

**THE NATURE AND PRACTICE OF DISTRIBUTED
LEADERSHIP IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF
SOUTH AFRICA**

Submitted by

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DECLARATION

I, Shalati Doreen Manzini, declare that the Doctoral Degree research thesis that I herewith submit for the PhD qualification in Education at the University of the Free State is my independent work. I also confirm that I have not previously submitted similar work for a qualification at another institution of higher education.

I am aware that copyright vests with the University of the Free State and, therefore, hereby declare that all royalties as regards intellectual property that was developed during and/or in connection with the study at the University of the Free State will accrue to the University.



SD MANZINI

20 January 2023

DATE

DEDICATION

This educational journey was truly a labour of love. I have learned many things throughout this journey, including discipline, perseverance, and the importance of family and friends. Although the attainment of this goal was a personal one, it was not accomplished alone.

This thesis is dedicated to my late dad, **Beginners, Damas Shiluvani** (*Nkhwashu wa mpindza mahalambeni, gegetsu ra nhlonghe, xilwa na dzhana khume rilwa na mayeka, nwana hosi*), my late mom, **Mihloti, Enia Shiluvani** (*Nwa Dhliwayo, nwarimondzo rinwe*), and my late brother, **Madala Morris Shiluvana** (*Bra Mo, nwana mhani*) whom I commenced the lengthy and tortuous academic path, which they did not stay to witness. You were always there for me through my life to instil in me values, morals, and the ethic of hard work. You always supported me in everything I did, and I am grateful to have had your love and support. *Etlelani hi ku rhula mi ya khatsile ndzima ya nwina.*

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ABSTRACT

The world over, secondary schools have experienced different kinds of leadership such as team leadership, ethical leadership, psychodynamic leadership, teacher leadership and distributed leadership, among other leadership styles. The present study explored the nature of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools in the Limpopo province of South Africa. It sought to provide answers to the central question: *What is the nature of distributed leadership practice in selected secondary schools in the Limpopo province of South Africa and how does it shape teaching and learning?* In order to answer this question, the study was guided by the following sub-questions: (i) How is distributed leadership understood and practised in selected secondary schools, in the Limpopo Province of South Africa? (ii) In what ways do the practices of distributed leadership in the selected secondary schools shape teaching and learning? (iii) How can the practice of distributed leadership within the selected secondary schools be described and explained? Research participants comprised 14 members drawn from the entire education value chain for the districts studied. The key finding in the present study is that, distributed leadership practice in the selected secondary schools may be understood from the perspective of two key dimensions, namely, the vertical and horizontal dimensions. The vertical dimensions focuses on who is involved in distributed leadership in a school system. It is about the range of persons involved in distributed leadership as viewed from the perspective of the organisation structure of an education system. The horizontal dimension focuses on what activities are involved in distributed leadership. Pursuant to these two dimensions, an important finding showing in the present study is that distributed leadership in the schools studied involves some form of shared leadership. In fact, all participants in this study understood distributed leadership as a leadership approach in which "all persons with capacity", regardless of rank, are allowed to lead in some specific situation, as and when the need arises. However, there appears to be discrepancies on the definitions of "all persons" among stakeholders in education. Some participants viewed the concept of "all persons" from an local employee perspective, that is, individuals within a school as bounded by the perimeter fence. This view is defined in this study as the employee perspective of distributed leadership. Others viewed the concept of "all persons" from a stakeholder perspective. These variations in perspectives of "all persons", that is, discrepancies on who comprise the vertical dimension of distributed leadership appears in the present study to have ramifications on the practices of educators. Participants with an employee, that is, an office bearer perspective to the concept of 'all' practised distributed leadership in the perspective of a school with boundaries. This means they viewed distributed leadership in the perspective of people who are internal to a specific school, such as teacher leadership and the members of the school management teams. On the other hand, those with a stakeholder perspective viewed the concept of "all persons", in the broad sense, to include everyone with an interest in what happens in schools. This view focuses on schools as institutions without boundaries, or if the boundaries exist, they are pervious. In this perspective, distributed leadership practice also involves people who may not hold line authority in the educational value chain. Clearly, findings in the present study showed distributed leadership to be a situational practice. The situation comprises the personal characteristics of educators across the entire education value chain and the context of the school leadership environment. As a result of these two contexts, that is, the personal context of educators

and the institutional context of the school leadership environment, distributed leadership practice may be described and explained in terms of two main goals. The first goal is to democratise the education space and to ensure that educators effectively account for their performance. The second goal focuses on improving instructional practices and learner attainment from an entirely professional perspective as opposed to a political perspective of democratising the education space. Clearly, findings in the present study showed that distributed leadership in the Limpopo province of South Africa can be explained in terms of either democracy or service delivery goals. The present study recommends a holistic approach based on both the democracy and service delivery goals of distributed leadership. The former seems to have its roots in the political and policy context of education and the latter on instructional and pedagogical foundations.

Keywords: *distributed leadership, educational leadership, practice, secondary schools, teaching and learning, and, South Africa*

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ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

CES	Chief Education Specialist
DCES	Deputy Chief Education Specialist
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DL	Distributed Leadership
EEA	Employment of Educators Act
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
HOD	Head of Department
LDoE	Limpopo Department of Education
MEC	Member of Executive Council
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NEEDU	National Education Evaluation and Development Unit
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
PED	Provincial Education Department
PLC	Professional Learning Community
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
SASA	South African School Act 1984 (Act No. 84 of 1996)
SES	Senior Education Specialist
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
UFS	University of the Free State

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This study explores the nature and practice of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools in South Africa. The concept “distributed leadership has been explored internationally as a leadership model that will promote and advance excellence in learning and teaching ...” (Carbone et al., 2017: 183). According to Badaracco (2001) and Klar et al. (2016) distributed leadership has gained popularity as a "post-heroic" representation of educational leadership in recent years. This depiction of educational leadership as a distributed practice has prompted a shift in emphasis away from the traits and actions of individual leaders towards a more multisystem viewpoint. In this new perspective, leadership is conceived of as a collective social process, emanating from the need for multiple stakeholders in education to collaborate towards the realisation of the shared goal of educating the child (Uhl-Bien, 2006). This view about the growth trajectory of educational leadership from the traditional heroic view of school leadership to school leadership as a distributed or shared social activity is supported by Shava and Tlou (2018). Furthermore, Shava and Tlou (2018) postulate that distributed leadership, as an approach to school leadership has grown steadily in the realm of education leadership over the past few decades and has significantly penetrated and shaped present-day theory and practice of school leadership, both in Africa and beyond.

According to Gronn (2002:19), “the first known reference to the concept of distributed leadership was in the field of social psychology in the early-1950s”. A few years following its emergence, distributed leadership almost became dormant for more than three decades before briefly resurfacing again in social psychology and later in organisation theory in the early 1990s. An awareness of the concept and practice of distributed leadership among educationalists also dates from about this same period (op-cit). The focus in the field of education was on making sure that a variety of key educational stakeholders have "leaders working efficiently in ‘multiple leadership’ or ‘distributed leadership’ teams" (Gronn, 2002:653).

According to Harris (2008), the modern notion of distributed leadership, which views this type of leadership as a network of leadership activities and interactions that stretch across individuals and situations, did not emerge until the late 1990s and early 2000s. Empirical studies conducted in this area, some of which were reported by Spillane et al. (2001:20), affirm the contemporary idea of distributed leadership by describing it as a "practice distributed over leaders, followers, and their situation ...". Although there is no agreement on what typically comprises the concept and practice of distributed leadership (Hickey et al., 2022), this concept is generally taken to denote a type of leadership that encompasses activities of several stakeholders, either as individuals and/or as groups. Leithwood et al. (2006) however postulated that, simply "distributing" leadership may not be beneficial in its own right as just another leadership approach available for grabs by positional heroic leaders, but rather, what is vital to consider is how far and to whom leadership is distributed. This also means that, distributed leadership which focuses on the persons in positions of power only, may be viewed to be inadequate. Leithwood et al. (2006) see the nature and practice of distributed leadership to be more important than just defining it.

With respect to its nature, Harris (2008) indicated that distributed leadership should speak mostly to an organisation's growth potential, organisational learning, openness to change and developmental prospects. What this description means is that distributed leadership has the potential to revolutionise educational leadership (Spillane 2005; Alfadala et al., 2021) at a time when the traditional heroic model (Klar et al., 2016; Bush 2020) of educational leadership is slowly but surely disintegrating and becoming obsolete. As a result, this traditional heroic approach to school leadership is getting replaced by more democratic approaches, such as collaborative leadership (Shaikh et al., 2022), shared leadership (Bilal et al., 2019), that is, distributed leadership (Alfadala et al., 2021). However, just like any other approach to educational leadership, the distributed leadership approach may not, on its own, be viewed as a panacea for all leadership problems, that is, a leadership approach for all seasons (Peters, 2017), or a "one size fits all" leadership technique (Fletcher & Kaufer, 2003) in the schools that have embraced it. It is generally agreed by many writers and researchers that distributed leadership is the

leadership for the future, both in South Africa and beyond. Abrahamsen and Aas (2016) thus define it as the school leadership for the future.

Given these possibilities and promises of distributed leadership as an alternative to the traditional heroic (Bush, 2020; Bilal et al., 2019; Klar et al., 2016) approach to school leadership, recent times have been characterised by an explosion of research in this important area of educational leadership. Such researches have been carried out mainly in the UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand, and some parts of Europe where they have greatly influenced policy and practice of school leadership (Carbone et al., 2017). According to Hickey et al. (2022), difficulties arising from the adoption of the conventional "heroes of leadership" paradigm in contemporary schools have created pressure and therefore rising advocacy for educational institutions and systems to adopt the distributed approach to school leadership. In the heroic approach to school leadership, the role of some key stakeholders, tools, and structures necessary for successful running of schools and student learning are ignored as people focus on the actions of the leader (in this case, the school principal) only.

Undoubtedly, the heroic approach to leadership does not have any place in present day democracies and hence the need to replace them by more democratic approaches such as distributed leadership (Hargreaves & Fink, 2009). In contrast to the traditional heroic approach to school leadership, the distributed leadership approach involves more than one person embracing all leadership responsibilities without interference of the leader. However, even though empirical evidence about distributed leadership are numerous and encouraging (Harris 2009; Carbone et al., 2017), they are still far from conclusive, especially in Southern Africa (Van der Vyver et al., 2021). The missing link, as observed by Harris and Spillane (2008: 33), demands that researchers should get under the skin of leadership practitioners in order to perceive their understanding of the "why and how" of distributed leadership. Researchers should also make educational stakeholders see the importance of distributed leadership practice. It is also necessary to influence policy makers and educational leaders at various levels (Du Plessis & Heystek, 2020) to see school leadership differently by illuminating various possibilities for organisational

transformation through adoption of more robust and more progressive approaches to school leadership in the mould of distributed leadership.

As discussed above, it is beyond doubt that collaborative or shared leadership approaches, that is, distributed leadership, as opposed to centralised leadership are the way to go and that, in recent years, there has been proliferation of research on distributed leadership in countries of the “Global North” (Roberts & Tran, 2022; Carbone et al., 2017). This understanding made Abrahamsen and Aas (2016) to describe distributed leadership, in contrast to the heroic leadership, as the leadership for the future. Paradoxically, there has been a dearth of research on the nature and practice of distributed leadership in African countries including in secondary schools in South Africa as stakeholders seem to be attracted to the managerialist (Du Plessis & Heystek, 2020; Van der Vyver et al., 2021) and heroic approach (Klar et al., 2016; Abrahamsen et al., 2016) to leadership. Writing in South Africa, du Plessis and Heystek (2020) blamed policy ambiguities and blind spots on distributed leadership in public schools to be the reason behind the failure for such leadership to take root in South Africa. Studies on distributed leadership in South Africa, such as by Williams (2011), Botha and Triegaardt (2015), Botha (2016), Grant (2017), Du Plessis and Eberlein (2018) and Munje et al. (2020), do not specifically talk about the nature and practice of distributed leadership in secondary schools in South Africa.

Bush (2013) defines distributed leadership as the model of choice in the 21st century. However, Grant (2017) questions whether distributed leadership in South Africa is yet another passing fad or a robust theoretical tool for investigating school leadership practice. Williams (2011) focused on the possibilities and constraints of distributed leadership in the South African context. In addition, Munje et al. (2020) looked at the role of heads of departments in advancing science and mathematics education through the distributed leadership framework. Botha Triegaardt (2015) looked at the role of distributed leadership in functional South African schools. Clearly, most of these studies seem not to focus on the nature and practice of distributed leadership as embraced in secondary schools in South Africa. Instead, the focus seems to be on the ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions of distributed leadership and not the ‘how’ and ‘who’ questions. However, in clear

appreciation of the multilevel and multivariate nature of distributed leadership, Alfadala et al. (2021) suggest that the search for knowledge about distributed leadership thought and practice should also focus on the 'how' and 'who' questions.

In the present study, I therefore sought to explore the nature and practice of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools in South Africa in order to bridge the identified gap and thus contribute to the growing discourse on distributed leadership theory and practice on the African continent and beyond. Undoubtedly, findings from this study also have implications on educational leadership practices in the secondary schools in South Africa, and the rest of the African continent and beyond. This study is particularly relevant given the fact that school leadership influences student learning in a significant way (Leithwood & Schumacker, 2020). According to Leithwood et al. (2008:27), "school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning". The present chapter presents the background to the study, significance of the study and a summary of the research methodology employed to collect and analyse the data needed to answer the questions upon which this basic research is ground. In addition, this chapter on the orientation and background to the study also provides an outline and structure of the thesis as it gives an overview of the study.

1.2 Background to the Study

Distributed leadership, as an approach to educational leadership, is increasingly becoming a popular topic in academic research and practice of school leadership internationally (Timperley, 2005; Klar et al., 2016; Jambo & Hongde, 2020). In support of this view, Tariq (2022:141), citing earlier work by Harris (2011) also maintains that "distributed leadership has gained a lot of attention and fame in the last two decades, and it has been considered a significant contributor to organisational growth and effective performance". However, Grant (2017) has some misgivings about distributed leadership in South Africa, although Bush and Ng (2019), echoing earlier work from Harris and Spillane (2008), see it as an idea that has been growing in popularity since its adoption in educational leadership in the 1990s. According to Hickey et al. (2022:1), "distributed

leadership is currently the most frequently adopted school leadership theory internationally”, although it is not yet fully understood (Grant, 2017).

Dimmock (2012), with support from Heck and Hallinger (2009), observed that distributed leadership has been of interest to educational researchers, policy makers and practitioners for its potential to improve schools’ academic capacity by increasing both social and human capitals and democratising the education space (Hargreaves, & Fink, 2009). Samancioglu et al. (2020) report of a “positive relation between distributed leadership, teachers' job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and organisational citizenship behaviours in Turkish schools” (Tariq, 2022: 142). These observations confirm the view that distributed leadership is the model of the future. Harris and Spillane (2008:32) contend that there is mounting evidence on a worldwide scale that "distributed leadership improves organisational performance and student learning”. For this reason, it is claimed, distributed leadership has been accepted globally (Hickey et al., 2022).

Although the concept of distributed leadership has been widely accepted internationally, interpretations of this key concept seem to vary across the globe. In many countries, and/or school context, this key concept in present day school systems “... has been represented as a descriptor for all types of shared leadership (Hickey et al., 2022:3). According to Liu (2020:3), the concept is sometimes used interchangeably “with other network leadership styles, for example, shared or collective leadership”. In other context, it is associated with distributing leadership roles within the established structures of an education system. Such differences in conceptualisations, according to Hickey et al. (2022), have led to confusion and misunderstanding relating to distributed leadership thought and practice in schools. In agreement with the conclusion observed above, Spillane (2005) thus advocates for ‘distributed leadership’ to be viewed as a situational practice which is characterised mainly by a shared approach to leadership. This perspective is also embraced in the current study. However, the perspective embraced and practised in the South African secondary schools context is not fully understood. What is understood is that, theoretically, there is considerable overlap between distributed

leadership and such concepts as collaborative leadership and democratic leadership, for example. However, development of distributed leadership theory really pinpoints to a number of vital features that are aligned with my interest as a researcher exploring the nature and practice of this key concept in secondary schools in South Africa.

The first of all these features is that, the concept 'distributed leadership' "suggests the openness of leadership boundaries with a particular emphasis on leaders' expertise in leading different leadership functions" (Liu, 2020). Such an approach suggests that, officially designated school leaders, such as school principals, should not limit sharing leadership roles with position holders, such as vice principals and heads of departments only (Spillane & Healey, 2010). Instead, distributed leadership should include sharing roles with non-position holders with capability. This means, all persons who are suitable for leading at any particular stage and for different functional purposes should be afforded space to do so (Bolden, 2011; Anderson, 2012; Du Plessis & Eberlein 2018).

Another key element of distributed leadership comprises what Spillane (2005) describes as the practice-centred theory. This theory articulates that distributed leadership is a dynamic process which is grounded on promoting synergistic interactions among the leader, subordinates, and situations (Spillane, 2005). According to Liu (2020:3), "Spillane's [distributed leadership] theory conveys that the emphasis on distributed leadership should centre on how a group of leaders dynamically tackles school leadership and management [responsibilities] together for school success". The questions arising from these perspectives which are also unclear about the situation in South Africa focuses on distributed leadership as a vehicle for democratising the education space or for delivering (Hargreaves & Fink, 2009), benefits to learners through its effects improving instructional practices by educators and therefore learner attainment.

Clearly, literature discussed above reveals different conceptualisations of distributed leadership thought and practice, with some writers and practitioners viewing distributed

leadership to be synonymous with related terms such as shared leadership, collaborative leadership and democratic leadership (Shava & Tlou, 2018). With regards to its growing interest and popularity as an approach to school leadership, a situation also embraced in the present study, Harris and Spillane (2008) see three key reasons for the increasing popularity of distributed leadership internationally. The first reason is that distributed leadership has normative power (Liu, 2020). This means the notion of distributed leadership reflects contemporary changes in educational leadership practice in present day schools. In this view, leadership models that focus on school leadership by a singular, heroic leader are being replaced by models that focus upon teams rather than individuals.

This type of leadership places greater emphasis upon teachers, support staff and students as key stakeholders in the school leadership matrix (Harris, 2004). The second reason for the ever-increasing popularity of distributed leadership in the present era is the representational power of this approach. This means distributed leadership represents an alternative approach to educational leadership that has arisen due to increased external demands and pressures on educational institutions internationally to democratise the education space. Many schools, for example, have restructured their leadership teams and created new roles and responsibilities in order to meet the needs of workforce remodelling. Such remodelling initiatives, in one way or the other, are attractive to all progressive education systems today, including in South Africa. As schools reposition and redefine themselves in response to pressure arising from such programmes as “Every Child Matters and the extended schools agenda”, distributed, extended and shared leadership practices (Harris & Spillane, 2008), are increasingly becoming necessary tools for school effectiveness. Wenger et al. (2002: 123) supports this view saying, “As schools engage with complex collaborative arrangements, distributed forms of leadership will be required to ‘cross multiple types of boundaries and to share ideas and insights’”.

The last and probably the most important feature of distributed leadership is that distributed theory and practice have empirical power (Harris & Spillane, 2008:32). There

is therefore growing research evidence that distributed leadership makes a positive difference to school outcomes and student learning through effective management of leadership, subordinates and situations.

In line with the discussion above, it can be said here that distributed leadership is currently popular internationally due to its normative, representational, and empirical power (Harris & Spillane, 2008). Specifically, distributed leadership has shown possibilities and promises to move school leadership away from the notion that authority comes solely from the formal position of the principal to framing leadership as a democratic practice, involving a variety of people whose dynamic interactions inspire and direct teachers in the process of implementing instructional change and enhancing student learning (Harris 2005; Spillane 2005; Timperley, 2005), participation and involvement of stakeholders.

In clear agreement with this view, Carbone et al. (2017) concur that the concept of distributed leadership expands on the idea that leadership can be "spread over" several stakeholders inside an organisation rather than being exercised by a single charismatic or heroic figure who completely transforms the organisation single-handedly. In agreement, Harris (2013) sees distributed leadership as largely focused on empowering leaders at all levels and moving away from a top-down approach. The focus is on leadership as interaction and practice rather than on the acts of individuals with formal leadership roles or duties. It is however not understood whether this conceptualisation of distributed leadership reflects what prevails in secondary schools in South Africa.

Regardless of the possibilities and promises (Du Plessis, & Heystek, 2020), as outlined above, and the fact that distributed leadership, as an approach to educational leadership has become a popular topic in the contemporary world (Carbone et al., 2017; Badaracco, 2001; Klar et al., 2016), very little attention has been paid to the nature and practice of distributed leadership on the African continent (Jambo & Hongde, 2020), including in South Africa (Williams, 2011; Sibanda, 2017; Grant, 2017). This lack of understanding on the nature and practice of distributed leadership in South Africa has been caused by a

dearth of research on this topical issue on the African continent in general and in South Africa in particular (Bush & Ng, 2019). It is against this paucity in research that Grant (2017) asks whether distributed leadership in South Africa is yet another passing fad or a robust theoretical tool for investigating school leadership practice and student learning.

Although evidence for distributed leadership is still developing on the African continent, the theory and practice of this key concept has already been embraced internationally in educational reforms in several countries, including in the UK, the USA, Australia and New Zealand, among other countries of the Global North (Abrahamsen & Aas, 2016; Klar et al., 2016; Jambo & Hongde, 2020; Hickey et al., 2022). All of these reforms essentially adopt a normative perspective on leadership distribution and emphasise expanded forms of leadership at the school, district, and system levels (Liu, 2020). The majority of these reforms support and strengthen shared or group leadership techniques, mainly but not entirely at the school level. Although legislative changes turning away from the heroic towards more democratic and collaborative approaches to school leadership have been witnessed in Western contexts, nothing much seems to have taken place, in this regard, outside the countries of the Global North, including on the African continent, until recently. This seems to be particularly so, with regards to distributed leaders in the context of delivery (Hargreaves & Fink, 2009) as opposes to political perspective of distributed leadership as an way of democratising the education space through stakeholder participation and involvement (Erol & Turhan, 2018).

According to Harris (2011), Hong Kong is one of the first Asian cultures to formally implement distributed school leadership outside Europe and America. Whilst African countries such as South Africa are also making inroads to embrace distributed leadership approach, (Van der Vyver, et al., 2021), given different conceptualisations of this key concept as discussed in this part of the study, the nature and practice of distributed leadership as practised in the secondary schools in South Africa is not fully understood (Grant, 2017; Williams, 2011). The reason behind this lack of knowledge is that, distributed leadership is a recent development in the school leadership arena internationally, including in South Africa. Furthermore, school leadership has generally

followed managerialism, and hence authoritarian approaches as opposed to democratic approaches such as shared leadership, collaborative leadership and distributed leadership (Sibanda, 2017; Bilal et al., 2019; Alfadala et al., 2021; Shaikh, et al., 2022).

The observations above illustrate that distributed leadership, with all its prospects and possibilities (Sibanda, 2017; Larsson & Löwstedt, 2023), is not yet fully understood in the South African school leadership context, especially with regards to its nature and practice. It is for this reason that Grant (2006: 512) as echoed by William (2011) says, "... distributed leadership in South Africa has not been actualised as envisaged in official policy. However, this concept is gradually taking root due to its normative, representational, and empirical power (Harris & Spillane, 2008). According to Harris (2011), the ideals of distributed leadership have been incorporated as a new leadership competency framework and as a crucial component of the national framework for school effectiveness in such countries as the Netherlands and Wales. The goal, as literature seem to suggest is to enhance academic achievement through effective leadership and to democratise the education space. Heck and Hallinger (2009), as also supported by Dimmock (2012), thus mention that distributed leadership has been of interest to educational researchers and practitioners in these countries because of its potential to improve academic capacity of schools by enhancing both their human and social capital. In addition to such countries as the Netherlands and Wales, other European countries that have embraced a distributed approach to school leadership include German, Belgium, New Zealand and Ireland (Liu, 2020). In Africa, the countries that have been making inroads to embrace a distributed approach to school leadership, at least on paper include South Africa, Ghana, Namibia, Nigeria, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Dampson, 2015; Botha 2016; Liu, 2020; Van der Vyver et al., 2021). Grant (2017) supports the adoption of distributed leadership in the South African context and defines it as the "new kid on the block", though unsure whether it is yet another passing fad or a robust theoretical tool for investigating school leadership practice.

Post-apartheid South Africa has a remarkable Constitution, a powerful Bill of Rights, and a wide range of programmes geared at democratising its educational system (Grant,

2017). This context creates a perfect setting for theories and practices of distributed leadership. However, its nature and practice in this country is still yet to be fully understood. Williams (2011, 192) thus recommends that distributed leadership "be carefully explored as a strategy of addressing the leadership crisis in many South African schools". Naicker and Mestry (2011:105), also held in the present study believe that "distributed leadership has a lot to offer schools" in the public education system in South Africa. It is further believed that, in response to the multifaceted school leadership dilemmas that characterise school leadership in many South African schools today, "distributed leadership" offers a viable alternative to the heroic leadership paradigm which for all intents and purposes seems to have outlived its period of usefulness in a democratic South Africa (Hamza & Jamil, 2019). However, Williams (2011:191) asserts that, "although the political environment in South Africa has been set for the adoption of a distributed leadership approach to school leadership, this vision has not been actualised to the full".

In the background of the discussion above, it can be said that, although the concept of distributed leadership has been around for quite some time (Gronn, 2002) both in Africa and beyond, the nature and practice of distributed leadership in the secondary schools in South African has not been fully explored. What is understood is that distributed leadership, as an alternative to the traditional heroic approach to educational leadership, has a great potential to improve schools' academic capacity by increasing both social and human capitals (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). Secondly, it is also understood that distributed leadership is a context based and dynamic process which is grounded on promoting synergistic interactions among the leader, subordinates, and situations (Spillane, 2005) in a school system. The present study on the nature and practices of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools in South Africa sought to close the identified gap. It also sought to explore the measures that may be taken to ensure that school leadership in general, and specifically distributed leadership, become more effective and responsive to the needs of the community. This is given the possibilities and promises of distributed leadership as outlined in this section on the background to the study.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The background to the study presented above has shown that distributed leadership is increasingly becoming a popular topic in academic research and school leadership practice internationally (Timperley, 2005; Harris & Spillane, 2008; Harris, 2011; Jambo & Hongde, 2020; Tariq, 2022). Distributed leadership is of interest to policy makers, educational researchers and practitioners as a result of its potential to improve schools' academic capacity through its effect on both social and human capitals (Dimmock 2012; Heck & Hallinger, 2009). Specifically, the background to the study points to a positive relation between distributed leadership, teachers' job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and organisational citizenship behaviours in an education system that has embraced this approach to leadership (Spillane & Diamond, 2007; Heck & Hallinger 2009; Samancioglu et al., 2020; Tariq, 2022). As an approach to school leadership, distributed leadership is well placed to replace the traditional heroic leadership approach which, researchers and practitioners' alike view as inappropriate and inadequate to dealing with the increasing complexities involved in present day education systems globally (Alshehri, 2022; Hallinger, 2011; Gumus et al., 2016; Hulpia et al., 2009).

However, perspectives of distributed leadership seem to vary in both space and time (Hickey et al., 2022; Liu, 2020). In some contexts, distributed leadership is viewed to be synonymous with such related terms as collaborative leadership and democratic leadership (Shava & Tlou, 2018; Bilal et al., 2019; Al-Ghanem et al., 2020; Alfadala et al., 2021). In other situations it is viewed as a self-contained concept which is characterised by shared leadership practices (Spillane, 2005). However, it is not clearly understood how distributed leadership is constructed and understood in the secondary schools in South Africa (Grant, 2017). In addition, an understanding of what distributed leadership ought to be, vis-à-vis related practices such as shared leadership, collaborative leadership and democratic leadership is believed to have practical implications on school leadership practice internationally. This study on the nature and practice of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools in South Africa therefore sought to bridge the identified gap. Specifically, it is assumed that if the findings of the present study, are embraced either at school, district and/or national level have the potential to make distributed leadership,

both in South Africa and beyond, more effective and responsive to the needs of schools and education systems in a complex and dynamic school leadership environment such as prevailing in the present situation today.

1.4 The Role of the Researcher

By way of reflexivity (Woods, 2019), it can be said that, as a researcher, my personal perspective of educational leadership in the present study was shaped in part by my lived experiences (Welford et al., 2011; Lincoln et al., 2011) as a member of the community and my career in education at various levels in the field. I graduated from the University of Limpopo with a bachelor's degree in secondary school teaching, and subsequently received a post-secondary level 1 (PL1) educator appointment. For eleven years, that is, from 1992 to 2002, I was employed as a teacher at Hudson Ntsanwisi Secondary School. I was also elected to coordinate school-based structures in a number of capacities during my career as a teacher.

As a result of my motivation to contribute to humanity, I also assumed leadership roles in different capacities within the teaching profession and the community at large. At some point, I worked as the president of the School Christian Organisation (SCO), chairperson of the Matric Farewell and Beauty Pageant Committee, chairperson of the Cleaning Committee, Site Gender Convener of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), and Secretary for the School Governing Board (SGB). All these roles enabled me to understand better the significance of stakeholders' participation in all activities that affect them as human beings. My advancement to the position of Deputy Principal at Lwandlamuni Secondary School particularly enabled me to experience and to appreciate some of the challenges and possibilities associated with educational leadership practice in the South African context.

This understanding was further strengthened when I was promoted to the position of Principal at Masungulo-2 Primary School after three years of service at Lwandlamuni secondary school. Ensuring that work responsibilities are shared fairly among the various

stakeholders is one of most important duties of principals in South Africa (DBE, 2016: 33). As a principal, I was therefore responsible for fair assignment of workloads to staff members. Undoubtedly, these assignments carried with them leadership responsibilities, some of which demanded that incumbents be involved in some shared or collaborative leadership activities, albeit, outside the realm self-contained distributed leadership perspectives. However, this experience made me hungry and thirsty for a deeper understanding of the nature and practice of distributed leadership in secondary schools in South Africa. Regardless of my lived experiences (Welford et al., 2011; Lincoln et al., 2011) as outlined in this section, I made a conscious effort in the prevailing situation to prevent the current study from being polluted by my personal biases. This effort ensured that the findings in this study on the nature and practice of distributed leadership are both valid and reliable as humanly as possible.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the problem statement described above, the following two categories of research questions were framed to guide this investigation:

1.5.1 Primary research question

The study sought to provide answers to the central question: *What is the nature of distributed leadership practice in selected secondary schools in the Limpopo province of South Africa and how does it shape teaching and learning?*

1.5.2 Secondary research questions

In exploring the nature of distributed leadership practice in selected secondary schools in the research area and how this practice shape teaching and learning, the study was guided by the following sub-questions:

- *How is distributed leadership understood and practised in selected secondary schools, in the Limpopo Province of South Africa?*
- *In what ways do the practices of distributed leadership in the selected secondary schools shape teaching and learning?*

- *How can the practice of distributed leadership within the selected secondary schools be described and explained?*

1.6 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study was designed to achieve the following aims and objectives:

1.6.1 Aim of the study

The study aimed to explore the nature of distributed leadership practice in selected secondary schools drawn from two districts in the Limpopo Province of South Africa; and to investigate how this influences teaching and learning in these schools.

1.6.2 Objectives of the study

The study was designed to achieve the following objectives:

- To explore how distributed leadership is understood and practised in selected secondary schools, in the Limpopo Province of South Africa.
- To examine how distributed leadership is practised in those selected secondary schools.
- To assess and explain the influence of distributed leadership practice on teaching and learning in the selected secondary schools.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This study on the nature and practice of distributed leadership in South Africa was framed by the distributed leadership theory (Spillane, 2001) and the stakeholder theory (Freeman et al., 2021). Internationally, the stakeholder theory emerged in the 1980s as a response to the growing dynamism and complexity of the environment in which organizations operate. In South Africa, the stakeholder theory gained grounding beginning 1994 when the country gained independence from apartheid rule. In its evolution, stakeholder theory has pointed out different questions for the strategic management of organizations such as how to identify and prioritize stakeholders, how to understand their interests and demands, how to balance the relationships among various stakeholders and how to engage stakeholders in organizational activities (Sulkowski et al., 2018). In this approach,

all the individuals or groups that have a stake in the organization are considered in the strategic management and strategic activities of the organisation. Specifically, organization and for the purpose of this study, schools systems that have embraced a stakeholder approach are managed with the purpose of creating value for customers, suppliers, owners, employees and local communities (Freeman et al., 2020). According to Langrafe et al., (2020) citing earlier work by Stoner and Freeman (1999), stakeholders can be classified into the following two categories: internal and external. The internal stakeholders are those who act within the organization such as owners and employees. The external stakeholders are those that interact directly with the organization such as customers and suppliers. In this study both stakeholders are considered important.

According to Spillane (2005) and Spillane et al. (2004), distributed leadership is a form of educational leadership theory that sees effective leadership as inherently distributed over key educational stakeholders such as positional leaders, followers, and the school's environment or setting. Botha and Triegaardt (2016), citing earlier work from Spillane (2012), define distributed leadership as "... the process of leadership which incorporates collaborative relationships that lead to collective action founded in the shared values of individuals who work together to affect positive change". According to Gronn (2008; 445), in distributed leadership, "it is not only the leadership of principals that matters, but also the leadership roles performed by vice principals, substantives, support staff, members of school councils, governing bodies, classroom teachers, and learners". This type of thinking separates distributed leadership from related leadership practices such as shared leadership and collaborative leadership which focus on positional leaders. Unlike these related approaches to school leadership, distributed leadership theory focuses on leaders, followers and the situation. Spillane et al. (2001) identify the collaborative nature of distributed leadership as an approach to school leadership. Hickey et al. (2022) assert that the concept distributed leadership is generally taken to denote a type of leadership that encompasses activities of several stakeholders, either as individuals and/or as groups. The key here is stakeholders.

In this study, distributed leadership is used as a theoretical framework because it structures leadership practice as an artefact of communications among stakeholders in a schools system, that is, leaders, followers, and their settings. It acknowledges that stakeholders in a school system can transition between leadership roles regardless of the positions they hold (Spillane et al., 2001; 2004). This arrangement inculcates stakeholders, including teachers, a feeling of organisational citizenship in the schools to which they belong, which in turn promotes a shared vision and cooperation towards shared school goals.

Distributed leadership also promotes parental engagement (Hlanga et al., 2021; Mwelu & Gcelu, 2022). In a world economy that is becoming increasingly integrated and interdependent, the relationship between society and public organisations, including schools, is increasingly becoming more complex (Lawrence et al., 2010). Given this situation, school authority should learn to make strong leadership decisions with a better understanding of corporate ethics, sustainability, and stakeholder management from a strong managerial and leadership perspective (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2014). It is assumed that a stakeholder perspective to educational leadership, enmeshed with the distributed leadership perspective, is capable of creating a school leadership context that fits the demands imposed on present day schools by the dynamic environment in which they are operating. These issues are further discussed in Chapter 2 of this study on the nature and practice of distributed leadership in secondary schools in South Africa.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study may be significant to a number of stakeholders involved in the education sector, comprising the Department of Basic Education (DBE), researchers, teachers, School Management Teams (SMTs), classroom teachers, School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and Learner Representative Councils (LRC). At various levels of the DBE, namely at the national level, provincial level, district level, and circuit level, the findings of this study may be used to inform policy formulation, policy implementation and for evaluation and monitoring progress towards implementation of educational policies. In addition, policy makers may use the distributed leadership model, informed by this study, as a framework for promoting democratic schools. Other stakeholders, such as SMTs,

SGBs, LRC, parents and teachers, may benefit in the sense that the democratic leadership environment created by distributed leadership approaches, if fully adopted in secondary schools in South Africa, may improve stakeholder engagement and participation in issues involving them.

The findings of this study may also help internal stakeholders such principals, school management teams, school governing bodies, representative councils of learners, and teachers with the distributed leadership information and skills they need to use to improve learning outcomes in their respective schools. This is in line with affirmations by Harris (2005) who avers that distributed framework provides practitioners with a collection of diagnostic and design tools that can help them step back and consider how and in what capacity leadership is spread in their school. On the part of the researcher, the current study may also assist to develop leadership skills that may possibly help me to become a consultant in the area of distributed leadership in addition to helping develop my expertise in carrying out day-to-day leadership responsibilities more effectively. Finally, the findings of the present study may also inform future research on the distributed leadership both in South Africa and beyond.

1.9 Research Methodology

This section summarises the research methodology that was used to collect, analyse and present data needed to answer the research question upon which the current study on the nature and practice of distributed leadership in secondary schools in South Africa is grounded. Specifically, the study employed a qualitative research approach, a constructivist research paradigm and what Yin (2009) defines as a multiple case studies research design. The qualitative approach was used because it was seen to have the potential to help the researcher to collect rich data about the issues at stake in the study. Specifically, the qualitative approach enabled the researcher to collect data about the lived experiences of educational stakeholders about the practice of distributed leadership and the meanings people attach to distributed leadership practice (Punch & Oancea, 2014:218).

Using semi-structured interviews, data were collected from the multiple cases that participated in the study. The cases comprised five secondary schools, four educational circuits and two districts that were purposefully sampled to participate in the study. Research participants comprised principals from the five schools, circuit managers and district officials. In total, the participants for this study were 14. Data on the effects of distributed leadership on teaching and learning in the chosen secondary schools, circuits and districts were also gathered using non-participant observation techniques. The details of the research methodology, including the data collection, analysis and presentation procedures adopted are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

1.10 Grounding Assumptions

In order to understand the nature and practice of distributed leadership in any given school system, one needs to carry out a study that cuts across the entire education system of interest and not to be confined by physical boundaries of schools.

A study involving school principals, circuit officials and district officials can provide information that may enable one to understand the nature and practice of distributed leadership in a school system of interest.

Attainment of independence and the subsequent dismantling of the apartheid system of governance has brought with it a number of changes in the way public institutions in South Africa, including in education, as the country sought to embrace international best standards, social justice, democracy and growth with equity (Karlsson, et al., 2020).

All stakeholders in the education system in South Africa, from school level through the circuit level, have functional knowledge of distributed leadership, at least in the perspective of how it [distributed leadership] is understood and practised in their particular context. Whilst this knowledge may not be academic or correct from a scholarly perspective, it has serious ramifications on practice in by educational stakeholders involved in the education system involved.

1.11 Clarification of Concepts

This section explains the important concepts that were used frequently in this study. Understanding the many settings in which the terms are employed was made possible through explication of the concepts by both the researcher and readers.

1.11.1 Leadership

Spillane (2015:280) defines leadership as "activities tied to the core work of an organisation that is designed to influence the motivation, knowledge, affect, or practice of organisational members or that are understood by organisational members as intended to influence their motivation, knowledge, affect, or practice". Bolden (2004: 5) defines leadership as "an ideology that includes organisational, social and personal processes". Furthermore, Bolden (2004) highlights that leadership has nothing to do with "seniority or the position of an individual in an organisation or company". Bolden (2004) rather believes leadership depends on the process of influence, where individuals are inspired to work towards certain goals. Leadership should therefore not be done through coercion, but through personal motivation. Northouse (2010: 3) defines leadership as the "autonomy of influence". Northouse (2010) believes in the notion that leadership is the process that "influences a single person or a group of people to achieve a common goal". The same definition of leadership is used in this study.

1.11.2 Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership is defined by Hulpia and Devos (2010a), and Ali and Yangaiya (2015:74) as "the sharing of leadership functions among the leadership teams, which is a group of people within the organisation having leadership positions". In a similar vein, Humphreys (2010) characterises distributed leadership as being based on the division of the school's administrative and educational activities and responsibilities among all of its staff members. The core tenet of distributed leadership notion is that leadership responsibilities should not be concentrated in the hands of a single person but rather distributed among a group of people within a company or team (Mayrowetz, 2008). Timperley (2005, 412) defines distributed leadership as a practice of leadership that

mobilise expertise at all levels in the school in order to generate opportunities for change. By linking distributed leadership with the division of management and leadership responsibilities among the numerous members of a school, the researcher followed the same stance as the scholars stated above.

1.11.3 Educator

According to the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996:4), an educator is "any person, except one who is appointed to perform exclusively extracurricular duties, who teaches, educates, or trains other persons, or who provides professional educational services, including professional therapy and educational psychological services at a school". According to Article 1 of UU No. 16 (2005) on teachers and lecturers, "a teacher is a professional educator whose primary responsibility is to educate, teach, guide, direct, train, assess, and evaluate learners in formal education, in elementary education, and secondary education".

Nolen (1994: 6) defines the educator as an individual that has an occupation to instruct. In addition, Nolen (1994) believes in the notion that an educator is able to transform the learning environment so that the environment is conducive to teaching and learning. Furthermore, Nolen (1994) points out that those educators ought to understand the different perspectives that should be part of the teaching and learning. In this study, the terms 'educator' and 'teacher' are used interchangeably when referring to someone who works in education.

1.11.4 Teacher leadership

Teacher leadership, according to Wasley (1991: 23) and also echoed by Wang and Ho (2020) is "the capacity to inspire colleagues to change, to undertake things they typically wouldn't contemplate without the influence of the leader". Similarly, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001: 17) state that teacher leaders "lead within and outside the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and inspire others towards enhanced educational practice". Boles and Troen (1994: 11) define

teacher leadership as a type of "collective leadership in which instructors gain competence by working cooperatively"; and contrast it to conventional concepts of leadership (Harris, 2003). Teacher leadership is not always about having control; rather, it is about teachers expanding their influence outside of the classroom by looking for new challenges and opportunities for personal development (Cosenza, 2015).

1.11.5 Learner

The term 'learner' refers, in provisions of the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996:5), to "any person receiving education or required to acquire education in accordance with this Act". According to Lansdown (2005), a learner is defined as an individual that is learning a subject or a skill. Lansdown (2005) attests to the fact that a learner acquires knowledge and skills through an educator. Martin (2022) defines a learner as someone who learns and is very creative and able to do something. Similarly, Reeves (2000, 34) defines a learner as someone who is willing to learn something new. Reeves (2000) believes in the notion that a learner always seeks to learn and acquire knowledge. In this inquiry, the terms 'learner' and 'student' are used synonymously in the context of schools.

1.11.6 Principal

A principal in a school is someone who oversees all staff members, including teachers, support workers, and any other employees. The smooth operation of the school is the principal's responsibility, and hence compliance with all DBE statutory frameworks is anticipated. To foster a favourable environment for learning and teaching, the principal is also in charge of distributing the workload among all school personnel (DBE 2016). Pounder and Merrill (2001, 35) views the principal as the individual that makes the final decision for the school. Pounder and Merrill (2001) regard the principal as one accountable for the failures and success of the school. The principal has to plan, lead and control the human resources and all activities. Bryant (1998, 8) defines a principal as one that has authority. Furthermore, Bryant (1998) states that a principal is concerned with helping every staff member of the school. A principal is the controller and organiser of resources and shares responsibilities with the staff members. In this study, the terms 'principal' and 'head of institution' are used synonymously in reference to a school setting.

1.11.7 School Management Team (SMT)

Herman (2016:9) defines the term 'school management team' (SMT) as "a collection of people in a school that help make choices and are a key element of leading instructional improvement projects". The principal, one or more deputies, and the department head who oversees and supports the core curriculum and extracurricular activities, were included among the SMTs under examination in this case. Additionally, SMTs encourage school-based projects to raise student achievement, empower and develop their subordinates (DBE. 1998). Lemmer and Badenhorst (1997, 343) believe in the ideology that school management teams are responsible for the school. Therefore, they define school management teams as a practical operation that has introduced change within the school. The school management teams also inspire and encourage school rejuvenation.

1.11.8 Teaching and Learning

The concept of teaching and learning (teaching/learning) in the present study is not used to refer to the process or act by which learners through the guidance and facilitation by teachers acquire academic skills and knowledge that prepare them for formal employment only. Instead, the concept learning, in particular is used to refer to the process or act of acquiring knowledge, skills and attitude that enables beneficiaries to fit into the communities to which they belong and be able to participate in it fully as healthy and productive adults. Such adults should be able to fend for their own families and be able to live in harmony with other people who may be different from them. Teaching is therefore the process which make learning possible and therefore the two concepts, from a secondary school perspective may not be separated, thereby making the concept teaching and learning or teaching/learning a compound word. Learning is therefore seen to be holistic and the skills acquired are both psycho-social and academic.

1.12 Delimitations of the Study

This investigation on the nature and practice of distributed leadership and how it influences teaching and learning was restricted to selected secondary schools, four

circuits and two districts drawn from the Limpopo Province of South Africa. The Limpopo Province was chosen to participate in this study because it was assumed to be typical of any other province in the country. As a result, it was assumed that the findings from this study may comprise a plausible basis for understanding the situation in greater South Africa. Any other school or educational circuit that is outside the Limpopo Province of South Africa and the selected districts was considered to be outside the scope of the study. The sample comprised fourteen participants, made up of five district officials, four circuit managers, and five principals. These participants were selected from the two districts that were drawn from the Limpopo Province to directly participate in the study.

1.13 Limitations of the Study

This section describes five major limitations that the current research was subject to. First, there was a restriction due to the type and quintile group of the sampled schools. Only five public secondary schools in the third quintile in the province of Limpopo were included in this study. The NNSSF classifies quintile 1 to 3 schools as "no fee" schools since they provide services to the nation's impoverished inhabitants (DBE, 2004:5) In a province with 1370 quintile 1 to 5 public and independent secondary schools, the choice of only five quintile 3 public secondary schools was a drawback. As a result, only schools with a similar background can apply the study's conclusions generally.

Second, only five school principals in those secondary schools were interviewed, ignoring other crucial stakeholders (SGBs, teachers, and RCLs) also involved in running and leading schools and who either directly or indirectly were impacted by the characteristics of distributed leadership practice and how it affects teaching and learning.

Thirdly, this study also had its limits because it was restricted to the two educational districts in Limpopo Province only. The province of Limpopo has 141 circuits and 10 educational districts. Given the tiny sample size, generalisation to the full population may be suspect (Harry & Lipsky, 2014). However, using a variety of data collection techniques (including document analysis and field observations) ensured the validity and dependability of the research findings (Creswell, 2014:251).

Fourthly, because the researcher was the circuit manager in one of the districts in the Limpopo Province, study risked to be value-laden and to be biased by some kind of preconceived conceptions or personal locus. However, as a researcher, made a conscious effort to avoid my study being polluted by personal bias or prejudice. In order to avoid biases, I also gathered and examined, thick data which may have influenced the validity of research findings in a positive way. I also intentionally chose to use a variety of data sources and confirmed responses across the data examination and explication periods to mitigate this bias (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Finally, effort was also made to motivate participants to be completely honest in their views and comments. I also used numerous data sources and analysis methodologies to get high-quality results in accordance with Bryman and Bryman's (2015) advice. The details for the methodology employed in the present study are given in Chapter 3.

1.14 Outline and Structure of the Thesis

Figure 3 provides a brief synopsis of the outline and structure of the thesis.

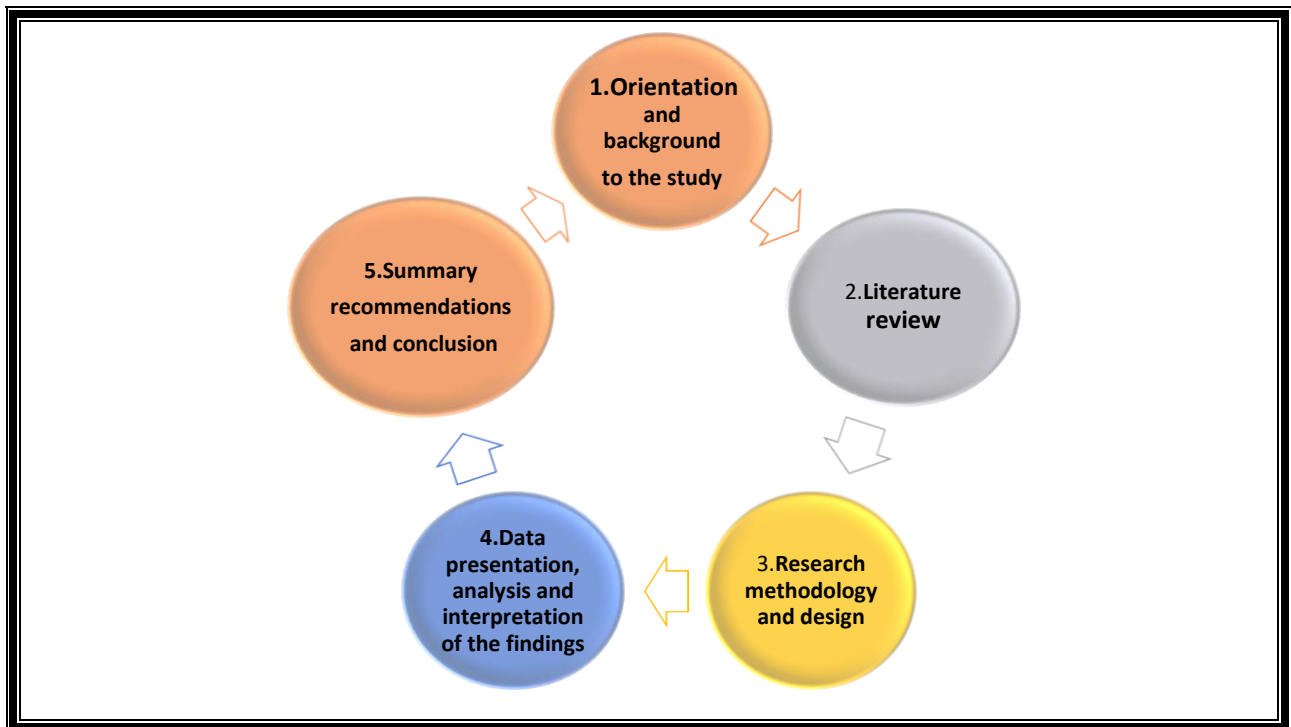


Figure 1.1: Diagrammatic outline and structure of the five chapters of the thesis

Below is a summary of the focus of each chapter.

