

**INVESTIGATING MENTORING AS A FORM OF SOCIAL LEARNING FOR SCHOOL
PRINCIPALS**

BY

MUSA A THAMBEKWAYO

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SUPERVISOR: DR T van Louw

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my beloved parents, the late John Semause and Martha Ntombithule Thambekwayo. They both played an important role in taking me to Peter Mabuza Primary School in January of 1968.

My gratitude to them is boundless. Their support has always taken me to the very limits of my purpose, allowing me to look beyond it, and I cannot thank them adequately for that.

For as long as there is life in me, I will continue to learn and thus honour them, and they will always be cherished through my successes.

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To my wife Refiloe and my children, Andile, Mthobisi and Kgaohelo, a very warm word of thanks, not only for their support, but also for the interest and encouragement during my study.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the Mpumalanga Department of Education for granting permission for the programme to take place within its Gert Sibande District. The principals I interviewed and their School Governing Bodies who gave permission to do the research within their schools. To the principals, you are the shining stars for the future of our education, "shine on!"

ABSTRACT

Mentoring as a professional development strategy forms an integral part of the Advanced Certificate: School leadership that was introduced in 2007 by the National Education department as an entry qualification in the school principalship. The Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership is aimed at capacitating school leaders to address the challenges experienced by school principals.

The primary objective of this study was to investigate whether the mentorship component of the course is experienced as a form of social learning by the candidates. To achieve this goal, open-ended questions were prepared and administered during semi-structured interviews with the school principals who have been mentored within the ACE programme. The interviews were conducted to ten (10) participants including principals, deputy principals and heads of departments (school level) within the Gert Sibande District (Mpumalanga Province).

The investigation highlighted that principals do indeed experience mentoring as a form of social learning. This was confirmed by the statements given by the interviewed principals that their learning was based on learning from each other through observation and engagement as well as through their mentors. This learning is confirmed by Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) which suggests that learning takes place through observation and positive behaviour of the mentor.

Based on the findings, the main recommendations were that mentorship, as social learning, should be extended to all school leaders and ultimately to school educators, that a mentoring unit should be based at each district office, that the selection of mentors should be carried out carefully so that protégés could benefit maximally and that the period of mentoring should go beyond merely being a component of an academic course.

Key words: capacitation /training, mentoring, social learning, protégé, mentor, observation, educational leadership and management.

ABSTRAK

Mentorskap as 'n professionele ontwikkelingstrategie vorm 'n integrale deel van die Gevorderde Onderwysertifikaat: Skoolleierskap wat in 2007 deur die Nasionale Onderwysdepartement as 'n toetree-kwalifikasie vir skoolhoofde ingestel is. Die Gevorderde Onderwysertifikaat: Skoolleierskap is gerig op die kapasitering van skoolleiers om die uitdagings wat die posisie van Skoolhoof meebring aan te spreek.

Die primêre doelwit van die studie was om vas te stel of die mentorskapkomponent van die kursus deur kandidate as 'n vorm van sosiale leer ervaar word. Om die doel te bereik is oopvrae voorberei en geadministreer tydens semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude met skoolhoofde wat as deel van die Gevorderde Sertifikaat: Skoolleierskapkursus gementor is. Die onderhoude is gevoer met tien skoolhoofde, adjunkhoofde en departementshoofde van die Gert Sibande distrik (Mpumalanga).

Die ondersoek het aan die lig gebring dat skoolhoofde wel die mentorskapproses as 'n vorm van sosiale leer ervaar. Hierdie aspek is bevestig deur die respons van skoolleiers dat hulle van mekaar geleer het deur observasie en braadslaging asook deur die modelering van mentors. Dié vorm van leer strook met Bandura se Teorie van Sosiale Leer (2007) wat die idêe onderskryf dat leer plaasvind deur observasie en modelering van positiewe gedrag van die mentor.

Gebaseer op die bevindinge is die hoof aanbevelings wat in die studie gemaak word dat mentorskap, as sosiale leer, uitgebrei behoort te word na alle skoolleiers en uiteindelik na alle onderwysers, dat 'n mentorskapeenheid by elke distrik gebaseer behoort te word, dat die keuring van mentors omsigtig moet geskied sodat protégés maksimaal voordeel trek en dat mentorskap verder moet strek as bloot 'n komponent van 'n akademiese kursus.

Slutelwoorde: kapasitering/opleiding, mentorskap, sosiale leer, mentor, protégé, modelering, observasie, onderwys leierskap en bestuur.

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it to any university for a degree.

Signed:

Date:

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Academics (Van der Westhuizen & Van Vuuren, 2007; Searby, 2008; Bush, 2006; Erasmus, 1994), Education Department officials (Hindle, 2006), as well as politicians (President G.J. Zuma, 2009; Motshekga, 2009; Pandor, 2006; Masango, Mpumalanga MEC, 2007) are in agreement that the role of the principal is crucial for the optimal functioning of schools. It is therefore no surprise that in South Africa (SA), as in countries the world over, an array of strategies focussing on the enhancement of leadership and management capacity and competence of school principals has been implemented over the years. One such strategy, which in recent years has increasingly been considered by SA education authorities, is that of mentoring (Van Louw and Waghid, 2008).

