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**EXPLORING PRINCIPALS' ROLES IN IMPROVING LITERACY IN THE
FOUNDATION PHASE**

By

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DISSERTATION

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DECLARATION

I, MACHÉ JORDAAN (2010035570), declare that the topic “**Exploring principals’ roles in improving literacy in the foundation phase**” is my own dissertation.

This research project has not been submitted in part or whole to any other university. All the sources that have been used or cited have been completely and accurately referenced by means of detailed references.

Signature: 

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explored the role of the principal in improving literacy in the foundation phase. The challenges teachers and principals experienced were shown in the study as well as additional influential factors affecting literacy. This study is grounded in a theoretical framework with a focus on instructional leadership. This study comprised a qualitative research method, and the study took place in five different schools in the Motheo District, Bloemfontein, Free State, South Africa. Data were collected using individual interviews with five principals and 6 Departmental Heads. In addition, focus group interviews were conducted with 16 foundation phase teachers. Furthermore, a documentary analysis was done in each school as well. Various themes emerged from the qualitative research, and the primary focus was on the role of the principal in improving literacy in the foundation phase. The findings revealed that principals need to better understand literacy and the curriculum in the foundation phase and that literacy instruction needs urgent attention to improve learner achievement.

Keywords: Literacy, curriculum, principals, professional development, instructional leadership, distributor leadership.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

APIP - Academic Improvement Plan

CAPS – Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

DBE – Department of Basic Education

FP – Foundation Phase

DH – Department Head

PAM – Personnel Administrative Measures

PD – Professional Development

SMT – School Management Team

WCED – Western Cape Education Department

CHAPTER 1 :

ORIENTATION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Literacy skills (the ability to read and write) form the cornerstone of a child's learning (Hlaithwa, 2013:1). Without these two skills, learners will struggle with all other subjects (Plaatjies, 2016:4). Researchers agree that basic literacy skills are essential for academic learning, lifelong learning, participation in a society that is meaningful, for the well-being of learners, and sustainable development (Cambridge Assessment, 2013:10; De Vos & Van der Merwe, 2014:3; Peregoy & Boyle, 2000:237; Trudell, Dowd, Piper & Bloch, 2012:5; Wagner, 2010:16; Govender & Hugo, 2020). Gove and Cvelich (2010:2) note that, in the foundation phase (FP), this is especially important, and that FP is exactly that, the foundation of a learner's ability to apply the skills learnt to read and write. If learners do not grasp this ability to read and write, they will struggle and continue to as they move to higher grades (Govender & Hugo, 2020).

Research reports, however, show that the performance of South African learners in literacy is quite dismal (Department of Education 2008:4; Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2015:29; 2017b:1–2, 2017c:6). Roodt (2018:1), referring to the poor results in literacy performance, points out that "South African education is in crisis". This is especially confirmed by assessments done through the Annual National Assessments (ANA). These assessments presented information that exposed learning difficulties in literacy, which revealed the literacy problems in the FP (Spaull, 2013:3; Govender & Hugo, 2020). Many specific concerns about FP learners reading and writing abilities were highlighted in a diagnostic report stemming from the Annual National Assessments of 2014 (DBE, 2015). Some of the problems that emerged were related to reading and writing activities in particular. The report showed that Grade 1 learners were, for example, unable to write short and simple sentences about a given picture. Most of them did not use capital letters at the start of their sentences and left out the full stop at the end of the sentence in their writing activities. At Grade 2-level, in terms of reading, the results revealed that learners displayed a lack of knowledge in giving the order of events after reading and listening to the text read to them. A significant number of learners were unable to give the correct order of events in

relation to the story. Other learners found it challenging to express an opinion on the story and give reasons to support their own opinion. In all the grades in the FP, many learners still perform poorly in spelling and in using words to write meaningful sentences and paragraphs (DBE, 2015: 30- 60).

South African learners' performance in international tests paints an equally bleak picture (Plaatjies, 2020:2). Roodt (2018:3) points out that, in the 2016 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) study, children attending South African schools fared poorly on almost every metric and are ill-prepared for the world after school. Furthermore, the data of the PIRLS study showed that "of the 50 countries that participated, South African learners performed the worst on their reading ability" (Roodt, 2018:3).

Furthermore, in South Africa, learners have a myriad of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This leads to serious challenges in terms of literacy skills and performance (Chouari, 2016:3). This creates many challenges for teachers in the FP (Grade 1-3). Challenges include language barriers, different learning styles, different epistemologies, ethnicity, and cultural differences (Chouari, 2016:6-8). Therefore, teachers in the FP are vital influencers and role players in ensuring that learners are provided with effective literacy instructions (Rutgers, 2012).

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Quality teaching and learning should form the most important activity schools need to fulfil (Sekar, 2019:1). To ensure this, principals as leaders play a vital role in providing leadership in the curriculum (Plaatjies, 2020:5). Literacy forms part of the Curriculum and Policy Statement (CAPS) FP curriculum. Therefore, principals are obliged by the Departmental Policy Frameworks (Personnel Measures, 2016 and Standard for Principals, 2016) to improve literacy performance. This is especially important due to the central role that literacy plays in a child's academic performance.

According to Steyn (2011:43), teachers can contribute to making a difference in the achievement level of learners, but "effective leadership is also important when the needs and challenges of literacy instruction are addressed in the attempts to transform education". Apart from this, research indicates that leadership is second to instruction in improving educational outcomes (Leithwood, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004:5).

When looking at the role of the principal in leadership, principals must encourage greater learner achievement by being the mediator in achieving these outcomes (Mbhalathi, 2017:5). There have been many discussions about the fact that principals should be more involved as curriculum leaders and development to improve literacy knowledge and mentor teachers (Western Cape Education Department [WCED], 2006). Curriculum leadership entails establishing, leading, implementing, and monitoring the curriculum. It is the principal's role to ensure the relationship between practice and theory is reviewed to better the success of the curriculum (Glatthorn, Boschee, Whitehead & Boschee, 2019:127).

Furthermore, to develop greater involvement, the principal should be a subject leader, someone who has a great influence on subject areas and the quality of the teaching and learning (Harris, Busher & Wise, 2014:4). The principals' role in subject leadership is to judge the subject's standards, evaluate the teaching and learning, and lead sustainable improvement (Day, 2020). Subject leadership is closely linked to instructional leadership. As school managers, principals are expected to take on the role of instructional leadership (Oliva, 2013). Instructional leadership can be described as learner achievement directly influenced by leadership and management aspects (Van Deventer, 2016:342). According to Botha (2016:195), instructional leadership is a key role of the principal is attempting to improve learner achievement. The Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document (DBE, 2016:33) outlines the primary duties of the principal. It is stated that he/she is mainly responsible for developing programmes for staff training and should offer professional advice and guide and supervise teachers to achieve the educational objectives and needs of the school. In addition, as instructional leaders, principals must make sure the curriculum is implemented effectively, promote professional learning communities in the school, foster all learner successes, and take the lead in continuous improvement by implementing a shared vision and mission through establishing a culture of achievement (DBE, 2015:9). In addition, it is imperative for principals to develop and implement an instructional framework that is data-driven, research-based and aligned with the national curriculum, empowers staff to become instructional leaders and recognises good instructional practices that motivate and increase learner achievement (DBE, 2015:9). Plaatjies (2016:4) maintains that "effective instructional leadership makes broad demands on principals' knowledge and skills with regard to

both student and teacher learning”, therefore it is vital for principals to be knowledgeable when it comes to the curriculum.

When it comes to literacy, in particular, it is further highlighted that teachers and principals need a “deep understanding” of the different components that entail literacy learning (Plaatjies, 2016). Therefore, Lear (2017:3) believes that “focused efforts can be made to support principals to become instructional leaders in literacy learning”. This study aims to explore principals’ role in improving literacy in the foundation phase. To obtain this primary goal, the study will be approached through the lens of instructional leadership theory.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

This study was prompted through my daily observations as an FP educator in my class and school. Through these observations, interactions with colleagues, and experiences, I am well aware of how learners struggle to read and write in this vital phase of a child’s academic learning. Also, I experienced the challenges related to their home language, as many learners come from language backgrounds different from English. Educators struggle to cope with this difficult issue in particular. Another issue is the fact that their parents cannot help them due to the lack of good literacy skills themselves. My concerns about this dismal situation lead to some deep reflections about practices for improvement.

I have realised that much research has been conducted about the problems related to instruction, but this is mainly from a didactical perspective. However, my interest as a postgraduate student in management and leadership made me think about the literacy challenge from a different angle: that of the role of instructional leadership to address the problem. The lack of attention to the challenge from a leadership perspective is confirmed in a recent study by Plaatjies (2020:3). He indicated that little is known about approaching the challenges from a leadership perspective (Plaatjies, 2020:3), especially in the South African context.

As learners struggle more and more to become competent in reading and writing already in the FP, the problem escalates in the further grades. This, in turn, leads to a serious challenge for intermediate phase teachers, as they now need to devote extra time to provide support to learners with backlogs. As instructional and curriculum

leaders, I believe that school principals should play a far more prominent role in providing direction in literacy through these forms of leadership. Therefore, it became imperative to explore the role principals play in improving literacy in the foundation phase.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Swanson (2013:122) views a theoretical framework as the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory, which explains why the research problem under study exists. The value of a theoretical framework is that it supports the theories concerning the existing research problem. Furthermore, a wider area is considered about the relevant topic or problem. The theoretical framework also allows the reader to evaluate the assumptions made in a critical manner (Kivunya, 2018:46).

This study was informed by the instructional leadership theory. Various definitions exist for this theoretical perspective. For instance, the PAM document (DBE, 2016:33) stipulates that the instructional core duties of the principal include “to guide, supervise and offer professional advice and to be responsible for the development of staff training programmes, and to assist teachers in developing and achieving educational objectives in accordance with the needs of the school”. On the other hand, the Standard on Principalship (DBE, 2015:9) requires that principals as instructional leaders ensure that the school is a professional learning community, lead continuous improvement in curriculum implementation, lead the school into the future through the use of ICT, foster the success of all learners, promoting a culture of achievement for all learners by communicating and implementing a shared common vision and mission. Drawing from these descriptions, this study adopted the instructional leadership theory to investigate, describe, and analyse the leadership role of principals in terms of literacy. The theory will be unpacked in more depth in Chapter 3, under the Theoretical framework and part two of the literature.

1.5 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Important concepts used in this study are clarified below.

1.5.1 Literacy

Literacy is cognitive, social, and affective competencies that consist of symbols to share and express knowledge, experiences, and ideas. The main focus is to read and write fluently in various forms, whether it is visual, digital, or electronically (Hobbs, 2016:1).

1.5.2 Curriculum

The curriculum can be described as content that teachers would be teaching learners and also as the content that learners would be learning within a certain period. (Su, 2012). For example, according to CAPS (Curriculum ad Assessment Policy Statement) (DBE, 2018), the literacy curriculum and content areas for English Home Language are listening and speaking, phonics, reading, handwriting, and writing.

1.5.3 Leadership

According to Zeitchik (2012), the meaning of leadership is to motivate your members to do their best according to their abilities. In support of this, leadership means to inspire ones' colleagues to pursue the goals and visions that were set out (Matei & Burguete, 2012). Moreover, Kruse (2013) defines leadership as something "about articulating visions, embodying values, and creating the environment within which things can be accomplished". Leadership is thus a process of social influence, which in return helps to maximise the efforts people put in to achieve their goals (Almaki, Silong, Idris & Wahat, 2016).

1.5.4 Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership not only focuses on the direction of influence but also pinpoints the core activities of education institutions by managing teaching and learning (Bush,

2007; Ng, 2019:4). It is the capability to involve colleagues to collaborate in improving teaching and learning, which is the main purpose, through learning and development (de Lima, 2008; Ng, 2019:4).

1.5.5 Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership is the sharing or distributing of roles amongst colleagues or staff members. Leadership roles are shared amongst principals and teachers to observe meetings, develop opportunities, and build better relationships with the school and its community (Spillane, 2005).

1.5.6 Principal

A principal is a person in charge of the school, leading and guiding teachers. Principals can also be defined as a leader who impacts an organisation's culture (Allen, 2017).

1.5.7 Foundation Phase Teacher

An FP teacher is a person who teaches Grade R to Grade 3 with the responsibility and primary goal to develop manners, ethics, and learning techniques amongst learners, which is fundamental (Basil, 2016).

1.6 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Numerous studies have reported that the significance of literacy skills (reading and writing) is undisputed (Plaatjies, 2020:1). Literacy skills are required from the beginning of school education to employment and citizenship (Spaul, 2012; Gunning, 2014 & Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshela, Mokoena & McLeod 2017). However, the underperformance of learners over the years in literacy assessments is of great concern for educationists (Archer, 2010; Matomela, 2010; Evans, 2011; Spaul, 2012 Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2013). Few would dispute that South African learners have serious literacy incompetencies, as confirmed by their performance, which is also "frequently far below international benchmark standards" (Mbhalati, 2017:2).

Plaatjies (2020:3) declares that although considerable research has been done to address the problems with literacy – especially with regard to classroom practices – less is known on how to approach the challenges with poor literacy performance from a leadership perspective. It appears that research is particularly scanty regarding the principals' role in improving literacy. Recent studies (Plaatjies, 2019; 2020) showed that principals lack the necessary leadership capacities to provide sufficient support to teachers in improving literacy. It is their Instructional leadership role in particular that seems to be vital in the improvement of literacy. Townsend, Bayetto, Dempster, Johnson and Stevens (2018) agree that principals should play a far more prominent role in this regard.

The instructional leadership role of principals is comprehensive, with a focus on all the subjects in the school curriculum. One of the challenges is also that principals often devote little attention to specific subjects, and very little is known about how principals should influence literacy instruction through this form of leadership (Plaatjies, 2019:160). Researchers point out that it focuses on aspects such as classroom visits and observations, supervision of instruction, monitoring and moderation activities (Pinello, 2015; Kubicek, 2015; Mestry, 2017). Furthermore, principals should focus on leadership approaches such as distributed leadership practices and possess influential leadership actions such as the correct attitude and motivations.

This study, therefore, aimed to explore the principals' role in improving literacy in the foundation phase.

Emanating from this problem, the following research questions were formulated.

1.6.1 Primary Research Question

- What are principals' roles in improving literacy in the Foundation Phase?

1.6.2 Secondary Research Questions

- What are the challenges that FP teachers experience in terms of literacy education?
- What are the leadership challenges that principals experience in terms of literacy education?

- How do principals execute their literacy leadership roles in the FP?
- Which strategies should be implemented to improve literacy education in the FP?

1.6.3 Research Aim

This study aims to “Explore the principals’ role in improving literacy in the FP”.

1.6.4 The objectives are to:

- **Identify** and **describe** the challenges that FP teachers experience in terms of literacy education.
- **Identify** and **describe** the leadership challenges that principals experience in terms of literacy education.
- **Establish** how principals execute their literacy leadership roles in the FP.
- **Determine** which strategies should be implemented to improve literacy education in the FP?

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design and methodology explain the research elements that will be used in this study. In the section that follows, the main aspects of a research design will be briefly touched on. Finally, the design and methodology will be unpacked in-depth in the methodology chapter.

1.7.1 Research paradigm

This study adopted a constructivist paradigm. This approach asserts people's experiences to be constructed through their understanding and by reflecting on their experiences (Adom, Ankrah & Yeboah, 2018). In Chapter 4 (4.3.2), the researcher will elaborate more on the selected paradigm.

1.7.2 Research design

This study adopted a multiple case study design. Creswell (2013) and Brink (2018:1) describe multiple case studies as an in-depth data collection of explored real-life situations. Furthermore, it allows participants to think analytically, and real-life situations and actual circumstances are exposed with this research design (Crowe, Creswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery, & Sheikh, 2011:8). The role of the principal in improving literacy in the FP was explored and the research design was discussed broadly in Chapter 4, subsection 4.3.1.

1.7.3 Research approaches

The research approach for this study will commence a qualitative research approach. This approach refers to studying a phenomenon in a natural setting, where the meaning of behaviours or situations is contextualised (Aspers & Corte, 2019:147). In support, Mohajan (2019:1) confirms that a qualitative research approach is used to explore and understand the beliefs, behaviours, attitudes, and experiences of people. This approach would allow me to explore the role of principals in improving literacy in the foundation phase.

1.7.4 Research Environment and Population

The population can be defined as a researchers' participants and the circumstances from which the study would flow to a conclusion (Babbie 2014:119). This study's population was located in quintile 5 Primary schools in the Motheo District.

1.7.5 Selection of Participants

Purposeful sampling was used in this research, comprising five principals, HODs and educators from five primary schools in the Motheo District. Primary schools were selected because the study focuses on the foundation phase.

1.7.6 Data Collection Methods and Procedures

This study made use of individual interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis. Individual interviews were conducted with the principals of the five schools. Focus group interviews were done with the teachers and Departmental Heads of the selected schools. Furthermore, an analysis of documents pertaining to literacy was done.

1.7.6.1 Individual interviews

The advantages of individual interviews are that being face-to-face provides a more accurate screening (DeFranzo, 2014). The person being interviewed is unable to falsify information during screening. Another advantage, according to Marshall (2016), is that individual interviews ensure that complete and undistracted focus is maintained throughout the interview without having any technological distractions. Costs may be a negative disadvantage, as it may cost much money to travel to have face-to-face interviews, and it may be very time-consuming.

1.7.6.2 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews consist of smaller groups, usually not more than 10 participants who voluntarily discuss a particular topic. Focus groups are used as a data collection tool (Writing, 2019). This method allows for different viewpoints and disagreements; it may be challenging to get all the participants together at the same time due to different schedules or extramural activities (Schwab, 2016).

1.7.6.3 Document analysis

Qualitative research can be done through document analysis, where the researcher is given a voice via interpreted documents (Bowen, 2009). In this study, the analysed documents dealt with the programmes for internal moderation and monitoring of the educator's files.

1.8 QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Research quality assurance is underpinned by the research community and its trustworthiness (The Research Information Network, 2010: 4). For this reason, it is vital to investigate the strategies that researchers use to ensure findings that are not only credible and transferable but also confirmable and dependable (Horn, 2018). The following paragraphs will present aspects that intensify the quality assurance of this research study.

1.8.1 Ethical Considerations

The participants' views, thoughts, intentions, and feelings are reported accurately and understood by the researcher. "The ethics of science concerns what is wrong and what is right in the conduct of research", and it is therefore imperative that the researcher find reliable information and has to adapt to norms and values (Mouton, 2006: 238-239). As the researcher of this study, I adhered to ethical principles. The prevention of "fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research or reporting research results" is vital. The researcher has to be very attentive, according to Johnson and Christensen (2008:103). Issues may occur during the process, and the researcher has to be constantly aware of the agreement. All participants were informed about the process. Their rights were protected, and a harmless research process was guaranteed. The researcher obtained ethical consent after informing the participants of the purpose of the study. The complete disclosure was disclosed to all participants (Strydom, 2007:56-69).

1.8.2 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Trustworthiness has numerous definitions, but the most known criteria in qualitative research would be credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). These terms and how they are intertwined in this study are highlighted in the paragraphs below.

1.8.2.1 Credibility

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018: 121), credibility is viewed as “the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings”. Credibility will be established through the original data and whether the participants’ original views were interpreted correctly (Kortjens & Moser, 2018). In this study, credibility was ensured through interpreting data rigorously.

1.8.2.2 Dependability

Dependability entails the evaluation of the participants’ findings, interpretation, and recommendations for the study to ensure that all data is supported (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In this study, dependability was ensured through rigorous monitoring of the data by the researcher’s supervisor.

1.8.2.3 Transferability

Transferability can be defined as the measure in which qualitative research results are transferred to other respondents or contexts (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Applicability may be a concern in transferability and a “thick description” is vital to allow the reader to assess the findings and judge the transferability (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014:574). By presenting these thick descriptions, readers would be able to establish if the findings could be applied to other contexts, situations, times, and populations.

1.8.2.4 Confirmability

Confirmability can be described as the level to which a researchers’ findings can be confirmed. Confirmability is apprehensive with that data is interpreted and established clearly in the findings and that data is not fabricated (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Confirmability was established through an audit trail. The data in this study was recorded meticulously during the collection process, and notes were made of the entire data collection process.

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to explore the principals' roles as literacy leaders in the FP in the Motheo District. The study will also explore the challenges that principals face as literacy and curriculum leaders. The information gathered may give direction to what is needed to improve literacy amongst learners, specifically in the FP. Curriculum leaders and subject heads will help give data needed to determine why literacy is a problem area in the FP. It is hoped that this study would identify whether principals understand and realise their roles, not only as curriculum leaders but also as literacy leaders. It is further hoped that the problem areas would be pointed out to find strategies and solutions to improve literacy in the FP in further studies.

1.10 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

1.10.1 Scientific Demarcation

This study aimed to explore the principals' roles in improving literacy in the FP. This meant that this study is located in two distinct fields of education. Literacy settle in the field of languages and literacy education whilst the roles of principals reside in the discipline of educational leadership. This study was therefore directly linked to these two fields.

1.10.2 Geographical Demarcation

The study was undertaken in the Free State Province, specifically in the Motheo district, Bloemfontein. All five participating schools are categorised in quintiles 5.

1.11 LAYOUT OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter one was driven towards the introduction and portraying the background of this study. To set the context in which this study will be unravelled, a theoretical framework was highlighted. The problem statement, research questions, and research objectives were mentioned in this chapter.

Chapter two provided a brief overview of the literacy curriculum for the FP. Furthermore, it discussed the features of the CAPS curriculum and challenges experienced in the classroom.

Chapter three focused on the second section of the literature review. In this section, the researcher focused the discussions around the different leadership approaches, the theoretical framework that was embedded in the study, instructional and distributive leadership roles, and the influential factors in literacy instruction.

Chapter four outlines the research design and methodology employed for the study. It outlined the data collection methods as well as issues on trustworthiness and ethics protocol.

Chapter five presented the findings from the data collected from the participants. The findings were discussed according to themes and were analysed and supported with literature and the theoretical orientations of the study.

Chapter six offered a summary of the chapters as well as the findings. Furthermore, recommendations are presented and discussed and recommendations for further research are identified. Lastly, the study's limitations are presented, and a concluded research study summary is provided.

1.12 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

This chapter served as an orientation and overview to this study. The study was introduced using an introduction and background. This included the importance of literacy skills for FP learners. Thereafter, the performance of learners and the challenges that they experienced were highlighted. The leadership role that the principal should provide in terms of subjects was briefly outlined. The research design (multiple case study design) and approach (qualitative) were described as well as the data collection methods. Issues on trustworthiness as well as ethical considerations were also outlined in the chapter.

In the next chapter, the first part of the literature review will be outlined, with a focus on the features of the FP literacy curriculum and the challenges in terms of literacy instruction.

CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 analysed the introduction and background. Furthermore, the theoretical framework for the study was briefly described together with the problem statement, research questions, and the objectives of this research study. Chapter 1 also outlined the clarification of key concepts, problem statement, research questions and objectives, and the research design and methodology. The main aim of this study is to explore the principals' roles in improving literacy in the foundation phase. Specifically, the focus is on how principals should improve literacy practices such as instruction and assessment in the foundation phase. Keeping an eye on instruction and assessment, resorts under the Instructional leadership role of principals. The specific competencies related to this role will be further discussed in Chapter 3 (*cf.* 3.3-3.5).

This chapter is based on an extensive literature review with the aim to explore the literature related to literacy education. In order to execute their roles as instructional leaders in literacy, it is first necessary to look at the strategies of teaching literacy in line with the expectations of the CAPS-literacy curriculum. Thereafter challenges that exist in the teaching of literacy are discussed. These discussions provide background to what is expected from the principal in improving literacy in the FP. Chapter 3, therefore, will focus on the role of the principal in addressing the challenges in improving literacy in the foundation phase. In order to respond thus to the aims of the study, the literature review was quite comprehensive in scope, which necessitated the splitting of the literature in two chapters.

2.2 CONCEPTUALISING LITERACY IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE CURRICULUM

The term literacy was conceptualised in the introduction under Chapter 1 (1.1). Literacy in the foundation phase is described in the CAPS document. The policy

document for literacy (DBE, 2018) indicates that reading and writing activities in Grades R-3 should take place during the Focus time for reading and writing. Learners need to be taught to be effective writers and readers during these focused sessions and lessons. The policy document states that time should be set aside each day to focus on reading independently and in groups and on shared reading and writing to enhance literacy skills. Learners can focus on paired or independent reading while the educator does group guided reading with smaller groups (DBE, 2018:11). South Africa has developed a curriculum and assessment policy that is used as a guide to ensure that all learning outcomes are achieved successfully. To improve the implementation of the curriculum, the National Curriculum Statement was amended in 2012, from which the Curriculum and Assessment Policy document was developed to use as a guideline in learning programmes and assessments for all subjects in Grades R-12 (DBE, 2018:3). This study focuses specifically on the principal's role in improving the literacy component of the curriculum in the FP, which stretches from Grade R-3. However, this study focuses on Grades 1-3. As such, the following paragraphs will briefly outline the key focus areas in the literacy curriculum and strategies for teaching literacy. This information provides the reader with the essential context needed to understand the research problem and its significance before moving on to more specific discussions of the relevant literature. This study is not about the didactical component of literacy per se, but- as the title indicates- a focus on the role of the principal in improving literacy. This role will be alluded to in-depth in Chapter 3, based on the challenges presented in Chapter 2. Due to the magnitude of the topic and bringing together curriculum and leadership issues, the literature review was too extensive. This necessitated the split of the literature review into two chapters.

2.3 STRATEGIES IN TEACHING IN LINE WITH THE CAPS DOCUMENT

The level of performance of an education system is determined by means of the performance of learners in numeracy and literacy with the main focus reading literacy and South Africa is performing abysmally poorly in reading regardless of the home language of the learners assessed (Pretorius & Spaul, 2016:2).

The policy document for literacy indicates that reading and writing activities in Grades R-3 should take place during the focus time for reading and writing. Learners are taught to be effective writers and readers during these focused sessions and lessons.

Each day, time is set aside to focus on reading independently and in groups and on shared reading and writing to enhance literacy skills. Learners can focus on paired or independent reading while the educator does group guided reading with smaller groups (DBE, 2018:11). There are time allocations for each focus area, namely for reading and phonics, shared reading and group guided reading (DBE, 2018:9). Strategies used in the foundation phase to teaching reading literacy is emergent reading, group guided reading and shared reading.

2.3.1 Emergent Reading

Emergent reading can be described as reading that starts early in a child's life even before formal school attendance (Wang, 2018:1). Furthermore, emergent literacy as a term is derived from "emergent literacy" and reading and writing components are both included. Wang (2018:1-2) claims that learning to read starts before a child starts with school and that teachers identify skills in school that a child should comprehend before they can learn to read through a "formal reading curriculum". The first words kids learn are not through formal reading but through their interactions socially through daily actions and events (Pretorius & Stoffelsma, 2017:2). Learners also informally and casually read posters and labels on the classroom walls. According to Wang (2018:2), the main components include "vocabulary knowledge, decontextualised language skills, conventions of print, knowledge of letters, linguistic awareness, and phoneme-grapheme correspondence". Learners in the foundation phase start to read the text slowly in the early reading stages (Pretorius & Spaul, 2016:5). NEED draws its attention in Literacy teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase on three challenges teachers experience: content knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge, and curriculum knowledge (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016:4). When starting to read and write in Grade 1, learners begin "writing" by using pictures until they master letter formation skills and later on have the ability to copy single words and copy full sentences and captions. According to the requirements in the policy, Foundation Phase learners should be able to write their captions when looking at pictures and form at least one sentence by the middle of Grade 1. Support and guidance should, however, be given by the teacher (DBE, 2018:18). Through the shared writing process, learners are taught how to use individual letters to form a word to, later on, be able to construct sentences. During this process, they also learn the importance of

punctuation and spaces between words. Additionally, this process teaches learners to become skilled in writing their own sentences and enlarge their vocabulary to enrich their sentences and their fluency and comprehension in reading (DBE, 2018:18).

Gove and Wetterberg (2011:1) highlight that emergent reading is crucial as “teaching young children to read is the cornerstone of improving educational outcomes”. High literacy rates, proficiency, and fluency in reading are promoted when children's reading skills are developed optimally from early childhood stages (Abaszi, 2017:8). Grahame and Kelly (2018:3) argue that learners are likely to fail their fluency levels and cognitive skills in higher grades if they cannot learn to read with comprehension in the earlier grades. Early grade interventions in reading are thus “a useful strategy for developing cognitive skills needed in schooling (Steward & Modiba, 2019:151).

2.3.2 Group Guided reading

Guided reading is also a strategy used in literacy reading and can be defined as small groups reading a selected text as the teacher gives support whilst challenging learners to increase accuracy, fluency and comprehension in reading (Pinnell & Fountas, 2011). Teets (2017:13) claims group guided reading is a strategy by which “teachers generate multi-levelled lessons and activities based on students’ level and interest and engage the students in the reading lesson”. Learner motivation is improved by ensuring that topics and interests are embedded in the curriculum and that learners participate and teachers instruct (Teets, 2017:12).

2.3.3 Shared reading

Shared reading is reading that involves three elements, namely a learner, an adult reader and a multimodal text book or picture book (Torr, 2020:816). Shared reading is beneficial to learners as it allows the learner to relate to qualities and surroundings of adult-child-focused books whilst involving discussions that include the interests of the learners, literacy capabilities and their current language of learning (Cunningham & Zibulsky, 2011; Torr, 2020:816).

Hoynes and Egan (2019:4) stated that during the shared reading, the learners follow the teacher and learn from their behaviours how to read, such as turning pages and

how to change the tone and pitch of your voice. The learners follow along and by learning from the teacher's behaviours, they get a greater understanding of communication as well as language gestures and vocalisations, which is a “critical stage of interaction” when the teacher or adults speak and read (Hoyne & Egan, 2019:4). During shared reading social interaction is also supported between the teacher and the child and attention to language is thus promoted (Golinkoff, Can, Soderstrom & Hirsh-Pasek, 2015). Shared reading already starts at home with the parents from infant stages and carries on in school and formal reading as all these interactions contribute to the reading development of the learners (O’Farrelly, Doyle, Victory & Palamaro-Munsell, 2018; Hoyne & Egan, 2019:4).

2.4 CLASSROOM CHALLENGES WITH LITERACY INSTRUCTION

The improvement of literacy is one of the leading priorities in the majority of countries in the world (Quinn, 2011:5). However, in achieving this, teachers face many challenges to improve and teach literacy efficiently. These challenges may prevent them from achieving their desired outcomes. Regardless of the diversity amongst learners in terms of their cognitive levels, mental practices, and emotional development stages, there are still numerous other challenges that teachers experience (Mumpuniarti, 2017:243). According to Blease and Condy (2014:44), the main challenges recognised in FP classrooms are the language of learning and teaching, curriculum overload, the lack of parental literacy, reading and writing problems, the lack of resources, lack of leadership from School Management Team (SMT), the lack of support from the department of education, and insufficient teaching and assessment practices. These challenges teachers experience in everyday teaching and assessments are as follows.

2.4.1 Challenges Related to the Language Teaching and Learning

One of the thorniest issues in South African education is schools that have to deal with dual-medium literacy challenges. According to Plüddemann, Braam, October and Wababa (2004:11), dual-medium is defined as “the systematic exposure to two languages of instruction”. It is further described by Baker (2007:132) as “...the subject curriculum through one language on one day and through a different language the

next day, in strict alternation”. Mbatha (2010:49, 65-66) asserts that the approach of a dual medium in terms of literacy is favoured when it allows English literacy to be taught early on to learners. In English medium schools, teachers explain work first in the learners’ mother tongue and then in English. However, this takes away from the education time of teaching English and limits their time; thereby, teachers struggle to keep up with the CAPS requirements (Deacon, 2016:15). Principals and teachers face various challenges on a daily basis and language barriers is one of the most common challenges in classrooms (Cline, Crafter & Prokopiou, 2014; Zarate & Pineda, 2014; Dreyer, 2017; Shayne, 2020). As a FP teacher, experience also confirms that this aspect can contribute to the prevention of successfully teaching learners English if there is no support from the parents and management to overcome this barrier.

2.4.2 Curriculum Overload

The National Council for Curriculum Assessment defines curriculum overload as a load of work that is too much or excessive (2010:7). It is suggested that there is an imbalance between teachers’ capacity to teach and the implementation of the curriculum itself. The overload of the curriculum not only affects the teachers but also the learners subjected to it. Majoni (2017:157) concedes that the biggest challenge in education is the masses of work expected to be done and the size of the curriculum, which is causing the overload. Other challenges that inhibit the effective completion of the curriculum are learners who struggle with learning abilities. They need extra time and attention from teachers (Ndjabili 2004; Majoni, 2017). Additionally, teachers have mountains of administration that take up time—for example, filling in forms for the department, taking fundraising fees from learners, responding to parents in message books (Patty, 2018).