Chapter 1: Orientation and layout of the study

Chapter 1 provides the orientation and background to the study. This chapter also outlines the problem statement, research questions, aims, and objectives of the study, and the significance of the study. It also addresses the ethical considerations taken into account in this study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The literature review is presented and described in Chapter 2. This chapter also highlights the conceptual framework of the study as well as the review of primary and secondary sources on the nature and practice of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools in South Africa. The literature sources include the latest monographs, dissertations, theses, and journal articles on distributed leadership practices.

Chapter 3: Research methodology and design

Chapter 3 presents and describes the research methodology and design employed in the study. This section outlines data collection instruments as well as the justification thereof. Strategies utilised to interpret the findings are also delineated.

Chapter 4: Data presentation analysis and interpretation

Chapter 4 focuses on the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the qualitative research findings based on the primary and secondary research questions. In this chapter, codes, themes, and categories are used to present and clarify the data. The data are presented employing charts, tables, and quotes and include the non-verbal statements observed during the interviews and school observations.

Chapter 5: Summary, recommendations, and conclusion

This chapter provides a synopsis of the study findings, contributions, and limitations of the study, and provides recommendations for the implementation of distributed leadership practices based on the findings and analysis.

1.15 Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the introduction of the study. This chapter also defined the primary and secondary research questions, as well as the purposes and objectives of the study, based on the research topic. In addition, the conceptual framework, importance of the study, research technique and design, definition of terms, ethical considerations, and research structure were all discussed in this chapter. The next chapter focuses on the review of the literature related to the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 presented the orientation and background to the study, wherein the research questions, aims, and objectives of the study were highlighted. The distributed perspective to leadership and the stakeholder theory as a framework for the study, together with the significance and grounding assumptions of the study, were also defined and discussed. The present chapter focuses on a review of the literature related to the study. The literature for this study was reviewed in light of the three sub-questions upon which this basic study is grounded. Special attention has also been focused on exposing the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guide them. The objective of reviewing literature in this study is to advance an understanding of the debates and research that have already been conducted on the nature and practice of distributed leadership across the globe, including in the secondary schools in South Africa. The main objective of this chapter is to specifically identify and describe any gaps in knowledge on the nature and practice of distributed leadership in the secondary schools in South Africa that may need to be addressed by ways of research findings from studies such as the one in hand.

2.2 Clarifying the Conceptual Framework for the Study

Jabareen (2009: 51) defines the term conceptual framework to mean “a network or ‘a plane’ of interlinked concepts that together provides a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena” in a study. The present study is framed by Spillane’s model of distributed leadership (Spillane et al., 2001). According to Spillane et al. (2001) as cited in this section, the distributed leadership perspective recognises that schools are characterised by multiple leaders and that leadership activities in these situations are widely shared between and/or among stakeholders within the various structures comprising the system. Figure 2.1 summarises the main tenets of the distributed leadership perspective as viewed by Spillane et al. (2001).

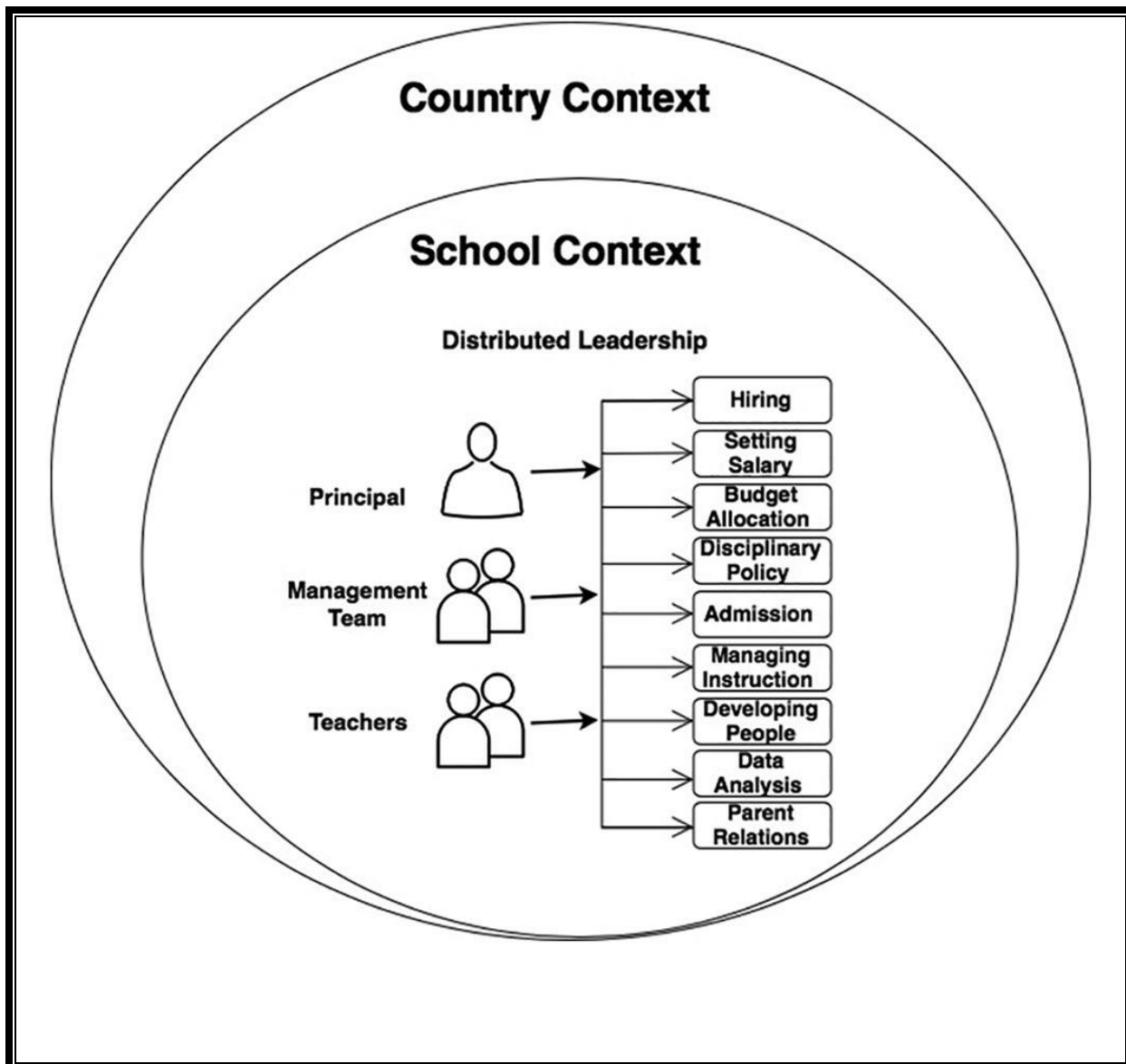


Figure 2.1: Distributed leadership conceptual framework

(Source: Liu, 2020:12 as cited in Spillane et al. (2001).

As shown in Figure 2.1 above, Spillane’s distributed leadership model comprises two major components, namely multiple leaders and their school leadership environment. In the perspective of distributed leadership by Spillane et al. (2001), the term leader is not restricted to positional leaders such as the school principal and school management teams only. Instead, the term also includes teachers. It is on this basis that Spillane (2015) sees distributed models of leadership to be focussing upon interactions, rather than the

actions of those who are officially designated as leaders. In the same vein, Spillane et al. (2001:24) sees distributed leadership as:

“... a form of collective agency, incorporating the activities of many individuals in an organisation. They work at mobilising and guiding other functionaries in the process of instrumental change in which this form of leadership is constituted as the interaction among multiple leaders, as well as followers, using particular to”

Literature as reviewed above shows that the distributed leadership model views leadership activities as comprising leaders’ interactions with their followers at various levels, as they work towards a predetermined goal within a specific school leadership context. The models locate and analyse leadership practices within a networked web of people and circumstances by drawing on activity theory and distributed cognition as further shown in Figure 2.2 below.

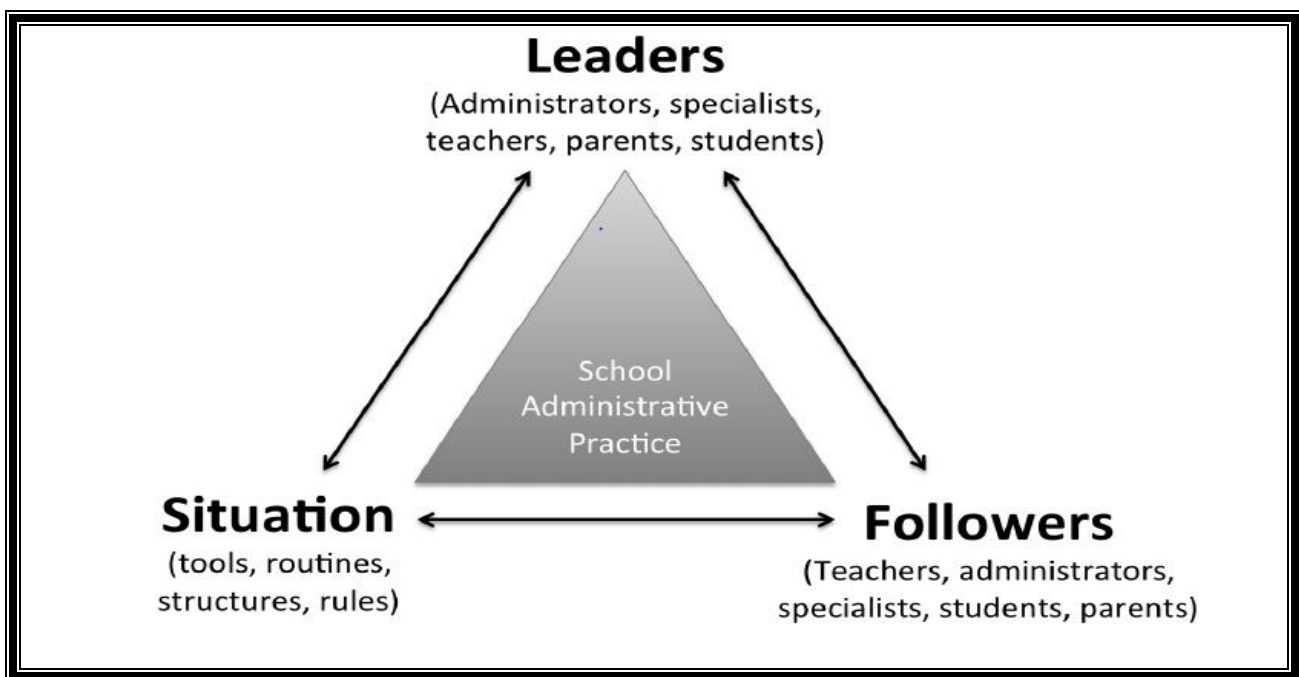


Figure 2.2: A Flow of Leadership influence and authority under a distributed perspective

(Source: Spillane et al., 2015:281)

Figure 2.2 above shows the direction of flow of authority and influence under conditions of distributed leadership. Specifically, it shows the level of collaboration between officially designated school leaders and their followers within the school context. In the conventional sense, all personnel such as teachers who report to officially designated leaders are considered followers. Such followers have a single obligation, that is, follow behind the officially designated leaders who singularly should lead the way towards the realisation of school goals. Contrary to the situation described in this section, distributed leadership practices result in collaboration among school stakeholders (Spillane, et al., Healy 2008) at various levels of the school system.

In other words, Spillane et al. (2001)'s distributed leadership theory which frames the present study on the nature and practices of distributed leadership in the secondary schools in South Africa, shifts the emphasis of school leadership from the school's principal, who normally serves as the school's sole leader, to the network of stakeholders who interact with each other in the process of instituting leadership tasks and responsibilities within a specific school leadership environment (Spillane & Diamond, 2007). In this South African system, the network of stakeholders, unlike is the situation presented in the diagrams above also include external stakeholders such as traditional leaders. This reality has made me as a researcher to adopt a theoretical framework which embraces the two theories of distributed leadership and stakeholder theory which also informs the conceptual framework for the study. This environment is seen to shape the nature and practice of school leadership activities that are realised in the schools in question, especially in a South African setting. The result should be on leadership behaviour, which "is spread among leaders, followers, and the setting or context of the school" (Spillane et al., 2004:10). This also enables followers with useful knowledge and skills to emerge as situational leaders who may be followed within the school system. It is due to this type of thinking that this study is framed.

2.3 Historical Antecedents of Distributed Leadership Thought and Practice

It will be recalled from Chapter 1 of this study (see section 1.1) that the ideas relating to distributed leadership have their roots in ancient times (Oduro, 2004). However, the

modern notion of distributed leadership which views this type of leadership as a network of leadership activities and interactions that stretch across individuals and situations (Spillane et al., 2001; Spillane, 2004; Spillane 2005; Spillane & Diamond, 2007; Du Plessis & Heystek 2020; Tariq, 2022; Hickey et al., 2022) did not emerge until the late 1990s and early 2000s (Harris, 2008). This view is also supported by Bolden (2011: 252) who contends that, whilst distributed leadership is increasingly becoming widely adopted, with a lot of promise, by academics and leadership professionals across the social divide, this idea has far older roots than imagined by many. However, at each stage and context, a different name and extent of leadership distribution may have been adopted. Clearly, members of the academic community seem to agree that the ideas of distributed leadership comprise one of the most ancient leadership principles designed to facilitate completion of organisational goals through people, even this may be new in the context of education, particularly in the newly independent countries such as South Africa.

According to Oduro (2004), leadership styles that show some evidence of distributed practice can be traced dating back to as far as 1250 BC. However, it is beyond doubt that this ancient version of leadership practices, even though manifesting some of the key tenets of distributed leadership as it is known today, may not be seen to strictly resemble distributed leadership as conceptualised and practised today internationally, including in South Africa. These variations may be explained in terms of the varying contexts in which school leadership is practised. Harris (2008) thus says that the modern understanding of distributed leadership, which views school leadership as a network of leadership activities and interactions that stretch across individuals and situations, did not emerge until the late 1990s and early 2000s. Harris (2008) as also shared by Bolden (2011) reaffirms that the concept distributed leadership as we know it today has only been a popular concept beginning in the mid-20s, and not earlier. Clearly, literature reviewed in this section suggests that, although practices that resembles distributed leadership as it is known today have been in existence for a long time, there has been, in recent years, increased efforts by school systems internationally to embrace distributed approaches to school leadership. This invigorated perspective has prompted Bush (2013) to view the distributed

leadership model as the leadership model for the 21st century and is a cause for scholars and practitioners to seek a deeper understanding of this school leadership approach.

According to Harris et al., (2007), an Australian psychologist named Gibb (1968) coined the phrase “distributed leadership”, referring to shared leadership styles as opposed to leadership styles that are centred on one venerable individual. The latter has been associated with what has come to be referred to as heroic leadership styles (Bush, 2020), whilst distributed leadership has come to be viewed as a post-heroic approach to school leadership (Bilal et al., 2019).

According to Gibb (1968), school leadership, for example, is a responsibility that should be shared by all employees of an organisation, including those sweeping the floors, and not just one individual (Gibb, as cited in Gronn, 2000:324), that is, the heroic leader. Gibb (2011) further points out that, followers who are properly motivated frequently initiate leadership behaviours that are good for all members of the organisation whenever the situation presents itself. Gibbs (2011) concurs with Gibb (1968:206) who earlier on asserted that “distributed leadership epitomises many of the attributes of the followers, and the relationship between the leader and follower is often so similar that it is impossible to tell who influences whom and to what degree”. Goksoy (2015) also shares a similar view, stating that it is conventional for most people who think about leadership from a distributed leadership perspective to associate leadership with groups and teams, rather than the assumption that one person can completely reform an organisation. In the distributed approach to organisational leadership, both executives (officially designated leaders) and employees (followers) within the organisation are gradually coming around to the idea of shared leadership, or collaborative leadership.

In the context of education, distributed leadership refers to the teachers’ acceptance of a shared set of leadership responsibilities in the classroom. It is from this background that Harris (2004) asserts that leadership is a responsibility for all teachers in a school system that should be shared and therefore exercised by all teachers in a school rather than by just one person at the top. The concept teacher is here used to all educators. Gronn

(2002) also shares the same view, and further avers that distributed leadership is the only form of leadership that works well in schools since it enables participation at all levels of educators and that, a school with multiple leaders is more productive than one with only one, that is the school principal. It is should be for this reason that the South African education system introduced the concept of school management teams (SMTs) (Luhailima and Mulovhedzi, 2021), that is, both democracy and delivery (Hargreaves & Fink, 2009). It is however not clearly understood how these twin objectives are being achieved in the secondary schools in South Africa. For this reason the present study which explores the nature and practice of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools in the Limpopo province and how this influences teaching and learning is seen to be very well placed and relevant.

Clearly, literature reviewed above shows that the distributed leadership perspective has developed over a long period although there has been renewed energy in recent years for schools to embrace this distributed leadership approach. Through its developmental history, distributed leadership seems to have assumed, in one way or the other, different names and different mixes of authority levels. The aim of distributed leadership is to decentre the figure of the leader. Some of the terms that have emerged to describe some of these leadership types are collaborative leadership, shared leadership and teacher leadership (Cosenza, 2015). All these versions of what may be viewed as distributed leadership hold in common the view that any person, regardless of rank, may serve as a leader in some capacity, and may possess leadership capacity. The level of distribution of authority to lead however varies across different contexts of “distributed leadership’ practice. As literature seems to suggest, Spillane et al., (2001) has given one of the most comprehensive and inclusive models of distributed leadership in education. Distributed leadership in a school setting, according to Spillane et al. (2001), aims to involve all educators in leadership activities to enhance classroom instruction, with the objective of increasing higher learner attainment. The key here is in involving all educators and not a single group such as members of the school management team (SMT) or teachers only.

Given the variations in the contexts and leadership types that may be seen to have some elements of distributed or shared leadership styles as given above, the nature of distributed leadership as practised in the secondary schools in South Africa is not fully understood. For this reason, the present study focuses on the nature and practice of distributed leadership in the secondary schools of South Africa and is informed by Spillane's (2001) model of distributed leadership, in order to close this gap.

2.4 Perspectives and Practices of Distributed Leadership

Literature reviewed in this chapter has illustrated that the notion of distributed leadership has a wide range of definitions and descriptions. Tahir et al. (2016), citing earlier work by Leithwood et al. (2007), affirms that there are various and sometimes conflicting, explanations for distributed leadership, given the various contexts in which education policies are designed and implemented. This view is supported by Sol (2021:73) who points out that distributed leadership is frequently described as situational leadership, team leadership, democratic leadership, or shared leadership by the many writers in the field of people leadership. However, Sol (2021) further advises that, these leadership philosophies should not be viewed to represent an alternate kind of distributed leadership. Tahir (2016) and Sol (2021), as cited above, seem to be in agreement with Harris (2008) who earlier on observed that any system that uses decentralised, collaborative, or shared leadership practices in a learning institution frequently practises various notions that describes main stream distributed leadership as may be understood today. The present study therefore sought to understand distributed leadership thought and practice from the perspective of educational stakeholders in South Africa, by focusing on selected secondary schools drawn from two districts in the Limpopo province.

The contextualised as opposed to the universalised view of distributed leadership as discussed in this section is also in line with Spillane et al. (2009) and Spillane (2013, 2016) who further acknowledge the existence of three distinct types of distributed leadership, namely coordinated, collective and collaborated distributed leadership. These three types of distributed leadership as is further explained below have one thing in common, that is, leadership is a shared and not an individual practice. The critical issue

here is that the distributed perspective of school leadership is grounded on people practices and situations (Spillane et al. 2001) and my analysis in the present study as further presented below, focuses on leadership practices, people and the context of the school leadership environment and not leadership practices alone.

2.4.1 Collective distributed leadership

According to Spillane et al. (2009), the first type and perhaps the pillar of distributed leadership is the collective leadership perspective. This approach to distributed leadership involves multiple people working on the same leadership assignment. Shava et al. (2021: 291), citing earlier work by Diamond and Spillane (2016), thus regard collective distributed leadership as an approach to educational leadership which “captures how [leadership] practice is stretched over two or more people who work separately and interdependently ...”, such as when using classroom instruction. The thinking behind this approach is that the practice of distributed control and influence is shaped by collective leadership effort. This idea is in line with Miller and Rowan’s definition of organic management, which encourages:

“A shift away from conventional, hierarchical patterns of bureaucratic control towards what has been referred to as a network pattern of control, that is, a pattern of control in which line employees are actively involved in organisational decision making [and] staff co-operation and collegiality supplant the hierarchy as a means of co-ordinating workflows and resolving technical difficulties” (Miller & Rowan, 2006:219-220).

Clearly, the excerpt above shows that collective distributed leadership is centred on a network pattern of control. People working together to accomplish a common goal comprise what O’Neill and Brinkerhoff (2018) define as collective leadership. Raelin (2018:5) defines “collective leadership as a co-construction of leadership by those involved in any undertaking”. In this approach to school leadership, people at various levels of the school system are inspired both within and externally to work cooperatively

to achieve a common objective when collective leadership is used. These individuals and groups put their talents, unique and sometimes tacit skills to good use in order to further the educational goals which they all share.

As a unit, school systems that embrace a collective approach to distributed leadership acknowledges that achieving long-term success is unlikely without a variety of contributions and perspectives (O'Neill & Brinkerhoff, 2018). In the process, people who embrace collective leadership develop ownership and organisational citizenship through genuinely committing to the organisation's vision, sharing responsibilities, taking accountability, and coming to collective decisions. The vision under this type of leadership is created with consultation at various levels of the organisation and therefore embraces everyone's input, and everyone is committed to making it a reality. Additionally, collaborative leadership is predicated on the idea that everyone has the potential to assume a leadership role. This potential is realised when people can trust one another, share power in an accountable manner, and communicate effectively and clearly.

The foundation of collective leadership is the recognition of people's abilities, perspectives, and talents to fulfil the goals of the organisation (Bolden et al., 2007). People develop their creativity through this kind of leadership. In a similar line, collective leadership is a technique that is reliant on how members of the system interact with one another. In contrast to the conventional leadership model, people behave differently when working in a collective leadership environment. Furthermore, sharing leadership responsibilities might result in an extraordinary performance.

According to Raelin (2018), organisational members are more likely to be motivated to participate in school activities when there is effective and co-operative leadership. In a workplace where employees have established a culture of taking ownership of the organisation's goals, the employees become increasingly motivated to work towards realisation of organisational goals that they also share. Whilst there are several benefits for collective leadership as described above, many writers have proffered fears that inhibit both researchers and practitioners from fully embracing and sustaining a

collective approach school leadership (Barad 2003; Raelin, 2016). Raelin (2018) further supports this view and proposes that embracing and sustaining collective leadership approach requires participants to keep an open mind in order to solicit every members' diverse viewpoints, primarily through constructive dialogue. According to Raelin (2018), such parties need to continually work to earn each other's trust and cohesion while fostering creativity and timeliness in order to create learning organisation.

According to Raelin (2018), one of the fears of collective leadership is that it uproots a potential need in most people. This is the need which was perhaps brought to light initially by Sigmund Freud in his conception of transference. In the view of this conception, people seek to repeat in an adult relationship what they expected from their parents during childhood (Maccoby, 2004; Raelin, 2018). The net effect of transference, if it is not resolved through maturation, for example, or if the need arise, through therapy is that many people, even in their adulthood, prefer the security of someone looking out for them, the way parents have been doing for them during the days of their childhood. This seems to have a long tradition both in Africa and beyond. In the Western thought, for example, Keith Grint (2010) refers in his Durkheimian reference to the "sacred" (Raelin, 2018). In such countries as ancient England, monarchs legitimated their rule over their territories, and even their mystique through their assumed connection with the Almighty God. Through this Divine right, they were accorded a high degree of distance and reverence in exchange for followers' obedience. In Africa, such reverence also manifests itself through traditional leadership systems and has undoubtedly been transfused in industry and commerce and other social institutions including in education.

The second reason for people's fear of the collective leadership approach to distributed leadership is the media-inspired mythology surrounding the "great man" theory of leadership (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). According to Benmira and Agboola (2021), the "great man" theory is a 19th century perspective to leadership that is still extant in the hearts and minds of many people and cultures and is influencing leadership thought and practice even up to this day. In line with this blatantly sexist theory, leadership is vested in the charisma, intelligence, and political actions of the 'great men' of history.

The result of this type of thinking has been a ‘romance of leadership’ in which leaders and followers collaborate to use the media to dramatize issues, manifest the formers’ sincerity, and build up the leader’s charisma in order to project a larger, more powerful, and more moral image than actual presence would imply (Raelin, 2018:8). In the Western world, including in America, collective leadership is also supported by cultural norms that sustain an individualistic mentality which Raelin (2018) defines as ‘rugged individualism’. The highest form of this political individualism, as it exists in America, holds that “every individual should be free to make his/her own decision decisions against collective obligations imposed on them by such social institutions as the state or even as ordained by religious morality” (Raelin, 2018:8).

In the perspective of individualism, characteristic of most countries of the Western world, collective leadership is viewed to be defiant of a range of power dynamics serving to keep those at the top in place. From a pure career perspective, for example, those who toiled to reach the seat of power are reluctant to give it up and pave way for collective approach to leadership. Some critics of collective leadership are concerned that group decision making (Bolden et al., 2007) is not only slower but less efficient since decision making may get bogged down by members wishing to have their private preferences take priority. For this reason, individual approaches based on the ‘great man’ are preferred.

It is needless to mention that individualism is anathema to the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*, which is grounded on collaboration and collective effort towards goals that society shares. It is however not clearly understood how this African philosophy has helped to buttress collective leadership initiatives in the secondary schools of South Africa. For this reason, the present study that focuses on the nature and practice of distributed leadership in the secondary schools in South Africa is very well placed. As literature shows, putting collective leadership into practice encourages stakeholders to share accountability, knowledge, and resources. The task at hand becomes lighter and simpler for the entire team when shared responsibility is practised (Leithwood, 2017).

2.4.2 Collaborated distribution

According to Spillane and Orlina (2005), collaborative leadership occurs when two or more leaders concur to co-operate and share responsibilities in a situation. Shava et al. (2021) (citing earlier work by Spillane & Diamond, 2007), supports this view when they say that “collaborative distribution occurs when two or more people work together in the same time and place on a particular activity, for example, facilitating a staff meeting” , or codirecting an event, such as a speech and prize giving day. In both cases, the facilitators and/or the directors would have equal authority to make decisions for the group and exact obedience. Another example is when a group of teachers from various subject areas cooperate to analyse student achievement after an assessment is complete. Under this system of distributed leadership, teachers can develop their leadership potential, skills, and talents when they collaborate and share tasks as leaders. In addition, collaboration among teachers improves classroom performance (Northouse, 2016).

Spillane (2009) refers to this type of collaborative leadership as reciprocal interdependency. According to Flint et al., (2018:18), the coordinated approach to distributed leadership presents possibilities for shared leadership, educator ownership, and exchange of instructional and pedagogical ideas. It is against this background that MacBeath et al. (2004) define distributed leadership to mean “the same as dispersed leadership, shared leadership, collaborative leadership and democratic leadership” (Triegaardt, 2013). Spillane (2015) also adds that distributing leadership to various stakeholders in the school system, that is, away from the ‘great man’, also conceptualises with delegated leadership, if viewed from the perspective of transfer of managerial authority, tasks and responsibilities. This observation also means that, strong collaborative leadership promotes teacher career advancement and boosts teacher retention when they feel more appreciated and a high sense of organisational citizenship. Through more possibilities for leadership and a sense of worth in the school community, effective collaborative leadership gives teachers the chance to enhance their practices.

2.4.3 Coordinated distribution

The concept of 'co-ordinated distribution' describes leadership practices formed by tasks that are completed sequentially for the leadership routine to be performed (Grenda 2011:31). Unlike is the case with collaborative distributed leadership where two or more people work together at the same time and place on a particular activity (Spillane & Diamond, 2007), with co-ordinated distribution, leaders can co-perform independently or together. Interdependence in this situation is sustained, because completion of any activity by a group of leaders or any individual leader within the group is a precondition for initiating the task or activity that follows. This reality means that the leadership process within a school is embedded in co-ordinated distributed practices as shaped by the interactions of leaders, followers, and the context of the school leadership environment (Spillane, 2006; Tanjung et al., 2021).

Running through the veins at arteries of distributed practices of leadership is the concept of heedfulness. Spillane (2015) defines the concept of 'heedfulness' as the "way in which a set of behaviours is performed". In other words, "groups act heedfully when they act carefully, intelligently, purposefully, and attentively" (Spillane, 2006:59). In the co-ordinated distributed leadership approach, unlike in the collaborative leadership approach, leaders at various levels of the organisation do not of necessity have to agree. Instead, at each level, they must all be attentive and alert to other leaders' actions (Spillane, 2006; Spillane et al., 2001). This execution of leadership responsibilities by two or more people in a specific order is referred to as coordinated distribution. According to Grant et al. (2010), the key idea of a co-ordinated dispersed leadership model is that many people participate in a variety of school activities and contribute to decision-making processes. Additionally, according to Singh (2014), several teachers possess high levels of competence and capacity. It is the job of an instructional leader to motivate these teachers to use their abilities effectively and efficiently for the benefit of the institution. It is against this background that Cosenza (2015) defines distributed leadership to comprise what has come to be viewed as teacher leadership.

This section focused on the three types of distributed leadership by Diamond and Spillane who have written extensively in the area of distributed leadership, namely collaborative distribution, collective distribution and co-ordinated distribution (Diamond & Spillane, 2016; Spillane & Diamond, 2007; Spillane, 2006). The common thread in all these variants of distributed leadership is that of shared leadership and therefore decentring school leadership from a heroic leader. The extent to which such distribution is practised in the selected secondary schools was not fully understood. The present study, therefore, sought in part to close this gap. The next section focuses on some of the benefits of embracing a distributed approach to school leadership.

2.4.4 The main ideas of a distributed approach to instructional leadership

It may need to be appreciated that, given its various conceptualisations as revealed by the different names used, for its variants, any one variant of the concept of distributed leadership may not need to be a manual for best practices in school leadership. However, it should be viewed as part of a framework that promotes a shared approach to school leadership, and may include such practices as teacher leadership (Triegaardt, 2014). Secondly, distributed leadership serves as a framework that stakeholders may use to enhance their procedures and results. In fact distributed leadership should be viewed as a framework which offers practical methods for including all parties involved in the management of a school. It also frees up the principal to concentrate on his or her leadership responsibilities in achieving the school's goals. According to Grant et al. (2010), the school principal has traditionally been having authority to single-handedly lead a school, but distributed leadership challenges this thinking. The focus in distributed leadership, which Bush (2013) regards as leadership of choice in the 21st century and Bilal et al. (2019) sees as a post-heroic leadership approach, is on participative management practices. Here, all parties collaborate in making decisions related to the running of their school, in some specific roles, whenever the need arises. Parties also collaborate on the implementation of such decisions.

It ought to be appreciated that the extent to which schools in South Africa and the general education system have embraced collaborative distribution of leadership is not fully

understood. In a research conducted in South Africa in recent years, Bush and Clover (2003) have shown that South African schools and the country's larger educational system still exhibit several bureaucratic characteristics. According to Moonsamy (2010), not much has changed in the South African schools since the end of apartheid in 1994. This is because schools have largely remained hierarchical, with the principal as the 'great man', continuing to make decisions and teachers remaining in the classroom. In this context, the notable features (Goksoy, 2015) that set distributed leadership apart from other forms of educational leadership are largely absent. Table 2.1 provides descriptions of the main idea of distributed leadership by different scholars.

Table 2.1: Descriptions of distributed leadership

Author and year	Description
Gibb 1954 Gronn 2002	It is a leadership approach used since the 1950s.
Chen et al. 2007	The focus of distributed leadership is on student achievement and progress towards development in teaching.
Harris 2005 Printy 2008	This perspective regards leadership as the shared contribution of all leaders to total leadership and distinguishes it from other theories.
Gibb 1954	Leadership cannot consist of only one person and; therefore, should be shared.
Elmore 2000	Creation of an environment that regards learning as the 'common good' is very important in distributed leadership.
Smylie, Lazarus & Conyers 1996	It is a participatory or cooperative decision-making process in which administrators, teachers, students, and parents also take part.
Elmore 2000	Distributed leadership is the guide and moderator of educational development.
Spillane, 2001; 2006	Distributing leadership among all the employees (educators) has a much larger effect than the individual efforts of all leaders in a school.
Kempster, Cope & Parry 2010	There is the belief that it is always better to distribute leadership among many individuals than to allow one leader to act alone.
Baloglu 2011	There is a positive relationship between the distribution of leadership and capacity development.
Korkmaz & Gunduz 2011	By respecting and accepting different expertise areas, distributed leadership makes all kinds of products the shared capital of the organisation, including the knowledge arising from the interactions.

(Source: Adapted from Goksoy 2016:299)

Table 2.1 above summarises the view that, distributed leadership as model of school leadership, can be viewed from multiple perspectives. The common thread among all these multiple views of the distributed leadership framework which Bilal et al. (2019) regard as a post-heroic approach to school leadership and Bush (2013) defines as a

model of first choice in the 21st century is its shared perspective to leadership and the shared goal of improving student learning. However, Harris and Spillane (2008) suggest that there are three key reasons for the present-day popularity of distributed leadership.

The first reason this popularity is that distributed leadership has normative power as it reflects present day changes in leadership thought and practices in schools. In the present wave of school leadership thought and practices, the traditional model of the singular, venerable leader is being replaced with a democratic approach to leadership that focuses upon teams instead of individuals. This modern approach to leadership also places emphasis upon teachers, support staff and learners as leaders (Harris, 2004).

As a democratic approach to school leadership, it has also been argued that the “term ‘distributed leadership’ also has representational power” (Harris & Spillane, 2008: 31). Specifically, distributed leadership represents alternative approaches to instructional leadership that have arisen due to increased stakeholder demands and pressures on schools to embrace participatory approaches to instructional leadership. For example, in America and most countries of the developed world, schools have restructured their leadership teams and created new roles to meet the needs of the constantly modernising workforce. As the schools are repositioning and redefining themselves, distributed, extended and shared leadership practices are becoming more prevalent. Wenger et al. (2002: 123) supports this view by saying that, “As schools engage with complex collaborative arrangements, distributed forms of leadership will be required to ‘cross multiple types of boundaries and to share ideas and insights’”. Clearly, this view shows that in an increasingly complex world of education typical of most education systems today, the work of leadership will require diverse types of expertise and systems of leadership that are flexible enough to meet new demands and dynamic challenges, including accountability expectations of stakeholders. Internationally, with South Africa not an exception, there is an increasing recognition that the old organisational structures in the public-school system is simply no longer germane to the requirements of learning in the twenty-first century. No wonder that Bush (2013) regards distributed leadership as the model of choice in the twenty-first century and Bilal et al. (2019) sees it as a post-

heroic leadership approach. The nature of distributed leadership in the secondary schools in South Africa, especially as it relates to people, practices and context is not fully understood, and therefore the present study is seen to be well placed and relevant.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, distributed leadership is seen to have empirical power (Harris & Spillane, 2008). Literature seems to point to increasing empirical evidence that “distributed leadership makes a positive difference to organisational outcomes, in particular, learner learning”. According to Diamond and Spillane (2015), whilst this evidence base is still fairly new, the messages from it are very consistent and encouraging (Harris & Spillane, 2008; Triegaardt, 2013). Harris et al. (2007) also supports this encouraging and consistency view in saying that there is an increasing number of studies that highlight a powerful relationship between distributed forms of leadership and positive organisational change. Leithwood et al. (2007) also submit that research in recent years has shown that the patterns of leadership distribution matter within a school and that distributed leadership practice is more likely to equate with improved learner performance and therefore school outcomes. In South Africa, studies on distributed leadership have also been increasing. The focus of these studies, such as by Williams (2011), Sibanda (2017), Grant (2017), Botha (2016), and Du Plessis and Heystek (2020) have been on the possibilities of distributed leadership on improving performance of schools and not on the nature and practices of distributed leadership in secondary schools. The present study that explored the nature and practice of distributed leadership in the secondary schools in South Africa is therefore very well placed.

2.4.5 Perspectives on the new role of the principals in distributed leadership practices

According to Hermann (2016), a school principal's leadership responsibilities have changed as a result of the increased demands for better teaching and learning in classrooms. As Dampson et al. (2018) suggest, the principal's responsibility in a distributed leadership perspective is to establish norms that promote shared learning and to build capacity among teachers to partake and embrace leadership roles and responsibilities (Hopkins & Jackson, 2002; Harris & Lambert, 2003). The principal has a

responsibility to create the procedures and structures that guide school leadership and management decisions, among other duties. A school principal also makes sure that resources, both physical and human, are managed properly and efficiently (Dampson et al., 2018) in order to realise the instructional goals of the school effectively and efficiently.

As literature seem to suggest, in the current thinking, a great leader is no longer viewed as one who single-handedly makes decisions that influence the behaviour of others towards organisational goals. Instead, from the perspective of distributed leadership, a great leader is someone who is aware of the value of working with all stakeholders to ensure that individuals are developed and empowered to co-operatively make decisions affecting them. By offering such fresh models of leadership, the leader creates new avenues for teaching and learning (Gupta et al., 2016). The expansion, bolstering and realignment of the principals' roles and responsibilities, from the portrait of a 'great man' of the school system, the hero of the school, to one which views a leader as a facilitator of school leadership, demonstrates some of the changes to the school leadership environment (Gronn, 2003). Similar to the case anywhere else internationally, principals in South Africa, are therefore, faced with a significant quantity of work and new opportunities as a result of the expansion of their management responsibilities.

Numerous studies have been carried out focusing on the part school leadership, in particular school principals, plays in fostering efficient teaching and learning (Khaleel et al., 2021). The heroic function (Frisk, 2019) of a principal has received particular emphasis in most of the research that has been done so far. However, several academics have remarked that leadership in public schools today is extremely complex and cannot be administered by a single individual. As a result, system-wide distribution of leadership tasks for schools is necessary (Lee et al., 2012; Spillane et al., 2004). Glanz (2006) supports this view and goes further to assert that collaborative school culture and the promotion of trust connections among key stakeholders comprise some of the requirements for school principals who wish to embrace distributed leadership practices. By placing a collaborative culture (Kumar et al., 2016) of leadership at the centre of their

school leadership practices, principals can strengthen and sustain effective instructional leadership (Halverson & Clifford , 2006) and also ensures long-term success by schools.

Fullan (2001:10) emphasises that effective leaders develop other leaders at various levels of the organisation as a system. According to Mulford (2003:21), citing earlier work by Harris and Muijs (2002), a school principal, from the perspective of distributed leadership should be viewed as a "leader of leaders". Some of the specific role expectations of school principals in their capacity as leaders of leaders are outlined below, beginning with their roles as capacity building.

2.4.5.1 Capacity building

People development, that is, capacity development is listed as one of the essential leadership practices of successful school principals who seek to embrace a distributed approach to instructional leadership. Figure 2.3 helps to show the position of a school principal as a capacity builder in a public school system and the benefits accruing the school in where the school principal adopts the role of a capacity builder.

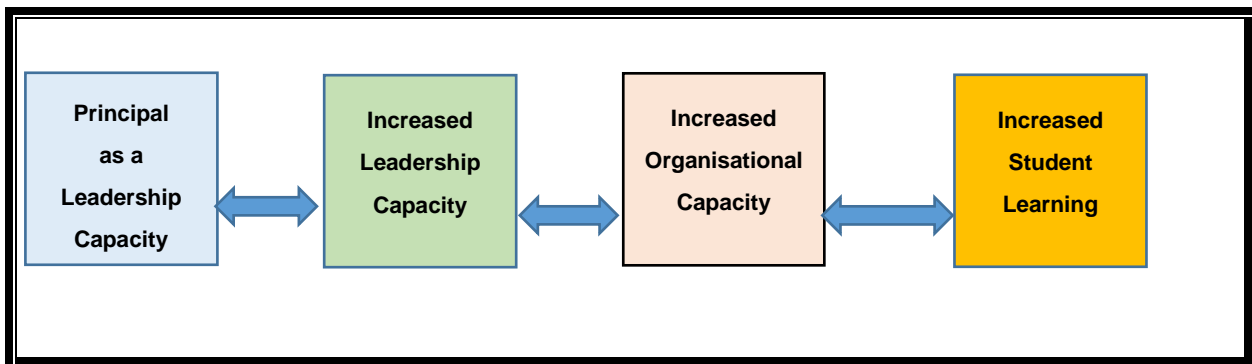


Figure 2.3: Principal as leadership capacity builder framework

(Adapted from Klar et al., 2015:17)

As shown in Figure 2.3 above, capacity building, that is, human development, is a central feature of distributed leadership practices. When principals create an atmosphere where skills and professional knowledge are developed at all levels and where the school community is working together toward increased learner performance, a school can

perform better. Teachers' development as leaders is greatly influenced by their interactions with principals and other school leaders. Teachers' relationships with one another and their experiences increase their motivation and capabilities (Leithwood et al., 2006). As a result, when instructors' motivations and capacities are strengthened, professional development is accomplished.

Increased teacher self-confidence and self-efficacy are among the other positive outcomes of distributed leadership, according to a research on the subject (MacBeath 1998). It has been proven that teachers who collaborate on high-quality practice and learning tend to increase high-quality teaching (Lieberman, et al., 2000; Little, 1990). Additionally, it has been claimed by some researchers that giving instructors a forum to interact with one another and participate in decision-making significantly lowers the rate of teacher absenteeism (Rosenholtz, 1989; Sickler, 1988).

The implementation of distributed leadership is possible when traditional organisational structures are changed. If schools wish to see improvements in the quality of instruction, they should start developing leadership skills among their stakeholders. People can only develop their leadership skills when they are aware of their potential (Crowther et al., 2002; Harris, 2002; Lambert 2003). It is essential to develop teachers' leadership skills since doing so boosts their confidence and increases their willingness to take on leadership responsibilities (Harris, 2003; Rina, 2019). Principals should be able to create initiatives that address teachers' inadequacies and encourage them to capitalise on their strengths as part of the development of their leadership capacity. Leaders who provide a moral purpose or a shared viewpoint are the ones who direct decisions and procedures in schools (Crowther et al., 2002; Fullan, 2001). Collaboration between leaders and followers is necessary to create shared values. There should be a consensus among all leaders in the leadership relationship; moral purpose cannot belong exclusively to the top leadership. Many scholars agree that, when making decisions, leaders and followers should be clear on their respective guiding principles (Fullan, 2001; Lambert, 2003).

Developing one's knowledge and skills is the foundation for developing leadership capacity. Building leadership capability among teachers requires, among other things, encouraging people to examine their potential, forging consensus, staying on course while school improvement activities are being carried out, and fostering a culture of inquiry and collaboration (Klar, 2015). As also shown in Figure 2.1 above, building teacher capacity has ramifications on learner learning and therefore, school performance.

2.4.5.2 Professional learning communities

Another key element of the role expectations of the school principal in his/her capacity as a distributive instructional leader involves promoting the development of professional learning communities (PLCs) among teachers. A PLCs is defined by the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development (ISPFTED) as:

“... communities that provide the setting and necessary support for groups of classroom teachers, school managers and subject advisors to participate collectively in determining their developmental trajectories, and to set up activities that will drive their development” (ISPFTED, 2011:14).

It has often been argued that, in a typical school setting, PLCs and distributed leadership practice coincide in terms of features and traits. First, the two models both function in collaborative settings where individuals collaborate for a specific objective to improve teaching practices and learner outcomes.

Secondly, distributed learning practices and PLCs foster a culture in which inquiry takes place jointly, choices are made as a group, and instruction is planned throughout the entire school. Finally, distributed leadership practice and PLCs provide teachers and officially designated school leaders with power to work and learn together. This means, they offer individuals the chance to collaborate with others. In the process, teachers gain new skills useful as both classroom practitioners and teacher leaders in various capacities and faculties of the school system, including working with learners. It should be stated at this point that the extent to which school principals practices are fulfilling their role

expectation as a 'capacity developers' and 'leader of leaders' in secondary schools in South Africa is not fully understood. For this reason, the present study that sought to explore the nature and practices of distributed leadership in secondary schools in South Africa ought to be seen as worthwhile.

2.4.6 Perspectives on the role of the teacher in distributed leadership

The literature on the role of the principal seems to dominate academic discourse on distributed leadership. This literature seems to point to the traditional view, that is, the heroic perspective of school leadership which is grounded on the view that the concepts of school principal and school leadership are interchangeable (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). In this linear perspective, the teacher is viewed from a purely follower perspective, without any leadership roles attached, except as an adult person in his/her class of young children only. However, Lin et al. (2018) observe that, over time, there has been a change in how the role of teachers in school leadership is perceived. Historically, teacher leaders were thought to be involved in leadership roles when they were formally assigned to positions of authority and management such as grade heads and departmental heads only. Otherwise their place was seen to be in the classroom, teaching their classes. Today, teacher leaders are viewed as "classroom instructors who offer their experience in numerous formats" including in leadership, writes Nappi (as cited in Lin et al., 2018:2).

Although research into distributed leadership and teacher leadership is still in its infancy in South Africa, there are indications that, internationally, the role of teacher leaders in a distributed perspective has mutated to embrace emergent leadership roles even outside formal appointments. In South Africa, some of the research studies on teacher leadership have been made by Grant (2006), Grant and Singh (2009), and Grant, Gardner et al. (2010). Such studies seem to have laid the foundation of 'teacher leadership' as a key element of distributed leadership. According to Harris and Lambert (2003), teacher leadership refers to a leadership paradigm in which teaching staff members are given the chance to lead at various levels within the institution. The assumption here is that, both formal and informal teacher leadership styles are possible (Leithwood et al., 1997), either in the classroom or outside the classroom. When the teacher leadership paradigm is

embraced from a distributed leadership perspective, teachers have the chance to assume leadership positions and be responsible for important school-related issues and decision that require their opinions (Harris & Muijs, 2005). As a result, teachers can be considered "co-producers of leadership" in this context (Harris, 2005b:11), and not mere policy implementers.

Strictly speaking, teacher leadership from the perspective of distributed leadership means that, regardless of whether they occupy official leadership positions in the school, teachers are no longer limited to playing the role of followers, but they are participants in making decisions that affect them, that is, they are "teacher-leaders" (Grant, 2006:513). Many writers and researchers on the issues of school reform, have consistently affirmed that distributed leadership, from the perspective of teacher leadership, has beneficial effects on transforming schools and on helping to lower teacher alienation from the results of their labour (Fullan, 2001; Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Little, 1990). In other words, teachers who get the opportunity to act as leaders in their respective schools help to guide the schools' development by taking part in decision-making (Collins, 2001), a situation which also helps to develop organisational citizenship and employee engagement among such teachers. Hammersely-Fletcher and Brundrett (2005) support this view and further aver that teachers prefer a work environment that gives them responsibilities and the opportunity to practice teamwork and collaboration towards objectives that they all share.

In the light of the observation described above, Harris (2003:77) concluded that "teacher leadership is a distributed leadership strategy, which should never be overlooked in any school system because it significantly improves learner outcomes, and therefore school effectiveness in comparison to traditional leadership techniques". The concept of leadership, as seen through the distributed leadership lens, is therefore always regarded as a collaborative process where those in leadership positions cooperate and collaborate with all stakeholders, including teachers, in order to attain shared objective, which enhances learner outcomes (Spillane et al., 2001). Harris (2003) therefore submits that

teacher leadership serves as an example of how distributed leadership practices can be created to favourably impact school development and improvement. Gronn (2003:14) supports this view and further points out that, “in contrast to the conventional sets of presumptions that guided the work of earlier generations of school leaders, teacher leadership presents qualitatively alternative points of reference for understanding professional activity” and the roles that teachers should play in order to ensure school effectiveness. Among the various activities in which teacher leaders are involved in an education system that has embraced a distributed approach to school leadership is participation in subject committees and professional learning communities. This is further explained below.

2.4.6.1 Subject committees and professional learning communities

Figure 2.4 below outlines the relationship between the subject committee and PLCs.