The importance attached to mentoring as a support strategy for principals in the Mpumalanga Province was clearly articulated by Mr. S. Masango, the ex-Provincial MEC for Education, in his 2007/08 Policy and Budget Speech in the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature, when he stated that “the challenges brought about by the mediocre performance of certain school managers in the province will receive an intervention through training and mentoring programmes to enhance performance”. According to Masango, the target group for these programmes was the serving principals of schools in the province of Mpumalanga.

Since then, the mentoring programme implemented by the Mpumalanga Provincial Education Department focuses mainly on the principals of underperforming schools. The Provincial Department of Education has targeted those school principals whose schools received a pass rate of 20% or less in the Matriculation results. These schools are underperforming in terms of the department’s expectations. According to the Mpumalanga Department of Education (2010), “mentoring is intended to help principals of underperforming schools to manage schools effectively in order to

produce better results". According to Kiltz, G., Danzig, A. & Szecsy, E. (2004), mentoring for school administrators is based on the recognition that professional development of principals requires opportunities to learn from other practising administrators. The principals who are participants in this investigation were selected by the Mpumalanga Education Department to be mentored by experienced principals or ex-principals from well-functioning schools. Of the chosen principals in the Gert Sibande district, 15 are currently registered for the ACE Leadership programme (2007) and are being mentored.

Most of this paper refers to mentoring of school principals to enhance their skills in managing schools for better learner achievement. This research investigates whether mentoring of school principals in the Gert Sibande District is a form of social learning or not.

What is mentoring and where did it originate?

According to Daresh and Playko (1992), the concept of mentoring goes way back to Homer's *Odyssey*, where Mentor was the teacher entrusted by Odysseus to tutor his son, Telemachus. Since then, different commentators have emphasised different aspects of the mentoring process. Although this is the case, one aspect that clearly stands out as central to any mentoring process is that mentoring is essentially a learning process – "a particular mode of learning" (Smith, 2007). Crow (2001) states that mentoring is a "specific socialization tool", and later suggests that during mentoring both the mentor and the protégé are actively engaged in a learning process. Central to statements about mentoring by both Smith and Crow is the emphasis they place on mentoring as a form of learning. This aspect resonates with Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), which suggests that social learning is learning from others through the process of behaviour modelling. This theory forms the basis of this investigation and intended to determine whether principals from the Gert Sibande district in the Mpumalanga Province involved in mentoring programmes do experience mentoring as a form of social learning or not.

The study focused mainly on the black school principals in the Gert Sibande district. These principals lead and manage schools which belonged to the former Department of Education, commonly known as the ex-DET, and did not receive adequate training relevant to their tasks as principals. They now face enormous challenges due to the neglect brought about by Apartheid education.

Van der Westhuizen and Erasmus (1994) argue that there were never any thorough training programmes specifically developed for aspiring or serving principals in South Africa. Candidates were mainly appointed as principals due to the fact that they were judged to be successful educators. The only training these candidates underwent was in the form of workshops and/or in-service training. Most of these programmes were offered for only a day or two, resulting in unlikely potential effectiveness. With the added legacy of the generally-accepted dubious standards of pre-service training for black educators during Apartheid years, it is not surprising that black educators appointed as principals would (in most instances) find great difficulty in leading and managing their schools effectively. The gravity of this situation is even worse when considering that the Gert Sibande district includes mainly schools from the former Ka-Ngwane homeland administration, where the services were much poorer than those in the black township schools. The investigation of mentorship as a form of social learning in this kind of situation is important in order to evaluate its effects in enhancing the potential of principals as school leaders and managers.

While investigating mentoring as a form of social learning, the concept of socialization was also relevant in describing the results of mentoring. Crow (2001) describes mentoring as a socialization tool. The school principal, as a professional, is required to experience “professional socialization” as well as “organisational socialization”. Professional socialization for principals encompasses knowledge of core responsibilities, laws and procedures, as well as technical skills common to all principals, whereas organisational socialization refers to the processes through which new principals learn how to be a principal in a new district or school (Hertting & Phenis-Bourke, 2007).

Probably, one of the biggest challenges for any training programme for school principals is the extent to which the training is experienced. I argue that it is what

principals will experience during the training programme that matters most. It is what is learnt during the programme which offers the possibility of enhancing the potential of the principals. Mentoring therefore provides a different opportunity of personal growth for school principals, as it focuses on the person, his or her career and support for individual growth and maturity (Erasmus *et al.* 2008:203). Street (2004) confirms the relevance of mentoring by suggesting that the purpose of mentoring (relationships) is to socialize new teachers into the profession, while Daresh and Playko (1992) argue that “mentoring is needed by adults at different life and career stages”. Hertting and Phenis-Bourke (2007) also propose that many experienced principals would also benefit from mentoring support.