Another issue that raises the workload of teachers is that they also have to work into their schedules. For example, they plan fundraising days, like casual clothes days and water sports days, where learners sell and buy things to raise money for the school (Postiolis, 2012:24). Sports days, such as athletics, netball, and rugby days, are also factors that put pressure on ensuring the curriculum is covered, as those days are lost to sport and not teaching and learning. Consequently, the school calendar experiences a time mismatch, which may lead to teachers feeling negative about the curriculum (Mandukwini, 2016:24). These events all take up time from the normal teaching and

learning days; then, the curriculum has to be cramped in to still cover all the work that is required according to the curriculum. Teachers feel like they have to rush through work to cover all the work and this leaves little or no time to drill work or to recap any work (Mthethwa, 2020). Bruwer, Hartell and Steyn (2014:27) agree with this statement by expressing that “the expectations of the new curriculum are too high and the workload too heavy”. It expects teachers to rush through the work, and learners are not able to keep up. The requirements expected for the curriculum and the classroom reality do not correlate (Connelly, Michael, Conway & West, 2009).

Researchers indicate that it is a daily battle for teachers to complete the curriculum against the hours they have in a day and against the standards expected to be taught (Goetze, 2016). Teachers have to be prepared at all times to make sure they cover the whole curriculum. For Ray (2010), it is important to ensure that learners understand the concepts taught before moving to new topics, as these may become troubled scenarios later on. Due to the lack of time to cover the curriculum, teachers sometimes use the integration of subjects. To establish effective strategies to help teachers covering the curriculum, contextual changes within the curriculum should be considered. This will also help teachers be well prepared to ensure that basic teaching and learning take place (Tadesse & Meaza, 2007; Mandukwini, 2016:24).

2.4.3 Insufficient Teaching and Assessment Practices

As a teacher, it is not only sufficient for teachers to teach the material, but it is also crucial for learners to understand the material or the work that has been taught. This shifts the focus from teachers only giving content through by being teacher-centred to being more learner-centred in their approach. Green, Parker, Deacon and Hall (2011:111) mentions that learners struggle due to formal education having high demands, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient academic support. According to Bruwer et al. (2014:19), this may be why poor school performance amongst learners. Insufficient teaching practices may lead to learners experiencing learning difficulties, which may lead to learners becoming anti-social and getting caught in a cycle of learning problems, which in turn may negatively affect the learners (Hojnoski & Missall, 2006:603). As a result, this negative effect on learners may affect their confidence and self-image, leaving them feeling inferior, helpless, and failures (Janus & Duku 2007; Magnuson & Shager 2010; Bruwer et al., 2014:20). It is suggested by Chen, Masur

and McNamee (2011:1149) that learners master learning approaches while actively engaging in classroom activities in a formal teaching and learning environment. Additionally, Duncan, Dowsett, Claessens, Magnuson, Huston, Klebanov and Japel (2007:5) similarly explain that better academic achievement can be obtained by focusing for longer periods while engaging in learning activities. In other words, taking part in the learning process helps the development of learning approaches via a growth process (Bruwer et al., 2014:21-22). As previously discussed, the curriculum is overloaded, which contributes to insufficient teaching practices. Teachers are of the opinion that they lack enough time to lay a proper foundation in the curriculum and are thus expected to teach new concepts without ensuring that previous concepts have been mastered properly (Bruwer et al., 2014:28). Learners are then assessed on their knowledge of work, yet they have not mastered the concepts taught. For FP learners, this may have devastating consequences, especially in the vital subject of literacy.

Sethusha (2012:33) highlights that assessments guide and inform teachers in their teaching instruction. A variety of assessment tools are used, which helps teachers determine which instructional strategies should be modified and which ones are effective. Assessment can thus help improve practices in the classroom and plan more effectively according to the curriculum. Moreover, assessment helps teachers provide information about the learners' performance to administrators and parents (Brown & Hirschfield, 2008:13). The information received from assessments helps learners be self-reflective and, in return, helps to empower them. Their progress is evaluated and monitored to "develop the capacity to be self-directed learners" (Sethusha, 2012:34). Judgements about learners' progress and support to develop them are determined by overall assessment. Developing conception is compared by the feedback of learners' performance to achieve the desired performance as well as how to achieve it. The ultimate goal of schooling is to regulate the amount and the nature of study through the use of assessment information (Angelo & Cross, 2002). However, if the assessment is not done accurately or sufficiently, the whole purpose of the assessment is demolished.

Certain issues also come to light in regards to assessment, which contribute to insufficient assessment practices. One of which is that classroom assessment tools should have a purpose to impact learners and influence instruction positively. Secondly, the validity and fairness in which the teacher does assessments to determine what the learners know and what they are truly capable of doing. According

to Sethusha (2012:37), “assessment methods also require reliability, namely whether the data collected is reliable across applications within the classroom, school, and district”. The results from 2017-2019 for Grades 1-3 for English Home Language for schools in the Motheo district shows that only an average of between 13-14 per cent of learners failed. However, this contradicts my experience as a Grade 1 teacher. We struggle with so many learners who are in medium English schools, but their home language is Sesotho or other African languages. These barriers make it hard for them to grasp concepts easily, and for some learners, it is a very big adaption due to parents not being able to support them at home since they themselves do not speak English (Saneka & de Wit, 2019:1). The results found on EMIS for FP, however, do not break up the focus areas. It may be of more value if it is visible to see what learners achieved in specific reading or writing areas to address the specific problem areas.

Furthermore, it seems that these results look very good on paper, yet numerous teachers complain about the learners' poor reading and writing skills (Soderstrom & Bjork, 2015:176). This raises the question of how valid or reliable these results are, and if learners were to be tested again, they would get the same results. According to Akib, Najib and Ghafar (2015:1), “reliability refers to the consistency of test results”. Moreover, this situation highlights issues such as the coaching of learners before literacy tests and other dubious educational teaching practices (The Graide Network, 2019:10).

Lastly, it is vital to be consistent with assessment methods in the classroom, as efficiency plays a vital role in assessments to develop support programmes. Killen (2003:33) states that learners' desired outcomes should come to light no matter what assessment strategy is used.

2.4.4 Parental Illiteracy and Lack of Support

The support and help from parents are pivotal when it comes to the enhancement of literacy. It is thus problematic if the parents themselves are illiterate and do not receive local support in developing their level of literacy (Lemmer, 2007:220; Blease & Condy, 2014:15). Parents are therefore incapable of supporting the learners at home with homework and other literacy activities. In his study about parents' involvement in literacy, Plaatjies (2021:397) points out that “parents are confronted with their own low

literacy levels and low academic qualifications”. Parents also lack the necessary skills to revise the work to develop their skills in literacy to a higher level of competency. This factor has a negative effect on the ability of how learners learn to write as well (Woolfolk, Hughes & Walkup, 2008:411). Due to parents not being able to help the learners at home, the learners get discouraged from developing their skills in either reading or writing at home. This may, in return, cause a lack of interest to read and write under the learners due to unfamiliarity of the written language and their lack of the ability to understand how writing works (Blease & Condy, 2014:15).

The example that parents set with reading and writing and being a role model are crucial in the progress of learners’ literacy. Children, or people in general, learn through observing others (Morin, 2020). Parents who read themselves visit libraries, discuss interesting books, and more, set a strong example to their children (Wood, Fitton en Rodriguez 2018:2; Zwass 2018:5). Another vital prerequisite for literacy amongst learners to flourish is the literacy environment in the home. For instance, Garcia and Thornton (2014:1) maintain that student performance improves when learning in family involvement. Furthermore, parents’ confidence in their children’s education is restored and absenteeism is reduced. Ntekane (2018:1) also notes that learners with parents or caregivers who are actively involved in their education tend to show improved behaviour, greater social skills, and their grades and test scores seem to be higher. Zenda (2020:10) supports this statement and claims that support from parents or fosters improves learner engagement, their interests, and enjoyment in learning as well as their performance.

However, challenges that may hamper parents from being involved effectively are long working hours, which may limit the time parents spend with their children. This will also prevent them from providing sufficient support with their school work (Ntekane, 2018:3). A child’s motivation, well-being, and achievements at school are stimulated by a nurturing and healthy environment. Therefore, it is vital for parents to create this safe environment for learners at home (Makunga, Schenck, Roman & Spolander, 2017:1). Du Plessis and Mestry (2019:2) argue that this might be challenging for a large part of the parents living in South Africa, especially parents who live in rural communities. These parents face poverty, social isolation as well as limited education and skills. The ability of these parents to care for their children and help influence their education are directly and indirectly affected by these factors (Makunga et al., 2017:1). For this reason, it is essential for teachers to work together with the parents to benefit

the educational development of the learners effectively. In this manner, any gaps that exist between what the school expects of learners, what they should achieve, and what parents or the community expect of the learners are closed (Lemmer, Meier & Van Wyk 2006; Loughran 2008; Makunga et al., 2017:2). Additionally, it is pivotal to empower parents to assist in helping learners at home by developing projects that are self-sustaining and building capacity to assist in coping with possible challenges (Makunga et al., 2017:14; Zenda, 2020:11). In terms of enhancing collaboration between the school and the home in literacy, Plaatjies (2021:416) propose that principals should have termly meetings with parents, provide them with a basic framework of what is expected, and develop learning support programmes to support parents in helping to improve learner achievement.

2.4.5 Poor Reading Skills

The relationship between reading and writing is of utmost importance, and they go together hand in hand (Mokeddem & Houcine, 2016:197). Blease and Condy (2014:47) highlight that the poor writing skills of learners are due to their lack of reading skills. Learners have different barriers, such as struggling with a lack of vocabulary knowledge, comprehension skills and word-reading skills (Spear-Swerling, 2015:118). Low socioeconomic status may also be a reason for learners to read inefficiently due to their background (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2008; Kieffer, 2010; Lesaux & Kieffer, 2010). Word recognition is a problem and this may be due to not knowing the basic phonics taught, better known as phonemic awareness. Learners struggle with reading fluently and the above-mentioned barriers may be the reason for lack of fluency. Learners tend to memorise stories and cannot actually read the word they see. The teaching of systematic phonics is thus vital to help improve reading skills (Spear-Swerling, 2015:119). Phonemic awareness, word decoding, fluency in reading, vocabulary, and comprehension are all imperative aspects needed to read efficiently (DBE, 2018).

2.4.6 Poor Writing Skills

A skill that can easily be taken for granted is the skill of writing. Becoming an independent writer is a process for both learners and teachers (Blease & Condy,

2014:39). The most common communication method is writing; it is, however, quite complex and difficult if not developed correctly. Writing logically and clearly are prevented by various obstacles. Dednam (2008:130) mentions that due to difficulties in letter-sound relations, learners struggle with spelling errors, write phonetically, and ignore spelling rules. Furthermore, unnecessary curls and lines and the incorrect forming of letters intensify the writing problems and make it hard for the person who reads it to understand what they are trying to say.

Various factors contribute to problems in writing (Blease & Condy, 2014:40). The origin of one of these factors is emotional in nature. Learners may experience anxiety, lack of motivation, insecurity, and lack the desire to attempt the process of writing (Dednam, 2008:130). Factors of physical nature demonstrate that learners may be uncertain of their dominant writing hand, they may experience poor motor skills and perception, poor health or nutrition, experience sharp sightedness, or even deprivation. Furthermore, factors of social nature show that passive distancing aggression and hostility may contribute to writing problems (Dednam, 2008:130; Blease & Condy, 2014:40). Problems occurring from perceptual problems, neurological dysfunctions, or even intellectual impairment are known as factors of cognitive nature (Plaatjies, 2016:7). Factors in regards to language refer to the backlog in a certain language that may contribute to writing problems. Additionally, communication problems, such as speech and pronunciations problems of articulation, are problematic. The absence of verbal language, qualitative language that is different from the language norm, language development that was interrupted, or even variations in the language system may contribute to problems in writing (Dednam, 2008:130; Blease & Condy, 2014:40). Plaatjies (2016:6) highlighted additional factors, who adds that the environmental factors, including a lack of adequate parental support, have a negative impact on the development and acquisition of writing skills. Poverty and insufficient educational support already have an impact early on the literacy development of environmentally handicapped learners. One final factor that I believe may contribute to poor writing skills may be that principals as literacy leaders have “a poor understanding of the CAPS literacy curriculum”, according to Plaatjies (2019:155), and this may contribute to the problems experienced in writing, as they cannot guide teachers to adapt or change teaching instructions to improve writing skills amongst learners.

2.4.7 Lack of Resources

The lack of basic resources, such as books and stationery in schools, is a great challenge to teachers (Mudzielwana, 2014:23). If learners do not have the necessary resources, they are being robbed of the opportunity to receive proper teaching and learning (Fernandez, 2014; Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015). Due to a lack of stationery, learners would also not be able to write and learn how to form letters, words, and sentences correctly. This ultimately leads to little teaching taking place due to learners and teachers having to make plans to get the necessary resources (Woolfolk, Hughes & Walkup, 2008, du Plessis & Mestry, 2019:5). In agreement with this, Smith, Preston and Hay (2020:4) add that the lack of resources impacts the learners' mesosystem and that their experiences in effective teaching and learning are negatively affected.

In addition to the language barrier of learners not receiving education in their home language, the lack of translators to help teachers explain the new knowledge in the learners' home language may be problematic. Under these circumstances, teachers will resort to using hands and facial expressions to carry over the information to the learners (Blease & Condy, 2014:50). Teachers cannot deliver excellence in the curriculum without necessary curriculum resources (Mohangi, Krog, Stephens & Nel, 2016:73). It is emphasised by White and Kline (2012:36) that training, even for competent teachers, is essential to not only raise awareness but also bring better understanding to deliver quality education. Additionally, Blease and Condy (2014:40) mention that teachers are obstructed by the lack of resources and cannot fulfil the high expectations the writing curriculum expects. Learners can therefore not be taught the skills to read and write without the necessary resources. According to Lewis-Spector and Jay (2011:15), it is thus vital for principals to arrange and monitor classroom resources in the literacy environment to enhance student learning effectively. Furthermore, it is pivotal for principals to have the necessary expertise to assist teachers in selecting and implementing various literacy materials of high quality (Bean & Dagen, 2012:156; Plaatjies, 2019:146).

2.4.8 Lack of Support from Management

Much of the above-mentioned challenges can be referred back to management. Prior studies show that Principals do not support teachers effectively when it comes to

literacy instruction and the curriculum (Plaatjies, 2019; Plaatjies, 2020). The reason for this seems to be due to insufficient knowledge of literacy, specifically in the FP, inadequate time, low commitment levels of principals, and ultimately, spending most of their time on running the building and not on instruction (Kgatla, 2013; Taylor & Hoadley; Sebastian, Camburn & Spillane, 2018). These deficits are quite alarming.

The question is, why are there so many challenges? Why do teachers struggle in educating the learners? The lack of training under staff may be a challenge due to the lack of support from management. This lack of support from management may ultimately cause low levels in learner achievement, showing poor management and leadership skills (van der Voort & Wood, 2016:1). Management is responsible for ensuring that all the necessary resources are there and that any problems or struggles are dealt with, or possible solutions are established. Proper monitoring and control should be done, and this includes class visits to ensure that all needs are met and that teaching and learning are up to standard. This raises another question. Are class visits done frequently, and is monitoring and control done sufficiently? According to van der Voort & Wood (2016:1), the visitations of schools and the interaction with managers of schools are also not done regularly by circuit managers to monitor and evaluate the management of schools. Zimmerman (2017:39) says that low-income learners are served in high performing schools and these learners need competent, committed and strong leaders whilst feeling safe. The future of the learners is thus at stake, and their achievement levels would be affected if the dysfunctional school does not become functional (Duke, Carr & Sterret, 2013). Accountability from management is vital in regards to basic literacy (van der Voort & Wood, 2016:2).

2.5 CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER

Part one of the literature review chapter focused on an overview and features of the CAPS-literacy curriculum. Furthermore, challenges with literacy instruction inside and outside the classroom were also explained. These challenges include curriculum overload, insufficient teaching and assessment practices, parental illiteracy and support, poor reading and writing skills, and lack of resources and support from management. Principals can show greater interest in gaining knowledge about literacy instruction and curriculum in the FP and commit to being involved and supportive. The literature review indicated that schools in areas where poverty is existent are more

affected. In terms of the issue of mother-tongue instruction, it seems that this issue poses a significant threat to literacy performance. This appears to be one of the greatest challenges that the principal as curriculum leader faces.

Chapter three will be an additional chapter of literature review and will focus on the theoretical framework of the study and the strategies that principals should implement to improve literacy instruction.

CHAPTER 3 :

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW (PART TWO)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 dealt with the first part of the literature review. This included a discussion, the features of the CAPS-literacy curriculum related to literacy content, assessment and strategies related to teaching literacy as prescribed in the curriculum. Furthermore, Chapter 2 touched on classroom challenges that hamper progress with literacy instruction. This is where the role of the principal comes in improving literacy, which will be discussed in chapter 3. Chapter 3 is a continuation of the literature relevant on this topic. In line with the aims of the study, which is to explore the role of principals as literacy leaders in the FP (*cf.*1.8.), this chapter will focus on the challenges that principals experience as well as the strategies that should be implemented to improve literacy in the FP. As a starting point, though, the first section of the chapter outlines the study's theoretical framework.

3.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY: INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORY

A theoretical framework is defined as the “blueprint” for a research study (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:13). According to Adom, Hussein and Joe (2018:439), the hypothesis of a study is reflected through the theoretical framework, which is based on already existing theories. The research is constructed from it, and it thus serves as a foundation for the study. The researcher is guided by the framework and prevents deviation from the accepted theories. Adom et al. (2018:439) further state that a theoretical framework consists of theoretical principles, tenants, constructs, and concepts of a theory. The goal is to connect all the research aspects with the framework. An appropriate theory is selected based on the phenomenon that will be investigated. Based on the aforementioned, this study is embedded in the instructional leadership theory, which explains the principals’ roles in improving literacy in the foundation phase.

3.2.1 Rational for selecting Instructional leadership as a theory

Teaching and learning (instruction) form the core business of the school. Instructional leadership deals with the role of leaders to provide support to teachers in improving teaching and learning. In this section, therefore, the literature on the role of the principal as instructional leader in improving learning success is revised. The discussion will centre on how this role should be applied in improving literacy because Instructional leadership is not confined to a specific subject. Jita and Mokhele (2014:124) confirm this notion by pointing out that Instructional leadership “attempts to influence each subject”. However, few studies have been conducted on the application of Instructional leadership theory in literacy improvement. Hence, besides attempting to address the overall aims as described under 1.6.4, this study also aims to contribute to how this theory should be applied in improving literacy, specifically in the foundation phase. The theory is therefore aligned with the aims of the study to achieve the intended outcomes.

A Wealth of research is available about the theory of Instructional leadership. In the following paragraphs, an exposition of the theory and its relevance to the study.

3.2.2 Conceptualising Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership approaches started during the 1970s, with theorists such as Weber (1971), Brookover and Lozette (1977), and Edmonds and Fredericksen (1978), who started to study instructional challenges from a leadership perspective in schools (Hallinger & Wang, 2015:4). Van Deventer (2016:342) conceptualises instructional leadership as “a broad term used to describe the leadership and management of aspects of a school that directly influence learner achievement. It covers all the managerial and leadership tasks that are all involved in teaching and learning delivery every day.”

3.2.3 The Instructional Leadership Roles of Principals

The principal of a school has various roles and responsibilities in managing and leading the school. They are accountable to all the teachers employed at the school, the SGB as well as the community (PAM, 2016:35). Principals are expected to act as

curriculum or instructional leaders (Moonsamm-Koopasammy, 2012:4; Maponya, 2015:2; DBE, 2015:10). According to Gumus and Akcaoglu (2013:290), principals are instructional leaders whose primary aim is to improve the learning environment and the teaching practices in their schools. The principals of effective schools focus more on curriculum and instruction and less on managerial tasks, making instructional leadership the dominant paradigm for school leaders (Gumus & Akcaoglu, 2013:290). Botha (2016:195) claims that instructional leadership should focus on the principal's primary role in the quest for excellence in education. For Osborne-Lampkin, Folsom and Herrington (2015:2), the focus should be on a learning climate free of disruption, a system of clear teaching objectives and high teacher expectations for students. Other important elements include principal leadership, a clear mission and opportunities to learn. Instructional leadership theorists such as Hallinger and Murphy (in Botha, 2016:195) point out that there are three dimensions associated with instructional leadership: defining the school mission, managing the instructional programme, and promoting the school climate. As said previously, these general roles should be applied to the different subjects in the school curricula. In the case of this study, to literacy.

Researchers confirm furthermore that an instructional leader requires the aim of achieving high levels of achievement through the principal's behaviour (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003:3; Maponya, 2015:6). This includes both the managerial and leadership tasks of daily teaching and learning. In addition, instructional leadership emphasises behaviours that directly and indirectly affect teacher instructions significantly in terms of student learning (Yu, 2009:723). Traditionally principals were the sole manager and leader of instructional processes. Nowadays, due to a more inclusive approach to leadership, principals are expected to share their leadership responsibilities with the SMT as well as educators (DBE, 2016). According to Maponya (2015:25), principals should collaborate with educators on curriculum, instruction and assessment. The aim is to enhance teaching and learning in this study in literacy.

This means that they should provide leadership in all the subjects in the curriculum, including the literacy curriculum. The policy documents that guide principals in teaching and learning are also the PAM document and the Standard for the principalship. These policy documents place a legal responsibility and accountability on the principal's shoulders to execute their instructional leadership duties. The PAM document claims that principals are responsible for educational programmes and

activities that ensure the curriculum is implemented (DBE, 2015). This means all the subjects, including the literacy curriculum for the foundation phase. The core purpose and role of the principal is to ensure effective teaching and learning in the school and to ensure that staff is empowered and that self-development takes place (DBE, 2015:3). The “Standard for Principalship” maintains that the following aspects are all important requirements for principals to perform their roles as leaders of the instructional programme (DBE, 2015:11):

- Ensuring the school is a community of professional learning as the learners are being led.
- Continuous improvement in the curriculum is implemented by this leadership.
- Making use of ICT to lead the school into the future.
- Success is fostered amongst all learners.
- A culture of learning and achievement is promoted amongst all learners through the implementation and communication of a vision and mission that is clear, and all stakeholders take part in it.
- An instructional framework is developed and implemented that is research-based, data-driven, and in line with the national curriculum.
- A clear vision and mission are set for staff to share the responsibility of achieving it by being empowered to become instructional leaders themselves.
- Good instructional practices are recognised to increase and motivate learners' achievement and encourage teachers to successfully implement these practices.

According to the PAM document (DBE, 2016:33), instructional core duties of the principal include “to guide, supervise and offer professional advice and to be responsible for the development of staff training programmes, and to assist teachers in developing and achieving educational objectives in accordance with the needs of the school”.

3.2.4 Application of Instructional leadership theory in this study

This study is situated within an Instructional leadership approach, which is key in exploring principals' roles in improving literacy in the foundation phase. Guided by the relevant instructional leadership theories and policy frameworks as discussed in the

previous paragraphs, the literature discussions focus on specific aspects that the researcher deemed important for the principal to improve literacy in the foundation phase. The themes identified in the literature review are also aligned with the aim and objectives of the study. The topics include a discussion on the implementation of professional development activities to improve literacy instruction (see DBE, 2016), the establishment of well-resourced and print-rich classrooms (as part of their aim to establish good practices for literacy learning), developing a clear vision and mission for effective literacy instruction as proposed in the Standard (DBE, 2016). Other approaches include establishing a community of practice, support strategies and ensuring optimal and effective use of available time for literacy instruction. Furthermore, as pointed out by the DBE (2016) as well as Osborne-Lampkin, Folsom and Herrington (2015), the focus is also on managing instructional resources and guiding literacy school culture and climate.

In the next paragraphs, the discussion focus on the principals' roles in terms of his/her knowledge of the curriculum, supervision of instruction and other supporting strategies.

3.3 THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER IS TO IMPROVE LITERACY IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

3.3.1 Knowledge of the Literacy Curriculum

Kobola (2007:29) asserts that it is vital for the principal to always have the necessary policies, guidelines, and circulars close by and that he/she should internalise the important information of the curriculum. The principal should possess knowledge of the curriculum to ensure that instinctive ways of thinking and behaving are established. Additionally, he/she should always be aware of the content and possible changes to ensure personal improvement is reinforced to maintain consistent improvement of learner's achievement (Graetz, Rimmer, Lawrence & Smith, 2006:340). New innovative approaches and strategies are vital to enhancing the education system. This is crucial when it comes to management, administrative and governance strategies, and teaching and learning methods to help improve the task and activity implementation (Kapur, 2019:2).

In terms of literacy, Plaatjies (2019:142) highlights that principals should have the necessary knowledge of the literacy curriculum, assessment, and instructional methods to promote continuous improvement in the curriculum. It will be very challenging for principals to support and mentor teachers or contribute to improvement if they do not know the curriculum well (Day & Sammons, 2013:12). When it comes to literacy instruction, principals will be enabled “to assist teachers in the practical side of the process”. Therefore, sufficient knowledge of the curriculum is vital (Plaatjies, 2019:142). Day and Sammons (2013:7) opines further that, for learner achievement standards to be raised in classrooms, principals have to be involved and their “clarity of thought, sense of purpose and knowledge of what is going on” can help staff to give their best performance.

3.3.2 Supervision of Instruction

To develop and create productive climates in the classroom, effective principals use various techniques to help motivate students’ learning. Supervision and classroom observations are some of the techniques used by principals to ensure effective teaching and learning. According to Plaatjies (2019:143), one of the most important components of a principals’ responsibilities as an instructional leader is their ability “to perform rigorous supervision”. As an instructional leader, the principal is responsible for maintaining the instructional programmes and is also responsible for improving the quality of teaching and learning to ensure “effective and efficient attainment of the set educational objectives of the school” (Egwu, 2015:99). Lear (2017:63) emphasizes that, through regular supervision, academic achievements will improve and accountability towards instructional achievement will be the main focus.

Supervision of instruction refers to the evaluating and control of a school’s performance (Tesfaw & Hofman, 2012:1). Instructional supervision is carried out either by the principal or is distributed to other leaders by the principal. It is aimed at support, continuous assessment of teaching and learning, and providing guidance for the professional development (PD) of teachers in the process of teaching and learning (Tesfaw & Hoffman, 2012:1; Rahabav, 2016:48, Donkoh & Baffoe, 2018:44). Supervision of instruction is mainly focused on improving schools by assisting teachers to develop professionally through reflecting on their teaching practices. According to numerous researchers, instructional supervision and PD have a clear

connection (Tesfaw & Hoffman 2012:1; Donkoh & Baffoe, 2018:44). Rahabav (2016:49) mentions further that supervision of instruction is important because it helps determine a school's condition, the state of teachers and learners, teaching methods, learning objectives, and it helps identify possible problems that may arise in schools through observations. Furthermore, it helps to promote student learning by influencing teachers' behaviour and teaching to create effective teaching and learning climate and determine the effectiveness of the teachers' classroom management (Ekundayo & Oyerinde, 2013:187). According to Osbourne-Lampkin, Folsom and Herrington (2015:9), monitoring teachers and giving feedback, monitoring learning progress according to the set-out vision, and progress monitoring is all part of supervision instructions. To help improve and motivate teachers in their practice, supervision of instruction should be done on the evaluation methods teachers use, learning programmes, how learners are grouped inside classrooms, reporting of the progress of learners, curriculum content, and methods of teaching, to only name a few (Ekundayo & Oyerinde, 2013:188). This will benefit both teachers and the learners to help improve learner achievement. Instruction is evaluated, and feedback is given to teachers to help monitor progress through the supervision of instruction (Osbourne-Lampkin, Folsom & Herrington, 2015:9).

Supervision of instruction consists of various strategies that need to be implemented by principals to improve performance in literacy. These approaches will be discussed next.

3.3.2.1 Classroom observation

In terms of literacy, principals may lack the ability to cover all content areas proficiently. However, they are still expected to be familiarised with strategies to improve literacy as instructional leaders. Focusing on literacy specifically, principals should perform classroom observations regularly to ensure and observe whether strategies to improve literacy are implemented. Plaatjies (2019:143) points out that, according to Bean & Dagen (2012:152), a logical approach in improving teaching and learning of literacy is to have constant visits to classrooms. This allows the principal to know what is happening in the classroom. A principal who does regular classroom observations and spends short amounts of time in all the classrooms can prevent teachers from laying low and ensure that teaching and learning occur. There are many other advantages

of classroom observations. O’Leary (2012:739) adds that teacher effectiveness and different approaches used in classrooms are identified during classroom observations. This leads to more meaningful reflections (O’Leary, 2014:11). Parra and Hernandez (2019:4) note that learner achievement is dependent on the “relationship between teachers’ effectiveness and students’ performance”. Hence, it is vital to do observations to ensure teachers are implementing new or successful teaching methods for effective teaching and learning to take place.

Herrera (2010:30) recommends that principals as “instructional leaders should develop structures and routines to influence classrooms on a regular and timely basis”. Plaatjies (2019:143) supports this idea by proposing that “strong management skills of the process appear to be crucial”. This will assist in the monitoring and control of teachers’ evaluation in teaching and learning to ensure improvement in education practices and their work strategies. Therefore, principals can do daily observations in every classroom. Plaatjies (2019:144) agrees with Herrera (2010:30) and suggests that these daily visits should become a routine for principals as instructional leaders. To be specific during this process, Plaatjies (2019:144) adds that principals should make use of an observation checklist when conducting observations.

Further, Lewis-Spector and Jay (2011:5) confirm that “an observation guide can indicate to both teachers and principals which areas are taught, how they are taught, and how students are encouraged to respond to and apply literacy skills”. Learner strengths and weaknesses can be explored through these observations, and learning instruction can be improved (Lewis-Spector & Jay, 2011:6). Student learning is ultimately the principals’ responsibility and has to be accountable by ensuring that academic standards are met and that teachers skillfully integrate strategies to improve literacy (Ball & Pollock, 2016:4). However, teachers should not feel that the principal or management are checking upon them, but rather perceive observations to identify underlying problems that may affect learner’s performance and discover new ways of improving learning patterns (Parra & Hernandez, 2019:6).

3.3.2.2 *Monitoring of literacy teaching and learning practices*

Monitoring as a concept is intertwined with concepts such as assessment and evaluation (Kabonga, 2019:2). According to Mngomezulu (2015:13), monitoring and

evaluation are used to inform each other but are two different concepts. Monitoring is defined by Kariuki (2014:140) as a continuous assessment done on activities completed in class and the context of implementation. Kabonga (2019:2) states that monitoring is crucial to determine if planned activities are implemented and to ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place, and if not, then problem areas can then be addressed. Du Plessis (2013) also confirms that managers can discover obstacles and learner needs via monitoring the curriculum; this includes learners and teachers. By having continuous monitoring, principals show support to teachers and their initiatives to improve learner achievement. Learning is enhanced by the support of quality instruction and thus promotes better learner performances (Henard & Roseveare, 2012). Mngomezulu (2015:17) reports that management must therefore monitor teachers and their learning initiatives closely in classrooms.

Information for evaluation is gathered through monitoring. To develop strategies to improve progress, evaluation needs to take place (Mngomezulu, 2015:13). Monitoring usually takes place through assessment and is thus seen as a monitoring strategy. Monitoring is a process that is ongoing to ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place as expected (Bush & Glover, 2012). Monitoring includes the observation of teachers by visiting classrooms and giving them feedback on their performance. These monitoring functions are often divided amongst principals, deputies, and DHs (Mngomezulu, 2015:14). For example, Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and van Rooyen (2010:162-168) show that teacher profiles would be checked by the Department Heads and the learner books to compare and make sure what the educator claims are validated. The Department Heads portfolio and workbooks would then be checked by the principal and again also the learners' books to compare and validate claims. This type of evidence shows great involvement of SMTs in classroom activities and shows continuous monitoring (Mngomezulu, 2015:14).

3.3.2.3 Evaluation of literacy teaching and learning practices

Evaluation can be defined as “the assessment of the effectiveness of a programme in meeting its objectives, or the assessment of the relative effectiveness of two or more programmes in meeting common objectives” (Kabonga, 2019:3). The main purpose of the evaluation is to find answers in the effectiveness, sustainability, efficiency, impact, and relevance of intervention developments. Lear (2017:63) proposed that “teacher

evaluation – focusing on instructional improvement and accountability – holds promise for engendering improvements in academic achievement”. In the process of improving literacy and classroom structure, the principal should make evaluations part of the managements’ focus. Hence, to ensure literacy is improving, it is crucial to evaluate whether the skills and knowledge taught to learners address all literacy needs according to the CAPS curriculum. Valid and important questions should be asked during evaluation, such as “Are educators teaching the correct teaching programs? Are they using the necessary resources? Are the goals of learner achievement clear? Are the assessments and programs up to standard?”. Asking these questions is a good strategy proposed to principals to evaluate teaching and learning in teachers’ classrooms (Bean & Dagen, 2012:152). Plaatjies (2019:144) points out that Massey (2017:53) suggests that principals as leaders of the school will also be able to use the data gained via evaluations to address areas where there are weaknesses, based on the formal assessments, to ultimately improve literacy and address the needs arising.

3.3.2.4 Demonstration lessons

Demonstration lessons can be defined as lessons planned to present in front of observers to assess teachers' skills and teaching abilities (Knisely, 2020). Employers or observers would judge teachers’ qualities in terms of effective teaching to define their expectations. High demand for accountability is faced by the teachers, as they are evaluated according to specific standards. Due to restricted education time, teachers have to be well-prepared, purposeful in their instruction, and well-organized to cover all the content for the day effectively. The reasons why demonstration lessons are done are to engage all learners via interactive teaching strategies, provide interaction for both the learners and the teachers, and ensure feedback that is positive, genuine, and specific (Knisely, 2020). Demonstration lessons can be done either to evaluate teachers as mentioned in the latter or it can be done for teachers to observe and learn from more experienced teachers to improve teaching and learning in regards to literacy. It all depends on what the principal wants to achieve as a literacy leader.