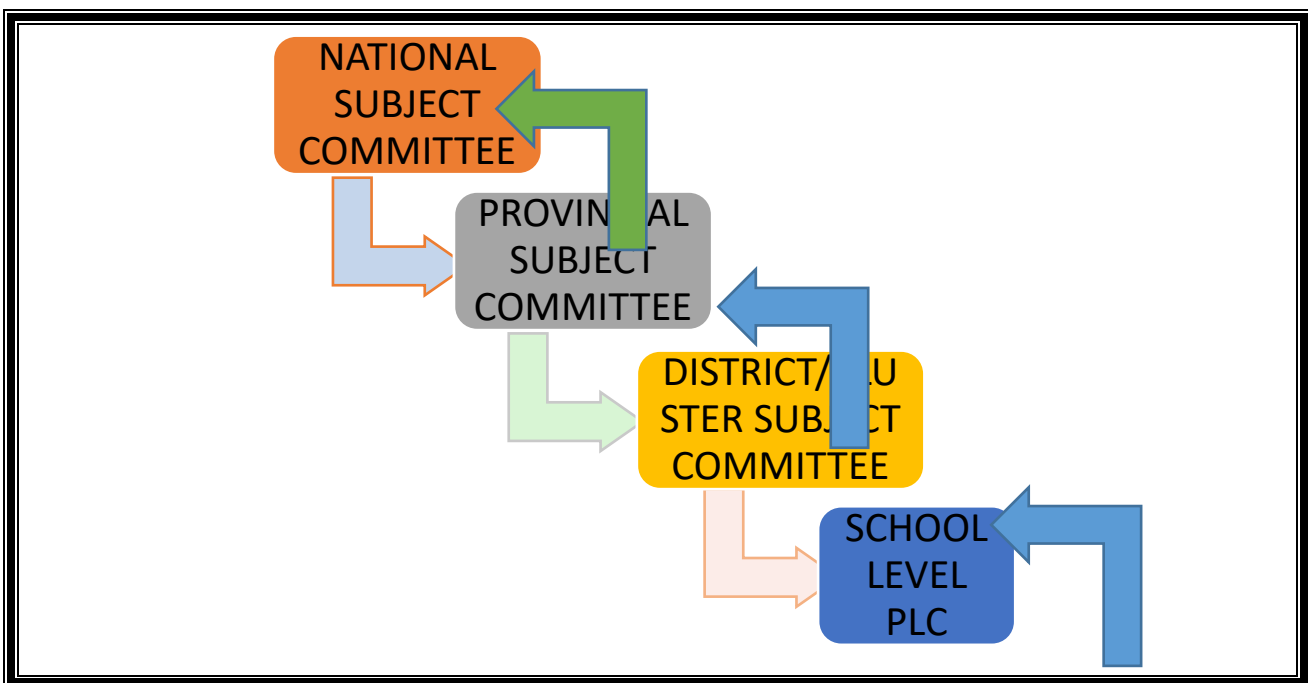


Figure 2.4: Diagrammatic outline of subject committee and PLCs

(Adapted from: DBE 2014:11)

As shown in Figure 2.4 above, teachers and other stakeholders in the education sector may collaboratively participate in subject committees and professional learning

communities at various levels of the education system (DBE, 2014). Specifically, Figure 2.2 shows that subject committees and professional learning communities may be organised from school level, district level, provincial level and the national level.

This distribution shows that, in addition to the three levels of collective distribution, collaborative distribution and coordinated distribution (Spillane, 2016), distributed leadership may also be understood in the perspective of participation by teachers in the leadership of subject committees and professional learning communities throughout the education continuum. However, the nature and practice of teacher leadership in the secondary schools in South Africa has not been fully explored by researchers in academia. This is because interest in distributed leadership in the general education system in South Africa is a recent development in the country. The present study is therefore very well placed to bridge the existing gap.

2.5 Promoters and Inhibitors of Distributed Leadership Practices

A review of several definitions of the term "distributed leadership" reveals several characteristics that might be regarded as fundamental components of distributed leadership (William, 2011). These traits imply that distributive leadership is a style of leadership that should be carefully studied as a way to deal with the leadership issue. As literature shows, the implementation of distributed leadership has both promoters as well as inhibitors (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). Figure 2.5 outlines some of the factors that promote, and those that inhibit distributed leadership.

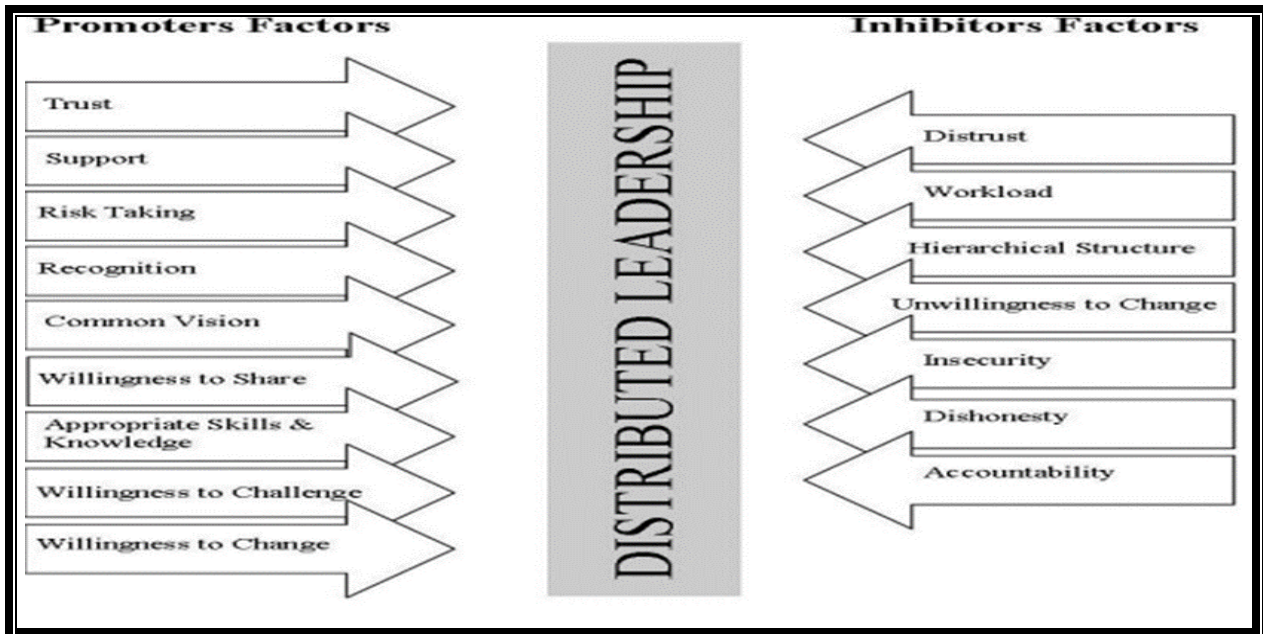


Figure 2.5: Distributed leadership promoters and inhibitors

(Source: Grenda 2011:28)

Figure 2.5 shows that employees are the starting point for institutions to yield positive results through distributed leadership practices. In order for employees to be effective as promoters of distributed leadership, there should be an ‘atmosphere’ of trust, support for each other, willingness to take risks without the fear for reprisal, and the willingness to share ideas. William (2011) sums it up by asserting that, if the combined knowledge, skill, and experience of different role-players and stakeholders are utilised cooperatively, distributed leadership within schools can be attained. Promoters and impediments of distributed leadership summarised in Figure 2.5 above are further discussed in the section below, beginning with promoters of distributed leadership.

2.5.1 Promoters of distributed leadership thought and practice

It can be said here that distributed leadership may motivated by policy and/or increased stakeholder demands and pressures on schools to embrace participatory approaches of instructional leadership (Spillane, 2008). The policy perspective of distributed leadership in the South African context is explained by the fact that this framework of school leadership began to take centre stage in school leadership discourse and practice after

the attainment of independence in 1994. Williams (2011: 190) thus says that, "Before 1994 South African teachers in general ... teachers, were effectively excluded from fulfilling meaningful roles as leaders at school level. Since 1994 the Department of Education has promulgated a number of policies in an attempt to actualize distributed leadership in South African schools." Clearly, this shows that distributed leadership is a recent phenomenon in South African Schools, and that it is also a policy project. However, it should also be appreciated that distributed leadership does not take away the responsibility from top management for the overall performance of the organisation. Rather, as stated by Elmore (2000:15), it implies that:

- that the job of administrative leaders is primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organisation;
- creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge; and
- holding the various pieces of the organisation together in a productive relationship with each other and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result.

The adage that "two heads are better than one" holds true when discussing distributed leadership. This old saying implies that the interdependency created by distributed leadership can benefit the combined skills of extra members (Grant, 2011). This is supported by Volante (2012) who emphasises that having multiple leaders within an organisation has been shown to have greater benefits than having only one. Since distributed leadership in the South African context is also a product of policy, in as much as it may also be motivated by professional, that is, instructional and pedagogical objectives, issues of accountability as also mentioned by Elmore (2000) and cited above seem to claim a high stake in this school leadership framework. Sol (2021:73) also points out that distributed leadership is attractive to many researchers and practitioners because it results in better decision-making when individuals with various experiences, knowledge, and competence are given the opportunity to participate in decision making on issues affecting them. This is regardless of their positions in the organisation's structure.

O'Neill and Brinkerhoff (2018) listed five advantages of distributed leadership which makes this leadership model attractive to both researchers and practitioners in the modern era. These factors also show how schools and schools systems might change by implementing distributed leadership. First, it has often been argued that implementing distributed leadership in schools improves organisational decision-making processes and self-efficacy (Spillane, 2008). The second benefit is that, when schools use this approach, both teachers and students are motivated and self-directed. Thirdly, by consistently applying distributed leadership, barriers are removed, and the development of active inner inspiration is advanced. Fourthly, collective leadership, leadership for example, fosters shared accountability and acknowledges the potential of other stakeholders in an organisation throughout the education value chain. Finally, if properly implement with a full consideration of the local context, distributed leadership in the educational field fosters a sense of job security, staff engagement and organisational citizenship.

On the part of "teacher leaders themselves, as they learn leadership abilities, improve instructional techniques, and become more completely engaged in their work", distributed leadership is thought to support unbounded special effects (Sol, 2021:76). It can therefore be argued that teacher leadership enhances organisational dynamism and creates a positive schools environment as well as teacher proficiency (Murphy, 2005). In particular, collective distributed leadership "makes individuals [members of the team] take on leadership behaviours to influence the team and to maximise team productivity" (Northouse, 2016:365). This view means that positional leaders in the school systems are motivated to involve non-positional leaders in leadership practices in order to strengthen their decision-making processes, up and above the political objective of democratising the education environment. It is for this reason that Williams (2011: 190), said, "Fundamental to distributed leadership is the belief that all teachers have the right and potential to participate in decisions that affect their work." In other words, positional leaders under a distributed leadership framework incorporate other stakeholders with the needed skills and knowledge into leadership matrices in order to strengthen their distributed leadership and educational goal achievement (Northouse, 2016).

It is important to note that distributed leadership strengthens group ties between leaders and followers and democratises the education space by promoting stakeholder involvement and participation in decisions making on things that affect them and for which they have an interest. Additionally, collaborative engagement improves student performance and instructor effectiveness (Leithwood & Jantzi., 2000; Leithwood et. al., 2010). The experts mentioned above also point out that instructor leadership techniques have a big impact on how well students achieve. Involving educators in decision-making has been linked to a variety of learner performance metrics, including learner self-efficacy, motivation, and academic accomplishment, according to a study by Mujis (2011). However, the situation in the South African education system has not been fully explored. For this reason, the present study which sought to explore the nature and practice of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools drawn from the Limpopo province of South Africa and how this influences teaching and learning was found to be very appropriate and worthwhile.

2.5.2 Inhibitors for distributed leadership thought and practice

According to Harris (2009), regardless of the promises that distributed leadership has, there are various difficulties associated with this leadership approach in schools. These difficulties may lead to competing goals, objectives and focus for leadership effort (Harris, 2009) among key stakeholders in the education system. This view is supported by Tahir et al. (2016) who opine that the use of distributed leadership in schools is hampered by several issues and challenges. Such challenges include the institutional and person specific contexts of the school leadership environment in which the distributed leadership framework is implemented. The institutional environment comprise the socio-political and policy environment such as prevailing in the South African context since the fall of apartheid in 1994. Flessa (2009) defined the socio-political context of distributed leadership as the “micro-politics” of distributed leadership. The person specific context may comprise the biographic background and characteristics of policy makers and policy implementers such as for the research participants in the present study which according to Jita (2004) may be defined as resources of biography and have implications on practice. This also means that principals’ perception of distributed leadership practices,

the expertise and readiness of teachers to assume leadership roles, the idea of power-sharing between school management teams and teachers, and the hierarchical structure of the school all have ramifications on distributed practices in schools (Tahir et al., 2016).

It is from this background that Liljenberg (2015) argues that, because distributed leadership is a technique that necessitates the creation of new relationships and new leadership structures, principals find it challenging to put it into practice in the school setting. In addition, since it is a new though promising leadership model in the education system, there is a dearth of research on the nature and practice of distributed leadership, especially in the secondary schools department of education. This deficiency means that more research must be done on how distributed leadership is implemented and how effective it can be in improving school performance, vis-à-vis the traditional approach to school leadership (Tahir et al. 2016:99). The attitude of teachers and principals, according Tahir et al. (2016) is another obstacle to the growth of distributed leadership. These researchers found that principals are frequently reticent to delegate control and teachers reluctant to accept responsibility and the high levels of accountability attached. Teachers who are unwilling to assume administrative and leadership responsibilities make the situation very difficult for the success of distributed leadership initiatives in schools (Rhodes et al. as cited by Tahir et al., 2016).

In a study conducted in Ghana, Dampson et al. (2018) identified three main barriers to distributed leadership in educational settings. First, they observed that, since distributed leadership is about decentralisation of power and responsibility from the traditional heroic school principal, its execution may be badly impacted by educators' lack of collective accountability. This deficiency may be mitigated by effectively preparing teachers for distributed leadership, for example, through capacity building. The second barrier, according to Dampson et al. (2018), is that, whilst distributed leadership emphasises the importance of trusting others, there is a large number of leaders in the public school system who are still reluctant to let go by not including other educators in leadership responsibilities. This barrier may be associated with structural inertia and thus impede development. In other words, the bureaucratic leadership structure within the educational

system creates polarisation in the management of schools due to title positions and lack of accountability and good governance and (William, 2011:3).

The third barrier, according to Dampson et al. (2018), is that the application of distributed leadership is greatly influenced by the leaders' understanding of the idea. Hatcher (2005) thus says that, people may not participate if there are contradictions between their understanding of what is claimed and what is being done in supporting this idea. In other words, when those in formal leadership positions are ill-equipped and ill-prepared to practise distributed leadership, they may represent the weakest link in the process (Harris, 2014) and thereby comprise the strongest barrier to success.

Harris (2014) therefore suggests that the following domino effect to account for failure of distributed leadership initiatives in schools:

- Formal leaders may have a misconception that by implementing distributed leadership they renounce their control, power, or authority.
- They then try to practice selectively distributed leadership.
- They do not let go of the notion of command/hierarchical leadership.

Clearly, the net effect of the situation described above illustrate that officially designated school management teams often hesitate to employ distributed leadership practices because they fear losing the power that has been granted to them as formal leaders. As a result, and in an effort absorb pressure from the school leadership context which favours distributed leadership models, school authorities may embrace what Hatcher (2014) defines as distributed leadership. This is a cosmetic approach to distributed leadership which does not fully embrace all the tenets of the model. Harris (2014) further identifies four consistent barriers to distributed leadership which may make practitioners to adopt a dispersed approach (Hatcher, 2014) to school leadership. This is further discussed below, beginning with barriers related to time.

2.5.2.1 Time

Key stakeholders such as teachers may embrace the view that they do not have time to be involved in distributed leadership practices because they may be too busy and have their attention focused on teaching and learning. It is in the perspective of this view that Spillane (2015) contend that distributed leadership may fail because various stakeholders within a given institution are unable to efficiently manage their time.

2.5.2.2 Culture

According to Harris (2014:75), mutual regard, trust, and learning are the three primary components of distributed leadership. In this regard, the author contends that distributed leadership cannot take place if the cultural norms of the school are not consistent with the three identified cultural variables. Simply put, the use of distributed leadership is hampered by the absence of unspoken and taken for granted principles that shape and impact teaching and learning. In a research that examined distributed leadership approach and dilemmas in secondary schools in Aksum Town, Ethiopia, Mesfin (2018) discovered principals who thought that supportive school structures and cultures did not exist, that knowledge and skills are lacking. Furthermore, the principals did not trust others, and put obstacles in the way of distributed leadership and thereby becoming serious barriers to success (Mesfin, 2018).

2.5.2.3 Professional unwillingness

According to Harris (2014), the idea of distributed leadership is frustrating on the part of school principals, for example, when people are hesitant to volunteer for leadership positions because they demand compensation for their effort. In a study that focused on the views of 57 middle school teachers from a single affluent Central Massachusetts school district, Lizotte (2013) established another professional barrier arises from the fact that most educators, teachers included, lack the skills and experience necessary to effectively lead their co-workers because they were taught to follow rather than to lead. As a result, a lack of motivation based on incentives and a lack of leadership development make educators feel disinterested and inferior, which in turn prevents them from having the confidence to lead their peers.

2.5.2.4 The fear of getting it wrong

The fear of making a mistake by non-positional leaders is also seen to stifle innovation and therefore distributed leadership (Harris, 2014). It is beyond doubt that innovation, a factor that is grounded in the principles of learning organisations is the foundation upon which distributed leadership is built. Harris (2014) supports this view asserting that distributed leadership does not conform but instead dwells in the minds of creative people. According to Lizotte (2013), the majority of educators are overwhelmed by leadership responsibilities because these do not seem to fit with their training and job description. For them to fit well in a distributed leadership model, there is therefore, a need for empowering teachers through capacity building and participation in professional learning communities.

Literature reviewed in this section has also shown that, regardless of all its possibilities and promises as the leadership model of choice in the twenty-first century, distributed leadership is still associated with many barriers that inhibit its adoption and practice in public schools up to this day. As literature shows, these barriers may both be institutional, that is, contextual (structural), and internal, that is, specific (personal) to various stakeholders in the public education system. The extent to which these barriers shape distributed leadership in the secondary schools of South Africa is not clearly understood. The present study focuses on the nature and practice of distributed leadership in the secondary schools in South Africa and thus designed to close this gap.

2.6 School Leadership and the Role of the School Principal in the South African Context

This section focuses on the school leadership context and the role expectations of the school principals as educational leaders in the South African context. I begin this section by reviewing literature on the school leadership context as a key variable for successful adoption of the distributed model of instructional leadership.

2.6.1 School leadership in the South African context

Since apartheid was abolished in 1994, South Africa's educational system has undergone significant changes. However, these changes have occurred in a somewhat gradual process. According to the World Economic Forum (2015), South Africa's primary and secondary schools have been performing poorly, especially in mathematics and science education when compared to other countries worldwide. The educational standards in both privileged and underprivileged communities have been seen to fluctuate significantly throughout the country's post-apartheid history. The table below summarises the metric results for the period 2008 – 2019.

Table 2.2: South African NSC matric results: 2008-2019

Year	Pass rate	Change
2008	62.5%	-2.7
2009	60.6%	-1.9
2010	67.8%	+7.2
2011	70.2%	+2.4
2012	73.9%	+3.7
2013	78.2%	+4.3
2014	75.8%	-2.4
2015	70.7%	-5.1
2016	72.5%	+1.8
2017	75.1%	+2.6
2018	78.2%	+3.1
2019	81.3%	+3.1

(Adapted from: DBE, 2020)

As shown in Table 2.2 above, the pass rate in South Africa's public schools has been fluctuation. During the period under review, the average pass rate is 72.2%. By all standards, this average pass rate cannot be viewed to be very high. The assumption in

this study is that school leadership at various levels of the school system and classroom instruction hold the keys to improving these results for the better.

In the South African school system, education and, therefore, school leadership is structured into a number of bands. The General Education and Training (GET) band, which comprises Grades R through to Grade 9, and the Further Education and Training (FET) band, which comprises Grades 10 through to Grade 12, fall under the purview of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Provincial Education Departments (PEDs). Public schools that do not charge fees, fee-paying public schools, and independent schools make up the elementary and secondary education sector. As a matter of national policy, all children between the ages of 7 and 15 must attend school. The DBE aims at maintaining, supporting, and developing the education system in South African schools in a way that meets the standards and expectations of the twenty-first (21st) century. In an effort to reach this end, the DBE continues to place emphasis on:

- Accelerating delivery and improving school infrastructure;
- Enhancing teaching and learning by ensuring access to high-quality learner and teacher support materials.
- Improving Grade 12 completion rates;
- Providing educational opportunities for learners with severe to profound intellectual disabilities;
- Increasing the supply of quality teachers;
- Monitoring performance; and
- Providing nutritious meals to learners in schools through the National School Nutrition Programme.

South Africa as a country is divided into 86 education districts and nine provinces as depicted in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Number of education districts in South Africa per province

Province	Number of Districts
North West	4
Mpumalanga	4
Northern Cape	5
Free State	5
Western Cape	8
KwaZulu-Natal	12
Gauteng	15
Limpopo	10
Eastern Cape	23
Total	86

As shown in Table 2.3 above, the education system in South Africa is structured in such a way that at the very top, there is the national structure. The national structure is then followed by the provincial structure, which in turn is followed by the districts and then clusters, before zeroing in on the school level and then; lastly, the classroom. The current study explores the nature and practice of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools cognisant of the fact that the school as a unit is a subsystem of a larger system with which the school principal should forge a number of relationships. The focus for the present study is on non-fee-paying secondary schools (Grade 8-12) in the districts of interest as drawn from the Limpopo Province of South Africa.

2.6.2 Role expectations on school principals in the South African school leadership context

Without any doubt, educational institutions require the services of a school principal. According to the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 (the Act), and various regulations under the Act, the principal is given a wide range of management responsibilities in South Africa. These responsibilities are also outlined by Personnel Administration Measures (PAM), which are determined by the Minister of Education. The PAM is an essential piece of legislation that spells out, among other things, the role

expectations of a school leader. The role expectations of a school principal in a South African context, according to the DBE (1998), include the following:

- To be responsible for professional leadership within the school.
- To guide, supervise and offer professional advice on the work and performance of all staff in the school and, where necessary, to discuss and write or countersign reports on teaching, support, non-teaching, and other staff.
- To ensure that workloads are equitably distributed among the staff.
- To be responsible for the development of staff training programs, both school-based, school-focused, and externally directed, and to assist educators, particularly new and inexperienced educators, in developing and achieving educational objectives in accordance with the needs of the school.
- To participate in agreed school/educator appraisal processes.
- To ensure that an environment conducive to teaching is created and maintained.

The list of expectations above shows that the office of the school principal is central to instructional practices and instructional leadership in any school system in South Africa. However, in order to fulfil these obligations, the school principal should consult other stakeholders who comprise his/her role set. Figure 2.6 shows an organogram for a conventional secondary school, and therefore the role set of a school principal.

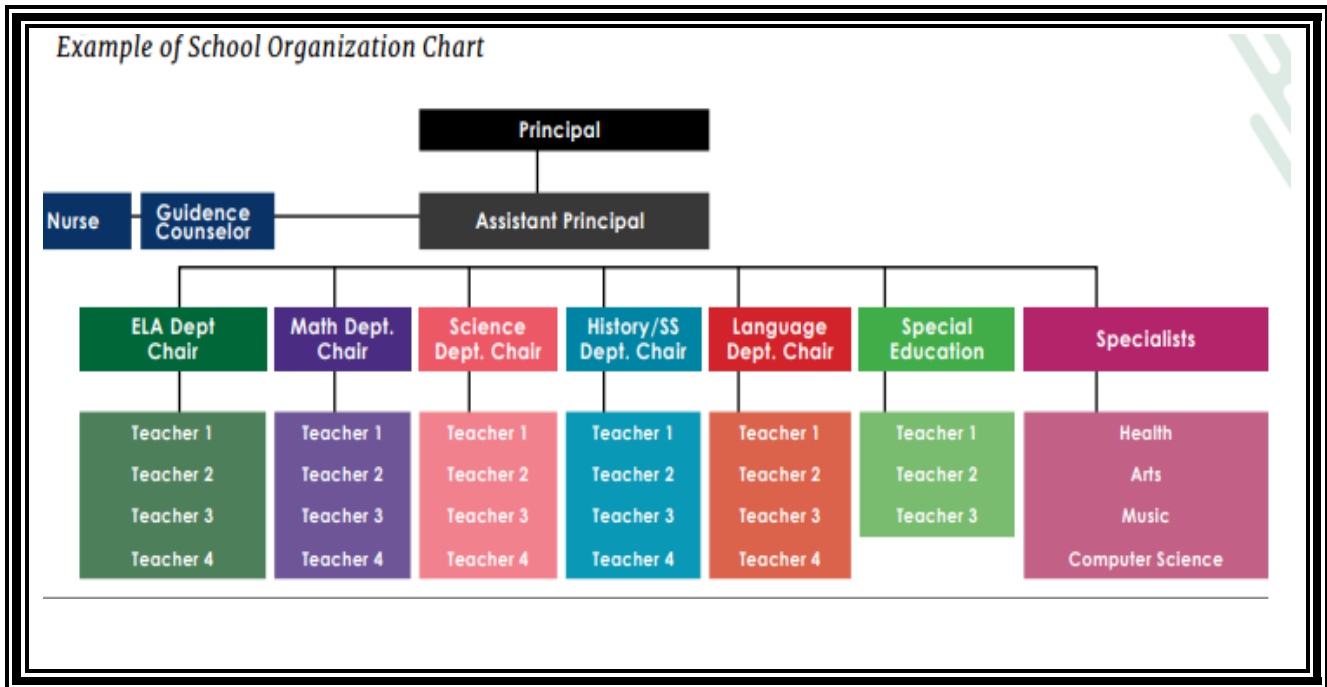


Figure 2.6: Level 1 SMT organogram for distributed leadership in secondary schools

(Source: Supovitz et al., 2019:16)

As shown in Figure 2.6 above, the role set for a school principal within the internal environment of a school comprise a number of levels, with the school principal's office at the top. It is against this background that Hallinger (2003) points out that, a key factor in determining a school's overall effectiveness is the principal's position as an instructional leader. The Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship (2015) further amplifies the role expectations of the school principal as follows:

- To develop as well as implement plans, procedures, and policies that allow the school to achieve its objectives.
- As an instructional leader, the principal, as the leading professional in the school, shall be responsible for providing leadership and direction that will ensure that the mission and vision of the school are accomplished.
- It is the principal's responsibility to create an enabling environment conducive to learners to be taught effectively and efficiently.

- Principals, as instructional leaders, should develop leaders who will be able to assist them in attaining the vision, goals, and mission of the school.
- In executing his/her leadership role, the principal should strive to create an environment that will ensure that people understand and share the school's values, ethos, and identity (DBE, 2015:10-12).

The South African Schools Act (SASA) is another important piece of legislation that speaks to the role expectations of the school principal (SASA, Act 84 of 1996). This law establishes a consistent system for school organisation, management, and funding. It also amends and repeals a number of previously operating school-related laws, and addresses related issues (South African School Act 84, 1996:01). The act also specifies the obligations of two significant participants in the South African education system, namely the principal and the School Governing Body (SGB).

The statute grants authority to both of these stakeholders to handle governance and professional issues relating to schools' effectiveness and efficiency in a way to achieve their goals. The following is an extract from Section 16 of the SASA which speaks about professional management and governance of public schools:

- Subject to this Act, the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body, and it may perform only such functions and obligations and exercise only such rights as prescribed by the Act.
- A governing body stands in a position of trust toward the school.
- Subject to this Act and any applicable provincial law, the professional management of a public school must be undertaken by the principal under the authority of the Head of Department (SASA 84, 1996: section 16: A)

The excerpt above (Section 16 of the SASA) clearly shows that the South African legal system prepares the road to guarantee that leadership is spread among stakeholders in the South African schools system. In this case, three SASA components are specifically important. First, the Act's section 16(1), as amended, states that the SGB oversees a

school's governance. In summary, the following are some of the SGB's statutory mandates:

- Determines school policies such as school admission, language, and religious policies.
- Adopts a code of conduct for learners and presides on all learners' misdemeanour cases.
- Ensures that the school's infrastructure is well maintained.
- Prevents financial mismanagement and maladministration when approving purchases.
- Provides governance support to principals of schools as they execute their responsibilities.

Clearly, literature reviewed in this section has shown that school principals do not operate in a vacuum. Instead, school principals operate in an environment in which there are other stakeholders with whom they forge a number of relationships. These stakeholders comprise the role set of school principals. The key stakeholders include the ministry officials, that is, officers from the DBE, members of the SGB, the SMT and teachers. From a distributed leadership perspective, school principals are therefore expected to play a crucial role in creating a positive environment for effective learning to take place (Mulford, 2003:27). In this environment, various stakeholders should collectively and collaboratively be coordinated towards the realisation of school goals which they all share. In other words, principals who have embraced a distributed leadership model should create and maintain a collaborative school culture that fosters trust connections among their varied stakeholders (Glanz, 2006:3; Hopkins & Jackson, 2003). The extent to which school principals in the secondary schools in South Africa are able to harness the energy from their varied stakeholders so that they collaboratively, collectively and willingly apply their leadership skills towards school goals, when and as the need for them to do so, is not clearly understood. The present study therefore sought to bridge this gap.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This present chapter focused on a review of the literature germane to this study. The literature was reviewed apropos the objectives upon which the study is grounded. The conceptual framework for distributed leadership developed by Spillane was also reviewed (Spillane et al., 2004). Spillane's framework reviewed in the present chapter also frames the current study. The next chapter focuses on the methodology that was employed to collect, analyse, present and interpret the data collected to answer the questions upon which the study is anchored.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a detailed review and analysis of literature pertinent to this study. The goal of Chapter 2 was to gather data from multiple literature sources, analyse and summarise it in order to help me as a researcher to explore and understand the nature and practice of distributed leadership in a sample of South African secondary schools and illustrating how it affects teaching and learning. The present chapter focuses on research methodology that is the research methods, research approach and designs that were used to collect the data that were needed to answer the central question upon which the study is grounded.

The concept, research methodology is used to refer to a deliberate and planned process for gathering, analysing, interpreting and presenting research data in order to draw conclusions from them (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Rather than the "logistics" plans frequently mentioned by others, Yin (2011:75) describes the notion of research design as "logical blueprints" that function as "logical" plans. In this current chapter, the plan is outlined citing the researcher's justification for the methodologies adopted throughout the investigation. The chapter focuses on the research paradigm, research approach and research design. This strengthens the connection between the study topic, the data that was gathered, and the data analysis techniques that were employed (Yin, 2011). The methods for sampling, data gathering, and data analysis are then discussed. A discussion of the ethical criteria used during the research conclude the chapter. I reiterate the primary question as well as the supporting secondary at the beginning of this chapter to prevent losing sight of these important research guides along the way.

3.2 Research Questions

The research problem stated in Chapter 1 outlined one primary research question and three secondary research questions as follows:

3.2.1 Primary research question

The study sought to provide answers to the central question that: *What is the nature of distributed leadership practice in selected secondary schools in the Limpopo province of South Africa and how does it shape teaching and learning?*

3.2.2 Secondary research questions

In exploring the nature of distributed leadership practice in selected secondary schools in the research area and how this practice shape teaching and learning, the study was guided by the following sub-questions:

- How is distributed leadership understood and practised in selected secondary schools, in the Limpopo Province of South Africa?
- In what ways do the practices of distributed leadership in the selected secondary schools shape teaching and learning?
- How can the practice of distributed leadership within the selected secondary schools be understood and explained?

Clearly, the study sought to explore the nature of distributed leadership practices as understood and practised in selected secondary schools in the Limpopo Province of South Africa.

3.3 Research Paradigm

Fraser and Robinson (2004:59) describe a paradigm as “a set of beliefs about the way in which particular problems exist and a set of agreements on how such problems can be investigated”. Similarly, Coe et al. (2017:17) indicate that “a paradigm represents a person’s conception of the world, its nature and their position in it, as well as a multitude of potential relationships with that world and its consistent parts”. In line with the views of Hughes (2010), the adoption of a research paradigm is imperative for this study because it laid a proper foundation for the investigation of the nature of distributed leadership in the selected secondary school. Furthermore, the paradigm in this study sketches the scope and parameters of the inquiry (Punch & Oancea, 2014).

The research paradigm in this study established what is there that could be known about the nature of distributed leadership, what is known, as well as determine the procedure and techniques that could be employed to explore what could be known (Punch & Oancea, 2014; Coe et al., 2017). Guided by the research approach employed in this study, the researcher identified the constructivist paradigm to be the most appropriate for this inquiry.

3.3.1 Constructivist Paradigm

Honebein (as cited in Adom et al., 2016:3) “describes the constructivism as an approach to scientific enquiry that seeks to establish how people interpret and construct the meaning and understanding of the world around them through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences”. The constructivist paradigm is employed specifically for this study because a holistic understanding is needed in terms of how distributed leadership practice in the selected secondary schools shape teaching and learning. Creswell (2014) indicates that this type of paradigm focuses on specific context and a philosophical partner of qualitative research. The precise context of the present study include the various educational institutions (schools, circuits and districts) that form part of the research sites.

Ontologically, the adoption of a constructivist paradigm in this study, assisted the researcher to respond to the main question: *What is the nature and practice of distributed leadership in the secondary schools of South Africa and how does this influence teaching and learning?* Clearly, this question sought to establish ‘what is there that can be known.... about the nature and practice of distributed leadership in the selected secondary schools and how this nature or reality about distributed leadership shape teaching and learning, in the secondary schools studied. Epistemologically, a constructivist paradigm brings an element of knowledge to the inquiry (Creswell, 2014). Adopting the constructivist paradigm for this study in particular, provided a platform for explaining and describing distributed leadership practice in the selected secondary schools of Limpopo province, basing on meaning created about this phenomenon by key stakeholders in the public education system in South Africa.

3.4 Research Approach

According to Creswell (2014:31), research approaches are "plans and procedures for a study that cover the steps from general hypotheses through specific methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation". The present study employed a qualitative research approach. This approach was chosen because it was seen to provide insights into how distributed leadership is understood and practised in the selected schools and how this practice influences teaching and learning in secondary schools (Wyse as cited in Sinaga, 2014:3). The qualitative approach was seen to be suitable for the present study which sought to explore the nature and practice of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools in South Africa and how this influences teaching and learning.

Specifically, the qualitative research approach was embraced in this study because it enables the researchers to analyse and understand the meaning attached to distributed leadership thought and practice in the schools studied and how this understanding shapes practice. In addition the adoption of a qualitative approach helped me to explain how distributed leadership influenced teaching and learning. McMillan (2016) contends this approach is attractive in educational research because it deals with compound veracities that are deeply engraved in participants' perceptions and observations that occur in particular secondary schools operating as the participants' natural settings. Additional support for this view may be found in Hancock and Algozzine (2006) who assert that the major objective of the qualitative method is to understand the conditions under investigation from the perspective of participants rather than investigators. At a personal level as a researcher, this approach enabled me to better understand how distributed leadership is perceived by stakeholders in the selected secondary school.

Clearly, using a qualitative research methodology for the study in hand afforded me a number of benefits as a researcher. Existence of such benefits which may accrue to researchers is supported by Rahman, 2016: 104) who views a qualitative approach as proving a range of frameworks for understanding how stakeholders view distributed leadership. This perspective is also seen to allow researchers the opportunity to gather rich, detailed and all-encompassing data from the participants' points of view without

being compromising the richness of the data (Rahman, 2016:104). Adoption of a qualitative research approach also made it easy for me as a researcher to easily and completely describe and explain how distributed leadership is understood and implemented in the selected secondary schools. This on its own is a benefit to the study which is target at various stakeholders and interest groups.

Yauch and Steudel (2003), Creswell (2014), and Mohajan (2018) also review the benefits of a qualitative research approach, and further justify its use in educational research such as has been done in the present study. The benefits of a qualitative study which were also seen to be applicable and relevant in the present study may be provided as follows:

- Enables genuine interpretation of the real-world view of the nature and practices of distributed leadership which could not be described using numbers of a quantitative approach.
- Provides an understanding of the participants' viewpoints through communicating and involving them in their environment.
- Allows participants an opportunity to outline the prevailing circumstances that influence distributed leadership practices.
- Enables data to be collected, analysed, and interpreted on the nature and practices of distributed leadership in an adaptable environment.
- Provides an all-inclusive understanding of the nature and practices of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools.
- Allows the researcher to acknowledge the different circumstances and wishes of the participants under study.
- Provides an opportunity to exchange words with participants who set out their conditions; and
- Enables the generation of an expository aptitude built on main and unstructured information.

Although there are many advantages to the qualitative research approach, there are also some disadvantages. Berg and Lune for example says that, "... qualitative research is a

long, arduous journey, with illusive data on one side and severe requirements for analysis on the other" (Berg & Lune, 2012:4). This implies that, although the process produces a multitude of high quality data, it may be difficult and complex to evaluate and analyse such data in a real life situation. In addition qualitative data processing and analysis is time-consuming. However, despite these drawbacks, a qualitative research approach was chosen for this study because it has many advantages as outlined above. With the help of the research supervisor and reviewers of the thesis write-up at various stages of its development, I was able to go through the rigors of analysing and distilling the large quantities of data collected from the field and to get meaning out of them. At the end of the day, I was able to put together a meaningful document about the nature and practice of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools from two districts of the Limpopo province in South Africa. My thesis focused on the nature and practice of distributed leadership in these schools as perceived and understood by key stakeholders in the Limpopo province in South Africa and not necessarily from the perspective of what literature says about distributed leadership in other contexts. It also explores how distributed leadership practice in the area studied influences teaching and learning.

3.5 Research Design

According to Yin (2011:75), a research design is a "logical blueprint" that can link the research questions to the kinds of data to be gathered and the analysis techniques to be used. This therefore means that, a research design summarises the steps that are followed in carrying out an investigation such as the one in hand. The present study employed a multiple case study research design. The case study was chosen after it was seen to be the most appropriate research design for the research in hand, in terms of the goals of the research, its objectives, the nature of the research questions, and the research approach employed, that is, a qualitative research approach.

According to Yin (2003) as also echoed by Yin (2011), a case study is an actual investigation that explores and analyses a current phenomenon within its genuine environment, particularly if the boundaries between the scenario and the phenomenon are not well defined. By embracing a case study research design in the present study, I

was able to observe and understand 'distributed leadership' in practice, from the perspective of stakeholders in the area studied. In other words, I was able to observe participants conducting stakeholder, strategic meetings, accountability meetings and motivation meetings in their environments. In addition, I was able to interview and discuss in detail research participants understanding and practices of distributed leadership. I was also able to observe and interview research participants on how their practices of distributed leadership influence teaching and learning. My experience in the present study confirmed a case study to be an "in-depth study of a single or a few programs, events, activities, organisations, or other entities defined in terms of time and place (for example, investigating the culture of a specific magnet school) " as also observe by McMillian (2016:14). An in-depth analysis of distributed leadership in a few secondary schools in selected educational districts , the main goal of the current study was made possible through a the case study research design as discussed above.

3.6 Sampling Procedure and sample size

McCombes (2019) defines sampling as the process of choosing research participants in a scientific study. The fundamental objective of sampling, according to Whitehead and Whitehead (2016) and Showkat and Parveen (2017), is to identify relevant elements to allow the focus of the study to be effectively investigated. Whitehead and Whitehead (2016) categories sampling designs into two major categories, namely, probability and non-probability sampling designs or techniques. In the present study, a non-probability sampling technique, namely, purposive or judgemental sampling was used. This approach allowed participants who were easily accessible and were information rich and therefore, "useful and convenient" (Showkat & Parveen, 2017:7) for the purpose of the study to be drawn into the study sample.

As a researcher, I used my judgment as also guided by the grounding assumptions upon which the study, to purposively select research participants who are information rich and willing to participate in the study (McCombes, 2019). In line with this purposive sampling method, five secondary school principals, five circuit managers and five district officials from the two districts that participated into the study selected into the study sample.

Limpopo province and the two districts that participated in the present study were conveniently drawn into the study in line with their accessibility to me as the researcher. In other words, there were no special reasons why a particular province, district or school was drawn into the sample, ahead of any other, except accessibility. The guiding assumption was that information gathered from any of the provinces, district or school in South Africa would be useful for an understanding of the issues at stake in the study. This means, an understanding of the situation in the Limpopo province, including any district and secondary school in this province may provide a basis for an understanding of the nature and practice of distributed leadership in the entirety of South Africa and how it influences teaching and learning in this country.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

According to Alam (2021), the purpose of data collecting is to gather high-quality data that can then be used to conduct in-depth data analysis, allowing the researcher to further deliver conclusive solutions to the issues under investigation. According to Punch and Oancea (2014), the tactics used in an investigation should be dictated by the research questions. For the sake of this study's research questions, three methods of data gathering were used in the present study. The three methods that were used in the present study are; non-participant observations, face to face interviews, and documents analysis. Data collection in the present study followed a pilot study as described below.

3.8 Pilot Study

A pilot study is referred to as a preliminary research study carried out before the investigation's conclusion (Ismail & Kinchin, 2017:1). A pilot research, according to Janghorban et al. (2013:5), is a smaller-scale investigation conducted before the larger investigation. A pilot study was crucial to the research since it was meant to help the researcher assess the efficacy of the data gathering instruments. It reduced the risk of encountering unmanageable faults during data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation (Ismail & Kinchin, 2017:4). The pilot study was therefore, used in this investigation to administer anecdotal data as well as to evaluate and improve the suitability of the methods used for data gathering and analysis (Janghorban et al.,

2013:6). In the present study, I personally collected pilot data using the tools that were planned for use in the main study. The aim of the pilot study was to establish the feasibility of the research approach and research design and the suitability of research instruments for the planned research. Following data collection in the pilot study, research instruments were cleaned and refined, in preparation for the main study. The pilot study was carried out in two local secondary schools and one circuit that were not part of the sampled schools for the main study. For the two secondary schools, one is in a rural location and another in an urban area. The targeted final-scale secondary schools had comparable backgrounds with the schools that participated in the pilot study and thus served as good examples. The secondary schools in the pilot study were not involved in the main initiative. The pilot study enabled me to review the ethical issues involved in the study and therefore to fine tune both the central question and the secondary questions which serve as the foundation upon which the study anchored. Specifically, it was noticed that the original questions mentioned the names of the two districts that were planned for participation in the study. It was also noticed that by mentioning the names of these districts, the study was going to make it possible for readers to identify research participants in real life. For example, the district managers for participating in the study could easily be identified and be known, thereby violating ethical issues relating to anonymity of data sources and research participants (Artal & Rubinfeld, 2017). Following the pilot study, the names of the participating districts were left out of the main study.

3.9 Data Collection Procedures

Table 3.4 summarises the data collection processes, describes the data collection strategy, lists the data sources, and describes the steps involved in data analysis.

Table 3.4: Abstract of the data collection process

Secondary research questions	Data collection method	Data sources	Data analysis procedure
1. How is distributed leadership perceived by relevant stakeholders in the study's selected secondary schools?	-Semi-structured interviews	- School principals - Circuit managers - District officials	-Document analysis -Thematic analysis
	- Document analysis	- Policy documents - Vision statements - Organogram - Allocation of duty sheet	
	- Observation of leadership activities	Strategic planning session -SMT meeting - Staff meeting - Departmental head meetings	
2. How is distributed leadership practiced in those selected secondary schools?	-Semi-structured interviews	School principals - Circuit managers - District officials	-Document analysis -Thematic analysis
	-Document analysis	- Policy documents - Vision statements - Organogram - Allocation of duty sheet	
	- Observation of leadership activities	- Strategic planning session -SMT meeting - Staff meeting - Departmental meetings	
3. How does the implementation of distributed leadership influence teaching and learning in the study's selected secondary schools?	-Semi-structured interviews	- School principals - Circuit managers - District officials	-Document analysis -Thematic analysis
	-Document analysis	- Policy documents - School's post establishment -Time tables - Organogram -Allocation of duty sheet	
	- Observation of leadership activities	- Strategic planning session -SMT meeting - Staff meeting - Departmental meetings	

Table 3.4 above shows that semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis were the three main data collection techniques that were employed to collect the data needed to provide answers to the research questions upon which the present study was grounded.

3.9.1 Documents analysis

According to Bowen (2009:27), document analysis is "a systematic procedure for ascertaining or evaluating documents, including printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) data". Before starting the method of systematic document analysis, the first sought permission from the Limpopo Department of Education to conduct the investigation. A letter from the Superintendent-General authorising the researcher to do the research, access the research sites and examine the materials was submitted by the researcher. After gaining access to both private and public departmental documents and policies, the records were evaluated. The evaluation and clarification of the impact of distributed leadership practices on instruction in a sample secondary school were the major objectives of this study (Creswell, 2014).

Adoption of document analysis (See appendix L, page, 264) as a data gathering technique was significantly influenced by Bowen's (2009:31) assertions that papers are freely accessible and publicly available and that the process saves time and money. SASA, 84 of 1996, EEA, 76 of 1998, and Personnel Administrative Measures (DBE, 1999), to name a few, were some of the departmental regulations that were easily accessible from schools for analysis. Some these documents as obtained from schools were photocopied and put into a file that as a researcher, I opened for the purpose. This strategy was employed because it permitted allowed me to review the documents more than once, resulting in a deeper understanding of the issues at stake in the study (Bowen, 2009). In other words, each document that was studied was carefully placed in a file for protection so that I could always refer to it in case there were any issues arising during data analysis. By employing document analysis as a technique to gather data on the nature and practice of distributed leadership in the selected secondary schools, the investigation's scope was expanded and contextualised (Bowen 2009).

Despite the benefits of this strategy, I also exercised caution while using document analysis since, as Bowen (2009:31-32) notes, documents may include incomplete or difficult-to-find information. However, I was able to successfully use the documents

analysis techniques in this study, regardless of its inherent flaws. This approach relied on Bowen's (2009:29–30) four key roles of document analysis, in the following ways:

- The historical background and the origin of distributed leadership practices were unveiled as documents were analysed.
- The development of research questions originated from some of the documents that were reviewed.
- Changes and developments in the implementation of distributed leadership practices in secondary schools were tracked using documents.
- Through document analysis, the researcher was able to generate additional questions during the interview session.

A document analysis protocol was used to guide data collection using the document analysis method.

3.9.2 Non-participant observation

Another method of gathering data used in this study was non-participant observation (See appendix M, page 262). This method allowed me to gather data from its natural setting (schools) and exposed the full social environment and contextual setting in which people work (De Chesney, as cited in Whitehead & Whitehead, 2016:119). Whitehead and Whitehead (2016:119) define observation as the "process of observing the daily activities and behaviours of participants in their natural environment to record aspects such as social position". They further contend that it can be "a crucial method of data collection because what you see with your own eyes and perceive with your senses is not filtered by what others may have reported to you or what the author of some document may have seen" (Whitehead & Whitehead 2016:119). I selected this technique for data collection to interact with participants who were present at their SMTs, SGBs, or staff meetings, or to observe participants' beliefs about and experiences with the practice of distributed leadership. As a result, it was simple to evaluate the application of distributed leadership.

Data were collected using the methods, with full appreciation of what Whitehead and Whitehead (2016) define as the "reactivity effect." This refers to how participants may

respond differently as soon as the researcher is introduced, can make it difficult to see what is happening. This effect was mitigated in that before the observation process began, I made an effort to thoroughly explain the purpose the study to research participants. In order to facilitate data collection, an observation protocol was designed to record data while observing distributed leadership in practice. In designing the observation protocol, I used Yin's (2011:145) four categories as a starting point. The following guidelines which Yin (2011) suggested as points of focus made the process of observation in the present study easy and focussed:

- The characteristics of individual people, including their dress, gestures, and non-verbal behaviour.
- The interactions between, or among, people.
- The “actions” taking place, whether human or mechanical; and
- The physical surroundings, including visual and audio cues.

Despite the "reactivity effect" restriction, non-participant observation successfully used as a data collecting method in this study. This method provided me with a way to get information regarding the nature and practices of distributed leadership in everyday situations (educational institutions). Through observation, I had the chance, as a researcher to watch while leadership actions took place and evaluate how it was distributed among the many stakeholders in the school system.