It is against this background that I wish to argue that mentoring programmes (if experienced as a form of social learning) have the potential to socialize principals involved in such programmes and help them to fulfil the role of principal with enhanced capacity. This process is, however, dependant on the building and maintenance of sound relationships with colleagues and peers. Van der Mescht (2008) rightfully notes that “the purpose of educational leadership is not just about particular tasks and behaviours, but is a social and socialising relationship”.

Individuals learn a great deal through their interaction with others. In an environment socially conducive to learning, principals have an opportunity to learn from both other principals and their mentors. Salomon and Perkins (1998) provide some clarity on learning and posit that learning involves deeper understanding when aided by peers in a collaborative setting where members deliberate and agree. During this process of learning all members have an opportunity for learning from each other in a social environment. Lankau (2002:779) argues that mentoring is one important work relationship that can serve as a forum for personal learning.

The Department of Education has introduced this programme (ACE School Leadership: 2007) to help develop leadership and management capacities of school principals. Enhancing the leadership potential of school principals is believed to be one of the solutions to the problem of underperforming schools. Van der Westhuizen and Van Vuuren (2007) noted, after the publication of the 2006 Grade 12 results, that the focus was once again on schools which did not perform satisfactorily

academically. This drew the attention of the DOE to the performance of school principals. As a result, Hindle, the Director-General of the DOE, said at an interview: "This year (2007) it will be: 'back to school' - not only for pupils, but for principals as well". Hindle emphasised that "evidence indicated over and over again that good school leadership leads to good school results". Literature on the role of principals in the learning by students indicates that the leadership style of the principal plays an important role (Hale & Moorman, 2003). According to the Wallace Foundation (2008), school leaders are critical in helping improve student performance.

1.1. THE TRAINING OF PRINCIPALS IN SOUTH AFRICA BEFORE 1994

1.1.1 INTRODUCTION

Generally, the preparation of teachers in South Africa and the provision of education to the disadvantaged majority (being the black community before 1994) could best be described in Dr. Nelson Mandela's own words as "a crime against humanity" (Anjool, 2005). Dr. Mandela's statement is qualified by the injustices that were embraced by the Apartheid education before 1994. If the system of education caused black people in South Africa to become disadvantaged, then it can be concluded that the preparation of teachers and principals was not the government's top priority. Comparatively, the preparation of white principals was of a more acceptable quality when compared to that of their black counterparts.

On the training of black teachers from 1960 to 1976, Badat (1999) states as follows: "African teacher-training was brought under the control of Bantustan education departments and began to be ethnically structured, while that for coloured people and Indians came under central government control. Finally, while a beginning was made with higher technical training for blacks, this was extremely limited and framed by the policies of job reservation and separate development". Badat (1999) contends that most African and Coloured teacher trainees would not have possessed senior certificate passes.

Generally and more specifically, the preparation of teachers and principals in South Africa was based on race. As a result of this situation the preparation of black principals was the most neglected by the state. There were programmes, thought to be adequate for black school principals and teachers, that attempted to enhance their performance but only served “to produce a black population that would accept its subordinate status in society as natural” (Malde, 2005).

As I have previously mentioned, during the apartheid period the training of black teachers was not of an acceptable standard due to its insignificance in the economy of Apartheid South Africa. Firstly, some training colleges for teacher-training were built in the areas designated for black people, i.e. the homelands, and very few of these colleges were found in urban areas. Secondly, these homelands were situated far away from developed urban areas, which were planned by the state to serve the separate development agenda. Thirdly, these homelands were the reserves from which white employers drew their workforce. Keevy (2006), on the education and training system in South Africa prior to 1994, confirms its racial division and says that while most white learners were privileged, African, Indian and Coloured learners had to make do with the crumbs that fell from the table of the Nationalist Government. Keevy (2006) also contends that schools, colleges and universities reflected the national directive for segmentation, and while most white teachers received pre-in-service training at well-resourced urban universities, most black teachers started teaching without even completing their own secondary schooling, much less the tertiary education that they needed. The study investigates the experiences of these black principals, especially those who have been part of the mentoring programme, since schools in their realm are characterised as underperforming. As previously mentioned, these are schools that were under the authority of the ex-DET in the past.

The seriousness of this system of apartheid in education management is best summed up by Gallie and Sayed (1997) as follows: “The vestiges of these systemic maladies are apparent in the educational administration’s distribution of school managers, which remains blatantly distorted by issues of race, gender, and location. Teacher support focused solely on indoctrination, thereby ensuring that teachers executed specific tasks as ordained. Teacher training was marked by disorganised

pre-service preparation, ineffective in-service instruction, and pedagogical insularity. Racial, gender and regional inequalities, as well as ideological distortions in teaching and learning, were apparent at almost all the nation's institutions of higher education where teacher training took place”.