When teachers observe sound literacy lessons, they get the opportunity to learn new methods that they can then apply to their own practice (Patzner, 2020). Demonstration lessons can help teachers get more familiar with new content methods and strategies and get experience that can suffice for developing and discussing practice (Spalding,

2020). Moreover, it can encourage creative problem solving and foster self-reflection in teachers (Moran, 2007). Teachers may find these observations as positive outcomes to improve their own practice. Also, teachers can get feedback and constructive criticism to improve their practice, ultimately improve learner achievement in terms of literacy, and be pointed in the desired direction (Parsons, Dodman, Nuland, Pierczynski & Ramirez, 2019:9).

These demonstration lessons can be done in various ways, such as individual sessions, small groups, or whole class sessions using instruction techniques (Parsons et al., 2019:11). According to Parsons et al. (2019:12), a growing understanding of the roles of teachers is administered through these demonstration lessons.

However, challenges abound when it comes to the observation of lessons. Some teachers may feel offended, and conflict may occur when teachers feel as though they are not good enough. This may appear amongst teachers who are not easily adaptable and set on continuing in their current manner of teaching and learning (Patzner, 2020). On the other hand, a positive outcome can give teachers the opportunity to learn new methods, or in the case where they were observed themselves, they may be made aware of problem areas in their teaching and learning.

3.3.2.5 Internal moderation of literacy assessment and workbooks

Internal moderation can be defined as a framework of quality assurance to make sure all assessment decisions are accurate, and that assessment criteria are consistent (Punt, 2010:9). Chrisp (2018:14) adds that teachers or students are assessed for “high-stake purposes” and that, through professional discussions, the judgements that are made can be standardised. In addition, internal moderation requires a person who was not involved directly in the teaching and assessment tool to internally assess and review the assessment process (WCED, 2019:4).

Internal moderation usually involves one person, mostly the Department Head, and that person is responsible for evaluating teachers’ marking of assessments, adjusting marks if it is needed, and then arranging meetings to discuss what is expected from the teachers when they mark. It is the role of the principal to oversee the internal moderations done by the responsible people the principal delegated to the task. Usually, the process is conducted by the Department Head of the phase, but most

importantly, it is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that internal moderation and a policy for it forms part of the school's assessment policy (WCED, 2019:8; DBE, 2015:32).

The goal of internal moderation is to ensure that standards for all teachers and learners are the same, is implemented across all classrooms, and that everyone is evaluated the same way according to criteria that have been specified beforehand (Chrisp, 2018:14). It is vital that the moderation process is credible, and the quality of moderation practices should be ensured through specific application principles. These principles are reliability, fairness, and validity (WCED, 2019:7; Punt, 2018:10-11). Internal moderation would be done to assess whether the activities used in the assessment allowed the learners to show their understanding of the concepts on the grade-specific levels. Additionally, moderation would determine the achievement outcome that is desired for each assessment. According to the DBE (2018:6), the department head should support and mentor the teachers to ensure effective assessment programmes are developed to help learners who need support and guidance and should be aligned to cater to various levels of ability.

Internal moderation is imperative in schools to ensure the level of teaching and learning is up to standard. It helps to make sure that the work schedules and possible new strategies to help improve literacy skills are implemented and adhered to by all teachers as well as the facilitators (Janse van Rensburg, 2016). Internal moderation further helps prevent the allocation of results in a faulty manner or make accidental mistakes when capturing marks. It ensures assessments processes to be fair and accurate. Additionally, internal moderation ensures learner assessments to be consistent, well-designed, and accurate (Squire, 2013). Focus areas that should be observed during internal moderation could be displayed on a checklist provided by senior management. The aim is to evaluate and identify areas where support and development are needed. Issues such as learner behaviour, classroom management, the interactions between teachers and learners, and the designing of learning activities would be evaluated with internal moderation (Janse van Rensburg, 2016). Internal moderation improves the quality of assessment as well as the quality of teaching and learning. The feedback received from internal moderation assures learner achievement to be improved in terms of literacy in schools by improving teaching strategies and keeping the quality of education up to standard (Squire, 2013). The

implemented internal moderation system should be effective, and management should facilitate to ensure that the moderation takes place efficiently.

Workbooks are seen as flexible canvases that reflect the work that was done, and by monitoring books, data analysis and visual reports are administered (Winkle & Boucher, 2019). According to PAM (DBE, 2016), monitoring books is done by the leaders that management entrusted with the responsibility. From this directive, it can be deduced that no specific SMT member is entrusted with this responsibility. Class teachers are responsible for the monitoring of their own classrooms' books. Grade Heads are then responsible for monitoring and book control of the teachers together with 10% of their classrooms books to find out if the work is up to standard and whether there are any problem areas or issues that need attention or improvement. The DH will monitor and control the workbooks of the Grade Heads (DBE, 2016) and check the report the Grade Head gave the teachers in their care to ensure that the entire phase is following protocol and staying on track with the curriculum. Furthermore, it is crucial to monitor workbooks to keep track of any possible literacy issues that may come to the surface in the workbooks. Workbooks should be monitored on a routine basis to extrapolate the quality of education that took place over a period of time and try to improve or address any problem areas in teaching and learning (Didau, 2015).

3.3.2.6 *The principals' mentoring role*

Due to the shift to instructional leadership preparation, the sustainability and development of leaders in schools have increased and principals have expanded responsibilities (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2009; Trachtman & Cooper, 2011). Parylo, Zepeda and Bengtson (2012:120) point out that criticism towards preparation programs for leaders (Miller, Devin & Shoop, 2007) led to the more intensive examination of principals' support, socialization, and PD (Duncan, 2011; Rieckhoff and Larsen, 2011; Walker and Kwan, 2009). Mentoring can be seen as "a key part of individuals becoming effective leaders and also as a part of socialization to leadership roles", according to Daresh (2004:497). Further research asserts that there is a difference between informal and formal mentoring approaches. Both approaches are valuable; however, personnel tend to value informal mentoring more and is seen by mentees as more advantageous (Kramer, 2010; Parylo, Zepeda & Bengtson, 2012:121). Mentoring can be described as having a new perspective of things rather

than exchanging knowledge (Samuel, 2014). Furthermore, it is vital to ensure that teachers understand the importance of their mentor's (the principal) vision and that they support him/her in making that vision a reality.

Principals need to be prepared. As a mentor, they need to assess their own commitment strengths and how they will meet the needs of and utilise a diverse staff. Furthermore, they must make sure ground rules, goals, and processes are established (Samuel, 2014). As a mentor, they need to implement the continuous monitoring of staff and the curriculum to give back constructive feedback for staff to reflect upon. As a mentor, principals are responsible for ensuring PD for their staff members to show support in helping them overcome any obstacles or challenges.

3.3.3 Supporting Strategies to Improve Literacy

3.3.3.1 *Implementing professional development activities to improve literacy Instruction*

Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Gardner (2017:2) defines professional development as “structured professional learning that results in changes to teacher knowledge and practices, and improvements in student learning outcomes”. It is further conceptualised as job-embedded and external activities that help to increase the knowledge of teachers to support student learning according to teachers’ instructional practices. Samuel (2014) confirms that PD not only concerns the school but also concerns the community and district, showing that external activities include transmitting information to teachers in terms of values and traditions. Principals need to perform and implement certain practices to implement a “school-wide literacy initiative” to improve the achievement of learners (Hall, 2017). Therefore, PD activities have to be implemented to help improve literacy practices amongst FP teachers. A number of these components are usually featured simultaneously to show that personal development is successful. To ensure that teachers are equipped in their classrooms with support and complex student learning, PD is crucial (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017:23). A well-designed PD programme that is implemented should be seen as an indispensable component of a comprehensive system towards teaching and learning and that ultimately supports learners and teachers to develop competencies, skills, and knowledge to thrive, especially in literacy.

Literacy PD activities may take many forms. Teachers must attend workshops, conferences, and training, whether it is presented formally or informally (South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), 2015:5). Additional requirements of PD are that teachers are expected to deepen their knowledge on literacy as part of their subjects and observe peers regularly to get new ideas to help with literacy instruction in the classroom (Kampen, 2019). This is a great opportunity for collaboration amongst teachers to help improve learner achievement. The focus of PD should be on teaching strategies to support teachers with the content of the curriculum. Intentional focus is thus needed on curriculum development, discipline, and pedagogies in literacy (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017:4).

Personal development, however, does not always ensure professional learning to be successful, despite the intention (Darling-Hammond et al., (2017:1). Fullan (2007) argues that instructional improvement via external approaches is not specific or powerful enough to change a school or classroom culture. This might be one of the negatives of PD because, most of the time, the duration of these development workshops is less than 8 hours (Darling-Hammond et al., (2017:1). These types of workshops are short-term approaches. However, if a PD program is well-designed and implemented effectively, it may lead to the desired learner achievements and teacher practices. Kirsten (2019:369) affirms that language learning would be improved through these PD programmes and content learning.

According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017:4), there are seven characteristics of PD that need to be kept into consideration:

- First, it is vital to ensure the content is focused.
- Ensure that the adult learning theory that is utilised is incorporated by active learning.
- Make sure contexts are job-embedded and that collaboration is supported.
- Effective practice modelling and models are being used.
- Ensuring that expert support and coaching are provided.
- Make sure that enough opportunity for reflection and feedback is offered.
- Ensure that PD is of sustained duration.

The lack of awareness regarding the role of the literacy coach in charge of the PD program may lead to misperceptions of what the role entails. Some of the

administrators may misunderstand the purpose of coaching and allowing PD to take place inside the classroom. This confusion and misunderstanding may cause possible conflict (Kissel, Mraz, Algozzine, & Stover, K, 2011:300). Thus, informed instructional decisions will lead to better opportunities for increased improvement of student achievement (Mraz, Kissel, Algozzine, Babb & Foxworth, 2011:175). Mraz et al. (2011:176) point out that researchers discovered that the most effective PD is a process that is sustained, intensive, and makes use of appropriate content. Furthermore, it is a learning process that is hands-on and integrated into the school's daily routine and creates active opportunities for teachers. Moreover, feedback is provided through supportive observations, and follow-ups are done via study groups, staff discussions, peer coaching, and mentoring (Guskey & Sparks, 1991, 1996; Garet, Porter, Richardson, 2003; Hirsch, 2005; Bellanca, 2009; Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Knight, 2009; Webster-Wright, 2009; Duncan, 2010). Implementing PD programs to support teachers to advance as professionals and offer learners educational opportunities of quality is crucial in early literacy coaching. PD can thus “move from being an isolated activity to being a way of approaching teaching and learning; it becomes an ethos that is infused throughout the daily work of a team of teachers who are responsive to the PD needs of literacy coaches and teachers, who, in turn, can provide effect early literacy learning for children” (Mraz et al., 2011:182).

3.3.3.2 *Establishing well-resourced and print-rich classrooms*

An environment influenced by a well-resourced, print-rich classroom creates a positive environment for literacy and is supported by well-found literature. Bean and Dagen (2012:186) confirm that “learning to read occurs best in classrooms within print-rich environments, and lead to improved achievement”. Plaatjies (2019:145) asserts that it is without a doubt the responsibility of the teacher to ensure a print-rich classroom. However, teachers have to be supported to provide these strong learning environments for all learners (International Literacy Association, 2019:4). According to Bean and Dagen (2012:156), as pointed out by Plaatjies (2019:146), skilled instructional literacy leaders would be effective in fulfilling part of their roles if they assist teachers in not only selecting but also in implementing various literacy materials that are of high quality. As a literacy leader, the principal needs to have knowledge

about teaching and learning support resources, strategies, and approaches that can help develop a culture of learning in the school that will help raise achievement levels (DBE, 2015:13). Koen and Ebrahim (2013:1) add that FP teachers play a vital role in learners' ability to reach their developed potential by supporting them. Learners' cognitive and physical development is crucial during this important age, and the quality of education, which includes print-rich and well-resourced classrooms, plays an imperative role (Ige, 2011). Well-resourced and print-rich classes will help learners to feel safe and contribute to their confidence in learning.

In enriching the classrooms, it should be considered that learners come from diverse cultures and that diversity should be promoted in the classrooms. Koen and Ebrahim (2013:10) highlight this point by claiming that "programme design and environments for learning must take into account learning from real-world experiences and possibilities for engagement with cultural differences". In the FP, specific focus-areas of teachers have to be developed to ultimately "improve the evidence-based of students' learning" (Koen & Ebrahim, 2013:10). Creating a culture of literacy would help to enable teachers to not only identify learners' pre-existing knowledge but also to be explicit and plan for the needs of each learner in the classroom to integrate learning with the goal to promote independent thinking (Vale, Weaven, Davies and Hooley, 2010:574).

3.3.3.3 Developing a clear vision and mission for effective literacy instruction

As instructional leaders, principals need to participate actively in this type of leadership, directly and indirectly, to ensure a high level of academic achievement amongst all learners. The Standard adds that the principal should encourage high expectations and promote strategies to achieve targets; however, to do this, realistic targets should be set (DBE, 2015:14). A school-wide vision should be developed to set the focus on high standards of success not only for teachers but also for learners; this is an essential element. Ensuring ongoing improvement in literacy performance would depend on the principals' responsibility to communicate the desired direction and destination to all teachers and learners; this should also be monitored.

The principal's behaviour consists of various dimensions (Moonsammy-Koopasammy, 2012:23). These dimensions include defining a mission for the school that clearly

frames and communicates the goals of the school. Additionally, they have to coordinate the curriculum by supervising, evaluating, and monitoring to promote a climate of professional teaching and learning. Most importantly, the principal has to establish a vision for the school to follow to reach the goals set out for what they want to achieve in regards to literacy as a school. The vision of the school is of utmost importance, according to Plaatjies (2019:154), as he refers to responsibilities and functions of the principal as an instructional leader based on literature (Lewis-Spector & Jay, 2011; Day & Simmons, 2013; Osbourne-Lampkin, Folsom, & Herrington, 2015; Houck & Novak, 2017). In this vision, clear learning and teaching goals should be included. The implementation of teaching and learning goals and ensuring that strategies are developed for the evaluating of progress is part of the responsibilities of the principal (Houck & Novak, 2017). This includes establishing a system of clear objectives for teaching, and enhancing teaching and learning should be seen as a priority (Osbourne-Lampkin et al., 2015:2).

Literature shows that there are “various sub-aspects of a vision” (Plaatjies, 2019:146). It is highlighted that leaders need to give direction, communicate effectively, monitor, understand, and provide a clear instructional vision that the school should follow (Day & Sammons, 2013; Francois, 2014). In agreement, Nelson and Dunsmore (2018:5) say that to improve literacy, the vision has to be effectively connected to the classroom. Additionally, the achievement of the school’s mission statement should be promoted by the principal (DBE, 2015:14). The principal is the leader of the school. He/she should be an example for the school by leading and showing the staff how the values and vision of the school should be modelled (DBE, 2015:15). When principals, teachers, and staff know what they are working towards, they have a better chance of achieving the goals successfully and improving learner achievement in terms of literacy instruction.

3.3.3.4 *Establishing a community of practice*

Together with the SMT, principals are responsible for establishing and maintaining a community of practice (COP) to enhance excellent teaching and learning. COPs are seen as a very important concept in teaching and learning (Hoadley, 2014:287). A COP can be described as a group of people who are actively involved in the process of collective learning in sharing domains of human endeavour. Communities of

practice are “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger & Trayner, 2015:1).

A COP has three crucial characteristics: the domain, the community, and practice. Wenger and Trayner (2015:2) explain that these three characteristics and the domain are not just random people who form a club, it is purposefully selected to ensure that the people involved have the same goal or interest at heart. For instance, they all gather to get better knowledge on how to improve literacy in schools. The involved people learn from each other’s values and expertise. The community shows interest in similar domains, and to help each other and share ideas, the members of this community join together in discussions and activities about literacy issues. Relationships are built that enable them to not only learn from each other but also care for each other. The practice does not usually mean that the members work together in the same school. Resources from a shared repertoire are developed, and to form a shared practice, sustained interaction and a lot of time together are needed.

The combination of these three elements is what constitutes a COP (Wenger & Trayner, 2015:2). It is the role of the principal to link the school’s teaching and learning with a wider community and to ensure that richness and diversity are drawn upon (DBE, 2015:21). In addition, collaborative relationships and partnerships with the wider community should be built and maintained to gain access to potential resource providers who are focused on the well-being of the learners. COPs are important because it helps to develop noticeable results by organising people to take purposeful action.

COPs furthermore help with the PD and self-empowerment of teachers. It is crucial in helping teachers to improve their practice by identifying problems and finding solutions to ultimately establish the best practice (Wenger & Trayner, 2015). COPs are also important to limit teachers from isolating themselves and working on their own. The short- and long-term effects that COPs have on a school and teachers and the value they may bring should also be kept in mind. The value provided in the short term is the fact that challenges that may arise suddenly can be dealt with immediately. In the long term, this process becomes a capability for teachers and the school and is done in continuity (Stofberg, 2020).

Literacy teaching and learning should be integrated into the COPs. The COP’s that teachers belong to should reflect that information is valued and created by acceptable

practices of the community. Informational literacy is seen as situational, and it can be practised in formal and informal communities (Hovious, 2015). The formal community is the school where learners get their learning instructions from. The informal communities are their homes and suburb where they go home after teaching instruction. The literacy taught at school is not merely enough; it should be strengthened with support from home to help grow literacy needs and instruction effectively. The goal is to transfer literacy knowledge to students across communities throughout their academic careers and not only in the beginning or in certain phases. This is why parent involvement is also crucial and why it is necessary to have their support to help improve learner achievement in literacy from both the school and parents' side (Hovious, 2015).

3.3.3.5 The principals' role in providing support in the planning of literacy

The development of any nation is established through education. The main role of education is to transform a nation and develop learners. To do so, effective planning is necessary to cancel out faulty educational planning. It cannot be emphasized enough how crucial the importance of educational planning is (Akpan, 2020:2).

Planning means the work that should be done, how to do it, where to do it, when to do it as well as the person responsible for doing the work should be decided on in advance. According to the standard, principals, as the managers of schools, are responsible for implementing the curriculum process and creating suitable systems (DBE, 2015:16). However, I do feel like this document lacks a bit in terms of expanding and giving more information on how the principal is responsible for curriculum needs and how he/she will address challenges in the curriculum. By adding this important information to the Standard of Principalship, I believe that it will help to ensure that the predetermined goals and objectives are achieved in the end. Mitchell (2002:6) defines planning as a process to achieve desired objectives, solve problems, and facilitate actions through a developed strategy. According to Akpan (2020:2), educational planning involves “a systematic and scientific set of decisions for future action with the aim of achieving set educational goals and objectives through optimal use of scarce resources”.

When it comes to the planning of literacy instruction, planning is vital. The core of an effective teacher is planning. Planning allows the teacher to get a better understanding of second language acquisition, the knowledge of the learners through language teaching pedagogy, the context of teaching, and the curriculum (Akpan, 2020:2). Furthermore, planning helps teachers to have a greater perception of what they want to achieve and how all aspects will fit in together, in the end, to make sure the school's literacy instruction vision becomes a reality. When planning is done effectively, preventing deviation from topics and forming or maintaining a standard teaching pattern is promoted. Reed and Mitchell (2010) mention that teachers will be more prepared to ensure that the aims and objectives of teaching and learning are accomplished as well as to evaluate their knowledge on the specific content that will be taught in the classroom. Planning can only help to improve literacy instruction in schools to help improve learner achievement understanding or competence in literacy (Jones, 2018).

As a curriculum leader, it is expected of the principal to make sure his/her teachers and staff follow the vision, discipline, and standards set in place. The aim is to improve teaching and learning in the school. It is thus the principals' responsibility to ensure that planning of the curriculum and literacy instruction is done effectively. The principal should give direction, provide resources, and support not only the teachers but also the learners to improve teaching and learning in the school. The extent of the leadership in the curriculum is a key role that the principal takes up, and this leadership should be strong (October, 2009:30).

The principal's role in the curriculum is to ensure that the planning enhances a culture of teaching and learning throughout the school. October (2009:31) points out that principals should monitor the curriculum and the planning thereof to make sure the development of the curriculum is consistent and that the teachers are always on task and alert. The principal should establish curriculum committees to help with the planning to evaluate and monitor progress in the curriculum. The committee and the principal should then plan and then inform parents of curriculum changes or progress in the curriculum (Clark, 2007:246). The principal plays a huge role in motivating teachers to plan ahead and also supporting them in exploring change in the curriculum. However, to do this, planning should be done to find out where expansion is necessary (October, 2009:32). The core function of any school is the delivery of an effective curriculum. To achieve this, effective planning is pivotal.

3.3.3.6 Improved instruction through IQMS

According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2014:6), Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) is “a performance management system that consists of three programmes: (1) Developmental Appraisal, (2) Performance Measurement, and (3) Whole School Evaluation. An environment for the development of teachers was the reason why IQMS has been designed. Its purpose is to monitor the school's effectiveness, evaluate teacher performance, identify the needs of teachers to develop, support, and promote accountability (Gina, 2014; DBE, 2014:7).

IQMS is important to help support the teaching and learning culture in schools. IQMS is a tool that helps to enhance quality education and the delivery process thereof. Furthermore, it is vital because it underpins and helps to ensure growth, determine competence, monitor the effectiveness of schools, and promote accountability in teachers (Naidoo, 2006:59). Principals are responsible for excellence in schools; they encourage high expectations from teachers and help set realistic targets for achievement. In case of underperformance, principals should provide support and remedial action. This would include ongoing monitoring and evaluation in relation to practices of all classrooms (DBE, 2015:14).

Teachers in the FP who do not perform as desired to help improve literacy will be evaluated through the IQMS process and can be given additional training/interventions or further development to solve the underperformance (Bokgola, 2015:32). This will show the weak areas in the school, and through IQMS literacy instruction, it may be improved through the process. Rabichund and Steyn (2014:13) note that “the IQMS policy requires teachers to radically change the ways in which they carried out their teaching responsibilities for the sake of whole school development”. The IQMS process helps teachers to stay on track with new, modern changes in literacy and the curriculum and prevents stagnation under teachers. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure professional growth takes place (Rabichund & Steyn, 2014:13).

It is the goal to improve literacy through IQMS as well; it should be the desire of principals to create an atmosphere where teachers feel like the process is designed to help improve the curriculum and not like they are being tested to see whether they are good enough as a teacher. The idea is to create a feeling of making teachers feel good and responsible for their learners' well-being and improved results so that a culture of PD can be portrayed as a positive element in the school. For literacy to

improve, teachers need to “reassess their own beliefs about the purposes and nature of education or to accept challenges regarding the values which shaped their perspectives and approach” (Rabichund & Steyn, 2014:16).

The principal, along with the SMT, is responsible for ensuring that teachers stay on track with effective curriculum delivery. They should show that they are also committed to professional learning by evaluating teachers and further developing themselves and their education. They can encourage the staff by talking about their own experiences in learning from others. The principal should motivate and encourage teachers to improve their literacy instruction and all-around teaching methods (Rabichund & Steyn, 2014:16). De Clercq (2010) implies that the principal should better understand whether IQMS and appraisal can either undermine or contribute to the schools’ vision. The principal should monitor IQMS to ensure that the school and staff development and performances are improved, strengths and weaknesses are monitored, the staff is committed to working together, and also to ensure that conducive conditions are created for PD. It is the role of the principal to develop mediation strategies if the staff is not fully ready for PD (Keshav. 2012:35).

3.3.3.7 Ensuring optimal and effective use of available time for literacy instruction

It is crucial to be effective in the time teachers set out for literacy instruction, as literacy is not as simple as it may appear. Due to various cultures and contexts that are constantly shifting, reading and writing abilities also vary. Literacy nowadays is much more complex and principals have to stay up to date with modern technologies to help improve literacy instruction (Koch, 2014). The Standard confirms that principals need to “monitor, evaluate and review the quality and use of the school’s available resources” to ensure that improvements are ongoing, that the quality of teaching and learning continues to improve, and that the quality stays up to date with new technologies by using ICT effectively (DBE, 2015:17). Time, however, is of the essence and should not be wasted. Learners need to learn the ability to read and write, whether it is to use tablets to read the news, fill in an information form, or become lifelong learners and be competent in literacy.

During a normal school day, so many time wasters and distractions may hamper teaching and learning instruction to be done effectively to reach desired goals and set achievements. Whether the wasting of time is deliberate or not, these obstacles should not interfere with the productivity of literacy instruction (Stack, 2014). If teachers are not highly focused, it becomes easy to waste time and more challenging to keep up with effective instruction. Peers may be one of the biggest distractions or time-wasters. Quickly popping in to have a quick conversation takes away from education time, and it usually takes the teacher 10-15 minutes to get back on track. These interruptions can waste up to two to three hours a day (Roselle, 2016). Nowadays, cell phones are the way to stay connected. This, however, is also one of the big time wasters, as teachers check their phones for messages or social media feeds regularly. This connectivity affects productivity, and teachers should focus on academics as their priority. This problem can be addressed by placing your phone on silent or in your bag not to be aware of all the notifications coming through, distracting teachers and taking away from teaching and learning time (Matthews, 2018).

It is one of the principals' most important responsibilities to address time wasters. As a principal, demanding school complexities and challenges will come forth, and they have to be dealt with to ensure time management is effective and to ensure success and longevity (Ghamrawi & Al-Jammal, 2013:51). Procrastination may be one of the worst time wasters. Even though everyone does it sometimes, whether it is because of disliking tasks, feeling overwhelmed, or simply fearing to fail. The principal, however, has to make it clear to his/her staff that they should be productive in teaching and learning to ensure quality literacy instruction. By planning and knowing what to do next, productivity will be maximised (Stack, 2014). "School leaders need to develop time management strategies by planning a daily calendar to get organized, set priorities, master delegation and not be afraid to say no" (Ghamrawi & Al-Jammal, 2013:52). By procrastinating, people put work off till the next day and may find that they ran out of time to keep up with the work. It will then be too late, and time was wasted profusely. Principals can set goals that are worthwhile for teachers, help teachers to visualise their tasks as complete, practise positive affirmations, give teachers clear and reachable deadlines, refuse to allow invalid excuses, reward teachers for successfully completed tasks, and they have to accept full responsibility for the completion of objectives and activities (Ghamrawi & Al-Jammal, 2013:54). By

focusing on this, teachers will focus more rigorously on the improvement of literacy practices.

3.3.3.8 *Managing instructional resources*

In managing instructional resources, the principal can create learning communities for teachers to work together and learn from each other to improve literacy. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) state that, to develop various and new ways to make learning more meaningful and on standard, organizational structures should be built to allow teachers to connect and reach a higher achievement in learner performances. Moreover, sustaining the focus on the curriculum, student learning, and instruction, it is deemed necessary for the principal to meet with the teachers or leaders continuously (Mestry, 2017:257). Principals must always be aware of the averages of the whole school.

Using the appropriate resources in a classroom is vital in teaching and learning. Ellerani and Gentile (2013:13) emphasise that “from the atmosphere and decor of the room to interactions with peers and teachers, every element of the classroom is designed to allow students to explore the elements of literacy”. The importance of reading, speaking, and writing is enhanced in a literacy-rich environment. The selection of materials that will assist in the learning and teaching experience should be facilitated and reflected in the classroom design.

3.3.3.9 *Guiding literacy school culture and climate*

School culture can be defined as beliefs that are guided and values that are evident in the day-to-day operating of a school (Fullan, 2007). Fisher (2012:4) adds that “school culture can be used to encompass all the attitudes, expected behaviours and values that impact how the school operates”. In addition, it is the role of the principal to inspire strategies that empower, challenge, and motivate teachers to commit to the school's vision, mission, and values to “carry them forward in planned action” (DBE, 2015:15).

Promoting a culture of teaching and learning is important. It is suggested that effective organisations, including schools, should ensure that effort is placed on the building culture in schools (Fisher, Frey & Pumpian, 2012). Goals of academic achievement

are usually the main focus that schools concentrate on; however, if the school culture and academic press are not aligned, school improvement will not be effective. A culture of teaching and learning should be explicit rather than hidden and undeclared. Jerald (2006), on the other hand, argues that a school's vision is determined by its vision, mission, values, and beliefs. Deal and Peterson (2009) suggest that a strong and positive culture serves numerous beneficial functions, such as collegial and collaborative activities that are improved to solve problems and promote better communication and focus attention on what is valued and important through daily behaviour. Culture is therefore welcoming. If an ever-present culture for learning is promoted, a shared belief of feeling part of something great and personal pride, power, and purpose are developed (Fisher, Frey & Pumpian, 2012). Fisher (2012:10) underpins that the main role of culture in the success of a school is "the multiple ways school culture fosters improvement, collaborative decision making, PD and staff and student learning".

In a culture of collaboration and ongoing support, the principal should facilitate and support a conducive environment. The ultimate goal is to ensure that teachers and students feel safe, are motivated to stay positive, and that the core remains teaching and learning. Prokopchuk (2016:73) claims that the culture to help support learner achievement is difficult if there is no common goal for the school. Leadership, therefore, plays a vital role in establishing a culture in schools. A clear purpose is essential, with emphasis on learner achievement. Being a good leader also requires the principal to celebrate the idea of empowering staff to take on informal leadership roles (Prokopchuk, 2016:73). In addition, improving culture in school is dependent on the principal's ability to build trusting relationships. This can be done by developing a culture of professional learning communities (PLCs) (Carpenter, 2014). It is further proposed that improved teaching and better relationships can be built by a positive culture to significantly impact learner motivation and achievement (Prokopchuk, 2016:75). It is confirmed by Jones, Stall and Yarbrough (2013:59) that "the principal must create a culture and climate for change...[and] all participants should have the opportunity to examine their thinking which can be achieved through forming study groups, visiting schools that have restructured or collected data".

The principals' managerial aspects are not always at the forefront, but it is pivotal when it comes to developing the culture. Successful leaders ensure that the main purpose of education, which is teaching and learning, is grounded (Prokopchuk, 2016:77).

Harris, Edmonson, and Combs (2014:42) highlight that distributed leadership will be viewed as more genuine and sustainable if time, space, and opportunities are created for teachers to learn from leaders how to lead and partake in decision making. A capacity for greater distributed leadership will be created. The principal should facilitate and give attention to staff collaboration and the nature thereof to ensure continuous teaching and learning opportunities and initiatives for PD. According to Prokopchuk (2016:77), “leadership practices that share power can create an increased motivation, genuine trust and promote risk-taking, along with building a sense of community and efficacy among its members”. These are ways in which the principal can show support, facilitate, and help to promote a culture of collaboration in the school.

In the next paragraphs, the importance of distributive leadership roles will be further unpacked. Principals were primarily responsible for managing all the instructional processes in the school. However, in current practices, it is expected from the principals to do more, namely share their leadership responsibilities with the educators and collaborate with them on the curriculum, instruction and assessment in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning (Maponya, 2015:25). In fact, contemporary leadership dynamics requires principals to distribute and share responsibilities. Due to workload pressures, it is impossible for principals to perform the instructional leadership task single-handedly. Sebastian, Camburn and Spillane (2018:90) claim in this regard that: “Principals spent considerable time on running the building and considerably less time on instruction-related activities.” Of importance also is that the work distribution model as set out in the PAM and standard outlines that Departmental Heads, Gradeheads and subject heads are required to fulfil a far more prominent role in terms of instructional leadership. Therefore, principals should utilize the distributed leadership approach as part of their leadership role in improving literacy.

3.4 DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP APPROACH OF THE PRINCIPAL

Halverson and Clifford (2013) define distributed leadership as “distributed instructional leadership”. Due to their daunting workload, instructional leadership in primary schools cannot rest solely on the shoulders of principals. Deputy principals, Department Heads, and subject heads should be involved in leadership duties. In fact, the

Standard for Principals and the Personnel Administration Measures (PAM) (DBE, 2016) put a legal responsibility on other members of the SMT, like Department Heads, subject heads, or competent teachers, to fulfil an important role as instructional leaders. In line with this obligation, the distributed leadership theory provides a suitable lens to study these role-players' involvement in literacy leadership. The aim was to investigate how principals apply this approach by distributing responsibilities to provide leadership (in literacy) in the FP.

Distributed leadership can thus be seen as shared school leadership. Distributed leadership approaches carry leadership practices; additionally, situational and social structures are re-established (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001). Leaders cannot be doing all the roles and responsibilities by themselves; leadership should be shared (Göksoy, 2015:114). The principal should know various methods that encourage, promote, and implement teamwork, participation in decision-making, and shared leadership (DBE, 2015:20). Individual groups are not assigned to leadership roles; these roles are undertaken by the group members as their fundamental duty and are done willingly (Storey, 2004).

Adaptive and quantitative behaviours are the two dimensions under which distributed leadership is classified. Adaptive behaviour refers to interactions of various departments in a "coordinated manner", and quantitative behaviour refers to the belief that, in an organization, everyone can be a leader at some point in time (Gronn, 2002). Furthermore, this type of leadership focuses on the distribution of tasks amongst not only the leader but also other staff members (Spillane et al., 2001). According to Göksoy (2015:114), distribution is done at different times and duties, and leadership functions are distributed to various individuals (Gronn, 2002; Yuki, 1999). Supporting this, the standard mentions that it is the principal's responsibility to provide opportunities for staff, support, and encourage teachers to engage in provided roles and responsibilities to ultimately continue PD amongst everyone involved in the school (DBE, 2015:20). Bolden (2013:256) also adds that this type of leadership requires principals to focus on organising the team as a whole instead of only focussing on themselves as a leader and taking all the work upon themselves. Kempster, Cope and Parry claim in Goksoy (2015:114) that "it is better to distribute leadership among many people than for a single leader to act alone."