3.9.3 Interviews

A semi-structured face-to-face interview is one of the methods that was used to collect data in the present study (See appendix, I, J, & K). This method was employed, bearing in mind the view that a researcher can gain significant knowledge from an interview discussion which cannot be obtained by use of an observation technique (Gay et al., 2009). A one-on-one, face-to-face interview discussion was held with each of the principals of the selected five secondary schools, the circuit managers responsible for the selected schools, and the district officials in charge of the selected schools and circuits. These research participants constituted a large element of the data collection sources for this study. These interviews were used to gather data that was needed to respond to the

main question: *"What is the nature of distributed leadership practice in selected secondary schools in the Limpopo province of South Africa and how does it shape teaching and learning?"*

The interviews allowed me as a researcher to better understand how stakeholders construct, understand and practice distributed leadership in the selected secondary school system in the Limpopo province. Specifically, the face-to-face interview which I organised to be a one-on-one encounter with each of the research participants allowed me to speak with specific district officials, circuit managers, and principals and thereby obtained first-hand information (Creswell, 2014). Through the use of interviews, as discussed in this section, I managed to obtain strong insight and in-depth understanding about distributed leadership thought and practice by research participants. In line with Gay et al., (2009) who advised that the degree of organisation an interview discuss matters I conducted a semi-structured, face-to-face interview in which I was directly involved as the only data collector and collator for the study. This approach helped me to collect not only verbalised data, but also non-verbal data, such as from gestures, facial expressions and pauses in between statements. In addition, semi-structured interviews also allowed the participating principals, circuit managers, and district officials to independently respond to questions about their understanding and practices of distributed leadership (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Furthermore, this approach this interview method allowed research participants to share their perspective of how the brand of distributed leadership embraced in the schools studied influence teaching and learning. As a researcher, the semi-structured interviewing method allowed me the opportunity to appropriate questions that improved my comprehension of how distributed leadership practices influences teaching and learning in secondary schools.

Specifically, the semi-structured, face-to-face interview discussions with participants gave me the opportunity delve deeper into any ideas or themes that surfaced from the responses of the selected informants. In contrast to structured interviews, the semi-structured interviews as embraced in the present study were seen to be highly flexible and adaptable to the context of the situation on the ground. This flexibility of a semi-

structured interview, for instance, allowed me to collect extremely significant and high-quality data from participants, in ways that would not have been possible if structured interviews had been used. The semi-structured interview allowed me to delve extensively into the explanations and description of distributed leadership thought and practice issues as perceived and understood by research participants at a very personal level.

To collect the interview data needed to answer the central question in the current study, three semi-structured interview protocols were employed with three different participant categories, namely school principals, circuit managers, and district officials. Separate procedures were developed for each participant based on their role and the tasks they performed in the educational system. The interview schedule, which included the scheduled time and location for each interview session, as well as the consent form and invitation to participate in this study, were delivered to the participants' workplaces and places of attendance well in advance. This was done to give the study participants the freedom to perform essential duties of their job titles and descriptions whilst contributing their part as request in the present study. The interview discussions lasted for 45 to 60 minutes per research participant. However, interview sessions were planned in such a way that when the situation demanded that a participant would want to attend to other duties or emergencies, there would be breaks in between. In order to avoid disturbing work activities and processes, interviews were planned to be conducted during the times that were seen to be convenient to the research participant. In the main, all interviews took place after school hours, that is, between 2:30 and 4:00 p.m. Interview discussions were audio-recorded. In addition field notes were also recorded in a field notebook designed for the purpose.

3.10 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The present study employed qualitative data analysis techniques. Flick (2013:4) defines qualitative data analysis as the "classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material" to make assertions about the implicit and explicit dimensions and processes of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it." Similarly, Graue (2015:8) describes quantitative data analysis as "a process involving the description, classification,

and linking of phenomena with the researcher's notions". Bell and Bryman (2007) classified qualitative data analysis into five categories, namely content, narrative, discourse, framework [thematic], and grounded theory analysis. In the present study, a thematic approach to data analysis was employed. This involved coding of data in order to discover patterns or themes that are showing from the collected data.

This study involved simultaneous data collection, data processing, and writing up the findings. This approach is also recommended as effective by Creswell (2014). The six steps of data analysis offered by Creswell (2014:247) were used by the researcher to ensure that the data analysis done was in line with established strategies. To better understand the nature and practice of leadership, the researcher transcribed all of the data that was collected through interviews and observation of examples of leadership activities captured on audio and video.

The transcribing method was used by the researcher to ensure that the information from the audio and video recorders was converted into textual format. In this study, verbatim transcription was used because it allowed the transformed data to accurately reflect what was seen and heard during the interviews. Figure 3.1 below summarises the data analysis procedure employed in the study.

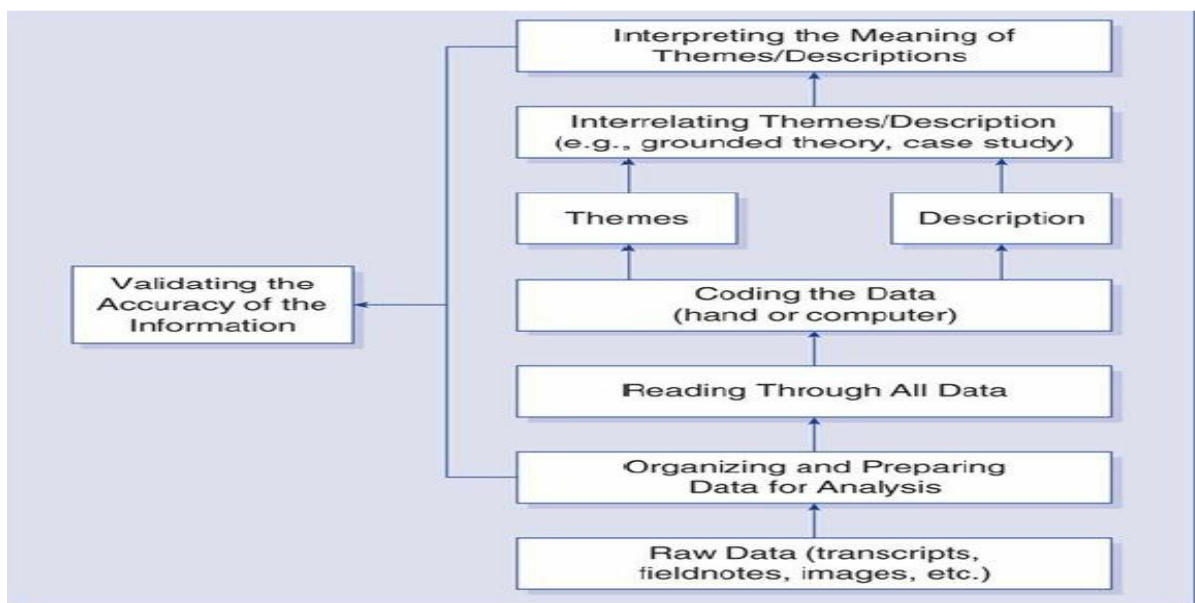


Figure 3.1: Creswell's six steps of data analysis

(Source: Adapted from Creswell (2014:247))

Figure 3.1 above shows in detail the six steps used to analyse data in the present study. As shown in 3.1, the first stage of data analysis is transcription of raw data. This is followed by organisation of data, going through [cleaning] the data, coding, description of the themes, linking the themes; and, finally, interpretation of the themes.

In the present study, transcribing data involved going through audio record interview discussions and field notes and working through to produce comprehensive and organised scripts from which meaning can be derived.

Field notes and transcribed data were organised in files or units by the following study questions:

- How is distributed leadership understood and practised in selected secondary schools, in the Limpopo Province of South Africa?
- In what ways do the practices of distributed leadership in the selected secondary schools shape teaching and learning?
- How can the practice of distributed leadership within the selected secondary schools be described and explained?

Data transcription was done immediately after each day's work of data collection. After the transcription, I read through all the transcripts and field notes to determine the themes showing from the data about how the nature and practice of distributed leadership in the secondary schools studied as perceived and understood by research participants. In addition, transcripts were also analysed to establish how distributed leadership practices in the schools studied influenced teaching and learning. Data were organised into themes and categories by use of codes. The coding process grouped verbatim excerpts and messages from observations and documents analysis and presented them as themes and categories (Rallis & Rossman, 2012) from which coherent meaning about the issues at stake in the study was derived. Specifically, the themes, and categories resulting from data analysis define in depth the nature and practices of distributed leadership in

secondary schools studied. In addition, they also show how distributed leadership influences teaching and learning.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

One of the most important factors in qualitative research is ethics (David & Resnik, 2011; Sanjari et al., 2014). According to McMillian (2016:29) research ethics are "standards and principles used [during a research] to govern behaviour, to identify what is right or wrong, a virtue or vice, good or evil, frequently tied to values and morals", Furthermore, McMillian (2016:29) views ethics in research as "what we base our decision-making on, with regards to the conduct, reporting, and utilisation of research findings".

In the present study, I made sure that established and recognised rules and norms of conduct that distinguish between undesirable and acceptable actions were followed both before and during the inquiry. Since the inquiry involved acquiring information from and about people, the researcher had to protect their rights and general welfare by upholding the study's ethical standards (Creswell, 2014). The researcher followed and used the six ethical principles defined by McMillian (2016:30) as the necessary ethical standards, namely professional competence, integrity, responsibility, justice, respect for people's rights, and serving the public good. The latter served as the foundation for all interactions and choices made during this investigation. The ethical considerations related to consent for participation and access to research sites are addressed in the paragraphs that follow.

3.11.1 Access to the research sites

To ensure that the ethical guidelines were followed, a request for ethical clearance was sent to the University of the Free State, guided by the norms and standards that govern research initiatives. How the research would be carried out and how the researcher would address ethical issues were both specified in the application to the ethics committee. The application (UFS-HSD2018/0259) was authorised by the University of the Free State's Education Ethics Committee under the condition that the researcher abides by their rules.

The approval of the Limpopo Department of Education's Superintendent-General was required to enter the five secondary schools chosen for the study and by the department's policies and regulations regarding educational research activities in the department. The approval was given with conditions, among other things that, study ethics must be followed and that the researcher must make the necessary arrangements with districts, circuits, and schools that were designated to participate as research sites. Following the Superintendent-General's approval, letters were sent to the five school principals, two district directors, three district officials, five circuit managers, and two district officials who had all been identified as participants in the inquiry. Permission to carry out the study as planned was therefore granted before the data collection process began.

3.11.2 Consent for participation in the research

Arrangements were made for an introductory meeting with the indicated participants at their respective study sites after gaining the necessary consent from all the listed institutions. The purpose of the meeting was to officially inform them that they had been chosen as research project participants and to provide them with information about the purpose of the study. A permission form (Annexure F) was created and given to the investigation's identified participants. Consent forms are essential instruments as guidelines for ethical issues, safeguarding privacy, and minimising participant harm.

As per the best practices in educational research as recommended by Johnson and Christensen (2014), and is also a requirement by the university of the Free State, all participants in this study were asked to sign consent forms before being included in the research. When filling out the consent forms, participants were made aware that audio or video recorders would be used during observation and interviews discussions. Participants were also informed that they retained the right to opt out of the study at any time if they felt it would be in their best interest to withdraw their participation from the study. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), and as also expected by the ethical standards at the University of the Free State, it is an important ethical issue to make sure that, research participants are informed that they are free to discontinue their

participation at any time if they choose to do so for whatever reason they see as a cause for them to do so.

Lastly, the information gathered through observations and interviews, recorded by audio and video recorders, as well as reports that were transcribed, were kept secure to safeguard the privacy of the investigation's participants. The identity of participants were concealed via the use of pseudonyms. This strategy allowed the researcher to ensure the study's participants that their confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity would be respected, as also supported by Allen and Wiles (2015).

3.12 Validity and Reliability of the Study

From a qualitative research view, the equivalence of validity and reliability would be trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability (Leung, 2015). All these concepts amount to "convincingness." In other words, validity in a qualitative study refers to the confirmability and credibility of the research, which measures how closely the events or phenomena described in the study match the reality of the real world (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). According to Gibbs (2007, cited in Creswell, 2014: 201), validity in qualitative research happens when a researcher uses certain mechanisms to assess the accuracy of the discovery. Leung (2015) goes on to explain that, in qualitative research, the "appositeness" of the data, tools, and methodologies used is what constitutes validity. However, in qualitative research, reliability essentially demonstrates how constant and consistent the researcher's procedures were throughout the study. This merely denotes uniformity throughout the research (Leung, 2015).

In light of the foregoing descriptions, the researcher validated the investigation by using validity methodologies noted by Creswell (2014:251) and covered below, ensuring that there was consistency throughout the study:

- **Triangulation:** The researcher used semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and observations as data-gathering methods to increase confidence in the research findings. Furthermore, by comparing results from various perceptions, the utilisation

of many research strategies allowed the limitations of each method to be overcome (Heale & Forbes, 2017:98).

- **Clarify the bias:** Any factor that causes a study's results to be distorted is what Polit and Beck (2014) define broadly as bias. The Limpopo Department of Education, where the researcher works as a circuit manager, was the setting for this investigation's subject matter and intended audience. The researcher considered her personal experience as a circuit manager and its potential impact on the formulation of the research questions, data collecting, and selection of the study's target population and locations

3.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the research methodology employed in the study. Specifically, the chapter focused on the research approach, research design, sampling techniques, data collection, data analysis and data interpretation methods embraced in the study. In addition, this chapter also examined the benefits and drawbacks of a qualitative research approach. With reference to the sampling technique, this chapter describes how purposive sampling was used as one of the non-probability procedures identifying participants for this project. The chapter also shows data analysis was embraced as a continuous process that required simultaneous data collecting, data analysis, and writing of the study's findings. The next chapter focuses on presentation, analysis and interpretation of data in order to draw conclusions on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The current study sought to explore the nature and the practice of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools drawn from two districts in South Africa and how perspectives and practice of distributed leadership by key stakeholders in the selected secondary schools influences teaching and learning. The concept, teaching and learning in this study is viewed from a holistic and not the narrow perspective of acquiring academic knowledge and employment related skills only. This study sought to answer the primary research question: *What is the nature of distributed leadership practice in selected secondary schools in the Limpopo province of South Africa and how does it shape teaching and learning?* Specifically, this study sought to explore participants' understanding and practices of distributed leadership in selected schools in the two districts in South Africa. In addition, the study also sought explore how distributed practices in the selected schools and districts can be understood and explained. The participants included, district officials, circuit managers and school principals. The study also sought to explore the implications and effects of this understanding on teaching and learning in the schools studied. The foregoing chapter focused on the research methodology employed in the study. The purpose of this chapter is to present a detailed analysis of the findings of the study.

These findings are analysed and presented using a thematic approach. Thematic analysis is a "distinctive method with a clearly outlined set of procedures in social science" (Braun & Clarke 2013:178). According to Braun and Clarke (2013), thematic analysis is a technique for methodically locating, examining, and summarising patterns of meaning (also known as themes) in qualitative data. Thematic analysis was adopted for this study because it enables the researcher to recognise and comprehend categories of shared meanings and experiences of research participants and therefore make sense of the data collected from the field. Complicated, conflicting, and tangled interactions that exist in the actual world can be captured by a researcher using this data analysis technique (Braun & Clarke 2012). It is in this vein that themes are described by King and Brooks (2018:150) as "recurring and distinctive characteristics of participants' stories, characterising certain

perceptions and/or experiences, which the researcher regards as significant to the study's research questions". Similarly, a theme "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke 2006:82).

The data in this study are presented by means of tables, figures, and verbatim excerpts which are interpreted individually or jointly to convey meaning, including that from non-verbal communication as expressed by participants during interview discussions. Data presentation is guided by the following secondary questions:

- *How is distributed leadership understood and practised in selected secondary schools, in the Limpopo Province of South Africa?*
- *In what ways do the practices of distributed leadership in the selected secondary schools shape teaching and learning?*
- *How can the practice of distributed leadership within the selected secondary schools be described and explained?*

Clearly, these question do not focus the study on the theories and practice of distributed leadership from the perspective of literature and practice outside the study area. Instead, they focuses the study on the stakeholders' perspectives of distributed leadership, that is, their understanding of what distributed leadership should be and how it is practised in the schools and the school system studied. In addition, the study seeks to establish how distributed leadership as practised in the area of study influences teaching and learning. This chapter therefore presents and analyse in line with the questions above beginning with demographic data for the research participants.

4.2 Biographic Data and Coding for Research Participants

This section presents biographic data for the research participants. Hammer (2011) describes such data as a detailed description of participants which enables readers and researchers to identify the participants to whom research findings generalise and enable comparisons to be made between replicated studies. In educational research, biographic data comprise in part, what Jita (2004) refers to as resources of biography. Andrews et al. (2013), as also cited by Muresherwa (2020), uses the term technologies of self, to refer

to biographic data as presented in this section. In educational research, such as the one in hand, biographic data are important because they help researchers to make sense of research findings as drawn, for example, from interview discussions, documents analysis and non-participant observations of practices by research participants.

Table 4.1 below summarises the main characteristics of the biographic data of research participants for this study.

Table 4.1: Biographic data of research participants

Demographic Profile of the Participants						
Participant	Gender	Age (years)	Designation	Academic and Professional Qualifications	Teaching Experience (years)	Management Experience (years)
District Officials						
DF1	F	64	District Director	JSE, BA (Hons), MAPL, PhD	8	36
DF2	F	51	District Director	B PEAD MPA	9	20
DF3	F	55	DCES Curriculum	STD, BED	30	14
DM1	M	55	DCES Governance	STD, BA (Hons), BED MED, PhD	6	20
DM2	M	50	DCES Planning	STD, MPA	15	26
Circuit Managers						
CM1	M	54	Circuit Manager	STD, BA (Hons), MAPL	18	12
CF2	F	57	Circuit Manager	MTEC, PhD	33	26
CM2	M	54	Circuit Manager	STD, HED, BTECH	11	17
CM3	M	52	Circuit Manager	STD, BA (Hons) PGDEL	16	28
Principals						
SM1	M	49	Principal	BA (Hons) HEd	25	11
SM2	M	59	Principal	BSc. HEd	14	24
SM3	M	57	Principal	BSc (Hons) B.Ed UED	6	28
SM4	M	59	Principal	B Agric. UED, B. Ed, FDE	32	27
SM5	M	46	Principal	STD, B. Ed	24	16

Key: DM: District Male; DF: District Female; CM: Circuit Male; CF: Circuit Female; M: Male; F: Female; BSc: Bachelor of Science; BA Honours: Bachelor of Arts Honours, BEd: Bachelor of Education; BTech: Bachelor of Technology; PGDEL: Post Graduate Diploma in Environmental Law; MPA: Masters of Public Administration; MAPL: Master of Advocacy and Political Leadership; PhD: Doctor of Philosophy

Table 4.1 above shows the different characteristics of the research participants for the present study. In total, research participants for the present study as also shown in Table 4.1, above were 14. As shown on the table, a number of codes and different labels were used in the present study to identify each category of research participants and distinguish one group of research participants from the other. These codes enabled the researcher to reference responses from a participant, and/or participant category when data were presented and analysed in this chapter. It may be observed from the data as presented in Table 4.1 above that, research participants for the present study, was drawn from the multiple levels of power and authority in the public education value chain. It may further be observed from the data presented in Table 4.1 above that all the research participants in the present study have attained levels of education that qualify them for the roles that they are playing in the secondary schools education system in South Africa, at least on paper. On the face of it, this knowledge made them able to understand the issues at stake in the study, at least from a personal perspective practice point of view, that is, what they believe distributed leadership should be and how they are practising it.

4.3 Themes, Categories and Sub-categories

The central question upon which the present study is framed is: *What is the nature of distributed leadership practices in secondary schools of South Africa and how does it influence teaching and learning in these schools?* Table 4.2 below presents the data analysis framework for the study. This analysis framework captures the themes, categories and sub-categories emerging from data analysis in the study.

Table 4.2: Data analysis framework for the study

Themes	Categories	Sub-categories
4.4 Stakeholder's Perspective of Distributed Leadership	4.4.1 The concept and practice of distributed leadership	<p>4.4.1.1 <i>Research participants' level and sources of knowledge</i></p> <p>4.4.1.2 <i>Mobilisation of leadership expertise and stakeholder involvement</i></p> <p>4.4.1.3 <i>Shared responsibilities and accountability</i></p> <p>4.4.1.4 <i>Team Building and Capacity Development</i></p>
	4.4.2 Multiple sites for decision-making, decision-taking and implementation under distributed leadership in a secondary school context	<p>4.4.2.1 <i>School level</i></p> <p>4.4.2.2 <i>Circuit level</i></p> <p>4.4.2.3 <i>District level and beyond</i></p>
4.5 Distributed Leadership and the School Leadership Environment	4.5.1 Distributed leadership and the Institutional context	<p>4.5.1. 1 Distribution of leadership within schools</p> <p>4.5.1. 2 Distribution of leadership within the circuit</p> <p>4.5.1.3 Distributed leadership within district</p>
	4.5.2 Distributed leadership and the personal context of participants	<p>4.5.2. 1 Distributed leadership and the persons involved at a school level</p> <p>4.5.2.2 Distributed leadership in the context of committees and sub-committees</p>
4.6. Distributed Leadership Practice as Stakeholder Participation and Involvement	4.6.1 Distributed leadership interventions within the conventional school level boundaries	<p>4.6.1.1 Distributing leadership roles and responsibilities through delegation</p> <p>4.6.1.2 Distributing leadership roles and responsibilities through co-option</p> <p>4.6.1.3 Distributing leadership as grooming interventions</p>

	4.6.2 Distributed leadership interventions involving stakeholders outside the conventional school boundaries	4.6. 2.1 Vision bearing and Controlling activities 4.6.2.2 Mentoring and supporting activities 4.6.2.3 Monitoring and evaluation interventions 4.6.2.4 Putting appropriate systems in place
	4.6.3 Distributed leadership, public policy and democratisation of education	4.6.3.1 Policy formulation to guide teaching and learning 4.6.2.2 Ratifications and approval of internal policy programmes 4.6.3.3 Policy implementation and stakeholder involvement 4.6.3.4 Monitoring and evaluation
4.7 Distributed leadership and how it influences teaching and learning.	4.7.1 Distributed leadership and its effect on teaching and learning environment	4.7.1.1 Effects relating to strategic issues 4.7.1.2 Effects related to empowerment and development of stakeholders 4.7.1.3 Effects related to monitoring and controlling of instructional programmes
	4.7.2 How distributed leadership influence teaching and learner attainment	4.7.2.1 Talent identification and talent development 4.7.2.2 Increased scope of accountability and demands on performance 4.7.2.3 Teambuilding and stakeholder empowerment 4.7.2.4 Putting in place systems that promote collaborative leadership

Source: Primary data analysis by the researcher

Table 4.2 provides an analysis framework for data in the present study. This framework also helped the researcher to make sense of the collected data and to organise them into research findings, as further presented below.

4.4 Stakeholders' Perspective of Distributed Leadership

This section focuses on research participants' understanding of distributed leadership, in their capacity as key stakeholders in public education space in the secondary schools system studied, beginning with the category on research participants' understanding of the concept and practice of distributed leadership and the bases for this understanding.

4.4.1 The concept and practice of distributed leadership

The first set of questions asked under this category sought to establish if research participants believed that they understood the concept and practice of distributed leadership, if so, how in their opinion they believed they obtained this knowledge and whether they see their knowledge of distributed leadership to be adequate.

4.4.1.1 Research participants' level and sources of knowledge

Table 4.3 below summarise data concerning research participants' perspective concerning their level of understanding for distributed leadership thought and practice and the sources of such knowledge.

Table 4.3: Research participants knowledge on distributed leadership and sources for this knowledge

Participant	Academic and Professional Qualifications	Diploma/Degree has Educational Leadership	Participant has Knowledge on Distributed Leadership	Adequacy of Knowledge of Distributed Leadership	Source of Knowledge on Distributed Leadership
DF1	JSE, BA (Hons), MAPL, PhD	No	Yes	Adequate	Personal Research & Experience
DF2	BPEAd MPA	No	Yes	Inadequate	Workshops
DF3	STD, Bed	No	Yes	Inadequate	Workshops
DM1	STD, BA (Hons), BEd MEd, PhD	Yes	Yes	Adequate	Education & Experience
DM2	STD, MPA		Yes	Inadequate	Workshops
CM1	STD, BA (Hons), MAPL	No	Yes	Inadequate	Workshops
CF2	MTEC, PhD	No	Yes	Inadequate	Education & Experience

CM2	STD, HED, BTECH	No	Yes	Inadequate	Workshops & Experience
CM3	STD, BA (Hons) PGDEL	No	Yes	Inadequate	Workshops
SM1	BA (Hons) HEd	No	Yes	Inadequate	Workshops
SM2	BSc. HEd	No	Yes	Inadequate	Workshops
SM3	BSc (Hons) BEd UED	No	Yes		Workshops
SM4	BA (Hon) BEd, Med	Yes	Yes	Adequate	Education & Workshops
SM5	STD, BEd, MEd	Yes	Yes	Adequate	Education & Workshops

Source: Primary Data collected by the researcher

Table 4. 3 shows that all the 14 research participants in the present study believed that they had at least some functional knowledge on distributed leadership. However, only four out of the 14 participants believed that their knowledge on distributed leadership was adequate. Two of the research participants that indicated that they have adequate knowledge on distributed leadership revealed that they obtained this knowledge in two main ways, namely, through the degree and diploma programs that they studied which had a component on educational leadership, and through in-service training workshops. These two, that is, SM4 and SM5, had Master of education degrees as their highest qualifications. Two other participants who claimed to have adequate knowledge of distributed leadership had doctoral degrees as their highest qualifications. The two research participants with doctoral degrees are, DF1 and DM1. Out of these two, DF1 revealed that she obtained knowledge on distributed leadership through personal research as a PhD degree holder and through experience as an educational leader in an environment in which distributed leadership is highly emphasised and prioritised. He described his situation as follows:

As a holder of a PhD degree myself, I am engaged in personal research as an academic in my own right (Emphasis) It is from such studies that I have gained what in my opinion is a detailed understanding of distributed leadership as a practice... I think you are also aware that the department of education emphasises on distributed leadership in an effort to democratise education in this country and to improve accountability for educators. I think my experience as a senior leader

in an educational environment in which distributed leadership is a priority has therefore contributed to my understanding of distributed leadership especially as practised in this beautiful country of ours (*Smiling, in a way that appeared to be reassuring the researcher that she had picked on a research participants with the knowledge she sought to understand*) (DF1).

The verbatim except above shows that, research participant DF1 believed that she had adequate knowledge of distributed leadership. However, she did not obtain this knowledge through any formal training. Instead, she gained this knowledge through independent academic research, and through experiencing, working in an environment in which distributed leadership was prioritised, “in an effort to democratise education... and to improve accountability for educators.” Research participant DM1, another holder of a doctoral degree and senior educational leader expressed his view on how he gained knowledge and understanding on distributed leadership as follows:

... In my view, the education that I acquired through the academic journey that I followed, up to where I am today and the experiences I went through as a professional have helped in my understanding of the meaning of distributed leadership, the benefits accruable to an education system that has embraced this shared approach to school leadership and what is expected of us in our capacity as leaders in order to realise these benefits... If asked to summarise the source of my knowledge in two words, I would give them as ‘education & experience.’ This means, the education that I gained for myself and my experience as a leader has equipped me with knowledge on distributed leadership... As an individual I believe I have enough knowledge to see me through as a leader in an environment in which distributed leadership is seen to be important (DM1).

Data as presented above show different sources and nature of research participants’ understanding of distributed leadership thought and practice. Three key sources of knowledge seem to show from the data presented above. These are, formal education, independent research and experience in a leadership environment where distributed is emphasised. When they were asked various questions that specifically elicited responses on their understanding of what the concept and practice of distributed leadership actually mean to them, research participants responded in ways which were analysed and are further presented as sub-categories below.

4.4.1.2 Mobilisation of leadership expertise and stakeholder involvement

When the different categories of research participants in this study were asked questions concerning their views of the meaning of the concept and practice of distributed leadership, some of their responses were as follows:

According to my views; ... distributed leadership involves mobilisation of leadership expertise from all levels, especially from all the members of SMTs, SGBs and deputy principals in order to support the principal's leadership. That is at a school level. At the circuit level, distributed leadership means mobilising expertise from school principals and at times deputy heads and support staff at this level for the good of the entire education system ... In fact structuring the school system into school level leadership, circuit level leadership, district level leadership, provincial level leadership and the nation level leadership, to me is an attempt to distribute leadership by increasing the centres of power and by involving more stakeholders than just a few people (CM2).

The key concepts that seem to emerge here is mobilisation of leadership expertise and stakeholder involvement. The same view is shared by another participant who responded to the same set of questions as follows:

... Distributed leadership is a process whereby a leader in an institution considers and ropes in other people's views and expertise in order to achieve a shared goal in order to benefit all members and the institution as a whole ... such as a school, a circuit or a district. Distributed leadership is practised across the board. People are roped in to lead in areas where they have more knowledge and skills than others as they are also led in other areas... The understanding is that, other people in the institution may have skills that can be enlisted, I mean, roped in for the good of the institution such as a school, a circuit or a district. This is applicable where the leader and his or her subordinates share the vision of the institution and the mission thereof so that they can all participate in managing the institution in which they all claim a stake. This is regardless of the fact that at the end of the day, the manager is the sole accounting officer... In this way, they plan together, they implement everything together and they achieve, so that when they succeed, they celebrate together... They show a clear case of team work and unity of purpose (DF3).

The excerpt above shows that distributed leadership is viewed by some stakeholders in the education system as involving mobilisation of leadership skills and knowledge from within the organisation in order to realise shared goals. The use of the word '*mobilisation*' by participant CM2 supports this view. Participant DF3 used the words '*rope in*' several

times in the interview discussion. In addition, the same participant also used the term '*enlisted*', which is also related with mobilisation and roping in. All this means that distributed leadership is viewed as the practice of leadership in which a leader in an institution ropes in, enlists or mobilises the energy, skills and knowledge from other stakeholders to support his or her own leadership initiatives. This involves planning together, implementing everything together and then achieving together. The concept of stakeholder involvement also features prominently in the excerpts as presented above. This also ensures institutional success by utilising leadership expertise and knowledge at various levels of the organisation. In the South African context, the levels range from district through circuit to school level. This is in line with Harris' (2013) proposition that, in a multifaceted institution such as post-apartheid South African schools, leadership cannot be accomplished by one person (principal) only. Instead, leadership responsibilities must be distributed to all the relevant stakeholders across the institution (Spillane & Healey 2010) to improve teaching and learning in schools.

4.4.1.3 Shared responsibilities and accountability

Responding to the same questions on what in their understanding research participants thought the concept and practice of distributed leadership mean, some of the research participants in the present study expressed their views as follows:

Distributed leadership is a term to mean that leadership responsibilities and accountability expectations are shared among staff or people in an organisation... Their different skills and knowledge put each of these different people in positions in which they are going to benefit from each other. In this approach, leadership is shared, rather than leadership responsibilities resting with only one individual in the school system, or just a few people on positions of authority. In my opinion, I think teachers, or even children, depending with their ability and attitude, should also be given responsibility to lead... This is what I mean by shared responsibility (SM4).

Another participant who shared a similar view had this to say:

I think distributed leadership refers to a leadership type in which the authority to lead is shared among members of the SMT in a hierarchy of the education system, that is, from the principal, the SMT and department heads. Practically, all members in this hierarchy are given authority to lead

and are therefore accountable for the performance of the school in one way or the other, although at a school level, the principal is finally answerable and at a circuit level, the circuit manager is finally accountable. For this reason, they should be given authority to lead... Shared leadership means that members of the SMT remain motivated to see the school perform well, unlike when the principal only is responsible for leadership in all school activities... In the same way, the principal who is directly answerable to the circuit manager is also motivated to see his or her school perform. I think the best that the South African education system did to promote effective leadership in schools is the emphasis being placed on such structures as SMTs, and on a clear line of authority from department heads, deputy principal, principal, circuit manager, and district director. All these members are accountable for results... Accountability for performance under a distributed approach is spread over a broad spectrum of stakeholders including those stakeholders who may not directly be under the line of education. In our situation, principals are also accountable to traditional leaders (CM4).

Both participants quoted above indicated that distributed leadership is a concept used to describe how leadership responsibilities and accountability are shared among members of an organisation. However, it is also evident that, whilst participant SM4 felt that leadership responsibilities may be distributed to as far as the teachers, the second participant, that is, participant CM4, brought in the element of sharing responsibilities from the level of SMTs upwards. This means participant CM4 saw SMT as the starting point for leadership and management in schools, with teachers as passive observers. What seems to be showing from data analysis in the present study is that research participants appreciated the view that distributed leadership involves sharing of leadership responsibilities among stakeholders within an organisation who are also accountable to external stakeholder. What is different is the perspective concerning the level of distribution and accountability for results. In other words, whilst some participants expressed that leadership distribution should be based on individuals' skills and attributes and not on positions only, others seemed to believe that leadership should be distributed among the members of the SMT and those within the chain of command or leadership hierarchy only. In addition, whilst some participants mentioned that accountability should be shared, even if it means that non-positional leaders are also involved, others seemed to believe that accountability should remain with positional leaders, namely department heads, as members of the SMTs, deputy principals and principals only.

4.4.1.4 Team building and capacity development

Responding to the questions on how they perceived the concept and practice of distributed leadership, the third group of research participants' responses are as captured in the verbatim excerpts below:

I see distributed leadership to be developmental in nature... Whilst it also serves to achieve educational goals as viewed from today's perspective, personally, I also see distributed leadership to be about building capacity for future leaders and educators. Both positional leaders and non-leaders share leadership roles, apparently to achieve educational goals as perceived today. However, stakeholders, for example, teachers are also trained to occupy leadership positions and to be more effective leaders for tomorrow. This provides continuity in school leadership as a practice... In addition, I see distributed leadership to be about team building. When power and authority to make decisions is shared among stakeholders who are working to achieve the same goal, there is a tendency for these stakeholders to seek to work together collaboratively as they all seek to achieve the goal as envisioned by all... This high level collaboration may result in the formation of formidable teams to steer the school forward (SM1).

It is the act of inspiring, motivating and capacity building for knowledgeable teachers and other members of staff to lead others in various activities in which their knowledge and skills are seen to be important. It means that teachers, parents and even students are capacitated to take the initiative to perform and accept responsibility for the outcome of their effort (SM2).

I see distributed leadership as a leadership approach in which leadership responsibilities which under some situations are the private preserve of people in high echelons of power are devolved so that people low in the organisation structure are also allowed to participate in leadership activities and decision making. In the secondary schools in South Africa, leadership distribution is sometimes achieved through participation of teachers in School Governing Boards and SMTs. Once in these boards or teams, teachers may be assigned to committees where leadership roles are further delegated... This approach to leadership serves a capacity building role for teachers as it also motivates and prepares them for leadership positions, even as principals or circuit managers in future (SM3).

The common word for participants SM1, SM2 and SM3's perspective of distributed leadership, as the verbatim quotation above seems to suggest, is '*capacity building*'. The term capacity, either in its noun or its verb form, was used two times in the quotations above. This use shows the centrality of this term in the definition of distributed leadership

by participants in this study. In a similar vein, in an apparent affirmation of the concept distributed leadership as capacity building, another participant had this to say:

... distributed leadership is mobilisation of leadership energy from all levels... and maybe from circuit level as well as from schools, and then channel this energy through the entire organisation and thus generate opportunities to capacitate all the people from the circuit level to schools for the improvement of performance at all these levels, especially at the school level, where things actually happen and where results should be realised... I think capacity building is very important here because without being equipped with the needed skills, one cannot lead for results... For me, distributed leadership also means empowering members to lead through both giving them the chance to lead and through capacitating them, such as through training, participation and involvement, so that they can lead their schools, with a focus on results... Okay, by results, I mean the purpose for which schools were built in the first place, that is, to provide quality basic education to all children in line with the national vision, as also captured in the vision and mission statement of the Limpopo department of education as displayed on this notice board over there [*Pointing to the notice board in his office*] (CM2).

Clearly, research participants in the present study believed that distributed leadership creates opportunities for building the capacity of educators at various levels to effectively work towards the realisation of the national vision on education. The phrase, capacity building or building capacity was in the responses of participants, as presented in verbatim excerpts above. Responses from participants also showed capacity building as referred in this study, to be focused on leadership for learning, in the context captured in the national vision and mission on education as also captured in the vision and mission statement for the Limpopo department of education. The vision statement for the Limpopo department of education which was seen displayed on the notice board in participant CM2's office and captured by camera during data collection is present in Figure 4.1 below:



Figure 4.1: Departmental Strategic Focus for the Limpopo Department of Education
(Source: Information sheets in one of the circuit manager's office)

Data as presented above show that some research participants in the present study also understood distributed leadership in the context of capacity development. The capacity in this context is about providing quality and innovative education programmes to learners in Grade RR to Grade 12 based on the understanding that “The heartland of Southern Africa – development is about people” (See Figure 4.1 above). In a clear agreement with participants; CM2 SM1, SM2 and SM3’s responses given above, participant DF2 had this to say concerning the same view on distributed leadership and capacity building:

... It is about building the capacity of teachers for a collaborative approach to school leadership and giving organisational members the opportunity to lead... People end up realising that, no we are able to do this collectively and effectively, because they will be doing it practically under the guidance and supervision of management, and within the backdrop of team spirit. What this also means is that distributed leadership entails on the job training on leadership skills for staff members involved, as well as building solid teams, comprising people who are capable of motivating and assisting each other towards a common purpose. It is from people exposed to this type of leadership where school leaders will be selected for promotions (DF2).

The excerpts above show that distributed leadership, for some research participants in the present study, is about building capacity for leadership and classroom practices. In other words, this involves equipping organisational members with skills and appropriate attitudes for leadership and teaching, that is, capacity building and empowerment for leadership and instruction. For some, the capacity is important in its own right for the purpose of current performance, including in classroom practices. However, for others, whilst the capacity to lead may be useful today, in the main, this capacity is considered to be useful in future when members will have been promoted to official leadership positions and be accommodated in the officially designated school positions, such as, as members of the school management teams. The former group of participants is the one which understands distributed leadership to include teacher leadership whilst the later views distributed leadership to embrace SMTs only. The focus on distributed leadership as involving SMTs only is in line with Ali and Yangaiya (2015:74), who, citing earlier work by Hulpia and Devos (2010) define distributed leadership as "... the sharing of leadership functions among leadership teams", that is, within a group of people in an organisation who hold leadership positions, as opposed to teacher leadership, which involves sharing leadership roles with teachers with capacity to do so and thus benefit the school.

What is clear in data as presented above is that, all research participants in the study understood the concept and practice of distributed leadership in the context of shared leadership. However, some participants understood distributed leadership to be about a shared approach to educational leadership which involves members of the SMTs only. On the face of it, this view seems to be in line with Section (16) of the South African Schools Act 1996, which holds that, only the principal as a key member of the SMT, is accountable for the implementation of all educational programmes and curriculum activities. This position clearly mean that the principal, regardless of the distributed leadership drive is still responsible for the performance of his/her school. Clearly, data as presented above show that research participants understood that distributing leadership is not dereliction of responsibility on the part of school principals, for example. One research participant (participant SM4) thus said "I also ensure [even after distributing leadership roles] that things are being done correctly since at the end of the day I am the

one who is accountable for the performance of my school.” Participant CM4, a circuit official also said, “In our situation, principals are also accountable to traditional leaders.”

Clearly data as presented above seem to show that distributed leadership raises questions of accountability. In fact, the word accountable was mentioned several times by research participants during interview discussions, clearly showing that, responsibility, that is, the obligation to perform owed by policy implementing agents to stakeholders is still important under a distributed leadership framework. On the face of it, accountability expectations, which some research participants seem to see as the purpose for distributed leadership seems to be an obstacle to embracing this approach to school leadership by school principals in particular. However, data as presented above also seems to show that, distributed leadership in the same districts studied, is, on the other hand, understood in the context of shared leadership, which also embraces teacher leaders as a key component of the school leadership matrices, regardless of the pressure to account, on the part of school principals. The key activities, as data seem to suggest, indicate that, distributed leadership is also viewed by some stakeholders to involve mobilisation or enlisting the energy, expertise and attitudes of members within the school system including those outside the boundaries of the SMTs, that is, teachers, for example, to contribute their lot within the perspective of school leadership towards the realisation of school goals. Last but not least, data as presented in this section suggests that distributed leadership is also viewed by stakeholders in the perspective of capacity building, that is, for both immediate and future use of the resultant capacity. The focus for these activities appears to be shared leadership in its various forms, within the multiple levels of the school leadership environment as further discussed below.

4.4.2 Multiple sites for decision-making decision-taking and implementation under distributed leadership in a secondary school context

Research participants were further asked questions regarding their perceptions of the decision-making, decision-taking and implementation matrices in the schools’ system. They were also asked questions concerning what they considered to be the advantages

of distributed leadership. Data to this effect are presented thematically below, beginning with school level data as a special category showing from this analysis:

4.4.2.1 School level

On being asked as to who makes important decisions concerning what and how things should be done and by who, some of the responses were as follows:

Well, most of the decisions are made at the school governance level, either by the principal, the SGB (school governing board). Since the principal is the main actor and the one who carries institutional vision he should be allowed to drive the institution towards the identified goal without disturbances. But then, he should not do everything alone ... but in consultation with others. Here, we first consult with the, SGB, depending with the issue in hand, and then the principal may decide to involve the SMT... The SMT will then develop various activities to achieve the set targets, now with the involvement of everyone in the school, including those sweeping the floors... **But like I said, it all starts at the governance level, and from governance, to the principal and then moving to the SMT, then to implementation at the shop floor** [*bold for emphasis*] (SM1).

The excerpt above points to the view that decision-making at a school level follows the traditional chain of command beginning from the SGB and/or the principal through the SMTs to people at the shop floor, including teachers, for implementation. In an apparent support of this view, another participant shared:

It is a well-known that the principal is the key. That is what he or she is called the principal... He should be visible at all levels, from the policy formulation level to policy implementation... However, at some point, all of us will have to take decisions and be allowed to perform. At times, management will have to directly control only in situations where you find that the people lower down are taking the wrong direction. As the manager of the school, under this situation you will have to guide them towards the correct direction and action, of course without interference... What I means is that, depending with the situation, people should be managed by exception, allowing them to lead each other, in the process, and not you, directly involved all the time... In reality, the system should be well corroborated and supported (SM2).

In a similar vein, participant SM5 responded to the question as follows:

We take collective decisions as a school. I've got SMT members, and school management members, which are educators. I have four of them that are assisting with me in running of the school. So, whatever idea that I come up with, or is handed to me from above. I call them, talk to them, then hear their views and from there, we move down to the staff. And every one of them, they should also contribute their thoughts, especially at implementation level bearing in mind that most of the things that we do come to us as policies meant for implementation. Of course, we also add our own input at an operational level to make the final decisions appear as collective, and not one-man decision, in order to promote stakeholder buy-in. ... I mean, even teachers may also lead the way. Where the situation demands, even learners are also allowed to assume leadership roles on issues affecting them" However, by and large we have to implement policies as they come from above (SM5).

The data presented above shows that, at school level, most decisions are made at a policy formulation level and are handed down to schools for implementation. However, internal stakeholders such as the principal, members of the SMTs and SBGs are also allowed to make adjustments on the policies at an operational level, to make the policies implementable. At the end of the day, leadership appears as collaboration among stakeholders at different levels of the organisation structure, each of whom plays a unique role, although at the end of the day, the school principal as data seem to suggest, is finally responsible for the performance of his school, and is held accountable for such performance. As data also seem to show, the SGB, and the SMT, comprising the school principals, deputy principal, and department heads appear to be more visible in decision-making than classroom teachers. Specifically, not much was said about teachers and learners as part of the leadership matrices in the schools studied. Where teachers are mentioned, the purpose seems to be attract stakeholder buy-in to management decisions and not that management thought it could benefit from their contribution. One participant however, brought something novel by suggesting that learners at his school teachers and learners are also part of the decision-making matrices. He expressed his point as follows:

... In the sense that there is the school management team, there are also educators at this top level of this decision-making board. In addition, we should also appreciate that, we also have learners' represented in the school governing board... You know, all stakeholders are involved ... and surely this is distributed leadership at its best. With particular reference to my school, for example, each

and every section is represented even in some of the SMT meetings we hold for decision-making purposes. I mean, at times, even teachers and learners are involved. What we do is that, when the need arises, we identify people with the skills or knowledge we need and these people will be given authority to lead others in various capacities related to their skills or knowledge and we expect all to follow... So, in these situations, leadership is not about positions but about roles, although the principal and SMT remain answerable to top management... We have, for example, a teacher here who is good at music. You know what? Working with learners, this leads all of us in this area, and we are seeing this working very well (SM4).

This excerpt suggests that, with respect to decision-making and practice, leadership distribution in some schools is structured to involve both teachers and learners up and above the members of the SMT. However, even as this level of leadership distribution was considered appropriate, accountability expectations on the part of the principal and the SMT still remain issues of concern. This concern was particularly evident where the research participant SM4 used the phrase, "... *although the school principal and SMT remain answerable to top management*". Similarly, another research participant had this to say with regards to decision-making practices:

... Me, as the principal and the chief accounting officer for this school, makes most of the important decisions affecting leadership and management, and my responsibility as a leader is to motivate others to follow my vision which they should also share, once properly communicated (SM3).

Clearly, data presented in this section show that decision-making in the schools studied was carried out at different levels of the organisation structure, even as all school principals subscribe to the view that leadership in schools should be a shared practice. Specifically, most decisions are made at policy formulation levels, that is, by outside agents (national or provincial level) and handed down to schools, only for implementation purposes. As a result, some principals view themselves as policy implementers and not as policy or decision makers. However, others still believe that school level leadership should have an input on policy decisions as they are handed down for implementation. This position is in line with policy captured in section 23(1) (b) and 24(1) which stipulates that, "*The principal of a public school represents the Head of Department in the governing body acting in an official capacity*" (SASA 1996). In this way, the principal represents a

senior government official, at least, at a local school level and hence the obligation to perform, which is placed by policy on his/her shoulders. Data presented in this section also show that, in some schools, decision-making is decentralised to involve both teachers and learners, whilst in others, decision-making is distributed to as far as members of the SMT only. The key constraint for distributed leadership in this context seems to be anchored on accountability expectations on especially the school principal by top management and policy makers, which data in the present study seem to show as the purpose for a distributed leadership drive, especially, from a policy perspective.

4.4.2.2 Circuit level

In responding to questions concerning decision-making as a variable for distributed leadership, research participants expressed a number of issues which reflect on their views in this regard. Answering the question on who makes decisions at circuit level and how these decisions affect school level activities, research participant CM2 specifically expressed his views as follows:

... So, the circuit manager ... myself, makes decisions in consultation with the circuit management committee. More often than not, it is these decisions also informed by policy and the district management committee that we communicate to schools to guide practice (CM2).

As captured in the excerpt above, research participant CM2, seem to imply that decision-making should follow a centralised approach in which informed public policy, public officials and office bearers should make important decisions that are communicated by the leadership to schools for attention. The same type of thinking is also held by research participant CF1, another circuit official who expressed his views as follows:

Since accountability always remains with the circuit manager, the authority to make decisions that affect the circuit purely lies in his or her hands and that of the circuit committee, unless he or she makes a choice to distribute authority to other stakeholders... Mind you, in our context, the circuit committee is also a product of policy. So, the decision making in the circuit, is also shared with circuit management committee, which of course should be under the watchful eye of the circuit manager who, under normal circumstances, is the ultimate positional leader and therefore answerable for the performance of his circuit (CF1).

Clearly, CF1 expressed the belief that circuit management committees present a platform for distributed leadership at least at circuit level. This view is particularly evident where CF1 uses the phrases “distributed authority” and “decision-making in the circuit, is also shared with circuit management committee”. In a clear agreement with the view that circuit committees present a platform for leadership distribution, CM2 had this to say:

A circuit is not run as a one-man show. Instead, it is run by a committee comprising many stakeholders. This provides room for collective decision-making and democracy at the work place. My duty as a circuit manager is to coordinate these many stakeholders and make sure that I get the best out of each one of them. As a circuit manager, I facilitate collaboration of all the stakeholders, embracing almost every person in our circuit committee, encouraging them to give their best, each according to his ability and in their differences... We- also encourage everyone to embrace stakeholder involvement and participation, through distributed leadership practices within the context of shared responsibilities and unity of purpose (CM2).

The excerpt above illustrates that, in some circuits, at circuit level decisions are taken jointly within the context of the circuit committee. In fact, the circuit committee is viewed by participants as providing a platform for distributed leadership by promoting stakeholder involvement and participation in educational leadership by members at a circuit level and circuit officials encourage schools level leadership to do the same. As data show this distribution of leadership should be done in line with their different skills, attitude and knowledge areas that afford stakeholders the opportunity to effectively participate in decision-making and policy implementation. In other words, even though the circuit manager is the ultimate accounting officer, decisions are taken in collaboration within the context of a circuit structure which comprises school principals, departmental heads and educators from both primary and secondary schools. The role of the circuit manager is to ensure that a decision that is agreed on should be implemented at schools. This could be, for example, curriculum management and leadership workshop and training. However, since the circuit manager is ultimately accountable for the performance of his/her circuit, he/she should remain actively involved to ensure that things are done according to acceptable standards. This means distributed leadership is not read in the

area studied to mean dereliction of responsibilities. Instead, as data seem to suggest, distributed leadership is seem to be understood, in part, to comprise an attempt by policy makes to democratise the workplace through stakeholder involvement and participation on issues affecting them and for which they have vested interest .

