was found from the minutes of the staff meeting:

**Figure 5.2: Meeting Minutes**



5. The Principals' Workshop (by the Principal):  
- He has been attending a two-day workshop meant for <sup>high</sup> school principals, about 34 from Anglican Schools. This workshop was solely run by the Schools' Secretariat who was the main Guest/Presenter; just like <sup>it has been</sup> on the past. The other presentation was by the Metropolitan Company on the Improved Group Scheme Policies - There were some special awards for performance by <sup>individual schools.</sup>  
\* It was Opened, officially, by His Lordship The Bishop of Lesotho. It was then closed by him together with <sup>with the</sup> a guest Bishop, who <sup>highlighted</sup> jointly emphasised the significance of "proper <sup>management</sup>"  
N/B: The principal has submitted a detailed report, which will be attached <sup>with these minutes</sup>.

According to literature, school principals are mandated to become extraordinary school managers and exceptional leaders in the period where the pace of transformation has increased rapidly (Pollock & Wang 2019, 2020; Wang & Pollock 2020). As expressed by Acton et al. (2017), school principals need continued professional development to keep up with the ever-changing demands placed on them as their roles have changed drastically in the last decade (Daniel & Griffith, 2017). Campbell et al. (2017) also emphasise the significance of mentoring and external support for leaders at different phases in their profession (see 2.4). In line with constructivism theory, Brau (2020) views individuals at the centre of knowledge creation and acquisition process through the interaction between their experiences and ideas. Constructivism, according to this author, is the perspective on learning which is concerned with how people actively construct and create knowledge out of experiences (Brau, 2020) in Chapter 3 (see 3.2). The above data, therefore, corroborates both the theoretical framework and the literature review of the study.

In seeking to find further find out about the principal's experiences in PD, I asked them to tell me about the PD programmes that are already in place for schools, the participants alleged that such programmes on professional development are not available for principals. They indicated that such programmes used to be offered in the past. P2 stated this as evidence:

*We don't have such programmes. There are no workshops arranged for us so that we can know that we will have them addressing different issues as it used to happen.*

P3 also indicated that they used to be capacitated through attending workshops on leadership in the past. He responded as follows:

*There are no such programmes here. I'm saying this because it was a long time ago when the Ministry of Education held us a workshop on leadership. I think it was in 2012 or 2013 if I remember well. We were capacitated on how to handle leadership and that was the last time I heard about this. From there, there are no programmes that I know which are meant for capacitation of principals.*

When P5 responded to a similar question on the PD programmes in place for school leaders, he revealed that since he is new in the office he has not been exposed to such programmes. These were his words:

*Since I am new in this office, I haven't heard of such programmes.*

Another perspective shared by P4 in responding to the question was that:

*It doesn't happen. There are no programmes that principals engage in to be equipped with skills relevant for school leadership and how they should handle the challenges they face in their day-to-day running of schools.*

Another opinion from P7 stressed lack of PD programmes. This is what she said:

*I have not seen such programmes in this country. We only attend the meetings organised by the principals' associations, but we just discuss a specific topic. Sometimes LESPA holds meetings for us, and we advise each other on how to handle the problems we face in our schools.*

P10 further emphasised that there are no PD programmes, but a cluster has been formed where they meet to discuss the challenges of leadership. She shared that:

*I cannot say they are there as such, but I can talk about the arrangement that has been made by the Education office to group the principals in this district*

*into clusters. We hold meetings during the holidays, and we talk about our challenges as leaders and the solutions to these challenges.*

In the above discussions, the participants reveal lack of exposure to PD programmes as they indicate that the programmes are not available for them. The data also indicates that where such programmes were available, it was a long time ago. The participants' responses show that there is lack of capacitation for Lesotho secondary school principals through PD programmes. The role performed by principals is demanding and this means they encounter many challenges in dealing with both the learners and the teachers. If the PD programmes are not availed for them, it means the leadership role becomes a challenge. Therefore, exposure and participation in the PD programmes will enhance their school leadership.

According to Aydin, Topsta, Kaysili and Topcu (2021), every educational system that claims to be successful needs to show continuous change and transformation to truly live up to these claims. As stated by Kheswa, Sandlana, and Kwatubana (2014), professional development of principals is significant in advancing educational practices. In support of this view, Paletta (2019) asserts that the responsibility of school principals is a developing one, regarding them as elements of change in their educational leadership to advance the schools. This is in line with the views of the principals on the professional development programmes as they indicated that they need to be furnished with the relevant skills to assist them to handle their leadership roles. Furthermore, Naidoo (2019) states that it is significant for the principals to possess managerial skills in areas such as finance, resources, and discipline for them to become effective leaders since these issues are regularly dealt with (see 2.4).

According to constructivism theory, people construct new knowledge through contact between their previous skills and knowledge acquired from social communication with peers and instructors, and social activities (Mukhalalati and Taylor, 2019). Thus, availability of PD for principals is a platform that enables them to engage in social interaction activities to improve their knowledge. Thus, constructivism emphasises that learners' perception of knowledge results from the search for creation of meaning in which learners are involved in a process of creating individual understandings of their experiences (Mukhalati and Taylor, 2019) (see 3.2). This is also in line with complexity leadership theory as it affords a framework on leadership which advances quality and capability of organisations as complicated adaptive systems that are open to knowledge acquisition, creativity, and information production (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009) in Chapter 3 (see 3.3).

### 5.3.3 Role of Principals in previous MoET PD programmes

In seeking to find out the role the participants played in the previous MoET programmes, the participants indicated that the role they played in PD programmes was participation to gather the skills that assisted them in their leadership positions and to improve their performance as school leaders. Furthermore, they shared their experiences in the MoET PD programmes. This is what P1 said:

*The role I played was only participation in the workshop and some of the skills acquired helped me to improve my performance as a leader, although it was a long time ago.*

P2 declared that the role played in the previous MoET workshops was only participation to gather leadership skills and that and it had yielded positive results for principals. This is how he shared this opinion:

*My role in the workshops that we used to attend in the past was only participation so that I could gather skills that would help me in my leadership position.*

P3 further highlighted that apart from just being a participant, the workshop was also a platform for them to share their experiences. The principal reported that:

*My role was just a participant, and we were workshopped on what is expected of us as principals. We were then asked to provide reports on our experiences in this position and we were given the tips on how to handle this position.*

This is how P5 expressed his view:

*I didn't have any specific role that I was playing. I was just a participant, and the skills were given to us by the presenters. Mine was just to gain knowledge from the presentations.*

The extracts above indicate that the principals played the role of participants in the PD programmes that were offered by the Ministry of Education in the previous years. The workshops were allegedly a development space for the principals as they gained skills and knowledge to enhance their leadership roles. The platform also gave them an opportunity to share their views on the challenges and successes within their leadership roles.

This is in line with the literature that indicates there is a need for education officials to prescribe professional development for school principals (Johns & Sosibo, 2019). These professional development activities come in the form of in-service training workshops which aim to impart new knowledge to improve teaching and learning (Murphy, Smith, Mallon & Redman, 2020). Schools can only be effective when professional development efforts for the principals and teachers are deliberate (Bush, 2020) in Chapter 2 (see 2.7.1).

In constructivism theory as stated by Piaget (1977), social interaction occurs as part of the learning process as individuals construct knowledge based on their personal experience (see 3.2.2.1). According to complexity leadership theory, it is only when people make sense of the setting that learning happens and the knowledge is formed which permits individuals to acclimatize to complicated situations (Weick, 2007). As principals participate in the workshops, they acquire the skills that enable them to adapt to the complex situations in their work environment (see 3.4).

#### **5.3.4 Principals support of PD programmes in schools**

When the participants were asked how they monitor implementation of PD programmes in their schools, they indicated that they work closely with the HODs to support the school-based PD. The participants further revealed that they have PD programmes such as workshops for their schools held internally and externally. They also go to an extent of inviting visitors from outside to capacitate the teachers in their schools. P4 alleged that:

*The workshops are there, and they are many for the school. There are workshops that focus on different subjects locally and regionally. For example, teachers from different departments meet to share the skills on how to tackle some of the challenging topics as they teach learners. We do have such workshops for the school. We also have those that teachers attend regionally which are attended by teachers from different schools in the region. I work with the HODs to support implementation of professional development programmes.*

P8 revealed his support for school-based PD to improve the deputy principal and the HODs in their leadership positions. This is his view:

*What I do in this school is to make sure that there are workshops for teachers. One, I identify the area that has some challenges. I arrange workshops for the management, the deputy principal and the HODs. For example, this year, in February, there was a workshop where they were trained on how to handle*

*teachers' misconduct, so the question is how we monitor implementation of PD programmes.*

P9 indicated that to improve teachers' attitude towards their work she supports internal PD programmes by inviting external experts to capacitate them. She said:

*What we do here as a school is to have workshops and I do organise such workshops. They tell me about the area in which they need capacitation and I invite the resource person or a specialist to come and talk to them. Sometimes we do it at departmental level. For example, the English Department may look for the people who can help them on certain topics such as marking and others. Departmentally, we do have the workshops. I always ask teachers to be free to say what they need capacitation on and mine is to arrange it with the HODs. I support them in all subjects.*

Almost a similar response emerged from P10 who emphasised that she motivates teachers to perform well by arranging workshops and organising team building activities for them. This is what she shared:

*What we do is to instil the passion in teachers by inviting the motivational speakers once in two years because they have to be paid. Sometimes we go out for team building. We call the experts to who come to present to us. Sometimes the teachers present to one another on the areas where they have expertise. The HODs help me to arrange the workshops as per the needs in individual departments.*

The above responses seem to reveal that PD is implemented in schools and the principals' role is to support its implementation. The responses also indicate that principals exercise their leadership role of ensuring that teachers are capacitated for schools to improve performance. The discussions further show the principals' understanding of the significance of their role to support PD in their schools. Thus, lack of capacitation for teachers means ineffectiveness in their duties. When the school performance deteriorates, the chief accounting officer is the principal. Therefore, principals need to also be capacitated to enhance their leadership. It could also be argued that since the principals have the huge responsibility to facilitate the professional development of teachers in their own schools, this is even more reason why they ought to be professionally developed and equipped in order for them to carry out this responsibility efficiently. In support of this view, Karacabey (2020) states that the responsibility of ensuring that teachers are capacitated lies with the principals. This suggests that in order to achieve improvement of goals, teacher professional development is a crucial factor for improvement of the quality of the school (Liu & Hallinger,

2018). Therefore, the principals are placed in a situation where they must ensure initiation and support of this effort to improve the learning experience.

The data from the analysed documents is in line with the interview data as it indicates the principal is accountable for providing support for school-based professional development. The principals are also entrusted to assist learners achieve the best performance. This can be achieved when the teachers are capacitated to effectively perform their teaching roles. From the school activity plan that I analysed in school 2, it revealed that principals support teachers through arranging departmental workshops for them. From the document, it is not clear when the principals attend the PD programmes. However, they as school leaders seem to understand their responsibility of supporting teachers by providing PD through workshops. These workshops, as evidenced by the interview data, are held at departmental levels, and are led by the HODs This is what the evidence from the document emphasised:

**Figure 5.3: Action Plan**

JANUARY		
2 <sup>nd</sup>	HODs Meeting	Deputy Principal
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Grade 8 Orientation	HODS
4 <sup>th</sup>	Staff Meeting	Principal
5 <sup>th</sup>	Departmental Meeting	HODs
10 <sup>th</sup>	School re-open	Principal
10 <sup>th</sup>	Grade 8 pre assessment	HODs
13 <sup>th</sup>	HODs Meeting	Deputy Principal
16 <sup>th</sup>	Class teachers' meeting	Principal
20 <sup>th</sup>	Counselling session for teachers	Principal
25 <sup>th</sup>	Nomination of School prefects(staff Meeting)	Prefectship Committee
26 <sup>th</sup>	Prefects inauguration	Prefectship Committee
27 <sup>th</sup>	Literature in English Workshop	
31 <sup>st</sup>	Staff meeting (Results analysis)	Principal
FEBRUARY		
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Internal workshop for English Dept(Marking)	HOD
3 <sup>rd</sup>	HODs Meeting	Deputy Principal
6 <sup>th</sup>	submission of test one question paper to HODs	Deputy Principal
8 <sup>th</sup>	Submission of Test One question papers to the Deputy's Office.	Deputy Principal
10 <sup>th</sup>	Celebration of 2022 results	Events Committee
13 <sup>th</sup>	Test one	Deputy Principal
27 <sup>th</sup>	Submission of Test one Marks	Deputy Principal
28 <sup>th</sup>	Deadline for grade 11 exam registration	Principal
MARCH		
1 <sup>st</sup>	HODs meeting	Deputy Principal
7 <sup>th</sup>	Staff Meeting	Principal

Effective schools have strong leadership support for teaching and learning. Among all factors, leadership comes in after classroom teaching in its effect on student learning (Berkovich & Bogler,

2019). Thus, school leaders have an indirect yet powerful impact on student attainment through their interactions with teachers and their ability to shape school culture (see 2.5).

As leaders and managers of schools, principals perform a crucial role of fulfilling the school vision and goal through a specific approach to accomplish the target (Berhane & Kilango, 2022). This substantiates, Berhane, Ephrem & Gaikar (2021), who they contend that school principals are expected to lead curriculum design, differentiate the fundamentals of sound instructional practices, as well as coach and guide teachers professionally (see 2.5).

#### **5.4 PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPALS ON THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES REGARDING PD**

When establishing perceptions of principals on the needs and challenges regarding their professional development, some sub-themes emerged, and these are presented in the sub-sections below.

##### **5.4.1 Professional development needs**

The following sub-themes emerged from the data on professional development needs of secondary school principals:

###### **5.4.1.1 Technological skills**

When the participants were asked about their professional development needs to enhance their leadership, they exposed the need for capacitation on the use of the latest technologies for them to fit in the changing world. They also indicated that being equipped with technological skills will assist them to blend well with the 21st century learners as well as teachers. This is how P2 expressed his perspective:

*I need to be equipped with the latest professional development skills on the use of technology, especially because we are leading schools in the 21st century. Being an old teacher, I am stuck with the old ways of doing things. I think I am not supposed to remain behind in the use of the latest technologies, so I should be equipped with the new ways of approaching teaching and learning in this changing world.*

Participants further emphasised that they need capacitation in the use of the latest technologies. This is the view shared by P3:

*I would like to be trained on the 21st century education needs of the learners we teach. Some of us are still backward yet we are supposed to be leading the people who are knowledgeable in technology. So, it does not become easy to lead people who know the latest ways of dealing with everything, yet you are still backward. So, computer literacy and use of technology is a priority in this changing times.*

School principals exposed similar sentiments as they provided responses on the question on their PD needs. P9 revealed that they need to keep pace with the changing times by being equipped with the leadership styles used in the era of transformation. She shared that:

*I should be refreshed because we are working in the changing world. The people we manage are knowledgeable in terms of the latest technologies so the leadership styles should merge these transformations that we see in the education system.*

From P10, it emerged that the use of technology is a challenge. Similarly, she emphasised the need for capacitation in technology and this is what she shared:

*Technology is also a great challenge to me because I am not experienced in its use. I try it to use it but where I encounter challenges, I ask for assistance from other people who are good at it.*

In the above responses, the participants revealed that among the PD needs, they wish to be provided with the technological skills to enable them to lead schools in the 21st century. Leading schools in the 21st century requires school leaders who are knowledgeable in the latest technologies as most of the activities they perform are undertaken online. Lack of capacitation in this area denotes inefficiency in the management of the overall running of the school. The 21st century teachers are exposed to new ways of dealing with learners. Therefore, the principals need to become instructional and technological leaders to be able to manage the 21st century teaching and learning. Therefore, being equipped with the latest ways to administer schools in the era of technology is a requirement. As opined by Ugur and Koç (2019), technology has transformed people's lives, from the utilisation of the internet to the way they interconnect with written messages as well as through e-mails. This change is also evident in the education system.