The principal has to re-arrange authorities and also re-distribute power in the education practice (Harris & Muijs, 2005; Grant & Singh, 2009; Spillane, 2009; Naicker & Mestry, 2013). It is confirmed in the Standard of Principalship (DBE, 2015:17) that the principal should know “processes and systems underpinning accountability, responsiveness and responsibility”. Additionally, teachers asked to help with certain roles have to respect that there are different areas of expertise and accept them (Göksoy, 2015:114). According to Harris (2011:8), instructional development is rooted and guided from the basis of distributed leadership. Furthermore, it is the principal’s responsibility to ensure a climate where learning benefits everyone. Principals have the duty and responsibility to “change and build the capacity for improvement” (Harris, 2014). It is vital to ensure an independent interaction amongst those chosen to take charge of duties and formal leadership instead of independent actions. Thus, to be clear, to still reach the goals that are set in place, the main leaders and those chosen to help should be working together in unity to share the workload rather than working alone and not in line with the vision. It is the principal's responsibility to ensure everyone is aware of their responsibilities and understands them as well (DBE, 2015:18).

To implement distributed leadership successfully, transparency, mutual respect, and high levels of trust are crucial. Management has to be very sensitive and productive in choosing who will be part of the chosen leaders. It should be planned carefully and orchestrated deliberately, and the people chosen should be chosen based on their expertise and not necessarily their years of experience. Management can, however, not choose everyone; they have to be selective. “Letting a thousand flowers bloom is not distributed leadership” (Harris, 2014). The main role of those in formal management and leadership is to create the opportunity for distributed leadership to occur; in other words, allow others the opportunity to lead. A positive relationship between distributed leadership and the improvement of practices in regards to learner improvement has been very successful (Leithwood & Mascal, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 2009). This type of leadership is “a potential contributor to positive change and school improvement” (Harris, 2014). High-performing schools can be attributed to leadership being distributed wisely and widely (Leithwood et al., 2009). According to Göksoy (2015:115), teachers showed positive views regarding student achievement that has been increased due to distributed leadership.

As part of the distribution of instructional leadership responsibilities, the following paragraphs will outline the role of the subject heads, and the role of the Department Head will be discussed in improving literacy instruction.

3.4.1 Ensuring that Foundation Phase Heads drive the literacy curriculum

As an overall instructional leader, the principal needs to ensure that Foundation phase Heads drive the literacy curriculum. Foundation phase heads play a vital role in ensuring the smooth running of the literacy curriculum. They need to make sure that members understand their individual responsibilities (DBE, 2016:16). The Department Head of the FP is responsible for ensuring good communication amongst all teachers and establishing a collaborative relationship with teachers (Bipath & Nkabinde, 2018:2). Furthermore, the policy documents clearly outline that the Department Head sets out the assessment programme for the term and monitors and controls workbooks, assessments, and overall daily routines in teaching and learning. Moreover, they have to stay updated and informed of any changes in the curriculum or syllabi and keep the teachers informed as well. The Department Head controls the work of the learners and the teachers in their department. When required, they have to submit all the relevant moderations, assessments, and evaluation reports to the principal. Additionally, they have to do pre-moderation as well as post-moderation on all assessment papers to ensure that they are up to standard (DBE, 2016:37). As part of the distributed leadership staff, the Grade Heads helps with the workload of the Department Head. The subject heads, in return, help with the workload of the Grade Heads. Teachers in the FP can be asked “To take on a leadership role in respect of the subject, learning area or phase, if required”, according to PAM (DBE, 2016:28). They have a broad range of roles and responsibilities but also have the pressure to take accountability for the demands the phase brings (Hammersley-Fletcher, Ainsworth, Davies & da Costa, 2019:4). All of these tasks need to be managed by the principal as the main accountable person of the literacy curriculum. This should be done through targeted monthly meetings, professional development sessions, and the rigorous moderation of teacher files, learner workbooks, assessment evaluations, and even marks evaluation (see Zimmerman, 2017). The standard for principalship (DBE, 2016:15) places an important responsibility on the principal to manage the quality of teaching and ensure accountability. The principal needs to know the processes and

systems underpinning accountability, responsiveness and responsibility (DBE, 2016:15).

3.4.2 Ensuring Grade Heads' involvement

This is another important facet of ensuring effective delivery of the curriculum. In the encouragement of shared leadership (DBE, 2016:18) principals should involve Grade Heads as well in the quest to improve literacy performance. According to the PAM (DBE, 2016:33), Grade Heads have to support the SMT when required of them and facilitate activities for PD. Grade Heads have to take responsibility to be educated in the different subjects and learning areas and take charge as the grade leader. They have to “plan, coordinate, control, administer, evaluate and report on learners’ academic progress” (DBE, 2016:33). The Grade Head's responsibility is to use various strategies to achieve the curriculum outcomes and establish positive classroom environments that motivate the learners to engage in the learning process. It is their duty to assist the Department Head when their help is needed and to address aspects and educational needs to ensure the welfare of the learners (DBE, 2016:34). Furthermore, principals need to ensure that Grade Heads support the SMT and promote the professional development of the teachers in their care by enriching them with new ideas and resources. In safeguarding standards, understanding curriculum changes and new developments in teaching, principals should collaborate closely with Grade Heads. Also important is that principals should guide Grade Heads in discussions with parents about learner progress and act as mentors to teachers who are less experienced (DBE, 2016:34).

3.4.3 The Role of the Literacy Coach

In some cases, the principal can be seen as a literacy coach and can help to influence teachers at the school level, based on their willingness to change, skills, knowledge, and response to reform (Coburn, 2004). It is the principal's responsibility to ensure literacy coaches are set in place to help teachers in terms of any literacy problems. This will promote the opportunity for ongoing professional learning (Woulfin, 2014:3).

Bean and DeFord (2012:1) claim that literacy coaches assist in assessments of learners and participate in instructional planning. However, most of their time is spent

coaching, which involves observation, demonstration lessons, and talking to teachers about instruction. Walpole and McKenna, however, argue in Frederick (2017:13) that there is not a clear definition for literacy coaching. According to Deussen, Coskie, Robinson and Aution (2007:5), literacy coaching is defined as a professional working together with a more knowledgeable professional to increase productivity. Given that there are so many different definitions for literacy coaching, a variety of implementation models may be present in schools and may differ from school to school (Poglinco & Bach, 2004; Scott, Cortina, & Carlisle, 2012; Deussen et al., 2007). Some people, for example, may see literacy coaching as any school-based PD, where support is given to the needs in the instruction of classrooms teachers (Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Walpole & McKenna, 2013; International Reading Association, 2004). On the other hand, sailors and Shanklin (2010:1) mention that for others, it has a different meaning and is seen as only class-based, where a more knowledgeable person, together with the teachers, explores to find strategies to improve practices. Furthermore, Cutrer (2016:1-2) highlights that literacy is individualised, invitational, and non-evaluative, whilst others define it again as coaches who are not only experts but also become mentors to teachers and “whole-school literacy initiatives”.

The advantages of literacy coaching are that it is a successful way the help classroom teachers enhance their instructional abilities (Cutrer, 2016:1). Mraz, Kissel, Algozzine, Babb and Foxworth (2011) and Frederick (2017:13) concedes that one of the main initiatives in reforming literacy is literacy coaching, and it has become a key component in helping teachers to improve their teaching skills as well as better the literacy achievement of the learners. Furthermore, effective literacy coaching can already help prevent learners from failing in reading and writing from a young age (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009; Amendum, Vernon-Feagans, & Ginsberg, 2011; Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; Vernon-Feagans, Kainz, Amendum, Ginsberg, Wood, & Bock, 2012; Cutrer, 2016:1). Lynch and Alsop (2018:2) assert that opening the classroom and allowing collaboration amongst teachers may be one of the best advantages of literacy coaching. This collaborative relationship between teachers and coaches has helped improve and attain learner achievement; it helped focus the attention on the teachers' areas of strength to improve learners' successes (Lynch & Alsop, 2018:3; Cutrer, 2016:36).

Principals have quite a heavy workload and do not always have time to be literacy coaches as well. Therefore, they distribute the role to other responsible teachers, such

as deputy principals or subject heads. These are mostly teachers who have expertise in literacy and have efficient years of experience in teaching literacy (Lynch & Alsop, 2018:2). To make literacy coaching more effective, skilful evaluation of the curriculum and collaboration with classrooms is vital. Principals can support this relationship between literacy coaches and teachers by making the roles of the coaches clear and monitoring the progress continually (Lynch & Alsop, 2018:3). In addition, principals should ensure that intervention strategies in literacy coaching are planned and designed clearly at the beginning of the year to reach the goals set in place to achieve greater performance and help set targets for attaining goals long-term (Cutrer, 2016:35).

3.5 INFLUENTIAL LEADERSHIP ACTIONS THAT MAY INFLUENCE LITERACY INSTRUCTION

Unrelated factors to instruction may greatly influence teaching and learning in general, but on literacy in particular. These include the attitudes and motivations of the principal towards relationships and expectations in terms of literacy. As part of his/her personal commitment to learning and standards of excellence (in literacy) (DBE, 2016:12), the principal should create systems that will build relationships and create an environment that is trusting, disciplined and conducive to teaching and learning (DBE, 2016:15).

3.5.1 Attitudes and Motivations of the Principal

Principals have a broad list of roles and responsibilities, and to add to this list, principals need to influence the action and attitudes on teachers' empowerment and morale. Vodicka (2006:27) delineates that part of the principal's job description is to give direction to help improve staff morale, the effectiveness of the school, leadership practices, and community and teacher involvement. For principals to change teachers' attitudes and morale to be positive, they have to ensure that they are positive and create a good atmosphere for teachers to follow. Littleford (2007:10) confirms this by stating that the principal is responsible for self-motivation, but even more eminently, the principal is responsible and held accountable for the school staff's motivation.

Baldoni (2005:33) pointed out that "leadership involves people, and people have a multiplicity of physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. A compassionate leader

understands the complexity of the human psyche as well as the forces acting upon us from work, family, and community”. Principals need to ensure that teachers have high morale because low morale leads to teachers being absent, negative, and even health issues (Littleford, 2007:11). This, in turn, will have a negative influence on teaching and learning. Principals should motivate individual teachers and provide individualised support by motivating and showing interest and support, being available, conducting informal conversations, and finding out which aspects teachers struggle with (Auletto, 2016). Clairborne, Morell, Bandy and Bruff (2020:1) also propose that principals should provide support by helping teachers find courses or workshops to attend that fit their PD requirements. “Teaching and learning experiences that take place outside of the confines of the classroom walls have a range of benefits for both students and instructors” (Clairborne et al., 2020:1).

Furthermore, principals can also show that they value their hard work and reward the whole staff with fun social events outside of the school. In this manner, more robust relationships can be built under the staff as an opportunity to learn the different personalities of each staff member. Strengths and weaknesses may come to the surface when people are in a more relaxed environment, and this may translate to being more motivated in the workplace. Teachers want to feel involved, and they need to be mentored. The principal should involve them in strategic planning and give them a chance to give their input while still being guided and mentored. Being mentored helps teachers to build a teaching career that is stronger and more successful (Garza, Ramirez & Ovando, 2009:1). In addition, Garza et al. (2009:2) add that “Mentoring is intended to help new teachers successfully learn their roles, establish their self-images as teachers, figure out the school and its culture, understand how teaching unfolds in real classrooms, and achieve other goals that are important to the teachers being mentored” (Garza, Ramirez & Ovando, 2009:2). Respecting teachers’ time during school as well as after school hours is one of the greatest acts, and teachers will feel motivated by this behaviour (Murphy, 2019). This means that principals should avoid unnecessary staff meetings and non-essential presentations. By respecting teachers time, principals make it clear that he/she values the work of the teacher and trust that their attention and time will be focused on the place where the impact is needed the most, which is in the classroom (Murphy, 2019).

3.5.2 Promoting Good Relationships as a Foundation for Improved Literacy Performance

To promote good relationships, principals need to establish and recognize that all teachers have different personality types. Having different personality types also offer various benefits. Relationships and better navigation of the world that resides inside as well as outside of the workplace can be useful and improved through these benefits (Nystrom, 2018). Improving the ability to make decisions, avoiding conflict when it arises, learning to appreciate diversity, and aligning your career path according to your personality are all benefits to help promote good relationships amongst the principal and staff members. The Standard notes that the principal should use conflict management skills to deal with any conflict (DBE, 2015:15). As the principal, it is vital to know the personalities of teachers to place them in the most suitable position to help the organization make the right decisions in terms of hiring new staff. Knowing their personalities and having a better understanding of individual personalities will also guide the principal in supporting, motivating, and promoting his/her staff members (Nystrom, 2018).

The principal needs to influence teachers through meaningful interaction. According to Price (2012:39), an atmosphere of teaching and learning can be created by the teachers' and principals' attitudes, which can influence the school's effectiveness. Additionally, a positive school climate condition is created through openness, trust, and shared vision. Teachers' and principals' satisfaction, commitment levels, and cohesion are affected through their relationships with each other (Price, 2012:39). Furthermore, higher levels of satisfaction, commitment amongst the entire staff, and cohesion about school goals can be generated through characteristics such as being open, cooperative, and trustworthy (Price, 2012:40). Researchers confirm that interpersonal interactions, as well as principal-staff relationships, are primary factors that influence the previously mentioned outcomes (Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2002; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, Anderson, Michlin, Mascall, Moor, 2010; Moolenaar, Daly, & Slegers, 2010; Stephenson & Baur, 2010).

Forming great relationships between principals and teachers is crucial, but it is just as important to ensure that teachers are not conforming to be like others or are not compared to each other and that their individuality is still acknowledged and valued. The individuality of teachers is at risk in a society where collaboration and

standardization are so prominent. Through evaluations and pacing guides from districts, standardisation has been pushed to the forefront tremendously. It is, however, pivotal that the individuality of teachers should not get lost (DeCesare, 2017). Another type of standardisation is the collaboration done through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that are increased. Good relationships can also be formed by joining these PLCs, as it prevents isolation and helps teachers grow while sharing ideas and collaborating with other teachers or the principal. Allowing teachers to lead and organise their own PLCs can help prevent them from losing their individuality by learning from others and working with them to create positive aspects. DeCesare (2017) adds that the individuality of teachers should not be suppressed by trying to standardise or make everyone the same in education. Jones, Stall and Yarbrough (2013:357) mention that an effective form of PD for teachers is being part of PLCs, and the principal can facilitate it. Furthermore, the school culture can be improved by these PLCs, which in return may contribute to better results of teaching and learning in the school. The principal's responsibility is to make teachers feel like they can live out their individuality by using their vision for the school to originate. However, it is still the responsibility of the principal to provide the opportunity for growth, ensure effective communication, and facilitate while still acknowledging or respecting individualism (Jones, Stall & Yarbrough, 2013:360).

3.5.3 Modelling high expectations to improve literacy performance

Tomecki (2017) opines that expectations are a belief structure that is deep-rooted and helps with the reasons behind why we are driven in our behaviours. Principals do not pass on expectations; however, they guide teachers to use their mental toughness and perseverance to reach set goals, as expectations actually come from within oneself (Linsin, 2009). Linsin further states that, to achieve goals or a vision set in place, having high expectations should be a part of who you are as a trait or belief. Hence, if people do not believe that they can achieve what is expected of them, they will fail to reach the principal's goals. Therefore, to successfully achieve these expectations set in place, it is vital to create a reality wherein you have high expectations for yourself, and these thoughts and beliefs about yourself must become a habit (Tomecki, 2017).

It is important for leaders of a school to have a clear vision that can inspire and empower others and motivate teachers to reach goals successfully, not only for themselves but also for the community (Corwin, 2015:6). In addition, it is expected from the principal to be able to communicate to the whole staff what vision he/she has for the school and the community (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; DBE, 2015:20). Corwin (2015:7) mentions that “sound instructional practices permeate the classrooms, which lead to high levels of student achievement”. That is ultimately what the goal should be: to improve the literacy achievement levels of the school. Lytle (2010) highlights that it is important to lead as a principal because it is seen as what leaders do and lead for learning to improve. It is a pivotal responsibility to set expectations for staff, as it gives them something prominent to work towards and will help to enhance the profession's success (Schooley, 2020).

Principals should know how to model high expectations. Elmore, in Lewis (2011:2), notes that leaders or principals are “creatures of the organisations” that they lead. Thus, it is essential for principals to have an established school vision and that all teachers are familiar with the values that they should adhere to. The principal needs to model exactly what they expect the staff to live out. They need to truly live the school's vision in terms of literacy. In agreement, Murphy (2007:73) confirms that “Effective principals and other school-based leaders articulate the vision through personal modelling and by communicating with others in and around the organization”. The intended goals are reached by demonstrating the values and beliefs through actions. This is also found true by Peariso (2011:2), as he agrees that teachers should behave correctly and that those in leadership positions should mirror what they speak while leading teachers to be empowered in the practice and leadership roles. Principals who show strong leadership in modelling appropriate behaviours and who are in line with the values will focus on student achievement and show shared leadership in a stronger manner or sense (Peariso, 2011:44).

Ngidi (2019:26) mentions that the principal takes on various roles and is a leader to other instructional leaders as well. Principals should guide processes of improvement, and they should be directed in the desired direction, as the required improvement is inevitable. In addition, the importance of teaching will be demonstrated by the principal by remaining involved and hands-on in the entire process through observations, instructional decisions, and growth (Murphy, 2007). Principals cannot carry out the intended visions without a collaborative and willing teaching staff (Al-Mahdy, Emam &

Hallinger, 2017; Ngidi, 2019:27). Principals should thus encourage staff members to grow by providing the appropriate and necessary support, resources, models, and opportunities (Marks & Printy, Murphy, 2007).

3.6 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter included the theoretical framework of the study, explaining the principals' role as an instructional leader and his/her role in distributing roles to staff and responsible personnel. Furthermore, the chapter touched on PD and other strategies on how to improve teachers and their performance to help improve literacy achievement in schools. The principals' roles in providing direction to other leaders in the school, such as the principal, Department Heads and Grade Heads, were addressed. Finally, the influential factors that impact literacy instruction were discussed in this literature review chapter.

The following chapter will be focused on the research study's practical side. It will outline how the research was conducted and how data was retrieved.

CHAPTER 4 :

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the second part of the literature review. The path through which research is conducted is through the research design and methodology (Sileyw, 2019). This chapter will discuss the research design and methodology, the research paradigm and approach, the research environment and population, selection procedures of participants, data collection procedure, data analysis, the quality assurance of the data, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study. The purpose of the research design and methodology is to show that the plan and aim the researcher wants to achieve is convincing (Sileyw, 2019).

4.2 RESTATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND AIM OF THE DISSERTATION

The underperformance of FP school learners seems to be of great concern due to little instructional guidance from principals, members from the SMT, and teachers experiencing numerous challenges. This poor performance, together, with the challenges teachers and principals experience, necessitated this study. The aim of this dissertation is thus to focus on exploring the leadership role of principals to improve literacy in the FP.

4.3 THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

According to Burns and Grove (2003:195), the research design is “a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings”. The research design should be linked directly with the specific aims of the study at hand (Sudheesh, Duggappa & Nethra, 2016:632). The research design is furthermore described by various researchers, as pointed out in Horn (2018:88), as “a set of decisions and choices” that will determine the population of the study and which methods would be best suited or applied to answer the research questions of the study (Babbie, 2014:121; Creswell, 2012:293; Kumar, 2011:74;

Laverty, 2016:9; Yin, 2011:75-76). The main goal of this research design is to answer the research questions and address the problem experienced through procedures of quality, accuracy, objectivity, and validity (Kumar, 2011:74-75). Laverty (2016:9) adds that the research questions and study objectives should have a distinct connection in any research design.

Before deciding on the research design that will be used, the researcher has to consider numerous factors to determine the most appropriate research design for the research problem (Asenahabi, 2019:1). Crucial factors that should be considered in choosing the most suitable research design is first to realise that the findings of the study and the conclusions will be affected by the research design; thus, it is vital to obtain reliable observations in helping to understand the phenomenon better (Mohajan, 2017:4). Furthermore, the researcher should get a better understanding of the nature of the phenomenon and if it would be suitable to use for collecting the data truthfully (Walker & SAS Institute, 2010). The research design adopted for this study is a multiple case study design. The multiple cases are the five schools that formed part of the study.

4.3.1 Multiple Case Study Design

Multiple-case design, or collective case design, refers to case study research in which several instrumental bounded cases are selected to develop a more in-depth understanding of the phenomena than a single case can provide. Heale and Twycross (2018:7) postulate that several similar cases are often to consider, such as educational programmes delivered from many locations. Although similar, they are complex and have unique features. In these circumstances, the evaluation of several similar cases will provide a better answer to a research question than if only one case is examined, hence the multiple-case study. In this study, similar cases from different locations refer to literacy leadership roles that principals execute at five different locations (schools). Gaining a holistic understanding of a phenomenon, community or group, and a certain situation is the main objective of a multiple case study (Kumar, 2011:125; Brink, 2018:1). This was one of the main reasons for adopting the multiple case study approach.

There were other reasons as well for adopting the multiple case study design for this study. A multiple case study can be defined as exploring real-life situations and an in-depth collection of data that involves multiple information sources (Creswell, 2013; Brink, 2018:1). Yin (2003) defines a multiple case study as an approach that “can be used to either augur contrasting results for expected reasons or either augur similar results in the studies”. In this study, the real-life situation refers to what is happening at schools in terms of how principals execute their roles in improving literacy in the foundation phase. One of the advantages of a multiple case study is that it allows the researcher to explore a wider perspective of the research question and the theoretical framework, which enables the researcher to better understand possible similarities or differences of each case studied (Brink, 2018:1). Following this advice, in this study, the five different cases were compared and similarities and differences were looked for, as presented in Chapter 5. Multiple case studies involve several individuals (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2009). In this study, several individuals were the principals as well as the teachers of the five schools. Poth (2018:141) claims that a multiple case study can draw on multiple sources to collect extensive data. The sources referred to are interviews, observations, audio or visual materials, and documents or archival records (Yin, 2014). In this study, the researcher made use of interviews, observations and documents.

4.3.1.1 *Other characteristics and strengths of a Multiple Case Study design*

To obtain the phenomenon in a broader view, case studies have to be conducted across multiple cases (Chrism et al., 2008:13). In a multiple case study, a phenomenon is explored in context using different methods of data collection. The researcher focuses on analysing themes to comprehend the complexity of the case (Creswell & Poth, 2018:141). Issues are identified and the themes surpass the case (Yin, 2009). Creswell and Poth (2018:141) agree by stating that one issue is selected and to illustrate the issue, multiple case studies are needed to reveal different perspectives of the issue. A variety of data is collected and it has a bounded time frame, and procedures are sustained over a period of time (Creswell, 2007:15). This study explored the role of the principal as a literacy leader in quintile 5 schools as well as the challenges they experience in terms of literacy. Principals, Department Heads and FP teachers would be involved in this study.

There are various other strengths that the multiple case study offers, which prompted the selection of the design. For instance, Baxter and Jack (2008) highlight that the data obtained through multiple case studies show to be more reliable and stronger. This was evident in this study because various data collection methods were used from five different research sites. Using this research design allows the researcher to have a more convincing theory while ensuring that the empirical evidence is grounded intensely (Gustafsson, 2017:9). Lawrence (2014:42) adds that a multiple case study further allows multiple views and perspectives to come to the surface and aims to elaborate the process holistically. The multiple views in this study comprised from teachers and HODs. The majority of the time, problems or issues can be theoretically solved. However, implementing the solution may be more complicated than expected due to an ever-changing world, and what was relevant today may not be relevant or true the following day (Copeland, 2018).

4.3.1.2 *Limitations of a multiple Case Study approach*

This case study is appropriate; however, there are some limitations to this approach. First of all, the researcher's subjectivity is thus a crucial matter to be questioned. Hence, it is mostly intended to act as a methodological critique (Verschuren, 2003), as pointed out by Willis (2014:4). Additionally, greater bias towards other methods of inquiry is contained in a multiple case study and Bent Flyvbjerg (2006:237) mentions that "on the contrary, experience indicates that the case study contains a greater bias toward falsification of preconceived notions than toward verification". The researcher countered this danger by using an audit trail, keeping a rigorous record of the happenings through the entire research process. Horn (2018:96) adds that the outcome of the study may be affected by the researcher's personal views because the researcher decides on the methods that will be used for the data collection. In this case, the researcher was led by methods associated with multiple case study designs and was the quality of the data ensured through member-checking. The use of external generalisability or validity may be one of this case study's most prominent critique issues. In this case, the multiple case study may arguably retain significant utility (Willis, 2014:5). Apart from the measures implemented to safeguard the study's trustworthiness, transparency was ensured through the recordings of interviews to ensure the study's validity.

4.3.2 The Nature of the Research and the Research Paradigm Selected for the Study

According to Rehamn and Alharthi (2016:51), a paradigm is a system of belief and theoretical framework assumptions about ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods. In other words, it means studying the world and its realities; and how we view or understand these beliefs. This study has adopted an interpretivist paradigm (IP). The main reason for adopting this paradigm is that the researcher wanted to obtain multiple interpretations from the participants in the study in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the principals' roles in improving literacy.

4.3.3 Definition, Aim, and Characteristics of the Interpretivist Paradigm

The Interpretivist paradigm can be defined as a multi-layered and complex reality that shows that multiple interpretations can be taken from a single phenomenon (Nel, 2018). Research techniques will help to find out how people interact in a social environment and how a phenomenon is interpreted. Hammersley (2013:26) describes interpretivism as being rooted in understanding human knowledge by trying to comprehend their actions based on how they interpret situations. Pham (2018:3) shows that "with the interpretivism perspective, researchers tend to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and its complexity in its unique context instead of trying to generalize the base of understanding for the whole population" according to Creswell (2007). In this study, the context refers to the schools in which the principals execute their roles. Adding to this, Hammersley (2013) highlights that amongst relationships of humans, multiple interpretations are developed and it should be comprehended that "the diverse ways of seeing and experiencing the world through different contexts and cultures" should lead to the avoidance of being biased when people or events based on their own interpretations are being studied. Qualitative research methods such as participant observations and face-to-face interviews would take place due to naturalistic inquiry (Ponterotto, 2005). The ability to get multiple views on the same problem is promoted, and subjective interpretation such as perceptions, feelings, and attitudes (Abdel-Fattah & Galal-Edeen, 2009:2).

De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2013:287) concede that participants are believed to be actively involved in this process and this is established by making use

of an interpretivist paradigm. In this study, active involvement was ensured through the conduct of individual interviews with principals and teachers, as they are most suited to provide answers to the problem under investigation.

4.3.4 Philosophical Beliefs for Interpretivism

According to Thomas (2010:291), research is “based on some underlying philosophical assumptions” to ensure research and the appropriate methods in the study is comprised as valid. Philosophy means “the use of abstract ideas and beliefs that inform our research” (Creswell & Poth, 2018:45). In a developing study, the first ideas we usually find are the philosophical assumptions; however, it is sometimes unclear how the overall process and the study relate. Denzin and Lincoln (2011:12) state that interpretive frameworks and philosophy are situated into perspective in the research process. The philosophical assumptions are explored through the questions that are embedded in the research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018:45). Being able to identify and know these assumptions are imperative to direct and evaluate the research.

The interpretivist perspective is based on the following philosophical beliefs.

4.3.4.1 *Ontology*

The beliefs about the nature of reality should be understood and interlocked by researchers to have the necessary skills to attain knowledge and is seen as vital factors in research paradigms (Thomas, 2010:291). Multiple realities are being embraced in qualitative research. Researchers, readers, and participants involved in studies also embrace the different realities of a qualitative study. The researcher used a qualitative study with the intent to report the multiple realities studied in the research and to present the different perspectives on individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018:50). Creswell and Poth (2018:74) further mention that through the interactions with other as well as the experiences of people, multiple realities are being constructed.

4.3.4.2 Epistemology

This is the truth or perspective we have of a phenomenon or how we see the world (Ryan, 2018:2). The epistemological assumption refers to the researcher getting as close as possible to the participants that take part in the study when conducting qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018:51). Any information gathered from participants would therefore be assembled subjectively. Subjective experiences contribute to gaining more knowledge. This is why studies are conducted in the workplace of participants to better understand their views and experiences. Epistemology offers complex and rich realities while gaining a better understanding of realities (Saunders, 2016:127). The researcher's own epistemological assumptions will, however, determine what they consider legitimate. Through their own thinking and interaction with participants, conclusions can be made through the collected data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:33). Creswell and Poth (2018:74) add that the researcher as well as the researched co-constructs reality.

4.3.4.3 Methodology

Creswell & Poth (2018:51) describe methodology as an emerging and inductive procedure shaped by the researcher's experience when collecting and analyzing data. Rehman and Alharthi (2016:52) see it as a "roadmap" that helps the researcher, whereas others think of it more as a plan of action or procedure (Tuli, 2010:102). Inductive logic is followed extensively and is not left solely up to theory or the participant's views. Methodology helps to better understand the research problem. The researcher followed a path of knowledge that was "increasingly detailed" about the topic that was studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018:51). Methodology is a strategy of research that transforms the principles of ontology and epistemology into guidelines (Tuli, 2010:102). To gain knowledge, the researcher will ask questions and methodology enables the researcher to study a phenomenon (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2019:28; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016:52).

4.3.4.4 Axiology

Researchers not only bring value to a study but they "make their values known" in their study (Creswell & Poth, 2018:51). The axiological assumption requires the researcher

to report their biases and values of the study actively from the gathered information. The researcher of this study has explained her interest in the study, as she herself is a literacy teacher in the foundation phase. Therefore, values known about the topic were also made known. As far as possible, the researcher “stood back” and looked at the process objectively. The ethics and values and their role in a study are referred to when using the term axiology (Saunders, 2016:128). This included not only the values of the researcher but also the values of those involved in the study. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:34), this is of paramount importance when it comes to the results of the study and contributes to its credibility. Since the researcher is doing interviews as part of the data collection, it is vital that the personal interaction with participants is valued and that their views are expressed anonymously (Saunders, 2016:128).

4.3.5 Advantages and Disadvantages of the Interpretivist Paradigm

The first advantage of an interpretivist paradigm is that when looking at the phenomena, there are so many diversifying views; this helps the researcher see and describe objects and get a better understanding thereof (Pham, 2018:3). The paradigm allows the research to be done in a natural setting where the participants feel safe and comfortable. In the case of this study, the data were collected at the school, and in some cases, via telephonic conversations, allowing the participants to feel at ease. Insights can be obtained directly from the participants involved in specific cases; insights from the research objects are gained from the insiders, which leads to more authentic information (Tuli, 2010). Furthermore, this paradigm allows for the investigation of things that cannot be observed. Participants’ feelings, perceptions, views, values, prejudice, thoughts, and perspectives can be investigated (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007).

There are also disadvantages to this paradigm. Pham (2018:4) points that it is “aiming to gain the deeper understanding and knowledge of phenomena within its complexity of the context rather than generalise these results to other people and other contexts”. Thus, a gap is left in upholding validity in the outcomes of the research. The ontological view of this paradigm causes this approach to be subjective instead of objective (Mack, 2010). This means that, as a researcher, what I view as important may not necessarily be viewed as important to other researchers or even readers. The researcher’s own

interpretation, ways of thinking, and belief system may cause biased outcomes in the study (Pham, 2018:4).

4.3.6 Reasons for Adopting Interpretivist Paradigm for This Study

Apart from the motivations as described in the preceding paragraphs, the researcher could view the role of the principal through the experiences and expertise of the participants. Thanh (2015:24) says that this is possible through the data gathered in this study through the interviews with principals, HOD's and teachers. By using this paradigm, the researcher was able to explore and gain a deeper understanding of the views and perspectives of these participants (see Abdel-Fattah & Galal-Edeen, 2009:7).

The chosen research approach, namely the qualitative research approach, will be discussed in the next section of this study.

4.4 THE RESEARCH APPROACH ADOPTED: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The research explained simplistically as “searching for knowledge and searching for truth” (Grover, 2015:1). To start addressing the research problem, an appropriate approach should be chosen deliberately to ultimately find solutions to the problem by designing research hypotheses, using different methods, selecting proper data collection tools, data processing, and presenting possible solutions to the problem before presenting the findings. When referring to the term “approach”, it means that the research plans and procedures are hedged in by assumptions of methods detailed in data collection, interpretation, and analysis. Grover (2015:1) further emphasise that to decide on the proper approach, the decision is guided by the philosophical assumptions an approach brings to the study, the chosen approach it necessitates, procedures of inquiry (research designs), and specific research methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation, as guided by design.

This study adopted a qualitative approach, as the researcher believes that the link between the philosophical assumptions, the research design, and the qualitative approach is appropriate to comprehend the significance of the study and to better guide the researcher's efforts in obtaining information.