The question we need to ask ourselves again concerns the preparation of principals. How are they being prepared for the leadership and management tasks they are expected to perform in their schools, given the history of apartheid education as summed up by Gallie and Sayed above? Erasmus (1994) contends that even though school principals are trained teachers, many of them are not trained for the leadership and management tasks/roles that they have to fulfil on appointment. In addition to the above information, Bush and Odura (2006) argue that there is rarely any formal leadership training, and principals are appointed on the basis of their teaching record rather than their leadership potential. Mestry and Singh (2007) contend that in many instances head teachers come to headship without having been prepared for their new role, and as a result they often have to rely on experience and common sense. As a consequence of inadequate teacher training, many principals are struggling to grapple with the realities of the leadership and management demands of today's education system in South Africa.

My argument is that mentoring as a form of social learning is an appropriate strategy to enhance the capacity of principals to begin to address the legacy of neglect in preparation of school leaders. Through its socialization nature and through the time and space it presents for social learning, mentoring as a strategy for professional learning can make a major contribution in providing principals the opportunity to acquire the confidence, skills and ability to lead schools effectively. “Mentoring posits valuable information about life and the skills needed to live well, and is a powerful tool for promoting human development” (www.soc.uscb.edu).

It needs to be stressed, however, that in this thesis mentoring is not propagated to be the only effective strategy aimed at the enhancement of the capacity of school leaders; rather, it is argued that it can make a valuable contribution if viewed and experienced as a form of social learning. Therefore, it is in this light that I wish to give a broad overview of “other key strategies” and to draw a distinction between

mentoring as a form of social learning and “other strategies” aimed at capacitating educational leaders.

1.2. COACHING, IN-SERVICE TRAINING AND INDUCTION

1.2.1. TRAINING

Training involves direct instruction and skill demonstration. Jones et al. (1989:102) lists the following forms of training:

- (a) Formal meetings by subject specialists (in-service training);
- (b) One-day conferences (induction/ workshops);
- (c) Short courses over a period of time (workshops);
- (d) Single session activities (coaching).

This work discusses coaching, in-service training and induction to highlight the differences and similarities between them and their purposes. The purpose of this discussion is to differentiate them from mentoring as a form of social learning.

1.2.2. COACHING

The word “coach” has been used interchangeably by many of its users, including sports practitioners and educators (Griffiths: 2005). This interchangeable use of coaching has led to confusion in its use. Griffiths (2005) traces this confusion to the historical origins of the word “coach”: the presence of some related forms of coaching within the educational settings (such as cognitive, peer and academic coaching) and also the various roles coaches assume during coaching. There is a direct relationship between coaching and learning. As Griffiths (2005) puts it, “Learning is inherent within the coaching process. The learning which occurs through coaching comes in many forms. It empirically demonstrates itself as a form of incidental, informal, skills-based experiential learning”.

Coaching has as its goal the correction of a behaviour or action. It focuses on the immediate situation and its main role is to inform. The coach is responsible for directing and aligning the team members to achieve a goal. A coach is a private tutor; one who instructs or trains a performer or a team of performers (Dorval, 2001:4). In most cases a coach is found in the sports arena. This programme puts more emphasis on the strengths of the player and overcoming his/her weaknesses. Attention is placed on the technical issues relating to learning and focuses on personal characteristics of the athlete, such as motivation, drive and confidence (Dorval: 2001).

Griffiths, writing about coaching in educational settings, contends that the presence of coaching in educational contexts is minimal. This does not necessarily mean that teaching does not utilise this method. According to Griffiths, cognitive coaching is used frequently to assist teachers in delving into the thinking behind their practices.

In conclusion, I need to emphasise that coaching relationships and mentoring relationships are equally important. Both are based on personal support, since both coaching and mentoring are learner-centred. Dennen (2001), quoting Collins *et al* (1989), says the following about mentoring and coaching: “the two (coach and mentor) do the same thing in practice terms” and distinguishes coaching from mentoring in the learning process by suggesting that “a mentor is one who provides support of a more general nature in an on-going capacity and a coach is typically focused on assistance for meeting a particular goal”.

From the above discussion it becomes clear that mentoring and coaching have some similarities as well as differences. According to Dorval (2001) the similarities and differences are as tabled below:

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
Focus on learning and growth;	Bottom line (coaching); Top-line emphasis (mentoring).
Provide a source of guidance;	Task- or performance-based relationship (coaching); More holistic relationship (mentoring).
Provide opportunities for skills development;	Coaching has only formal relationships; Mentoring has both formal and informal relationships.
Use questioning strategies to draw a person out;	Coaches are experts mainly in sports knowledge; Mentors channel knowledge and wisdom to mentees.
Use honest feedback to stimulate growth;	Coaching has benefits for both coach and pupil, entirely dependent on the physical ability of each other; Mentoring relationships develop with mutual benefit to both mentor and mentee.

I can therefore conclude by stating that coaching can be useful in the learning process of school principals. What needs to be understood is the fact that coaching alone (not accompanied by mentoring) is incomplete, as mentoring provides support after the coaching process.

1.2.3. IN-SERVICE TRAINING (INSET)

Van der Westhuizen (1991) describes in-service management training as a management development task which takes place on the job. This refers to any training that an educator or principal receives to improve his management skills, which in turn will improve job performance. In most cases, where there is no continuity in the in-service training, this method does not yield long-term positive results. This is because it is difficult to train principals in a relatively short time.