4.4.2.3 District level and above

District officials were also asked questions with regard to decision-making matrices as key components of distributed leadership. On being asked questions concerning who makes leadership decision at district level and how such decisions may be made to affect leadership in schools, responses were as captured in the verbatim excerpts below:

Obviously, most decisions are initiated by me as the district head. When I come up with an idea, I don't pursue it alone. I first sell such ideas to members at the district level then to circuit level, until they are cascaded to schools for implementation... In our curriculum management meetings, for example, I may just tell members that I am thinking about how we can drive curriculum implementation, and then I will open the floor in order to engage members and I get their ideas. At times I don't even chair the discussion myself. I may decide to involve any one of circuit managers to be the chair and leader of the house for that day... As for me, I will just take a back seat, of course making sure that discussions will not veer off-course, I mean, I should make sure that decisions are within policy expectations... Once decisions are made by the group, with someone else leading and not me, I will just shape it further and ensure that such team decisions effectively speak to relevant policy. Otherwise I don't interfere with the smooth running of meetings and the discussions in progress. I found my members loving this approach and I motivate members at every level of the education system in my district to do the same ... (DF3).

What I can say is that as the district director, I am the leader of the district and the vision bearer on all issues relating to education. This also means I am the key decision maker. Through the office of the district director, it is beyond doubt that all other offices should carry out their mandate and are controlled. For example, the heads of sub-directorates, including circuit managers who are expected to meet at what we call a strategic planning session to plan programmes and activities for a particular year in order to make sure that, at the end of the day, we come up with an action plan that speaks to government policy. These strategic planning meetings should culminate into operational plans ... In simple terms, what I mean is that, decision-making on all issues that are of importance and policy related is more of collective responsibility, but with district director as the leader of the team adequately informed and in the driving seat and therefore in full control (DM2).

The data presented above show that district officials that participated in the present study believed that distributed leadership is important for successful achievement of educational goals in their respective districts. In practice, both these district official work with district management committees to come up with decisions that shape the way work is done in their districts. Issues of accountability also seem to show in the data as presented above. However, although they expressed that, as heads of their respective districts, they were accountable for the results, they still believed that they should collaboratively work with their subordinates at various levels of the education system. Specifically, both participants indicated that, at the district level, the decisions to promote teaching and learning at schools are taken by the district director in collaboration with other stakeholders, including circuit managers, the chief education specialist (CES) responsible for governance and curriculum, heads of sub-directorates responsible for finance, human resource and circuit managers. As data show, district officials seem to be more receptive to a far reaching approach to distributed leadership than other officers at lower levels of the district education structure, including school principals. However, the district directorate wishes that the level of distribution of leadership embraced in the districts could be adopted at all levels of authority within the district structures of the education system. Participant DF3, for example, thus said, *“I found my members loving this approach and I encourage members at every level of the education system in my district to do the same ...”* This statement clearly expresses her wishes. Data as presented above also show that distributed leadership is perceived by some research participants as more of a policy issue than an instructional or pedagogical issue.

4.5 Distributed Leadership and the School Leadership Environment

This section presents data on distributed leadership within specific school leadership environments, beginning with data relating to the institutional context within which distributed is practised in the educational value chain.

4.5.1 Distributed leadership and the institutional context

Participants were asked about their views on how leadership is distributed within the schools, circuits and the district, and its application at schools and circuits. There were varied responses to the question as stated hereunder in the following sub-categories:

4.5.1.1 Distribution of leadership within schools

When they were asked questions concerning how leadership is distributed in schools, research participants responded as captured in the verbatim quotations below, beginning with research participant SM1:

Leadership distribution in this school is structured in such a way that the key decisions are made by the school principal and at the SGB level. From this level, power is then given to the SMTs. As told you earlier, if this was a movie, the principal is like the main actor. He is the one who gives direction to all the programmes in the school. However, he does not work alone... He works with the school management team. The school management team is a team that is made up of the principal himself, the deputy principal, heads of the various departments in a school, and representatives of non-teaching staff in that particular school. The members of these groups assist the principal to lead at various levels of school management. As you can see, the various levels of the organisation structure for the school are responsible with leadership in one way or the other and not the principal and his deputy alone. As the principal, I get my power from two main sources... these are the SGB and the Department of Education, depending with the situation in hand... (SM1).

The excerpt above suggests that distribution of leadership follows the traditional chain of command in the school system. As data shows, this chain begins at the Department of Education level with its different levels, that is, province, district, and then circuit, through to SGB, and then the SMTs. Clearly, distributed leadership in this context is perceived in its traditional and unrestricted approach and is associated with both public policy and professional perspectives. The latter implies that distributed leadership practised for instructional and pedagogical reasons and not as a public policy programmes alone. The approach described above, is also shared by research participant SM5 who describes leadership distribution practices at his school as follows:

Distributed leadership at this school is a collective responsibility. The practice is such that, at a policy formulation and supervisory level, we have the school governing body... At a school management and leadership level, we have the school management team. The school management team consists of stakeholders who help me with the day-to-day running of the school. Strictly speaking, for the smooth running of the school, the services of the members of the school management team such as department heads and the deputy principal are needed. Authority is given to the principal by policy, to constitute school management teams and to distribute leadership roles to other staff members. As a way of distributing leadership roles, for example, all HoDs who are members of the school management team are given leadership roles relating to their respective departments... I can safely say, this is the way leadership is distributed in this school (SM5).

The excerpts above clearly suggest that distributed leadership in some of the schools studied focused mainly on formal leadership positions only and is a product of policy, stemming from policy makers' effort to democratise the work place, and for professional reasons. Whilst data presented above seems to show that distributed leadership in the secondary focuses on members on positional leaders only, one participant however suggested that learners at his school are also part of the decision-making matrices. He expressed his point as follows:

... Whilst there is the school management team to which, naturally, leadership distribution should follow, in this school leadership distribution goes much further than those who are officially designated as school leaders such as circuit managers, school principals, deputy principal, and HoDs. In this school, leadership distribution also reaches to as far as teachers, and at times even learners. The issue here is that, as I mentioned to you before, when the need arises, we identify teachers with the skills or knowledge needed at a given time. These people will be allowed to lead others... I think this is what you earlier on referred to as teacher leadership, if I am not mistaken... As teachers are involved in leadership, as a positional leader myself, I will then focus on creating an environment conducive to emergent leaders such as these to function and succeed... I also ensure that things are being done correctly since at the end of the day I am the one who is accountable for the performance of my school (SM4).

It is evident from data presented in this section that the level and extent of leadership distribution varied from one school to another within the education system. Most participants indicated that leadership within schools is distributed among the members of school governing body, school principals, deputy principals

and departmental heads who collectively are referred to as the school management teams (SMT) only. However, in some schools, involvement of teachers and representative councils of learners (RCL) also comprised distributed leadership practices. It therefore emerged in this study that the level and depth of distributed leadership within the schools' system in the two districts drawn from the Limpopo province of South Africa to participant in the present study varies from one school to the other. It is also showing in the present study that from the perspective of schools principals, distributed leadership in schools may be viewed from two key perspectives, namely, the policy and professional perspectives. The former views distributed leadership as an instructional and pedagogical issue with the objective of improving student learning. However, data as presented in this section seem to suggest that distributed leadership is may be constrained by accountability expectations on placed on school authorities by stakeholders.

4.5.1.2 Distribution of leadership within the circuit

Concerning distribution of leadership within the education circuit level of the school leadership context, two research participants had this to say:

... Yes. Leadership, even at the circuit level, is not a one man band. Remember, we have a sub-committee that looks into teaching and learning. For instance, we have a cluster committee responsible for the management of the curriculum and setting of performance tasks in clusters ... This approach helps to avoid a situation where each one will set their own tasks which sometimes makes it sub-standard... We also do have a committee that is responsible for the welfare of both teachers and learners in schools... and we have a committee that is responsible for strategic planning. All these, collaborate to achieve the single goal of educating the child by creating a fluid link between the circuit and the school and between the circuit the district (CF1).

I see the circuit as an important artefact for leadership distribution in the South African education system... Isn't it that as circuits we are doing the job of the district director so that through us, the system will keep informed about what is happening in schools? The mere creation of the circuit system shows an affinity for distribution as opposed to centralisation of power in the education system... I think you appreciate that even circuit itself has a committee for this and a committee for that ... (smiling). Not everything is done by the circuit manager alone... The committee system is all about sharing responsibilities (CF2).

The verbatim excerpts above shows that research participants saw the circuit system to be an artefact for leadership distribution in the education system. In fact, the circuit was seen to be a level of authority through which the district director influences and controls what happens in schools. The circuit itself is not a one man band. Instead, it comprises different committees that collaborate in helping the circuit manager achieve the tasks and educational goals delegated by the district director. Each committee has distinct roles and responsibilities, such as cluster committees responsible for managing the curriculum and assigning formal tasks, welfare committees responsible for welfare, strategic planning committees responsible for identifying areas of concern in the circuit and schools, committees, responsible for governance or finance, among other roles. Clearly, the committee system provides a platform for sharing leadership roles and responsibilities as the circuit manager seeks to create a link between the schools and the district. Data as presented above also seem to suggest that leadership distribution from the perspective of some circuit officials is done for the purpose of increasing monitoring and controlling school activities on school programmes for accountability and not pedagogical reasons.

4.5.1.3 Distribution of leadership within the district

Talking about distribution of leadership within the context of education districts as structures within the secondary school education system in the Limpopo province of South Africa, one research participant had this to say:

I think you are not new to the fact that the district is an important structure in the South African system of education... It is clear the district director is the custodian of education in the district and he reports directly to the province. Whilst the district officials also gets to schools, most of the job of the district director in the schools is done by circuit managers. These are the foot soldiers empowered by the district director to supervise daily activities and programmes in schools. On his part, the district director also works with a number of committee that are put up to assist him to function and to promote transparency and democracy. Of course, there are challenges which we pick up because of the long chain involved in the movement of information, resulting in communication breakdown, but otherwise, given the level of power and leadership distribution in the education system, we are able to monitor and hold every school principal responsible and accountable for his or

her performance... In this way, stakeholders get value for the money invested in education as we ensure that learners get the best from their learning experiences (DM1)

The excerpt above shows that the education district as a platform leadership distribution in South African education system plays the role of linking the province and the circuits. In turn, the circuits link with the clusters and/or directly with schools. These linkages show the levels of leadership distribution in the schools system. Within the district itself, leadership is also distributed among the various committees established for the purpose with the district director acting as the hub from which authority radiates to different committees for adoption and use. However, the data as presented above also show that the focus for leadership distribution in the education districts seems to be on monitoring and controlling and not on improving instructional practices by teachers or any other objective such as leadership development. Although challenges were identified, namely communication breakdown between and among teams/committees; delays in capturing and sharing of information; challenges in the use of technology; working in silos, and faulty report writing, the structures given above have been seen to provide the platform for leadership distribution and to link the schools with their wider context. Talking specifically about the challenges faced, one of the research participants emphasised:

... Most of the time we have a challenge with communication technology. This means delays for information from the school level to reach us at this district level. With some of this information, people are supposed to just go in into the system and by the stroke of a button be able to access information, but we struggle to get such information because the system does not work at times. When reports are brought to the district level, you find that some of the reports are not well captured. To get accurate information, for example, people at each level are supposed to work with MS officials as leaders in this area and be assisted accordingly. However, for some reason, and probably to avoid the red-tape, they decide to work in silos in some cases. These are the problems we experience where power is decentralised too much, and is given into many hands, like is the case in our system. Ours is otherwise a good system which empowers, motivates and guarantees transparency. It would be good if teachers at school level are empowered in the same way... I mean leadership even at school level should be knowledge-based and not position-based (DM2).

The verbatim extracts above suggests that the office of the district director is a key component for promoting leadership in the secondary school education system in the Limpopo province of South Africa. Specifically, it provides a link and a platform for collaboration between the province and the education circuit. The latter then links with the schools and education clusters to make learning possible. The district offices are structured in such a way that, in addition to the district staff with whom leadership roles are also shared, there are also various committees which collaboratively take leadership roles in their respective areas of specialisation. Although there are problems associated, especially with the red-tape, there are many advantages for distributed leadership as embraced. These include promotion of transparency, motivation for stakeholders and tapping of talent. The excerpt above seem to suggest that distributed leadership in the perspective of some district officials is understood in the context of information movement, for the purpose of controlling the operations of school programmes and activities.

4.5.2 Distributed leadership and the personal context of participants

This section presents data concerning the people within a school system to whom leadership roles are distributed, in cases where distributed leadership is embraced. The data as presented in the form of verbatim excerpts below was seen as important in that they further clarify the nature of distributed leadership in the schools studied.

4.5.2.1 Distributed leadership and the persons involved at a school level

When research participants were asked questions with regards to their understanding of and experiences on who, at school level, is responsible for carrying out management and leadership decisions and practice, responses were as presented hereunder:

In my view, I see leadership to be a shared responsibility among all stakeholders... Leadership roles should surely be distributed to every member with the ability to lead. You may need to appreciate that leadership today no longer resides in positions, but in knowledge and skills needed for performance. I think this is the reason why we use the committee system in South Africa. Different committees and sub-committees are assigned different roles, and these committees are properly staffed with knowledgeable people. Leaders tend to gain from this knowledge for the good of the system... On the question of who in a school set-up is responsible, and who should be given access to lead others, my

answer is that leadership should be afforded to anyone with relevant knowledge and/or skills needed for the job in hand, even those without leadership positions... **Surely, even teachers should be allowed to lead in situations where they are deemed the best knowledgeable for the job at hand** (*bold for emphasis*) (CF1).

The excerpt above shows that the participant (CF1) understood distributed leadership in its unrestricted sense. In an earlier discussion, CFI described distributed leadership as mobilisation of leadership expertise from all levels including from capable teachers, and use this expertise for the good of the entire education system... (See section 4.4.1.1). These extracts clearly suggest that participant CF1 views distributed leadership in the context of shared leadership, which also include teacher leadership. Another participant had this to say:

Personally, I believe that leadership should be distributed to every member in the organogram. You know, the education system is so well structured that we have different stakeholders and these stakeholders should be treated as such. In this school as a system ... you may need to understand that, at the top, we have the principal. Below the principal, we have the vice principal, and just underneath, the vice principal, we have HoDs. Below this group of HoDs, who are many, we also have teachers. Below the teachers we have the students, that is, the learners in our schools. Like I said before, all these are interest groups, each of which either individually or as groups can contribute, in one way or the other, in the leadership of the school and for the good of all of us... Given this background, we therefore involve people from all these categories of stakeholders in leadership roles, depending with the situation in hand... Okay, what I mean is that leadership roles are distributed to every level in the organogram of this school... Even students are also given the opportunity to lead, when the need arises and are seen to have the requisite skills to do so (SM4).

Data presented above show that some stakeholders in the South African secondary school system believe that educational leadership should be distributed across the entire organogram to also include teacher leadership and leadership by learners. In emphasising his point, participant SM4 added that, "*I know, learners are represented in the school governing board. But to me, that may not be enough. They need to be more visible in other areas than just school governance*". For participant SM4, a school principal, the purpose for distributed leadership seem to be also on improving teaching and learning. This view is evident where he said, "... *all these are interest groups, each*

of which either individually or as groups can contribute, in one way or the other, in the leadership of the school and for the good of all of us...” The concept, “all” here also refers to teachers and learners. Another participant (SM2) expressed a different view as follows:

Leadership roles are distributed to members of the school management team. For example, in this school, it is myself at the top as the principal of the school, and then below me is the deputy principal. The deputy principal is the one who controls everything relating to the curriculum. It is the deputy principal who is in charge of that, and then the heads of departments. The structure is *simple* [emphasis] (SM2).

Clearly, participant SM2 believed in a rather restricted approach to distributed leadership, in comparison to participant SM4 above. In this approach, leadership distribution is restricted to top management comprising the school principal and deputy principal only, and then the officially designated school management team, which also includes department heads for the various department. Participant SM4 thus further also expressed a similar view as follows:

To say the least, leadership decisions come from us as management... me and the deputy principal, so to say. After we make the decisions, and after we have discussed with the staff, share these decisions with them we then allow each HoD to implement the decisions as a leader of his or her own department. As a leader myself, I see this approach helping in the development of good organisational citizenship among internal stakeholders in my school and therefore should be encouraged (SM1).

The excerpts above show that distributed leadership is understood and practised differently at school level. In some schools, it embraced teacher and at times learners. In others, leadership is distributed only among the members of a school organogram who are officially designated leaders only. In an extreme case, one participant (SM3) expressed, *“Given the policy environment in which we work, leadership at a school level is primarily about me and my deputy. We make most of the important decisions and then motivate other members of staff to follow the school vision as we see it. So it is primarily us who lead”*. Clearly, this statement by participant SM3 shows pressure to centralise authority and not to distribute leadership. The

pressure seems to be coming from accountability expectations placed on the school principals. This pressure seems to result in different levels of leadership distribution across schools even as school principals seem to appreciate the professional objectives of distributed leadership, namely, to improve instructional practices by teachers and to improve learner attainment.

4.5.2.2 Distributed Leadership in the context of committees and sub-committees

In responding to the same questions regarding their understanding and experiences on who, at school level, is responsible for carrying out management and leadership decisions and practice, responses, research participant CF1 expressed her views as follows:

Well, as I indicated to you earlier, SMTs are some of organisations within a school system that are establish to facilitate distributed leadership and therefore ensure effective supervision of teaching learning processes ... They do so by allowing people to participate in sub-committees, such as curriculum committees up and above direct participation in leadership of their own departments, for example, as department heads. The sub-committees also engage in planning the implementation of school programmes such as team supervision. In this way, the SMTs also help the principal and the circuit manager to supervise teaching learning activities in the school. It is for this reason that I define their roles and responsibilities as part of a distributed management system (CF1).

In a clear agreement with the statement by participant CF1 given above, participant SM2 had this to say:

... We have structures like disciplinary committees, sporting committees and subject committees... Some of these committees I have just mentioned, for examples are being led by members of the SMTs. For example, sporting and subject committees are led by department heads who are members of the school management committees... (SM2).

The extracts above show how SMTs act as platforms for leadership distribution. As data show, members of the SMTs participate in leadership distribution in three ways. First, they do so in line with the roles they occupy as leaders of their own departments. For example, department heads are leaders in their own department. They collaborate with

one another, each in his/her own department, but towards a common goal of educating the child. In addition, they also act as members of subcommittees through which they exercise leadership roles and exact following from the other members of the school system. They act, for example, as committee chairpersons for the various committees that exist in the school system. These committees include subject and sporting committees.

4.6 Distributed Leadership Practices as Stakeholder Involvement

This section presents data relating to the various and activities comprising distributed leadership practices by research participants in the present study and the contexts in which it (distributed leadership) takes place beginning with activities involving members within the conventional school level boundaries.

4.6.1 Distributed leadership interventions within the conventional school level boundaries

Research participants were asked questions with regards to activities comprising distributed leadership practices in the area studied, including the context in which it takes place. Their responses were as captured in the verbatim quotations below, beginning with responses relating to distributed leadership practices involving executing delegated leadership roles and responsibilities.

4.6.1.1 Distributing leadership roles and responsibilities through delegation

On being asked questions relating distributed leadership practices, one research participant, that is, participant SM3 indicated that leadership is distributed among members of the SMT through delegation. He expressed his views as follows:

... Leadership is distributed in this school by delegation... Delegating is when authority to lead others in a specific task is assigned to a specific individual or group of people at a specific time. This means the delegated authority given does not last a long time. For example, a member of the SMT may be asked to chair a meeting. Once the meeting is over, then the authority is over. In this school members of the SMT use such delegated authority to chair a staff meeting. The SGB chairperson who, in terms of policy is supposed

to be a parent may also appoint another parent or any other member to chair a specific meeting. In both cases, this helps to develop leadership capacity in others and to promote shared vision in the school system ... that means a common drive for high achievement among organisational members (SM3).

As shown in the excerpt above, participants see delegation as one way through which members of the SMT, for example, may be roped in to participate in school leadership roles. When they are involved in leadership roles, such as chairing staff meetings, it is felt that this helps to develop shared vision, shared purpose and good organisational citizenship among workers.

4.6.1.2 Distributing leadership roles and responsibilities through co-option

Other participants identified co-option as one way through which members of the SMT may be involved in distributed leadership. Responding to questions relating to how organisational members, such members of the SMT participate in distributed leadership, participant SM5 explained his view as follows:

... Members of SMT may be made to participate in leadership roles through co-option. In my school, for example, there is this other department head, I mean (*redacted name given*) from languages who was co-opted to be the teacher representative in the SGB. This is one way through which members get to be involved in leadership roles other than their usual day-to-day responsibilities. As you may be aware, in the South African schools setting, it is policy that teachers be represented in SGBs, since the SGB itself is an attempt by the department of education to ensure that democracy is practiced in the education system for this country... In this case (*redacted name given*) was co-opted because of his maturity and experience as a department, languages. As he assumed his leadership role, he still remained HoD, because he is very good at that role too (SM5).

During the interview discussion research participant SM5 also presented to me a policy circular on SGBs in order to show the composition of SGBs as an attempt by the Department of education to democratise the education space through promoting stakeholder participation and involvement. The participant also wanted to emphasise that whilst some members were voted into the SGB, others, like the

teacher he referred to were co-opted. Figure 4.2 below is an extract from this circular on SGBs as used in the schools in the Limpopo province of South Africa.

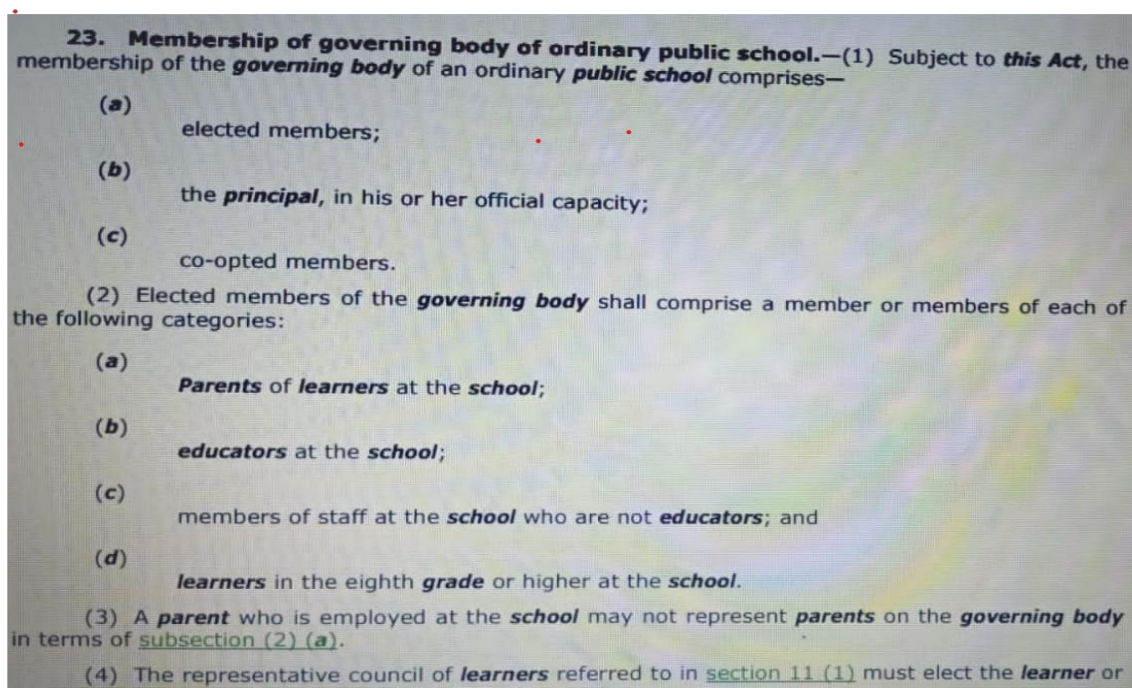


Figure 4.2: Membership of governing body for a public school in the South African public education space
(Source: South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996)

Figure 4.2 is an extract from the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 which was availed to the researcher for analysis during data collection. As in Figure 4.2 one of the methods for recruiting members into the SGB is through co-option. For being members of the SGB, department heads are seen by research participants to be involved as representatives of their fellow educators in some leadership activities. Sharing the same notion of co-option, but this time into the SMT and not out of the SMT, participant SM1 expressed his views as follows:

Members from the general teaching staff may also be brought into the SMT and be given leadership roles through co-option... In consultation with the SGB and the circuit manager, I co-opted members, that is, senior educators, to come and assist in the SMT after I realised that my school is a small school and I do not have enough appointed leaders.

However, to properly function this school needs at least three department heads, and I do not have these. Since there is clear indication that I needed to beef up the SMT, I therefore co-opted two more... As you can see [pointing to the organogram for the school on the notice board for me to see, Figure 4.3], I have only one appointed department who participants as a member of the SMT. I therefore had to co-opt two educators who are senior teachers to the SMT by also making them department heads... I see this practice as distributed leadership by co-option (SM1).

Clearly, verbatim excerpt above shows co-option as one way of distributing leadership in the secondary schools. Figure 4.3 below shows the organogram for the school as described in the verbatim except above. The names of the principal, department heads and for the school have been covered for ethical reasons.

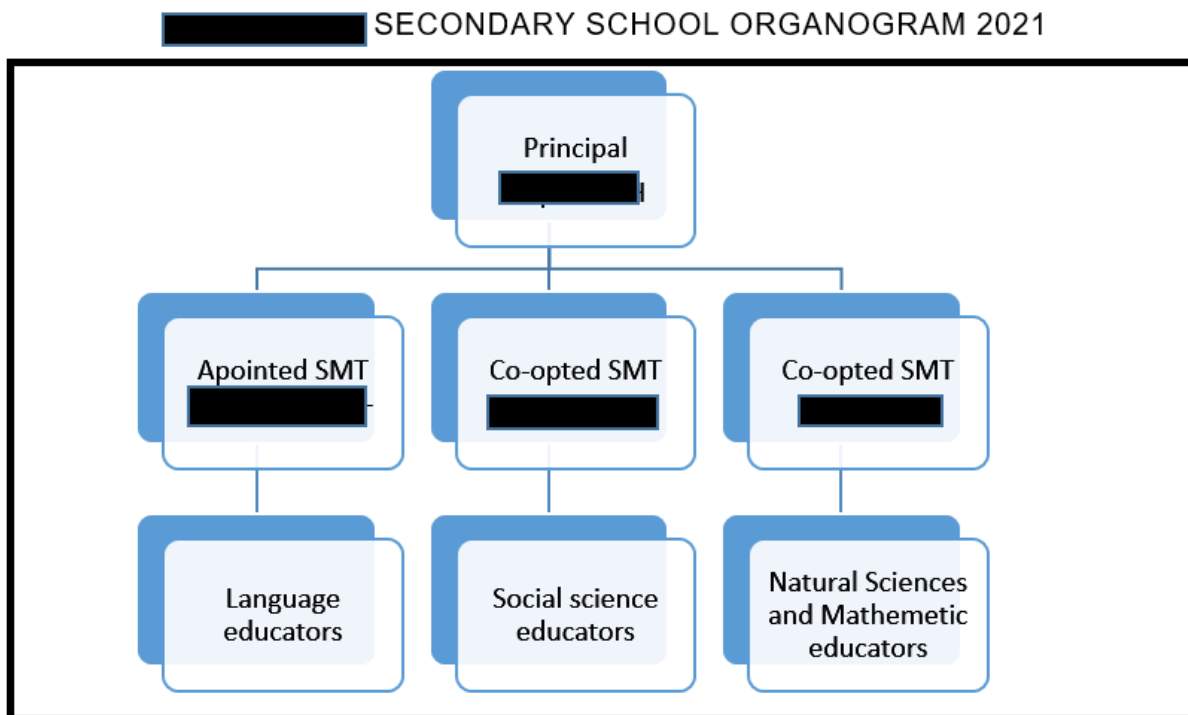


Figure 4.3: Organogram for one school that participated in the study
(Source: Information presented on the school's notice board)

As data shows, co-option may be two way, that is, co-opting senior educators into the SMT; and co-opting senior members of the SMT to take leadership

responsibilities in some committees outside the realm of SMT. In both cases, members are made to access a power base and authority that they would not have the access to before the co-option.

4.6.1.3 Distributing leadership as grooming interventions

Research participant DF3 indicated that leadership may be distributed through grooming interventions. He described this practice follows:

In fact, leadership distribution may be achieved through a grooming initiative. In my case, I'm grooming everybody to be a leader who will be accountable and in touch with what happens in the unit. Initially, I said to you I'm having a team of managers who are DCESs [Deputy Chief Education Specialists] and they have their own units that they are coordinating. So, I don't get involved in the daily running of the units because I want them to be themselves and to feel empowered. What I do then is that, I always give them challenging work to do with leadership in the secondary schools, so that I stretch them to the maximum possible. I believe, as a leader, I should produce more leaders and continue this effort to groom leaders through giving them roles that stretch them. In this way, they serve the leadership needs of today, as they are also being prepared for more challenging leadership roles tomorrow. **That is why I am talking about grooming as an approach to distributed leadership practice** [Bold for emphasis] (DF3). C

Clearly, there are many ways in which members of the SMT participate in distributed leadership initiatives. As data seems to show, some of these ways such as co-option has their objective as primarily to make work possible in an organisation. This means they are designed to cover gaps that may exist within the school system, for example, as a result of people movement and/or growth of the school. Other approaches have their objective as mainly human capital development. Delegation and participation in sub-committees also serve the purpose of making work possible, although they may also help in human capital development. One participant also associated distributed leadership with development of good organisational citizenship among involved staff members.

4.6.2 Distributed leadership interventions involving stakeholders outside the conventional school level boundaries

When research participants were asked questions regarding participation of stakeholders outside the conventional boundaries of an individual school in distributed leadership, namely, circuit and district officials, responses were as presented below.

4.6.2.1 Vision bearing and controlling activities

In expressing their contributions to the overall leadership of the school, some of the participants had this to say:

At a circuit level, I am the overseer and vision bearer for the circuit... I advise school authorities, including SGBs and them put up control mechanisms which ensure that everyone focuses on the larger vision for the Department of Education. For instance, if they want to take a decision that I see to be ultra-vires the policy that is given to us for implementation, my duty is to say no, no, that one is unlawful ... As the overseer of both public policy and custodian of the vision of Department of Education, at least at a circuit level, I tell them, on this one we will not win if we go that route... I think my role in this respect is key to the successful leadership of education in the circuit... I give policy direction to school-based leaders, such as principals and ensure that the larger vision as passed from above is achieved... This is the part I play as a leader at circuit level (CF1).

Clearly, the verbatim excerpt above shows that some research participants in the present study believed that the positions they occupy in the organogram for the education system place them in positions of vision bearers in the education system. As vision bearers, circuit managers, believe that they are responsible with receiving policy directions in the form of departmental vision, communicating this vision to stakeholders and controlling the system to make sure that members keep focused on the larger vision for the department of education. In an apparent agreement with this vision bearing and controlling perspective, research participant SM4, a school principal, had this to say

I think you agree with me that as a principal of the school, it is beyond doubt that I also act as the vision bearer, and official representative of the department of education at a school level... As such I am responsible carrying the national vision as passed down to me from

the circuit offices. It is this vision that I should share with the various groups and teams that assist me in the leadership of the school, including controlling my own staff and make sure that we work steadfastly towards a vision that we all agree we should work to achieve, each one doing his part one of us from the circuit office into the school system... I think as a system we are doing well on this. The various structures that have been put in place to promote a shared approach to school leadership are collaboratively working towards the realisation of the vision that we all share... I mean the goals that we all agree we should work to achieve... That is, the goal of educating the child (SM4).

Both the extracts above show that some of the research participants in the present study viewed themselves to be participating in the leadership of schools as vision bearers. The term vision bearing as used by research participants seem to mean, carrying the national vision and communicating it to stakeholders to ensure that it is effectively and efficiently implemented. The vision seems to be viewed from two levels, school level and Department of Education level. The responses suggest that both levels of vision are important to support the overall leadership matrices in the secondary school system. The principal, as a vision bearer, co-ordinate the school level activities and the circuit manager coordinates a cluster of schools in a given geographical area, guiding them to stay focused to the larger vision, that is, the vision of the Department of Education, which effectively is the custodian of education in the country and a representative of State in this area.

4.6.2.2 Mentoring and supporting activities

Another set of research participants expressed their contributions to the overall leadership of the school as follows:

As you may be aware, the district office is the first port of call for all the information that comes from the Limpopo Department of Education... Information about best practices and about current trends that have an impact on how education should be managed, all come through us. This makes us a command centre for all activities to do with education in the district. All this places me at a position where I should act as a coach and mentor for the leaders and managers below me... As the district manager, I am always the first to get information about new developments in education and expectations of Department of Education on circuit managers, principals and at times SGBs. It is therefore our duty as a

district office to coach the circuit level and at times school level leaders to embrace these new developments and be able to practice them at their own level... I see us as an office playing this role of coaching and mentoring very well. As I am talking now, secondary schools have embraced the issue of an online communication channel and ICT-based teaching. This is all because of our effort as district staff to develop leaders at various levels so that they embrace government programmes and best practices (DF3).

The excerpt above shows that distributed leadership practices in the education system makes leaders such as district officials to act as mentors and coaches for the leaders and managers below them. Research participants also see the clear chain of command in the educational value chain to command and the responsibilities given to leaders at each level to be part of the department of education's effort to distribute leadership. In clear agreement with the view that some leaders under a distributed approach to school leadership act as coaches and mentors, another research participant explained her views in detail as follow:

You know what? As the representative of the Limpopo Department of Education in the district, I am the custodian of public education at this level... However, I cannot, as a district manager work alone to achieve the mandate that is entrusted on me, by virtue of my position as a representative of the Department of Education in the district... After being appraised on the educational aims and objectives of the Department of Education, and after being empowered by way of the many meetings and workshops that are afforded me as the district director, I therefore assume the role of a coach to my own team members in the district... Specifically, on matters relating to schools, I coach the circuit managers as part of this team. As leaders in their own right, these will also cascade information down to schools through the school principals who will also empower people below them to lead at their respective levels... In sharing leadership roles this way, I also emphasise the need for each level of leadership to clearly explain to team members at these different levels of the leadership hierarchy that we are in the game together, so that they will not feel that by delegating leadership roles to them, we are relegating our own responsibilities as top leadership... This delegation should not be seen like punishment, but as a way of promoting organisational effectiveness and personal growth on the part of team members below each level of power. This is why I view my practice of encouraging and promoting distribution of leadership roles to members below each level of leadership to be a coaching ... We also take part in orienting members of the School Governing Body at each school in the district. At times we achieve this through circuit management team. But, as you may be aware, it is the district manager who is finally answerable and on the performance of his/her district... My interest in whole process is on empowering

stakeholders and therefore enable the system, from the district level to the school level, to function and achieve the goals of education... We train the people below us and make them know what we know and enable this knowledge to be cascaded down to promote action... (DF2).

The excerpt shows that participant DF2, a district official, like her fellow district official (DF3) above, sees her contribution to the overall leadership of schools to be a mentor and coach for the members in her district. In fact, she sees herself as the official representative of the Department of Education and a custodian of public education in the district. By virtue of her position in the district, participant DF2 sees herself privileged to attend meetings and workshops from which she is empowered to empower others. Once empowered, participant DF2 also empowers others. She saw this practice as having a domino effect that cascades through all the levels of power from the district level to the circuits and then schools, until it gets to the classroom. In the interview discussion concerning her understanding of the role she plays in the overall leadership of schools, she therefore saw her role as that of mentoring and coaching. Her response seems to support the view. This demonstrates that, for some participants in this study, distributed leadership focused on people in positions of power only and runs throughout the educational value chain. Her emphasis on leadership and positions of power also seems to speak to the issues of distributed leadership and accountability expectations on office bearers. Participant DF2 only talks loosely on distributed leadership and the role played by the teacher in the school leadership matrices. These stakeholders see the way the education system in the Limpopo province is structured into some multiple levels of power and authority, that is, from school level structures, through circuit level structures and district level structure to the provincial level structures, and the activities members in these structures play, whether wrongly or correctly, to be some form of distributed leadership.

4.6.2.3 Monitoring and evaluation intervention

Talking about the same theme on participants' contribution to distributed leadership practices in schools, participants CM3 and SM5 had this to say:

As you know, our system of education is well structured... Each circuit, as a subsystem of the bigger system, is given the responsibility to run a certain geographical area and provide

the needed leadership and control systems. As you may be aware, in this country we are now using a Data Driven District management system. Specifically, I can say that my responsibility as a circuit leader is to provide the necessary leadership, by way of monitoring the implementation of such initiatives and evaluate their effectiveness in that of teaching and learning programmes in the entire circuit... On behalf of the district manager and my own behalf, as a leader in my own right, I strictly monitor and evaluate work activities within the circuit, so that every principal in our schools is made to account for both the human and capital resources invested in his/her school. In terms of curriculum issues and classroom practices, for example, I monitor curriculum implementation, and evaluate policy compliance... At times, I assume a leadership role in performance management training for principals in order to equip them with the needed skills and attitude to work effectively towards national goals on education... I also monitor and ensure that, after training, the principals also empower others ... In fact, I also encourage participatory leadership and involvement of stakeholders in full view of the fact that, at the end of day, responsibility remains with me as the circuit manager (CM3).

In a similar vein, research participant SM5, a school principal had this to say:

... In my capacity as the principal, my responsibility is to take a leadership role and to give direction to other leaders in the organisational hierarchy of the school... For example, when we get instruction from the Department of Education, either through the circuit manager, or directly from the district or province, we are expected to implement it. It is my duty to see to it that such instructions, which can be in the form of policy statements, are implemented effectively and efficiently... In this endeavour, I therefore coordinate the effort of all internal stakeholders as the man on the ground and see to it that the policy is implemented without any deviation. The key issue is on involving all stakeholders, with me adopting a monitoring role (SM5).

Clearly, data presented above show that participant CM3 and SM5 also see establishment of multiple structures in the education system to comprise some form of distributing leadership in the education system in the Limpopo province of South Africa. In addition, they see the role they play in the overall leadership of schools in their respective work stations such as monitoring and evaluating the implementation of educational programmes to comprise part of their contribution to the distributed leadership practices in the education system. When asked to

further explain what he meant by monitoring the implementation of the Data Driven District management system, participant CM3 opened his lap-top which was placed on the computer during the entire duration of interview discussion and showed me the contents as shown in Figure 4.4 below.

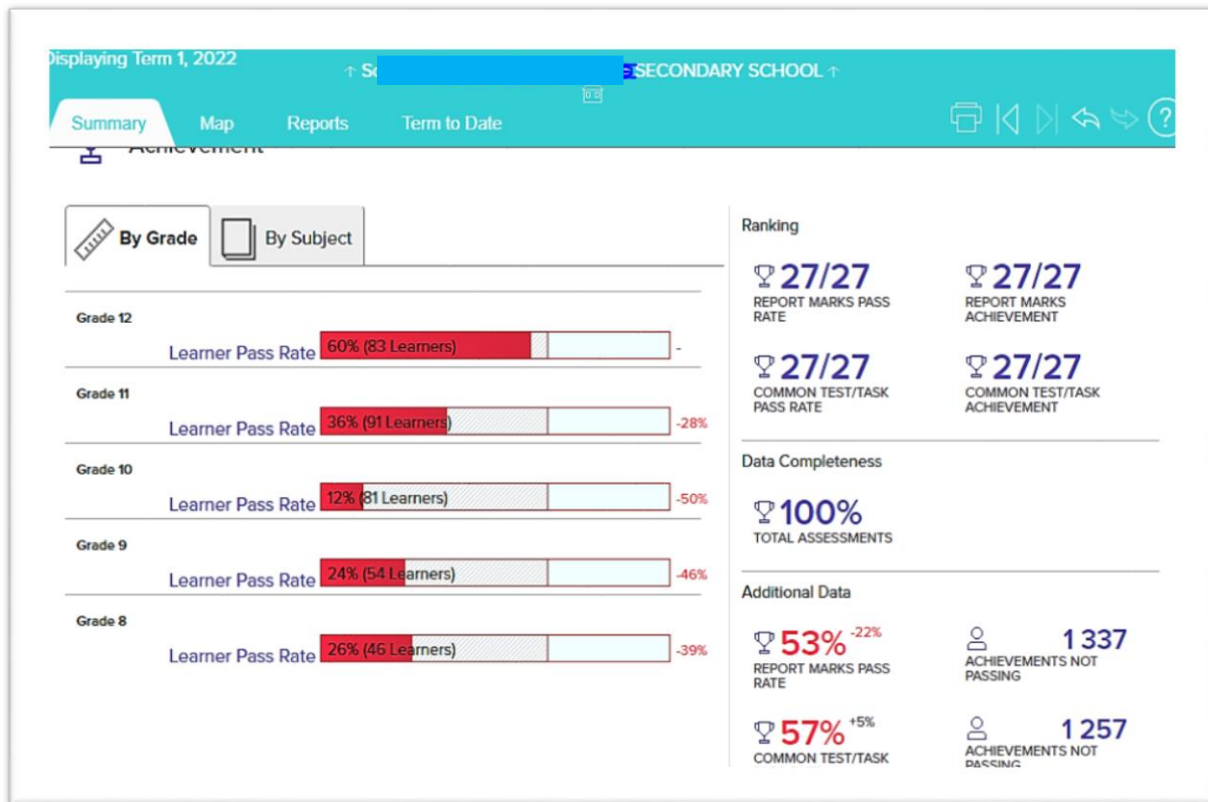


Figure 4.4: Term 1 learner pass rate data extracted from Data Driven District (DDD) management system

(Source: Primary data collected from the field)

In explaining the contents displayed on her computer (Figure 4.2), the participant said:

As you can see, this is a data driven management system used to track and monitor performance of schools, and to hold school authorities accountable for their performance. What happens is that at each school we have a data management administrator who is responsible with capturing data into the system. This data, once uploaded into the system will be accessible to everyone in the

education hierarchy by simply pressing a button... By mere pressing a button, novel, and real-time, visual learner data at the province, district, school, or learner level is made available ... As a circuit official, I am then responsible for monitoring both school performance in line with uploaded data and to also ensure that correct data is uploaded in the circuit. Such monitoring also ensures that school level leaders are accountable for the performance ... **As for me, I do all this on behalf of the district director, to whom I am also directly answerable in this environment of distributed leadership** (*Bold for emphasis*)

It is also showing from the data presented above that distributed leadership is viewed by research participants as involving people within the echelons of power and that distributed leadership seems to focus on monitoring and evaluation for accountability purposes. This view is particularly evident where one of the participants expressed that, "As you know, our system of education in this country is well structured". Another participant [CM3], said, "As for me, I do all this on behalf of the district director, to whom I am also directly answerable in this environment of distributed leadership." Clearly, it is also evident from the data presented above that distributed leadership in the schools studied are also perceived in the perspective of accountability expectations at each level of power within the education system. This is evident, for example, when research participant CM3 said, "I strictly monitor and evaluate work activities within the circuit, so that every principal in our schools is made to account for both the human and capital resources invested in his/her school."

4.6.2.4 Putting appropriate systems in place

Responding to the same questions concerning the contribution of research participants to the distributed leadership in schools, another participant said:

I see my contribution to the overall leadership of the school to be centred on putting appropriate systems in place in order to facilitate coordination of the various departments and points of power within the school... What I mean is that, I am responsible for putting school management systems in place so that everyone else will be guided in his/her leadership activities in order for us as SMT, working with the SGB to realise shared goals... By everyone, I mean the members of the school

management team, teachers, and even student leaders. I believe, each one of these have a stake in school leadership in one way or the other... The activities include facilitating establishment of the school management body. Once I put these systems in place, I will be able to collaborate with all the key stakeholders at both individual and/or committee levels, in a well-coordinated manner, and therefore ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place (SM4).

The data presented above show that some research participants saw their main responsibility in educational leadership at their respective work stations as to establish appropriate systems that facilitate collaborative leadership among stakeholders. The participants also envisaged that this would promote effective learning by students in their respective schools. These data suggest that, in order to practice distributed leadership, research participants believe that appropriate systems should be put in place. The excerpt above further shows that some school heads practise distributed leadership in the perspective of shared leadership by all members of the school as a system. The view of a school system, in the perspective of some research participants, seemed to focus on a school as an entity within the physical boundaries in which the school principal has legitimate power to direct and control. This is the area in which the principal has the authority to establish systems and structures which would drive school leadership and management programmes in order to facilitate student learning.

4.6.3 Distributed leadership, public policy and democratisation of education

This section focuses on data relating to actual practices of distributed leadership with regards to policy formulation and implementation as perceived and experienced by research participants. The data are presented in the context of categories of responses that emerged during the data analysis stage of the study, beginning with data relating to policy formulation (designing of policies).

4.6.3.1 Policy formulation to guide teaching and learning

When research participants were asked questions relating to who, how, and what extent are stakeholders involved in the various levels of distributed leadership related to distributed leadership practices, issues of designing policies to guide teaching and

learning in secondary schools, also came into the picture. Specifically, some of the responses in this respect were as captured in the verbatim quotations below:

What we should appreciate from the beginning is that, some of the policies that we implement in the schools are internal and others are external. What I mean is that, some policies have been designed by the LDoE [Limpopo Department of Education] and are handed down to us for implementation. However, there are other policies that are designed at a school level, such as at the SGB level and the SMT level. Even the principal may formulate internal policies to guide performance. However, all these policies should speak to the policy of LDoE. In this school, as the principal, I take the leading role to design internal policies for the school. Since I am the one who at the end is accountable for the results of the school, usually my input prevails over that of others in the formulation of policies. However, I don't do everything alone since we have the school management team. This also helps in designing policies. First, we are supposed to check the aim, and the aim must direct us to a policy... We present it to the school community ... It is on implementation where we now involve everyone ... At designing, it is mainly the LDoE, the SMT and me, as the man on the ground (SM3).

Usually when it comes to policies that we design at school level, a team that will do the job will be put in place. The team will analyse the need for designing such a policy and will go on to design and then submit the draft to the principal's office for refinement. When this is done, we then look at it and ascertain if it does not violate public policy like the Constitution and departmental regulations. If we are satisfied, then we sign the policy document and it will be ready for implementation. However, it may also need to be understood that some of the policies we implement are the responsibility of the SGB. For these, we have input from our representatives in the SGB. As principal, I also have a seat in the SGB. Teachers and learners are also represented. However, the representation of learners seems to be academic. They don't contribute much because the issues involved are normally above them. But the idea is good... When members participate in policy formulation like this, then policy implementation is without any resistance (SM4).

Policies start from committees. An example is in the area of admission policy. For this policy, the Admissions Committee is the one that deals with admissions. As a result, when they are facing challenges that may need to be addressed by way of policy statements, they will meet at a committee level and draft the needed policies. As an office, they should be give them the necessary support in terms of advice and resources... It is important to

also appreciate that School Admission Policy must also be ratified by SGB at the school level and should agree with expectations the Department of Education. When the policy is formulated this way finally comes out, the committees and all stakeholders will have a sense of ownership and will be implemented and supported whole-heartedly by all (SM5).

... let's say we want to develop a policy for curriculum, that is, curriculum policy, then the first thing that we do is to introduce this to the SMT, and then request members to hold meetings with their subordinates in their respective groups... However, in doing so, they must be guided by the curriculum policy from their department. It is only after the committee has done its parts that we come together and try to consolidate and make recommendations for improvement, if there is a need. It is after this consolidation that we come up with a policy. The resultant policy should be acceptable to all, including the Department of Education. My job as a principal is to ensure that the policy is perfectly in line with the Department of Education's expectations (SM2).

The excerpts above show that research participants in the present study view policy formulation to be one area in school leadership where distributed leadership is being practised. Two levels of leadership within the education value chain are involved. The levels include the LDoE and the school level management. At the school level, effort is made to ensure that internal policies directly speak to public policy from the LDoE. Since the principal is ultimately accountable for the performance of his/her school, in all cases, they always want to be involved in policy formulation in one way or the other, especially with regards to making sure that the resultant policies speaks to public policy. However, the school principals also feel a strong sense to involve others, especially within the context of SMT. In other words, distribution of leadership, with regards to policy formulation seems to embrace a restricted approach, in which only members in the SMT and/or some established entities, which are above the school level leadership are involved. Data as presented above also seem to confirm the view which is showing in the present study that research participants view the clear structure for the education system, comprising the school level structure, through the circuit level structure and district level structure to provincial level structure as part of policy makers' effort to promote a distributed approach to educational leadership.