4.4.1 Defining Qualitative Research

Clarke and Braun (2013:2) define qualitative research as an approach that “uses words as data collected and analysed in all sorts of ways”. Skovdal, Morten and Cornish (2015:1), on the other hand, point out that qualitative research is a method of inquiry where the beliefs, benefits, meanings, and perspectives are being explored and described. In addition, qualitative research aims to find meaning and an in-depth understanding of the phenomena (Chrism, Douglas & Hilson, 2008:1; Aspers & Corte, 2019:147). In this study, therefore, using this method, the views and perspectives of principals, HOD’s and teachers were obtained in interviews, documentary analysis, and observations to make meaning of the research problem. My approaches were thus in line with what qualitative methodologists perceive, and that is this approach involves making use of various empirical materials and approaches, such as case studies, interviews, personal experiences, observations, interactions, and visual text, to only mention a few; these all contribute to bringing meaning in the lives of individuals (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, Silverman, 2005, Flick, 2007, Silverman, 2013).

This research study sought to understand the role of principals as instructional literacy leaders in the FP. The HODs, subject heads and teachers are all important roleplayers in improving literacy, they work as part of a team with principals. Working in close collaboration with the principal thus, they have valuable perspectives about the role of principals in the improvement of literacy. Their involvement in the study therefore, has helped the researcher to obtain in-depth responses about the research problem. According to Horn (2018:89), greater insights are sought to be explored and achieved from the personal experiences and views of the participants in the study.

4.4.2 Aim of Qualitative Research

Various researchers view the aim of qualitative research as assisting researchers in gaining a better understanding and fostering better knowledge of the world we live in and comprehending “why things are the way they are” (Hancock, Windridge and Ockleford, 2009:7; Marshall & Rossman, 2011:92).

4.4.3 Other Important Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Thomas (2010:302) emphasises the fact that the researcher has to be at the core of the collection of data and the interpretation of the meanings, beliefs, and perceptions. Characteristics of qualitative research are identified by numerous researchers and their studies, but only a few would be mentioned here since there are various characteristics, and the list is not exhaustive. It will be shown below (Adapted: Chrism, Douglas & Hilson, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Styśko-Kunkowska, 2014; Yin, 2011 & Horn, 2018).

Table 4.1: The Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Naturalistic or real-life orientation	This refers to studies taking place in a natural setting to understand the realities of the existing conditions.
Purpose of the study	The study is aimed at exploring and understanding rather than shift blaming or generalization.
The involvement of the researcher	The encouragement and presence of the researcher are seen as a strength in the study instead of the researcher being uninvolved or not recognised.
A holistic perspective	Having different approaches towards a problem instead of having a narrow view or vision.
An inductive approach	The researcher does not only rely on and work from theories but they work from patterns on specific cases.
An emergent design	Due to the fact that findings of a study may reveal new suggestions, draft plans are developed and amended rather than having fixed designs already laid out from the start.

In the next paragraph, a brief outline of the flow of a qualitative research study.

4.4.4 Flow of Research in Qualitative Research

The following table shows the steps that unfold in a qualitative study (Cohen et al, 2007; Kothari, 2004; Neuman, 2014; Horn, 2018). This process was used in this study.

Table 4.2: Steps in a qualitative study

Identifying the research problem	The problem that will be studied is identified by the researcher. For instance, this study explores the role of the principal as a literacy leader in the FP.
Literature Review	Literature that may be relevant to the study is researched to address and identify the research problem.
Problem Statement and research questions	The research questions, aims and objectives are addressed in this part of the study.
Data Collection	Data collection is the practical application and proof of data gained as the evidence for the study derived from the aims of the study.
Data Analysis	Analyse the data that was collected and make interpretations and conclusions.
Report on the findings	Discuss the findings and make recommendations.

4.4.5 Advantages and Disadvantages of Qualitative Research

As previously mentioned, qualitative research has various perspectives and is seen as an umbrella term that covers numerous interpretive techniques and is therefore seen as an overarching concept; hence, it has advantages and disadvantages (Rahman, 2017:103).

4.4.5.1 Advantages of qualitative research

Qualitative research has some benefits when it is used as a research approach. It gives a full and detailed description of the participants' opinions, feelings, experiences, and actions interpreted. Rahman (2017:104) further mentions that "qualitative research results provide the relationship of information processing with performance specifically and deeply". Chalhoub-Deville and Deville (2008), on the other hand, argue that deeper insights in terms of issues are employed. Another advantage is that, in specific settings, human experiences are understood more holistically. Qualitative research gives meaning to various peoples' perspectives and gives participants a voice in different situations (Richardson, 2012). Rahman (2017:104) points out in his dissertation that participants' behaviours are analysed by various research techniques as well as cross-cultural influences (Lazaraton & Taylor, 2007). The inner experiences of participants are also discovered when using a qualitative research approach; this also includes identifying how the meanings of different participants are shaped through culture (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Through individual or group interviews, the researcher can interact directly with the participants to collect the needed data. Qualitative research has a flexible design structure and can be constructed and reconstructed considerably (Maxwell, 2012). By using qualitative research methods for issues or a problem to be analysed appropriately, participants determine what is consistent for them by having sufficient freedom (Flick, 2011). Rahman (2017:104) highlights those complex issues are made simple and easy to understand.

4.4.5.2 Disadvantages of qualitative research

There are also a few disadvantages when deciding on a qualitative research approach. Since this approach mostly focuses on the experiences and meanings, Rahman (2017:105) highlights those contextual sensitivities are often left out (Silverman, 2010). In agreement with this, crucial issues in the context may be left out by only focusing on participants' experiences (Cumming, 2001; Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy & Sixsmith, 2013; Wilson, 2014). A wider generalisation of other contexts is limited to smaller sample sizes, limiting the results obtained (Lam, 2015). This leads to the process of data analysis and interpretation being more complex. According to Berg and Lune (2012:4), it is demonstrated that "qualitative research is a long hard road, with elusive data on one side and stringent requirements for analysis on the other." It

takes up a lot of time to analyse the cases and may tend to generalise results because of the enlarged populations (Flick, 2011). The advantages and disadvantages were both investigated and considered informatively before deciding on using the approach.

4.4.5.3 *Reasons for adopting a qualitative research approach for this study*

As the previous section about the advantages pointed out, qualitative research focuses on the experiences of the participants. Therefore, the researcher deemed this approach appropriate (Austin & Sutton, 2014:436). The study wants to better understand the participants' experiences of teachers and leaders in literacy to find more information on how literacy can ultimately be improved from a principal's point of view.

4.5 RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT AND POPULATION

Together with the research design, the study requires the researcher to decide whom or what should be investigated. The population is defined as all the people, objects, subjects, everyone, and everything of concern that the researcher can study or draw conclusions from (Babbie, 2014:119). This study's population was located at five quantiles five primary schools in the Free State, Motheo District. The stakeholders include principals, Department Heads, subject heads/teachers employed in primary school, specifically FP.

4.6 SELECTION PROCEDURES OF PARTICIPANTS

To make reasonable conclusions, it is not compulsory to use an entire population to gather information (Mack et al., 2009:5). Additionally, the selection of participants or a phenomenon the researcher chose was only a section of the population and therefore was theorised in the study to represent an entire population (Neuman, 2011:246). For qualitative studies, only a sample of the population was selected to conclude the study. According to Mack et al. (2009:5), the number of participants decided on was based on the study's research objectives. Participants were chosen carefully and intentionally. The reason for this was to find the potential participants who were willing to share their perspectives and to make sure the participants had experience with the

phenomenon (Barglowski, 2018). The researcher had to choose participants who were most suitable to provide the needed information. They had to contribute to the study by providing needed and relevant information (Kumar, 2011:176; Yin, 2011:88).

The following participants were purposefully selected and were used in this research. Purposeful selection is a qualitative technique used to identify and select effective participants to be involved in a study, whether it be individual participants or groups (Palinkas, Feldman & Feldman, 2015:2). This method of selection is intended to maximize efficiency and validity. However, there are also some limitations to this method. It can be “highly prone to researcher bias” (Palinkas et al., 2015:2), and some may say that the nature of selection is subjective, meaning that the participants chosen may not be the preferred participants that the reader would’ve chosen for the study (Sharma, 2017:751-752).

Five principals, together with their FP Department Heads, were interviewed individually to explore their knowledge on their roles and responsibilities as literacy leaders. Five focus-group interviews also took place with three to four of the FP teachers. These participants were able to address the aims of the research. The selected number of participants did not represent the population in its totality; however, the findings limited the generalisation. When selecting participants, those who were not fit for the study were eliminated (Patton, 2002:126).

4.7 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Observing from numerous angles allows the researcher to learn more than by only viewing a single perspective, and research is built on this principle (Neuman, 2014:166). Choy (2014:99) adds that, through purposeful selection, open-ended interviews are qualitative methods used to gather data. Different methods were employed to collect data for this qualitative study. Principals, Department Heads, subject heads and teachers’ opinions and views were sought by conducting individual interviews with both 4 Principals and 5 Department Heads (Appendix D). Focus group interviews were conducted with 3-4 FP teachers of 5 different schools (Appendix E). Furthermore, document analysis (Appendix F) was done in the participating schools to get a better understanding and gain greater insight into how principals and other leaders in the school use their roles as literacy leaders. Personal feelings and non-

verbal responses that were noticeable were also jotted down during the interviews. In the following section, the methods that were used for data collection will be discussed. In the following paragraphs, the data collections used will be discussed.

4.7.1 Individual Interviews with Principals

Patton (2002:341) describes interviews as one of the best ways to “enter into the other person's perspective”. Cohen et al. (2007:349) states that “the use of the interview in research marks a move away from seeing human subjects as simply manipulable and data as somehow external to individuals, and towards regarding knowledge as generated between humans, often through conversations.”

The interviewers, as well as the interviewees, are enabled to not only use their own words but also clearly point out the view of various situations (Cohen et al., 2007:350). Horn (2018:98) shows in his dissertation that “during qualitative interviews, the researcher attempts to gain knowledge of the social condition in which participants live, and concentrates on giving the correct interpretation of how participants respond to questions” (Yin, 2011:135). Interviews were used to gain a better understanding and greater insights into the roles of principals as literacy leaders, the challenges they experience, and how they overcome them to improve the performance of FP learners in literacy levels.

An Individual interview is regarded by Adhabi and Anozie (2017:88) as a consultation with the participant, where the researcher seeks knowledge by asking the participant questions, and in return, the participant gives their opinionated answers. According to Lavery (2016:12), these interviews are quite intensive and in-depth and involve pre-determined questions, which allow the researcher to be flexible during the interview and present follow-up questions amidst the conversation. In the individual interviews, the researcher made use of semi-structured questions. The qualitative researcher seeks open-ended questions with a semi-structured nature (Hancock et al., 2009:16). Hancock et al. (2009:16) further imply that topics can be explored in more detail by the researcher and the participants when questions are not pre-determined. In addition, Lavery (2016:12) demonstrates that the researcher can also request the participants to explain their responses or answers in greater detail.

Further advantages and disadvantages of individual interviews will be discussed briefly in the following paragraphs. The rationale for collecting data through interviews will also be discussed below.

4.7.1.1 *Some other advantages of individual interviews*

The following can all be viewed as advantages for individual interviews. When a rapport is established with the participants, they feel comfortable and share greater insightful responses, especially with sensitive topics (Horn, 2018:99). Personal feelings are shared in more detail, which allows for a more in-depth experience (Laverty, 2016:11). Additional information can be obtained by asking-follow up questions, which is a great advantage to ensure that key information is gathered. Laverty (2016:11) adds that the flexibility of this approach allows the researcher to ask phrases again if it was not clearly stated or understood the first time. The researcher can monitor their language, tone, and word choice to make it level-appropriate for the participants to understand it clearly and avoid misunderstandings (Steber, 2017). Body language can be read to know if they are comfortable or not. There are no distractions or dynamics of peer pressure, so own views can be given through confidently. High-value findings can be obtained in a short period, which makes these interviews very advantageous and insightful (Laverty, 2016; Steber, 2017).

4.7.1.2 *Disadvantages of individual interviews*

The following were all identified as disadvantages for individual interviews. First, these interviews must be transcribed, analyzed, organized, and reported afterwards, which makes it very time-consuming (Laverty, 2016:11). The entire process may be undermined if the interviewer is not skilled and prepared. If this study is done in other cities or provinces, it may be costly due to travel and accommodation expenses (Steber, 2017). The researchers' bias may be forthcoming, and they should be very careful when choosing the participants to avoid bias (Horn, 2018:100).

4.7.1.3 Rationale for using semi-structured interviews to collect data

The reason why semi-structured questions were used for the individual interviews was to afford the researcher the opportunity to ask follow-up questions when the participant's responses were not captured correctly due to unclear interpretations. According to the PAM, principals remain the accountable officer, even though leadership is shared between the principal, deputy principal, and Department Heads (DBE, 2016:38).

Individual one-on-one interviews were undertaken with five principals from the selected primary schools as well as the five Department Heads of the FP. Principals are curriculum and instructional leaders (Jenkins & Pfeifer, 2012). Therefore, they were interviewed to explore these leadership roles in literacy. According to the PAM document, Department Heads are the leaders for FP teachers (DBE, 2016), and they were interviewed to explore the challenges they experience with regards to literacy leadership. As they work closely with principals to execute this role, their views on how principals perform these roles can add value to the subject. Individual interviews that are done face to face provide a more accurate screening (De Franzo, 2014). Interviews were also recorded.

4.7.1.4 Addressing limitations of the Individual semi-structured Interviews

As previously mentioned, there are various disadvantages of semi-structured individual interviews; however, the researcher still deemed this approach appropriate. The researcher will not have any unnecessary costs related to travelling and accommodation since the study is done in the researcher's hometown (Daniel, 2016:98). The researcher is aware that it may be time-consuming to analyse and transcribe the interviews but has planned well to use time wisely to complete the study successfully.

4.7.2 Focus Group Interviews

Information was obtained by exploring a group of people's opinions, perspectives, and basic perceptions on a certain topic (Lotich, 2011). Kumar (2011:103) defines focus groups as a "form of strategy in qualitative research in which attitudes, opinions or

perceptions towards an issue, are explored through a free and open discussion between members of a group and the researcher”.

Focus group interviews are defined as a method of collecting information through the interviewing of groups that consists of four to six people (Creswell, 2018:218). Horn (2018:101) mentions that Lavery (2016:12) “believes that focus groups cluster individuals to have a focused discussion on an aspect that has been decided upon beforehand”. A group of individuals that share similar views or experiences on a specific theme that is predetermined, gather together in “focused” groups to discuss the topic (Yin, 2011:141). In focus groups, the understandings, perceptions, and experiences of a group of individuals with the same or common experiences are explored within these group interview sessions (Kumar, 2011:131). Kumar (2011:103) further highlights that interviews allow the researcher to ask questions and discuss issues in this facilitated focus group session.

The advantages and disadvantages of using focus group interviews will be discussed in the following paragraphs, as well as the reason that this type of interview was used.

4.7.2.1 Advantages of focus group interviews

this type of interview is advocated because a plethora of data is yielded over a short period (Mack et al., 2011:51). Additionally, diverse and numerous perspectives are obtained on a chosen subject and collected in the focus group interviews. Hence, focus group interviews are advantageous because information-rich data is yielded through group diversity and dynamics (Mack et al., 2011:52). Immediate and quick results are obtained, and these interviews are low in cost, according to Babbie (2014:330). Babbie (2014:330) also mentions that group dynamics are elicited through focus group interviews, as participants introduce new topics that may be significant to the study and can be explored by the researcher.

4.7.2.2 Disadvantages of focus group interviews

Disadvantages that were identified by Babbie (2014:330) is, firstly, that the researcher may have slightly less control over the group discussions. Secondly, the data that was gathered is challenging to analyse. Thirdly, the groups may have differences arising

and this may be troublesome. Lastly, the assembling and control of these groups may be challenging at times.

4.7.2.3 *Rationale for using focus group interviews to collect data*

The researcher wanted to collect as much information as possible regarding principals' perspectives and views on being literacy leaders in the FP. Furthermore, exploring the challenges they experience and how they plan to overcome them was also valuable information. Focus group interviews were held with two groups of four to six FP teachers. They form part of the leadership team and would be able to provide insight on the leadership roles of principals with respect to literacy. Focus-group interviews have involved five FP teachers. As custodians of the literacy curriculum, they can provide rich information on literacy classroom experiences (Plaatjies, 2020:3). Focus-group interviews will consist of groups of three to four participants who will voluntarily meet for a discussion. This will allow the participants to demonstrate their different viewpoints and disagreements (Schwab, 2016). The focus group interviews have been recorded.

4.7.2.4 *Addressing limitations of the focus group interviews*

Limitations were addressed by ensuring that the researcher was familiar with the script and ensured control was never lost during the interviews (Nyumba, Wilson, Derick & Mukherjee, 2018:22). Furthermore, the researcher made sure every participant had their own opinion and was not influenced or directed to answer in a dominant participant's view. All participants were able to give their own opinions without feeling threatened or intimidated (Adams & Cox, 2008:23). Finally, the researcher ensured that everything was planned out effectively to complete the gathering and analysis of the data in the time frame that was set out.

4.7.3 Document Analysis

Qualitative research can be done through document analysis where the researcher is given a voice via interpreted documents (Bowen, 2009). According to O'Leary (2014),

document analysis can be in the form of public records, personal documents, or physical evidence.

4.7.3.1 Definition of document analysis

The assessing or weighing up electronic or written documents can be described as document analysis (Bowen, 2009:27). Creswell (2012:223) concurs and defines it as shedding light on particular participants or settings through obtaining private and unrestricted archives. Researchers claim that diverse and numerous types of documents may be used in document analysis. These documents include the visions, mission statements, minutes, brochures, reports, letters, diaries, emails, notices, records, photographs, memos, plans, libraries, and journals (Bowen, 2009:27; Hancock et al., 2009:19; Creswell, 2012:223; Yin, 2011:149; Kelly, 2016:55).

4.7.3.2 Rationale for document analysis

To foster and discover a better comprehension of the studied phenomena, the researcher can use different types of documents to assist with the process (Bowen, 2009:30). Important contextual information of the researcher's own study or fieldwork can be complemented by observing school records, newspapers, magazine articles, population statistics, or archived records (Yin, 2011:148). According to Cardno, Rosales-Anderson and McDonald (2017:146), this can help clarify some of the organisation's unfamiliar aspects that might improve the communications levels of the organisation.

Document analysis was used for this study, and Bowen (2009:29-30) can substantiate the reasons for using this method as a data collection tool as follow:

- The participant's environmental setting may bring forth important information through document analysis.
- Circumstantial information can be generated and the context of the study can become meaningful via these insights.
- Aspects that need more clarity can be highlighted through the document analysis.

- Value can be added to the research findings, and a better understanding can be gained by analysing the documents.
- The researcher compares different drafts to find the possible differences from the available documents.
- Documents can endorse evidence from various sources like interviews, and these types of documents are vital.

Document analysis may help obtain crucial information that the participant accidentally left out or can clarify activities that cannot be witnessed (Creswell, 2012:223). This type of data collection method may be very helpful to obtain information to help support and make the study stronger.

4.7.3.3 Advantages and Limitations of Document Analysis

Document analysis, like any other research approach, has its advantages and limitations. The following paragraphs will explain these concepts.

(i) Advantages of document analysis

This approach is not as time-consuming as other methods of data collection, such as interviews. Furthermore, having access to the internet in the modern world has made it easier to gain access to certain documents without the author's permission. This approach is not as costly because the data has been gathered already. Challenges of reflexivity can be reduced through the objects that have been collected. The documents used for document analysis cannot be adapted by the researcher and is non-reactive. A variety of topics and information can be covered by the documents, which took place over long periods within numerous settings (Bowen, 2009:31; Yin, 2011:149; Kelly, 2016:55).

(ii) Limitations of document analysis

The limitations of document analysis are set out by several researchers (Bowen, 2009:31; Yin, 2011:149; Kelly, 2016:55). Firstly, it may be quite challenging to get permission to access the needed documents for the study, as they may contain private or restricted information. Secondly, there is no guarantee that the documents are accurate, completely true, as they may be incomplete as well. Thirdly, all minutes or documents may not be accurate, and there is a possibility that they were not reviewed.

Fourthly, documents that are made available may not be of good quality, and the information's credibility may be compromised. Lastly, but not limited to these being the only limitations, personal notes, diaries, and bad handwriting may contribute to challenges in interpreting and deciphering documents.

The advantages of this approach are surpassing the limitations, and the low costs in finances make this approach very useful, and it may add great value to qualitative studies.

4.7.3.4 How document analysis was used in the research study

Procedural guidelines on the collecting of data through document analysis are set out by Creswell (2012:223). These guidelines were carefully considered when documents were analysed at the participating schools.

Documents that can add value to the study and the research questions should be identified. In the case of this study, documents that were studied were:

(i) Moderation reports by the principals and SMT-members' moderation plan

The moderation reports that were analysed will include assessment reports, the subject management plan, mark sheets, focus and error analysis, and the subject improvement plan to view how literacy issues and achievements were obtained as well as where the areas of concern may be.

(ii) Academic Performance Improvement Plan (APIP)

The academic performance improvement plan indicates the whole grade's performance in a specific subject. By analysing this document, we can get an idea of the percentage of learners passing or failing. We will also get a good indication of where the areas of concern lie when it comes to literacy needs and how we can improve them. These documents were graded against a rubric to provide a picture of how literacy leadership is exercised.

To obtain additional information that might strengthen the study, a variety of private and public documents should be studied (Creswell, 2012:223). Additionally, permission needs to be granted from the institution to obtain the documents needed to analyse the study. The researcher secured the documents through negotiations

before the data collection process commenced. After permission or consent has been granted to the researcher, the content of the documents should be studied accurately for the data to assist in answering the research questions of this study. In this study, the researcher analysed the documents by looking at the assessment reports, APIP's, subject improvement plans and the focus and error analysis documents to find areas of concern and possible literacy needs.

The data that was obtained from the documents should be jotted or written down.

This study aimed to explore the role of principals as literacy leaders in the FP. The documents used were strategically selected to show details regarding the literacy achievements of learners as well as the reports of the participants involved in the study to explore whether they are fulfilling their roles as literacy leaders.

The analysis of the collected data will be highlighted in the next section.

4.8 THE DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

Data analysis can be described as making meaningful insights from the collected data (Bhatia, 2018). Creswell (2012:236) states that "analysing qualitative data requires understanding how to make sense of text and images so that you can form answers to your research questions". Due to the adaptable design of data analysis, the analysis process can already begin while collecting data (Chrism et al., 2008:43). Deenath (2013:173) defines data analysis as large amounts of data that are being recorded and the findings are being arranged.

The process involved in data analysis is focused, and there are certain steps to be followed (Horn, 2018:109). According to Genniker (2015:150), these steps involve taking large amounts of raw data and reducing it. Furthermore, the collected data should be restructured and ordered into categories identified within the data. Thereafter a framework was then structured using the categories to develop themes to present the findings of the data collected (Horn, 2018:109).

Searching for patterns in data and examining meaningful content is the aim of data analysis in qualitative research (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009:160) further suggests that to ensure that data analysis is of high quality, certain aspects should be kept in mind:

- All evidence should be attended to.
- All alternative interpretations should be included.
- The issue that is the most important should be the main focus.
- The background knowledge of the researcher should be used in the analysis of the case study.

Rutgers (2012:151) points out that, according to Patton (2002:447), data analysis aims to get a holistic and context-sensitive perspective while conducting the case study. Oliva (2013:48) furthermore mentions that data analysis ensures raw data is organized to use the important information gained from the collection sufficiently. It is thus vital to fully comprehend the thinking and organizing process to understand the value of the data. The emphasis on information that is useful, supports decision making, and points to conclusions is the goal of data analysis.

A content analysis approach was used aligned to pre-determined themes to process the transcribed data. As pointed out by Oliva (2013:48), the thematic data analysis approach involves breaking up the text into relationships, patterns, and manageable themes (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:72). Questions were formed and written down, and the researcher developed themes and concepts to identify what the principals and other literacy leaders understand about the principals' roles as literacy leaders in the FP. Furthermore, the challenges they experience and how they overcome them will also be identified in these themes. The descriptive data that this study offered will enable the readers to comprehend the study better.

The following subsections focus on how the data that was collected was analysed.

4.8.1 Analysis of Individual Interviews

Five principals and 5 Department Heads of quantile five schools were interviewed individually using semi-structured questions. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants and their anonymity for all schools and their principals:

(i)	Principal of school A: PA1
(ii)	Principal of school B: PB1
(iii)	Principal of school C: PC1
(iv)	Principal of school D: PD1

(v)	Principal of school E: PE1
(vi)	DH of school A: DHA1
(vii)	DH of school B: DHB1 & DHB2
(viii)	DH of school C: DHC1
(ix)	DH of school D: DHD1
(x)	DH of school E: DHE1

The experiences of the principals and Department Heads are vital. They would be able to share important aspects of literacy leadership. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and thematically grouped.

4.8.2 Analysis of Focus Group Interviews

The participants' anonymity was preserved by making use of pseudonyms.

(i)	Teacher 1 school A: TA1
(ii)	Teacher 2 school A: TA2
(iii)	Teacher 3 school A: TA3
(iv)	Teacher 1 school B: TB1
(v)	Teacher 2 school B: TB2
(vi)	Teacher 3 school B: TB3
(vii)	Teacher 1 school C: TC1
(viii)	Teacher 2 school C: TC2
(ix)	Teacher 3 school C: TC3
(x)	Teacher 4 school C: TC4
(xi)	Teacher 1 school D: TD1
(xii)	Teacher 2 school D: TD2
(xiii)	Teacher 3 school D: TD3
(xiv)	Teacher 1 school E: TE1
(xv)	Teacher 2 school E: TE2
(xvi)	Teacher 3 school E: TE3

All recorded interviews were transcribed and additional notes were taken to point out emotions and data that was non-verbal. Data that was quite similar when doing the analysis was coupled together thematically, and thereafter coded. The content

analysis required the identification of issues, similarities, topics, and possible differences that was based on the answers and comments the participants provided (Sutton & Austin, 2015:28). All data were thematically analysed and divided into specific categories (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012:10). The audio recordings were used to reflect the viewpoints of the participants and the data was substantiated via verbatim quotations.

4.8.3 Analysis of Documents

According to Bowen (2009:32), document analysis means identifying superficial information, reading, and interpreting information. Content analysis and thematic analysis was used to analyse the moderation reports and moderation plan by the principals, SMT-members, and the APIP's that was mentioned previously. Additionally, these documents were also used to support and verify the data that was gathered during the interview processes (Bowen, 2009:33). In an attempt to address the study's research questions, these documents were categorised in alignment with the study. Themes became apparent from the study, which was then identified under the findings of the researcher.

4.9 QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The researcher went to great lengths to ensure this study is not questionable and that the findings are reliable and trustworthy. In the quality assurance of research, imperative aspects should be kept in mind to ensure the quality of the qualitative research study (Kumar, 2011:169; Anney, 2014:276). The following should be kept in mind in qualitative research: trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

4.9.1 Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers adopt certain strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of their research. Silverman (2011:360) mentions that trustworthiness refers to repeatability (whether the results and interpretations would be the same when other researchers conduct the same research study). Trustworthiness has numerous definitions, but the

best-known criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The terms intertwined in this study are credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.

4.9.2 Credibility

Credibility is viewed as “the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings”, according to Korstjens and Moser (2018:121). The accuracy and consistency of the data collected for the interpretation of the study are known as credibility (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The credibility of the study is strengthened by gaining a better understanding of the views and perspectives of the participants because they ultimately control the credibility of the results. Bryant (2020:72) highlights that credibility “establishes procedures that include continuous engagement, member checking, interviewing, consistent observing, and data triangulation of sources, theories, and methods” (Houghton, Casey, Shaw & Murphy, 2013). Sufficient time was allowed for the participants to collect data. It is suggested that prolonged contact time while collecting data allows a ensures a better understanding of the participants’ experiences, and therefore, rich, cohesive, and consistent data can be collected (Lewis, 2015). In this study, credibility was ensured by checking the raw data by my supervisor and the participants who took part in the study.

4.9.2.1 Member checking

Member checking was used after the data was collected and transcribed. This allowed the participants to add explanations to their answers or responses to ensure that the information given was accurate. According to Anney (2014:277), to improve the quality of the data, checking forms part of a credibility strategy. The participants’ direct interpretations of their views are vital in including the data analysis (Kumar, 2011:169). Babbie and Mouton (2001:275) add that member checking allows an opportunity for the information gathered through the interviews to be validated. In this study, the transcriptions of all the interviews were scrutinised by three fellow master’s students to evaluate the correctness of the findings. The reason for checking is to ensure that the researchers’ prejudice is excluded from the study’s findings (Anney, 2014:277). Hence, the reason for transcribing the participants’ actual responses. Additionally, the

school documents, such as the moderation reports and moderation plan by the principals, SMT-members, and the APIP's analysed, were also scrutinised by the fellow students to ensure responses were in line with the documentary evidence presented.

4.9.2.2 *Triangulation*

Triangulation of data formed part of the in-depth interviews, the literature reviewed by peers, and the participants' personal information (Anney, 2014). Various sources of information, which helps to increase the study's validity, are used for data triangulation (Creswell, 2014). Triangulation of the data in this study was secured through the use of three data collection methods, namely the semi-structured individual interviews, focus-group interviews, and documentary analysis. The semi-structured interview questions together with the notes the researcher makes while the recording takes place, triangulated this study. This method of triangulation was used to gain a greater understanding of the participants' experiences (Bryman & Bell, 2015) as leaders in literacy.

This study commenced multiple methods to obtain data, namely individual interviews, focus group interviews, as well as documentary analysis, to explore the roles of literacy leaders in the FP, with the main focus on the principals.

4.9.3 *Dependability*

Dependability means that the same study should be done again on the same topic, the same results would be obtained (Kumar, 2011:169). Horn (2018:116) claims that "this suggests that if other researchers sought to reproduce a study, they ought to obtain enough material from the current study to obtain results comparable to those of the current study". Detailed records of this study will be kept safe for other researchers if they want to compare them in further studies on the same topic. Participants were granted the opportunity to evaluate the study's findings, interpretation, and recommendations so that all are supported by the data received from participants of the study.

4.9.4 Transferability

Transferability is another method to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. The extent to which the findings of the study can be transferred is represented through transferability (Anney, 2014:277). Shenton (2004:69) points that information about the school and the detailed background of the participants are provided in regards to their experience in their field of work to ensure transferability. Transferability can be defined as findings of research studies that could be applied to other situations, times, or contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). As pointed out by Bryant (2020: 73), the relevancy of the background of the data can be judged by other researchers through transferability. When a study can be replicated by other researchers using similar methods, it can be viewed as an effective dependable and reliable study (Yin, 2015). Applicability may be a concern in transferability, and a “thick description” is vital to allow the reader to assess the findings and judge the transferability (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014:574). The evidence provided in this study with multiple datasets is evidence that this study could apply to the contexts, situations, times, and populations.

4.9.5 Confirmability

Confirmability is an additional method of enhancing the trustworthiness of this study. The researcher’s steps are taken to ultimately prove that the findings are from information collected and not their personal opinions (Silver & Lewins, 2014). When the researcher is being reflexive, it is not expected of them to completely avoid or ignore their own bias, as this would also be impossible. Rather, it requires the researcher to clearly articulate subjectivities and their position while reflecting on it for readers to better understand or comprehend the questions, collected data, and reported findings (Sutton & Austin, 2015:226). Anney (2014:279) additionally defines confirmability as being concerned with data and interpretations being established based on the findings from the collected data and not reflected from the imagination of the person inquiring the data. Thus, confirmability is the impartiality in the study’s findings.

Bryant (2020:75) claims that the participants’ replies to questions and their perception of the researcher will determine the foundation of the findings. Therefore, the researcher has to ensure that the participants' responses were not twisted or adapted.

Hence, partiality should be eliminated to guarantee honest responses. The participants will be informed of the study's procedures and what it entails beforehand to allow them to have their thoughts developed on what their possible responses may be. The data that was collected and analyzed will be recorded in detail. Any uncertainty that the researcher experienced in the collected data will be reflected in the findings of the study. In this study, research bias was minimized through the use of multiple people to code the data, having participants review their results, verifying with more data sources, checking for alternative explanations, and reviewing findings with peers.

4.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS APPLIED IN THE STUDY

In South Africa, the foundation of ethical principles and constitutional human rights are formed by the Constitution (1996). These rights and principles from the Constitution guided this study. Participants' feelings and views should be respected at all times. The study has to be supervised properly and confidence between the researcher and the participants should be fostered continuously (Mack et al., 2009:8). However, Ketefian (2015:167) mentions that the rights of the participants and privacy should be protected and ethical considerations should also protect them from any harm and confidentiality as part of the ethical considerations.

4.10.1 Permission to Conduct the Research Study

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee at the University of the Free State (**ethics number: UFS-HSD2020/2095/153**) (**Appendix B**) as well as the Free State Department of Education (**Appendix A**).

4.10.2 Informed Consent

Informed consent provides information that is truthful and accurate. The participants are allowed to participate without any implicit or explicit pressure while keeping all participant information confidential (Kiefan, 2015:167). The nature of the study, the researcher's contact information, confidentiality, and the participation requirements were presented to the participants. It is imperative to find reliable information and to adapt to norms and values (Mouton, 2006:238-239). The prevention of "fabrication,

falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research or reporting research results” is vital, according to Johnson and Christensen (2008:103). All participants were informed about the process (Strydom 2007:56-69). Their rights will be protected, and a harmless research process will be guaranteed. Participants received consent forms to sign (Appendix D).