Mentoring (support) can best be incorporated into in-service training so as to ensure continuity of principal training in order to ensure positive and sustainable results. In-service training can best be associated with internship, which is direct training on the job.

1.2.4. INDUCTION

Wong (2008) contends that induction goes beyond mentoring to provide an extensive framework of support, professional development, and standards-based assessments and evaluations. Comprehensive induction programmes vary in their particular designs, but essential elements include a high quality mentor programme, ongoing professional development and access to an external network of beginner teachers. Induction refers to the process of introducing new staff members to the school and helping them to know more about the school.

The confusion around mentoring and induction is addressed by Wong (2005:43) in this way:

“Induction is a noun. It is the name given to a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process that is organized by a school district to train, support and retain new teachers, which then seamlessly guides them into a lifelong learning program”.

In contrast to induction, Wong (2005) defines mentoring in this way:

“Mentoring is most commonly used as a verb or adjective, because it describes what mentors do. A mentor is an individual person, whose basic function is to help a new teacher. Mentoring is not induction; it is a component of the induction process”.

According to Bush and Oduro (2006) there is limited literature on the induction of principals in Africa, certainly because there is little evidence of formal induction occurring in almost all African countries. The statement therefore confirms the limitations of induction as well as in-service programmes because of the way they are

conducted by the provincial departments designing them, especially in South Africa. They lack the quality that mentoring possesses. The facilitator of an induction programme or in-service training programme may not be expected to have the qualities of a mentor, in view of the quality of the expected relationship between the mentor and the protégé.

Therefore my conclusion is that the latter-mentioned programmes are not mentoring, but mentoring may be a component of these programmes. Wong (2005) insists that the term “mentoring” is often misused to mean induction and contends that mentoring and induction are not the same.

1.3. MENTORING

Mentoring is very complex and varies from one situation to another (McKimm, Jollie & Hatter, 2007). According to McKimm *et al*, as well as Whitehead (1995), mentoring can be traced to the Greek mythological character, Mentor. When Odysseus, King of Ithaca, left for the Trojan War, he left his son, Telemachus, to his faithful servant Mentor and Athene the goddess of wisdom to teach him about becoming a great ruler. During this assignment a relationship developed between Mentor and Telemachus which made it possible for Telemachus to learn from Mentor. Since then the exercise of entrusting a young inexperienced individual (mentee) into the care and guidance of an experienced person or mentor has gained popularity. Hobson and Sharp (2005:25), on the history of mentoring, contend: “Historically, the term ‘mentor’ has been used to denote a wise and trusted guide, adviser or counsellor ... support given by one (usually more experienced) person for the growth and learning of another, and for their integration into and acceptance by a specific community”.

Mentoring is a process whereby two or more individuals work together to develop the career and abilities of a single individual (Goodyear, 2006). Tally (2008) provides a clearer definition of mentoring by saying that mentoring is a method by which novice practitioners are taught to adapt and succeed in new professional roles. It is important to use a relevant understanding of mentoring for the purposes of this study and the context within which this study takes place at school. The common

understanding, similar to the one above, gives an image of an older, wiser individual leading young protégés. This may not necessarily be the case in an educational set-up. Mentors may be younger than protégés; therefore this study adopted the definition which reflects mentoring as a two-way exchange of information. At the centre of this study is the ability of both individuals (mentor and protégé) to learn from one another through observation and modelling. This is learning which bears the characteristics of Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977).

The research focuses on mentoring as a form of social learning. The focus is on the experiences of the sampled group of principals in the Gert Sibande district (Mpumalanga Province) acquired during the mentoring process.

The goal of mentoring is to support and guide the mentee. It focuses on the long-term objectives, and one of its most important roles is to listen. The process of learning is led by the mentee and is characterised by a healthy relationship and the willingness of both to learn from each other. According to Dorval (2001) a mentor "is a guide by the side, not a sage on the stage". As guides, mentors travel the journey of personal learning and growth along with their mentees. The purpose of mentoring is to guide the inexperienced individual. Mentoring has been used in a number of in-service training and professional development programmes for school principals in England and the USA, as well as in other countries (Van der Westhuizen and Erasmus 1994). In most of these programmes it is confirmed that the mentor plays an integral part (Van der Westhuizen and Erasmus 1994).

Another instance where mentoring has been used successfully is the Singapore experience where the Ministry of Education (MOE), after introducing the ad hoc in-service training courses for principals and vice-principals, appointed a mentor to each DEA (Diploma in Educational Administration) participant (Bush and Chew, 1999). The DOE in South Africa could also be linked to this experience with the introduction of the ACE School Leadership programme, which also introduced mentorship (DOE 2007).

Bush and Chew (1999) give a different picture of mentorship in England and Wales to that of Singapore. The in-service training operates during the first year of headship, and mentoring is a voluntary activity.

“Mentoring has been researched in the management literature as a working relationship that contributes to personal growth and as an important organizational process. Mentoring relationships are one vehicle through which individuals can enhance personal learning”.