The 21st century has brought about new revolutions in the education systems which have an impact on the school leadership. Roll (2019) opines that the era has been characterised by continuous changes which have affected the role of leadership in contemporary organisations, including the schools. The current global changes, according to Fry and Egel (2021), advocate for advanced leadership capacity to lead a sustainable system. Due to these changes, school principals are confronted with the latest demands in the education system, complicated decisions as well as supplementary accountabilities more than it used to happen before (Mestry, 2017). To lead the implementation of the ever-changing digital period, school principals are entrusted with the responsibility to play the role of technology leaders (Mullen, 2019). Mullen further states that for school principals to excel in their leadership roles, they ought to consider the 21st century priorities such as innovation and technology which must be strongly practised. Therefore, technological professional development abilities should be availed for school principals to enable them to become creative technology leaders in the digital educational setting (Agur & Koc, 2019).

In line with constructivism theory, individuals acquire knowledge independently in the communal learning environments by creating their individual interpretation depending on the information accessible to them (Piaget, 1959). Complexity leadership theory further assists in understanding how school principals should respond to the pressures they face in their leadership and how they should find ways of surviving such pressures (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009). Complexity leadership is a substitute strategy for modern organisations to continue working in a changeable, competitive, chaotic environment influenced by information technology (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009).

#### **5.4.1.2 Financial management skills**

When asked about their professional development needs, the participants revealed that they need to be equipped with skills to manage the schools' finances. They indicated that capacitation in financial management will enable effective school administration. The participants further highlighted that since some of them are not Commercial subject teachers, capacitation in this area of management is necessary. This is what P5 shared:

*The most important need is to be equipped with the skills to handle the finances because I am the chief accounting officer, so I must see to it that the funds are used properly. I need the financial management skills so that I can effectively run the school.*

Another view from P4 was that there is a need for capacitation of principals on financial management skills as expressed in the following excerpt:

*Another need is the one I talked about which is focussing on finances. When you don't have enough financial literacy, things can happen right under your nose without being aware of such a thing. So, when I delegate someone to work on the school finances, I too should have knowledge in that area for accountability.*

Similar sentiments were shared by P3 as expressed in the following extract:

*Handling the school finances is an area I would like to be capacitated on, to be able to provide justification for all the money used to run the school. However, as a commercial subject's teacher, I have acquired some knowledge which should be improved through training on financial education.*

P8 further revealed that he needs capacitation in financial management. He stressed that:

*I need to be capacitated on how to handle the finances and how to budget because they are challenging.*

P10 also emphasised the need to be equipped with the skills to handle the school finances, and said that:

*I also need to be equipped with the financial management skills, especially on budgeting. I have an idea although I have not done accounting. Sometimes other principals would say they would not submit their budget just because of lack of understanding of how to draw it. We need the new ways of handling leadership and management.*

P12 also indicated the same need as expressed in the subsequent excerpt:

*Even the budget is very important so I should be capacitated on how to handle the school finances.*

In the above discussions, the participants revealed that they need capacitation in financial management skills. As expressed by the participants, they particularly experience a challenge with budgeting the school funds. Since principals are the chief accounting officers, they must ensure proper use of funds to avoid mismanagement. That means, running the school as an organisation requires a school leader who is financially literate to be able to budget properly and monitor the use of school funds. Therefore, their professional development in this area will enhance leadership.

Financial management encompasses planning and monitoring financial resources to accomplish organisational objectives (Ekpenyong, 2016). The position of the principal is the chief executive occupied by an individual with the responsibility of controlling, planning, stimulating, directing, organising, and coordinating numerous resources such as the finances at the expense of the school to foster achievement of educational goals (Ofojebe & Nnebedum, 2016). This, therefore, means that financial management skills are required for principals to enable them to achieve the desired goals or outcomes of education with the minimum number of available resources (2.8.3).

According to constructivism theory, adults are already in possession of considerable knowledge and experience, therefore, creation of the new knowledge and understanding is built on this existing body of experiences and knowledge (Piji Zieber, 2009). This means that principals need to construct knowledge on financial management based on the existing information. In line with complexity leadership theory, principals need to be equipped with skills to substantiate those they already possess. As opined by Benmira and Moyosolu (2020), leadership is one of the most complex phenomena during the 21st century where many transformations are taking place in the education system.

#### **5.4.1.3 Handling legal issues**

When the participants were further asked about their professional development needs, they exposed that they need capacitation in dealing with legal issues in their schools. They indicated that capacitation in this area will enable them to deal with legal issues and the discipline of learners as well as teachers. These competencies will assist them to also manage conflicts in the school. This is the view shared by P3:

*I would like to be capacitated to be able to handle legal issues concerning the staff members as well as the learners. This is because I have a great challenge on how legal issues should be dealt with since I deal with many issues involving people inside and outside the schools.*

P10 indicated that the principals need support from MoET to equip them with skills to handle legal issues. This is how she expressed her views:

*As a leader I have the needs. We need guidance and I would like the Ministry of Education to arrange many workshops. I need to be capacitated in the legal*

*issues. We keep asking one another in the group about how to handle these legal issues.*

Another view was that principals experience the challenge of dealing with teachers' and learners' discipline. This perspective was reiterated by P11 thus:

*Teachers' and learners' discipline is a problem here, so I need the skills to handle it. That means I must approach everything legally, so it becomes difficult when I am not capacitated to deal with legal issues.*

P12 also shared similar views on her PD needs and emphasised that:

*This work is stressful. I should be trained to work with teachers, learners' discipline, so I need capacitation on how to deal with legal issues.*

Similar needs were shared by P8 as he indicated that:

*Another area which I think I need capacitation is on legal matters, especially on employment laws because sometimes we get challenged. When the non-academic staff members retire, I must prepare severance pay for them, so I sometimes find it difficult to apply the formula and they challenge it at the labour court. Therefore, I need capacitation in this area.*

The above extracts revealed the participants' need for capacitation to handle legal issues in their schools. Principals deal with many issues of discipline in their daily running of the schools, involving both teachers and learners. This means that to be effective in handling these issues, they need to be provided with appropriate skills. Therefore, lack of legal skills indicates that the participants will be ineffective in their role. This agrees with what was stated by Fitria (2017) who argued that the principal as a leader plays a critical role in developing the strategies to shape learners' discipline in the school and oversee the course of the programme designed, while the teacher must apply the strategy to the learners (see 2.8.2). Cook-Harvey, Barron, and Osher (2019) explain that social constructivism holds the viewpoint that individuals socially interrelate with one another to reach an agreement on their observations. Complexity leadership theory emphasises that adaptability, which improves performance and invention, takes place in the daily exchanges between individuals acting in response to pressures and probabilities in their local settings (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009).

#### 5.4.1.4 Management and Leaderships skills

In further responding to their professional development needs, the participants indicated that they need capacitation in areas of management. They highlighted their appointment into the positions without any orientation or training. According to them, this affects their performance as leaders. They further emphasised the need for both the new and old principals to be provided with training opportunities on management to enhance their school leadership. The participants also emphasised that they would need capacitation in the form of refresher courses. This is what P6 shared:

*Another need is that I should be given training on management, leadership and this other one, administration, to improve the school leadership. Unfortunately, when people are appointed to this position, they are not trained on how they should handle it. We go for the interview and when we are successful, we just do the work without any training.*

P5 expressed the need for capacitation of both the new and old principals with management skills through attending administration courses:

*Since I have just assumed the position of the principal, new principals should be capacitated with management skills. I think the Ministry of Education is not doing enough to capacitate the new principals. Even those who are old still need to be equipped with the skills to improve their leadership. There must be refresher courses so that we can gather the skills to help us in the leadership role so that we can effectively run the schools. There should be administration or management courses that are run for principals.*

Similar sentiments were shared by P9 who emphasised that:

*As a school leader, I need a refresher course just at the beginning of the year and in the middle of the year to improve our management and leadership skills.*

Another similar perspective was shared by P10 as expressed in the following extract:

*As a leader like I am saying, I need a refresher course just at the start of the year and in the middle of the year to improve our management and leadership skills.*

The extracts above indicate that for effective administration of the schools, principals – particularly those who are new in the positions – need to be equipped with management and leadership skills. School principals are entrusted with a huge responsibility to equip learners with

skills and to support teachers to achieve learners' education. The principals are further accountable for the overall management of the schools. That means if they lack management skills, this could have a negative impact on the performance of their schools. Thus, to ensure efficient performance in their leadership roles, there is a need for capacitation to enhance school leadership. For improvement of school leadership, the principals need capacitation on management skills.

To enhance the data from the interviews, the school strategic plan from school 9 was analysed. This document revealed that the school takes initiative to capacitate the school board on management and leadership. This means that the school has its own school-based management and leadership PD programme for the school board, and the principal participates in such a programme as the secretary of the board. The excerpt below validates the interview data:

**Figure 5.4: Strategic Plan**

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:1.1.1** The Board be empowered to provide effective leadership to the school.

**STRATEGY 1.1.1.1.** Develop a board charter for the school

TASK	OUTPUT	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATING AGENT	RESOURCES	TIME - FRAME
(a)Develop a framework for the School Board charter and engage an expert to develop the charter	The charter will be published in the school's website	Principal	Chairperson of the Board	*Cooperate expert *Finance *Communication *Stationery	January – February 2022

**STRATEGY (1.1.1.2)** Enhance the capacity of the members of the Board in Corporate governance and leadership

TASK	OUTPUT	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATING AGENT	RESOURCES	TIME - FRAME
(a)Training of Board members on identified corporate governance and leadership needs	Certificates of Participation in training workshop awarded.	Principal	Chairperson of the Board	*Corporate governance and leadership expert. *Finance *Stationery	January – March 2022

The strategic plan further indicates that at school 9, PD is organised for the school management as shown in the following extract:

**Figure 5.5: Strategic Plan**

**Strategy (1.2.3) Upgrade the leadership skills and competencies of the school Principal , Deputies and HODs at the school.**

TASKS	OUTPUT	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATING AGENT	RESOURCES	TIME FRAME
(a) Engage an expert to offer leadership and Management skills to the Principal, and Deputies and HODs.	Certificate of attendance be awarded to the participants.	Principal	Chairperson of the School Board	*Organizational development expert. *Finance *Stationery Communication	February/March 2022
(b) Establish partnership with associations of high school Principals locally and in the African region.	Signed memorandum of collaboration with high school Principals.	Principal	Deputy Principal	*Finance *Stationery *Communication	February/March, 2022

According to Salwa et al, (2019), the principal is a factor that influences the achievement of all educational efforts and is considered the most powerful individual in producing high quality education procedures and results. The principal is accountable for directing, encouraging, influencing, supervising, and stirring the learners, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders in education to collaborate and contribute to achievement of the objectives (Kristiawan et al., 2017). As expounded by Pianda (2018), the success of individual schools is strongly influenced by the leadership pattern of the principal. It is crucial for principals to have the ability to carry out their duties with a full sense of responsibility in their role as leaders and to understand that the school is an organisation comprising various elements which depend on the achievement of the principal as a leader. In a global perspective, principals require supervision skills and opportunities of training empower them to advance their leadership skills such as personal, interpersonal, or socioemotional. Research indicates that principals need to be equipped with management skills and training opportunities that allow them to develop personal, interpersonal, and socio-emotional skills (Serrao, Tintore, Cabral and Alves, 2020) in Chapter 2 (see 2.8.4).

According to constructivism as asserted by Ertmer & Newby (1993), individuals and the environmental factors are significant to the constructivism learning theory. The complexity

leadership theory offers a leadership framework for improvement of the quality of the organisation as complicated adaptive systems that are exposed to originality, learning, and information production (Uhl-Bien and Marion, 2008).

#### **5.4.2 Leadership challenges faced by principals**

When asked about the challenges they face in their leadership roles, the participants revealed that they experience many challenges which affect their leadership. Some of the challenges they highlighted include not being paid for acting in the position of the principal, which is stressful and impacts negatively on their work. They also expressed the challenge of being selected for the leadership position without orientation to perform the role. As expressed by the participants, this contributes to uncertainty. That is, they are not sure if the leadership task they are entrusted with is carried out properly. They further revealed the stress of dealing with gangsterism and drug abuse among some learners. The other challenges, as they indicated, involve at times having to manage and lead disobedient teachers. P2 shared the following:

*There are numerous challenges and very difficult ones but the worst of all is that since I became the principal, I am an acting in the position. That means I am not being paid for the position of the principal because when we are acting, we are not given any allowance for it. Although it is personal, it is a challenge that affects my performance, which sometimes leads to stress. When you are stressed, you cannot perform well.*

P9 also emphasised the challenge of being appointed to carry out the leadership role without orientation, and this is how she expressed her views:

*One challenge is that I have been appointed as a principal without any orientation into this leadership role. One other thing is that we occupy the offices without another principal for handover. We just start doing the work. Until now, I am not sure if I am doing it right. There is no follow-up made to check whether the work is well done. The Ministry of Education could inspect us. It would be good if we could also be invited to training workshops to talk about the challenges we face. These come from the parents, the learners as well as the teachers. Even our authorities are not supporting us at all. This is a challenge on its own.*

P5 indicated ill-discipline as a challenge brought by learners:

*The element of ill-discipline shown by the learners is also a challenge in my leadership role. Most of the time I deal with disciplinary cases of learners who use drugs and those who absent themselves from school.*

In line with the previous view, P4 stressed that:

*One of the challenges is regarding discipline of learners especially on drugs and substance abuse. Another major challenge that hinders education is this one of learners who join gangsterism.*

P10 also expressed the challenges caused by both teachers and learners as expressed in this extract:

*A great challenge we deal with among learners is this one of gangsterism, which I believe affects many schools. These learners come to school with knives, and they smoke dagga and most of them are boys.*

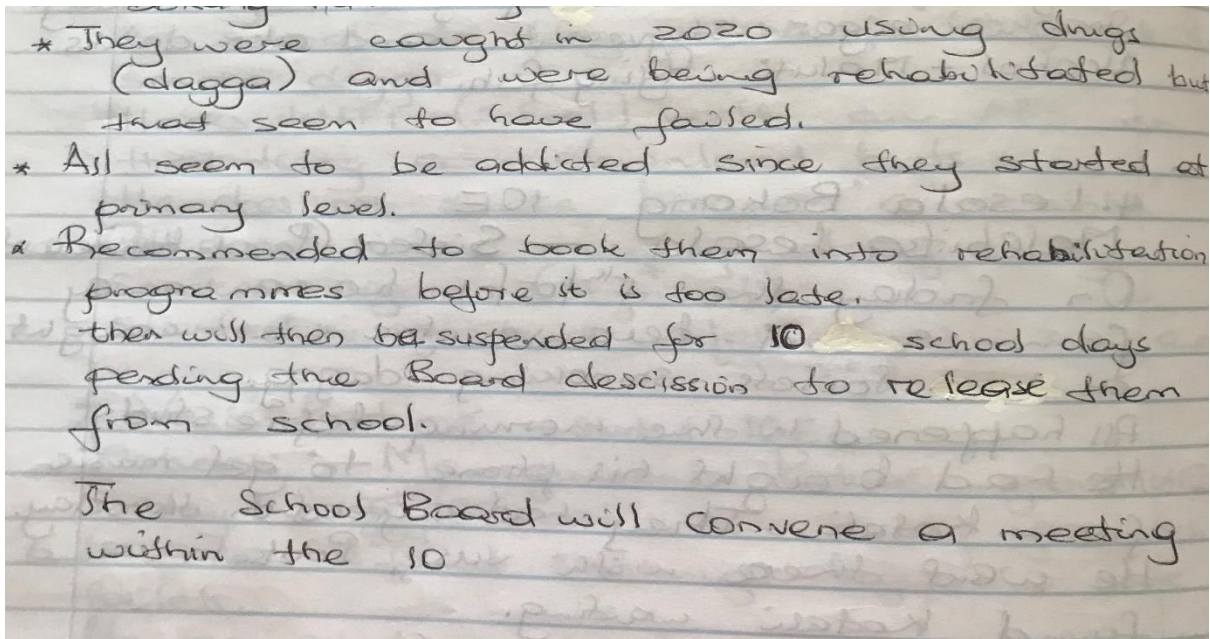
This is the view P5 emphasised:

*One challenge is lack of understanding from teachers. There are teachers who are being insubordinate because sometimes they question my way of doing things and this brings resistance. For example, if I want to enforce the use of professional books, they sometimes do it reluctantly. The use of clock books when they arrive and when they knock off becomes a problem but gradually, they will be used to it.*

The responses above indicate that principals deal with numerous challenges in their leadership roles, some of which are brought by learners and teachers, and these have a negative effect on their performance. The above extracts reveal the complexity of dealing with the 21st century school leadership particularly on ill-discipline. This means that principals need capacitation to handle disciplinary issues.