4.10.3 Voluntary Participation

The participants’ views, thoughts, intentions, and feelings will be respected and taken into consideration. They were informed that participation is voluntary and that they have the option to withdraw at any stage during the research process (Horn, 2018:119).

4.10.4 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Through the use of pseudonyms, the participants and the participating schools were guaranteed anonymity. The participants’ personal information would thus be disclosed as well as any comments made by participants while not being recorded. The participants’ answers would be given through in this study via fictitious code numbers to still identify the data received from the participants. Anonymity is guaranteed and pseudonyms will be used to hide the identity of the participants (Saunders & Kitzinger, 2015:620).

4.10.5 No harm to participants

The participants were not humiliated, placed under any risk, or pressured to participate unwillingly, and no harm to their self-esteem was done (Horn, 2018:120).

4.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Limitations include generalization due to the number of participants, times to visit schools was complex and not always possible, interviewing all the participants that will be approached may not always be successful as some won’t give permission, and all participants were not available due to unforeseen circumstances.

4.12 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter outlined the research that was carried out to have the research questions and objectives answered. The unfolding of the operational side of the study is explained in this chapter. The readers were familiarized with the research design adopted, the qualitative approach and presented the appropriate instrument for the study. The definition, aims, advantages, and limitations of qualitative research were the founding principles that were discovered in this chapter. The chapter furthermore highlighted and explained the process of how participants were selected for the data collection process. The data collection methods were described, comprised individual interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis to obtain information vital to the study.

How data was collected and analysed were also explained in this chapter. The quality assurance and ethical considerations of this study were revealed to the reader and showed respect towards keeping the trust and protection of the participants at heart throughout the study.

Chapter five constitutes the presentation, discussion, and analysis of the data.

CHAPTER 5 :

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to explore the role of principals as literacy leaders in the FP. Chapter four comprised the outline of the research design and methodology. The research methodology is the specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyse a topic. This process included the selection of the participants and the procedure surrounding this process. To ensure the quality and the integrity of the research, issues on the trustworthiness of the research were explained. Furthermore, the quality and integrity of the study were additionally guaranteed through the adherence to rigorous ethical measures.

In this chapter, guided by the aims and procedures of the study as presented in Chapter 4, the collected data will be presented and analysed. The data were gathered via individual interviews with five principals and 6 Department Heads. In addition, five focus group interviews were conducted with 16 FP teachers from five quintiles 5 schools. Although the study focused on exploring the role of the principal in improving literacy in the foundation phase, the views of HOD's and teachers formed a very important aspect of the study. As explained in the methodology section, the principal's role includes distributing responsibilities to SMT members and teachers. It forms part of his Instructional leadership role. Secondly, both HOD's and teachers are highly involved in literacy. HOD's are at the forefront as observers and evaluators of the IQMS, moderation, supervision and monitoring processes.

On the other hand, teachers hold valuable opinions about the leadership roles of principals and HOD's in curriculum matters, including literacy. I believe, therefore, that their views added richness and depth to the data. Their contribution is also directly aligned to Secondary research questions 1, 2 and 4. Furthermore, this approach ensured triangulation and trustworthiness of the data.

The data collection process was supported with an analysis of relevant documents related to the aims of the study. These included the minutes of subject and curriculum meetings, book control moderations, assessment moderations, APIP's and school management plans. The first step in analysing the data of this multiple-case qualitative

study was to analyse the unique context of the school. Creswell and Poth (2018) argue that considering context is important in multiple-case studies. The researcher also followed the advice of other researchers to adhere to the requirements for conducting rigorous qualitative research. Plaatjies (2020:8), for example, raised that according to Maxwell (2013:30), “contextual features and their influences on the participants’ experiences are important for qualitative researchers”.

With referral to the contextual aspect, South African government schools are subjected to a quintile system, where all schools are allocated into one of five categories. This categorisation is due to the country’s wide economic disparity, the issue of socioeconomic status, and the disparity between rich and poor schools. The most economically deprived (poorest) geographic areas are categorised as quintile 1, 2, and 3 schools, and those in the greatest economically privileged (wealthiest) environmental areas as quintile 4 and 5 schools. Schools in quintiles 1 to 3 are non-fee-paying schools and receive more funding per learner from the government than schools in quintiles 4 and 5 (Ogbonnaya & Awuah 2019, in Plaatjies, 2020).

Below is a discussion on the findings pertaining to each participating school, its context, and the related findings. The codes that safeguard anonymity were explained in Chapter 4 (4.8.1 and 4.8.2). The analysis strategy employed was a deductive content analysis, but in terms of the following themes:

Theme 1: Principals’ knowledge about the literacy curriculum.

Theme 2: Support from principal and Department Head

Theme 3: Supervision, evaluating and monitoring of the literacy instructional programme

Theme 4: Empowering staff through PD activities

Theme 5: Establishing a positive literacy environment

Theme 6: Challenges experienced in literacy instruction

5.2 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

5.2.1 School A

5.2.1.1 Contextual description

This quintile 5 school is based in a neighbourhood that is characterised by low-class housing. It is also situated more in a small business neighbourhood. The school infrastructure is in good condition. The school looks neat, and a professional atmosphere is evident in the office space. The energetic principal has 15 years of teaching experience and one year as the principal of the school. From the outside, the school appears to be well managed. The FP DH has 18 years of teaching experience and 5 years of experience as DH. The three FP teachers who participated in the interviews have experience of between 2-8 years.

5.2.1.2 Theme 1: Principals' knowledge about the literacy curriculum

The findings under this theme indicate that the teachers do not think the principal has a basic understanding or knowledge of the CAPS literacy curriculum. This is evident in some of the remarks made by the participants during the focus group discussions. TA3, for example, mentioned that the principal “does not have knowledge” and that she is more qualified for “higher grade”. They also opined that she does not have efficient knowledge of literacy in the FP and that they should have at least a basic knowledge of literacy. The lack of knowledge of the principal is even more apparent from her feedback. For example, when asking the principal about her understanding of the subject-specific skills, such as listening and speaking, reading and phonics, writing, her knowledge was found wanting:

“I don't know to be dead honest with you. I don't know... they.... I rely on my teachers to know exactly what they are supposed to be...supposed to be doing. And in my experience, I've never really taught the little ones because I actually do come from a high school. Yeah. So, to be honest with you, I'm gonna suck it out of my thumb. To give you an answer for that one” (PA1).

5.2.1.3 Theme 2: Support from Principal and Department Head

All the teacher participants of this school were quite vocal in their opinions about the support and guidance they receive from their superiors regarding how they are providing learning materials, resources, lesson planning, etc. *“Yeah, it's poor. There's no guidance, you are thrown into the deep side and you must swim”* (TA3). In contradiction with the responses from the teachers, the Departmental Heads stated vaguely that her role is to *“make sure that all the... the teachers are on par with what they have to do”* (DHA1). When probing to elicit more specific responses about the matter, the responses indicated that principals need to support teachers in many aspects related to management and leadership. The data displayed that principals as main Instructional leaders should provide more direction to the Departmental Head, as the Departmental Head does not provide enough guidance to teachers. The support they provide to teachers is sub-standard. TA1 confirms this by stating that:

“even when you ask questions, it's like...well. She, she herself can't answer them, she has to go find out by someone else” (TA3).

TA3 also reiterates that

“the DH needs improvement on people skills and giving guidelines” and *“that's a big frustration for all of us. Because there's no guidance”*.

5.2.1.4 Theme 3: Supervision, evaluating and monitoring of the literacy instructional programme

On the question of how the principal provides support in the form of supervision of instruction to teachers, the participants indicated that they conduct class visits. In a follow-up question on what the aims of such visits are, one of the other participants (HA1) declared that they (the principal together with his Departmental Head do *“monitoring and control on the subject... teachers “are supposed to write lesson plans”* and they *“do a lot to control... teacher planning control as well. Just to make sure that they're also on par”* with ensuring *“learners actually understand what they're doing or must do and we can see if the learners can read with comprehension...”* (DHA1). The document analysis also shows that the book control and moderations of assessments are done frequently. The principals' responses to the same question were as follows:

“At the end of the day, you rely on what the teacher tells you that they do...you must go on their word; you have to trust whatever they say they have done”.

The principal commented also that in support of the supervision, evaluation and mentoring that

“We've got a department head that is fully in charge of that. So she makes sure she draws in whatever she needs, anything books, teacher reports, anything like that. So yes, the Departmental Head makes sure that that happens and then she reports back to me”.

She added that the Departmental Head ensures that all internal moderation processes are done by emphasising that

“I'm very reliant on my Departmental Head especially with the foundation phase, yeah so there's not much that I do. She does all the work and just reports back to me”.

The latter may explain the feedback received from the teachers when asked if the principal provides any supervision in literacy instruction. They (TA1, TA2 &TA3) exclaimed unanimously that their principal does not supervise instruction.

5.2.1.5 Theme 4: Empowering staff through PD activities

When the teachers of school A were asked to provide their opinions on what the principal does to promote PD amongst staff, a resounding answer was given by all participants that the principal is doing nothing to ensure professional development activities. The Departmental Head pointed out that direction is lacking from the principal in terms of the PD through organising workshops for teachers, but they encourage teachers to find certain workshops to attend.

The principal (PA1) herself admitted that she does not take the lead in the PD of teachers in the improvement of literacy. Her response to the question if she takes the lead was brief and to the point that she does not take the lead in organising professional development sessions but that the Department Head do this. She also claimed that she did not get all the invitations to workshops and training. The Department Heads usually get the invites. She expects that the Department Heads see to it that the teachers attend training. She asserts that her responsibility is morning meetings and keeping teachers up to date with educational issues, and she also sees

that as PD. According to this principal, subject development is the responsibility of the Departmental Heads and to ensure it is arranged. She delegates the roles but does not arrange them herself.

5.2.1.6 Theme 5: Establishing a positive literacy environment

From the responses, it can be seen that principals establish few strategies to create a positive literacy environment in their schools. To this end, the Departmental Head alluded that there is definitely room for improvement. She further noted that the school used to have a library, but due to an increase in learners' numbers, they started using it as a classroom and not as a library anymore. DHA1, on the other hand, point out that teachers themselves try to promote a good physical environment in the following ways:

"With a lot of posters on your walls" as well as "having reading corners in the classroom to develop a love for reading and books" (DHA1).

The principal also acknowledged the work done by his teachers by highlighting that:

"their classes are wonderfully structured, the way that they have put out their desks and tables and things like that. You know, the way the classroom has been decorated and all those kinds of things they are using technology and all of the classes. So, it's contributing to that" (PA1).

Additionally, the principal (PA1) exclaimed that the literacy environment is a struggle since the kids attending the school are not English-speaking learners. She further mentions that they try their best to accommodate the learners by stating

"we've learned to cope with it and we know how to implement it correctly so that we can actually get a success rate with it" (PA1).

5.2.1.7 Theme 6: Challenges experienced in literacy instruction

Responding to the question about which challenges exists in literacy in their school, the teachers emphasised that language barriers are a big challenge in their school, especially as the medium of instruction is not the learner's Home Language: *"it's a big challenge for us in class to communicate and use English as home language, and then they don't even understand" (TA 1; TA3).*

They agreed that for them to address the challenges, they need to go back to basics.

TA3 notes:

"I personally feel to go back to the basics. Whether you are in grade three or your grade one, go back to the basics of learning the phonics from scratch, and then you go with the blends and all those things to make sure those things are a good foundation. And then from there on, you can build".

Furthermore, it was mentioned that even though they want to go back to the basics, "...the Annual Teaching Plans (ATP's) doesn't allow it. The government or the Department of Education expects too much from our children" (TA2). The Departmental Head highlighted that because English is not the home language of the learners, they have to focus on phonemic awareness. They do, however, form part of Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) to exchange ideas on improving and overcoming learning barriers (DHA1). When posing the question to the principal if she implements extra classes or provides support to the foundation phase learners to address the challenges, she replied by saying: *"we're not, because we're a combined school...we are focusing on weekends on the grade 12s, we are not at all focusing on the little ones we are trying to fit them in during the week"* (PA1). The principal voiced that there is not much she can do as a principal when accepting these learners. Her view is that the teachers should know what type of kids are coming to the school and enhance their skills through workshops and try to make the best of it. The document analysis also presents the analysis of results and teachers point out their difficulties with language barriers and which areas need intervention. We can give them support but they knew when they applied that they would work with learners who do not come from English Home language homes, but she cannot do much about the circumstances of the school. Additionally, she notes that they do, however, get didactics and are referred to as remedial support in more complex situations.

5.2.2 School B

5.2.2.1 Contextual description

This school is a quintile 5 school that is based in an area where low-class housing is prominent. The suburb is close to small businesses. It is situated close to downtown and the area is not as safe as other schools in town. The school infrastructure is in

good condition. The school looks neat and well looked after compared to the buildings surrounding the school. The area looks quite untidy with rubbish in the streets and suburbs. The principal of this school has a cool and calm approach and demeanour. He has 16 years' experience as a principal and 32 years in teaching experience. This school has two FP Department Heads, and both of them have more than 31 years' experience in teaching. The DH1 has 4 years' experience in being a DH, and DH2 has 21 years' experience. The three teachers have 5, 9, and 16 years of teaching experience amongst them.

5.2.2.2 Theme 1: Principals' knowledge about the literacy curriculum

The teachers were also quite vocal in their responses about this theme. They all agreed that the principal does not possess sufficient knowledge about the literacy curriculum in the FP. In support of this finding, TB2 declared openly: *"I don't think the principal has any knowledge of what's going on in the foundation phase"*. Furthermore, the data indicate that some participants feel that the foundation phase require a special focus and that there is a need for principals to have a sound understanding of the phase:

"foundation phase is not like all the other phases. It's more, it's a speciality phase. And I feel that not only the teachers, but the principal needs to understand that as well"
(TB3).

When the principal was questioned about his knowledge about the CAPS-literacy curriculum, his response was that language is consisted of reading, writing, listening, so different, all the different components (PB1).

5.2.2.3 Theme 2: Support from Principal and Department Head

The teachers were asked how they viewed the support from the principal and the Departmental Head with literacy in terms of providing learning materials, resources, lesson planning, etc. Once again, they responded by saying that they were not receiving support. The teachers alluded that to support them, they want the principal to listen to them and assist them when they need help. On the contrary, though, TB2 emphasised that the support from the Departmental Head is very good:

“Yeah, not from the principal, but the Departmental Heads...are very involved”. The teachers mentioned that the Department Heads helps by monitoring and controlling and giving them guidance in assessments.”

From the responses, it appeared that the teachers did not respect their principal and felt that he didn't take time to come for class visits. Two of the participant's made the following comments, which is evident of the principal's lack of interest and awareness of what is going on: *“I painted my class he didn't even notice”* (TB3). TB2 added, *“I painted my door, I promise you, he will notice it in five years”*. The predominant impression that the researcher got was that the teachers want their principal to support them, make time to listen to their opinions and concerns, and show interest in what they are doing. TB2 confirmed this by stating that:

“We want to feel like we have a principal where we can go and say okay, listen, this is my, my problem. And also, to have a principal that has your back all the time.”

5.2.2.4 Theme 3: Supervision, evaluating and monitoring of the literacy instructional programme

This theme indicated that the principal does not really perform supervision duties in the FP. Supporting this claim, one of the teachers noted: *“None of the above? Uhm No, unsuccessful, not applicable”* (TB2). From the feedback of the Departmental Heads, on the other hand, it could be seen that they are involved in the supervision, evaluation and mentoring process. DHB1 mentioned that:

“We do class visits, and we do IQMS as well and book control. And that gives us more or less an idea if, you know, if we see a teacher is not covering certain parts of the work, you know, and we have meetings, you know, informal meetings, as well as formal meetings quite often”.

The document analysis reflected the monitor and control reports showing that the Departmental Heads are actively involved in guiding and assisting teachers. Furthermore, this finding is confirmed by the responses from the teachers who mentioned that the Departmental Heads are supporting them and guiding them in their work and possible challenges. It also seems that the Departmental Heads are approachable to teachers and that teachers, therefore, feel free to engage with them.

The following comment is evident of the support and open communication channels between the Departmental Heads and teachers:

“...the teacher will come to us. And they'll speak to us and say, you know, I'm struggling with this, or, you know, you haven't covered that and things” (DHB1).

Although the Department Heads do class visits, the teachers feel a need for more interest and hands-on support from the principal's side. This is demonstrated by the following highly insightful views of one teacher,

“he must come for class visits because it's easy when you sit in the big chair to give orders, but if you don't know what's going on in the classroom, you understand? I don't think he has an idea how it is in the foundation phase with those little ones” (TB2).

The data revealed that the teachers felt that the principal had too many responsibilities to attend to and that there was a need for the distribution of some of his responsibilities. TB1 highlights this by saying, *“...may be less that he has to do on his own and divide the work so he can distribute, so we can get stuff done”.*

From the principal's viewpoint, on the other hand, it seems that he is distributing his responsibilities to the Departmental Heads. This was his response about his role and approach towards supervision, evaluating, and monitoring:

“There are also departmental heads. So I don't supervise that one. What usually happens is the departmental head or the subject head, or the grade manager will do that. And they will write, they will compile a report on a quarterly basis or term. And I will sign off on the report” (PB1).

5.2.2.5 Theme 4: Empowering staff through professional development activities.

The feedback from the teachers and the Departmental Head displayed that professional development is mainly conducted by the union and sometimes the department. In contrast to the response from the teacher, however (TB1), the Departmental Head drew attention to the fact that she is conducting virtual workshops. In addition, the Departmental Head claimed that they take the initiative at their school to organise workshops.

“Don’t wait for the department to give us a workshop. There’s such a lot of workshops on, you know, online that is not expensive or free” (DHB1).

This finding was confirmed by the feedback from the principal that they conduct professional development sessions mainly through online meetings such as zoom meetings or team meetings (PB1). When the principal was asked whether he takes the lead in these demonstrations and presenting workshop he had the following to say:

“At this stage, I’m not organising such things. We will rather go through the union, let’s say SAOU or some of the other unions NAPTOSA or those unions will have like workshops or programs where people can improve, but what I currently do is find out where is the different support or the training or information but personally, I don’t schedule a training session or something like that” (PB1).

The above mentioned is assured by two of the teachers who noted that the principal does not organise any professional development sessions. (PB1).

5.2.2.6 Theme 5: Establishing a positive literacy environment

It was interesting to note that when asking the participants what the role of the principal is in ensuring a positive literacy environment, they referred to curbed factors pertaining to space and accessibility of resources. For example, the Departmental Head responded as such:

“There’s no space” for book corners, but they do have “posters up on the wall” (DHB1).

PB1 adds,

“that the school has a library but that it’s not accessible for the learners”.

A good point, though, is that the teachers take out books and use them in their classes. In contradiction with the comment made earlier by the Departmental Head teacher 1 points out that they have little small book corners in the class and that they use the books there.

According to the department heads, they are mainly responsible for conducting class visits to ensure that the teachers are creating a positive literacy environment. When it comes to the environment, the focus is placed mainly on having posters on the walls ensuring literacy is addressed correctly according to phonemic awareness and the

correct methods of teaching the basic sounds and concepts (DHB1). Additionally, DHB1 added foundation phase teachers are very lively and sparkly. And this is how they promote learning. The principal from his side contributes to the creation of a conducive literacy environment by encouraging teachers to put up nice posters and charts. He said, however, that they allow for individuality and good practices. This principal makes use of additional support to create a positive learning environment, rendering external support.

5.2.2.7 Theme 6: Challenges experienced in literacy instruction.

The data displayed that the main and thorny issue in this school seems to be language barriers. Learners whose home language is not English, but Sesotho, attend this school. These learners struggle with all their subjects, which leads to poor performance and failures. Analysis of results, APIPs and the moderations reports revealed in the document analysis showed the challenges teachers experience and they documented it in their improvement reports. In a follow-up question, the researcher asked the principal what he does to address this challenge of learners attending English schools, which is not their home language. He responded that he feels it is better for a child to start in their mother tongue but we know that it is their democratic right to enrol the learner in the school of their choice. What he tries to do is to accommodate the learners in the Grade RR or Grade R pre-primary school to help them get the phonics and things for English Home language correct so that by the time they go to Foundation Phase, they do not have to struggle as much as they would normally do when coming straight from home (PB1).

From the responses of the teachers, it can be said that they do not receive support from the principal as Instructional leader. Also, they do not have the resources to teach effectively. The teachers also complained about the workload. They voiced their unhappiness about the principal's lack of support in the following manner: *"the school must also give us the necessary learning and teaching materials, so we can do what we must do"* (TB2) and *"if you don't do it out of your own pocket, it will never happen"* (TB3). The findings showed that meetings are conducted with the parents, but from the data, it is evident that little is done to provide support to parents as well.

5.2.3 School C

5.2.3.1 *Contextual description*

This quintile 5 school is based in a neighbourhood with low to middle-class housing. The school is based in the middle of the suburb. The area is quite safe, and there are no surrounding businesses that may affect the day-to-day running of the school. The infrastructure of the school is very good. They have new netball courts and well-looked-after sports grounds. The principal has 32 years' experience as a teacher and 5 years' experience as a principal. The Departmental Head of this school has 31 years of teaching experience and 5 years' experience as Departmental Head. The teachers who participated ranged between the ages of 30-35. They have 8-13 years' experience in teaching amongst the four of them.

5.2.3.2 *Theme 1: Principals' knowledge about the literacy curriculum.*

When asking the principal to provide an account about his knowledge of literacy in the FP, his answer was:

"it is required of each learner to be able to think with comprehensive comprehension, read with comprehension, view literacy, and be able to reason by the end of the grade or the phase" (PC1).

However, the teachers felt that his knowledge, specifically in the foundation phase, was very limited. They ascribe this due to the fact that he is not involved in the Foundation Phase. Interestingly enough, TC3 referred to the principals' expertise as a literacy teacher in the intermediate phase: *"But he was a language teacher. So, I don't think it's so limited. But I think he compares us a lot of what they do in the intermediate phase and it cannot be compared"*. More thought-provoking comments were made in terms of the principals' understanding of the setup related to the FP. The teachers pointed out that the principal may get annoyed if they do not completely work as fast he expects. They commented as follow about the principal's limited knowledge about the FP:

"he doesn't understand the amount of time that goes in with the foundation, phase learners" (TC1) and expects the same from them as intermediate phase as "he has the knowledge of intermediate phase" (TC2).

5.2.3.3 Theme 2: Support from Principal and Department Head

The teachers disclosed that support from the principal in drafting assessments is lacking. They pointed out that they do get support from all the SMT-members when they refer learners with learning and language barriers:

“if there are language barriers, or if there are children struggling with English, we can go to them...there’s a lot of support, they really do help us when you have to see parents.”

Specifically to help with speaking English at home and promoting it as the language of teaching and learning (TC1). Furthermore, TC1 also referred to the issue of support from the principal and other members such as the Departmental Head and other members of the SMT. TC2 specifies that they receive support from the Principal and Departmental Head by staying updated on important information from the department. The findings at this school also revealed that they organise and plan to assist teachers with their admin. Additionally, the principal and the rest of the SMT also support the teachers with parents when learners have discipline problems or when we meet parents for academic issues.

5.2.3.4 Theme 3: Supervision, evaluation, and monitoring of the literacy instructional programme.

When the participants were requested to share their views about supervision, evaluating, and monitoring TC1 said it is normally the Department Head and not the principal that moderate’s assessments, book controls and files moderation once a quarter. The data from the documentary analysis indicate that they have regular subject meetings to discuss possible learning issues and they also do item and error analysis of the results after assessments to address problem areas. The principal confirmed the quality assurance processes through a system of evaluating and moderating literacy. He alluded, however, that it is mainly done by the Grade heads and foundation phase departmental head. The document analysis presented the moderation reports and it is signed off and done on a quarterly basis.

The Departmental Head noted that the moderation duties were distributed amongst the teachers. She motivated this approach in the following manner:

“it's impossible for a foundation phase departmental head to do all 12 or even 15 teachers' books and files, twice a term, even so, there's no time for that. She's got her own class as well. So, therefore, I've got my three grade heads and they will assess their own people” (DHC1).

From this feedback, it can be reasoned that each grade head is thus responsible for evaluating, monitoring, and controlling the books and assessments of their own grade's teachers. The role of the principal in the process is to delegate responsibilities to other members of the SMT and staff:

“My moderation process as principal is trusting my grade heads and my department, departmental head. They plan weekly, assess work of learners in the workbook and eventually assess one or two per term and begins and ends in the, with report cards” (PC1).

The data also revealed that all participants are in favour of the distributed leadership model employed by the principal to provide support in literacy.

5.2.3.5 Theme 4: Empowering staff through PD activities.

It can be deduced from the feedback that this principal really ensures that the teachers are empowered through PD activities to improve instruction. This is evident by the responses from the teachers. When asked if the principal helps them with PD activities, the answer was very favourable. According to the feedback, the principal ensures that the teachers attend courses, encourage them, and pay for them. The principal also ensures that the DH allow teachers to form part of Professional learning communities and Professional Development activities. The principal added that they further encourage PD amongst teachers through *“Zoom meetings, virtual training, cluster meetings, DBE training, Union training, and the school pays for all the training that the staff goes to” (PC1)*. He does not take the lead; he notes that *“I don't, the Departmental Heads are doing that”*. He also asserts that his SMT members have different roles and when it comes to PD of teachers, but that the two Departmental Heads are the two ladies run the whole process” (PC1). In a follow-up question to the principal on which aspects he and his team give attention to when it comes to literacy, he added that the emphasis should be placed on focusing specifically on handwriting and reading. It should be continued in the higher grades, especially when it comes to

cursive writing and the hard work the teachers put in. He also exclaims the importance of reading and that PD should address any issues related to reading.

5.2.3.6 Theme 5: Establishing a positive literacy environment.

The findings indicate that it is mainly the Departmental Head who take the lead in this and really want to ensure that a positive literacy environment is being promoted. The data shows that the principal really put in effort and support to ensure the school get a library and new readers. As part of this drive, he does not hesitate to provide money to help improve literacy learning. Apart from the library, the data demonstrated that this school is very active in promoting an environment conducive or literacy learning. The Departmental Head documented that the principal organised classes for teachers to help better their pronunciation when teaching literacy to the learners and he would attend those classes himself. Helping to establish a positive literacy environment, the Departmental Head communicated that they focus on involving learners in reading and listening activities. The findings also revealed that the principal and his team attend to the classroom decorations *and “beautify”* their classes with posters on the walls for learners to read. Moreover, PC1 states that to promote literacy in the school they implemented the following:

“the new library that we have at school, TV’s in every class and YouTube internet connection, everything is available for the learners. The school is in a very middle class to a poor area of Bloemfontein. And but we are trying to keep a very clean school with all the necessary technology in every class, and we want to create a diamond in the south of Bloemfontein”.

5.2.3.7 Theme 6: Challenges experienced in literacy instruction.

The teachers were quite outspoken when asked to discuss the issues experienced in literacy. From the data, it is clear that the issue of language is also problematic in this school. In this regard, TC1 expressed an extremely gloom-ridden judgement:

“I think in South Africa, the main problem is I don't think we'll ever fix the language barrier. Because your home language the way you think is the way you should be schooled. And the way you know your language. And coming, I mean, coming to a language you don't know. I think you should be English Primary School starting maybe

there, because many children come over to our school, sometimes from a non-English in primary school. To be honest with you, I don't know how you're going to improve the language barrier. With a belief system that at home I'm speaking my own language".

In addition, the participants highlighted some serious cracks in the system. This teacher said that they (The Department) must start from the top, and that they must get proper teachers at schools, where the home language, is for example, Sesotho. However, one of the teachers placed herself in the parents' position and articulated:

"If I put myself in the parent's shoes, I would also not take my child to a school close by, that is not up to standard. I will also go to another school even if the home language is something else. But I know my child will get a better education there. So, I think it's the education system because in some schools there is nothing happening there. They must start there to get proper leaders, proper teachers that can really actually do the job at all schools" (TC2).

One of the teachers expressed her opinion about the issue of language in schools:

"I think, also in the rural areas, there shouldn't be something like a Sotho school". There should rather be only an English school or Afrikaans school. Sotho you can talk at home that your home language but you need to learn English or Afrikaans... they need to be taught from primary, they need to be taught English" (TC4).

The APIPs and analysis of results found in the document analysis shed light on the challenges teachers experience due to language barriers and how they try to address the challenges. Responding to what needed to be done from the side of the school's leadership, the principal said that due to learners struggling with the language used for teaching and learning, they still try to encourage our parents to help with reading (PC1).

5.2.4 School D

5.2.4.1 Contextual description

This school is like the others, also a quintile 5 school. It is based in a low-to-middle-class area. The school is neat and the surrounding area looks quiet and peaceful. The infrastructure of the school is average and, from the look of it, may need some maintenance and a new paint job. The principal of this school has 27 years' experience

in teaching and 8 years' experience as a principal. The Departmental Head has 30 years of teaching experience and 24 years' experience as a Departmental Head. The Departmental Head of this school has 31 years of teaching experience and 5 years' experience as Departmental Head. The teachers who participated in the study are varied between the ages 12-, 14-, and 19-years' experience in teaching.

5.2.4.2 Theme 1: Principals' knowledge about the literacy curriculum.

The teachers' reaction to this question made it seem like they do not think that the principal is acquainted with what the FP's literacy curriculum entails. According to TD2, for example, she doubts the capacities of the principal:

"I don't think she really understands what we must do. The expectation of what she wants and what we must achieve doesn't come together."

Agreeing with this, one of the other participants also affirmed that the teachers and the leadership do not share the same vision. According to these participants, this creates a lot of uncertainties:

"I think especially in FP making it difficult because we, we have a vision what we want to achieve and what is expected from us. And then there's, you know, there's a gap between what they expect from us and what we are doing in FP" (TD3).

From the principal's answer to the question on her knowledge about literacy in the CAPS curriculum, one can say that she has a very shallow knowledge base about it.

5.2.4.3 Theme 2: Support from Principal and Department Head

In her response to this particular issue, the principal explained that she supports the teachers by being visible and providing guidance where necessary:

"you must be visible every time and you must be guiding the teachers...I must be always present in all the academic meetings and advise where possible, and also hear out the frustration of the teachers and be able to solve it together" (PD1).

However, when asking the teachers if they receive effective support, one of the teachers mentioned that she does not rely solely on the support of the principal or the

SMT. She takes matters into her own hands and finds support from other sources. She mentioned:

"I followed documentation that's sent to me, not always from SMT or principal or whatever. Yeah. So, I'm kind of going on my own, on my own, what's the word ...on my own pace and on my own information that I gather, ...but I will go and look at the caps, look at the ATP's. The SMT isn't always up to date with things, you could say" (TD1).

When asked how the support they receive can be improved, TD1 expressed some concerns about how they are being treated by the principal and her leadership team at the school:

"I don't think we are feeling valued at our school".

She continued,

"we are kind of feeling demotivated and unappreciated and the work that's expected of us and jumping around in, doing this thing then that thing, it's all over the place at this moment".

The support from the Departmental Head sounds very little and only alluded to the fact that she guides them on how to teach the learners (DHD1). However, the data displayed that teachers feel confused and unsupported and that the focus is not on the right things (TD3; TD1).

5.2.4.4 Theme 3: Supervision, evaluating and monitoring of the literacy instructional programme

When the participants were asked the question on how supervision, evaluating, and mentoring are provided, it seemed that this is being done by the Departmental Head. She provided a detailed explanation of how the principal expects her to perform this role:

"You supervise it by checking in the learner's books. First, you start to check the educator's books. And then you've checked the correlation between the educator's books and the learner's books. And then after you check again, the recommendations made by the LF's, whoever visited our school and check with regard to the reports with regard to the visitor, and then you follow it up that everything is in place, and then

where we lack or where we have whatever the recommendations, we correct it”
(DHD1).

The findings showed some good practices when it comes to the moderation process. Moreover, the Departmental Head noted that when it comes to the moderation process, they undertake strategies such as book controlling, quality control, we are controlling them teacher’s books, we are checking the learner’s workbooks, we are also checking the correlation between the teachers work and also the learners and we also check the cleanliness, the handwriting of the learners (DHD1). The principal asserted further that they make use of various moderation strategies such as the pre-moderation plan, and the actual moderation and also the post-moderation and then in that kind of moderation, we inform the teacher what is it that we are going to be moderating. When asking about how mentoring is exercised, PD1 explained that:

“Look, it's not easy to just adapt in an institution. Ahh, you have to have be a mentor. Who's checking up with that? Have you done this? How are you doing it? Yeah, the struggles of that teacher? So there are mentors for each grade, especially for the new teachers, and also the Department Heads (Department Heads). Somewhere, somehow they are also playing the role of mentoring the teacher in that specific subject”.

The data demonstrate that the teachers disagree with the views of the principal. They commented that there is a lack of mentorship and that there needs to be an improvement in communication. It also appeared that there’s no structured guidance and no order as well in terms of providing leadership: *“It's like there is too many who wants to be in control and we don't know whom to listen to, and if we listen to the one, you're in trouble. So, we are confused most of the times”.* I don't think our leadership roles at the top are strong enough” (TD1).

A bold statement was made by TD1 in terms of the lack of leadership by pointing out that:

“Not all of them are leaders and that's the biggest problem. If you are in that post, you must be a leader and you must be motivated and you must motivate the people underneath you. And I think that's where we got lost. There's no one who is motivated anymore here because nothing you do is good enough”.

The support seems to be lacking and their concerns were voiced by noting this very important comment:

"I think we must stop worrying about looking good on paper and start worrying about actually what's happening in class..." (TD1).