The earlier discussion on general mentoring and mentoring as a form of social learning is brought up here again to discuss other forms of mentorship further. The two types of mentorship discussed below attempt to throw more light on mentoring and the roles of mentors and protégés. Sponsorship mentoring seems to be more of general mentoring and developmental learning (www.wlv.ac.uk/pathfinder).

1.3.1. SPONSORSHIP MENTORING: This is a relationship between a mentor and a protégé (www.wlv.ac.uk/pathfinder):

- (a) The mentor is more influential and hierarchically senior;
- (b) The mentor gives, the protégé receives, the organisation benefits;
- (c) The mentor actively champions and promotes the cause of the protégé;
- (d) Good advice is central to the success of the relationship;
- (e) Social exchange emphasises loyalty;
- (f) The primary objective is career success.

1.3.2. DEVELOPMENTAL MENTORING: This form of mentoring is less hierarchical and helps the growth of both the mentor and the protégé:

- (a) The mentor is more experienced in issues relevant to mentee's learning needs;
- (b) There exists a process of mutual growth;
- (c) The mentor helps mentee do things for himself/herself;
- (d) The mentor helps the mentee to develop his/her own wisdom;

- (e) The mentor helps the mentee towards personal insights to help steer his/her own development;
- (f) The primary objective is personal development;
- (g) The social exchange emphasis is on learning.

As previously mentioned, mentoring is widely used internationally and nationally. Literature on the international aspect of mentoring includes that of Bush and Chew (1999), the Wallace Foundation reports (2007) and Hobson and Sharp (2005).

The Wallace Foundation (2007:3) and Davis (2001:1) contend that a few years ago mentoring was not a commonplace feature of educational practice in the United States. In most cases educators recognized mentorship as a special, personal and unusually productive relationship established between an experienced teacher and one new to the profession or the individual school.

It should be noted that all of the above-mentioned programmes are designed to prepare principals for their desired roles. On the contrary, very little attention is paid towards developing veteran principals. Fortunately in South Africa, the ACE Leadership and Management programme (2007) is the component of mentorship and is designed to support serving principals as well. Thus this research aimed at investigating the experiences of the principals and SMT members who have undergone the mentorship programme introduced by the Department of Education since 2007, whether it is a form of social learning or not.

Henry and Tally (2008) say that “mentoring is a method by which novice practitioners are taught to adapt and succeed in new professional roles”. This study extend this definition to include veteran principals. The premise of a guiding mentorship is one of role acquisition and socialization through interactive learning. Henry and Tally (2008) further define mentoring as a creative method of promoting professional development that sets in motion the process of self-actualisation and growth.

Two definitions that give more clarity to the aim of this study are those given by Sosik and Godshalk (2000). The first one is as follows:

“Mentoring is a form of social support which may allay job-related stress of organisational members”.

The second one is as follows:

“Mentoring is defined as a deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled person, with the agreed-upon goal of having the lesser skilled person grow and develop specific competencies”.

From the above definitions of mentoring it is clear that the process aims to help one towards self-actualisation through interactive learning during professional development. The process is in the researcher’s opinion a socialization process. It is a socialization process because “socialization is learning” (Long, 2007). Kobeleva and Strongman (2010:13) suggest that mentoring, when effective, encompasses the structured socialization of learning. Consequently, mentoring practices according to Kobeleva and Strongman may increase competencies in:

- (a) performance;
- (b) language (organisational acronyms and neologisms);
- (c) building and maintaining relationships between staff members;
- (d) understanding power structures, organisational goals and values.

In addition to the above arguments, Marsha and Playko (2001) succeed in making a link between socialization and social learning when listing the potential values of mentoring relationships. They state that mentors can provide assistance to administrators by sharing information about leadership practices that are effective ... and by serving as role models. Bandura (1977) explains in his Social Learning Theory the manner in which individuals learn new behaviours through a process that involves observation, interaction and modelling.

1.4. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MENTORING AND THE SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

1.4.1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout this discussion, “mentoring” and “social learning” are used as central terms with interconnectedness between them. Mentoring is seen as an especially effective component of development in context (Day, 2001:594). Social learning comes from the Social Learning Theory advocated by Albert Bandura (1977). This section looks at the relationship between mentoring, as well as this theory of Bandura in the learning or developmental process.

According to Bandura (1977), the Social Learning Theory seeks to explain how patterns of behaviour are acquired and how their expression is continuously regulated by the interplay between self-generated and external sources of influence. This interplay is referred to by Ebel (1977) as the reciprocal determinism. Ebel suggests that behaviour both influences and is influenced by personality and environment, and that these two influence each other. This simply suggests that the environment is the context within which behaviour is observed or changed; this is the social context. The personalities of both the mentor and the mentee influence the context. Learning which takes place within a social context and influenced by the personalities of both (mentor and mentee) may be called social learning.