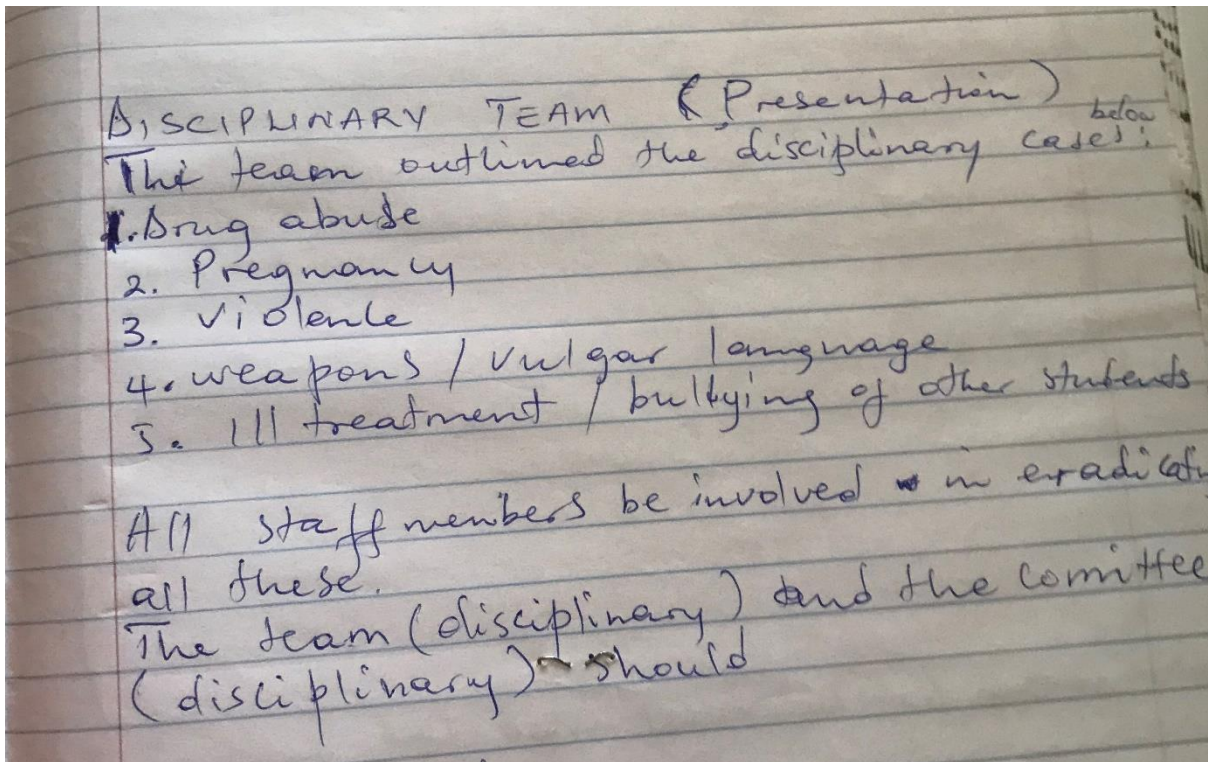
From the documents that were analysed, the minutes from school 4 indicate that the school principals face many challenges of dealing with learners' discipline. As shown by the minutes that were analysed from the school, learners' ill-behaviour includes drugs and substance abuse. This is what the data from the minutes reveals:

**Figure 5.6: Meeting Minutes**



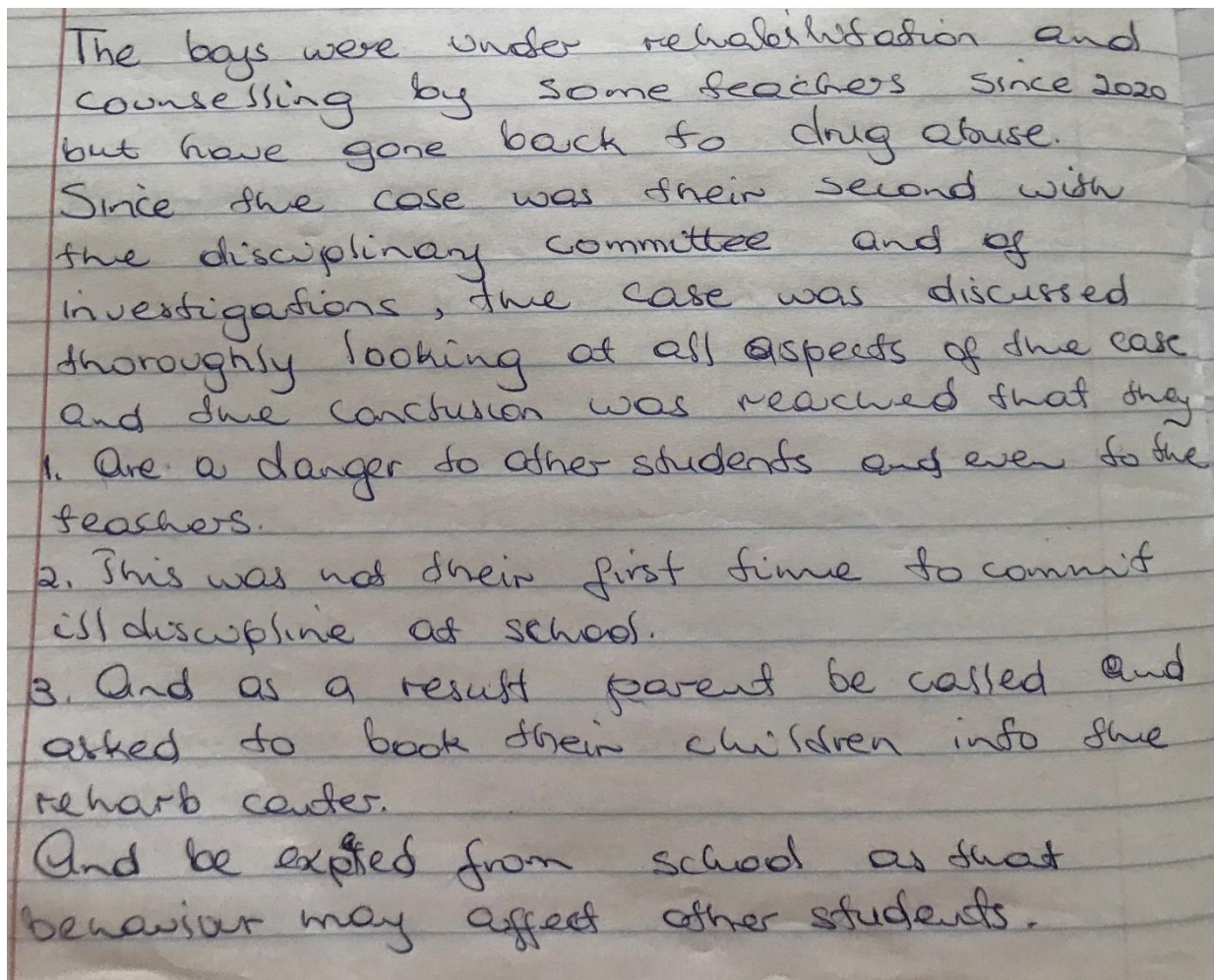
In line with the data from the minutes of school 4, data from the analysed minutes from school 10 indicates that principals deal with issues of ill-discipline among the learners as exemplified in the analysed minutes below.

**Figure 5.7: Meeting Minutes**



The data collected and analysed from the documents obtained from school 5 also indicates that the principals deal with disciplinary cases mostly involving boys. This means that the principals need capacitation to handle disciplinary cases as well as handling legal issues. The following is what the data from the minutes highlighted:

**Figure 5.8: Meeting Minutes**



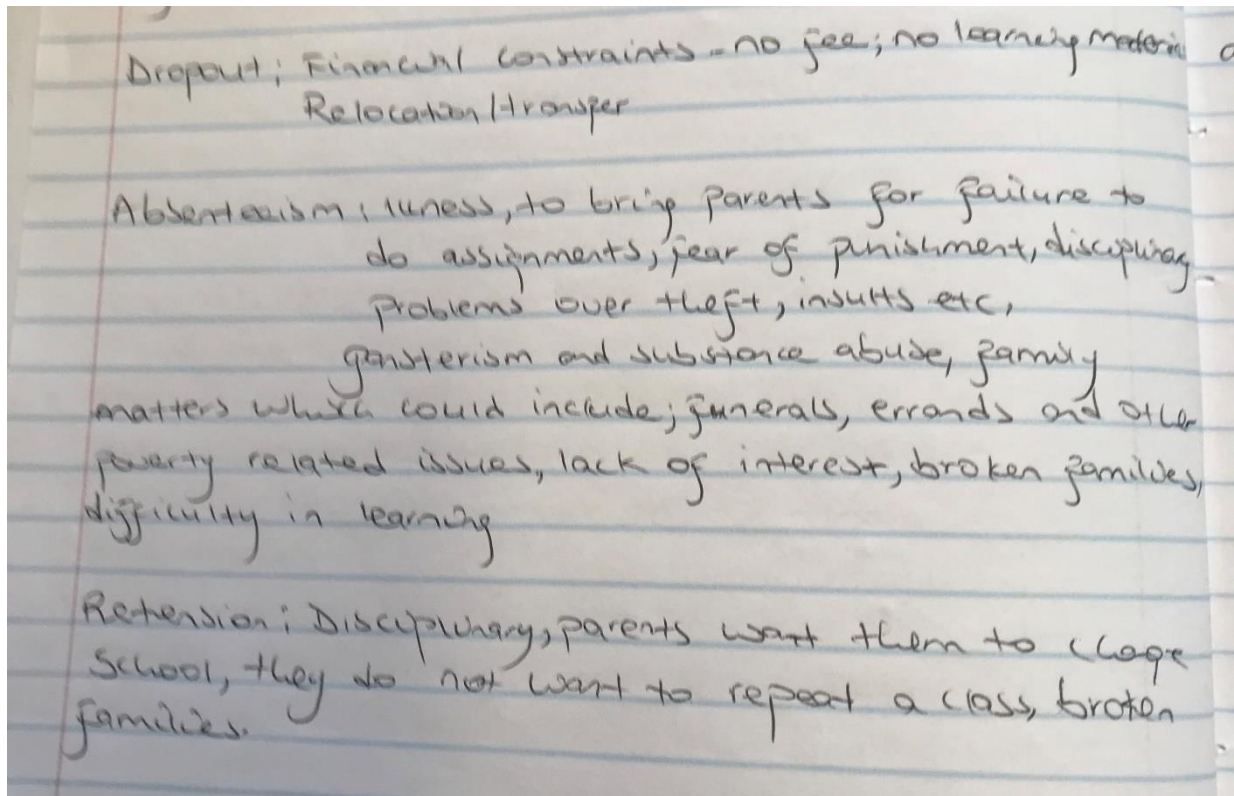
The boys were under rehabilitation and counselling by some teachers since 2020 but have gone back to drug abuse. Since the case was their second with the disciplinary committee and of investigations, the case was discussed thoroughly looking at all aspects of the case and the conclusion was reached that they

1. Are a danger to other students and even to the teachers.
2. This was not their first time to commit ill-discipline at school.
3. And as a result parent be called and asked to book their children into the rehab center.

And be expelled from school as that behaviour may affect other students.

To validate the face-to-face interview data, the minute from school 5 alleged that the principal experiences many challenges of learners' ill-discipline. According to the analysed minutes, besides learners' ill-discipline regarding drugs and substance abuse, principals deal with learners who drop out due to financial constraints. This, therefore, means the principals need to acquire skills to manage these different challenges.

**Figure 5.9: Meeting Minutes**



According to Van Wyk and Pelsier (2014), school principals need thorough training to assist them in development and execution of discipline policies. This is in line with what was stated by Fitria (2017) who argued that the principal as a leader has a responsibility to undertake in developing strategies to shape learners' discipline in the school and oversee the course of the programme designed, while the teacher must apply the strategy to students. It is exposed that the disciplinary condition of schools poses a challenge to principals' leadership. Principals face very stressful working situations in dealing with learners' disciplinary cases (Beam et al., 2016) in Chapter 2 (see 2.8.2).

Constructivism theory, as a lens for this study, is based on the way individuals construct understanding and knowledge of the world in which they live from experiencing what is happening around them and reflecting on their involvement (Ekpenyong & Edokpolor, 2016) in Chapter 2 (see 2.3). Therefore, this study demonstrates that as principals encounter new challenges in their leadership, they gain a better understanding of their world. Complexity leadership theory also assists in understanding how school principals should respond to the pressures they face in their leadership and how they should find ways of surviving such pressures (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009) in Chapter 3 (see 3.3).

#### 5.4.2.1 Platforms where the challenges are addressed

When I sought to find out whether there were platforms where the leadership challenges are addressed, the participants revealed that the District Education Manager holds meetings for them where they are given a platform to discuss the challenges that they face in their leadership roles. The principals also shared that at times they attend meetings organised by the Lesotho Principals Association (LESPA) as well as the school boards. They also emphasised that they find their own individual solutions and if they need a second opinion, they contact other principals in the WhatsApp group in their clusters. This is what P2 shared:

*As I mentioned earlier, the District Education Manager we have arranges meetings where principals meet and report on the challenges they face, and we advise each other on how we can solve them. Individual principals also report on their school's progress.*

A similar perspective was shared by P5. This is how he expressed his view:

*We do have such platforms through our District Education Manger who calls the meeting to find out whether we are coping in our leadership positions. We have been given a date when we will meet and discuss the challenges we face, and this will happen when the schools are closed.*

P5 further shared that:

*We also have the Principals Association at district level and the mother body, LESPA, at national level. We talk about our challenges; we are bound by circumstances to do so since we encounter many challenges.*

Another view shared was that the principals discuss the challenges they face in the WhatsApp group comprising of principals, and at times the principals' associations holds meetings for them to share their challenges. P6 indicated that:

*We communicate in our WhatsApp group with other principals. Another platform is the Principals Association where we share some of the problems we encounter. We hold meetings with the principals at district level.*

On the contrary, P11 said there are no such platforms that are directly used to address the challenges principals face. This is how she expressed her view:

*We don't have such a platform. The Principal's Association does not address such issues. The school board also just tells me to do the work and provide the report. So, I must solve the challenges by myself.*

A similar opinion was shared by P12 as indicated in the following extract:

*I do it myself at this school. The DEM sometimes helps to address the challenges although most of the time she calls the meetings only when the results are out to that they can be analysed.*

P1 indicated that all his challenges are addressed by the school board as stated in this excerpt:

*The school board addresses all challenges we face. Since I am leading a private school, I must work very closely with the school board.*

The above responses reveal that the principals' challenges are addressed through their interaction with the DEM. According to the participants the District Principals Associations also act as the platforms for where they meet and assist one another on their daily encounters. From the above discussions it is also revealed that the WhatsApp groups for principals are used as a platform where they share their experiences. Another platform that was raised is the school board.