5.2.4.5 Theme 4: Empowering staff through professional development activities.

Empowering staff development in literacy does not seem to really be a priority at this school. Workshops, for example, are in most cases organised by the Education Department and not the school itself. In this regard, the teachers mentioned that if the department organised a workshop, we would go but... it comes from the department...not in the school (TD1). When the principal was asked about how PD is being conducted, he added that they perform PD sessions through "the workshops through the meetings through team teaching. Referring to how the school sometimes also deal with Departmental sessions, TD3 pointed out that sometimes one of the teachers must go and then you must come and explain to the other teachers. She said that because of time there's not always time to give feedback. The principal sends the Departmental Head to attend meetings and workshops on his behalf.

When asking the teachers how they think the SMT or the principal can improve their ability to provide PD, they opined that the SMT and principal should be informed and to give the best feedback, to come back and give us feedback but we don't always get the right feedback. In Supporting this claim, TD2 was claiming that there is not really a genuine focus on literacy leadership, but rather window dressing. When requested to elaborate on how the principal directly supports the teachers in the FP, the teacher commented that there's not really something like that and that the principal is actually not knowing what's happening in FP. She continued by pointing out the impact of the lack of mentorship and experience also from the side of principals:

"If you had a good mentor when you started teaching career and actually told you how to do these things, then you are fine. But the new ones coming in, they don't have a clue".

TD3 confirms this lack of support and mentorship:

"there's no support for them...somebody didn't support them or helped them or assisted them. But from the beginning, if you are a new teacher and you come in, somebody must guide you. But it happens always it's too late".

The lack of support to inexperienced teachers was highlighted by the following bold statement by one of the participants:

*“I think people are really just every man for himself at this moment here in time. I mean that’s actually very sad, especially to the new teachers coming in because when we started here, we had that support and we were actually better off with everything in the school and that’s why...we sound so negative... But I think we are negative because we can see that the school that was once a top school and one of the best teachers in town and we are now losing everyone and everything, and everything is going to sh**...It’s sad and it’s how things are managed”.*

5.2.4.6 Theme 5: Establishing a positive literacy environment.

Responding to the question on how the leadership establishes a positive literacy environment, The Departmental Head provided an extremely vague and shallow account:

“The literacy environment, we are trying our best for it to be easy, and motivate our learners” (DHD1).

The feedback from another participant (TD1) provided a more detailed response on how the environment is made conducive for literacy education. According to her, the teachers try to create a love for reading and make it interesting for the learners by using exciting stories. She feels that the principal should help them and encourage parents to buy books and not watch too many stories on TV. It is the principal’s role to encourage the teachers and make sure everyone is on the same level and getting learners to improve their reading. The Departmental Head ensures that there are naming cards on the walls

“the pictures with the names whereby the learners can identify... when talking about a tree...and all the labels on the different it’s a carpet or it’s a chair...”.

The principal adds that the school provided reading programmes such as “Drop all and read (DAR)” and that they enhance that for improved reading skills. The findings showed also that to promote the literacy environment, the school has a library. In my analysis of how a literacy environment is being promoted, it does not seem though that much is done to create or enhance this positive literacy environment.

5.2.4.7 Theme 6: Challenges experienced in literacy instruction.

Once again when asking the participants what issues are experienced in terms of literacy, the issue of language barriers became evident. TD1 emphasised that,

“they are not English at home; they are Sotho learners with home language and English at school and parents don't always talk English at school as well”.

Language barriers seem to be the biggest problem for the teachers (TD1).

Another finding that surfaced from the responses of the participants was that of uninvolved parents. Other issues mentioned are illiterate guardians and learners living with grandparents who cannot read” (TD2). TD1 raised that the principal can help address the above-mentioned issues by assisting the parents by establishing afternoon care classes where perhaps retired yet qualified teachers can help these learners with their literacy needs. This will be beneficial to both parents and class teachers if learners are helped proficiently (TD1).

When asked how these issues or challenges can be addressed by principals, the teachers said that they must go back 20 years and start doing things like we were learned. I think then the language will pick up (TD2). TD1 asserts that:

“go back to basics, focus on lesser things and let them do that. And I think that's the biggest problem there and that our children that we received aren't always up to standard to our first home language because we are also getting a lot of Sotho Children in Grade 3 or 4 and then then they expect that child to perform in the English school”.

The teachers felt that the principal should use his position as literacy leader of the school and ensure that learners with no English background are not accepted. They believe that the requirements in accepting learners should be that the learners attended an English Grade R school. It seems according to TD1 that the department might play a role in the stress added to FP schools by stating the department will always say we'll make space, make spice, make space. So the big classes are another problem with that. You can't have that one on one.

5.2.5 School E

5.2.5.1 *Contextual description*

This quintile 5 school is situated in a middle-class neighbourhood that is close to businesses and shopping malls. The surrounding areas are safe. The school grounds are very neat, sports fields are still very well looked after and the all-around infrastructure of the school is in great condition. The principal has 29 years' experience in teaching and 8 years' experience as a principal. The Departmental Head has 16 years' experience in teaching and 8 years as the Departmental Head. The participants of this school has 13-15 years' experience as teachers in the FP.

5.2.5.2 *Theme 1: Principals' knowledge about the literacy curriculum.*

When asking the teachers of this school what they think about the knowledge of the principal is when it comes to literacy curriculum in the FP they provided very brief responses, without elaborating much. Their feedback was mainly short and to the point

"To be quite honest, I don't think he is quite knowledgeable in that area, because we use our departmental heads for that. So, I don't think he knows too much of that" (TE2).

The principal was honest in his response and confirmed his lack of expertise in literacy:

"Yeah, I'm not a language person, myself, I will look more into maths and that kind of thing" (PE1).

He did however acknowledge the importance of languages by pointing out that languages are important

"...your languages are very important... because without language, and obviously a child can do any other subject. So I think languages are very, very important in the first place in that and a lot, a lot of more emphasising should be done regarding your languages, to prepare children to be to be able to, to perform" (PE1).

He highlighted that even though he is the principal he manage the school, and delegated the literacy part to one deputy. For him it is important to see the results, to see where they can do interventions and where we can assist and intervene. (PE1).

5.2.5.3 Theme 2: Support from Principal and Department Head

As with the previous questions, the feedback from the participants was very brief and to the point. When asked if they received support from the principal and the Departmental Head, they answered: “We do our own work and that's it” (TE1). TE2 noted that as Grade Heads they are part of the SMT and “we will get the support if it's needed”. They did however add that if any improvement can be made it is that the principal “can come into the classes more often. He could come and ask if everything is okay” (TE1). Additionally, they regard these class visits as a good opportunity for the principal to “get more knowledge of what is going on in a FP class” (TE2).

5.2.5.4 Theme 3: Supervision, evaluating and monitoring of the literacy instructional programme

Feedback on this question indicated that when it comes to supervision by the principal it seems that there is “none” (TE1). TE2 answered by only stating “agree” and that “There is not a lot of support” when it comes to support in literacy. The teachers furthermore suggested some noteworthy strategies to improve literacy. They for example alluded that to improve this matter there can be extra courses or perhaps the Department Heads (can also go for extra courses and then just educate the teachers on what was taught. They also shared that the leadership should help them more with literacy. Another interesting proposal was made by one of the teachers who identified networking with other schools as a possible solution to the problem:

“And sometimes I think it would be nice to be part of other schools also to see how they are doing stuff” (TE1).

To improve support in literacy TE3 articulated that “I think in Grade 1 they must make sure it is English speaking children that sit in front of you”. This indicated that English not being the home language is “definitely a big problem” (TE3). To try and overcome this issue TE3 suggests that the principal make sure that the learners attend their own school's Grade R classes. Additionally, TE3 implied that, before admissions are done, all the learners applying at the school should be interviewed to see if they understand English and if they can speak and write in English.

When it comes to the evaluating of the teacher's work, the Departmental Head highlighted that they do it through book control during the term and sometimes we do

class visits, especially for IQMS and things like that. The latter is evident in the document analysis and moderation reports show the quarterly book control reports as well as all pre- and post moderation reports. (DHE1). Furthermore, DHE1 expressed that they also do...

"lesson planning...then sometimes I compare it with, there's not always time, but most of the times I have my CAPS document with me, and to see if they're on par, and if they are keeping up with the with the curriculum, to see that they are, where they're supposed to be".

She continued by saying that when it comes to moderations they do it once a term or twice a term and then look through the planning files...assessment papers, and look through the children's books (DHE1). The latter can be confirmed by the documentary analyses and can be viewed in Appendix E. This approach was also confirmed by the principal's perspective, by stating that they do:

"Moderation in different ways, we've got a book control system in the first place, which is on a quarterly basis with books and files of learners and files of teachers are controlled and see that everything is in place" (PE1).

According to the document analysis that can be found in Addendum E the Departmental Head looks at the books of the learners and the teacher's files as well. Interestingly enough the documentary analysis showed that the Departmental Head does spot checks to ensure teachers stay up to date with what is expected from them. They also moderate the assessments and analyse to improve the overall marks. In addition, he noted that moderation of assessments...

"goes through a normal process of the Grade Head or the subject head or the Departmental Head or whatever the case may be, which is firstly moderated before the learners write it and afterwards the, the results with the question papers or the assessment task, or whatever the case may be, are submitted again towards the subject head and it's again moderated to see if it's, it's properly marked and recorded" (PE1).

This process is discussed and decided by the principal during SMT meetings.

5.2.5.5 Theme 4: Empowering staff through professional development activities.

When requested to share their views about the PD of teachers the overall reply from the participants was that it is easy nowadays making use of virtual platforms such as “zoom” and “we do it” to conduct workshops, meetings or information sessions. (TE1). Confirming this the Departmental Head said that there are many webinars available for teachers to join online and they are informed telephonically to avail themselves for these workshops (DHE1). Of importance to note however is that the workshops are not done by the school itself. TE1 states that the workshops presented are usually done through the unions like computer courses or curriculum matters. She conceded that “Mostly it's up to us, you decide what you want to do, and you do it, just to help yourself and the children in your class” (TE1). When queried how professional in terms of literacy development activities can be improved TE2 highlighted that there is a lack in proficient workshops do the foundation phase and that the department can put in more effort in providing workshops as most of the workshops are done through unions. The principal also touched on this by pointing out that the in general, the department could be more involved and more supportive than they are at the moment, as they get much more support or collaboration from unions and fellow schools (PE1). In probing about the matter, the researcher requested the principal to identify which areas in terms of literacy would he regard as important for literacy PD activities. He responded by emphasising that his main objective in literacy is to ensure learners can read with comprehension and have a clear understanding of English as the main language (PE1).

It is important to note that both the principal and the Departmental Head said they do not initiate PD programmes. When the Departmental Head was asked if she takes the lead, she responded that she empowers her grade heads to take the lead and encourage them to attend workshops presented by their preferred union. The principal also said he does not take the lead and that his deputies, grade heads and subject heads take the lead in PD activities. The principal then elaborated on why he does not take the lead, and he highlighted:

“I mean, if you are speaking about literacy now, but I mean, if you go to all the different subjects in the school, especially with a school of our size, it is an enormous task to

do that. So I think it's not only delegating, but also empowering people at the end of the day to give them the task, and trust them to do the task" (PE1).

5.2.5.6 Theme 5: Establishing a positive literacy environment.

The literacy environment at this school was a good environment and that they enhanced the literacy component. For example, they take part in the world read aloud days and have library days (DHE1). DHE1 added that learners come from backgrounds where books are not very important, and she thinks it is a very important literacy component. Furthermore, the Departmental Head demonstrates that they establish a positive literacy environment by ensuring good discipline, employing competent teachers, and ensuring enough resources, learning materials, and access to technology. The principal also gave his opinion when he was asked about the literacy environment at the school. He stated:

"I think quite good. I think our school, not to brag about it, but it's one of the very high performing schools in the vicinity. So, I think... if we compare ourselves to many other schools, we are now on a very high level and so much so being a primary school that our learners are on demand when they go to the secondary schools. We've got the library; we've also got the computer centre. Nowadays, children who are not that fond of taking a book can go and sit and read. So technology plays a big role. We have equipped our teachers with projectors and laptops and that kind of thing. So that they can do this in a more technological way as well" (PE1).

5.2.5.7 Theme 6: Challenges experienced in literacy instruction.

From the feedback, it is clear that the issue pointed out by the teachers in this school are the language issue. TE1 elaborates that,

"The children are coming from backgrounds from Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa and then they come in Grade 1 and they can't even speak English. And then you have to start to teach them to speak English and by the time you're supposed to be able to read, they can just start with one word at a time because of the language".

The principal opines that to help the learners with English learning barriers, they have extra classes in the afternoon after formal school to address any possible literacy issues. According to TE2, the lockdown had a huge impact on the children in 2020

because parental support was not there and they struggled a lot and can really see a huge backlog. When asked how these issues can be addressed, they said they think more support from the parents and teachers can also support parents and show them how to help the children at home (TE3). TE1 suggested maybe doing courses for the parents on how to help with homework and help them with the pronunciation of the sounds. The principal asserted that parent involvement could improve and stressed its impact by saying that parent involvement is not desired it to be and the stress lies mostly on the teacher and the school to improve on challenges.

5.3 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS ACROSS CASES

5.3.1 Context

The data revealed that:

All the participating schools are quintile 5 schools, yet their demographical areas are not quite in line with what quintile 5 schools require. Van Dyk and White (2019:2) draw attention to the fact that quintile 5 schools are usually classified as affluent schools. This is contradicting to what the data is revealing about these schools. The evidence presented in this section shows that four out of the five schools are situated in low-income areas. The learners from these schools also mostly come from low-income suburbs, and the majority of them come from informal settlements. When looking at the demographical area, the assumption is made that poverty may be a challenge in these schools, negatively influencing literacy performance. The latter is supported by a wealth of research (Potterton, 2008; Archer, 2010; Matomela, 2010; Evans, 2011; Spaul, 2012; DBE, 2013; Plaatjies, 2019; Plaatjies, 2021) who corroborate that poverty in challenging environments may have negative effects on the performance and learning abilities of the learners and literacy learning.

Logically, it is difficult for principals to perform effective leadership in schools where poverty is existent. For example, Day and Sammons (2013:16) point out that “principals, whose schools draw their students from socio-economic vastly disadvantaged communities, face a larger range of challenges related to staff commitment and retention, student behaviours, motivation and achievement compared to more privileged groups”.

The infrastructure of four out of the five schools was good and seemed to be well maintained; however, it was evident that School D needed some form of maintenance. Research indicates that the infrastructure of schools also plays a vital role in ensuring a learning atmosphere and that it is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that this environment is set profusely (Mejia, 2016:8). Furthermore, Cele (2016:1) indicates that schools where the school maintenance and infrastructure are up to standard and where poverty does not have such a big impact may result in schools performing better, both academically and the overall management of the school (Cele, 2016:1). Barrett, Treves, Shmis, Ambasz and Utinova (2019:13) emphasise the importance of the school infrastructure as follow: “investments in school infrastructure and the physical conditions for learning are not a luxury but a need”.

5.3.2 Theme 1: Principals’ knowledge about the literacy curriculum

Teachers need support from knowledgeable principals to improve literacy. Principals should possess sufficient literacy knowledge (see Plaatjies, 2019, 2020; DBE, 2016). The data demonstrated that the principal of school B was the only one who could identify the components of literacy. This showed that he had a sound understanding of the literacy curriculum. The data revealed that the principals do not seem to clearly understand what literacy in the FP entails. This finding is confirmed by two other recent South African studies about the topic. In his work, Plaatjies (2019:151; 2020:15) found that “principals have a clear lack of understanding of the features and content of the CAPS literacy curriculum” and “the lack of sufficient curriculum and instructional knowledge amongst principals may have enormous repercussions”. Furthermore, principals’ lack of knowledge and understanding of the curriculum greatly impacts their ability to support teachers. It has been documented those principals who have sufficient knowledge of the curriculum can “improve the teaching and learning environment by creating conditions conducive to improved curriculum management” (Mestry, 2017; Kiat, Tan, Heng, & Lim-Ratnam, 2017). On the contrary, their poor knowledge base in the curriculum may lead to teachers' lack of support and guidance in assisting them in instruction and assessment. Together, these studies provide important insights that “trust and respect towards principals” are curbed due to not providing “strong curriculum coordination and instructional support” (Taylor & Hoadley, 2018).

5.3.3 Theme 2: Support from Principal and Department Head

To draw inferences from results, one can see that there is a lack of support from principals in the majority of the participating schools. It is quite alarming to find that only the teachers from School C noted that they get support from the principal as well as their Department Head, as this school also assists their teachers by doing demonstration lessons to help address barriers and help with new interactive teaching strategies (Knisely, 2020). In addition, it seems that only one of the schools takes on the role of literacy coach as the Department Head from school C assists their school's teachers in these demonstration lessons mentioned previously. Through this approach, the Department Head ensures that instructional planning is done and she spends time coaching and observing lessons to help improve instruction (Bean & DeFord, 2012:1). Looking at the data, it appears that none of these schools is high-performing schools. This is ascribed to language barriers and the low-income status of the schools. In such circumstances, the support of the principal in literacy is even more crucial. Providing the challenging circumstances, principals should exercise strong leadership. Zimmerman (2017:39) argues in this regard that "high performing schools serving low-income learners need a safe, orderly and positive environment, strong leaders, excellent teachers, competent, committed, caring, collaborative teachers with a sense of pride, competence and purpose of the school".

The lack of support from principals may be ascribed to various other reasons. First of all, it may be ascribed to their lack of expertise in the FP curriculum. This view is supported by Dowell, Bickmore and Howing (2012:7), who point out that "a major concern in providing consistent, high-quality literacy programmes is principals' inability to understand the essential elements of effective literacy instruction". Secondly, it may be that principals do not have enough time to devote to their instructional leadership duties (Mestry, 2017:259). Another issue that emerged from the data is that usually, the Department Heads are responsible for providing guidance in literacy matters. Although there is nothing wrong with this, the PAM document states clearly that principals need to offer professional advice on the work and performance of all staff (DBE, 2016:33).

Principals' lack of support may be the reason for the teacher's frustration, negativity, and even lack of respect towards their principals. This may furthermore negatively impact the quality of teaching and learning as a whole. Giving teachers solid and

strong support can lead to principals being powerful multipliers of active instruction, and in this way, practices in schools can be guided sufficiently (Manna, 2015). School principals and teachers need to work well together towards reaching the same goal. From the findings, only School C shows encouragement from their leader to build and work together on reaching set goals, which is a good form of executive leadership (DBE, 2015:11).

5.3.4 Theme 3: Supervision, evaluation, and monitoring of the literacy instructional programme

The findings revealed that School A, B, D & E similarly showed the lack of supervision from the principals. Interestingly enough, this role was performed by the Department Heads. On the contrary, School C's findings outline that the principal and the DH are doing supervision regularly. The data also displayed that the participants felt that their principal and DH truly supported them in all their instructional needs. Data obtained from the AIPIS revealed that they find ways of overcoming these challenges (Appendix G). A recent study's findings also showed that Department Heads are very much involved in supporting teachers' instructional needs. This seems to be due to the heavy workloads principals experience, hence their responsibility to distribute roles (Plaatjies, 2020:17). Giving Department Heads and deputy principals responsibilities to supervise, monitor, and evaluate shows good organisational leadership from the principal (DBE, 2015:12). It is undeniably the teachers who have a direct impact on the learner's ability to learn and their literacy achievement; however, the long-term success of literacy programs to address instructional needs rests on the principals' shoulders and his/her influence towards literacy improvement (Reyes, 2006; Munguia, 2017).

A positive outcome of the research is that the findings indicate that the monitoring and control of books take place in all schools. All the schools also have regular grade meetings to plan the literacy curriculum and instructional lessons that will be presented. This is supported by the data obtained from the analysis (Appendix G). Furthermore, the findings indicated that classroom visits are also done frequently by the Department Heads, but it was disappointing to discover that principals lack involvement in this area. U-Sayee and Adomako (2021:2) illustrate in this regard that supervisory activities performed by principals, such as evaluations and classroom

visits, are key roles that the principal should carry out. An important point is highlighted in PAM and Standard for Principalship policies that principals should make sure that Department Heads monitor the work of the teachers in the classroom for all subjects (DBE, 2015, 2016). This is also confirmed by the studies by Mestry (2017) and Plaatjies (2020). Even more alarming is the fact that there was no clear indication on what specifically principals supervised, evaluated, and monitored (Chen, 2018). This may be ascribed to the fact that the policy documents (PAM and Standard for Principalship) are vague in pinpointing how these processes should be executed.

Although distributed leadership approaches do not feature prominently, it was evident from the data that, in some cases, principals devote this responsibility to the Department Heads. Even though principals are distributing roles to the Department Heads to supervise, evaluate, and monitor, it is still the responsibility of the principal to be aware of what is happening in the classroom and stay up to date with all procedures (Herrera, 2010: 32; Mestry, 2017). In accordance with the present findings, previous studies have demonstrated that “the evaluation of the teaching and learning should form part of classroom visits, like teacher evaluation – focusing on instructional improvement: and accountability – holds promise for engendering improvements in academic achievement” (Lear, 2017:63).

5.3.5 Theme 4: Empowering staff through professional development activities.

In response to the question on PD, a dominant response was elicited. The teachers from four out of the five schools indicated that PD in literacy does not seem to be a priority at these schools. School C is the only one where the teachers feel that they get the opportunity to be empowered by the school to attend workshops and training. School C further claimed that the principal works together with the SGB to generate funds to pay for their workshops to support teachers and learners in developing their literacy skills and gain greater academic achievements. This seems to be a good example of strategic leadership employed by the principal (DBE, 2015:10). However, one of the most striking findings from the data is that the principals from all participating schools claimed that they do not take the lead in PD activities. Aspects related to literacy instruction may thus be neglected, which in turn may lead to teachers who cannot perform their duties confidently (Amo, 2019). Another consequence is that new teachers will be uncertain about their teaching practices (Morrow, 2007; Swart, 2013).

On the other hand, experienced teachers will spend their time monitoring unskilled teachers. This will, in turn, affect their overall productivity, which may have a negative outcome on their teaching and learning (Amo, 2019).

Pinello (2015:49) raised a pivotal point that shows the importance of principals taking the lead in PD by stating that “literacy leaders should establish a team with a coach, build capacity for literacy and provide time for PD and establish accountability standards”. Principals should show involvement and accountability by being actively involved. Yet, the findings of this study indicated that most of these principals adopted a distributed leadership approach by delegating their duties to their Department Heads. The researcher's concern is that the principals do not monitor to ensure that PD actually takes place. Principals remain the accountable person when it comes to curriculum leadership as well (Van Deventer, 2008:69; Dayson, 2016:14).

An interesting finding emanating from the data is that the teachers do PD through their unions. It seems that there are workshops and training to assist teachers, but what is not transparent is whether these workshops are specifically for improving literacy. Research shows that it is important for principals to “drive system improvement through a collaborative approach, pursuing a focus on literacy” (Espana, 2012:34; DET, 2018:9). The teachers predominantly feel that they are left to deal with issues themselves and struggle to address literacy needs. It is important for teachers to be empowered through PD, and principals need to show interest and support. Plaatjies (2020:7) affirms that better classroom execution can be established through “enhanced participation of principals” ensuring developmental sessions for teachers, emphasising teaching practices that lead to promoting literacy improvement.

5.3.6 Theme 5: Establishing a positive literacy environment.

Contrary to expectations, this study favourably found that all five participating schools have their own libraries on the school grounds. Researchers implied that academic performance is boosted by having access to libraries in schools (Kachel & Lance, 2013; Lance, Schwarz & Rodney, 2014; Littman, 2014). Unfortunately, schools in poor or low-income areas do not have access to libraries in schools due to the contending poverty factor (Pribesh, Gavigan, & Dickinson, 2011; Creech, 2017). In terms of the classroom set-up, the data demonstrated that all the classrooms displayed posters on

the walls with the aim to establish a positive literacy environment. The latter also contributes to emergent reading (DBE, 2018), which is vital for FP learners by looking at pictures and forming discussions or seeing words on the walls that contribute to an informal manner of reading. However, poor or disadvantaged schools do not have the privilege to have posters on the walls or learning and reading resources; these schools are greatly under-resourced with respect to reading materials (National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU), 2013:42; Paton-Ash & Wilmot, 2015:2).

Furthermore, all the participants mentioned that they try to promote a love for reading by doing reading programmes, such as Drop All and Read (DAR) and reading fun books. Reading fun stories and reading programmes contributes to learners' love for reading, encouraging curiosity (Clarke, 2021). Though it may seem that there are many challenges in schools when it comes to literacy, it was pleasant to notice that teachers still hope to improve the areas of concern. Observation of the classroom space revealed that the posters are not necessarily linked to the content of the curriculum. This finding is in line with previous research. According to Gerde, Goetsch and Bingham (2016:5), there are also limitations regarding materials used to create this positive literacy environment. Classrooms can have all these labels and posters, but they are used only for show and are rarely used by teachers for the correct purpose. They further explain that teachers should not have all these posters in the class and not use them meaningfully. Instead, they should use it to intentionally promote literacy and establish firm literacy foundations for the learners (Gerde et al., 2016:6).

Another finding was the lack of resources. The teachers mentioned that they buy the needed resources themselves (Woolfolk, Hughes & Walkup, 2008, du Plessis & Mestry, 2019:5) as the school or the department does not provide it, and this seems to be a great challenge experienced by teachers (Mudzielwana, 2014:23). The same principle applies when it comes to the use of technology. The findings revealed that most literacy teachers use technology to create interest through videos, songs, and fun ways of reading and writing to promote literacy. The prior mentioned is supported by other researchers. Literacy is promoted by using technology to retrieve videos and reading material to read along, with what is in line with the interests of the learners and to identify suitable topics (Kessler, 2019; Iona, 2020). It is, however, unclear how the teachers incorporate these approaches to promote literacy. Furthermore, these approaches should be linked to the needs of learners. Researchers imply that it is vital

for literacy leaders to understand the needs of the learners, and they can address these needs through various reading materials and through electronic digital materials, which interlink with the use of technology (Bean & Dagen, 2012:158). Principals should ensure that the entire school is creating this positive literacy environment. Zimmerman (2017:47) emphasised the effectiveness of school-wide literacy development and how crucial it is for principals, SMTs, and all teachers to be engaging and actively involved in the process whilst ensuring things are implemented and not only window dressed.

5.3.7 Theme 6: Challenges experienced in literacy instruction

It is interesting to note that in all five cases of this study, it is evident that one of the main challenges experienced in literacy instruction is language barriers. Learners are struggling to comprehend what is taught because they do not come from English Home Language homes. The Academic Improvement Plans (AIP) findings also showed that teachers experience this challenge with language barriers in the assessment tasks (Appendix G). The majority of the learner's mother tongue is an African language. This finding is supported by Cline, Crafter and Prokopiou (2014) and Zarate and Pineda (2014), who state that principals face so many challenges daily, and it seems that language barriers might be one of the biggest challenges. Diversity is a reality, and learning a second language is not as easy as it may seem, hence the challenges experienced in the classrooms (Dreyer, 2017; Shayne, 2020). The teachers express their frustrations, but the main question is, what are the principals doing to address this issue? The data showed that there are very few strategies employed by principals to address this issue (Mudaly & Singh, 2018:58). Although the principals of the schools added that they support these learners by providing extra classes to help overcome these language barriers, they could not elaborate in detail as to what they focus on and how. Research confirms that learners perform badly due to language barriers, and needless to say, variables such as extra classes are not effective enough. Regrettably, teachers are forced to complete the already overloaded syllabus due to time constraints (Mudaly & Singh, 2018:58). The researcher assumes that the fact that the parents themselves are not English speaking contributes a great deal to the challenge. Being not linguistically strong will prevent parents from providing sufficient support in terms of literacy. Furthermore, most of these learners come from informal settlements areas where they live.

Learners who face environmental challenges experience economic disadvantages, which may have an impact on their cognitive abilities. Researchers indicate that the cognitive outcomes of learners may enlarge as learners get older, but due to their economic disadvantage, their mental skills are already less developed. (Crosnoe & Cooper, 2010: 259; Van der Bergh, 2015: 29; Plaatjies, 2021:403). Makunga, Schenck, Roman and Spolander (2017:1) point out that factors such as poverty, marginalization, and social inadequacy may affect the ability to care for or help learners directly as well as indirectly. Illiterate parents can also have a negative impact on the learner's improvement and educational expectations may be lower (Drajea & O'Sullivan, 2014; Martínez & Fernández, 2010; Makunga et al., 2017:2). A good recommendation on how principals should approach the challenge came from one of the teachers at School D, who suggested that the principal have afternoon classes to support the learners whose parents work and are unable to provide support to them. It is thus still the responsibility of the principal to ensure that a positive climate is established in the school and that teaching and learning still take priority when it comes to literacy learning (Wise, 2015:104).

5.4 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

Chapter five probed to present and analyse the raw data that was gathered through individual interviews, focus group interviews, and documentary analysis. Additionally, this chapter presented the context of the participating schools as well as the information that was collected and analysed in themes. The themes are aligned with the literature review and the research questions of this study.

In Chapter 6, the conclusion will be discussed, together with the recommendations and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 6 :

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 offered the presentation and analysis of the findings of the study. The study's main aim was to explore the principals' role in improving literacy in the FP, whilst the main question that this study wanted to answer was, what are school principals' roles in improving literacy in the FP?

The following sub-questions were formulated to answer the main research question:

- What are the challenges that FP teachers experience in terms of literacy education?
- What strategies do principals use to execute their leadership roles in improving literacy in FP?
- What challenges do principals experience when executing leadership roles in improving literacy in FP?
- How can these challenges be mitigated?

This chapter offers a summary of the prime findings of the research. First, an overview of the chapters of the study is provided. Next, an overview of the main findings and how they emerged. This serves to appease the data analysis process with the conclusions maintained in this chapter. Finally, the chapter concludes with recommendations as well as limitations of the study.

6.2 ALIGNMENT OF CHAPTERS: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Chapter one portrayed the introduction, background, problem statement and theoretical framework cohesively with the research questions and objectives of this study. This chapter set the context for the study, that is, the role of principals in improving literacy in the FP.

Chapter two consisted of the first part of the literature review, which presented an overview of the curriculum and the features of the CAPS-literacy. Alongside this, the

challenges experienced in classrooms with regards to literacy were demonstrated. Also, it focused on the challenges in terms of curriculum overload, insufficient teaching and assessment practices, parental illiteracy and support, poor reading and writing skills, and the lack of resources and support from management.

Chapter three outlined the Theoretical framework adopted for the study. In addition, the chapter focused on the different leadership approaches and influential factors that impact literacy instruction. Furthermore, it explained the role of the principal as an instructional leader and the importance of distributing roles to staff. The chapter additionally touched on PD and elaborated on strategies on how literacy achievement, as well as teacher performance, can be improved.

In **chapter four**, the collection of the data and analysis process were captured to respond to the research questions and objectives. This chapter discussed the definitions, aims, advantages, and limitations of this qualitative study. The process of how participants were selected as well as the methods used to collect the data were outlined in this chapter. The quality assurance of the study, together with ethical considerations, were described as well.

Chapter five unfolds the presentation, discussion, and analysis of the findings and the raw data gathered using the individual interviews with the principals, focus group interviews with teachers, and analysis of relevant documents. Moreover, the context of each of the participating schools was presented. The data collected were categorised into themes and analysed.

Chapter six summarises all the chapters and the findings of the study conjointly with the main research question and the research sub-questions. It also discussed a synthesis of the most significant findings and conclusions and recommendations pertaining to the study's findings. Furthermore, recommendations in terms of policy and practice as well as for further research were also highlighted.

6.3 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The findings of the study are discussed in the following paragraphs. The primary purpose of this study was to answer the main research question: *What are school principals' roles in improving literacy in the FP?*

The research findings are particularly discussed below per themes as alluded to in the previous chapter.

6.3.1 Findings and interpretation based on theme 1: Principals' knowledge about the literacy curriculum

The data indicated principals have a poor knowledge base of the literacy curriculum in the FP (*cf.* 5.2.1.2). Of note also, it can be deduced that none of the principals has sufficient teaching experience in this specific phase (*cf.* 5.2.1.2, 5.2.2.2, 5.2.3.2, 5.2.4.2 & 5.2.5.2). This may be one of the main reasons why principals lack knowledge of the curriculum. This finding is consistent with the findings of previous research that indicated that these principals have great knowledge of literacy in the intermediate phase, where they have subject-teaching experience (*cf.* 2.5.8).

The implications for policy and practice is far-reaching: Principals need to have sound knowledge of the curriculum (Dempster et al., 2017) for them to guide the teachers in areas where there seems to be a need for intervention (*cf.* 2.5.8). A serious predicament may emerge when instructional knowledge is lacking amongst principals. Instructional support, as well as curriculum coordination, can be complicated in such cases.

It should be concluded that teachers want principals to support and guide them (*cf.* 5.2.2.3.), and this can only happen if principals have sound knowledge as instructional and curriculum leaders. Smart principals are aware of this (*cf.* 2.5.8). However, principals demonstrated little knowledge of literacy improvement strategies by only pointing out the importance of reading and libraries as a resource for literacy. Through this approach, principals will be able to keep each other updated about relevant curricular changes or improvements in literacy. For principals to guide teachers in improving literacy, they need to have a thorough understanding of the literacy curriculum, heedless the fact that they are not subject teachers in the specific phase (*cf.* 5.2.1.2).