According to Kytte (1978), the social learning paradigm is organised around three major regulatory systems: behaviour is (1) acquired, (2) maintained and (3) modified. Therefore mentoring, as a form of social learning, is investigated in terms of how the behaviour is acquired (as Bandura contends) through modelling, and how this behaviour is maintained (e.g. by punishing undesired behaviour). This work emphasises the link between mentoring and social learning. In doing so, the researcher cites the work of Lankau (2002) where he states the following:

“The most important characteristic of mentoring as a social learning process is that it is by its nature a collaborative process, wherein both the mentor and the mentee are working together”. Crow (2001) also states that mentoring is not a passive process but an active one in which the mentee and the mentor are actively engaged with each other in learning. In most institutions mentoring focuses on career development and in this research the aim was to look at it as a means towards personal development. The focus of this study is on mentoring as a form of social learning for school principals. Due to the nature of mentoring as a collaborative process, it therefore becomes important to build an acceptable environment (social context) for acceptable relations between the environment, the mentor and the mentee. When such conditions are created learning becomes a benefit for both mentor and mentee and therefore become a socialization process. This is the environment where the mentor gets to become a model for the protégé. Cuerrier (2002) presents the following characteristics of the mentoring relationship:

- (a) A mentor chooses to make the mentee a high personal priority;
- (b) A mentor sets aside his/her own time, ambitions, desires and fears and recognizes the ambitions, desires and fears of the mentee;
- (c) A mentor does not criticise, dictate conduct, rate performance and rescue or create in the mentee a carbon copy of him/her.

Due to the existing meaningful and helpful mentoring relationships, school principals who receive mentoring are supposed to develop self-confidence in their tasks of managing and leading educational programmes. These principals are also expected to be successful future mentors. The need for this study is the result of recognition of the importance of leadership and management roles played by principals in their schools, especially during the recent changes in education in South Africa. While the changes are taking place, Restine (1997) asserts that principals are pivotal players in improving the quality of life and learning in schools and any significant contribution towards their capacity enhancement requires that principals should understand themselves, their experiences and the world in which they live. Mentoring offers school principals the opportunity to learn and being adult learners their learning

differs from other forms of learning. Bandura's Social Learning Theory is therefore appropriate as the theoretical framework for this study.

The Social Learning Theory of Bandura (1977) provides more information on the role acquisition through what Bandura refers to as modelling. Modelling is what Bandura (1977) calls observational learning. The mentor is therefore expected to play the role of the model in the relationship environment and the mentee learn by observing the mentor. The role of the mentor and the willingness of the mentee are crucial in the role of mentoring as a form of social learning. According to Crow (2001), mentors are responsible for creating a climate of mentoring where learning is valued and mentoring is a community responsibility. Therefore this confirms mentoring to be a form of social learning since it is society- or community-based. What makes mentoring important is the fact that it makes possible the opportunities for both the mentor and mentee to learn from each other. This is referred to as "reciprocal determinism" by Ebel.

1.4.2. CONCLUSION

I wish to state Crow's reference to mentoring as a "specific socialization tool, typically used in internship programmes". The reference to a "specific tool" sets mentoring as a form of social learning far apart from other programmes used in the professional development or the skills enhancement programmes of school principals.

1.5. PROBLEM STATEMENT

There are a number of educational strategies, used both presently and in the past that are aiming at capacitating school principals in the execution of their leadership and management tasks. The problem of school principals not being adequately equipped to lead and manage their schools still exists, and the responsibilities of these principals are increasing almost annually. The Education Laws Amendment Act (2007) states that it is incumbent on the principal of a school to manage all educators

within the school and to implement all educational programmes and curriculum activities.

To address the challenges associated with school leadership and management of schools by principals, an Advanced Certificate in Education School Leadership programme was piloted by the Mpumalanga Provincial Education Department in 2007. This study is looking at mentorship within the programme, and asks: is the mentorship in the programme a form of social learning?

Mentoring as a form of social learning emphasises what an individual becomes after observing and modelling the mentor. What the mentee becomes is a result of the interaction the individual has had during mentoring with the mentor. Thus, the focus of this research is on what these principals are experiencing as a result of mentoring. The study is specifically set in the premise of mentoring as a form of social learning, while also using mentoring in general to cultivate an understanding of mentoring as a concept.

As a result, this study investigates how mentoring as a form of social learning benefits principals of schools. The emphasis is on the serving principals who are part of the mentoring programme introduced by the Department of Education as a support strategy for principals.

Hertting & Phenis-Bourke (2007) contend that although many mentor programmes work to support new or first-year principals, veteran principals are often not considered. Hertting & Phenis-Bourke contend that veteran principals would greatly benefit from a mentoring experience that takes into account both aspects of socialization.

The introduction of the ACE School Leadership programme by the Department of Education (2007) has brought new hopes regarding the improvement of the potential of principals.

The study therefore explores mentoring as a support strategy, but more particularly as a form of social learning. The study is expected to provide answers to the question whether these principals do experience mentoring as a form of social learning or not.