### **5.4.2.3 Factors hindering school principals' professional development**

When asked about the factors hindering the professional development of school principals, the participants' responses revealed the following sub-themes: financial constraints as well as lack of support from the MoET as discussed below.

#### **5.4.2.3.1 Financial constraints**

When I sought to find out the factors hindering PD for school principals, the participants revealed the lack of finances. They indicated that for the overall running of the school, it is imperative for the schools to have financial muscle. This is the view that P3 shared:

*I would say financial constraints is one of the challenges that hinder PD because we have the principals' association LESPA which in collaboration with*

*associations in other countries, sometimes invite us to attend conferences that are held in different countries, but we don't attend because of the lack of funds.*

Another perspective from P7 emphasised that lack of funds hinders PD for school principals as stated in the following excerpt:

*Our professional development is hindered by lack of finances. When there is no money, nothing will be done. For example, we must attend a conference in Eswatini, but many principals will not attend because of financial constraints. I think it costs around twenty thousand so it is a lot of money which we cannot afford. In that large group of principals in the WhatsApp group, only 7 people have confirmed to be going so far. If all of us could have a chance, we were going to be equipped with leadership skills.*

P8 further highlighted the similar view that:

*One of the factors that hinder PD is lack of finances because even if we want to have the workshops, we cannot if we don't have money. Even when we want to have the consultants, we need to pay.*

P9 shared the same sentiments and emphasised that:

*It is lack of finances because even if we want to have the workshops, we cannot if we don't have money. Even when we want to have the consultants, we need to pay. In the past, we did not have the support from the school board but the current one is working well.*

Another similar view on the financial constraints was expressed by P7 who said:


*One of the factors is that there is no money. I have been invited to attend the conference held in Eswatini this year which I find expensive.*

The data generated from the participants indicates lack of finances as a factor that impacts negatively on professional development of school principals since at times, they are compelled to pay for PD programmes, which they find it expensive. The discussions further revealed that the principals see the significance of PD but are restricted by the finances to organise PD for themselves. For the schools to run effectively, it is imperative to have sufficient funds. Lack of funds means the running the schools becomes a challenging task. Therefore, the issue of finances

needs to be taken into consideration by the authorities to ensure smooth administration of the schools.

From the document analysis, it was also verified that principals are faced with challenges of lack of funds. When they are invited to the conferences, especially outside the country, they cannot afford to pay for such PD programmes. In the face-to-face interviews, almost all principals revealed that it was their wish to attend a conference in Eswatini but due to financial constraints, they could not afford to participate. This is corroborated by the letter from school 9 which stated as shown below.

Figure 5.10: Invitation letter



**ESWATINI PRINCIPALS ASSOCIATION**  
P. O. Box 7471 Manzini. 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Office 201, Bhunu Mall, Manzini.  
Telephone: +268 2505 5880. Email: [info@epanational.com](mailto:info@epanational.com)

28<sup>th</sup> April 2023

**President – ACP**  
**Secretary General – ACP Council**  
**All National Presidents – Principals Associations of ACP**  
**All Executive Council Members of ACP**  
**Non-members of ACP**

**RE: INVITATION TO ATTEND THE 12<sup>TH</sup> ACP CONFERENCE – AUGUST 2023**

The Eswatini Principals Association (EPA) takes great pleasure to invite you to the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the African Confederation of Principals (ACP) Conference to be held on 28<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023 at Esibayeni Lodge, Matsapha, Kingdom of Eswatini.

The theme of the conference is:  
**ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE QUALITY EDUCATION IN AFRICA.**

Please find below the different levels of registration and timelines

International delegates					
Early Bird		Middle Bird		Late Bird	
31 <sup>st</sup> May 2023		30 <sup>th</sup> June 2023		15 <sup>th</sup> July 2023	
Member	Non-member	Member	Non-member	Member	Non-member
\$460	\$600	\$500	\$680	\$600	\$760

Local delegates					
Early Bird		Middle Bird		Late Bird	
31 <sup>st</sup> May 2023		30 <sup>th</sup> June 2023		22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2023	
Member	Non-member	Member	Non-member	Member	Non-member
\$200	\$240	\$240	\$280	\$300	\$340

The registration fees above exclude accommodation. Information on accommodation is contained overleaf.

To access the ACP Conference 2023 website, kindly use the following link: <https://acp2023.epanational.com/>. **International delegates are advised to register with their respective Principals Associations.** Registration and payment details for local (Eswatini) delegates is on the ACP Conference 2023 website.

"Quality Leadership for Quality Education"

**NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

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7661 1980

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Phindile Makhanya  
7608 7833

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7621 6076

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Jerome Msweli  
7606 5174

**ORGANISING SECRETARY**  
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7644 4439

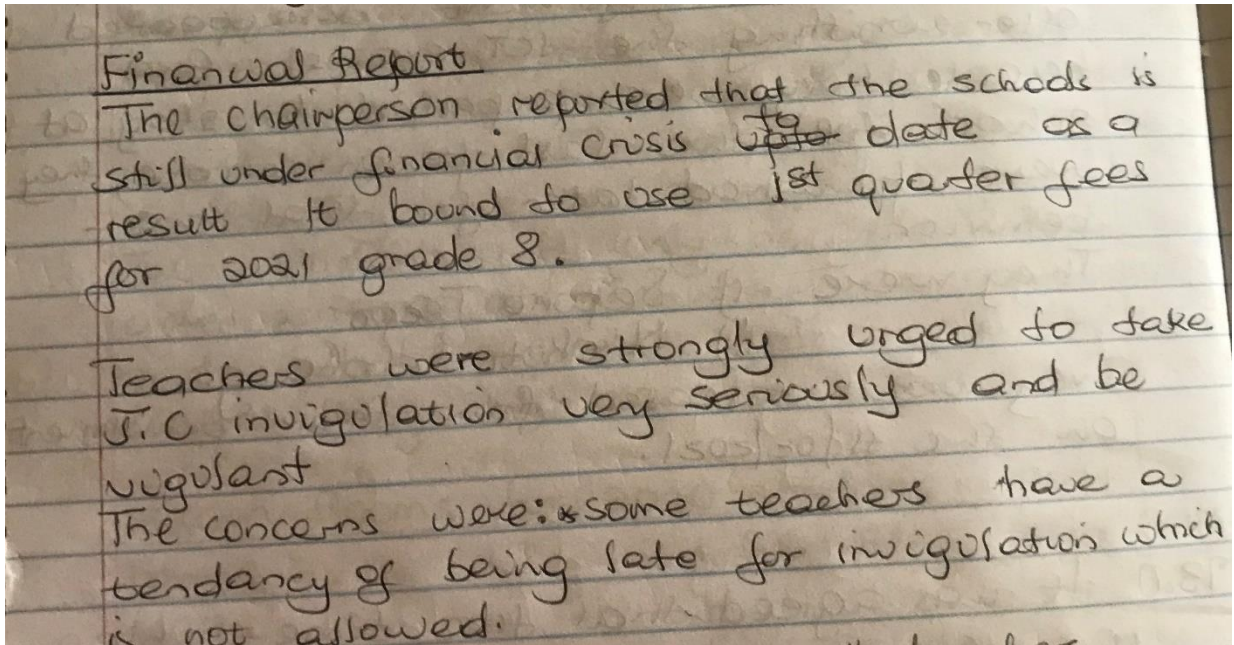
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Armstrong Dlamini  
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The data from documents such as the letter displayed above indicates that principals experience financial constraints in their school leadership. This, as also expressed in the face-to-face

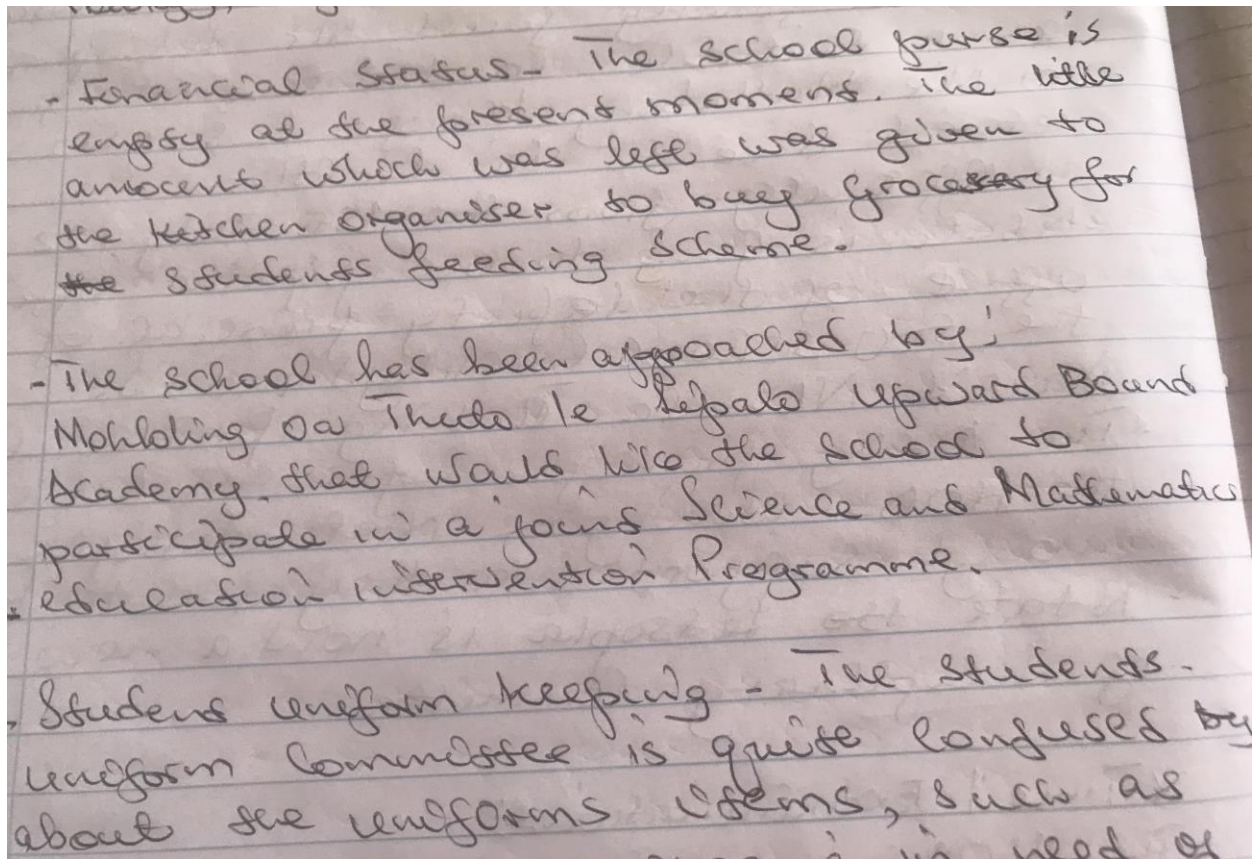
interviews hinders their professional development. The issue of lack of finances was shared by school 3 as stated below:

**Figure 5.11: Meeting Minutes**



A similar challenge of lack of funds was exposed by the minutes that were analysed from school 8. This validates the data from the interviews, that principals experience financial constraints.

**Figure 5.12: Meeting Minutes**



According to a study conducted in Nigeria by Abdulrasheed & Bello (2015), many principals are criticised for insufficient funding offered to run the schools. The unavailability of funds has a negative impact on their management as well as ability to run the schools because of the limited funds. The significance of being equipped with financial management skills is discussed in the growing experiential literature (Luhmann et al., 2018). Despite several initiatives made to foster financial literacy, the effectiveness of financial education is debated in different essential ways (Kaiser, Lusardi, Menkhoff & Urban, 2022) in Chapter 2 (see 2.9.2).

According to constructivism, individual people, together with the organisations, bring past experiences and beliefs which have an influence on the way they interrelate and understand their situations (Lambert, 2009) (see 3.2). Complexity leadership theory also stresses that flexibility happens in day-to-day interconnection of individuals as they respond to the triggers in the work situation (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009).

#### 5.4.3.1.2 Lack of Support from MoET

In responding to the question on the factors hindering PD for school principals, the participants revealed the lack of support from the MoET. According to the participants, the Ministry pay much attention on capacitation of the teachers, yet it is their responsibility to also ensure that the principals are equipped with the necessary skills to handle the position. P2 said:

*Professional development of principals is hindered by the fact that the Ministry of Education is focussing on developing teachers and tends to forget that principals also need support to improve their leadership skills.*

A similar opinion was shared by P7, and these were her words:

*I think it is the responsibility of the Ministry to ensure that we are equipped with leadership skills and other skills necessary for one to survive in this position. However, we are not supported through trainings and workshops.*

P8 further emphasised that:

*For us to be professionally developed, it must start from the Ministry of Education. It depends on whether the Ministry understands that we are supposed to be trained and what they do to ensure that we are professionally developed. This is already a factor that hinders my professional development because we don't get support.*

The same perspective was highlighted by P10:

*The first one is that I was appointed into this office without being trained on leadership and management of the school. I did not get support from the Ministry of Education through training. I learnt about many things through individual research because I was the deputy principal before I became the principal. I as a person lack training through short courses. The Ministry of Education must do something about this.*

From the discussions above, the participants revealed that there is insufficient support from the MoET which affects PD for principals. The results further indicate that the Ministry focusses on capacitation of teachers and forget about the principals, yet they are entrusted with the responsibility of performing their roles effectively for the success of learners in their schools. If schools are led by incompetent leaders, the teaching and learning are compromised hence

unsatisfactory results. It is, therefore, the mandate of MoET to provide the necessary support and guidance to ensure that the principals are equipped with the relevant leadership competencies.

The data collected from the document analysis indicates that due to lack of support from the MoET on their leadership roles, the schools at times find ways of capacitating both the principals, the deputy principals as well as the HODs to enhance their leadership skills. This is what the strategic plan at school 9 revealed:

**Figure 5.13: Strategic Plan**

**STRATEGY (1.2.1 ENHANCE MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION CAPACITY IN THE TEACHING AND NON TEACHING DEPARTMENTS AT THE SCHOOL.**

TASK	OUTPUT	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATING AGENT	RESOURCES	TIME - FRAME
(a)Conduct management skills training for various management levels.	(a)List of staff members provided with management training.	(a)HODs Principal	School Principal	(a)Organisational development Expert. *Finance * Communication * Stationery	March /April,2022

**Strategy 1.2.2.Restricture and reorganize the school's management structure to improve efficiency in the administration of the school.**

TASK	OUTPUT	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATING AGENT	RESOURCES	TIME -FRAME
(a)Identify and create new positions to the already existing structure.	(a)Letter of appointment for the new positions 1.2 <sup>nd</sup> school Deputy Principal 2.IT specialist School driver. 3.School driver.	(a) School Principal	Chairperson school Board	*Organisational development expert. *Finance *Communication * Stationery	January/Feb 2022

The study by Adams and Muthiah (2020) stresses that principals suffer from insufficient support from the Ministry of Education. This has a direct impact on the efficiency of the principals' leadership which includes steering the school to success. Therefore, it is suggested that the schools, together with the Ministry of Education, need to act as the central elements in devising strategies to achieve a more sustainable educational improvement. This will subsequently allow the principals to actively participate with their groups to form a link between the schools and their societies (Adams & Muthiah, 2020) in Chapter 2 (see 2.9.2).

### 5.4.3 PD PROGRAMMES TO BE IMPLEMENTED FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

#### 5.4.3.1 Workshops

Under this sub-theme, the question the participants responded to was what programmes should be implemented to assist school principals to in their leadership roles. In discussion with the principals, they revealed that attending workshops could enhance their leadership. Here is a view P1 shared:

*I think the workshops which are focussed on management should be held to provide principals with the skills they need to handle leadership.*

A similar opinion was shared by P4, and this is what he said:

*There should be a platform where we are equipped with the skills of leadership through attending workshops. In the absence of such programmes such as the workshops, it becomes difficult for the principals to get capacitation for their leadership roles.*

P6 reiterated almost the same opinion as he emphasised that:

*There should be some workshops arranged to sharpen our leadership skills.*

P7 also emphasised that:

*Attending the workshops can help me a lot because we share the problems we face regarding school leadership since we experience different challenges. So, it is helpful to share the strategies with other principals.*

The above responses reveal that the participants considered workshops as programmes that equip them with skills to handle school leadership. They also take the workshops as the platforms in which they could share their challenges. From the participants' responses on the PD programmes to be implemented, I could sense that they long to have regular workshops as an empowerment strategy to build their leadership skills.