4.6.3.2 Ratifications and approvals of internal policy programmes

One research participant responded to the questions relating to who, how, and what are stakeholders involved in, at the various levels of distributed leadership as follows:

In order to have school based policies embraced for implementation, they need to be ratified by some of the key stakeholders directly, or through their representatives. In practice, internal policies are ratified by the SGB and approved for implementation. In some cases, where the policy is made by committees other than the internal committees, they also need a nod from the school circuit manager and the principal before implementation begins. For example, with admission policies, once policies are made by the SMT, they are taken to the principal who also should look at the policy in line with government policy and, if necessary, beefs up the policies with what he or she thinks is best for the school. In our case, where we think there are flaws, we deal with such flaws before passing to the SGB for ratification... When the SGB is happy with its contents, then the policy is ratified, and it becomes the admission policy for the school... You see, this is how leadership is distributed. Each level does its part and hands over to the next. This is collaboration, like what happens in a car assembly where engineers and artisans at different levels share responsibilities to come up with one good product (SM5).

The excerpt above shows that school based policies may not be adopted for implementation before they are ratified by the SGB and at times the circuit manager, representing the department of education. Specifically, the school principal also has an interest in the policy drafts in order to make sure that school based policies speak to public policy as passed down through the department of education's structures. In other words, the principal has interest in the final draft of school based policies partly because he/she is ultimately accountable for the performance of his/her schools. The policies should therefore be seen not to be ultra-vires public policy, if they should pass the goodness-of-fit tests and be implemented in the respective schools, otherwise they may not be embraced.

4.6.3.3 Public policy implementation and stakeholder involvement

Talking about policy implementation as a category of educational leadership activities where distributed leadership is practised, research participants had this to say:

Policy implementation in the secondary schools is also an area where leadership is distributed... it is the responsibility of a number of functional level leadership, each of which doing its part, towards a common purpose. At the circuit level, as an example, we have the Circuit Management Team. This team is not involved in the formulation of policies only... it is also responsible with implementation of policies directly. For leadership at a school level, the circuit management plays the monitoring role. This monitoring is a key aspect of policy implementation which ensures success of policy programmes at school level (CF1).

It may be appreciated that in the Department of Education, the responsibility for policy implementation lies with the school level leadership. In fact, the education system is neatly stratified into policy makers and policy implementers. In my case, the minute I receive a policy circular or any related to school policy document, for example, on curriculum ... say from the province or from national office, I quickly send such documents either via email or WhatsApp group to accounting centres... that is, to schools. I make sure that schools have received the document in time... That is priority number one. Number two, I will have to go through the circular or the policy document as I expect school-based leadership to do the same. Even circuit managers, and may own district staff, I also instruct them to do the same. Once information has reached all centres and schools are beginning to implement, both the district and the circuit level leaders will collaborate to monitor progress on implementation. School level structures as represented by the school principal and SMT will also be activated to do the same. This is how distributed leadership with respect to policy implementation functions in the secondary school system (DF3).

In this school, policy implementation is done at various levels. Even me, as the principal, although my job involves creating an environment which is conducive to the work of others, including the deputy principal, department heads and teachers, I am also involved in policy implementation as a matter of policy. Mind you, all of us are policy implementers. However, heads of departments and departmental staff are at the forefront of implementing policies... This is their responsibility. For the principal and the other senior staff, the key responsibility is to create an environment that is good enough for people to work, including the implementation, to make sure that policies are put in place and from there, HoDs and the deputy principal must lead the implementation activities (SM2).

The entire line of authority is about policy implementation, from the district into the classroom, each at his or her level, doing his/her mandate as specified by policy. The HR manager is responsible for appointing and provides leadership in that area. If, if we have

posts, we'll have the management to plan on how the posts should be filled. The District Director should always be in contact with the HR manager. The HR manager will do everything needed for the recruitment process until people are hired. The HR manager also adopts a leadership role in training members of the SGB... The various committees from the district up to school level are also involved in policy implementation... This is what is involved in policy implementation. Everyone is involved throughout the chain... There is surely distribution of leadership roles in line with the organisation structure (DF1).

The responses concerning policy implementation suggest that the participants believed that all policy implementation is the responsibility of various levels of organogram of the education system. The data also shows that every member from the district to the classroom level see himself or herself as a policy implementer in one way or the other. However, there are certain levels of the organogram where members are viewed entirely as policy implementers. From the level of the deputy principal through the level at department heads at the school level to the classroom teachers, members were defined more as policy implementers than policy makers. The data presented above seem to suggest that, from the district level up to the classroom level of the organogram for the education system in South Africa, members generally see themselves as policy implementers even as they also are responsible for policy formulation, at least at a localised level. Leadership in the perspective of policy implementation is seen to reside in office bearers, that is, in those occupying leadership positions, throughout the education value chain. The value chain comprise, school level structures, circuit level structures, district level structures, provincial level and national level structures.

4.6.3.4 Monitoring and evaluation

Data analysis has also shown the monitoring and evaluation function of educational leadership to be one area in which some participants saw distributed leadership as being practised in the educational leadership matrices. Two participants that talked about this category of school leadership matrices had this to say:

One area in which distributed leadership is being practised is the role of monitoring and evaluation of educational programmes implementation. For example, in the area of school financial management when we, as a district, are paying money to the schools, the District Finance Officer is the leader in the disbursement process. When the money gets to schools, the SGBs will be responsible with monitoring and controlling how the money is used in the schools. The principals will also be responsible... The circuit manager is also responsible with monitoring finance utilisation by schools... In addition, as a district, we also control finance management activities in schools. On top of that, there are audit teams... I think it is beyond doubt that there is distributed leadership in schools, especially in the area of financial management. Various offices, for instance, collaborate in making sure that the funds that get to schools are utilised properly... Each member within the hierarchy of the education system will be working at his or her own level, but the objective is one, that of achieving success in education through prudent financial management practices. You see. This is an area where leadership is distributed (DF1).

One area in which I see distributed leadership to be practised in my school is the area of monitoring and evaluation of school programmes including teaching and learning activities... Undoubtedly, this is done at various levels of leadership. Key among these levels is the level of SMT... In some cases, as a mechanism to control the quality of education in the school, teachers are also involved in the assessment of their colleagues' lessons. They then write reports which they share at that department level. In other cases, outstanding teachers train other teachers. Recently, the Maths and Science Department had a very successful workshop on integrating ICT in the teaching and learning of maths and science. The workshop was organised and facilitated by some of our best teachers in the area of ICT in the school and we found this approach very effective... Like I said earlier, student leaders in this school also participate in distributed leadership. In the area of control, they also participate in teacher evaluation where each end of year, they assist in coordinating other students to complete teacher assessment forms that we also regard as very important in improving teacher performance and classroom practices... I can safely say that in this school we have both teacher leaders and learner leaders (DF3).

It is in the area of supervision that, as a district office, we have a keen interest and we are greatly involved... As a department, of education we also do monitor learning activities through the circuit managers... At a school level, we are also represented by the principal, who also work through SMTs to monitor and control learning programmes internally... What I mean is that we have a clearly laid down structure in which responsibilities are shared... Whilst the practice of teacher leadership is important, this is not yet policy. In

fact, leadership goes with accountability. I see it is difficult for now to hold teachers accountable for their leadership failures, especially where it is clear that such leadership is the responsibility of the principal, in the first place... At a school level, teachers may of course be involved in leadership roles, but that is not policy... Policy officially designates them as leaders only at classroom level... As a district, we focus on many things... We monitor use of funds, curriculum implementation and management of examination... We monitor and control everything to do with quality education for the child. In fact, we are the custodian of education in the district and represent the interests of both parents and the Department of Education (DF2).

The excerpts above show that the research participants in the present study view monitoring and control to be among some of the key elements of school leadership activities where distributed leadership is believed to be practised. This data seem to confirm the data which was presented earlier which seem to confirm that distributed leadership is understood differently in the South African secondary school education system. It is evident in the data presented above that distributed leadership in the secondary schools in South Africa follows the officially designated leadership position within the organisation structure of the public education structure. Whilst some participants also believe in and practice teacher leadership in such areas as monitoring and control as key variables of education leadership, others seem to focus distribution of leadership among those officially designated as leaders within the school system.

4.7 Distributed Leadership and how it Influences Teaching and Learning

Preliminary analysis of data has shown two key categories relating to effects of distributed leadership on teaching and learning. The first category focuses on effects of distributed leadership that are related to the teaching and learning environment, and the second category focuses on effects related to instructional practices and learner attainment. This section focuses on data relating to the various ways in which distributed leadership influences teaching and learning in the secondary schools in the selected districts from the Limpopo province of South Africa, beginning with effects relating to the teaching and learning environment as presented below.

4.7.1 Distributed leadership and its effect on teaching and learning environment

Participants were asked about their views on how distributed leadership influences their practices as principals in their respective schools. The responses were captured and analysed to come up with categories as presented below:

4.7.1.1 Effects relating to strategic issues

On being asked as to how, given their experiences, research participants view the role distributed leadership thought and practice plays in shaping principals' leadership strategies in schools, responses were as captured in the verbatim excerpts below:

I think the distributed leadership approach has made it easier for principals to approach their own work at school level. This is so because they know that there is always a support structure for them to lean on... A distributed leadership approach is seen to be very strategic in this respect... Distributed leadership has made school principals to be able to look up to the circuit manager and, at times, the district director for guidance, and the people below their own levels for policy implementation. ... All in all, a distributed approach to educational leadership has made all of us leaders in schools... I see a distributed approach to leaders as helping the school principal to collaborate with the entire education system to improve in terms of what we would like to do as a system and achieve educating our children as South Africans (CF1).

... In fact, distributed leadership is the way to go... At a personal level and in my capacity as a school principal in this school, distributed leadership makes my job to be lighter. This is so because it is a strategic approach that enables me to tap and benefit from different talents and potential from other staff members in the school system without me having to carry out all the leadership responsibilities by myself... You what? At times the job of a school principal is overwhelming and confusing... You may not be able to do everything all by yourself. With a distributed leadership in mind, I don't have to carry everything on my shoulders. I just make sure that everyone is made to feel a sense of belonging and to have a common goal of providing quality education to learners... Once everyone develops this sense of belonging to the school and a sense of ownership for what we do towards achieving our shared goals, then people become prepared to lead at various levels towards these goals. This type of collaboration makes me conclude that distributed leadership is typically strategic and should be promoted in every school and at every level within the school, even if it means that ... learners should also be given chance to lead (SM4).

In my experience as an educational leader, I see stakeholders' understanding of distributed leadership to have shaped school leadership in a very significant way. Because of an understanding of distributed leadership, the education system in South Africa is so neatly structured. Like I said earlier, structuring of education from the national, province, district, circuit, up to school level where we also have school governing boards and school management teams provide an appropriate platform for distributed leadership. I view this clear structure as one of the best things that has ever happened to the South African Education System. To me, this structure naturally leads the education in this country, including secondary schools, to adopt distributed leadership as a strategy for school leadership. In this leadership strategy, all stakeholders collaborate in making education for all the citizenry possible, effective and efficient (SM5).

The excerpts above show that some of the research participants in the present study view stakeholders' understanding of distributed leadership thought and practices to be playing a strategic role in shaping leadership practices in the education system in the Limpopo province of South Africa, including in secondary schools. As data seem to suggest, distributed leadership thought is seen to have shaped school leadership strategies at various levels of the education system. Whilst some stakeholders view distributed leadership to have shaped educational leadership strategies in the perspective of the entire education system, there are others who see distributed leaders to have shaped leadership strategies at a school level, including leadership of both teachers and learners. In other words, distributed leadership is viewed to be affecting or shaping leadership strategy at a localised perspective whilst it is also viewed to have practices by school principals at broader perspective of the education system. All this coalesced to influence how school heads practise leadership in their schools.

4.7.1.2 Effects related to empowerment and development of stakeholders

Responding to the same set of questions concerning their views on the effect distributed leadership in shaping principals' practices in their respective school leadership environments, other research participants had this to say:

To me, distributed leadership is developmental in nature. By being afforded the opportunity

to be involved in leadership programmes and activities, even before one is officially appointed as a leader, I see this as helping to develop future leaders. Development such as this will help to improve leadership practices in the schools system as a whole... When people are allowed to participate in decision making when they are not yet promoted, and they come up with suggestions or proposals which are good, when these suggestions are implemented for the good of learners and they work to improve learning, people will like it... It will be like conditioning... People will be motivated to repeat the same actions that are associated with rewards. In doing so, they are being trained as future leaders. This is what we are doing here and is the reason why I say distributed leadership is developmental in nature and is helping to develop leaders for tomorrow... We have developed many leaders that way in this school. Some of them are already principals of their own schools. Others are already working as circuit managers. This is all from our distributed strategy in which member teachers are allowed to participate in different committees, or allowed to lead in different committees (SM1).

In essence, distributed leadership is an eye opener for many of us. For example, say you are in a consultative meeting, sharing ideas with your subordinates and you decide not to take an active role, except that of a coordinator... You allow someone else from the group to chair, such as a member of the SMT and, as the principal you just sit there, observing the proceeding. Surely, you get your mind broadened in terms of your knowledge, in terms of your understanding of things, and in terms of how to do some of the things you take for granted. I have done that at a district level and have learnt a lot from my own subordinates. As district director, I have encouraged my people at all levels of the education structure in this district to do the same. Even school principals are being socialised to do the same and we have seen it working... What I mean is that, for practising distributed leadership, school principals are also learning from people below them. An example is where they give members of the SMT to lead, for example, as facilitators in workshops, sit there and see how others are doing things (DM2).

I see distributed leadership as challenging the school principal to go down to train their SMTs and make sure that they are empowered to take up leadership roles, including those that may be outside their own departments. Once they do that, they will be assured that, even if they distribute leadership roles that may be outside the normal responsibilities attached to them, leadership activities will still be up to scratch across the board. What I am saying here is that distributed leadership will make principals to appreciate the need to view training as an ongoing process. Such training is important because in all what they are doing, principals should always remember that, at the end of it all, they are the ones

who are finally accountable for the performance of their schools. They are accountable to the circuit manager who is also accountable to the district director... As a result, they cannot afford to relax and allow chance to take its course... (DM1).

The excerpts above show that, in the perspective of research participants in the present study, distributed leadership may be viewed as a developmental and empowering experience. During data collection, I observed a training workshop organised by the district curriculum head for one of the districts that participated in the study, working with circuit managers, using delegated authority from the district director. Figure 4.5 below is a snap-shot of the workshop in question.



Figure 4.5: School principals attending a district workshop on how to manage curriculum implementation
(Source: Photo taken by the researcher for the field, during data collection visit to schools)

Figure 4.5 is a picture which was taken during a training session for school heads that was conducted by district curriculum head, working with circuit managers. The workshop focused on how to monitor and support curriculum implementation by SMTs and educators. The objective of this training was to ensure that curriculum implementation is managed effectively and efficiently. In the perspective of research participants,

participation of circuit managers and the district curriculum head other than the district director who is the ultimate authority and custodian of education in an educational district amounted to leadership distribution. In turn, school principals were also expected to train SMTs. Clearly, data as presented above suggest that distributed leadership has a developmental dimension. The facilitators of the workshop were also developed.

4.7.1.3 Effects related to monitoring and controlling of instructional programmes

Concerning how distributed leadership influences teaching and learning interventions in the secondary schools studied, research participants DF1 and SM1 had this to say:

Distributed leadership helps me as the principal to easily monitor and control teaching and learning programmes and activities... It is particularly so because a distributed approach to school leadership is characterised by participation and involvement of other stakeholders in educational leadership even at a school level. For this reason, my role as the principal is just to do follow-ups on how work is being done. In other words, monitoring and controlling is easy for me as the principal because I will not be working alone... I will be part of a team in an environment of shared leadership and cooperation by team members. Where distributed leadership is adopted as a leadership strategy, effective monitoring and controlling of teaching and learning is created. Such is the situation in South Africa where leadership is carried out with the help of SMTs (SM1)

Since the principal will be aware that there are other officers above him or her who are also doing their part in a distributed leadership style, it is beyond doubt that he or she will work hard to please his superiors. If he or she delegates authority to the SMTs, for example, the principal will also be pressured to institute strict monitoring and control... The issue here is that in a distributed leadership set up, where the principal aware that offices above him is keeping an eye on him or her, such a principal will be under immense pressure to perform to the satisfaction of the authorities above him. This is because the principal of a public secondary school represents the circuit manager in the school. In the same way, the circuit manager represent the district director. For this reason, this circuit manager will demand high performance because he/she is answerable to the district director who also reports to the provincial director. All this gives the principal, as the person on the ground, pressure to perform... Strictly speaking, in this way, distributed leadership may be said to be improving the teaching/learning environment and thereby promoting effective teaching which in turn is the key-hole to effective learning in schools (DF3).

The excerpts above suggest that distributed leadership, as perceived and practised by research participants, strategically positions the school principal in the monitoring and controlling role. The hierarchical structure of the education system is seen to be very important for promoting distributed leadership. The school principal, for example, is directly accountable to the circuit manager who also have accountability expectations from the district director. This means, even as the principal establishes SMTs to assist him or her to run the school and thus promote student learning, he/she will also put in place strict monitoring and control mechanisms, because he/she will also be answerable to people above him or her. As data seem to suggest, distributing leadership also increases the levels of power and authority to monitor teaching and learning activities in schools. It is also evident that the focus of distributed leadership captured in the excerpts above is on distributing leadership to members who already occupy leadership positions, such as members of the SMTs. As data show, these structures comprise a key element for the distributed leadership environment as understood and practised in the area studied. The concept and practice of distributing leadership to embrace teachers is largely silent in this leadership environment described above.

4.7.2 How distributed leadership influence teaching and learner attainment

Research participants were asked questions regarding how distributed leadership influences instructional activities and learner attainment. Their responses were captured in the verbatim responses below, beginning with responses from school principals:

4.7.2.1 Talent identification and talent development

In responding to the questions regarding whether and if so how school principals involve teachers in activities other than their direct participation in classroom activities, school principals responded as captured in the verbatim responses below:

Yes. Teachers are involved in leadership activities in a number of activities, which affect teaching and learning... They are given opportunities to lead in different areas, depending with their knowledge and expertise. For example, a teacher with knowledge of sports may be given the chance to lead in that area and enable learners to benefit from his or her knowledge in a significant way. We also have teachers with knowledge of theatre arts.

Such teachers are also given the opportunity to lead in that particular area of expertise when the need arises. Teachers are also given delegated authority to lead in training programmes, such as for SMTs. The whole idea is about identifying and taking advantage of the talent that exist among teachers, and motivating them to share their skills and knowledge for the good of the school and their own good as professionals (SM2).

Other than direct teaching and learning, teachers are involved in leadership activities in two main ways that promote teaching and learning. First, teachers are involved and participate in leadership activities as members of the School Governing Body. Secondly, they may be appointed as heads of departments in which they may be given the responsibility to participate as members of School Management Teams. ... Last but not least, teachers with special skills may be appointed in their personal capacities to lead in certain areas where they may be seen to have the necessary knowledge. When this happens schools will be able to reap the best from the teachers' knowledge which in some cases may be tacit... I mean, by being afforded the opportunity to lead other teachers in some specific ways, teachers be able to develop their colleagues and improve their ability to teach. This means a positional leaders, we may benefit from teachers leading other teachers... Even learners may benefit as well (SM3).

Like I said when we started this discussion, in this school, we also practice teacher leadership... Teachers that may be talented in some specific field such as music, sporting activities netball, soccer, volley ball and arts, among other skills, may be appointed to take leadership roles in these areas. In some cases, teachers may be asked to assist in committees such as disciplinary and counselling committees where they help in dealing with children with behavioural problems in order to make such children better placed to benefit from their learning experiences. What I mean here is that, in situations where teachers have special knowledge and skills that others may not have, such as counselling skills and teaching using ICT based approaches, as an example, such teachers are given leadership roles to help others as they also further develop and polish up their skills... Recently, we had a very successful workshop on ICT integration in teaching and learning. This workshop was facilitated by some of our teachers from the ICT department who are very knowledgeable in this area of ICT... I tell you, this workshop was such a success and has transformed instructional activities in this school... Truly speaking such workshops help teachers to improve their teaching skills and ultimately students' learning (SM4).

Verbatim quotations above show that school principals involve teachers in leadership responsibilities that improve both the teaching skills of the teachers and

student learning all at once. In some cases, these responsibilities may be in some activities that are outside direct classroom responsibilities of educators at the level of a classroom teacher. As data show, teachers were involved mainly by co-option into special committees, or clubs, according to their varied skills and tacit knowledge that the system may want to exploit. The committees are associated largely with existing structures within the education system, for example, subjects departments. Participant SM1 mentioned special skills such as teaching using ICT methods to be some of the skills that he looked for and used as a criterion assigning people to some leadership responsibilities. Participant SM4 mentioned skills in such areas as sport, art and culture as comprising part of the criteria used to identify stakeholders who should be given the opportunity to lead others, for example, through establishment of clubs in their specialist area. At the end of it all, such activities were seen to have an impact in both instructional practices by teachers and learner attainment. However, the concept '*learning*' in the present study is not used to refer to the narrow view of acquiring knowledge and skills that prepare the beneficiaries for employment. Instead, this concept is used to refer to the processes and activities that prepare children to fit into the community to which they belong and to be able to participate in it fully, as healthy and productive individuals who are capable of fending for their own families and to live in harmony, with other people who may be different from them.

In one school that the researcher visited as she collected data, she had an encounter with a teacher of history who had been appointed as a distributed leadership intervention, to lead the history club. In the club room, the teacher had a collection of photos of the heroes in the war against apartheid in South Africa. The photos were under the title, "*The History of South Africa in Pictures and the Creation of a Rainbow Nation: Lest We Forget*". The photos included the following:

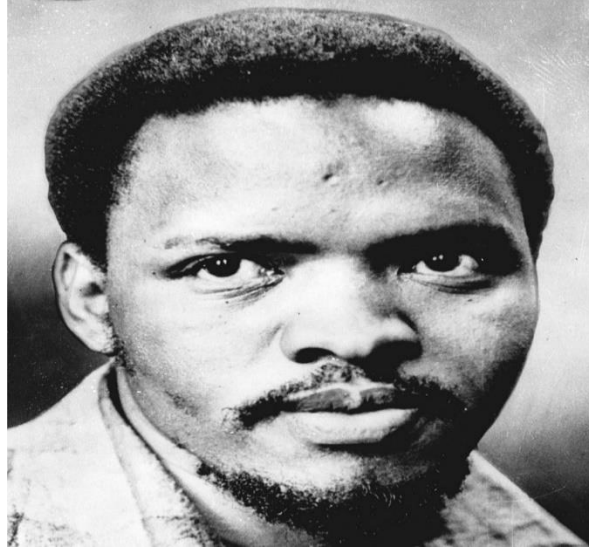


Figure 4.6: Steve Biko: An Anti-apartheid Activist Who Died in Police Custody in 1977

(Source: Photo Collected from the Field where it was displayed on Walls of History Club Room).



Figure 4.7: Albertina Sisulu at the Nelson Mandela Foundation in Johannesburg, South Africa, March 12, 2008

(Source: Photo Collected from the Field where it was displayed on Walls of History Club Room).



Figure 4.8: Veteran anti-apartheid ex-member of parliament, Helen Suzman with recently Released ANC Leader Nelson Mandela at his Soweto home, Feb. 26, 1990

(Source: Photo Collected from the Field where it was displayed on Walls of History Club Room).

Each of the photos that were displayed in the history club room acted as an episode of the grand narrative of the South African story. To explain to the researcher the contribution of each of these pictures to this narrative of the South African history, the teacher in charge of the history club, who had been asked by the principal (SM4) to take the researcher through the club activities, explained the his leadership activities in the clubs as follows:

You see, each of these photos has a story to tell, about the liberation struggle in this country. To come up with a speaking club house as you see here, we involve learners in a big way... In fact, as I told you earlier the club chair person is a learner, with me acting as the patron... My responsibility as a club patron, together with my fellow teachers is to assist the learners and keep them focused. Otherwise all these pictures and the stories behind them and presented below each picture are developed by learners as lead by the club chairperson. Through these stories and interactions within the club, learners are able to learn about the history of our rainbow country.

Beginning with Steve Biko (Figure 4. 6), the pictures had the following inscriptions below them which the research was allowed to record:

Steve Biko was an anti-apartheid activist. He spear-headed the formation of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO). This organisation became a strong force in the fight against injustices faced by Black students at a time when student groups and Black political organizations were illegal in this country.... His political activism led to several arrests until he died in a police hospital after being questioned and tortured by the South African police in 1977... His last words before he passed on were: **“My blood will nourish the tree that will bear the fruits of freedom. Tell my people that I love them. They must continue the fight.”** His death sparked international protests and a United Nations arms embargo against apartheid South Africa (Excerpt from the history club house)

Moving to Albertina Sisulu (Figure 4.7) the story was as follows:

Albertina was a freedom fighter and nurse. She had her first direct encounter with racism while she was working as a trainee nurse at Johannesburg General Hospital. Here, she saw her White workmates being treated as superior to Black nurses. Her political journey began in 1954, when she was recruited to join the ANC Women's League. In 1956, she assisted in the organisation of the revolutionary women's march against apartheid... In opposition against Bantu education system, which discriminated people on racial grounds and was designed to limit the futures of the Black people as subservient to their white counterparts, Sisulu turned her own home in the township of Soweto home into an improvised school for children from the Black community, which she operated for a number of years until the government passed a law to bar it from operation... As you can see, the struggle did not only involve man. Instead, even women were also involved in a very big way (Excerpt from the history club house).

Turning to Figure 4.8, the story below the picture was follows:

The first President, Nelson Mandela, hugging Helen Suzman, a Jewish woman who also contributed her own way towards the formation of this Rainbow nation... In her work of over 36 years as a parliamentarian, she stood for equality and human rights. When Nelson Mandela was finally released from prison, Helen visited him at his home to congratulate him for being free at last. That is when this photo was taken... Prior to this historic moment, Suzman used her position as a Member of Parliament to speak for the voiceless, in the name of peace, love and justice for all races. In her days parliament, she represented the

opposition Progressive party during the apartheid era, where for 13 years she stood as the lone voice for marginalised people in a South African parliament of all-whites in which she would be ridiculed for her stance... The full cycle of Suzman's political career was completed when she served on the Independent Electoral Commission that oversaw the first democratic elections in 1994... Her inclusion on the list of luminaries who contributed in building this Rainbow nation shows that the fight against apartheid was not a fight against a certain group of people, but a fight against a system (Excerpt from the history club house

The excerpts above demonstrate that leadership in some schools is distributed to as far as teachers and learners, although in many of the cases, leadership roles are confined to people who are in positions of power, such as the members of the SMTs. Classroom teachers and learners who are given leadership roles are mainly those with special flair and tacit knowledge of some specific areas of interest to schools. Data presented above seem to show that, where leadership distribution is extended to learners, effective learning takes place. Of particular interest is the level of maturity and understanding portrayed in the excerpts above, which the club patron indicated were mainly contributed by learners with teachers providing a facilitation role only. Clearly the excerpts above show that the history club approached some sensitive issues from the dark period of South Africa in a very mature and educative way, on the part of learners. Learners as portrayed in the excerpts seem appreciate through their participation and leadership of club activities, the fact that the struggle against apartheid was not a fight against individuals, but a fight against a system. The excerpts above rightfully define the new South Africa as a rainbow nation. Clearly, affording learners leadership roles, even by way of making them chairpersons of committees and/or clubs that are of interest to them seems to enhance learning. This view is further explored below.

4.7.2.2 Increased scope of accountability and demands on performance

Responding to questions regarding how distributed leadership impacts on classroom teaching, research participants responded as captured in the verbatim quotations below:

To me, I see distributed leadership as shared leadership. This is important in that it increases the scope of accountability expectations in the schools... What I mean is that, instead of the principal and probably his deputy only held accountable for the school performance, accountability expectations under distributed leadership are shared over a large spectrum of stakeholders... Under this arrangement, everyone should be held accountable at least for the performance of that area of the school system for which one is responsible... Distributed leadership will prevent the development of 'them versus us' type of thinking among stakeholders. Organisational members will see themselves as players in a game of sports. In soccer, for example, individuals play in different positions, but they all try to achieve the same goal of winning the game... Every member will develop a sense of organisational citizenship and will work hard to ensure that organisational objectives are achieved... This is so because, at the end of the day, everyone will be held accountable for the performance of his own area of operation although at a school level, the principal is the one who will ultimately be answerable to the circuit manager who will also be answerable to the district director and the chain continues, until we get to the province, through to the national level (SM4).

The excerpt above shows that distributed leadership improves classroom practices through its effects on accountability expectations placed upon educational stakeholders. In apparent agreement with this view, another participant (CF2) had this to say:

Distributed leadership improves classroom practices by teachers in that it increases accountability levels in the education system... It is important because it makes everyone accountable to at least someone above them. At the beginning of the year, for example, when results for metric examinations are out, leaders at various levels of the education system, starting from the department level ... sit with their team members and analyse the results together. In these meetings, for example at circuit level, we analyse the performance of such and such school, as we also seek to understand the overall performance of the circuit... Each principal will be challenged to see how the performance of his school or her school is contributing to the overall performance of the circuit... These accountability sessions cascade to schools... Here, the deputy principal is accountable for the performance of all departments in the school and departmental heads are also accountable for their own departments... During the year, such accountability sessions are held quarterly. The effect is that, the responsible people at each level of the school

leadership system will put pressure on the next, and thereby improve performance by teachers in terms of the effort they put in their work (CF2).

The verbatim excerpts above suggest that distributed leadership impacts on classroom practices through its effect on increasing accountability demands and expectations on stakeholders. It is evident in the excerpts above that distributed leadership is also viewed in the perspective of people in positions of power. This means that distributed leadership is viewed from the perspective of department heads, the deputy principals, school principals, circuit managers and district directors, among other position holders in the chain of command of the education system. Each of these position holders exert accountability demands on people below him/her. The effect of such demands permeates the whole school system until it gets into the classroom where teachers are expected to work hard to improve student learning as they also seek to promote positive evaluation by their leaders during accountability sessions. During data collection, the researcher had the privilege to witness one such accountability session where she was allowed to take photos, in line with her data collection plan. See the photo presented below:



Figure 4.9: The school management team following proceedings in an accountability session meeting

(Source: Photo taken by the researcher during a data collection visit to schools)

Figure 4.9 shows members of the SMT, comprising department heads, in an accountability session which is chaired by the deputy principal. In the meeting, department heads are accounting to the deputy principal on the performance of their respective departments. The deputy principal, will also account to the principal on the performance of the various departments in the school. In turn, the principal will account to the circuit manager. Figure 4.9 below is about an accountability session at a circuit level as captured from the field during data collection.



Figure 4.10: School principals following proceedings in an accountability session meeting chaired by the circuit manager

(Source: Primary data collected from the field).

Figure 4.9 above shows school principals in an accountability session in which they are accounting for the performance of their schools in the metric examination. The circuit manager will in turn account to the district director on the performance of his/her circuit and the chain goes on and on until it gets to the superintendent general who is also accountable for running the province. It is evident from the data above that distributed leadership, as perceived by some stakeholders in the South African education system, impacts on classroom practice through the procedural accountability for results by the various stakeholders at each level of educational administration. When results come out well, schools are also rewarded for high performance by various interest groups, across education system value chain. Figure 4.10 below is a motivation session conducted by traditional authorities (traditional leaders) in appreciation of good grade 12 examination results.



Figure 4.11: Motivational sessions conducted by traditional leaders and organised by circuits managers
(Source: Photo taken by the researcher from the field).

Figure 4.10 above is a picture capturing proceedings at a motivational session conducted by traditional leaders in order to show their appreciation for the schools that had done well in grade 12 examinations in 2020. The picture shows that school principals were accountable not only to authorities within the chain of command for the department of education, but also to the traditional leadership in the communities they serve. In addition, district municipalities also serve as an interest group public education. In order to motivate educators, learners, schools and circuits to perform, district municipalities hold excellence awards and present trophies, laptops and monetary rewards high performers. Figure 4.11 below shows recipients of the municipality excellence awards ceremony which was attended by the researcher during data collection.



Figure 4.12: Recipients of district municipality excellence awards for one of the districts studied
(Source: Primary data collected from the field).

Recipients of district municipalities' excellence awards as shown in Figure 4.11, include learners, classroom teachers (educators) and school principals whose

school have done well in public examinations. In the perspective of research participants in the present study, district municipalities comprise part of the stakeholder groups that also hold schools accountable for their performance in a distributed leadership instructional context. It is also evident from the data presented above that at each accountability level, the metric results comprise one of the key performance indicators for secondary schools in the studied. Analysis tables for grade 12 examinations results were displayed in each of the offices at every level of the accounting centres, that is, from the HoD's office through the deputy principal's office and then the circuit managers to the district manager. Table 4.4 below is an excerpt of examination results which was displayed in one of the circuit managers' office.

Table 4.4: NSC Grade 12 performance, in 13 education circuits from one of the districts studied for the 2016-2020 academic years

CIRCUIT (Not real names)	2016% Pass	2017 % Pass	2018% Pass	2019 Pass%	2020 Pass %
A	69.0	70.6	71.6	75.0	76.9
B	71.5	73.1	65.9	73.2	76.2
C	76.7	75.6	78.2	78.0	72.9
D	62.1	65.9	71.7	73.7	71.7
E	58.2	64.1	55.9	72.9	69.3
F	70.4	62.8	64.8	76.3	67.9
G	80.7	75.7	61.7	69.1	66.8
H	54.1	64.7	77.9	71.1	66.1
I	71.5	73.1	64.8	75.8	65.4
J	73.1	66.4	71.1	68.4	64.3
K	54.8	64.1	69.0	65.0	63.1
L	73.4	69.1	70.7	74.9	62.1
M	58.2	64.9	64.9	63.3	56.4
Average pass rate	65.7	67.7	68.6	72.4	67.6

Table 4.4 shows the pass rate for the 13 circuits from one of the educational circuits in one of the districts studied. When circuit managers were asked as to why the examination analysis tables such as Table 4.3 above were posted on notice boards in all accounting centres such as schools, circuit offices and district offices, they responded as captured in the verbatim quotes below:

Education is a stakeholder based enterprise... As educators, we don't need to hide anything from these stakeholders because we are also accountable to them for our performance... For your own information, we are accountable even to our traditional authorities who also have interest in how we perform as a schools. In addition, schools should be made to appreciate how well they are performing vis-à-vis other schools. If you are made to appreciate that this year your school or circuit has been beaten by many other schools or circuits, whatever the case may be, as a leader yourself, you will be forced to pull up your socks the following year. This is because you know that your own leaders, that is, leaders above you, expect you to do better the next year around. You will not like it when you will be asked to account for your performance publicly and your results will be displayed for all to see... Displaying results publicly like this will surely force leaders at each level to work hard and therefore improve results... I see this way of sharing results as a way to force leaders at every level to work hard, something that improves student learning. When your results are good, you may also be rewarded for high achievement. In fact, you will enjoy it when your school is deemed to be doing well (CM3).

Results for every leader or manager in the education system should be made public. The school principal should display in his office all the results from each department. These results should be displayed together with those of the circuit to show how the circuit is performing... The circuit manager should also display the pass rate for both each and every school in the circuit, as well as that for the district. In fact, nothing should be hidden. Everything should be above board. The whole idea is to induce competition. At the end of the day, this competition will improve learning across the board... What I mean is that, everyone in the whole value chain will work hard in order to make sure that his/her own department will not be blamed when results fail to come out well (CM1).

When the pass rates for all schools are published at every centre of the education system and made known to all stakeholders, this will motivate everyone to work hard in order to get results and avoid being embarrassed when one's school, circuit or district is not doing

well ... Imagine seeing yourself at the bottom of the log table all the time... Surely, you will never be happy when you sees yourself being negatively evaluated all the time. I have seen results in my circuit improving because it has been very difficult for people at every level of the school system to explain to supervisors above them what went wrong all the time... Like is the case with (name), circuit as you can see (*pointing to the notice board*). This circuit has almost become a perpetual failure and the circuit manager should be in serious problems with the district manager... In order to survive, the circuit manager should also pressure the school principals in his circuit to perform. If this happens, results will obviously improve. It is beyond doubt that very soon, we will see results in this circuit improving... *Wait and you will see what will happen* [Emphasis] (CF 2).

Data presented above show that one of the ways in which distributed leadership influences teaching and learning in the schools studied is through its effect on increasing accountability demands on educational leaders and other stakeholders that are tasked with the responsibility to facilitate student learning. This is so because, every one of the many leaders to whom authority to lead is distributed will desire to be positively accountable for his/her own section and contribute towards the common goal of providing quality education ng the child. Those in the leadership will always ask members under them to account for their performance as they are also expected to account to authorities above them. However, data presented above seem to confirm that, as pointed out earlier, distributed leadership among some stakeholders in the schools studied is understood in the perspective of decentralising power and authority through creating multiple accounting centres within established structures in the chain of command. These accounting centres will therefore collaborate towards a common goal of educating the child. By so doing, effective teaching and learning takes place.

4.7.2.3 Teambuilding and stakeholder empowerment

Responding to the same set of questions concerning whether and how distributed leadership impacts on teaching and learning in secondary schools, some of the research participants had this to say:

I see distributed leadership very helpful in improving the quality of teaching and learning in secondary schools in this country in that it helps in team building and capacity development... The teams that are built out of practising distributed leadership collaboratively work together to realise educational goals of the school... An example of the teams that result from the country's effort practice a distributed approach to leadership is the school management team. You find, for example, that it is mandatory in this country that each school establishes a school management team that assists the principal to manage teaching and learning activities and the members are leaders in their respective groups. As leaders, departmental heads also coordinate staff development workshops and organise team teaching sessions. These sections and workshops help to improve teaching and learning by learners and also develop teaching skills by learners (SM1).

Personally, I see distributed leadership improving teaching and learning in the sense that it inspires and motivates stakeholders to work together towards the goals of education in the country. These are the goals that all stakeholders agree that they should achieve when they realise that their contribution, for example, in decision making, is being considered... Under distributed leadership, as I told you earlier, teachers with knowledge and skills that are seen to be important for some specific programmes or projects in the school may also be appointed to lead others in that area... By utilising this knowledge and skill the school promotes team building and cooperation among teachers at the station. This cooperation will in turn improve morale among teachers. Once morale is high, teachers will teach better and children will learn more effectively (SM2).

As I told you earlier in this discussion, I see distributed leadership as an approach to leadership where responsibilities that are supposed to be in the hands of people who are in positions of power only, are also afforded to people who are in the lower rungs of the organisation structure. For example, in the secondary schools in South Africa, leadership distribution is sometimes achieved through participation of teachers in school governing boards and other committees that are important in the education of children. This approach to leadership helps in teacher capacity building and motivation. As teachers are involved in making decisions that are important for their everyday work activities, they also get motivated to implement those decisions. By so doing, they will improve the way they teach and, as a result, learners will also benefit (SM3).

The way I understand it is that, distributed leadership affects teaching and learning in a number of ways. My point here is that distributed leadership, as an approach to school leadership, takes leadership beyond people who have officially been appointed into some leadership positions... What I am saying here is that whilst, yes, there are people in positions of power who are finally

accountable to people above them on the performance of their schools or departments, for example, department heads, school principals and circuit managers, distributed leadership goes much further than these positions. Even those who are not officially appointed as school leaders, for example, classroom teachers, are given the chance to lead others as is seen fit at any given time. In this school, leadership distribution also reaches to as far down the ladder as classroom teachers and, at times, learners are also given the chance to lead, especially where they are seen to possess knowledge that others do not have, but may be useful to the system... As I told you earlier, in this school, we identify teachers skills or knowledge needed at a given time and we deploy them to lead others in that area of speciality...Like I also said earlier, I think you have also seen what both teacher leadership and learner leadership entails. Have you seen how proficient the child leader in the history club has become on issues of both South African liberation history and nation building? It is clear from my own experiences and practices in this school that, where leadership roles are distributed to beyond people in positions of power, those people who are involved in leadership activities are also given opportunities to learn when they are involved in leadership roles... I have seen that, where I involve non-leaders into leadership roles, I also develop leaders in the process. In a way, it can therefore be said that distributed leadership improves both teacher and student learning and therefore improve learner learning (SM4).

Data presented above have shown that distributed leadership impacts on teaching and learning through its effects on team building and capacity development. This view is supported by one research participant (SM1)'s statement that, "I see distributed leadership very helpful in improving the quality of teaching and learning in secondary schools in this country in that it helps in team building and capacity development... The teams that are built out of practicing distributed leadership collaboratively work together to realise the educational goals of the school." In clear agreement with participant SM1, participant SM2 said, "I see distributed leadership improving teaching and learning in the sense that it inspires and motivates stakeholders to work together towards the goals of education in the country." Clearly, distributed leadership is understood to impact on teaching and learning through its effect on team building. In addition, it also builds leadership capacity among participants. The data presented above suggests that learning is not defined from the perspective of passing examinations only. Instead, learning is also understood to mean acquisition of knowledge and skills that make one able to live in harmony with others to whom one shares the same environment. The case in point is the learner who chairs the history club. Through his participation and leadership of the history

club, the learner understood that the fight for independence in South Africa was not focused on fighting a certain race, but a fight against a system.

4.7.2.4 Putting in place systems that promote collaborative leadership

In responding to the same set of questions concerning how distributed leadership impacts on teaching and learning, one research participants (SM5) had this to say:

One of the ways in which distributed leadership impacts on teaching and learning is that it assist in putting systems in place ... An understanding that power and authority to perform the activities needed to achieve goals of a school may effectively be concentrated in one person or one level of the organisation forces people to put in place systems that make work possible. This is why I sometimes say the best thing that has happened to the education system in South Africa since the advent of democracy is to put in place a clear structure with multiple levels of authority... Undoubtedly, this arrangement for distributing leadership roles and responsibilities, away from direct school authorities only, makes school leadership easier and teaching and learning activities more effective and efficient... I can safely say these multiple levels of authority provide a platform for shared leadership (SM5).

The excerpt above shows that research participant, SM5, saw distributed leadership as having an impact on teaching and learning by putting systems in place. These systems provide platforms for collaborative and collective leadership in which each member within a particular section of the education organogram plays his/her own unique way to make teaching and learning effective and efficient. The view captured in the excerpt above seems to be in line with that of CF1 who had this to say:

... The structures that are put in place where a distributed approach to school leadership has been embraced, facilitate teaching and learning in the education system in this country... At a school level, for example, we have department heads, the deputy principal, the school principal, and such structures as the school management teams and school governing body. If all these structures are properly coordinated, they can collaborate in a way that promotes effective learning... As you may be aware, every year before learners sit for their final examinations, schools in this circuit come together and organise what has come to be referred as last lap strategies towards final examinations. These strategies are organised by principals, working together with school governing bodies, school management teams and educators... It is beyond doubt that these programmes go

a long way in promoting teaching and learning. *I wish if you may attend some of these sessions to understand what I mean, if you have not done so already* [Emphasis] (CF1).

Clearly, participant CF1, seems to agree with participant SM5 that one of the ways in which distributed leadership impacts on teaching and learning is through its effect on establishment of systems that promote collaborative leadership. Once these systems are put in place and are allowed to function, effective teaching and learning becomes possible. Figure 4.12 below captures an instance in which the various stakeholders in the education system are collaborating in promoting effective teaching and learning.



Figure 4.13: Learners from different schools attending workshops on last lap strategic workshops (Source: Primary data collected from the field).

Figure 4.12 above show learners from different schools who are brought together to attend what are referred to as Last Lap Strategic Workshops as they prepare to sit their final examinations. The workshops are organised by school principals working with SGBs, SMTs and educators (classroom teachers), with support from circuit managers. These groups work collaboratively, each one of them doing its part to ensure that the workshops become a success. In clarifying the role that each level of authority and power plays, in planning, organising and executing the Last Lap Workshops as shown in Figure 4.8 above, participant SM4 who participated in one of the workshops had this to say:

As you can see, this workshop is good for our learners. We are giving them the final push to make sure that they see through their final examinations... You find that to make this workshop a success, a number of offices are involved. For your own information, school principals initiate the training programme. For funding purposes, school governing bodies take the leadership role and the actual training is managed by department heads within their capacity as subject specialists among the members of the school management teams. The facilitators for the workshop are the subject teachers... Circuit managers are also involved as the representatives of the Limpopo department of education... I think you can see that these workshops are a product of collaborative leadership by a number of stakeholders in the schools system... As you can see, these stakeholders function within a well-coordinated and systematic structure within the education system, which I see to have been put in place in order to facilitate effective teaching and learning in schools through a shared approach to leadership, and is doing exactly that (SM4).

Clearly, the data presented above show that a distributed approach to educational leadership also promotes effective teaching and learning by putting in place systems and structures for this purpose. These systems and structures, such as SMTs, SGBs and circuit management committees, all collaborate to ensure effective teaching and learning in the secondary schools. Such structures assist office bearers, such as school principals and circuit managers, to coordinate and facilitate teaching and learning in these schools. It is also evident in the data presented above that, in the distributed leadership matrices, classroom teachers may also have a stake as they are the ones who directly interface with learners during the actual teaching and learning activities.

4.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the data that was collected from the field in order to answer the questions. Data in this chapter are presented according to themes that emerged from the analysis of responses from research participants to the questions asked them and the observations made from the field. As a result, the data are presented in the form of verbatim excerpts and pictures that were taken from the field. The next chapter focuses on the analysis and discussion of research findings.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION, SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The current study sought to explore the nature of distributed leadership practice in selected secondary schools in the Limpopo province of South Africa and how this practice influences teaching and learning in these schools. It sought to provide responses to the main research question: *What is the nature of distributed leadership practice in selected secondary schools in the Limpopo province of South Africa and how does it shape teaching and learning?* The present chapter discusses and summarises the findings of the study. It also presents the study's conclusions, contributions, and recommendations for practice, future research, policy formulation and implementation. The findings of the study are presented and discussed in the perspective of three secondary questions upon which the study is framed. The questions are as follows:

- *How is distributed leadership understood and practised in selected secondary schools, in the Limpopo Province of South Africa?*
- *In what ways do the practices of distributed leadership in the selected secondary schools shape teaching and learning?*
- *How can the practice of distributed leadership within the selected secondary schools be described and explained?*

Discussion of research findings and the conclusions from the study is purposefully linked to primary data as presented thematically in Chapter 4, literature as reviewed in Chapter 2, and the conceptual and theoretical frameworks upon which the study is framed and grounded, as presented in Chapter 1. The study sought to explore research participants' understanding of the concept and practice of distributed leadership in secondary schools in the Limpopo province of South Africa. In the process, the study also highlighted how distributed leadership, as understood and practised in South Africa, influences teaching and learning in secondary schools in the country. Based on these findings, the researcher therefore recommends various measures that may be taken to ensure that the South African secondary school system effectively benefits from distributed leadership practices

defined by Spillane et al. (2001) as an educational leadership approach that involves all educators in leadership activities to enhance classroom instruction with the objective of increasing higher learner attainment. The concept of learning in this study is not confined to the acquisition of academic knowledge only. Instead, this concept is viewed from a holistic view that embraces the acquisition of knowledge, attitude and skills that enables learners to fit in the community to which they belong and to participate in it fully as healthy, responsible and productive citizens who are able to fend for their families and to leave with others in harmony. Such learners ought to bear in mind the notion of unity in diversity, upon which the rainbow nation of South Africa is grounded.

5.2 Analysis and Discussion of the Findings of the Study

This section analyses and discusses the findings of the study beginning with an overview of the context and conceptual framework for the study. In order to fully understand and unlock the meaning of the data presented in Chapter 4, as drawn through interview discussions with research participants and non-participant observation of distributed leadership practices from the research sites, this study also looks at both the personal contexts of research participants and the institutional contexts of research sites, respectively. The first part of this section, therefore, focuses on the characteristics of research participants and then locates the study into its social and institutional context, in order to show how distributed leadership practice in the study area can be explained.

5.2.1 An overview of the personal characteristics of research participants

In this section, I present an analysis and discussion of the biographical data of research participants in order to avoid “absolutism” that assumes that phenomena of interest in an empirical study are the same regardless of differential characteristics of research participants such as culture, race, ethnicity and educational background (Hammer, 2011). According to Jita (2004), the different characteristics of research participants comprise what may be referred to as *‘resources of biography’*. Andrews (2013), as cited by Muresherwa (2020), uses the term *‘technologies of self’*, to refer to personal characteristics or biographic data of research participants that may be used as a basis for understanding why people behave or act the way they do in a given context. In other

words, personal characteristics of research participants provide the keys that may be required for secondary data analysis, synthesis and interpretation of research findings.

With respect to research participants in the present study, it can be observed from data presented in Table 4.1 (See section 4.2: On Biographical Data and Coding for Research Sites) that, the research participants in the study had at least a degree as part of the qualifications that allowed them to practice as educators in their various capacities (See Table 4.1). This means that all research participants were above the minimum level for entry into the education system as educators. The DBE (1996:17) states that a recognised three-year certificate (with) relative education qualification value (REQV13) that includes suitable training as an educator is the minimum requirement for an educator to be eligible for employment in a learning institution.