6.3.2 Findings and interpretation based on theme 2: Support from principal and Departmental Head

The findings revealed that the teachers from all schools were quite outspoken about the lack of support from principals in literacy (*cf.* 5.2.2.3). Consequently, teachers feel uninspired, not cared for, and negative (*cf.* 5.2.2.4). The implications of the lack of support is that teachers may struggle with the delivery of the literacy curriculum. One of the areas that present an enormous challenge for teachers is the language barriers that learners have (*cf.* 6.3.1.1.) and in which they need more close collaboration with and support from principals. Principals must enhance teaching through collaboration with teachers to improve their instructional capabilities (*cf.* 5.2.3.3). The findings also revealed teachers' need for other types of interventions, such as the appointment of a literacy coach for literacy improvement (*cf.* 3.5.3). The data revealed the need for a strategy, such as demonstration lessons, to improve literacy instruction (*cf.* 3.4.2.4).

It is interesting to note that principals, on the contrary, blame the department for insufficient support (*cf.* 5.2.5.5). The findings also indicate that principals just accept learners into the school to get numbers. The implication of this is that the teachers struggle to teach literacy to learners whose Home Language is not English. This might cause more harm to learners when being placed in English schools with no foundation of the language (*cf.* 5.2.2.7).

Participants felt that principals should come up with plans to support teachers, despite the barriers, as part of their literacy leadership responsibilities. From the findings, it is also clear that there is a lack of direction to teachers from the side of the principals. Consequently teachers are not knowing how to deal with challenging literacy issues. Principals thus need to set clear expectations, so the staff is aware of what is expected for a solid literacy basis (*cf.* 3.4). In addition, they need to be present in literacy classrooms to guide and support all teachers. Prior research concurs with this statement by noting that principals should know what takes place in classrooms, conduct regular visits, and make suggestions and give meaningful feedback. By adopting this strategy, principals will ultimately improve the teaching and learning quality of the school (*cf.* 3.4.2.1).

The study implored that managing the curriculum seems to be a challenge for the principals, mainly due to increasing roles and responsibilities (*cf.* 5.2.3.5). The principals emphasised that they delegate some duties to their Deputies and

Department Heads due to a lack of time and a heavy workload (*cf.* 5.2.3.5.). Therefore, they have limited time for activities related to literacy instruction (*cf.* 2.5.8). One of the findings that emerged was that it is mostly Department Heads that do observations. Principals seem to be absent in this regard. Principals, as main instructional leaders, should also conduct observations in classrooms. By entering classroom spaces, they can observe firsthand how teachers purposefully teach learners (*cf.* 3.4.2.1). Principals will then also be aware of the challenges teachers experience regarding language barriers in the classrooms and will be able to assist them or guide them proficiently.

A noteworthy finding of this study was that principals do apply distributive leadership approaches sometimes by distributing roles and responsibilities to Deputy principals and Department Heads (*cf.* 5.3.4). Research emphasises that distributed and shared leadership is the desired approach. Establishing a high-yielding literacy program is difficult without the relevant support in classroom instruction and principals can essentially not raid alone towards this goal (*cf.* 5.3.5). Due to the heavy workloads of principals, as noted previously (*cf.* 6.3.2.2.), role distribution is worth a great deal in ensuring sufficient support to teachers in literacy. This approach is consistent with requirements from the policy documents such as the Standard for Principalship and The PAM (*cf.* 3.5).

The findings (*cf.* 5.3.3) also showed very little evidence of support strategies such as coaching. This finding highlighted once more the need for principals to empower teachers as leaders by distributing leadership responsibilities. Teachers should be identified and opportunities should be sought out to increase teacher's abilities to grow and become great leaders of literacy. Leadership density is further generated through observant principals who recognize and provide opportunities for teachers to be empowered in literacy (*cf.* 3.5).

6.3.3 Findings and interpretation based on theme 3: Supervision, evaluation, and monitoring of the literacy instructional programme

This study has found that principals are generally not the ones in charge of supervision, monitoring, and evaluation (*cf.* 5.3.4). It seems to be placed mostly on the shoulders of the Deputies and the Department Heads. Monitoring and planning of literacy are key aspects of a school and lead to pinnacle accountability levels (*cf.*

5.3.4). The findings indicated that principals are often not noticeably visible or involved with classroom visits, supervising, evaluating, and monitoring (*cf.* 3.4.2.1). Even though there are benefits of empowering other staff members to take on these leading roles, it remains the responsibility of the principal to follow up on supervision, monitoring, and evaluations done in the classrooms. By doing so, he/she will be firsthand aware of any problematic areas or good practices (*cf.* 3.4.2.1). Principals must have conversations of the value with teachers to ensure a steadfast grounding and build on strengths and weaknesses discovered from the conversation (*cf.* 3.4.2.1). “It seems that principals possibly do not have the expertise, motivation or enough time to perform these crucial functions. This is confirmed by allegations of window dressing (*cf.* 5.2.4.5).

This study has demonstrated that principals, in general, are not observant, involved, and motivating teachers to do better (*cf.* 5.2.1.5; 5.2.2.5; 5.2.3.5; 5.2.4.5 & 5.2.5.5). This behaviour of principals may lead to teachers feeling frustrated and unappreciated (Oliva, 2013:91). The data revealed that the principals do not even notice what is going on in classrooms (*cf.* 5.2.2.3). Another concerning finding is that teachers do not have enough resources to support literacy instruction and assessment—the resources that they currently have they had to buy themselves (*cf.* 5.2.2.6).

The implications of these may also lead to principals missing other pivotal factors, such as literacy needs or being unaware of the quality of teaching and learning that takes place (*cf.* 5.3.6). Consequently, principals not having an “understanding of the link between the content and the learning materials required in the classroom”. Also, principals are unable to guide teachers in improving print-rich classes suitable for literacy, leading to further uninvolvement of principals (*cf.* 5.3.3). Contending the latter, it can be argued that it may be an unrealistic expectation for principals to have knowledge of all the subjects taught, especially as principals have many other roles and responsibilities while dealing with demanding challenges often that arise on the spur of the moment (*cf.* 5.3.3).

6.3.4 Findings and interpretation based on theme 4: Empowering staff through professional development activities

This study revealed that the teachers mostly do workshops and training through their unions or online through zoom meetings (*cf.* 5.2.2.5). The study revealed a shocking finding that is that principals did not really show interest in the PD of the teachers. Last-mentioned was also found in previous studies (*cf.* 5.3.5). This is problematic as teachers need professional development for improvement of literacy practices.

Although the findings raised concerns about the lack of support from the Education Department, the researcher believes that principals as curriculum leaders should not wait on the department, as curriculum and instructional leadership is a vital role of the principal (*cf.* 3.4). The noticeable lack of knowledge that principals have of literacy in the FP shows that not only should teachers attend these PD activities, but principals should also attain intellectual engagement on literacy instruction (*cf.* 5.3.5). This is especially important as research is clear that PD promotes high-quality literacy and increases learner achievement in schools (*cf.* 3.4.3).

6.3.5 Findings and interpretation based on theme 5: Establishing a positive literacy environment

The findings pointed out that all five participating schools consist of a library which contributes to establishing a literacy environment that is positive and conducive (*cf.* 5.3.6.). This will boost reading and writing activities, and performance (*cf.* 5.2.1.6). The findings revealed that Departmental Heads and teachers go out of their way to make sure classes are print-rich. Departmental Heads do regular class visits to ensure classes are up to standard and that learners feel valued and wanted (*cf.* 5.2.2.6). All five participating schools do not have access to all the newest technological products. This hampers progress in this area, but if the school is unable to provide it seems that the teachers try to go the extra mile and sometimes buy the necessary resources themselves to ensure learners are capable of learning and doing so in a positive literacy environment (*cf.* 5.3.6).

6.3.6 Findings and interpretation based on theme 6: Challenges experienced in literacy instruction

6.3.6.1 *Language barriers in classrooms*

The data revealed that all the participating schools struggle with language barriers. According to literature (*cf.* 2.5.1), most learners in South African schools face language barriers in the classroom. This is mainly ascribed to the fact that the learners come from households in which languages are spoken other than English. Learners whose spoken language differs from the one that they are taught in and learn in school presents an immense challenge for teachers in terms of literacy instruction (*cf.* 5.2.1.7). Another negative consequence of the language challenge is that learners cannot perform to the best of their abilities in literacy because they are not familiar with the language of instruction at schools (*cf.* 5.2.5.6.). Moreover, the language deficiencies affect their confidence and cause a severe disadvantage on their cognitive, social, cultural, and psychological development. This, in turn, negatively affects also their ability to perform well (*cf.* 5.2.2.7).

6.3.6.2 *Illiterate parents result in ineffectual support*

The data also revealed that the parents do not support the learners with speaking English at home. Strangely though, parents expect the learners to achieve well and learn in English (*cf.* 5.2.5.7.). Also, it points to a lack of understanding about the challenges that schools face in this critical area. Therefore, it is possible that parents are not sufficiently skilled to provide support at home in literacy and even other subjects taught in English (*cf.* 5.3.7).

The language barriers discussed in the previous paragraphs go hand in hand with the fact that some parents may not be able to help the learners at home because they are probably illiterate themselves (*cf.* 5.2.4.7). Perhaps parents are not helping learners at home because they are incapable of speaking the English language. They may also struggle to understand it well, which might hinder the learner's progress a greater deal (*cf.* 5.2.5.7). Based on the data from this study, a striking finding was that strategies are absent from the side of principals to address the language issue.

The data also demonstrated a huge cultural divide between learners and teachers (*cf.* 3.4.3.2). Although research (*cf.* 3.4.3.2) indicates that diversity should be celebrated,

intervention in literacy should be prioritised to narrow this cultural gap and improve the language capabilities of learners (*cf.* 5.2.1.7). This will lead to improvements in learner achievement.

6.3.6.3 *Lack of parental involvement in schools*

The observation made by the researcher was that parents are not involved in helping to improve literacy and their children's skills at home as much as the schools would desire (*cf.* 5.2.4.7). The question, however, remains what the school do on their part to strengthen literacy practices. Principals as literacy leaders should still ensure that learners become skilled, passionate, and competent learners regardless of the absence of the parents (*cf.* 2.5.4). Principals should foster and sustain good relationships with parents to form a partnership, which may lead to better involvement of parents (*cf.* 2.5.4).

6.3.6.4 *Leadership skills of Principals*

The research proved that teachers' lack of support is a hindrance between teachers and the principal (*cf.* 5.2.4.3.). It is favourable for principals to have an open-door policy and shows that he/she is approachable when a challenge or inquiry occurs (*cf.* 5.3.3). The study showed that the principals generally have numerous years of experience; one assumes, therefore, that they would direct teachers profusely in literacy instruction. Principals who are excellent instructional leaders can impact teachers in a very powerful manner (*cf.* 5.3.3).

6.4 CONCLUSIONS BASED ON THE FINDINGS

It can be concluded that there are major challenges facing principals in leadership for improved literacy performance in the FP. However, the attitude of principals and the willingness to address these challenges will determine the success of implementing possible strategies to improve literacy achievement in the FP. Principals should address the issues related to the language barrier of learners. Better support to parents, teachers, and learners in this regard is vital. Intensive and regular workshops are crucial.

Based on the findings of this research, principals, as school leaders, should portray good curriculum management practices and take the lead in empowering themselves to obtain a solid understanding of the literacy curriculum. This will enable them to provide targeted support in terms of literacy. This will also lift the morale of teachers.

Principals should set the example to prevent their schools from declining into a school with no clear vision and no direction. Principals are responsible for curriculum management, monitoring and supervision, and the PD of teachers. These responsibilities are continuous, and at the time, very complex and demanding. As instructional leaders, principals should establish a climate for literacy to flourish. The type of management experienced at schools contributes largely to the teamwork demonstrated amongst colleagues as well as their commitment and overall performance in the school. The researcher is optimistic that although the teachers seem negative and overworked due to lack of support, changes can still be made. Principals can attain success again by making it a priority to ensure they are competent, well informed about literacy practices, and stay positive. With the time and effort put forth in showing their loyalty and commitment towards the school and its staff, challenges can be addressed and the needed support will be given and implemented.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, recommendations are made, as well as gaps identified in research that possibly requires further study in the research field.

6.5.1 Implications of the findings: recommendations for policy and practice

6.5.1.1 *For policy*

- Subject leadership and Instructional leadership should be prioritised in the policy frameworks of SA education. Relevant policies such as the SA Standard for Principalship and PAM need to be more specific as to what the role of principals should be pertaining to leadership in core subjects such as literacy.
- The roles of Department Heads should also be specified clearly in the policy documents when it comes to subject leadership.

- Given the magnitude of the principal's workload, to alleviate pressure on them, distributed leadership practices and how they should be applied in the FP should also receive a stronger focus in the Standard for Principalship and the PAM document.
- The role of curriculum advisors should be specified, and emphasis should be placed on providing support to teachers. Furthermore, the circuit managers' role in supporting principals in subject leadership should also be outlined more clearly.
- The Department of Education should review the admission policy and design and implement a plan to provide solutions on how to deal with the issue of language barriers.
- Requirements on the Government Gazette adverts for principal posts should include some type of higher education or Education Management and leadership competencies to ensure knowledgeable leaders are appointed.
- Close and continued monitoring by the Department and district officials of the subject, curriculum, and instructional leadership practices at schools are needed.

6.5.1.2 For practice

- Through support from circuit managers and curriculum advisors, principals should be informed on their role in the subject and instructional leadership in literacy.
- Principals and Department Heads should receive training on how to exercise subject, instructional, and distributed leadership approaches.
- Principals need PD in the area of distributing roles effectively whilst still staying informed and involved. They need to get higher education training in management to improve their skills as leaders.
- Principals should be guided by circuit managers and subject advisors and implement what they are advised to do effectively in the school to improve literacy achievement.
- The department should assist principals in addressing the language barrier issue and guide them with correct measures to improve literacy and implement the Department's plan.

- School Human Resources committees and SGBs should be trained and informed to look at qualifications when appointing leaders to ensure they are knowledgeable and competent to be in the desired position.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study brought forward various themes to the fore which justify further studies:

- The role of the Departmental Heads literacy leader should be investigated.
- The role of the principal as leaders in literacy could focus on how principals could apply a distributed leadership approach.
- A more comprehensive study in curriculum management and leadership with a focus on which strategies can be established and implemented to improve literacy in primary schools is needed.
- The relationship between school leadership and the subject advisors from the department should be investigated.
- The role of PD training programs based on literacy to improve literacy instruction is recommended.

6.7 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following strengths of the research study should be noted:

- This study comprised participants, which include five principals, six Departmental Heads and 16 FP teachers of five quintiles 5 schools in the Motheo District in the Free State Province. This is a total of 27 participants. This is a relatively large participant span.
- Multiple methods were used to collect data. The research study embraced individual interviews, focus group interviews as well as documentary analysis.
- The study was cost-efficient, which is another strength added to this study.
- This study is strengthened by triangulation to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena.

The following limitations of the research study should be regarded:

- Even though the number of participants is quite high, it still only presents a small part of the whole of South Africa. Hence, the study cannot present the entire population of Primary schools.
- The findings of the research can thus not be generalised.
- Initially, four to six teachers were the target group. However, most schools only made three to four teachers available for the interviews. Fortunately, it was representative of all the grades in FP. The principal would send the Grade Heads of Grades 1-3 to participate in the study.
- The collection of the data was quite time-consuming due to a relatively large participant group. This also lengthened the transcript time of analysing the raw data.
- Due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, follow-up face-to-face interviews were not always possible. Follow-up questions were thus asked telephonically.

6.8 METHODS

The methods used in this study were a qualitative research approach. Individual interviews and focus group interviews were done with the participants. It would have perhaps added value to the study if the researcher could have observed some classroom practices.

6.9 ACCESS AND TIMING: COVID 19

According to Knight, Watermeyer, Small and Pretorius (2021:1), national regulations, protocols, and guidelines are in place and researchers are advised to follow them during the data collection process. Face-to-face activities were not prohibited but adhering to the regulations is crucial to prevent spreading the virus and placing the participants or the researcher at risk. The researcher was fortunate enough that all participating schools and all participants agreed to participate in the data collection process. The advantage that favoured the process was the strict protocols schools need to abide by. These protocols were followed and adhered to profusely. The following protocols during the data collection process were respected and are set out by the Department of Health (2020:5):

- Keeping a social distance of 1.5m-2m distance between participants.
- Keeping masks on and ensuring the nose and mouth are covered.
- Sanitising hands frequently.

The positive side is that no appointments had to be cancelled, and all interviews went on according to plan.

6.10 SELF REFLECTION

6.10.1 Personal growth

This study really helped me improve my ability to work effectively on the computer, learning how to research various articles to compare and use in my study. My knowledge of how to search for scholarly articles on the internet really improved as I was exposed to various sites where articles are published such as LitNet to use an example. The study further challenged me to work hard and manage my time wisely. It is not always easy staying focused, but I got the willpower to push through and commit myself to put in the hours needed to finish this study profoundly. My work ethic has improved tremendously as I set time frames for myself to be finished with certain chapters or sections at specific dates. Additionally, I also learnt so many new ways of phrasing words by being introduced to word banks and academic writing. I usually struggle with arguing and comparing the views of researchers. I have not yet mastered it and still have a lot to improve on. I do, however, believe my writing skills have improved a great deal whilst completing this study. I will aim to continue working on improving my skills as I believe a person should always be teachable and can always gain more knowledge in academic writing skills. This would not be possible without guidance from my study supervisor. I really learn something new every time we meet for a discussion in regards to the research study.

6.10.2 Scholarly growth

This study impacted my scholarly growth immensely and really gave me insight to comprehend this research study to try and fill the gap in literacy research in the FP. The following points show the findings of my scholarly growth.

- A better understanding of the role of principals and Department Heads.

- Awareness of policy documents and their roles in ensuring better teaching and leadership practices.
- Improved understanding of teaching and learning, assessment, moderation, in the FP.
- Information founding about literacy practices and how to implement these in my role as a teacher.

6.11 FINAL SUMMARY

This study set out to explore the role of the principal in improving literacy in the FP. The focus was on literacy and what knowledge principals have as curriculum and instructional leaders when it comes to improving literacy practices. Therefore, the most important issue of the study was to investigate the challenges that principals and teachers experience and how principals can guide teachers to overcome the challenges that they experience in the classrooms. This point, namely how principals should become true literacy leaders, require further investigations, as the scope of this study did not allow for an in-depth exploration of this vital aspect.

The main finding of this study suggests that the principals do not seem to have efficient knowledge due to not teaching in this specific phase themselves. This leads to principals being unable to guide and assist teachers sufficiently in literacy practices. This hampers the improvement of literacy skills and definitely has a negative effect on learner achievement. This is the main value of this study, which will hopefully lead to further investigations about this important theme in research.

To this end, this study shed light on many shortcomings in addressing the literacy challenge. That includes the shortcomings in related policies to the roles of principals, the rest of the SMT, and the attention to leadership approaches. Policies are also vague in terms of subject leadership, which leaves gaps as to what the precise responsibilities of principals are. It is vital that the leadership practices of principals, in terms of subject, curriculum, and instructional leadership, are thoroughly and continuously monitored by education authorities. This also implies that the Education Department should show greater interest in research conducted about Subject leadership practices.

In conclusion, the findings will grant the opportunity to address the challenges principals face head-on by designing and implementing strategies to improve literacy in the FP and pave the way for greater literacy leaders.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: FS DoE

Enquiries: FC Thango
Ref: Research Permission: M. Jordaan
Tel: 082 537 2654
Email: FC.Thango@education.gov.za



28 Gowanlea
Reynecke Avenue
Heuwelsig
Bloemfontein
9301

Dear Ms. M. Jordaan

APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

This letter serves as an acknowledgement of receipt of your request to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education.

Topic: Exploring the principals' role in improving literacy in the Foundation Phase.

- List of schools involved:** Brandwag, Dr. Viljoen, Fauna, Onze Rust and Sentraal Primary Schools.
- Target Population:** Five Principals, Five HODs and Five Foundation Phase Educators at the selected Primary Schools.
- Period of research:** From the first week of February 2021 until 30 September 2021. Please note that the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project in the approved period, you will need to apply for an extension. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
- The approval is subject to the following conditions:
 - The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
 - A bound copy of the research document should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 101, 1st Floor, Thuto House, St Andrews Street, Bloemfontein.
 - You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
 - The ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
- Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

Yours sincerely


Mr. J.S. Tladi
Acting DDG: Corporate Services

19/04/2021
DATE:

Enquiries: MZ Thango
Ref: Notification of research: M. Jordaan
Tel: 082 537 2654
Email: MZ.Thango@ededucation.gov.za



District Director
Motho District

Dear Mr. Molo

NOTIFICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT IN YOUR DISTRICT BY M JORDAAN

The above mentioned candidate was granted permission to conduct research in your district as follows:

Topic: Exploring the principals' role in improving literacy in the Foundation Phase.

1. **List of schools involved:** Brandwag, Dr. Viljoen, Fauna, Onze Rust and Sentraal Primary Schools.
2. **Target Population:** Five Principals, Five HODs and Five Foundation Phase Educators at the selected Primary Schools.
3. **Period of research:** From the first week of February 2021 until 30 September 2021. Please note the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year nor during normal school hours. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
4. **Research benefits:** This study aims to explore the role of principals as literacy leaders in the Foundation Phase in the Motheo District. The study will also explore the challenges that principals face as literacy and curriculum leaders. The information gathered may give direction to what is needed in order to improve literacy amongst learners, specifically in the Foundation Phase. The findings of the study may be worthwhile to SMTs, educators, subject advisors, circuit managers and other relevant departmental officials in their quest to improve literacy practices. Finally, this study can assist in leadership training in this aspect of SMTs' roles and responsibilities in literacy.
5. **Strategic Planning, Policy and Research Directorate** will make the necessary arrangements for the researchers to present the findings and recommendations to the relevant officials in the district.

Yours sincerely

Mr. J.S. Tladi
Acting DDG: Corporate Services

19/04/2021
DATE:

RESEARCH NOTIFICATION: M. JORDAAN: 02-APRIL 2021, MOTHEO DISTRICT

Strategic Planning, Research & Policy Directorate Private Bag 33095, Bloemfontein, 9300 - Tsho House, Room 101, 1st Floor, St Andrew Street, Bloemfontein

APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

15-Mar-2021

Dear Ms Maché Jordaan

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

Exploring the principals' role in improving literacy in the Foundation Phase

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2020/2095/153

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

Yours sincerely

Dr Adri Du Plessis

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

**Adri du
Plessis**

Digitally signed by
Adri du Plessis
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APPENDIX C: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear principal

I am doing research at your school and would like to request your permission to obtain some information from you through the completion of a questionnaire.

DATE

1 February – 30 April 2021

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Exploring the principals' role in improving literacy in the Foundation Phase

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER(S) NAME(S) AND CONTACT NUMBER(S):

Mr. M. Jordaan	2010035570	071 898 3228
Name of student/researcher	Student number	Contact number
Name of student/researcher	Student number	Contact number
Name of student/researcher	Student number	Contact number

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:

Faculty of Education
School of Education studies

STUDYLEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:

Dr. B.D. Esterhuysen
051 401 2955

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The aim of this study is to explore the roles of School Principals as literacy leaders in the Foundation Phase.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

Mr. M. Jordaan, Foundation phase educator & Masters student in Education management and leadership, at the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State.



HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

Approved.

Approval number: UFS-HSD2020/2085/195

WHY ARE YOUR INSTITUTION/ORGANISATION/COMPANY INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

The participants (principals and teachers) selected are the best suited to achieve the aim of the study, that is to Exploring the principals' role in improving literacy in the Foundation Phase. The contact details were obtained from a list of schools that are quintile 4 or 5 schools. Five schools will form part of the study. Participants were purposefully selected and the number of participants will be 5 principals, 5 HOD's and 4-6 foundation phase teachers in each school.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Individual interviews will be conducted with the principals and HOD's. Focus group interviews will be conducted with the teachers. Furthermore, a document analysis will also be done on selected documents related to literacy aspects. The researcher foresees no risks to the participants, and they may withdraw during any stage during the study.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

This study aims to contribute to the existent body of knowledge in the literacy instructional leadership field. It will therefore be of great value for principals, and other members of the SMT, and foundation phase teachers in helping them to create environments in the school that stimulates literacy instruction and learning. This in turn will contribute to the professional development of teachers and better student outcomes.

WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL RISKS TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are no risks foreseen in participating in this study.

WILL THE INFORMATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The names of the participants will be kept confidential and this implies that their names will not be recorded anywhere. Code numbers or pseudonyms will be used to refer to the participants in the study. Privacy will be protected and participants may refuse to take part or may withdraw at any stage of the process. Only the transcriber will have access to the data. Confidentiality will be maintained by signing a confidentiality agreement. The article will be reviewed in order to make sure that the research has been done properly. The report will be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.



APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORMS



RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

DATE

1 February- 1 September 2021

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Exploring the principals' role in improving literacy in the Foundation Phase

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER(S) NAME(S) AND CONTACT NUMBER(S):

<i>Ms. M. Jordaan</i>	2010035570	071 898 3228
<i>Name of student/researcher</i>	<i>Student number</i>	<i>Contact number</i>
<i>Name of student/researcher</i>	<i>Student number</i>	<i>Contact number</i>
<i>Name of student/researcher</i>	<i>Student number</i>	<i>Contact number</i>

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:

*Faculty of Education
School of Education Studies*

STUDYLEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:

~~Dr. BO Bloembergen~~ 051 401 2955

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The aim of this study is to explore the roles of School Principals as literacy leaders in the Foundation Phase.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

Ms. M. Jordaan, Foundation phase educator & Masters student in Education management and leadership, at the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study is awaiting approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: UFS-HSD2020/2095



WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

The participants (principals and teachers) selected are the best suited to achieve the aim of the study, that is to Exploring the principals' role in improving literacy in the Foundation Phase. The contact details were obtained from a list of schools that are quintile 4 or 5 schools. Four schools will form part of the study. Participants were purposefully selected and the number of participants will be 4 principals, 4 HOD's and 4 foundation phase teachers.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Individual interviews will be conducted with the principals and HOD's. Focus group interviews will be conducted with the teachers. Furthermore, a document analysis will also be done on selected documents related to literacy aspects. The researcher foresees no risks to the participants, and they may withdraw during any stage during the study.

CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

The researcher will explain to the participants that participation in the study is voluntary and that there is no penalty or loss of benefit for non-participation. They will also be informed that being in this study is voluntary and they are under no obligation to consent to participation. The participants will- if they do decide to take part be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. They will also be informed that they are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

This study aims to contribute to the existent body of knowledge in the literacy instructional leadership field. It will therefore be of great value for principals, and other members of the SMT, and foundation phase teachers in helping them to create environments in the school that stimulates literacy instruction and learning. This in turn will contribute to the professional development of teachers and better student outcomes.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Principals' demanding work schedule may pose a challenge to conduct the interviews on the scheduled timeslots. This will be dealt with by negotiating with them two or three other suitable dates if something unexpected arise. No other risks are foreseen. Teachers may also have busy schedules due to extra- and co-curricular activities, alternative dates will be provided.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The names of the participants will be kept confidential and this implies that their names will not be recorded anywhere. Code numbers or pseudonyms will be used to refer to the participants in the

APPENDIX E: PRINCIPAL AND DEPARTM HEAD INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF PARTICIPANTS

Sex			For office use
1.	Male		
2.	Female		
3.	Age		

SECTION B: HIGHEST QUALIFICATION

1.	DE 111 (Diploma in Education)		
2.	FDE (Further Diploma in Education)		
3.	ACE (Advanced Certificate in Education)		
4.	HDE (Higher Diploma in Education)		
5.	BEd		
6.	BEd Hons		
7.	MEd		
8.	DEd/PhD		
9.	Other		

SECTION C: YEARS TEACHING EXPERIENCE

1	1-5 years		
2	6-10 years		
3	11-15 years		
4	16-20 years		
5	20-30 years		
6	31+		

SECTION D: YEARS EXPERIENCE AS PRINCIPAL

1	1-5 years		
2	6-10 years		
3	11-15 years		
4	16-20 years		
5	20-30 years		
6	31+		

QUESTION 1: LEADING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN THE LITERACY CURRICULUM

- 1.1 Describe your understanding of the requirements related to teaching and learning of the literacy component (reading and viewing, thinking, reasoning and writing) of the CAPS curriculum?

- 1.2 Describe your understanding of the requirements related to the assessment of the literacy curriculum?

- 1.3 Share with us your understanding of the subject-specific methodology of the literacy curriculum.

1.4 What is your knowledge on literacy instructional practices that work for all learners (struggling readers, gifted readers and learners from diverse learning populations)

1.5 How do cater for the needs of these learners?

1.6 What would you regard as your most important role regarding instructional leadership in literacy?

QUESTION 2: SUPERVISION OF THE LITERACY INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMME

2.1 How do you supervise the taught literacy curriculum?

2.2 Do you have a system of mentoring and evaluating the literacy curriculum implementation?

2.3 Describe your internal moderation process relating to literacy (teacher planning files, work done by learners in workbooks, assessment tasks and rubrics).

2.4 How do you use data to diagnose challenges in literacy instruction, performance and decision-making?

2.5 In which ways do you involve the rest of the SMT in leading the instructional programme in literacy?

QUESTION 3: EMPOWERING STAFF THROUGH PD ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHERS

3.1 How do you promote opportunities for teachers to enhance their competencies in literacy instruction through skills development training?

3.2 Do you take the lead in developing exemplars and demonstration programmes of quality literacy learning?

3.3 Are there sufficient opportunities in your school for clustering groups, professional learning groups and study groups among teachers and the teachers from neighbouring schools that promote literacy instruction?

3.4 Share with us any ideas/programs etc. that your school do regarding the PD of teachers.

3.5 What are the role(s) of other members of the SMT in PD?

QUESTION 4: ESTABLISHING A POSITIVE LITERACY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

4.1 How would you describe the literacy environment in your school?

4.2 How do you address the academic, social and emotional needs of student's in the literacy environment?

4.3 How do you promote a physical environment conducive for literacy instruction?

4.4 How do you promote a learning environment where rules, expectations, routines, procedures and schedules in classes are promoted?

4.5 What programmes/strategies are in place to promote the learning climate in classrooms?

QUESTION 5: ADDRESSING THE IMPACT OF THE SOCIAL CONTEXT ON LITERACY INSTRUCTION

3.1 Do you have any additional intervention programmes, such as afternoon or weekend classes, to provide extra support in literacy to struggling/ socio economically and ethnically diverse learners?

3.2 Do you have any additional support programmes for teachers that will enable them to adapt their learning and teaching strategies to address the social and emotional needs of learners with literacy difficulties?

3.3 How do you, as the principal, enhance the importance of literacy proactively among all your teachers?

3.4 In which ways do you get parents involved in the improvement of literacy programmes?

3.5 How do you promote collective efficacy among your staff to enhance literacy instruction?

What programmes do you have in place to support teachers in teaching socioeconomically and ethnically diverse learners in literacy?

APPENDIX F: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

SEMI-STRUCTURED FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS TO BE COMPLETED BY TEACHERS

SECTION: BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF PARTICIPANTS

Sex			For office use
1.	Male		
2.	Female		
3.	Age		

SECTION/ AFDELING B: HIGHEST QUALIFICATION

1.	DE 111 (Diploma in Education)		
2.	FDE (Further Diploma in Education)		
3.	ACE (Advanced Certificate in Education)		
4.	HDE (Higher Diploma in Education)		
5.	BEd		
6.	BEd Hons		
7.	MEd		
8.	DEd/PhD		
9.	Other		

SECTION C: YEARS EXPERIENCE AS LANGUAGE/LITERACY TEACHER

1	1-5 years/ jaar		
2	6-10 years/ jaar		
3	11-15 years/ jaar		
4	16-20 years/ jaar		
5	20-30 years/ jaar		
6	31+		

QUESTION 1:

PRINCIPALS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE LITERACY CURRICULUM

1.1 How would you describe the understanding and knowledge of your principal regarding the requirements (reading and writing) related to literacy ?

1.2 How would you describe the understanding of your principal regarding the **assessment** requirements (reading and writing) related to the literacy curriculum?

1.3 Describe the support that you receive from the principal and the members of the SMT in literacy instruction and assessment?

1.4 What aspects of support needs improvement?

QUESTION 2: SUPPORTING AND ENHANCING PD OF TEACHERS IN LITERACY INSTRUCTION

2.1 What types of PD activities in literacy do you perform at your school?

2.2 What is the role of your principal and SMT in these PD activities?

2.3 How should PD activities being enhanced/improved?

QUESTION 3: SUPERVISION OF THE LITERACY INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMME

3.1 In which aspects do your principal provide supervision in literacy instruction?

3.2 What is your opinion on the manner in which your principal provide support in literacy instruction?

3.3 How should supervision of instruction in literacy education being improved?

QUESTION 4: KEEP CONTEXT INTO CONSIDERATION

4.1 What are the support measures for at-risk learners that your principal and SMT implement to support their literacy learning?

4.2 Describe the challenges that you experience as literacy teacher.

4.3 How should the challenges in literacy being addressed?

APPENDIX G: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

Documents	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E
Moderation reports					
Moderation plans					
Academic Improvement Plans/Error Analysis					

APPENDIX H: TURN IT IN REPORT

M. Jordaan Final

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