The data gathered from the school activity plans revealed that the workshops that were organised for some of the schools and were included in the school activity plan were those that were meant for capacitation of the teachers. This indicates that even in their plans, the schools prioritise capacitation of the teachers more than that of the principals. The school activity plan from school 2 indicates as depicted in figure 5.14.

**Figure 5.14: Action Plan**

Blue

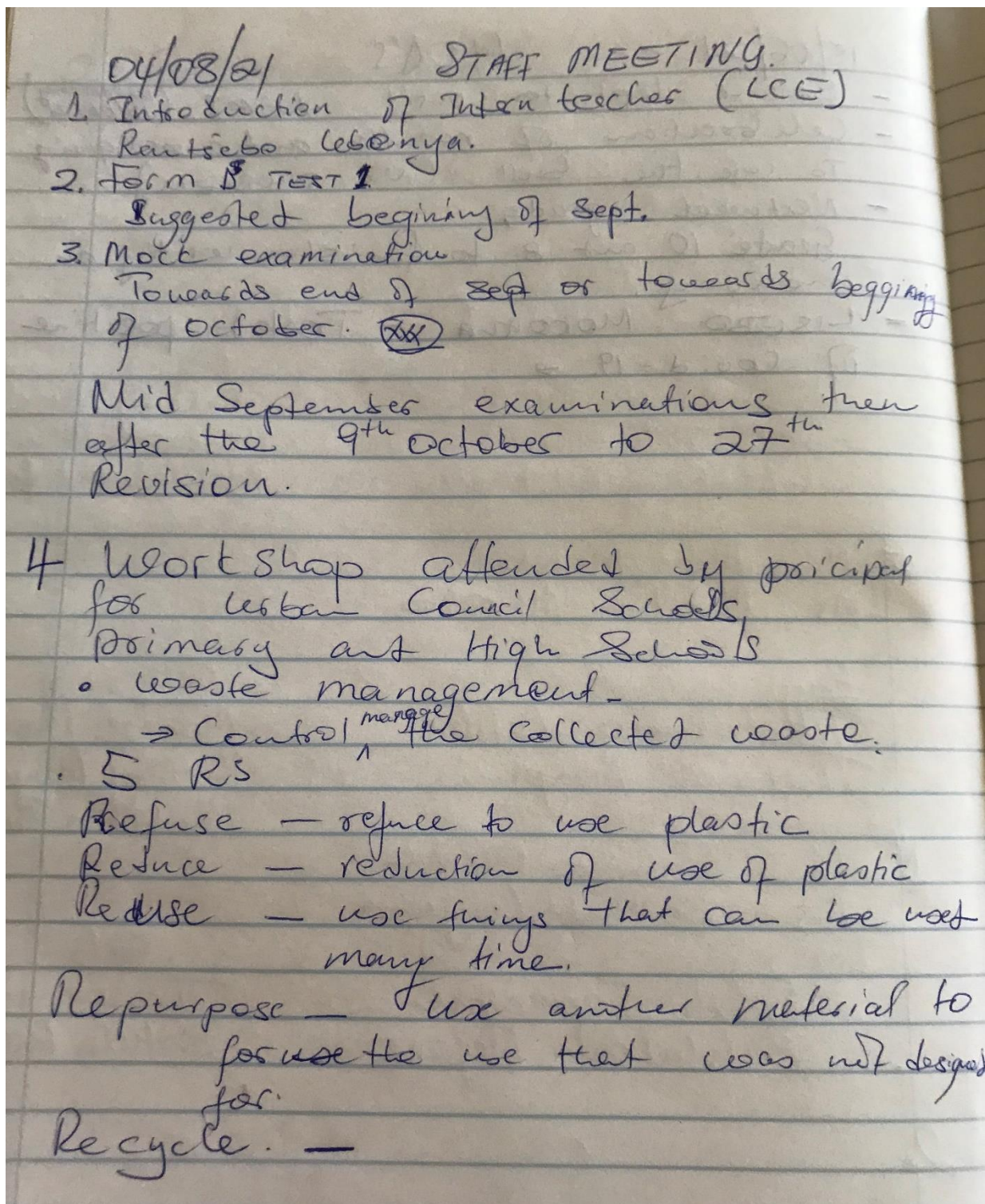
## ACTION PLAN April 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3 Grade 11 March exams continues -Internals grades 8,9, &10 Test 1 continues	4 Grade 11 March exams continues -Internals grades 8,9, &10 Test 1 continues	5 - Grade 11 March exams end - Internals Test 1 ends -Schools close for Easter break	6 EASTER HOLIDAYS	7 EASTER HOLIDAYS  GOOD FRIDAY	8
9	10 EASTER HOLIDAYS EASTER MONDAY	11 EASTER HOLIDAYS	12 Schools reopen after Easter break	13 - Sesotho local workshop	14	15
16	17 Local workshop Social Sciences	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27 Deadline for marking Test 1 & March Exams	28 Deadline for recording marks for Test 1 & March Exams	29
30						

NOTES \_\_\_\_\_

The data from the documents revealed that the principals attend workshops although most of them are not focussed on their professional development but on general issues that need to be addressed by school leaders. This is what school 6 minutes alleged:

Figure 5.15 Meeting Minutes



According to literature, there is a need for education officials to prescribe professional development for teachers and principals (Johns & Sosibo, 2019). These professional development activities come in the form of in-service training workshops. The workshops aim to impart new knowledge and re-skill the implementers to improve teaching and learning (Murphy, Smith,

Mallon & Redman, 2020), which would eventually advance the economic prospects of the country. Schools can only be effective when professional development efforts for the principals and teachers are deliberate (Bush, 2020). Therefore, principals need to be equipped with skills through in-service training, particularly by attending workshops, with appropriate leadership knowledge to achieve the educational needs of learners and teachers (Gumus & Bellibas, 2020). In countries like Lesotho, for instance, there are no direct policies and strategic initiatives to train and develop principals to administer their schools even during times of curriculum implementation reforms (Moorosi & Komiti, 2020). Therefore, it is significant for the workshops to be arranged for school leaders to enhance their leadership skills (see 2.7.1). This literature corresponds with constructivism theory which asserts that knowledge is adopted through certain devices by individuals. It is further a leadership theory that describes the ways learners create their knowledge from the coached learning (Xu & Shi, 2018). Thus, through attending the workshops, the principals construct new knowledge on the form of leadership they are being instructed on. That is, to sharpen their leadership skills, they need to be equipped with the skills to be able to construct new knowledge.

#### **5.4.3.2. Short training courses**

When further responding to the question on the professional development programmes to be implemented to assist school principals on their leadership roles, the participants revealed the in-service short training courses. P5 shared that:

*During the time when the schools are closed, the Ministry should organise the short courses that the principals can attend. Now we are going to close for the winter holidays, and we are going to spend almost two months at home. This time can be utilised for the short courses which are focused on leadership.*

A similar opinion was shared by P7 who said:

*To enhance our leadership skills, we can also attend the short courses on leadership, administration, and management. There are also short courses on planning and budgeting which I think can assist us to effectively manage the schools.*

P8 also emphasised that:

*We must attend the management short training courses that are offered for principals.*

In line with the above opinion, P10 indicated that:

*We need the workshops, even if it can be twice a year we can be motivated and gather confidence. The ministry can hold such workshops where we can also equip one another with skills to overcome the challenges we face.*

For these principals in the above discussions, short trainings are preferred to enhance their leadership skills. The participants portray these training courses as particularly useful if they focus on management and leadership. These trainings are further confirmed by the principals as the activities that can boost their confidence in executing their leadership roles. According to literature, training, and development in the environment of the work of organisations and educational institutions is essential (Kalangi et al., 2021). The purpose of the institutions' training is to upgrade a range of skills and techniques for undertaking specific repetitive work (Khurotin & Afrianty, 2018). Training is often undertaken in educational institutions to enhance employees who are regarded unable to undertake their responsibilities efficiently (Sunasi et al., 2019). This influences the administration of educational institutions to facilitate and organise training and career expansion of their employees to attain effective and efficient performance results (see 2.7.2).

Social constructivism relies on knowledge derived from social exchanges and communication (Garrison, 1998; Gergen, 1995; Prawat & Floden, 1994). According to social constructivism, social contact and collaboration can assist the formulation of more general and reliable knowledge depending on a system of consensual sharing, assessment, and evaluation (see 3.2.3.1). According to complexity leadership theory, the principals face new problems in their leadership and as a result, they must find flexible ways to adapt to the new situations. Therefore, complexity leadership theory emphasises that adaptability, which enhances performance and innovation, occurs in day-to-day interactions of individuals acting in response to pressures and opportunities in their local contexts (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009).

### 5.4.3.2. Conferences

In this sub-theme, I wanted to find out the professional development programmes to be implemented to assist principals in their leadership roles. In responding to this question, the participants further revealed that attending conferences could help them to share ideas and improve their leadership skills. P2 shared that:

*I am thinking of conferences because I have realised that they help a lot. If they can be organised for principals nationally, they can be of a great help. Since I manage the church school, there is a LECSAPA conference that I attend which is targeting all secondary school principals from LECSA. I found it very helpful, and I hope it could be extended to all schools nationally.*

A similar perspective was emphasised by P6. He indicated that:

*There should also be forums where experts are invited to address many issues concerning leadership, management, and administration. These could be in the form of conferences.*

P9 also emphasised the need to attend conferences to be capacitated with the leadership skills. This is what she said:

*Conferences should be attended where we are capacitated to lead the schools. These conferences on leadership and management should be held during the holidays.*

P10 further shared a similar perception. This is how she expressed her view:

*We also need to attend the conference and the seminars on leadership.*

The above responses revealed conferences as one of the PD programmes to be implemented to enhance principals' leadership. The conferences are also emphasised as the platforms where principals can share information to capacitate them in their leadership roles. Therefore, the mood from the participants' responses was that they are in dire need of programmes such as conferences to assist them to lead schools effectively. Participating in programmes such as conferences could assist principals in their leadership roles since a conference is a platform for skills sharing to improve one's job performance. Thus, for school principals, taking part in such an activity where experts are invited to tackle leadership issues could improve their leadership.

Scholars support the argument that more approaches centred on practice and contemporary approaches to PD, such as school-based PD activities mentoring, and action research have a great potential to advance leadership practices of the school principals (Zepeda, 2019). However, traditional PD activities, such as workshops and conferences are much easier and less expensive to plan and deliver to many individuals.

#### **5.4.3.4 MoET Strategies to enhance leadership**

When asked about the strategies that MoET should use to capacitate principals for their leadership roles, the participants indicated the need for inspectors to support principals. The participants also highlighted that another strategy that MoET could use is to engage teacher training institutions to capacitate principals in the areas where they lack skills. They further revealed that the focus needs to be with the newly appointed principals and follow-ups should be made to ensure that they cope. This is what P1 shared:

*This can be done using Inspectors. The Inspectors do not concentrate on assisting principals in their leadership and management roles. Most of the time, they concentrate on the materials that the schools have, without focussing on school leadership. Yet for the school to perform well, that depends on its leadership. I think it's high time that they assist school principals to cope in this position.*

P5 also stressed that:

*The Inspectors come to schools, but they concentrate on teachers and check the school documents. I think it would be a good thing for them to also assist principals in their role. They should also make follow-ups on whether the newly appointed principals cope with school leadership.*

P8 also stressed engagement of teacher training institutions to capacitate principals with management and leadership skills, and indicated that:

*I think the teacher training institutions should be used to provide trainings on management when the schools are closed. These training should focus on the areas where we lack skills. Just a course of one month since we close for two months in winter. That is one strategy that can help. Besides that, the first degree in Education at NUL should focus on a compulsory management course. The course must have all necessary management skills. Besides that, the principals may be taken outside the country to learn how other people handle their*

*leadership, especially at the kind of school which is the same as mine. For example, mine is inclusive so I must learn from other inclusive schools.*

P2 further explained another strategy as using top performing school principals to capacitate others as explained in the following excerpt:

*On top of what I have already talked about, it should be a concern for the Ministry of Education to find ways of helping schools to perform better and this relies on the principals' leadership. The Ministry should take into consideration professional development of principals so that they can be motivated to perform well in different areas. One strategy could be for the Ministry to use principals from top performing schools to capacitate those from the low performing schools. The top ones should be used as resources to uplift others because if as a leader I am not performing well, the school will not do well.*

P9 shared similar sentiment that there should be education Inspectors assigned the task of finding out the areas of capacitation for principals. This is what they shared:

*I think it could be good if there could be Inspectors who are assigned to work with the principals. Such an officer will find out which areas the principals need capacitation on so that training can be arranged for them. The Ministry of Education can also divide principals into the regions so that they can compete, and the Inspectors should go around helping the principals. The Inspectors should visit us frequently to equip the new principals with skills to handle the position.*

Another strategy that P6 shared is that there should be PD trainings for principals when the schools are closed as indicated below:

*The Ministry can make sure that there are trainings of principals on quarterly bases. Even if it can be once a year it will work for us. These trainings should be organised when the schools are closed so that all principals can attend.*

The above discussion reveals various strategies recommended by principals to enhance their school leadership. These include the support from the Ministry of Education using the Inspectors. Participants further exposed that they would like to be trained on leadership to be able to

effectively carry out their roles, particularly the newly appointed principals. According to literature, many countries have conducted induction programmes for their novice principals and succeeded (Bush, 2018). School principals have an exceptional role to lead the schools. Thus, being school principals has never been an easy task, especially for newly appointed principals (Susilowati, 2021). The results of the study by Acton (2021) derive that principals have acquired very little professional development to become leaders of transformation. Their professional knowledge as transformation agents occurs through activities such as networking with trusted colleagues as well as on-the-job training (see 2.10.2).

Constructivism theory emphasises that learners' conceptions of knowledge result from the meaning-making search, in which learners are involved in a process of creating individual understandings of their experiences (Mukhalati & Taylor, 2019). Social constructivism demonstrates the source of construction of knowledge as being the social connection of people, exchanges that encompass sharing, comparison, and debate among learners and teachers (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Rogoff, 1990). Through a vastly interactive process, the social environment of learning is given centre stage and learners both improve their own senses and assist others to discover meaning. In this manner knowledge is jointly built (see 3.2).

Drucker (2012) states that nowadays, the organisations are surrounded by complicated and competitive systems of the situation known as the threshold of confusion which are mostly controlled by technology upheaval and globalisation. To this end, the organisations need to implement strategies based on knowledge, revolution, and imaginative thinking to improve the quicker decision-making process that can afford to change the traditional administrative structure to contemporary style of leadership that echoes with new system development and are flexible when it comes to organisational decision-making This is only how an organisation endure in the chaotic environment (Byrne & Callaghan, 2013; Adams & Stewart, 2015).

## **5.2.4 CONCLUSION**

The chapter presented and discussed data from the document analysis and the face-to-face interviews. The data was discussed in line with the theoretical framework, the research questions, and the interview schedule as well as the literature review. This chapter revealed that there is lack of professional development for principals. The data further revealed various factors that affect PD for school principals. These include, among others, lack of support from the Ministry of

Education and Training. The participating principals indicated that the challenges they face overshadow their accomplishments. The data from the analysed documents also verified the face-to-face interview data as it exposed that principals face many challenges in their leadership role and there are factors that affect their professional development. The chapter (Chapter 6) that follows summarises the thesis by providing the lessons I learnt in the research journey.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **THE RESEARCH JOURNEY AND CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the research journey and the experiences gained from carrying out this study, as well as the contribution to the body of knowledge on the professional development needs of secondary school principals. The chapter begins with an introductory summary of the research background. It further discusses the journey the researcher undertook, and the lessons learnt. It also presents a model showing the contribution of the study to the body of knowledge on principals' professional development. The chapter is summarised with the final word.