According to policy, a second degree or higher is required for district-based authorities. As data show (See Table 4.1), all participants in this category hold at least a master's degree with some of them holding doctoral degrees. Clearly, all participants in the present study met the required standard for working in their respective capacity. As data show, whilst most of the research participants have at least a master's degree, some of these degrees seem not to be directly related with educational leadership, in which all research participants were involved. When they were asked as to whether their degrees had any course on educational leadership, only three participants answered in the affirmative. When they were further asked as to whether their degree programmes had courses that included topics on distributed leadership, the three participants who indicated that their degree programmes involved educational leadership further indicated that they also had topics in distributed leadership. The rest of the participants indicated that they attended in-service courses on educational leadership which also touched on issues of distributed leadership. However, the same participants also indicated that the knowledge that they acquired in distributed leadership from these courses is not adequate and does not fully prepare them for embracing distributed leadership fully in their various capacities.

5.2.2 An Overview of the characteristics of the research site

This study is about the nature and practice of distributed leadership in secondary schools in South Africa and how this nature and practice of distributed leadership influence teaching and learning in schools. As discussed above, research participants in this study are educators at various levels of the educational value chain from secondary school level to the circuit level, and up to the district level. Whilst secondary schools from the two districts that participated in the study may be considered to comprise the key element of the research site for the study, circuit and district offices also emerged as additional important parts of this research. This is particularly so since, as a researcher, I also interviewed district officials in order to get a holistic view of the nature and practice of distributed leadership in the value chain of secondary schools as understood and practised by key stakeholders from the school level to the district level in South Africa. Data presented in Chapter 4 has shown that, at a school level, centres of power and authority may be viewed from the perspective of individual office bearers and institutions established for the purpose of facilitating both school leadership and education by learners. The individual office bearers in a standard and conventional school, as illustrated in the data, comprise classroom teachers, department heads, deputy principals, school principals and parents. Whilst the parents may not have any line authority over the other members of the educational value chain, their contribution to the school leadership matrices and to teaching and learning, in the South African context, as data seem to suggest, is immense. For this reason, parents comprise a key element of the school leadership context, especially through their participation in parent assemblies and school governing bodies (SGBs). Parental involvement and participation, something that some stakeholders in the present study interpreted as an effort by policy makers to democratise the education space (Grant, 2017; Hlanga, et al., 2021; Karlsson et al., 2020). According to Hargreaves and Fink (2009), distributed leadership may also be associated with democratising education.

Another key element of the school leadership context, as also established in the present study, is the learner. In addition to the key stakeholders discussed above, standing in their individual capacities in educational leadership, data presented in Chapter 4 also

show that these stakeholders may also comprise key contexts of school leadership environment in the form of school management teams (SMTs) and SDGs. Furthermore, as data show, a number of committees may also be formed and be assigned specific roles within the school leadership matrices, which, according to participants in the present study amounts to some form of distributed leadership in a South African context. After the school level, another key context of the secondary school leadership environment comprises the circuit managers and the district director. These also emerged as a key context of the school leadership environment. It may also need to be appreciated that within the circuit and district structures, as data show, there are also different stakeholders who act either as committees and/or in their individual capacities, to comprise key elements of the distributed leadership context, as perceived by stakeholders. In affirming the context of the school leadership environment discussed above, research participant SM5, a school principal, thus said, "I view this clear structure [of the education system] to be one of the best things that has ever happened to the South African education system."

5.3 Discussion of Major Findings

This section presents and discusses the major findings of the study. These findings are discussed in the perspective of the objectives upon which the study is grounded.

5.3.1 Perspectives of distributed leadership

It will be recalled that the first objective of this study was to explore the nature of distributed leadership as understood and practised by key stakeholders in selected secondary schools. This knowledge forms the basis for understanding distributed leadership practice by key stakeholders in South African secondary schools as related to the first sub-question of this study. The first sub-question for the present study is: *How is distributed leadership understood and practised in selected secondary schools, in the Limpopo Province of South Africa?* The question about the nature of distributed leadership can be answered from two perspectives. The first view concerns the main tenets of distributed leadership as perceived and experienced by stakeholders in the schools studied. The second perspective comprises practices of distributed leadership in the schools studied. In this section, we start by looking at first

perspective on the main characteristics of distributed leadership as perceived and understood by research participants in the present study. This is understanding is important because it is the basis of practice. An important finding emerging from data analysis in the present study with regards to this sub-question is that, the research participants understood distributed leadership in the perspective of two key dimensions. For the purpose of this discussion, these two dimensions are defined as the *vertical* and *horizontal* dimensions of distributed leadership. The conceptualisation of distributed leadership in the perspective of the two dimensions is presented diagrammatically below.

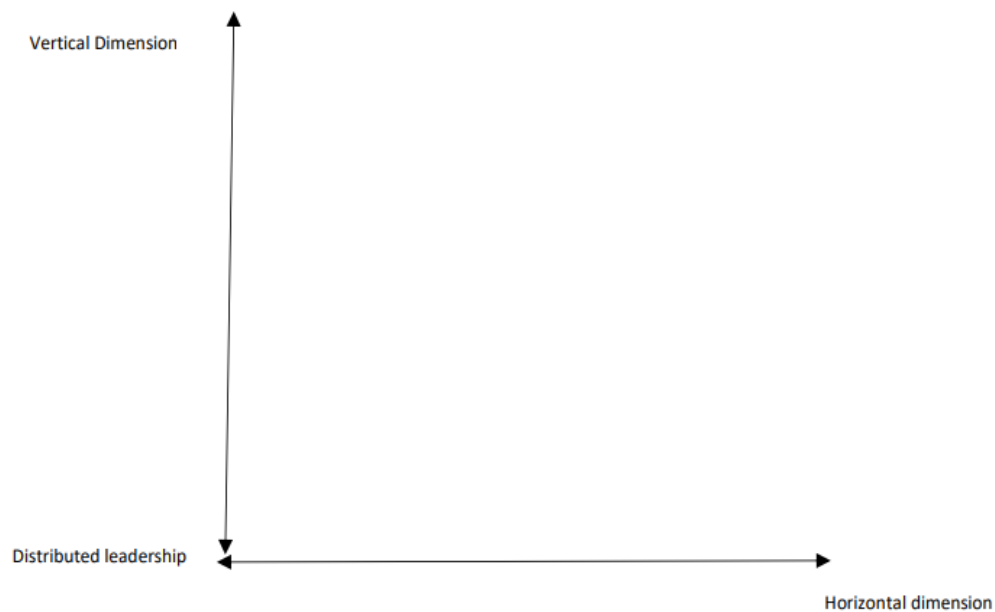


Figure 5.1: Dimensions of distributed leadership as perceived by education stakeholders (Source: Data analysis and synthesis by the researcher).

Figure 5.1 shows the two dimensions of the distributed leadership framework as derived from data analysis and synthesis in the present study. The first dimension, that is, the *vertical dimension*, focuses on who is involved in distributed leadership within the educational system chain of command or educational value chain. Specifically, this dimension is about the range of persons or office bearers involved in distributed leadership as viewed from the perspective of the organisation structure of an education system. The second dimension, that is, *horizontal dimension*, focuses on what activities are involved in distributed leadership. The issue here is that distributed leadership, as

emerging from data analysis in the present study, can be understood from the perspectives of the 'what' and/or the 'who' questions. Specifically, the questions can be summarised as: What does distributed leadership entail (look like)? And/or who is involved in distributed leadership? As data seem to suggest, the answers to the "who and what questions" summarised above comprise what may be viewed as 'vertical' and 'horizontal' dimensions of distributed leadership, respectively. This understanding of distributed leadership, as comprising vertical and horizontal dimensions, is further discussed below beginning with the horizontal dimension.

5.3.1.1 *The horizontal dimension of distributed leadership*

The concept of horizontal dimension is used in this section of the study to address the questions of what activities and processes are involved in distributed leadership in the secondary schools studied. Data presented in Chapter 4 (See section 4.4.1) seem to show that research participants in the present study understood distributed leadership in the perspective of the activities or processes involved in this approach to school leadership. In other words, research participants also understood distributed leadership in the perspective of the 'what' as opposed to *the 'who'* questions only. In line with the questions on what distributed leadership entails, data presented in Chapter 4 show that research participants understood distributed leadership in the perspective of collective, coordinated and collaborative leadership by key stakeholders in the value chain of secondary schools' education system. Since they address the questions on what is involved in distributed leadership, concepts such as co-ordinated leadership, collaborative leadership and collective leadership comprise what could be viewed in this study to be the elements of the vertical dimension of distributed leadership. As data seem to suggest, all these types or styles of leadership seem to involve some form of shared leadership. The element of this approach to leadership includes mobilisation and utilisation of expertise, that is, both tacit and explicit knowledge and skills within the education system in order to achieve shared goals and hence the use of such concepts, as collective, coordinated and collaborative leadership. As shown in Chapter 4, it is from this background that research participant SM4, a school principal, opined that distributed leadership is "an approach to school leadership, in which leadership is shared, rather than

leadership responsibilities resting with only one individual [the principal] in the school system, or just a few people on positions of authority". Another participant, that is, participant CM4, a circuit manager said, "I think distributed leadership refers to a leadership type in which the authority to lead is shared among members of the SMT in a hierarchy of the education system, that is, from the principal, the SMT and department heads".

Clearly, research participants seem to believe that distributed leadership can be viewed from the perspective of shared leadership, which is characterised by collaborative and coordinated or collective leadership as opposed to concentrating power and authority in just one individual or one level of the school leadership hierarchy. It is from this perspective that Raelin (2018:5) defines distributed leadership "... *as a co-construction of leadership by those involved in an undertaking*". Spillane et al., (2001) and Sol (2021) define it as situational leadership. In fact, all research participants in the present study, as data seem to suggest, appreciate the concept of distributed leadership as either collective or co-ordinated/ collaborative and through which positional leaders (Harris, 2014) in a school system also allow other leaders to grow and assist them to pursue and achieve shared goals. This means participants understood distributed leadership as some form of shared leadership. Specifically, the activities of distributed leadership in this dimension are also viewed by research participants to encompass team building, capacity development and empowerment of stakeholders to assume leadership roles in some specific situation. Clearly, this dimension of distributed leadership addresses *the 'what' questions* and not *'the questions of 'who' is involved in distributed leadership and 'how'*. The *'who' questions*, that is, who is involved in distributed leadership in the secondary schools studied are discussed in the second dimension of distributed leadership presented below.

5.3.1.2 The vertical dimension of distributed leadership

The concept of vertical dimension is used in this section of the study to address the questions of *who* is involved in distributed leadership in the value chain or organisational hierarchy of secondary schools' education system. An important finding emerging from

data analysis is that research participants seem to agree that distributed leadership may be understood from the perspective of shared leadership comprising collaborated, coordinated and/or collective leadership, and the related activities of team building, capacity development, co-options and empowerment of stakeholders to assume leadership roles in an environment in which leadership is shared. This means they agree on the perspective of distributed leadership as a leadership approach premised on the view that all person with capacity, regardless of rank, may be allowed to serve as a leader when and as the situation arises (Spillane, 2001). However, participants' perspective of the level of distribution of authority, that is, the definition of "all persons with capacity", seem to vary across stakeholders in the education system. Data presented in Chapter 4 (See section 4.4.2) therefore seem to show a lack of agreement among research participants with reference to the depth of leadership distribution, that is, with regards to the questions concerning 'who' is involved in distributed leadership within the value chain of secondary school education system.

Data presented in Chapter 4 illustrated an important finding that some research participants in the present study hold the view that any person with capacity, that is, desired knowledge and skills, regardless of rank, can serve as a leader under a distributed leadership framework. This is in the true sense of the concept, "any person with capacity". The key term here is capacity. However, other participants view distributed leadership to be a domain for those within the corridors of power either in their individual capacity as department heads or deputy principals, or in their collective capacities as members of some specific institution within the education system. These institutions, such as the SMTs and the SGBs, are established by policy to facilitate teaching and learning (Williams, 2011). However, research participants also see them as platforms for distributed leadership. An important finding in the present study is therefore that research participants viewed distributed leadership either in the narrow sense of involving those in the corridors of power only, or the broad sense of involving anyone with capacity as and when the situation demands, regardless of rank. In the broad sense of distributed leadership, as data seem to suggest, even classroom teachers and learners were involved in leadership in areas where they were known to have the skills, knowledge and

attitude needed to lead in the given aspect, activity or process in the educational value chain.

In an effort to describe his understanding of which stakeholders in a school system are involved in distributed leadership, one research participant, that is, participant SM4, a school principal said:

“What we do is that, when the need arises, we identify people with the skills or knowledge we need and these people will be given authority to lead others in various capacities related to their skills or knowledge and we expect all to follow... at times, even children are given the opportunity to lead, depending with the situation in hand.”

Clearly, it is evident from the citation above that participant SM4 believed that everyone within the educational value chain with the capacity to lead in certain aspects, processes and activities in the school system, should be given the opportunity to lead, regardless of rank. An interesting feature of this excerpt, which is absent from the contributions of most of the responses by research participants, is that participant SM4 believed that even learners may also be roped in to participate in leadership roles as and when the situation demands. This type of thinking agrees with Sol (2021:73) who points out that “... distributed leadership is frequently described as situational leadership, team leadership, and democratic leadership by the many writers in the field of people leadership”. Effectively, this means that, when the situation demands, even classroom teachers and, at times, learners should be allowed to lead in some specific contexts.

Clearly, like is the case with Sol (2021) cited above, participant SM4 also sees distributed leadership to be situational and a shared approach to educational leadership. In an apparent agreement with the view that distributed leadership should involve any person with the capacity to lead, regardless of rank (Cosenza, 2015) and that distributed leadership is situational (Sol, 2021), SM4 said:

“...we take collective decisions as a school... I've got SMT members, and school management members, which are educators. I have four of them that are assisting me

in running of the school. So, whatever idea that I come up with, or is handed to me from above. I call them, talk to them, then hear their views and from there, we move down to the staff... and every one of them, they should also contribute their thoughts, and if necessary, lead the way, especially at implementation level... I mean, even teachers may also lead the way. Where the situation demands, even learners are also allowed to assume leadership roles on issues affecting them.”

Participant DM1 also seem to share the view that under distributed leadership, every person with capacity to lead must be given the opportunity to do so, as and when the situation demands. His view in this respect was evident when he said:

“They [positional leaders] are accountable to the circuit manager who is also accountable to the district director... As a result, they cannot afford to relax and allow chance to take its course ... However, even them... should also allow everyone with the needed skills, knowledge and proper attitude to lead others in his/her own area of expertise to do so, within the spirit of distributed leadership, they should appreciate that the final responsibility to account, rest on them... What I mean here is that, surely, as leaders in education, we are supposed to harness talent from our teams and allow the schools system at every level to benefit from this talent. However, we should never lose sight of the stubborn fact that we remain answerable to the performance of our sections.”

Clearly, issues of accountability crept into the discussion as an apparent barrier to distributed leadership. However, this excerpt from participant DM1 suggest that, like participant SM4 and SM5, he also shares the view that distributed leadership should afford all persons with capacity to lead others in some specific situations. Issues of capacity in this context involve the matters related to possession of necessary skills, knowledge and proper attitude to lead others in some specific situation.

Data presented in Chapter 4 seem to suggest that all research participants in this study had some understanding of the concept distributed leadership as an approach that recognises schools as characterised by multiple leaders and that leadership activities in these situations are widely shared between and/or among stakeholders within the system (Spillane, 2001; Spillane, 2004). However, what seems to

differ is an understanding by these educational stakeholders concerning the extent to which distributed leadership can be stretched to reach the multiple levels of power and authority. This spread of authority within the chain of command or the hierarchy of a school system comprise what is referred to in this study as the vertical dimension of distributed leadership. Whilst participants DM1, SM4 and SM5 believe that distributed leadership can be stretched to reach everyone with capacity, regardless of rank, most of the participants in this study seem to view leadership distribution in the perspective of those in positions of power and the structures within the education system that are established for the purpose of facilitating learning. Examples of such structures include the SMTs, SGBs, and the various committees that may be established at a school, circuit or district level to assist in educational leadership and management.

A key finding emerging from the present study is therefore that for some participants a secondary school is not what is defined by physical boundaries. Instead, it also includes other structures outside the conventional boundaries of a school as demarcated by, the school fence. It therefore emerged that some of the research participants in the present study, as data seem to suggest, believed that the practice of sharing leadership roles under the banner of distributed leadership should focus mainly on people in positions of power. Such personnel includes department heads, deputy principals, principals, circuit managers, and district directors, among other others in the educational value chain. The research participants also regarded institutions such as the SMTs and SGBs as platforms for distributed leadership. In fact, such stakeholders seemed to view distributed leadership in to also involve national policy to democratise the socio-educational space and to improve accountability by educators for their performance. In an apparent agreement with this view, research participant CM4, a circuit manager, thus said:

“... I think the most important thing that the South African authorities are doing to promote distributed leadership in schools is the emphasis being placed on such structures as SMTs, and SGBs, and on a clear line of authority from department heads and above... Surely these institutions, as vehicles for collaborative leadership, make educational leadership and therefore student learning possible.”

As data presented in chapter 4 show, this view was also echoed by research participant SM5 who, in an apparent appreciation of the physical organisation of the South African education system from the SMTs level to the SGBs, and the circuit management teams (CMTs) to what he referred to as district management teams (DMTs), said:

“This is why I sometimes say that the best thing that has happened to the education system in South Africa since the advent of democracy is to put in place a clear structure with multiple levels of authority... Undoubtedly, this arrangement for distributing leadership roles and responsibilities away from direct school authorities only, makes school leadership easier and teaching and learning activities more effective and efficient... I can safely say these multiple levels of authority provide a platform for shared leadership.”

Clearly, the multiple levels of authority in the public education system were seen to position the South African education system for distributed leadership. In fact, the multiple levels of authority throughout the secondary school education value chain were considered as providing platforms for distributed leadership which participant SM5 aptly described as shared leadership. However, some stakeholders seemed to perceive distributed leadership as confined to those people in positions of power and the institutions they established comprising SMTs, SGBs, CMTs, and DMTs, whilst others view distributed leadership to extend beyond the physical boundaries of a school.

Clearly, an interesting finding emerging from data analysis in this study is that distributed leadership is viewed by some stakeholders to be flowing through all the linkages of the educational leadership value chain including the centres of power that may be considered to be outside the physical boundaries of a school as an organisation. In other words, as data seem to suggest, the vertical dimensions of distributed leadership in a secondary school system are not restricted by what are conventionally viewed as the physical boundaries of a school. This view also means that a school system today may be viewed to extend beyond the boundaries demarcated by the school fence. As a result leadership influence that originates and is supported from outside the conventional boundaries of any individual school is therefore also seen as distributed leadership and to affect

leadership activities and processes within individual schools. It is for this reason that research participants in this study independently affirmed, but with agreement that:

“... the most important thing that the South African authorities are doing to promote effective leadership in schools is the emphasis being placed on such structures as SMTs, and on a clear line of authority from department heads and above...” (CM4).

“... the best thing that has happened to the education system in South Africa ...is to put in place a clear structure with multiple levels of authority...” (SM5).

Clearly, the same research participants further confirmed, as also given above, that this clear structural arrangement of the education system provides a platform for distributed leadership. This clearly demonstrates that distributed leadership, in the perspective of these stakeholders and participants in the present study, goes beyond the physical boundaries of a school as an individual institution of teaching and learning. In fact, this reality seem to point to the view that distributed leadership in the districts studied is both a policy and a professional issue.

In addition, data discussed above seem to support one of the findings emerging in this study that distributed leadership, as perceived by stakeholders in the present study, is characterised by two key dimensions. These are the vertical and horizontal dimensions. As data also seem to suggest, each of these dimensions is flexible and is capable of shifting from one point to another as it embraces more of the elements that it represents in the distributed leadership matrices in either of the opposite ends of the continuum. Data, as discussed in this section, also seem to suggest that, in defining distributed leadership, some stakeholders focused mainly on the upper end section of the vertical dimension of this approach to school leadership. In other words, some stakeholders focused leadership distribution on persons that occupy some place in the high echelons of power, such as department heads, deputy principals, principals, circuit managers, district directors, and parents, either in their individual capacities or by way of the institutions they represent such as the SMTs, SGBs, CMTs, and DMTs only.

However, as data also seem to suggest, a complete and holistic view of distributed leadership should be centred on the concept of 'all persons with capacity', in the same way as it embraces both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of this approach to leadership. In other words, distributed leadership should be understood as a leadership approach that is premised on the view that any person with capacity, regardless of rank, may be allowed to serve as a leader when and as the situation arises (Spillane, 2001). The key here rests on capacity and context. This view also means that the activities and processes of distributed leadership should be understood in the context of shared leadership, which is characterised by collective, and coordinated or collaborative leadership activities within a specific and permissible context. The context in the South African situation, as data seem to suggest extends beyond a school's physical boundaries.

Findings emerging from data analysis also show research participants in the present study agreeing on the horizontal dimensions of distributed leadership in the context of the key characteristics of shared leadership, collaborative leadership or collective leadership. These elements of distributed leadership manifests themselves through the activities such team building, capacity development and empowerment of stakeholders to lead in some specific situations. What seem to differ in the way stakeholders understand distributed leadership is on the aspects of vertical dimensions. Some research participants, such as DM1, SM4 and SM5 seemed to embrace a holistic perspective of distributed leadership as involving all persons with the capacity to lead in some specific situations. However, other participants seemed to understand distributed leadership in the perspective of persons who are already in positions of power acting individually or within the context of their institutions.

An analysis of the personal context or the biographic data for research participants DM1, SM4 and SM5 seems to show that the three research participants, unlike the rest of the research participants in this study, studied educational leadership at some point in their professional journeys. These three participants indicated that the degrees and/or diploma programs that they studied had some components of educational leadership and,

specifically, distributed leadership among the topics of study. The rest of the research participants indicated that they did not take any formal study in educational leadership at any stage in their academic journeys. However, all of them indicated that they participated in some workshops which covered some topics on educational leadership. The data presented in Chapter 4 suggest that the knowledge of distributed leadership that these participants had was obtained through their participation in the workshops in questions and their experiences as educational leaders in the South African context.

Most research participants, however, believed that they did not have adequate knowledge about distributed leadership. Only four participants, that is, participant DM1, SM4, SM5 and DF1 indicated that they had adequate knowledge about distributed leadership. The first three participants indicated that they had studied educational leadership in which distributed leadership was part of the content studied. One participant, that is, participant DF1, a district official who holds a doctoral degree indicated that she did not do any course on educational leadership, specifically. However, her knowledge of educational leadership in general and distributed leadership in particular, was obtained through the workshops that she attended as a high ranking education official. In addition, participant DF1 also indicated that she obtained knowledge of distributed leadership through personal research. She indicated that, as a PhD degree holder, a research based degree, she was involved in educational research including studies on issues to do with educational leadership. It is from such studies and professional experience that she got the needed knowledge of distributed leadership and other issues affecting her work as a district education official. Findings in the present study therefore seem to show that the differences in educational stakeholders have ramifications on how authorities in the education system understand distributed leadership thought and practice.

5.3.2 Practices of distributed leadership

It ought to be recalled that one of the objectives of this study was to understand the distributed leadership practices embraced in South African secondary schools. This objective is also captured in the secondary research question: *How is distributed leadership understood and practised in selected secondary schools, in the Limpopo*

Province of South Africa? The key finding with regard to this sub-question is that distributed leadership, as practised in the secondary schools that participated in the present study, is seen to be characterised by multiple activities which collectively amount to what Spillane et al., (2001), Spillane and Diamond (2016) and Sol (2021) define as shared leadership activities. As literature show these activities comprise collective leadership, collaborative leadership and coordinated leadership activities (Spillane, 2001; Al-Ghanem et al., 2020). Al-Ghanem et al. (2020) further describes this approach to leadership as team leadership. In practice, these team leadership activities take place at different levels of intensity within the multiple levels of authority, along the vertical dimension of the distributed leadership framework. To distinguish these activities from other dimensions of distributed leadership, I defined the elements associated with distributed leadership in this study as the horizontal dimension of distributed leadership (See Figure 4.1). These activities are also performed at different mixes across schools and/or different levels of the vertical dimension of the distributed leadership framework.

As evidenced by data in Chapter 4, and discussed in section 5.3.1 above, distributed leadership in the secondary schools that participated in the present study is understood in the perspective of both school level activities and secondary school system educational value chain. The latter comprises the part of the education system which is situated outside the confines of what conventionally is defined as the physical boundary of any specific secondary school. This is the part that comprise, in part, the institutional context in which schools, as public organisations, operate as they seek to achieve the goals for which they were established. Both levels of distributed leadership practice described in this section are important for teaching and learning, as data presented in Chapter 4 seem to suggest. What this means is that, in some schools, distributed leadership is practised in the whole continuum of the vertical dimension from low rungs involving learners and classroom teachers, to the entire school system that is conventionally demarcated by physical boundaries to the part of the school system that is external to the physical boundaries of specific schools. However, in other schools, distributed leadership is confined to persons who hold positions of power, either in their individual capacities as positional leaders or in the institutions formed to facilitate teaching and learning for which

positional leaders are members, namely, SMTs, SGBs, CMTs, and DMTs. This seems to be the conventional definition of distributed leadership thought and practice, as literature seem to suggest (Cosenza, 2015; Spillane & Diamond, 2016).

Clearly, the discussion above shows that, participants in the present study agreed on the perspective of distributed leadership as a leadership approach that is premised on the view that any person with capacity, regardless of rank, may be allowed to serve as a leader when and as the situation arises (Cosenza, 2015; Spillane, 2001; Spillane & Diamond, 2016). However, the perspective of “any person” and therefore the vertical dimensions involved seem to differ among schools and within school systems. This difference is also in agreement with Spillane et al. (2009), Spillane (2013) and Spillane (2015) who, after acknowledging the existence of three distinct types of distributed leadership practices, namely co-ordinated, collective, and collaborated also talk of what they referred to as teacher leadership. Other writers, such as Harris and Lambert (2003), Grant (2006), Grant and Singh (2009), Gardner et al. (2010) and Cosenza (2015), also add teacher leadership to the list of distinctive types of distributed leadership practices as given by Spillane et al. (2009), Spillane (2013) and Spillane (2015), as cited above. Harris and Lambert (2003) define teacher leadership as a leadership paradigm in which teaching staff members are given the chance to lead at various levels within the institution, as and when the situation demands. In other words, teacher leadership is viewed as a key component of the shared leadership framework.

It also emerged in this study that, in some of the schools that participated in the present research, distributed leadership practices were also observed in the context of parents and learners. This means, in addition to other stakeholders, teachers, learners and parents were afforded the opportunity to also lead others in situations where they were found to have the necessary knowledge, skills and aptitude to do so. In other words, these schools practised the broad perspective of what Harris and Lambert (2003), Grant (2006), Grant and Singh (2009), Gardner et al. (2010), Spillane (2013) and Cosenza (2015) define as everyone with capacity, in a given situation. In showing that teachers in his

school also participated in distributed leadership, participant SM4, a school principal in one of the schools that participated in the present study said:

“... in this school, teachers are also involved in the assessment of their colleagues’ lessons... They then write reports which they share at that department level... In some cases, outstanding teachers train other teachers... Recently, the Maths and Science Department had a very successful workshop on integrating ICT in the teaching and learning of Maths and Science... The workshop was organised and facilitated by teachers, and I can safely say that very important objectives were achieved through putting teachers on the driving seat ...

Clearly, this excerpt shows that teacher leadership (Wang & Ho, 2020) as a form of distributed leadership, was also practised in some of the schools studied. During data collection, some teachers were seen to be taking leadership roles in specialist committees or co-opted into such institutions as the SGBs. They also were seen to be taking leadership roles in school club activities. In one school that I visited during data collection, I encountered a teacher of history who had been appointed to lead the history club ahead of everyone else. The club had a number of other teachers, but the school appointed one teacher as a coordinator and patron of the club that was also chaired by a learner. Clearly, the situation illustrated a case of shared leadership comprising both teacher and learner leadership. Clearly findings in the present study shows that that distributed leadership in some schools also involve what Rina (2019) and Tanjung et al. (2021) define as student leadership. The learner leadership is used in this study to mean the same as student leadership.

However, distributed leadership in some schools appeared restricted to persons in positions of power, either in their individual capacities such as department heads, deputy principals, principals or parents in their official designations as leaders of institutions designed to facilitate teaching and learning. In other words, these schools did not emphasise on teacher leadership and learner leadership as a variable for the vertical dimension of distributed leadership. Clearly, this absence of teacher leadership and learner leadership initiatives is oblivious to the proposition that “teacher leadership and learner leadership as also showing in this study may comprise distributed leadership

practice. This view of teacher leadership and learner learners as showing in the present study may need not to be overlooked in any school system because it significantly improves learner outcomes, and therefore school effectiveness in comparison to traditional leadership techniques” (Harris, 2003:77). Rina (2019), thus, sees learner leadership as a vehicle for promoting internalisation of entrepreneurial competence and character by learners.

However, most schools that participated in this study were seen to practice distributed leadership at least from the level of department heads. For example, the department heads at a school level collaboratively planned, organised and collectively trained their teachers on ICT integration in the teaching of their respective subjects. In addition, department heads also comprise in part, the SMT, in some cases by co-option (see Figure 4.3). In an apparent agreement with this practice of collaborative leadership, at least from the level of department heads, one research participant, that is, participant SM3, a school principal of one of the schools studied, said:

“... Once they are in such groups as SMTs; which to me are accounting centres in their own right, teachers in their capacities as department heads, have often organised themselves and collaboratively work together in such area as training their teachers, for example, in such areas as syllabus interpretation and ICT integration into instructional activities... At the end of the day, the school will be able to tap and benefit from the talent available in people at various levels of the organisation’s structure as it seeks to achieve its goal of providing quality education to the learners enrolled.”

What is meant here is that, positional leaders (Harris, 2014) at a particular level within the organisation’s hierarchy worked together in some of the schools studied, each doing his or her own part and according to their capacity. At the end of the day, they would all be contributing to the common goal being pursued organisation wide. Such goals include, for example, the common educational goal of affording quality education to all learners enrolled in a particular school. However, it is also evident in the excerpt above that research participants associated distributed leadership with accountability. In line with this view, research participant warned, “However, we should never lose sight of the stubborn fact that [as positional leaders], we remain answerable to the performance of our sections”

Another finding that emerged in the present study is that, other than operating within the confines of the physical boundaries for some specific secondary schools, distributed leadership in the schools studied was also understood and practised across the entire educational value chain. This included the parts of the education system which normally are considered to be outside the confines of the physical boundaries of a particular school, including the SGBs, CMTs, and DMTs. As data show, distributed leadership in this perspective appears more like a policy than an instructional and a pedagogic issue. In an apparent agreement with this policy perspective of distributed leadership, one research participant in the present study, DF1, a female district official thus elaborated:

“... the education system across all districts in South Africa is structured in such a way that distributed leadership becomes possible... In fact, even without having been told, one is bound to conclude that from a policy perspective, the education system in the entirety of this beautiful country is structured in such a way that distributed leadership as an approach to decentralise and democratise the education system in this country becomes possible.”

As data seem to suggest, it is from a similar view point that research participant CM4 added: “... the most important thing that the South African authorities are doing to promote effective leadership in schools is the emphasis being placed on such structures as SMTs, and on a clear line of authority from department heads and above...” In the same vein, participant SM5 opined: “... the best thing that has happened to the education system in South Africa, since since the advent of democracy is to put in place a clear structure with multiple levels of authority...” This view is also supported by Karlsson et al. (2020).

The structure of the South African education system, which research participants considered to be well placed for distributed leadership, as data in the present study also seem to suggest, include the SMTs, SGBs, CMTs, and DMTs. This means, stratification of the education system which some writers such as Williams (2011) believe to be an obstacle to distributed leadership were viewed as promoting distributed leadership by some stakeholders in the present study. It was noted for example that there are some

committees at each level of the school leadership hierarchy, and these committees also help to co-ordinate and collaborate towards the realisation of goals shared by all. Some research participants were also enthused with the participation and involvement of parents in the education of their children, for example, through their participation in SGBs. This participation was defined as policy based distributed leadership, especially given the fact that, by policy, the chairperson of the SGB should be a parent (SASA, Act 84 of 1996).

Data presented in Chapter 4 show that, by way of practice, educational leaders in the different levels of authority in the school system collaborated in various ways towards their common goal of providing quality education to learners. During data collection, as also shown in Chapter 4 of the present study, leaders at these multiple levels of authority were seen organising “Last lap workshops” for learners. The workshops were organised by school principals working with SGBs, SMTs and classroom teachers, with support from circuit managers and in concurrence with district directors. This example provides a clear case of stakeholders’ collective leadership towards a common goal of providing quality education to learners. Collaboration, as a practice, was also evident in the way each of these leaders was doing his/her own part to ensure that the workshops became a success. For example, whilst the school principals planned and organised the workshops, the school governing bodies helped to fund the programmes, while school management teams comprising department heads worked with classroom teachers to come up with the course content. Together, department heads and subject teachers participated in the actual training. Here subject teachers with the requisite level of subject mastery and skills to deliver, took the leading role to do the actual training, while the circuit managers and school principals assumed the supervisory roles. This practice amounted to collaborative, collective and co-ordinated leadership, which collectively result in shared leadership among the multiple leaders in the educational value chain. Clearly, findings in the present study shows that a school system in the present era may be defined to include education structures that are outside the conventional boundaries of any single school. As a result, distributed leadership is seen to cut across the entire education value chain, within a school system which is unbounded by a boundary fence.

5.3.3 How practices of distributed leadership influence teaching and learning

It can be further recalled that the second objective for the present study sought to address the issues of how distributed leadership practices in the selected secondary schools influence teaching and learning. In order to realise this objective, the study was guided by the sub-question: *In what ways do the practices of distributed leadership in the selected secondary schools shape teaching and learning?* An analysis of data presented in Chapter 4 shows that the question on the ways in which the implementation of distributed leadership shapes teaching and learning' can be answered from two dimensions. The first dimension concerns the opportunities created by distributed leadership practices to influence teaching and learning in the secondary schools of South Africa. The second dimension concerns the effect of distributed leadership activities and/or processes on teaching and learning in the selected secondary schools. Both these dimensions, as further discussed below, beginning with the first dimension on the multiple opportunities created by distributed leadership.

5.3.3.1 Opportunities created by distributed leadership for teaching and learning in schools undemarcated by boundary fences

An important finding emerging from data analysis in the present study is that embracing a distributed approach to educational leadership seemed to create multiple opportunities that collectively contribute to effective teaching and learning in the secondary schools, in an education system in which schools are no longer bounded by boundary fences. This is a school system in which distributed leadership is seen to be moving beyond embracing teacher leadership (Spillane, 2001; Wasley, 1991; Boles & Troen, 1994; Grant, 2006; Grant and Singh, 2009; Cosenza, 2015; Spillane & Diamond, 2016; Wang & Ho, 2020) only, to what is appearing in the present study as stakeholders' based collective leadership practice. What is emerging from data analysis in the present study is that the concept of distributed leadership may be understood to mean a mix of different leadership approaches that is premised on the view that any person with capacity, regardless of rank, may be allowed the opportunity to serve as a leader when and as the situation arises (Spillane, 2013; Cosenza, 2015; Spillane & Diamond, 2016). In doing so, a lot of opportunities accrue to benefit learners directly and indirectly by improving the capacity of the educators to perform their duties and responsibilities, thereby, providing quality

education to learners. Specifically, research findings in the present study suggest that distributed leadership comprising different mixes of co-ordinated leadership, collaborative leadership and collective leadership techniques shapes teaching and learning through its influence on the following variables arising from within and affecting institutional context of the school leadership environment:

- i) Mobilisation and utilisation of latent potential and expertise
- ii) Involvement and participation of stakeholders other than line staff
- iii) Increased scope of accountability and demands on performance
- iv) Teambuilding and capacity development
- v) Putting in place systems that promote shared leadership.

Findings in this study agree with Al-Ghanem et al. (2020) who contends that distributed leadership presents possibilities for shared leadership. The variables presented above are further discussed in this section. As data summarised above seem to suggest, a distributed approach to school leadership improves teaching and learning through the opportunities it creates in specific secondary schools contexts and in the secondary school systems' system that embrace this approach to leadership. The main tenets of these opportunities may be summarised into the five categories above. As shown above, it can be said that, distributed leadership creates opportunities for mobilising and utilising latent and expertise within the school system. The issue here is that knowledge required to drive a school forward is not a monopoly of those in positions of power. Roping in people who may not be in positions of power and may not have line authority, to participate in school leadership, including teachers and, at times, learners and parents may enable schools to tap into latent talent and potential within these people and utilise this talent and expertise to promote effective teaching and learning in schools. In some of the schools that participated in the study, teachers with knowledge of and skills in ICT, theatre arts and sports, among others, were afforded opportunities to participate as leaders in these areas. It is in the light of this view that participant SM4 said, "We normally have those that may be talented in music, sporting activities netball, soccer, and volley ball, among other skills, being appointed to take leadership roles in these areas". Participant SM3 also said, "... teachers with special skills may be appointed in their

personal capacities to lead in certain areas where they may be seen to have the necessary knowledge". Clearly data presented in this study show that distributed leadership presents opportunities for mobilisation and utilisation of latent potential and expertise in non-positional members of the school system. Another participant said, "They (classroom teachers) are given opportunities to lead in different areas, depending with their knowledge and expertise in these specific areas". As data seem to suggest, such participation and involvement ensured effectiveness of the schools in achieving their goals of providing quality education to learners, through taping both tacit and explicit talent which may be latent and hence unused within the organisation.

Clearly, data presented in Chapter 4 of this study and summarised above also suggest that distributed leadership promotes involvement and participation of stakeholders other than line staff in the education of children in their communities. For example, parents were seen to be involved in the education of their children through participation in SGBs and parents' meetings. The Chairpersons of SGBs was drawn from parents. They were responsible with leadership of all parents and governance activities in schools and hence were leaders in their own way. It can therefore be said that parents participated in school leadership even though they did not have line authority over line staff in a school system. Participants in the present study viewed involvement of parents in educational leadership as comprising participation in distributed leadership within a South African context. In their capacity as members of the SGBs, parents were seen to have accountability expectations on educators. These expectations were supposed to be fulfilled and internal stakeholders such as school principals would be held accountable for the performance of their schools.

In addition to parents who were seen to be involved in the education of their children, traditional leaders also emerged in the present study as another group of key stakeholders outside the conventional chain of command in the school system leadership. The involvement of traditional leaders was also acknowledged by some research participants as distributed leadership in the South African context. Specifically, traditional leaders in the present study were seen participating in accountability sessions with school

principals. In these sessions, the schools that did well in public examinations were rewarded for their performance. At the same time, those that did not perform well were challenged to work hard in order to improve their results. According to research participants in the present study, the involvement and participation of traditional leadership in education and their power to hold school principals to account for their performance demonstrated distributed leadership matrices of the secondary school system. This view takes us to the next finding emerging from data analysis, that is, distributed leadership increases the scope of accountability demands for performance placed on educators and other internal stakeholders in the education system. As a result, educators would be driven from multiple angles to work towards educational goals of providing quality education to learners.

As data seem to suggest, the multiple levels of power and authority in the public education system in districts and secondary schools studied comprise the SMTs, SGBs, CMTs, and DMTs. These multiple levels of power reduced the power distance between policy implementers and policy makers and thereby increased the scope of accountability demands for performance placed on school authorities. The point here is that, each level of power in the hierarchy of authority would demand that the next level below it perform according to expected standards. Effectively, these expectations meant that the multiple centres of power in the education system increased accountability pressure on educational leaders and policy implementers at various levels of the educational value chain. As a result, this pressure would be expected to shape teaching and learning in schools in a positive way. This is because educators would be under pressure to perform their best in order to be positively evaluated by these multiple stakeholders. It could be for this reason that research participant CM4 said: "... the most important thing that the South African authorities are doing to promote effective leadership in schools is the emphasis being placed on such structures as SMTs, and a clear line of authority from department heads and above..." In the same vein, participant SM5 opined; "... the best thing that has happened to the education system in South African is to put in place a clear structure with multiple levels of authority..." Clearly these excerpts support the view that the multiple centres of power in the education system, which participants in the present study viewed as manifestations of distributed leadership practices, increased

accountability pressure. This is pressure on educational stakeholders to perform in ways that positively impacted on teaching and learning in the secondary schools studied.

Data presented in Chapter 4 (See section 4.4.1.3) also show that distributed leadership, as perceived and experienced by research participants in the present study, promotes effective teaching and learning through its effect on teambuilding and capacity development among educators. During data collection, this reality was first evidenced when research participant SM1 said, “I see distributed leadership to be developmental in nature... Whilst it also serves to achieve educational goals as viewed from today’s perspective, personally, I also see distributed leadership to be about building capacity future leaders and educators.” In the same vein, participant SM3 said, “This approach to leadership serves a capacity building role for teachers as it also motivates and prepares them for leadership positions, even as principals or circuit managers in future.” Similarly, participant, CM2 said, “... I think capacity building is very important here because without being equipped with the needed skills, one cannot lead... For me, distributed leadership also means empowering members to lead through both giving them the chance to lead and through capacitating them, such as through training, participation and involvement, so that they can lead their schools, with a focus on results...”

Talking specifically about team building which research participants viewed as a key component of capacity development, participant DF2, a district official added, “What this also means is that distributed leadership entails on the job training on leadership skills for staff members involved, as well as building solid teams, comprising people who are capable of motivating and assisting each other towards a common purpose”. Clearly, data in the present study show that distributed leadership affects teaching and learning through its effect on team building and capacity development among educators. This capacity is important for immediate use and for leadership development. It may therefore be said that distributed leadership as seen from the perspective of the present study is also a foundation for succession planning.

The question on how the implementation of distributed leadership influence teaching and learning in the secondary schools in South Africa may also be partially answered by the

view that a distributed approach to school leadership helps to put in place systems that promote collaborative leadership by everyone with the capacity to lead in a particular context. As data show, the education system in the districts and schools studied seems to be so structured that it is easy to distribute power and ensure collaborative leadership for effective teaching and learning to take place. The structure which has created multi-levels of power comprise, from within the internal environment of the school system, the SMTs, SGBs, CMTs, and DMTs. As also discussed above, these structures make distributed leadership from as stakeholder and collective perspective possible. It should be for this reason that research participant CM4 said: "... the most important thing that the South African authorities are doing to promote effective leadership in schools is the emphasis being placed on such structures as SMTs, and a clear line of authority from department heads and above..." Clearly these structures, which are products of policy in the South African public education system, were seen by research participants in the present study to comprise, in part, a context that promote collaborative leadership and therefore effective leadership to take root.

5.3.3.2 Distributed leadership activities and their impact on teaching and learning in secondary schools

The impact of distributed leadership in any given country is measured against what is viewed as the purpose of education in that community as captured in its vision and mission statement. Data presented in Chapter 4 show that the vision of the Limpopo Department of Education is to achieve excellence in the provision of quality basic education. The mission is to achieve this excellence by providing quality and innovative education programmes to learners across all grades, guided by the key values of excellence, professionalism, innovation and integrity. The concept of quality education and student learning used in the present study are not measured in terms of academic and examination centred excellence only. Instead, the concept of quality education and student learning are used in their holistic sense of providing lifelong learning to learners by preparing them, not only for employment, but for entry into the community to which they belong and to be able to live in that community as healthy, happy and productive adults capable of fending for their own families and to live with others in harmony in the South African spirit of unity in diversity. One of the key findings showing in the present

study is therefore that distributed leadership practised in the secondary schools studied influences learning through its impact on both the academic excellence and social skills of learners. Data presented in Chapter 4 suggest that, although some schools are lagging behind, examinations results for some schools and/or circuits in the districts studied were improving as a result of distributed leadership practices embraced. In a clear confirmation of this effect of distributed leadership on teaching and learning, research participant CF1, a female circuit manager, for example, said, “I have seen results in my circuit improving because it has been very difficult for people at every level of the school system to explain to supervisors above them what went wrong all the time...” Clearly, this excerpt shows that distributed leadership improves performance of schools in public examinations. To further reinforce his view, the research participant reemphasised, “It is beyond doubt that very soon, we will see results in this circuit improving...” This would be “very soon” if the multiple stakeholders and the multiple levels of power in the education system follow a distributed approach to leadership and continue to push for results.

In addition to results improving because of increasing pressure to perform, data in the present study also show that teaching and learning in the secondary schools may also improve as a result of improvements in teacher motivation and competence following distributed leadership practices in the education system. As a result of the distributed leadership approach embraced in the schools studied, a number of stakeholders were seen involved in education in different respects. As these stakeholders demanded performance from educators in their different capacities, they also motivated educators in different ways, all of which had an impact on teaching and learning. These stakeholders included parents, traditional leaders, municipal officials and those within the chain of command for school system comprising department heads, school principals, circuit managers and district directors, either in their individual capacities as line managers and/or in the context of the institutions and committees they established for the purpose. As data show, distributed leadership also affects teaching and learning through its impact on teacher capacitation and empowerment such as through training. In the schools studied, for example, teachers with knowledge and skills in areas such as ICT were seen helping in the training of other teachers on integration of ICT in the teaching of their

respective subjects. Such training were seen as platforms for skills sharing and exchange on the part of teachers, with great potential to improve instructional practices.

In addition to improving performance of learners in public examinations and instructional practices on the part of teachers, distributed leadership in the present study was also seen to develop the social and conceptual skills of learners. In some schools, distributed leadership was also seen to involve learners. An example is where a learner was made the chairperson of the history club. Although he worked with the history teacher as the patron of the club, such distribution of leadership practice helped the learner to understand and articulate issues related to the geo-political environment in a way that portrayed a high level of learning and maturity, clearly showing the impact of distributed leadership. The learner was, for example, able to understand and explain the contribution of some key figures in the fight against apartheid in South Africa and to appreciate that the fight was not against a certain race in South Africa, but against a system. Clearly, this story shows the effect that distributed leadership has on improving student learning and therefore answers in part, the question of how implementation of distributed leadership influences teaching and learning in the secondary schools in South Africa.

As data show, involvement and participation of learners in leadership roles as observed in the present study appears not to be by default in the South African education system. As data show, it is by design. Specifically, policy has it, for example, that learners should be involved in school governance and school leadership activities through their participation in SGBs and learner representative councils (Karlsson et al., 2020). Although this policy provision seems not to have been fully actualised (Williams, 2011; Munje et al., 2020), findings in this study shows that in some schools, learners were also involved in school leadership through their participation in committees and/or clubs established to promote and facilitate learning in schools. This participation is in line with government policy to democratise the socio-educational space (Karlsson et al., 2020). In addition to teacher leadership (Harris & Lambert, 2003; Grant, 2006; Grant & Singh, 2009; Gardner et al., 2010, and Cosenza, 2015, Wang & Ho, 2020), among other forms of distributed leadership depicted in literature, findings in the presents study seem to

suggest that in the South African context, we may also talk about learner leadership and parents leadership. In fact, distributed leadership in the present study is viewed both in the narrow and the broad sense of every person with capacity. In the narrow sense, distributed leadership is viewed in the sense of shared leadership among employees within a specific school as demarcated by school boundaries. In the broad sense, it is viewed within the context of a stakeholder approach to educational leadership. In this situation schools seem to be viewed as institutions without boundaries. If the boundaries exist, they may otherwise be porous. In all cases, distributed leadership is seen to serve the dual objective of democratising the education space and delivery of quality education to all learners.

5.4 Summary of Major Findings

The first major finding in the present study is that, although there were important differences in some details concerning how research participants constructed and understood distributed leadership, by and large, this concept was viewed as an approach to school leadership in which all persons with desired knowledge, skills and aptitude, regardless of rank, are allowed to lead, in some specific capacity as and when the situation demands. Three key concepts that frame this finding are all *persons*, *capacity* and *situation*. This finding seems to be in line with Sol (2021:73) who observed that "... distributed leadership is frequently described as situational leadership, team leadership, democratic leadership, or shared leadership by the many writers in the field of people leadership". Spillane et al., (2001) as also supported by Al-Ghanem et al. (2020) and Munje et al. (2020) see distributed leadership in a school setting as a leadership which involves all educators in leadership activities with the aim of enhancing classroom instruction and improving learner attainment. It is in this same view that Rina (2019) says that distributed leadership practices promote internalisation of entrepreneurial competence and character among learners.

As a practice, distributed leadership was seen to comprise two key dimensions both of which contribute to enhancing instruction and improving learner attainment in the context observed by Spillane et al. (2001). The two dimensions and their relationship to student classroom instruction and student learning are summarised in Figure 4.2 below.