#### **6.2 INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH BACKGROUND**

The study explored the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on their professional development needs to enhance leadership. This was done based on the opinions of the principals who participated in this study. The significance of professional development (PD) for school leaders has been widely recognised (Jayaweera et al., 2021; Rodriguez et al., 2021; Rowland, 2017). The perceptions of principals were explored to gain understanding on what constitutes their professional development needs to enhance school leadership. As leaders of schools, principals' needs should be addressed to achieve effective leadership. According to literature, school leaders, need continued professional development to keep up with the ever-changing demands placed on them (Acton et al., 2017), as their roles have changed drastically in the last decade (Daniel & Griffith, 2017). The complexity of school leadership must be handled by school principals; therefore, it is significant for them to be equipped with the necessary leadership skills to manage schools in the 21st century, along with the associated school challenges. The Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) needs to device strategies to enhance principals PD to improve the performance of the schools. To enhance school leadership, PD for school principals should be taken into consideration and be prioritised.

#### **6.3 MY RESEARCH JOURNEY**

The interest to carry out the research on perceptions of Lesotho school principals on PD needs to enhance leadership stemmed from the recognition that principals perform various roles in their

leadership positions. These include, but are not limited to, managing the school finances, budgeting, handling disciplinary cases as well as technology management. The researcher was influenced to conduct this research because of the realisation that principals face leadership challenges in their day-to-day running of schools. The motivation to undertake the study was further stirred by the interest to investigate how principals can be professionally developed to improve school leadership. The researcher was, therefore, influenced to conduct research to investigate secondary school principals to understand how they perceive their professional development needs to enhance leadership.

In addition to the responsibility as a teacher, the principal's duty is to maintain order and discipline in the school and to develop co-operation and coordination of efforts among teachers (Lesotho School Supervision and Management Regulations, 1988). According to the Education Act (2010), the principal is responsible for the organisation, management and day-to-day running and leadership of a school. As the chief accounting officer of the school, the principal is expected to maintain records of income and expenditure of the school and submit financial statements to the school board for approval. This means that it is the responsibility of the principal to prepare an annual budget for the school. Moreover, the principal is responsible for maintaining and enforcing the discipline of teachers and learners in his or her school. The effectiveness of the principals in their leadership roles is highly dependent on their professional development, hence the decision to undertake the study to explore their professional development needs to enhance leadership. The research report comprises six chapters and this chapter provides an overview of the trajectory taken to provide the thesis of the study.

Chapter 1 presented the research problem to lay a foundation for the study. In that chapter, the researcher contended that the Lesotho school principals are entrusted with many management responsibilities which require them to become effective leaders in the execution of their duties. Further argument was that principals seem to lack the capacity to handle curriculum change, financial management and other roles. That means, to perform their duties, principals need capacity building from the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET). However, those responsible to provide principals with programmes to equip them for the position did not seem to do enough to support them.

The evidence from sources on the professional development of principals globally and regionally were highlighted although the professional development needs of secondary school principal in the context of Lesotho were not sufficiently explored. The researcher also contended that

secondary school principals seem to face challenges in their school leadership which require them to be professionally developed to deal with these challenges. Thus, the need to explore how they perceive their professional development needs to enhance leadership was deemed significant.

The following research questions were therefore developed:

### **Main Research Question**

What are the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on their professional development needs to enhance leadership?

### **Subsidiary questions**

1. What are the realities of professional development for school principals in Lesotho?
2. What are the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on the needs and challenges regarding professional development for their leadership roles?
3. How should professional development leadership programmes be enhanced to effectively develop and meet the needs of secondary school principals?

These subsidiary questions enabled deeper exploration of the realities of PD for secondary school principals, the PD programmes already in place for principals, the role they played in PD programmes and their implementation in schools. Through the second question, the researcher investigated the perceptions of secondary school principals on their PD needs, the challenges they face in terms of leadership in schools, the platforms where these challenges are addressed as well as the factors hindering PD for school principals in their leadership roles. The question assisted me to explore professional development programmes on leadership for school principals, and the strategies to ensure capacitation of principals to enhance leadership.

Chapter 2 presented a review of literature focussing on sources exploring professional development of secondary school principals from the local, continental, and global perspectives. The chapter is organised into seven themes comprising school leadership in the 21st century, the role of principal in teaching and learning, conceptualisation of PD for principals, an overview of PD programmes for principals, PD needs for principals, factors affecting PD for principals, strategies to enhance PD to meet the needs of principals as well as the role principals play in the implementation of PD for their schools. A conceptualisation of the key concepts of the study was also provided.

Chapter 3 presented and discussed the two theories namely, constructivism theory and complexity leadership theory. The two theories were used as a lens to explore the perceptions of secondary

school principals on PD needs to enhance leadership. Subsequently, the synergy between the theories was discussed to provide a background on the understanding of PD for school principals. The two theories were also used in this study to produce a combined viewpoint on the understanding of professional development for school principals.

Chapter 4 presented and discussed the research design and methodology of the study. The researcher used the constructivism paradigm which considers knowledge as a social construct, resulting from exchanges and interactions between individuals and the settings within which they are formed. Constructivist paradigm also views all human knowledge as socially constructed. This is aligned with the qualitative research approach used in this study. In exploring the perceptions of principals on their professional development needs. The researcher also found it relevant to use a multiple case study and provided justification on its significance in the study. The research sites were discussed in detail and the procedures followed to access authorisation to collect data were indicated. An explanation on how the participants of the study were selected was provided and the methodology employed was justified. Furthermore, details of thematic data analysis as the data analysis strategy used in the study were provided. As the chapter was concluded, the researcher indicated how trustworthiness was ensured as well as ethical considerations.

Having described the research design and methodology, the researcher proceeded to the data presentation and discussion (Chapter 5). The following three themes were discussed: 1. the reality of PD for Lesotho secondary school principals; 2. perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on their needs and challenges regarding professional development; and 3. strategies to enhance leadership professional development for secondary school principals. Then the major findings of the study were also presented. The next section of this chapter presents the lesson learnt from the research journey.

#### **6.4 LESSONS LEARNT IN THE RESEARCH JOURNEY**

This chapter provides an overview of the research journey and the lessons learnt for professional development of school principals in Lesotho. It also discusses the lessons learnt as well as steps to be taken going forward with regard to PD needs of secondary school principals to enhance leadership. The findings of the study are also summarised based on the research questions as well the theoretical framework that was used as a lens for the study. The researcher also presents the

novel contribution of the study to the body of existing knowledge. Through engaging with the study, a considerable insight of PD needs was gained by exploring the themes from the perception of the participants. This contributed to improvement of my understanding of PD needs for principals. To a large extent, the researcher who began this journey a few years ago has gained a better perspective of PD issues and how they could be addressed to engender better functioning education systems in Lesotho and other similar contexts.

### **Experience and understanding of PD for school principals**

From the experience and understanding of PD for school principals in Lesotho, the lesson learnt was that principals understand PD although they lack exposure to PD programmes. The workshops that were previously attended organised by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) are now replaced by meetings organised the District Education Managers (DEM), and the aim is not to provide PD for principals but to present and discuss reports on day-to-day school activities. Furthermore, other meetings are organised by the principals' associations with the sole purpose of providing motivation through invitation of experts.

The principals seemed unhappy about their lack of experience in PD since handling leadership becomes a challenge due to the complexity of their work. From the principals' understanding, MoET is largely responsible for providing their PD. This means that beyond MoET, it is difficult for principals to envisage any other structure that could provide them with the tools they need to handle their pressing leadership responsibilities. Instead of finding their own initiatives to expose themselves to PD programmes, the principals seemed to be in their comfort zone waiting for MoET to expose them to PD programmes. This means there was no initiative for self-initiated professional learning. According to constructivism theory, learning occurs through social interaction with the environment (Piaget, 1964). This means the principals are expected to find ways to create their own learning. Besides that, complexity leadership theory indicates that knowledge is constructed through individuals' encounter with complex situations since they need to find the ways in which they can adapt to such situations (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009).

Another finding was that in the PD programmes that were offered by the Ministry of Education and Training in the previous years, the principals played the role of being just participants. The workshops were allegedly a development space for the principals as they gained skills and knowledge to enhance their leadership roles. The platform also gave them an opportunity to share their views on the challenges and successes within their leadership roles. This means that

principals are supposed to continue from what the MoET has offered and find ways of initiating their own PD programmes to enhance their leadership. Such self-initiated PD programmes could encourage networking among principals for improvement of their leadership skills. Campbell et al. (2017) stresses the importance of external support and mentoring for principals at different stages in their career path.

An important element of high-quality PD is networking with other principals who could stimulate critical reflection and assist to identify gaps in knowledge and skills (Service & Thornton, 2021). Social constructivism suggests the collaborative nature of learning. According to social constructivism, knowledge develops from individuals' interaction with each other and society at large (Lev Vygotsky, 1978). This is corroborated by complexity leadership theory which views leadership as a shared emergent process where individuals and teams interact and learn from each other to produce innovation and adaptive capacity (Avolio et al., 2009; Lichtenstein et al., 2006; Hazy and Uhl-Bien, 2014).

From the role principals played in the implementation of school-based PD, I formed the impression that principals understand their role of ensuring that teachers are capacitated for better performance in the schools. This means that they too can arrange their own PD to ensure effectiveness in their duties. Constructivism connects learning with meaning that is created through experience; the mind filters input from the world to produce its own unique reality (Jonassen, 1991). Thus, principals need to collaborate with other principals to create, share their own experiences and learn from others. Senol (2019) indicates that participating in professional development programmes will update principals' knowledge and improve their job performance by applying new knowledge and skills to implement the best teaching practices in schools. According to Ertmer & Newby (1993), individual and environmental factors are both critical to the constructivist theory of learning. It is the specific interaction between these two variables that creates knowledge. Complexity leadership theory proposes that adaptability occurs in everyday interactions of individuals responding to triggers in the work environment (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009).

### **Principals PD needs**

On principals' PD needs, the findings revealed that principals need capacitation in the use of the latest technology. As stated by Agur and Koc (2019), technology has changed the way people live; from the use of the internet to the way they communicate through text messages. This change is

also evident in the education system. From my interaction with the principals, I learnt that there is a sense of apprehension about the use of technology. However, it was evident that they were running the schools where there were young teachers who were digitally literate. Therefore, the issue of lack of capacitation in technology could be dealt with at school level. Agur and Koc (2019) found that administrators are apprehensive about social media in the classroom and that they need to become more familiar with it to implement technology more effectively in the classroom.

To ease their apprehension, principals need to change their ways of thinking about how social media is used. Professional development in technology skills needs to be more available and flexible for principals to become more visionary technology-driven leaders in the 21st century digital educational environment. Thus, principals need to be open to learning new things in their own settings. This is in line with constructivism theory as it states that learning is an active process and involves sensory input to construct meaning. Individuals need to do something to learn, as learning is not a passive activity. They also need to engage with the world to be actively involved in their own learning and development (Fosnot, 2005; Rockmore, 2005). Complexity leadership theory further emphasises that learning occurs throughout the interaction among agents and their functions and can be regarded as a collective process of reflection and action, branded by asking questions, seeking feedback, experimenting, reflecting, and discussing errors or unexpected outcomes of the action (Edmondson, 1999).

The findings also revealed that principals need capacitation with skills to manage school finances. As expressed by the participants, they particularly experience a challenge with budgeting the school funds. I learnt that the principals believe it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to equip them with the skills to handle school finances. This gave me the impression that they are relaxed about this area in which they lack skills while one could argue that enrolment in some self-initiated short training courses geared towards the areas in which they are ineffective could assist them. As expressed by literature, in secondary schools, financial management is a crucial responsibility of every principal (Ekpenyong, 2016). The principal must demonstrate the ability to raise funds and ensure they are used effectively and efficiently. Thus, it is crucial for the principals to encourage the spirit of self-driven learning in schools as organisations and they too should be part of it. According to constructivism, as asserted by Xu and Shili (2018), expertise is not outside and does not transfer by itself, rather, it can be discovered and gain new meaning through conversation, discussion, collaboration, and construction. Complexity theory also suggests that it is only when individuals make sense of situations that learning occurs and the knowledge created allows individuals to adapt to complex situations (Weick, 2007).

From the data on the principals' PD needs, it was found that principals lacked skills to handle legal issues. Since they deal with disciplinary cases and other issues that need them to be conversant with the rules and regulations, the findings revealed that principals believe it is the responsibility of MoET to provide them with such capacitation. However, it could be argued that among other duties, principals are entrusted with the responsibility to maintain proper order and discipline in the schools. This means principals need to find effective ways in which they can enforce discipline in the schools. The motivation to learn on their own and through networking with other principals could lead to improvement of school leadership. As they interact with the environment and deal with the sometimes-chaotic situations in their schools, the principals need to gather experience in dealing with such situations. Constructivism theory as a lens for this study equates learning with meaning that is created through experience; the mind filters input from the world to produce its own unique reality (Jonassen, 1991). Thus, humans learn by internally constructing meaning as opposed to acquiring it. As people learn, they continually build personal interpretations of the world from input by experiences and interactions. Complexity theory assists in understanding how school principals should respond to the pressures they face in their leadership and how they should find ways of surviving such pressures (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009).

The evidence on PD needs further indicated that principals lack skills to manage schools effectively, particularly novice principals. The findings indicated that after their appointment into principalship positions, no follow-ups are made by MoET to ensure they cope with management and leadership. The impression the researcher had is that if MoET does not organise PD programmes, the principals just sit back and do nothing while they could engage in collaborative activities with schools that perform better and share ideas with such schools to enhance leadership. In fact, one of the participants suggested this kind of collaboration where principals could gain valuable insights from best leadership practices observable in other schools. The researcher also has a feeling that participating in clusters could bring constructive effects on improvement of school leadership. Thus, it is crucial for principals to collaborate with others to gather ideas on how they could cope with their leadership positions. Constructivism theory suggests that knowledge construction can be formed from both the existing knowledge and the social interaction process with the surrounding environment (Mohammed and Kinyo, 2020). Further to that, social constructivism views the origin of knowledge construction as being the social connection of people, interactions that involve sharing, comparing, and debating among learners and mentors (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Rogoff, 1990).

### **Leadership challenges principals face**

On the leadership challenge that principals face, the lesson learnt was that there are numerous challenges in the form of ill-discipline brought by learners and teachers, and this impacts negatively on performance. The ill-discipline of learners, particularly the boys on drugs and substance abuse, is a hurdle for principals. The findings further revealed disobedience among teachers in many ways. As the principals were interviewed, the researcher could sense the need for capacitation to handle the challenges they face in their daily running of the schools. Since principals face almost similar challenges, one could argue that being part of the local principals' association could be of a great assistance since they could share their experiences with others in their areas. In constructivism theory as stated by Piaget (1977), social interaction occurs as part of the learning process since individuals construct knowledge based on their personal experiences. Thus, principals need to engage in social interaction to construct new ways of dealing with the challenges they encounter in their leadership. Complexity leadership theory focuses on the effort to understand organisational leaders' skills to coordinate complex dynamics, establish social, formal and informal group interactions in organisations and provide flexibility to respond to new conditions. This means that principals need to become flexible enough to deal with the new situations they face in running schools as organisations.

### **Platforms meant to address challenges**

In establishing the platforms on which the challenges could be addressed, the findings revealed that principals' interaction with the District Education Manager (DEM) as well as the Principals Associations are useful platforms. However, the impression one had was that the meetings are not regular. The argument could be that principals within a district could find convenient times that would allow them to frequently meet to discuss management and leadership issues. The researcher also learned that WhatsApp groups are used as platforms for principals to share experiences. However, one could argue that research on similar encounters nationally and globally could assist the principals in dealing with the challenges. According to Bada and Olusegun (2015), social constructivism focuses on the collaborative nature of learning where knowledge develops from how people interact with each other, their culture, and society at large. That is, individuals rely on others to help them to construct their own knowledge and reality. Terrence and Fernsler (2017) argue that complexity leadership theory offers a model for organisations to enable adaptive responses to challenges and it offers tools for organisations and sub-systems dealing with rapidly changing, complex problems.

### **Factors that hinder PD for principals**

On the factors that hinder PD for them, the principals revealed financial constraints and lack of support from the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET). Regarding financial constraints, the lesson learnt was that the principals found it difficult to participate in PD programmes such as conferences. The argument was that the conferences were held outside the country hence required substantial financial resources which schools often lacked. One could argue however, that such conferences could also be virtually held to enable access for those who are unable to participate physically, especially for conferences where virtual participation is an option. Instead of shifting the blame on financial constraints, majority of the principals could participate in such conferences from wherever they are and greatly benefit from the PD programmes offered. As viewed by constructivism theory, individuals must observe and pay attention to the learning process and keep it under the frame of collaboration and interaction (Zielinski, 2017). According to complexity leadership theory, the 21st century organisations deal with pressure in an environment where competition and globalisation foster change and unpredictability (Cao and McHugh, 2000). As stated by Anderson (1999), organisations are built upon complex dynamic systems where agents freely interact under simply structured rules to promote innovation and efficiency across the organisational system. Therefore, principals must find the most convenient ways to engage in the PD programmes.

Another factor revealed by data was lack of support from MoET which has a negative impact on principals with regard to PD. The lesson learnt from this was that the principals blamed MoET for their lack of capacitation. That is, the principals seem to shift the blame to MoET while they too could initiate their own programmes in which they need capacitation. The principals are entrusted with the responsibility to perform their roles effectively for the success of learners in their schools. Therefore, they need to be motivated to find cost-effective ways of upgrading their leadership skills. Complexity leadership theory, as stated by Drucker (2012), indicates that nowadays organisations are affected by a complex and competitive system known as the threshold of chaos mostly led by globalisation and technology revolution. To this extent, the organisations are supposed to adopt flexible strategies that are knowledge-based, innovative, and require creative thinking to enhance quicker decision-making and can afford to change the traditional administrative structure to a new and modern style of leadership that resonates with new developments.

### **PD programmes for principals**

Regarding PD programmes to be implemented for school principals, the findings revealed workshops, short training courses and conferences as the programmes that would enhance school leadership. These were referred to as the platforms for information sharing that could improve principals in their leadership roles. From the findings of the study, the participants considered workshops as the programmes that equip them with skills to handle school leadership issues as they regarded them as the platforms on which they could share their challenges. I learnt that the principals used to attend the workshops that were organised by the MoET to capacitate them in their leadership roles. Thus, beyond MoET, there were no initiatives from the principals to arrange workshops for themselves either at district level or nationally. To enhance their leadership skills, principals could work jointly to contribute funds which would be reserved for district-based PD programmes such as workshops to address their daily needs and challenges. According to literature, the workshops aim to impart new knowledge and re-skill the implementers to improve teaching and learning (Murphy et al., 2020), which would eventually advance the economic prospects of the country. Constructivism assumes that humans develop social frameworks and environments in which they can scrutinize and assess their personal experiences concerning the external world (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009). Complexity theory stresses that adaptability occurs in everyday interactions of individuals responding to triggers in the work environment (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009). This means that principals must initiate ways to adapt to their environments and to handle their leadership needs.

Another programme that was revealed by the findings on possible PD programmes was the short training courses on management and leadership. However, the researcher learnt that the principals have put their hope in MoET to avail funds so that they can attend the short courses to enhance school leadership. It could be argued that the principals could organise self-initiated training courses depending on the areas in which they lack skills. The significance of the training courses is emphasised and confirmed by the principals. This means that they need motivation to enhance their individual PD needs through attending the training courses. Individual principals are also supposed to pay for the short courses to upgrade their skills. Therefore, it depends on the areas in which they need capacitation. Literature has shown that the purpose of the institutions' training is to upgrade a range of skills and techniques for undertaking specific routine work (Khurotin & Afrianty, 2018). Training is often carried out in educational institutions to improve personnel who are considered unable to carry out their work properly (Sunasi et al., 2019). This encourages the

management of educational institutions to facilitate training and career development of their personnel to obtain good, effective, and efficient performance results. As stated by Piaget (1977), social interaction occurs as part of the learning process as individuals construct knowledge based on their personal experience. Complexity leadership theory proposes that adaptability, which enhances performance and innovation, occurs in the everyday interactions of individuals acting in response to pressures and opportunities in their local contexts (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009). Thus, for principals, engaging in trainings could encourage interaction hence knowledge and skills to enhance leadership.

Moreover, conferences were revealed as the other programmes that need to be implemented to enhance school leadership. The conferences are regarded as the platforms for information sharing to capacitate principals in their leadership roles. Literature argues the traditional PD activities, such as conferences and workshops, are much easier and less costly to plan and deliver to many individuals. I learnt that the principals view conferences as PD programmes that could equip them with the skills to handle leadership. The conclusion I drew was that the principals did not explore more self-initiated opportunities that would allow them to gain knowledge without physically meeting with other people. One would argue that leading schools in the 21st century affords leaders a chance to learn through the internet using electronic gadgets and other related devices. Thus, the principals must become technology leaders and embrace the latest ways of acquiring knowledge. Paletta (2019) asserts that the role of school principals is an evolving one, calling them to become agents of change, focusing on educational leadership as they advance the schools.

On the strategies that MoET can use to enhance PD for school principals, the findings revealed a number of them. One of the strategies was the support from the Ministry of Education using the Inspectors. The lesson learnt was that the Inspectors focus solely on improvement of teachers, and they do not follow up on the principals. Instead, of relying on the support from the Inspectors, the principals' professional learning could also occur through on-the-job experience and networking with trusted colleagues. Being engaged in the school leadership networking might be the essential leadership responsibilities for principals to benchmark their skills and work towards improved leadership practices (Nurdiant & Nurdin, 2020). Social constructivism views the origin of knowledge construction as being the social interaction involving sharing, comparing, and debating among learners and mentors (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Rogoff, 1990). Through a highly interactive process enabled by the social environment of learning, individuals refine their own meanings and help others find meaning. In this way knowledge is mutually built.

Another strategy that MoET could employ is engaging teacher training institutions to capacitate principals in the areas where they lack skills. Literature on organisational leadership points out that organisations are operating in an increasingly complex and dynamic environment (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2011). That means schools as organisations also operate under complex situations and the school leaders must find ways to adapt to the situations in which they operate. My impression is that principals need to conduct self-introspection and find the exact areas where they need capacitation to equip them with skills to face challenges. All teachers, inclusive of the principals in the country, were exposed to management courses at the colleges and universities. I think this kind of capacitation could be strengthened by research on management and leadership. I also believe that the use social media platforms could enhance social learning among the principals.

#### **6.4. RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION**

The study explored the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on professional development needs to enhance leadership. Based on the findings of the study, in which the principals deliberated on their professional development needs, I developed a model on PD needs of the principals to enhance leadership. The findings revealed that principals need capacitation in financial management. According to the principals, capacitation in this area would enable them to control and use the school funds effectively as expressed by the Lesotho Education Act (2010). Furthermore, the skills would assist the principals to prepare annual budgets for the schools and draw financial statements. The findings will provide important awareness to the Ministry of Education and Training in Lesotho on the PD needs of principals and, hopefully, jolt the Ministry into action to provide them with capacitation relevant to their needs.

The findings exposed that principals need to be equipped with the skills to handle legal issues. Principals deal with discipline of learners and teachers, hence knowledge of how to legally handle disciplinary cases is essential. Therefore, this finding will assist policymakers to organise appropriate PD for principals.

The findings further exposed that for effective administration of the schools, principals need to be equipped with management and leadership skills, particularly those who are new in the positions. School principals are entrusted with a huge responsibility to equip learners with skills and to support teachers to achieve learners' education. The principals are further responsible for the overall management of the schools. That means if they lack management skills, this could have a

negative impact on the performance of their schools. Thus, to ensure efficient performance in their leadership roles, there is a need for capacitation to enhance school leadership. This finding will sensitise the Ministry of Education and Training in Lesotho on how to structure PD for principals to meet their needs.

To achieve effective leadership, the study revealed that capacitation of principals through workshops, short training courses and conferences is essential. The workshops were viewed as platforms on which principals could share their challenges. According to Bush (2020), schools can only be effective when professional development for principals is availed. Thus, principals need to be equipped with skills through in-service training, particularly by attending workshops, with relevant leadership knowledge and skills to meet the needs of teachers and students (Gumus & Bellibas, 2020). The study also found that principals need capacitation with leadership skills through short training courses. According to Khurotin & Afrianty (2018), training and development in the world of work of organisations as well as in educational institutions is essential to upgrade a range of skills and techniques to perform specific routine work.

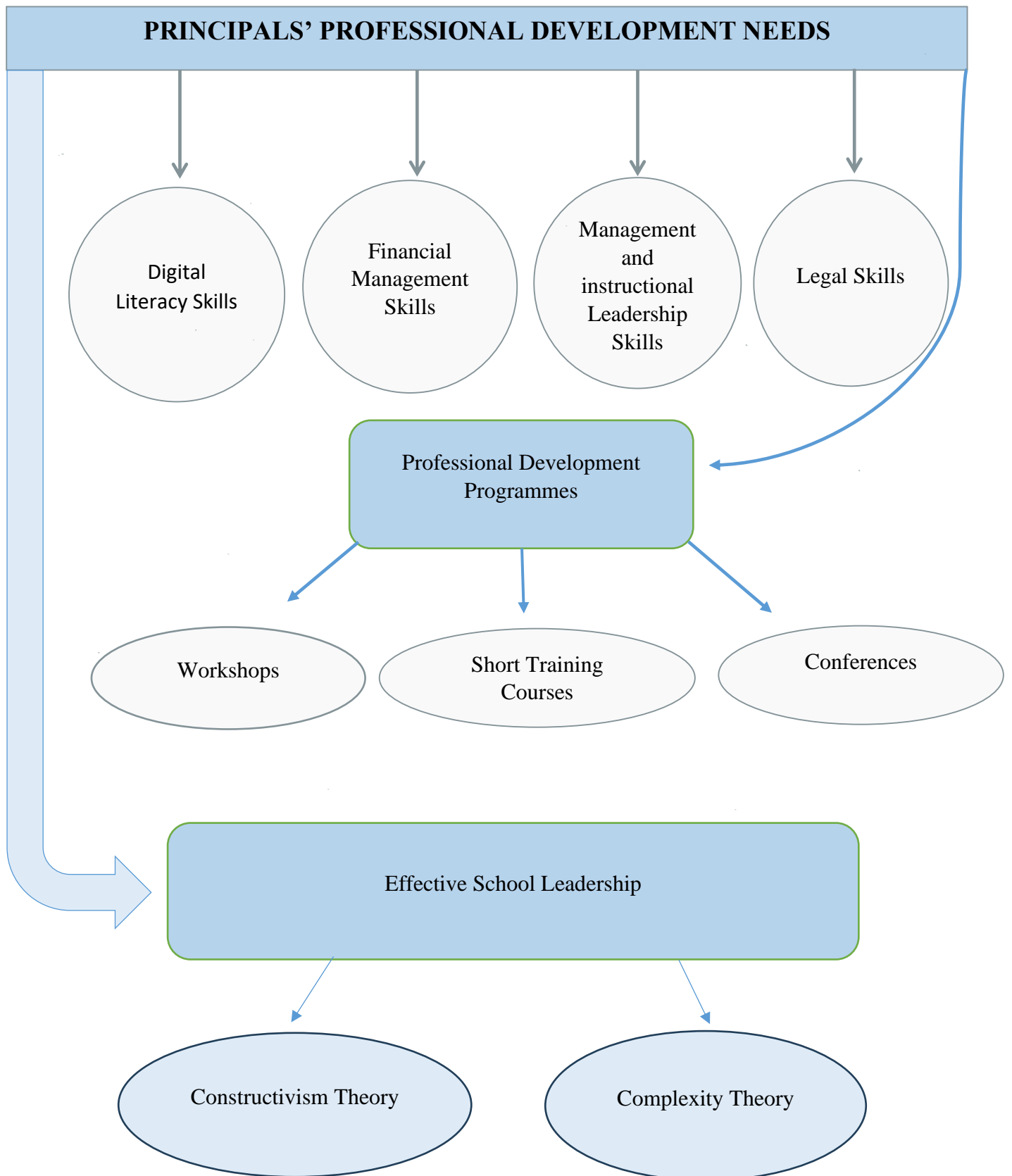
The findings further revealed that principals' PD needs could be achieved through attending conferences geared towards improvement of school leadership. The conferences were also emphasised as the platforms where principals could share experiences, challenges, and strategies to enhance school leadership. The findings on PD programmes will assist MoET to organise PD programmes based on the needs of the principals. Literature highlights the need to incorporate contemporary approaches to PD such as mentoring, peer coaching, action research and job-embedded learning as effective PD programmes for principals besides workshops and conferences (Zepeda, 2019).

The major findings of the study indicated that school principals lacked capacitation through various PD programmes, which contributes to ineffectiveness in their work. It also emerged that principals lack exposure and experience in PD; therefore, handling leadership becomes a challenge due to the complexity of their work. They revealed that PD programmes are not available for them, and that in cases where such programmes can be accessed, financial constraints hampered their participation. What also came out was that PD needs to be implemented in schools and the principals' role is to support its implementation. The following PD needs were identified: capacitation in the use of technology, financial management skills, handling legal issues as well as management and leadership skills. Capacity in these areas would enhance school leadership. Besides that, it emerged that principals faced numerous challenges in their leadership roles, some

of which were brought by learners and teachers. Among these challenges, it emerged that principals dealt with learners' ill-discipline emanating from, among others, drug and substance abuse.

The findings revealed that the principals' challenges were addressed through the following platforms: their interaction with the District Education Manager, attending the District Principals Associations meetings where they assist one another on the challenges they face in their day-to-day running of schools, as well as using the WhatsApp groups as platform on which they share their experiences. Financial constraints and lack of support from MoET also emerged as the factors that hinder PD for secondary school principals. The study further revealed that workshops, short training courses and conferences are the strategies that MoET should use to enhance PD of school principals. Further strategies included support from the Ministry of Education and Training using the Inspectors, and training on management to be conducted for all novice principals to sharpen their leadership skills. Figure 6.1 below depicts the model that emanated from the issues raised and discussed with regard to professional development needs of secondary school principals in Lesotho.

**Figure 6.1: Model of principals' professional development needs**



The above model expounds the findings as expressed by secondary school principals on their professional development needs. Professional development for principals encompasses numerous stages including recruitment and selection, completion of a preparation programme, initial licensure, induction, and continuing professional development (Gordon, 2020; Steinberg & Yang, 2020). To effectively perform their roles, principals need capacity on the following skills and competencies: digital literacy skills, financial management skills, management and instructional leadership skills, as well as the skills to handle legal issues. The model indicates that to enhance effective leaderships, professional development programmes need to be availed for principals, and could be structured in the form of the workshops, short training courses and conferences. As expressed by the literature, principals need to be equipped through in-service training, particularly by attending workshops aimed at building their leadership knowledge and skills to meet the needs of teachers and students (Gumus & Bellibas, 2020). In addition, this study has revealed the need to incorporate contemporary approaches into PD. These include mentoring, peer coaching, action research and job-embedded learning.