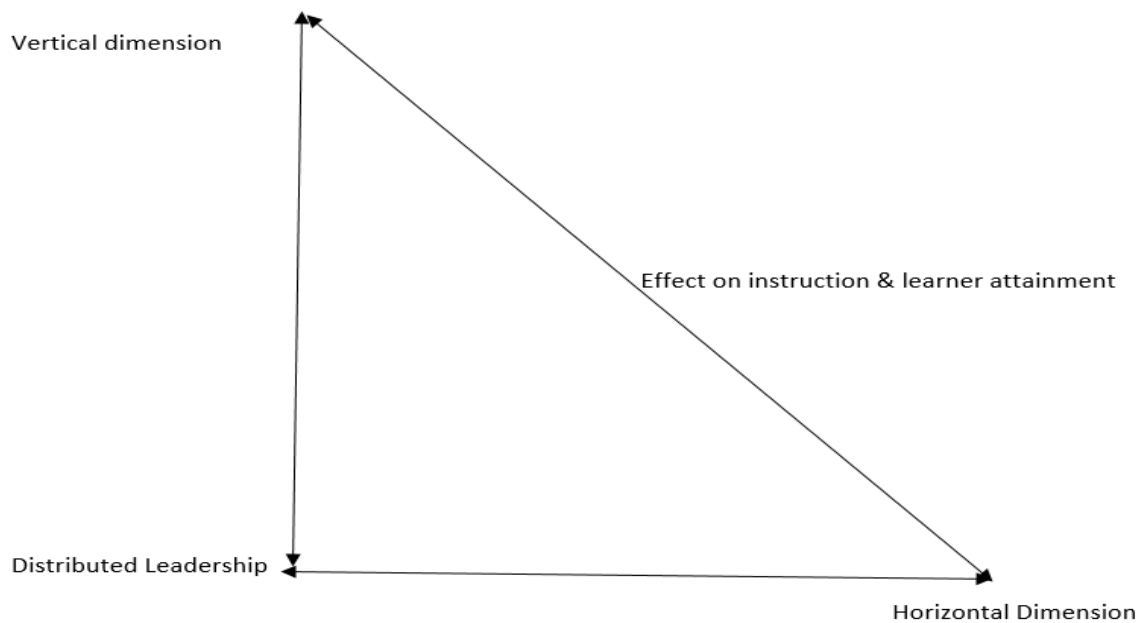


Figure 5.2: Dimensions of distributed leadership and their relationship to student learning
 (Source: Primary data)

As shown in Figure 5.2 above, findings in the present study has shown that distributed leadership in the secondary schools in South Africa comprise two key dimensions, namely the vertical dimension and the horizontal dimension. The two dimensions work together to influence teaching and learning, that is, the purpose of education in any given community. These two dimensions may be viewed as capable of shifting at any of the two ends of the continuum representing them as more variables of a related nature are added in either of these two ends. The details of how these dimensions shift are beyond the scope of the present study and may be the subject of another study. In this study, which focuses on the nature of distributed leadership practice in the secondary schools in South Africa, it suffices to say that distributed leadership is viewed as comprising two dimensions, namely the vertical and the horizontal dimensions. These two dimensions work together to improve instructional practices and learner attainment. All participants in the present study agreed on the two-dimensional character of distributed leadership thought and practice. Even if they may be using different terms, such as collaborative leadership, collective leadership and shared leadership, participants in the present study

seemed to agree on the fact that distributed leadership is about affording 'all persons' with the capacity the chance to lead in a particular situation, as and when the need arises. However, they seemed to have varying conceptions on the concept of "all persons". This means that, whilst in some schools the concept of "all persons" was used in its narrow sense to include teachers and, in some cases, learners, most of the participants used this concept broadly to include all people who are in positions of power within the entire educational value chain. These include heads of the various departments in the secondary schools, deputy principals, school principals, circuit managers, district directors and, at times, parents. Clearly, this view embraces a stakeholder as opposed to an employee perspective to distributed leadership and the concept of all.

Viewed from the perspective of actors in the schools studied, distributed leadership is understood either from the narrow sense of internal people in positions of power only, or in the broad sense of the concept of all persons with a stake in public education. As data seem to suggest perspectives of distributed leadership seem to be explained in terms of what Jita (2004) defines as resources of biography. Andrews et al. (as cited by Muresherwa, 2020) used the term technologies of self to define what Jita (2004) refers to as resources of biography. These are personal characteristics and experiences of individuals that help them to develop personal identities that assist one to interpret the reality in one way and not the other. These personal characteristics (Leithwood, 2017; Hallinger, 2018), or resources of biography (Jita, 2010), or technologies of self (Andrews et al., 2013) are person specific context. Hallinger (2018: 7), citing earlier work from Goldring et al. (2009), observed that, "a leader's life experience and personal resources [resources of biography] act as a prism through which information, problems, opportunities and situations are filtered and interpreted". In the present study, it appears that differences in educational qualifications and areas of specialisation had an impact in the way research participants understood and explained the concept of distributed leadership. Research participants who studied educational leadership at some stage in their academic journey seemed to understand distributed leadership in a more holistic perspective than those that had not studied educational leadership, even as they may also had higher degree qualifications.

An important finding that is showing in the present study as also explained above is that, all research participants understood distributed leadership as an approach to school leadership in which all persons with desired knowledge, skills and aptitude, regardless of rank (Cosenza, 2015; Spillane, 2001; Spillane & Diamond, 2016), are allowed to lead in some specific capacity, as and when the situation demands. However, the participants that studied educational leadership in which distributed leadership was one of the topics understood the concept of “all persons” to also mean teachers and, at times learners, among other stakeholders, whereas the participants that had not studied educational leadership viewed distributed leadership as focusing on persons in positions of power only. These were seen to participate in distributed leadership either in their individual capacities or through the institutions they established for the purpose of enhancing instructional practices in schools and to improve learning. Understanding of distributed leaders in this sense seemed to be shaped by education and policy.

Findings in the present study also showed that the research participants who had not formerly studied distributed leadership obtained their knowledge in distributed leadership through in-service workshops organised at various levels of the education system. Research participants also viewed the education system in South Africa, and hence the districts studied to be so well structured to make distributed leadership possible. Distributed leadership was defined by stakeholders to include the activities of sharing leadership roles and collaboratively work towards the realisation of shared goals by stakeholders at various levels in the multiple centres of power and authority in the education system. In this view, distributed leadership seems to be viewed more of a policy project to democratise (Hlanga, et al., 2021; Karlsson et al., 2020) the education space, than an instructional and pedagogical project. Clearly, this perspective of distributed leadership may not have been perceived when the concept of distributed leadership was first conceived and may be common in South Africa and other countries with a similar political and therefore educational history only.

Another key finding in the present study is that research participants' understanding of what distributed leadership practice mean to them was seen to influence how they practised distributed leadership at their respective centres. For example, research participants that view distributed leadership in the broad sense of "all persons", regardless of rank, included what Grant and Singh (2009), Gardner et al. (2010), Cosenza (2015), Harris and Lambert (2003), Spillane et al. (2009) and Spillane (2015) define as teacher leadership. This is a type of distributed leadership in which classroom teachers are also included in the definitions of "all persons" to whom leadership roles and responsibilities should be accorded rather than those in positions of power only. In cases where they were at school level, research participants who viewed distributed leadership in the broad sense also involved learners in leadership roles and viewed this practice as distributed leadership. However, research participants that regarded distributed leadership in the narrow sense embraced only those persons in positions of power.

Another key finding showing in the present study is that some research participants viewed distributed leadership within the perspective of an education system and not an individual school setting as most literature seem to suggest. Research participants in the present study viewed the education system in South Africa as having been prefabricated to embrace distributed leadership which many writers define as democratic leadership, shared leadership, collaborative leadership, situational leadership, team leadership or collective leadership (Spillane, 2001; Triegaardt, 2013; Leithwood et al. 2007; Sol, 2021). However, Tahir (2016) contends that these leadership philosophies do to represent an alternate kind of distributed leadership. This means, they mean the same thing. Harris (2008), as also echoed by Spillane (2009), avers that any system that uses decentralised, collaborative, or shared leadership practices in a learning institution frequently practises various notions that describe mainstream distributed leadership. It is in this perspective that Spillane (2013) and Diamond and Spillane (2016) identified three distinct types of distributed leadership, namely co-ordinated, collective, and collaborated which they say tend to embrace all the different types of distributed leadership practice as may be perceived and practised in different situations.

An important finding which is also showing in the present study is that the education system in South Africa seen to have been structured in a way that promotes effective involvement and participation of all stakeholders in educational leadership activities at various levels of the school system. This means the involvement and participation of stakeholders in leadership activities in the South African education system was defined by research participants in the present study to comprise distributed leadership initiatives. In other words, distributed leadership viewed by some participants in the present study is not restricted to an individual school only. This view seem to make sense in that schools in the South African context do not exist in isolation. Instead, they are seen to exist as subsystems of a major system. In the South African education system, these structures also include circuit and district offices. Clearly, this means that a secondary school system in this context should be viewed in the perspective of that which is bounded by the perimeter fence. Instead, it should be seen to extend beyond the boundary fence to embrace other stakeholders. Activities of different people in this major system, for which a school is a subsystem, may be understood contribute towards educating the child. This is so because, instead of educational leadership being concentrated in the hands of only a few people, leadership roles and responsibilities in this well-structured system are shared among many stakeholders. These stakeholders collaboratively work together to attain the goals that they all believe they should work to achieve. All what is said here amount to saying that structuring education, as observed in this study, is understood by research participants as a way of distributing leadership. This type of distributed leadership is seen to have implication for teaching and learning.

5.5 Conclusions

The first conclusion drawn from the present study is that, although they used different terms to explain their understanding of distributed leadership, all in all, the concept of distributed leadership is seem to be understood by research participants to be an approach to school leadership in which all persons with capacity, that is, desired knowledge, skills and aptitude, regardless of rank, are allowed to lead, in some specific context/situation, as and when the need arises. Three key concepts that frame this finding

are all *persons, capacity* and *context or situation*. This conclusion is in line with Sol's (2021:73) observation that distributed leadership is a democratic and situational leadership approach. Distributed leadership in the present study can be viewed from the perspective of such terms as team leadership, democratic leadership, collaborative leadership, and shared leadership. All these concepts were explained both in literature and by research participants to mean an approach to school leadership which involves all educators in leadership activities, regardless of positions, with the aim of enhancing classroom instruction and improving learner attainment (Spillane, 2001; Rina, 2019; Munje et al., 2020).

The second major conclusion drawn from the present study is that, research participants viewed distributed leadership to comprise two main dimensions, namely the vertical and horizontal dimensions. The concept of horizontal dimension is used in this study to address questions on the nature of the activities and processes that are involved in distributed leadership in secondary schools in South Africa. In other words, the concept of horizontal dimensions focuses on the 'what' questions of distributed leadership, as opposed to *the 'who'* questions. In addition, the concept, vertical dimension addresses the 'who' questions of distributed leadership. Specifically, the vertical dimension of distributed leadership as data analysis in the present study seems to show answers the questions concerning which stakeholders or stakeholder groups are involved in distributed leadership in the secondary schools in South Africa. Together, the two dimensions coined in this study as the vertical and horizontal dimensions of distributed leadership, presented a holistic view (Tam, 2019) of this concept. This view fully answers the questions about who and what activities are involved in distributed leadership.

Whilst research participants in the present study seemed to share the perspective of distributed leadership as an approach to school leadership that involves 'all persons' with capacity in leadership activities regardless of positions, it also appears in this study that they defined the concept of 'all person with capacity' differently.. In other words, whilst research participants viewed distributed leadership as a democratic approach to school

leadership which is characterised by collective, collaborative and/or distributed leadership activities, perspectives of leadership distribution seem to differ across different stakeholders in public education. Some participants in the present study perceived the concept of 'all persons with capacity' in a narrow sense to mean people in positions of power only, whilst others viewed this concept in a broad perspective. This broad view also embrace what Harris and Lambert (2003), Grant (2006), Grant and Singh (2009), Gardner et al. (2010), Spillane (2013), Cosenza (2015) and Wang and Ho, (2020) define as teacher leadership. In some cases, the concept of 'all' was defined to embrace stakeholders that are not necessarily in the conventional chain of command, that is, the line of authority in a secondary school. These include traditional leaders and, in some cases, learners and parents. It is this view of distributed leadership that, it may be concluded in this study that it might not have been envisaged when the concept distributed leadership as an approach to school leadership was first conceived.

It can be said here that, research participants' understanding of distributed leadership thought and practice may be explained in terms of two main factors in the school leadership environment. These include resources of biography for research participants and public policy imperatives as shaped by national policy on education. It was noted, for example, that the educational background for educators seemed to have an impact on how they constructed and understood distributed leadership thought and practice. Specifically, research participants with educational qualifications in which they also studied educational leadership seemed to view distributed leadership and the concept of 'all persons with capacity', to also embrace learners. The policy environment also seemed to make research participants and educational stakeholders in the present study to view distributed leadership as embracing everyone in the educational value chain to include, department heads, school principals, circuit managers and district directors. In addition, stakeholders who were not in the formal line of command, that is, those who did not have line authority over educators were also viewed from a policy perspective to be involved in distributed leadership. The key objective was to enhance instruction and therefore improve learner attainment in secondary schools. What is said here amounts to saying that distributed leadership thought and practice in the secondary schools in the Limpopo

province of South Africa may be explained in terms of two key factors of the school leadership environment. These factors include, the resources of biography for educational leadership practitioners and the socio-political environment in which education public education, as a social good is provided and/or enjoyed.

The policy perspective, for example, seem to have made stakeholders in the districts studied to viewed public education to be structured in such a way as to ensure that distributed leadership becomes inevitable. For example, one research participant said, "... the most important thing that the South African authorities are doing to promote effective leadership in schools is the emphasis being placed on such structures as SMTs, and on a clear line of authority from department heads and above..." In a similar vein, another participant said "... the best thing that has happened to the education system in South Africa ...is to put in place a clear structure with multiple levels of authority..." These multiple levels of authority were seen by research participants in this study as platforms and affordances for distributed leadership. Other structures referred to in this study are; SGBs, CMTs and DMTs. Needless to point out that all these structures are products of public policy, such as the South African School Act 1984 (Act No. 84 of 1996)

Clearly, it can be said that distributed leadership thought and practice in the South African context may be explained in terms of resources of biography for key stakeholders in education, including the public policy context of the school leadership environment. It has also been found, for example, that research participants with formal training in educational leadership, such as through degrees and diplomas programs included teacher leadership and, in some cases, learners in their distributed leadership practices. Clearly, distributed leadership thought and practice for such leaders is different from that by research participants that did not have formal training in educational leadership, such as through the degrees and/or diplomas they studied in order to qualify them as educational leaders. The latter have their understanding of distributed leadership shaped mainly by public policy expectations. As a result, their practice were seen to focus on leadership distribution on persons already in positions of power only. These persons acted either

independently or within the context of structures established by policy in order to democratise the education space. This had the potential to enhance classroom instruction and to improve learner attainment.

A more holistic perspective and practice of distributed leadership regards it as a practice that allows "all persons with capacity" to lead in some specific situations. To do so it requires the support of all structures in the education system with a view to also improve instruction and learners' attainment and not to democratise the education space, within the perspective of policy only. In the South African context, This approach to distributed leadership allows even teacher leaders to emerge and be given the opportunities to lead. In addition, even learners may also be allowed to participate as leaders in some situations, as and when the need arises. It has been established in the present study that distributed leadership, such as practised in the secondary schools in South Africa has both policy and practical implications. As a result, distributed leadership in this context may be explained in terms of effort by stakeholders to democratise the education space, in line with public policy and in terms instructional and pedagogical objectives to improve learner attainment by adopting a human resources perspective to school leadership. By way of policy, distributed leadership in the schools studied was seen to democratise the education space. However, from an instructional and pedagogical perspective, it was also seen to enhance instructional practices and improving learner attainment. This included teacher capacity building, team building, empowerment and provision of opportunities to contribute to decision-making on issues affecting their job and the education of children in their hands. Learners who participate in decision-making also learn through grooming.

5.6 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions as given above, it seems justifiable to recommend the following:

5.6.1 Recommendation for policy

In addition to putting in place public policies that speak to distributed leadership mainly for democratising the education space only (Hargreaves & Fink, 2009; Grant, 2017; Hlanga, et al., 2021; Karlsson et al., 2020), the educational policies in the districts studied and in the rest of South Africa may also need to focus distributed leadership more precisely, on enhancing instructional practices and improving learner attainment. The concept of learner attainment should not be read to involve academic attainment only. Instead, learner attainment should be read to refer to the situation which prevails when learners acquire knowledge, skills and attitude that enable them to fit into the community to which they belong and be able to participate in it fully. This means, learners should be able to develop their full potential so that they would be able to live independently as healthy, responsible, and productive citizens in control of their own lives and to live in harmony with other people who may be different from them. In other words, public policy on distributed leadership should not focus on democracy (Hargreaves & Fink, 2009), that is, involvement and participation of people on all issues affecting them as a socio-political issue only. Instead, as an approach to democratise the social space with respect to education, distributed leadership should also be viewed as an instructional, that is, pedagogic issue. The objective is to enhance instructional practice by teachers and learner attainment. In this case, learner attainment should not be defined in terms of academic achievement only, but something which should also be clearly captured and articulated through public policy pronouncements. This also means that involvement and participation of teachers in leadership roles should not be by default, that is, free will of positional leaders that might have studied distributed leadership at some stage in their academic journey, or those that may have acquired knowledge by some other private means. Instead, teacher leadership should consciously be factored into some policy instruments on educational leadership.

5.6.2 Recommendations for practice

It is further recommended here that educational leaders at various levels of the educational value chain in the district studied and beyond be adequately trained to understand the bolts and nuts of distributed leadership. The prevailing situation in the schools studied in which leaders view themselves as having inadequate knowledge and

skills on distributed leadership is not sustainable. The exception is those leaders that might have formerly studied educational leadership by way of degrees and/or diplomas that they acquired during their academic journey. The present study shows that, out of the 14 research participants in the present study, only 4 believed that they had adequate knowledge on distributed leadership. These participants also indicated that they obtained their knowledge of distributed leadership from the in-service courses that they attended after their appointment as educational leaders. The rest of the participants also indicated that they also obtained knowledge on distributed leadership through in-service training. However, they still believed that their knowledge of distributed leadership was inadequate. It is therefore recommended that in-service workshops for distributed leadership be intensified, and emphasis to be also on teacher leadership. In addition, all educators should be encouraged to embrace learners in their distributed leadership initiatives as and when the need arises. At school level, such practices as joint planning, joint monitoring, team teaching and sharing of best practices, such as ICT integration in teaching and learning may be made to involve and be led by classroom teachers, instead of focusing on persons already in positions of power only. By providing that some learners should be roped into leadership roles, for example, participating in SGBs, public policy in South Africa seems to have done well. However, this policy seems not to be fully embraced in some schools. It is partly for this reason that Hargreaves and Fink (2009), and Williams (2011) and Munje et al. (2020) posit that distributed leadership policy in South Africa has not been fully actualised. For this reason, it is recommended that this policy be enforced and teachers take a more active role in this initiative. In addition, effort may also need to be made to make learners more visible in leadership roles as a way of grooming them as future leaders. The situation in the schools studied has shown a lot of promise on involving learners and in allowing them to participate on issues affecting them. However, it is felt that more may still be done to benefit the most from this approach to school leadership.

5.6.3 Recommendations for further research

The current study explored the nature and practices of distributed leadership in two selected districts in the Limpopo districts of South Africa. Findings from the presented study may serve as a keyhole to understand distributed leadership in other parts of South

Africa and beyond. The findings from this study have shown, as Bolden (2011) also observed, that distributed leadership in the schools studied has a lot of promise to enhance instructional practices by educators and to improve learner learning. Furthermore, findings from the present study further revealed that distributed leadership in the schools studied was not politically neutral. From a political perspective, distributed leadership in the schools studied seemed to be understood in the perspective of democratising the social space by allowing people to be involved and to participate in decision-making on issues affecting them. However, distributed leadership also appears to be understood from an instructional and pedagogical perspective as a platform for enhancing instructional practices by teachers, and to improve educational attainment by learners. Learner attainment in the present study, as data show, is not measured by academic achievements only. Instead, the concept of learning is used in its holistic sense of providing lifelong knowledge, skills and attitude to prepare learners not only for employment, but also for entry into the community to which they belong. Learning ought to prepare learners to be able to live in that community as healthy, happy and productive adults capable of fending for their own families and to live with others in harmony in the South African spirit of unity in diversity. Replicating this study in other districts both in South Africa and beyond may help to validate the findings of the present study and establish the extent to which these findings are transferable to other districts or regions with a similar socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-historical context, and hence the recommendation. In a South African context, the study may be replicated to include more districts and a bigger sample of research participants.

5.7 Final Thoughts

This study explored the nature and practices of distributed leadership in selected schools drawn from two districts in the Limpopo province of South Africa. This study also sought to understand how distributed leadership thought and practices in the selected schools influences teaching and learning. In addition, it also sought to establish how distributed leadership practice in the study area can be explained. The concept of teaching and learning in this study is not defined in its narrow sense, that is, in terms of academic and examination centred excellence only. Instead, it is defined in its holistic sense of providing lifelong learning to learners, preparing them to fit into the community, participate as

productive adults and live with others in harmony. Findings from the present study elaborated, expanded and, in many respects, provided new insights on the findings by earlier writers on distributed leadership thought and practice, and how it influences instructional practices by teachers, both in South Africa and beyond. Specifically, findings in the present study show that distributed leadership in the schools studied may be explained from the perspective of two key dimensions, namely, the horizontal and vertical dimensions. The present study shows that, both of these dimensions should be understood if one seeks to have a holistic perspective of the nature and practice of distributed leadership and to avoid universalising this otherwise situational approach to educational leadership. The horizontal dimension of distributed leadership is seen to comprise the various activities and processes that are involved in this context based approach to educational leadership which Spillane et al., (2001), Spillane and Diamond (2016), Cosenza (2015) and Sol (2021) define as situational. In other words, the horizontal dimension answers the 'what' questions of distributed leadership. This means, it answers questions such as: *What activities and/or processes comprise distributed leadership practices?* Literature provides different types of activities that comprise what is categorised as the horizontal dimension in the present study as coordinated leadership, collective leadership and collaborative leadership activities (Spillane & Diamond, 2016). The common feature among these activities is that they all amount to shared leadership. This means, each of the co-ordinated, collective and collaborative leadership styles comprise some form of leadership which is characterised by a move away from a heroic leader (Badaracco, 2001, Klar et al., 2016), to allowing other stakeholders access to leadership roles as and when the situation demands, regardless of rank (Spillane, 2001; Cosenza, 2015; Spillane & Diamond, 2016). In practice, these leadership styles can be embraced and practised either in combinations, comprising different mixes and intensity of each one of them, depending with the situation in hand. The situation, as findings in the present study seems to suggest, comprise resources of biography for educational leaders in their capacity as policy implementing agents and the context of the school leadership environment. The latter comprises the socio-historical environment, the socio-political environment and the socio-economic environment in which leadership is practised. On the other hand, the vertical dimension of distributed leadership deduced

from the present study, comprises the various persons that are involved in leadership distribution. This dimension answers the 'who' questions of distributed leadership. Specifically, it answers questions such as: *Who, amongst educational stakeholders, is involved in leadership distribution in situations where distributed leadership is practised?*

One of the key findings in this study is that all research participants agreed on the shared nature of leadership under a distributed leadership framework. This means they all understood distributed leadership as a leadership approach which allows "all persons with capacity" to be involved in educational leadership as and when the need arises. However, there appears to be discrepancies among stakeholders on the definition of "all persons with capacity". This means, whilst research participants agreed on the horizontal dimension which could be summarised into the single concept of '*shared leadership*' (Spillane, 2001; Spillane & Diamond 2016), there seems to be discrepancies on the horizontal dimension where the definition of "all persons with capacity" seems to vary across stakeholders in education. Some stakeholders, for example, seemed to define the concept of "all persons with capacity" broadly, to include teachers and, in some cases, learners. Additionally, the broad perspective of "all persons with capacity" is also read, in some case, to include people that are not necessarily within the chain of command for the education system, namely parents, traditional leaders and municipal council officials.

Two key factors were seen to explain stakeholders' perspectives of what distributed leadership ought to be in terms of both the vertical and horizontal dimensions and therefore how distributed leadership is practised. These factors comprise the educational background of stakeholders and public policy on education. Jita (2004), as also echoed by Muresherwa and Jita (2021) views educational background of research participants to be a key component of the resources of biography for educational leaders. With respect to public policy, distributed leadership is understood from a socio-political perspective that regards "all persons" with capacity to be involved and to participate in making decisions on issues affecting them. In other words, distributed leadership in this policy perspective is viewed in the perspective of democratising the public education space by allowing stakeholders to have a say on issues affecting them and to hold people in public office

accountable for their performance. Specifically, the issues of accountability to stakeholders and democracy seem to feature in very strongly in this view.

With respect to educational background of stakeholders, distributed leadership is understood to be an instructional and pedagogic issue with the objective of enhancing instructional practice by teachers and to improve learner attainment. It is not necessarily to meet accountability expectations of stakeholders from a policy perspective. Clearly, it can be concluded from the present study that perspectives of distributed leadership in secondary schools in South Africa can be explained in terms of the two key contexts. These are the personal contexts of individual educational leaders in their capacity as social actors and policy implementing agents, and the institutional context, comprising the environment in which schools as public entities are operating. Both of these views or perspectives have implications on teaching and learning. For this reason, it is felt that both aspects should be emphasised. This means policy makers should emphasise the need for the education system to embrace all stakeholders in distributed leadership, including parents and teachers in order to democratise the education space. The public policy view, that is, the view of distributed leadership that focuses on democratising the socio-educational space seems to be in sync with the democratic perspective of the rainbow nation which is being built on the ashes of apartheid South Africa.

It is however felt that as the country moves with this democratisation agenda, people should not lose sight on the need to promote distributed leadership in public schools in South Africa and beyond in order to enhance instructional practices and to improve learner attainment. It should be appreciated that the wind of democratising systems and institutions that is blowing across nations has collapsed the traditional boundaries of schools, to create schools without boundaries and thereby, broaden the range of stakeholders and accountability expectations on school authorities. However, it seems prudent here to emphasise that, instead of focusing leadership distribution strictly on issues of democracy and accountability on a purely political sense of these concepts, effort should also be made to promote distributed leadership for instructional and pedagogic reasons. In fact, distributed leadership should be approached from a holistic

perspective. This means distributed leadership should be embraced to achieve the objectives of democratising the socio-educational space and to improve accountability by educators from a political perspective and to realise instructional and pedagogic objectives of education from a professional perspective. It is therefore recommended in this study that, in order to effectively realise instructional and pedagogic objectives of distributed leadership practice, up and above its objectives of democratising the socio-educational space for political and accountability reasons only, effort may also be made to ensure that educational leaders across the entire value chain are adequately trained. This recommendation arises from the fact that the findings from the present study seem to show people with formal training in educational leadership to have a more holistic understanding of distributed leadership and to be better placed to effectively implement it from both a policy perspective and an instructional (pedagogical) perspective. For example, leaders without formal training in educational leadership, that is, leaders whose knowledge on educational leadership was obtained through in-service training only, appeared to be more inclined to distributed leadership from a political perspective only, and not a professional perspective. Given the socio-political and socio-historical environment in which the secondary schools in the area of study, including resources of biography for educational leaders at various levels of the educational value chain, it seems more attractive for policy makers and practitioners to embrace a political ahead of an instructional and a pedagogic perspective of distributed leadership. With regards to distributed leadership as an approach to democratise the socio-educational space, and to improve accountability by educators, it appears from the present study that the department of education in area studied seems to be fearing very well.

In fact, in an effort to democratise the socio-educational space and to improve accountability by educators, the Department of Education in South Africa, including the Limpopo province, has put in place some clear structures to facilitate educational leadership practices. Stakeholders in this education system see these structures as platforms for distributed leadership. It is against this background that one research participant (participant CM4) in the present study said, "... the most important thing that the South African authorities are doing to promote distributed leadership in schools is the

emphasis being placed on such structures as SMTs, and SGBs, and on a clear line of authority from HoD and above...” In a similar vein, participant SM5 said, “... the best thing that has happened to the education system in South Africa ...is to put in place a clear structure with multiple levels of authority...” It is felt here that it is in the area of education and training where policy makers should consider an improvement in order to develop a holistic view of distributed leadership among educational stakeholders. This view should combine the political objectives of democratising the socio-educational space and improving accountability for the performance of educators with the professional objective of enhancing instructional practices in order to improve learner attainment. The Department of Education may also consider it mandatory to appoint educational leaders with some training in educational leadership, if distributed leadership, and all its promises should be fully realised. Alternatively, distributed leadership in-service training should be intensified. Otherwise, the sink or swim approach to educational leadership, whereby educational leaders are not fully equipped for practice, is not good for the system.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Ethical Clearance Letter from the University of the Free State



Faculty of Education

16-Oct-2018

Dear Mrs Shalati Manzini

Ethics Clearance: The nature and practice of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools of South Africa

Principal Investigator: Mrs Shalati Manzini

Department: School of Education Department (Bloemfontein Campus)

APPLICATION APPROVED

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

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: UFS-HSD2018/0259

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

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

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

Yours faithfully

Prof. MM Mokhele Makgalum
Chairperson: Ethics Committee

Education Ethics Committee
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GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

13-Feb-2020

Dear Mrs Manzini, Shalati SD

Continuation/Report Approved

Research Project Title:

The nature and practice of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools of South Africa

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2018/0259/1302

We are pleased to inform you that the application to extend your ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Prof Derek Litthauer

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

Digitally signed

by Derek

Litthauer

Date: 2020.02.15

19:39:51 +02'00'

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D.Litthauer', is positioned to the left of the digital signature text.

205 Nelson Mandela
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APPENDIX B: Request to Conduct Research from LDoE

ENQ: MANZINI SD

P. O Box 1697

CONTACT: 082 732 5870 / 071 679 3188

LETABA

sdmanzini@yahoo.com

0870

29 June 2018

The Head of Department

Limpopo Department of Education

Private Bag X 9489

POLOKWANE

0700

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON THE NATURE AND PRACTICES OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF SOUTH AFRICA

My name is Shalati Doreen Manzini, a Ph.D. student at the University of Free State. I humbly request permission to conduct a study in the province as part of my Ph.D. degree on the topic: **The nature and practices of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools of South Africa.** This project will be conducted under the supervision of Prof LC Jita (University of Free State).

I am hereby seeking your consent to approach five (5) selected secondary schools from five selected circuits in the Mopani district to provide participants for this project. The purpose of the study is to analyse the nature of distributed leadership and explore how these practices influence teaching in secondary schools. Directors, Circuit Managers, Principals, and School management Teams will be observed and interviewed to understand how distributed leadership is.

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide the Department of Education with a bound copy of the full research report. If you require any further information, please do

not hesitate to contact me on cell: 0716793188/ 082 732 5870 and sdmanzini@yahoo.com. Thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

Manzini SD

APPENDIX C: Limpopo Department of Education Permission



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Ref: 2/2/2

Enq: MC Makola PhD

Tel No: 015 290 9448

E-mail: MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za

Manzini SD
PO Box 1697
Letaba
0870

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. The above bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research has been approved. Topic of the research proposal: **“THE NATURE AND PRACTICES OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOL IN LIMPOPO”**.
3. The following conditions should be considered:
 - 3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.
 - 3.2 Arrangements should be made with the Circuit Office and the schools concerned.
 - 3.3 The conduct of research should not in anyhow disrupt the academic programs at the schools.
 - 3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially the fourth term.
 - 3.5 During the study, applicable research ethics should be adhered to; in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: MANZINI SD

CONFIDENTIAL

Cnr. 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X9489, POLOKWANE, 0700
Tel: 015 290 7600, Fax: 015 297 6920/4220/4494


The heartland of southern Africa - development is about people!

3.6 Upon completion of research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.

4 Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter at Schools/ Offices where you intend conducting your research as an evidence that you are permitted to conduct the research.

5 The department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.

Best wishes.


Ms NB Mutheiwana
Head of Department

04/07/19
Date

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: MANZINI SD

CONFIDENTIAL

APPENDIX D: Request for Permission to Conduct Research: District

ENQ: MANZINI SD

P. O Box 1697

CONTACT: 082 732 5870

LETABA

sdmanzini@yahoo.com

0870

.....

The District Directors

████████████████████ Education District

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON THE NATURE AND PRACTICES OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF SOUTH AFRICA

1. My name is Shalati Doreen Manzini, a PhD student at the University of Free State. I humbly request permission to conduct a study in the District as part of my PHD degree on the topic: **The nature and practices of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools of South Africa.** This project will be conducted under the supervision of Prof LC Jita (University of Free State).

2. The investigation will be undertaken in ████████████████████ Education District in Limpopo Province. The study will be conducted in five schools. The researcher will observe samples of leadership activities such as staff, SMT and SGB meetings just to mention a few, and interview key role players in each institution. Furthermore, the researcher will also interview five (5) circuit managers, and five (5) district officials responsible for the schools. The table below outlines the Fifteen (15) participants in the study:

DISTRICT OFFICIALS	CIRCUIT MANAGERS	SCHOOLS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Directors ██████████ and ██████████ Menapi West Education District • CES curriculum: ██████████ and ██████████ • CES: Institutional Governance and Quality Assurance ██████████ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ██████████ East Circuit Managers =2 • ██████████ West Circuit Managers =3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ██████████ Schools =2 • ██████████ schools =3

3. The following guidelines will be adhered to without fail:

- a. The research will not in any way disrupt the academic processes of the above-mentioned institutions.
 - b. The research will not be conducted during examination times, especially in the fourth term.
 - c. All applicable research ethical norms and conducts will be adhered to.
4. For this investigation to start, the researcher further requests the profiles of the institutions mentioned above. The information should be prearranged as follows

DISTRICTS	CIRCUITS	SCHOOLS
a. Five-year grade 12 NSC results b. Number of circuits c. Number of Secondary Schools d. Number of Performing schools in 2018 e. Number of Underperforming schools 2018 f. Performing and underperforming subjects	a. Five-year grade 12 NSC results b. Number of Secondary Schools c. Number of Performing schools in 2018 d. Number of Underperforming schools in 2018 e. Number of non-teaching and teaching personnel f. Performing and underperforming subjects	a. Names and contact numbers of Principals of schools b. Number of SMTs c. Number of SGBs d. Number of RCLs e. Five-year Grade 12 NSC results per school f. Performing and underperforming subjects g. 2019 total school enrolment h. Number of non-teaching and teaching personnel

5. Attached please find the permission letter from the Superintendent General; Limpopo Department of Education and the consent form.

6. Thanking you in anticipation.

Manzini Shalati Doreen

Student Number: 2016144319

APPENDIX E: Permission from [REDACTED] Education District



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
M[REDACTED] DISTRICT

CONFIDENTIAL

REF : 2/2/2 ENQ [REDACTED] EMAIL: [REDACTED]@edu.limpopo.gov.za Cell: [REDACTED]

TO MANZINI SHALATI DOREEN

P. O. Box 1697

LETABA

0870

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: THE NATURE AND PRACTICES OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF SOUTH AFRICA.

1. The above matter refers.
2. The district wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research has been approved in line with the above-stated topic as outlined in your letter.
3. Please note that this permission also permits you to interview the District Director, the Chief Education Specialist responsible for Curriculum / Deputy Chief Education Specialist for planning, and the Circuit Managers at a time suitable for you.
4. The following conditions should be considered without fail:
 - 4.1. The arrangement should be made with the selected circuits and schools.

- 4.2. Please note that you are not allowed to conduct research during the 4th term of the school calendar since schools will be engaged with the end-of-the-year assessments.
- 4.3. The research should not be conducted during working hours.
- 4.4. During the research, applicable research ethics should be adhered to, in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).
- 4.5. Upon completion of the research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.
- 4.6. The research should not have any financial implications for the Department of Education in Limpopo Province.
5. Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter to any person and offices where you intend to conduct your research since it will serve as proof that you have been granted permission to conduct the research.
6. The Department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make to improve the education system and wishes you success in your research.



05.08.2019

*pp***DISTRICT DIRECTOR**

The heartland of Southern Africa-development is about people

APPENDIX F: Invitation for Participants at District, Circuit and Schools Level

ENQ: MANZINI SD

P. O Box 1697

CONTACT: 082 732 5870 / 071 679 3188

LETABA

sdmanzini@yahoo.com

0870

Date:.....

TO.....

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY ON THE NATURE AND PRACTICES OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF SOUTH AFRICA.

My name is Shalati Doreen Manzini, a Ph.D. student at the University of Free State. I hereby invite you to participate in a study for my Ph.D. degree on the topic: **The nature and practices of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools of South Africa.** This project will be conducted under the supervision of Prof LC Jita (University of Free State).

The study will use observation, interviews, documents, and audio-visual material as data collection techniques. You are therefore requested to participate as follows:

- Participate in a recorded interview describing your views and experiences on how distributed leadership practices are implemented in secondary schools
- Samples of leadership activities will be observed to analyse distributed leadership practices
- Documents that describe and explain distributed leadership practices will be examined.

To ensure that teaching and time on task is protected. Also to ensure that the general school management and leadership is not disrupted. All interviews will be conducted outside the teaching period.

If you have any questions about your participation in this study, please do not hesitate to contact me and/or my supervisor, Professor Jita LC(jitalc@ufs.ac.za or 051 401 7522).

Attached please find a consent form that will be administered for your participation in this study.

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours sincerely

Manzini SD

APPENDIX G: Interview and Observation Participants' Consent Form

The nature and practices of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools of South Africa

I

Hereby consent to participate as requested in the interview and observation for the research project on **the nature and practices of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools of South Africa**

1. I have read the information provided.
2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I agree to audio/video recording of my information and participation.
4. I understand that:
 - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
 - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
 - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
 - Whether I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, will have no effect on any treatment or service that is being provided to me.
 - I may ask that the recording/observation be stopped at any time and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.
6. I agree/do not agree* to the tape/transcript* being made available to other researchers who are not members of this research team, but who are judged by the research team to be doing related research, on the condition that my identity is not revealed. * *delete as appropriate*

Participant's signature.....**Date**.....

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name: Shalati Doreen Manzini

Researcher's signature Date.....

8. I, the participant whose signature appears below, have read a transcript of my participation and agree to its use by the researcher as explained.

Participant's signature.....Date.....

9. I, the participant whose signature appears below, have read the researcher's report and agree to the publication of my information as reported.

Participant's signature.....Date.....

APPENDIX H: Principals' Interview Protocol (Part 1)

<p>TOPIC: THE NATURE AND PRACTICES OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF SOUTH AFRICA</p>

INTERVIEWER: Shalati Doreen Manzini

POSITION OF INTERVIEWER: Principal Investigator

INTERVIEWEE: Secondary School Principal

DATE: Different date

PLACE: Secondary School

TIME: 14h30 to 16h00

INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions were conducted before the commencement of the interview session (researcher and interviewee). The researcher thanked the participant for accepting to take part in the interviews. Furthermore, sketched out the purpose of the study and assured the participants of anonymity and confidentiality throughout the session

Participant's Biographical information

The researcher requested the participants to outline their biographical information which included their gender, age, designations, qualifications, teaching, and management experience in their schools.

1. What do you understand by the concept: of **distributed leadership** in a school context?
2. **Primary research question: What is the nature of distributed leadership practices in secondary schools and how does it influence teaching and learning?**

- a. Who decides school leadership and management activities?
- b. How is leadership distributed within the school environment?
- c. How are leadership and management decisions implemented in your school?
- d. Who are involved in the implementation of leadership and management decision in your school

3. Research question 1: How is distributed leadership perceived by relevant stakeholders in the study's selected secondary schools?

- a. How is leadership distributed amongst the School Management Team (SMT)?
- b. How do you work together as a team to design and implement policies in your school?
- c. How has distributed leadership influenced your responsibilities as principal?
- d. What contribution do you make to the overall leadership and management of the school?

4. Research question 2: How is distributed leadership practiced in those selected secondary schools?

- a. As a Principal how do you involve teachers beyond the classroom activities?
- b. How does the SMT influence teaching and learning in your school
- c. How does sharing responsibility and decision-making enhance learning and teaching?
- d. How do you encourage teachers to work together for a common vision?

5. Research question 3. How does the implementation of distributed leadership influence teaching and learning in the study's selected secondary schools?

- a. What is the relationship between distributed leadership and learner performance?

- b. How do distributed leadership practices impact school-based activities?
- c. How does collective leadership in your school build capacity?
- d. In your own words how do you describe and explain distributed leadership in your schools

N.B Feel free to ask any question or comment on the issues which we have discussed.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

APPENDIX I: Circuit Managers' Interview Protocol (Part 1)

<p>TOPIC: THE NATURE AND PRACTICES OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF SOUTH AFRICA</p>

INTERVIEWER: Shalati Doreen Manzini

POSITION OF INTERVIEWER: Principal Investigator

INTERVIEWEE: Circuit Manager

DATE: Different dates

PLACE: Circuit Office

TIME: 14h30 to 16h00

INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions were conducted before the commencement of the interview session (researcher and interviewee). The researcher thanked the participant for accepting to take part in the interviews. Furthermore, sketched out the purpose of the study and assured the participants of anonymity and confidentiality throughout the session

Participant's Biographical information

The researcher requested the participants to outline their biographical information which amongst others included their teaching and management experience in their circuit.

1. What is your understanding of the concept: **distributed leadership** in a circuit context?
2. **Primary research question: What is the nature of distributed leadership practices in secondary schools and how does it influence teaching and learning?**

- a. Who makes decisions concerning Circuit leadership and management activities?
- b. How is leadership distributed within the Circuit?
- c. How are leadership and management decisions implemented in your Circuit?
- d. Who are involved in the implementation of leadership and management decision in your circuit?
- e. What operational practices that are in place so that leadership can be extended to other leaders in the circuit?

3. Research question 1: How is distributed leadership perceived by relevant stakeholders in the study's selected secondary schools?

- a. How is leadership distributed amongst the Circuit Management Team (CMT)?
- b. Who is responsible for the development and implementation of circuit plans?
- c. How has distributed leadership influenced your operations as a Circuit Manager?
- d. What contribution do you make to the overall leadership and management of the Circuit?

1. Research question 2: How is distributed leadership practiced in those selected secondary schools?

- a. As a circuit manager, how do you involve Principals beyond their school's activities?
- b. How does the distribution leadership influence teaching and learning activities in your circuit?
- c. How do share responsibility and decision-making to enhance learning and teaching?

d. Does the distribution leadership encourage Principals to work together for a common vision in your circuit?

2. Research question 3: How does the implementation of distributed leadership influence teaching and learning in the study's selected secondary schools?

- a. What is the relationship between distributed leadership and learner performance in your circuit?
- b. How do distributed leadership practices impact circuit-based activities?
- c. How does collective leadership in your circuit build capacity?
- d. In your own words, how do you describe and explain distributed leadership

N.B Feel free to ask any question or comment on the issues which we have discussed.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

APPENDIX J: District Officials' Interview Protocol (Part 1)

**TOPIC: THE NATURE AND PRACTICES OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN
SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF SOUTH AFRICA**

INTERVIEWER: Shalati Doreen Manzini

POSITION OF INTERVIEWER: Principal Investigator

INTERVIEWEE: District Official

DATE: Different dates

PLACE: District Office

TIME: 14h30 to 16h00

INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions were conducted before the commencement of the interview session (researcher and interviewee). The researcher thanked the participant for accepting to take part in the interviews. Furthermore, sketched out the purpose of the study and assured the participants of anonymity and confidentiality throughout the session

Participant's Biographical information

The researcher requested the participants to outline their biographical information which amongst others included their teaching and management experience in their schools.

1. What is your understanding of the concept: **distributed leadership** in a district context?

2. **Primary research question:** What is the nature of distributed leadership practices in secondary schools and how does it shape teaching and learning?

- a. Who makes decisions concerning District leadership and management activities?
- b. How is leadership distributed within the District community?
- c. How are leadership and management decisions implemented in your District?
- d. Who are involved in the implementation of leadership and management decision in your District?
- e. What operational practices are in place to extend leadership to a staff member in your district?

3. **Research question 1: How is distributed leadership perceived by relevant stakeholders in the study's selected secondary schools?**

- a. How is leadership distributed amongst the District Management Team (DMT)?
- b. Do you work together as a team to design and implement policies?
- c. How has distributed leadership influenced your operations as District Director?
- d. What contribution do you make to the overall leadership and management of the District?

5 **Research question 2: How is distributed leadership practiced in those selected secondary schools?**

- a. Besides the DMTs, are Circuit Managers allowed to lead beyond their circuit?
- b. How does the DMT support teaching and learning activities in your district?
- c. How do shared responsibility and decision-making support learning and

teaching in your district?

- d. Does the DMT encourage Circuit Managers to work together for a common vision?

6 Research question 3: How does the implementation of distributed leadership influence teaching and learning in the study's selected secondary schools?

- a. What is the relationship between distributed leadership and learner performance in your district?
- b. How do distributed leadership practices impact district-based activities?
- c. How does collective leadership in your circuit build capacity?
- d. In your own word how do you describe and explain distributed

N.B Feel free to ask any question or comment on the issues which we have discussed.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

APPENDIX K: Part 2 Interview Protocol (Principals, Circuit Managers and District Officials)

TOPIC: THE NATURE AND PRACTICES OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF SOUTH AFRICA

INTERVIEWER: Shalati Doreen Manzini

POSITION OF INTERVIEWER: Principal Investigator

INTERVIEWEE:

DATE: Different dates

PLACE:

TIME: 14h30 to 16h00

Introductions were conducted before the commencement of the interview session (researcher and interviewee). The researcher thanked the participant for accepting to take part in the interviews for the second time. Furthermore, sketched out the purpose of the study and assured the participants of anonymity and confidentiality throughout the session

For the researcher to describe and explain the nature and the practice of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools, conducted part 2 of the interview with the same participants.

1. What are the key challenges you have faced when implementing distributed leadership in your institution?
2. What measures did you implement to resolve those challenges?
3. How confident are you that distributed leadership will succeed in your institution? Kindly elaborate.

4. What lessons have you learned in your implementation of distributed leadership?

5. How would you describe the support of other stakeholders, namely members of management, SGB, teacher unions, etc in the implementation of distributed leadership?

N.B Feel free to ask any question or comment on the issues which we have discussed.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

APPENDIX L: Document Analysis Protocol

**TOPIC: THE NATURE AND PRACTICE OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN
SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF SOUTH AFRICA**

1. The researcher thanked the participant for accepting to take part in the study. Furthermore, sketched out the purpose of the study and assured the participants of anonymity and confidentiality throughout the session

2. The researcher thanked the principal for ensuring that school management and accountability documents for the researcher to analyse in an attempt to assess ways in which the practice of distributed leadership in the selected secondary schools shape teaching and learning

Name of the documents analysed	Author of the Document and year of	Document Available (YES/NO)	Document Utilized to distribute leadership (YES/NO)	The aim of the document
South African School Act (SASA) 84 of 1996,				
Employment of Educators Act (EEA) 76 of 1998				

DBE Personnel Administrative Measures PAM (1999).				
Post establishment				
Allocation of duty sheet				
Job descriptions				
School Organogram				
Time tables				
Annual Academic Performance Report (AAPR)				
School Improvement Plan (SIP)				
School Self Evaluation(SSE)				
SMT minutes at the beginning of the year				

SGB minutes at the beginning of the year				
Staff Minutes at the beginning of the year				
Grade meeting minutes at beginning of the year				
Subject meeting minutes at the beginning of the year				
Registers				

N.B Feel free to ask any question or comment on the issues which we have discussed.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

APPENDIX M: Qualitative Observation Protocol

The nature and practices of distributed leadership in selected secondary schools of South Africa

Observer:

Date:

Time:

Site:

The researcher thanked the participants for allowing her to observe different types of meetings to examine how the practice of distributed leadership looks like in selected secondary schools

1. Type of meeting (tick one)

Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Subject Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Management Team	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Governing body	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Category of the meeting (tick one)

Briefing session	<input type="checkbox"/>
Special meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formal meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Composition of the meeting

Number attendees	28			
Gender	Males=	Female=		
Post Description	PL1=	PL2=	PL3=	PL4=

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4. Description of individuals engaged in activity: (Meetings/Session)

Who chairs the meeting?	
To what extent does the chairperson allow maximum participation?	
What is the nature and quality of interactions?	

5. Sequence of activities undertaken: (Meetings/Session)

Who convenes meetings?	
How often are these meetings held?	
What are the nature and the practice of Distributed leadership?	
How do members express their opinions?	
To what level are the members' contributions valued?	
How are crucial and critical decisions or resolutions made?	
How are unexpected items to the agenda managed?	
What are the concluding remarks?	

6. Comments:

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APPENDIX N: Turnitin Report

Turnitin *Originality Report*

- Processed on: 29-Jan-2023 15:45 SAST
- ID: 2001287525
- Word Count: 78675
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17 January 2023

To whom it may concern

This serves to certify that the PhD study document titled: *The Nature and Practice of Distributed Leadership in Selected Secondary Schools of South Africa*, by **Shalati Doreen Manzini**, were edited by an experienced editor/proofreader. I have edited the document and advised the author to effect various changes including the mechanics of language, formatting of text and referencing style.

I am of the view that the quality of the chapters are of generally accepted academic standards.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T.W. Gama'.

T.W. Gama
(Editor)