The study was grounded on constructivism and complexity leadership theories. In developing this model, these two theories were considered. According to these theories, the principals constructed their perceptions on their professional development needs from the complex situations in which they work. According to Weick (2007), learning happens when people understand situations, and the knowledge created allows individuals to be familiar with the complex conditions. As expressed by Drucker (2012), organisations in the contemporary era face complications and competitive environments known as the era of chaos which is largely influenced by globalisation and the industrial revolution. Thus, constructivism and complexity theories complemented each other to assist in the understanding of the effective professional development school principals. Constructivism theory views learning as constructed from individuals' interaction with the environments in which they live. Constructivism associates learning with meaning which is formed from experience. In this process of knowledge construction, the brain screens information from the outside world to create its exceptional reality (Jonassen, 1991). Complexity leadership theory sees leadership as a complicated process which requires construction of ideas that assist in adapting in the complex situations. Complexity leadership theory considers leadership as a collective development process in which individuals and groups of people network and acquire knowledge to produce innovation and adaptive capability (Avolio et al., 2009; Lichtenstein et al., 2006; Hazy and Uhl-Bien, 2014).

## **6.5. THE STUDY LIMITATIONS**

This section presents the limitations of the study. According to Theofanidis and Fountouki (2019), limitations of the study are potential weaknesses which are often out of the researcher's control and may affect the study's design, results, and the conclusion.

### **6.5.1 Limited access to documents**

Researching on secondary school principals' PD needs required me to analyse documents such as the school activity plans, staff meeting minutes, programmes as well as invitation letters. At first when the researcher requested the documents for analysis, the principals were reluctant to provide them, particularly the staff meeting minutes and the school activity plans. This reluctance was brought by the fear among the principals that I might be intruding into their school business. They were also not comfortable, thinking that I might have been sent to their schools by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) to expose their leadership flaws. To make them feel at ease, the whole research process was explained, and the participants were assured that the data gathered from their schools would be used solely for the purpose of the study. That means it would not in any way be accessible to unauthorised people. It was further clarified that pseudonyms would be used to ensure the study participants and their schools remained anonymous. After providing this clarification, the principals were at ease and provided me with the requested documents. However, when the invitation letters were requested, as well as the programmes for the management workshops and meetings they attended, the researcher discovered that most of the documents were sent via WhatsApp and the principals indicated that when their phone memories were full, they deleted everything. Very few letters were found in their office files. Therefore, the principals were requested to provide the files so that the researcher could analyse the letters and programmes that were accessible.

### **6.5.2 Participants declining within short notice**

The researcher had anticipated to interview twelve principals to gather data on their perceptions on PD needs to enhance leadership. However, when embarking on the task, the declines to participate in the study, which came at short notice citing busy schedules were experienced. To address this issue, the researcher had to look for other participants since participation was

voluntary and told them that they were free to withdraw whenever they felt uncomfortable. The participants who declined were replaced until the researcher ended up maintaining the twelve participants, which was the proposed number for the study.

### **6.5.3 Non generalisation of the findings**

Another limitation is that the research was conducted in only two districts of the country, with the focus mainly on the urban parts of the districts. Considering the small sample of the study, the results cannot be generalised to a bigger population. The aim of the study was to contribute to the body of knowledge on PD needs of secondary school principals.

## **6.6 FINAL WORD**

The aim of the study was to explore the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on their professional development needs to enhance leadership. The study found that principals understand PD although they have limited exposure to PD programmes, and they failed to provide self-initiated PD programmes. The study also revealed that in the PD programmes that were offered by the Ministry of Education and Training in the previous years, the principals played the role of just being participants and when the programmes stopped, the principals failed to find ways to initiate and sustain the PD programmes. The study also found that the principals need capacitation on digital literacy skills and to ease their uneasiness, they could alter their views on social media and how it is used.

The study further revealed that principals need capacitation with the skills to manage the school finances and that enrolling in some self-initiated short training courses geared towards the areas in which they are ineffective could be beneficial. The study found that principals lacked skills to handle legal issues suggesting the need to find effective ways in which they could impose discipline in the schools and to learn on their own as well as through networking with other principals to improve school leadership. The study also found that novice principals lack skills to manage schools effectively and they need to collaborate with schools that perform better to share ideas on how to improve leadership. Participation in clusters could also provide some rewards and benefits.

The study further revealed numerous challenges of ill-discipline brought by learners and teachers, and ultimately impacting negatively on school performance. Principals Associations could provide a useful platform for them to share experiences and create a positive transformation in their schools. The study also found that principals' challenges are addressed through their interaction with the District Education Manager (DEM) as well as the Principals Associations, so WhatsApp groups could also be used as platforms for principals to share experiences. The findings as well revealed financial constraints and lack of support from the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET). Another factor revealed by data was lack of support from MoET which has a negative impact on PD for principals and that principals too could initiate their own programmes in which they need capacitation.

Regarding PD programmes to be implemented for school principals, the study revealed workshops, short training courses and conferences as the programmes that could assist to enhance school leadership. Therefore, principals need to work jointly to contribute funds which would be reserved for district-based PD programmes such as workshops to address their daily needs and challenges. The study also revealed short training courses on management and leadership as another programme to be implemented, and that principals need motivation to enhance their individual PD needs through attending the training courses. Individual principals need to pay for these short courses to upgrade their skills. Conferences were also revealed as the other programmes that need to be implemented to enhance school leadership and that principals should explore self-initiated opportunities that would allow them to gain knowledge through either virtual or physical connections. Since data that informed the findings of this study was gathered from the urban parts of the districts, further research is needed focusing on the rural districts of Lesotho. This is because the professional development needs of principals might also be influenced by the environments in which they perform their duties. The study recommends that professional development programmes be arranged for principals to address their needs to enhance school leadership. Moreover, short training courses could be organised by MoET to professionally develop principals in the areas where they lack skills. Further research is also suggested on the professional development needs of secondary school principals in the rural areas of Lesotho. The current study was confined to the schools located in the urban areas of Lesotho. The researcher believes that the needs may vary depending on the environments in which the principals work.

In conclusion, professional development is one of the key attributes in the quest to create better functioning education systems and schools; especially in the era characterised by the myriad challenges school leaders constantly face. Neglecting professional development for school principals would be equivalent to condemning the foundational phases of education to stagnation and failure.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A – ETHICAL CLEARANCE



18 October 2022

### APPLICATION FOR TITLE REGISTRATION

**Applicant:** Mabeleng, Ml  
**Student Number:** 2020737835  
**Discipline:** Education Management  
**Study Code:** Doctoral (EDML9100)

Dear Ms Mabeleng

**Your registered title is as follows:** "PERCEPTIONS OF LESOTHO SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS TO ENHANCE LEADERSHIP"

All of the best with your studies.

Yours sincerely,

  
Prof Patrick Mafora  
Chair: CTR committee

  
Ms CS Duvenhage  
Secretary: CTR committee

205 Nelson Mandela Drive | Park West, Bloemfontein 9301 | South Africa  
P.O. Box 339 | Bloemfontein 9300 | South Africa | [www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)



**APPENDIX B – PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE REGIONAL INSPECTORATE-  
MoET**



**THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING – MASERU**

**P.O.BOX 47 MASERU 100**

**FAX: 00266-**

The Principal

24<sup>th</sup> October 2022

..... high school  
Maseru 100.

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH STUDY**

Permission is hereby granted to 'MATANKI MABELENG (Ms) to undertake a study whose topic is  
:"THE PERCEPTIONS OF LESOTHO SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ON PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT NEEDS TO ENHANCE LEADERSHIP".

It is the hope of the Ministry that the findings of this study will help in the advancement of the  
Ministry's efforts to provide quality education.

I hope this will reach your favourable considerations

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Teboho Moneri'.

Teboho Moneri - Regional Inspector Central



## APPENDIX C: PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE DISTRICT EDUCATION MANAGER



10 November 2022

Matanki Mabeleng (Ms)

Dear Madam

### Request for Permission to Conduct Research

Your request to conduct a research study in some of Botha-Bothe district post-primary schools is granted; even though you did not specify names of the schools. Nonetheless, your interaction in schools should not interfere with schoolwork.

One also hopes that the professional development needs of secondary school principals are anticipated to impact positively on learners' performance. It is based on this background, that you are humbly requested to share the findings of the study with the office of the District Education Manager, Botha-Bothe.

Always relying on your usual cooperation

Warm regards



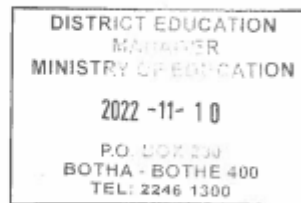
Manana Ratau (Ms)

District Education Manager (Botha-Bothe)

Telephone: +266 22461300 (landline)

Mobile: +266 63033320/59318843

Email Address: rataumanana@ymail.com



## APPENDIX D: PERMISSION LETTER TO THE REGIONAL INSPECTORATE

Exams Council of Lesotho  
P.O. Box 507  
Maseru 100

24 October 2022

The Regional Inspector  
Central Inspectorate  
Maseru 100

Dear Sir

### A REQUEST FOR DATA COLLECTION PERMISSION

This letter serves as a request to your good office to grant me permission to collect data in six (6) High Schools based in the central region of Maseru district.

I am a PhD student at The University of the Free State in QwaQwa Campus, specialising in Education Management and Leadership. The title of my study is: **Perceptions of Lesotho Secondary School Principals on Professional Development Needs to enhance Leadership**. The participants are the principals from the six (6) schools.

It is my wish that upon completion, the research study will contribute to the body of knowledge on the professional development needs of secondary school Principals in Lesotho. It will further assist the policy makers; The Ministry of Education and Training on how to structure professional development programme to meet the Principals' needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

I am looking forward to a positive response.

Yours Faithfully



Matanki Mabeleng (Mrs.)

## APPENDIX E: PERMISSION LETTER TO THE DISTRICT EDUCATION MANAGER

Exams Council of Lesotho  
P.O. Box 507  
Maseru 100

24 October 2022

The District Education Manager  
Butha- Buthe Education Office  
Butha-Buthe 400

Dear Madam

### A REQUEST FOR DATA COLLECTION PERMISSION

This letter serves as a request to your good office to grant me permission to collect data in six High Schools in the Butha- Buthe district.

I am a PhD student at The University of the Free State in QwaQwa Campus, specialising in Education Management and Leadership. The title of my study is: **Perceptions of Lesotho Secondary School Principals on Professional Development Needs to enhance Leadership**. The participants are the principals from the six schools.

It is my wish that upon completion, the research study will contribute to the body of knowledge on the professional development needs of secondary school Principals in Lesotho. It will further assist the policy makers; The Ministry of Education and Training on how to structure professional development programme to meet the Principals' needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

I hope my request will meet your favourable consideration.

Yours Faithfully



Matanki Mabeleng (Mrs.)

## APPENDIX F: PERMISSION LETTER TO SCHOOLS

P.O. Box 507

Maseru 100

12 November 2022

The principal

..... High School

Dear Sir/Madam

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH


I wish to request permission to conduct research at your school. The title of my study is **'PERCEPTIONS OF LESOTHO SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS TO ENHANCE LEADERSHIP'**.

My name is Matanki Irene Mabeleng. I am furthering my studies with the University of the Free State, pursuing Doctor of Philosophy in Education Management and Leadership (PhD).

The findings of this study will contribute to the body of knowledge on professional development needs of secondary school Principals. I, therefore, request you to participate in the study. I am going to use the two data collection methods, namely, the face-to-face interviews and document analysis. The collected data will be used only for the purpose of this study and your name as well as that of your school will be kept anonymous. I have already been granted permission to conduct the research from the District Education Office.

I hope that my request will be favourably considered.

Yours faithfully



Matanki Irene Mabeleng

## APPENDIX G: PERMISSION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

P.O. BOX 507

Maseru 100

12 November 2022

Dear Participant

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This serves as a request for you to participate in my study. The title of my study is **'PERCEPTIONS OF LESOTHO SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS TO ENHANCE LEADERSHIP'**.

My name is Matanki Irene Mabeleng. I am furthering my studies with the University of the Free State, pursuing Doctor of Philosophy in Education Management and Leadership (PhD).

The findings of this study will contribute to the body of knowledge on professional development needs of secondary school Principals. I, therefore, request you to participate in the study. I am going to use the two data collection methods, namely, the face-to-face interviews and document analysis. The collected data will be used only for the purpose of this study and your name as well as that of your school will be kept anonymous. I have already been granted permission to conduct the research from the District Education Office.

I hope that my request will be favourably considered.

Yours faithfully



Matanki Irene Mabeleng

## APPENDIX H: PERMISSION LETTER FROM SCHOOLS

### PERMISION FROM SCHOOLS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Permission is hereby granted to 'Matanki Irene Mabeleng to conduct research at ..... High School on the following topic:  
**'PERCEPTIONS OF LESOTHO SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS TO ENHANCE LEADERSHIP'.**

I ..... understand the nature of this research and, therefore, I consent that this school will participate in the research project.

Signature:

Date:

# APPENDIX I: CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS



## Consent to participate in this study.

I, the undersigned,

(participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")

confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the

\_\_\_\_\_ (the "Study") in relation to

\_\_\_\_\_ and which Study is being conducted by:

\_\_\_\_\_ (insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that-

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits, and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study.
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet.
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study.
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing, and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto.
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein.
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage.
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the <insert specific data collection method>.

Full Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX J: TURNITIN CERTIFICATE

### Matanki Mabeleng PhD thesis

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#### ORIGINALITY REPORT

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<b>7</b> %	<b>5</b> %	<b>2</b> %	<b>3</b> %
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

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#### PRIMARY SOURCES

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<b>1</b>	<b>hipatiapress.com</b> Internet Source	<b>1</b> %
<b>2</b>	<b>scholar.ufs.ac.za</b> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1</b> %
<b>3</b>	<b>researchspace.ukzn.ac.za</b> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1</b> %
<b>4</b>	<b>Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal</b> Student Paper	<b>&lt;1</b> %

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## APPENDIX K: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

### NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LESOTHO



Telephone: +266 22340601  
+266 52213632  
+266 52213639  
Fax : +266 22340000  
Website: <http://www.nul.ls>

P.O. Roma 180  
Lesotho  
Southern Africa

#### FACULTY OF EDUCATION

26<sup>th</sup> November 2023

The Supervisor  
Faculty of Education  
University of the Free State  
Bloemfontein

Dear Supervisor

#### Re: proof of language editing

This letter proves that I read and edited Matanki Irene Mabeleng's thesis titled:  
*Perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on professional development needs to enhance leadership.*

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mahao'.

Mahao Mahao (PhD)  
Department of Language and Social Education  
Faculty of Education,  
National University of Lesotho

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## APPENDIX L: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS

1. Background questions.
  - a) Your experience in this position, in years.
  - b) Your teaching subjects, if any.
  - c) Your experience as a teacher, in years.
  - d) Age
  - e) Gender
  - f) Highest qualification
  
2. What is your experience and understanding of the PD of school leaders in Lesotho?
3. What PD programs are already in place for schools?
4. What is your role in those PD programs?
5. How do you monitor/evaluate the implementation of PD programs in your school?
6. Does your school have any school-based PD programs? If yes, what is your role as a school principal? If not, why?
7. As a school leader, what are your PD needs?
8. Are any of these needs being met? Elaborate, please.

9. What challenges do you come across in terms of your leadership in the school?
  10. Is there a platform where such challenges are addressed for school principals?
  11. What factors do you think, hinder your PD as a school principal?
  12. In order to enhance your leadership skills, what do you need capacity on?
  13. Who is responsible for providing capacity on what you have just mentioned?
  14. What programs should be implemented to assist you as a school principal in your leadership role?
- 

15. What strategies do you think, the Ministry of Education in Lesotho can use to ensure that school principals are capacitated in terms of PD?
16. How do you think your PD needs can be met as a school principal?
17. Is there anything you would like to add, that we might have missed?

Thank you, for your time and patience.