1.6. AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to investigate mentoring as a form of social learning for principals of schools in the Gert Sibande district of the Mpumalanga Department of Education. The Social Learning Theory of Bandura (1977) serves as the theoretical framework for this study. This theory focuses on learning through observation of the attitudes and behaviour of others, as well as outcomes of this behaviour. The study investigates how the sampled (interviewed) principals experience mentoring as a form of social learning.

A number of school principals have experienced difficulties relating to curriculum changes, and the need for supporting them arose. As a result, the Department of Education (2007) has introduced the Advanced Certificate in School Leadership which aims to support principals through its mentorship programme in order to equip them with the necessary capacity to lead and manage their schools effectively and efficiently.

It is for these reasons that this study investigates mentoring as a form of social learning for principals. Furthermore, mentoring as a form of social learning “is characterised by interplay with our experience” (Wenger, 2000: 226). It is in this interplay between people and the social systems where learning takes place. It is also within this interplay that the principals are expected to acquire the experiences which are the larger part of what the study aimed to investigate.

The findings of this study are expected to assist the Department of Education to gain insight on the relevance of strategies which embrace the Social Learning Theory in enhancing the capacity of principals in leading and managing schools. Principals will benefit from the experiences of those principals who have been part of the mentorship pilot project within the ACE School Leadership course.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Primary Question:

- (a) Do the school principals in the mentorship programme in the Gert Sibande district experience mentoring as social learning?

Secondary Questions:

- (b) What experiences did the principals have during the mentoring programme?
- (c) How do these principals perceive mentoring as a professional development programme?
- (d) How do they interpret their experiences?
- (e) What according to these principals do their experiences mean?

1.8. RESEARCH METHOD

The study used the interpretive inquiry paradigm. Interpretive inquiry, according to Waghid (2003: 46) insists on two central issues:

- (a) The self-understanding of the individual forms the basis of all social interpretation (phenomenological or hermeneutical);
- (b) Human consciousness is transparent.

The background of the qualitative method indicates the following aspects (according to Strauss and Corbin (n.d:9) :

- (a) “The need to get out into the field to discover what is really going on;
- (b) The relevance of theory, grounded in data, to the development of a discipline and as a basis for social action;
- (c) The complexity and variability of phenomena and of human action;
- (d) The belief that persons are actors who take an active role in responding to problematic situations;
- (e) The realization that persons act on the basis of meaning;

- (f) The understanding that meaning is defined and redefined through interaction;
- (g) Sensitivity to the evolving and unfolding nature of events (process); an awareness of the interrelationships among conditions (structure), action (process) and consequences.

The data was interpreted with the help of the set of principles for interpretive field research as suggested by Klein (1999:70) as follows:

- (a) The Fundamental Principle of the Hermeneutic Circle;
- (b) The Principle of Contextualization (understanding the data within the context of the interviewee's understanding and interpretation);
- (c) The Principle of Interaction between the Researcher and the Subject (advocating that the interviewee, just as much as the researcher, can be seen as interpreter and analyst);
- (d) The Principle of Abstraction and Generalisation (requires relating to idiographic details revealed by the data interpretation through the application of principles 1. and (5) (see above-mentioned points) to theoretical, general concepts that describe the nature of human understanding and social action);
- (e) The Principle of Dialogical Reasoning (sensitivity to possible contradictions between the theoretical preconceptions guiding the research design and actual findings will be required);
- (f) The Principle of Suspicion (requires sensitivity to possible biases and systematic distortions in the narratives collected from the participants).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to investigate whether principals do experience mentoring as a form of social learning. This method, according to Conco (2005) involves direct interaction between the researcher and a respondent. This interview differs from traditional structured interviews in several important ways. Firstly, although the researcher may have some initial guiding questions or core concepts to probe, there is no formal structured instrument or protocol. Secondly, the interviewer is free to move the conversation in any direction of interest that may come up. This strategy is important since it provides the researcher with an opportunity to explore the topic further, taking into consideration, however, what Conco states about

the difficulty to analyse semi-structured interview data, especially when synthesising across respondents.

1.9. LITERATURE STUDY

Mouton (2001:90) states that “a good literature review should be exhaustive in covering the main aspects of the study and should be fair in the treatment of authors”.

A literature study was undertaken to describe the problem and the current state of knowledge on the topic. Literature on this work covers the various programmes offered at various tertiary institutions in South Africa, one being the current training of educators occupying the positions of school principals in the format of an Advanced Certificate (ACE) in education leadership (Heystek, 2007).

Literature on the preparation of principals reveals that principals in Africa face a daunting challenge and that they often work in poorly equipped schools with inadequately trained staff (Bush & Oduro, 2006).

Literature on mentoring suggests that “protégé learning plays a vital role in mentoring relationships and also that mentoring speeds the development of talented staff and helps develop a wider pool of talented managers” (Hezlett:2005). Seeing that this study is looking at mentoring as a form of social learning, it was important to investigate this aspect. Bandura’s (1977) Social Learning Theory forms the theoretical framework of this study. The important aspects of this theory of learning such as modelling, vicarious learning and observation have been discussed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW OF MENTORING AS A FORM OF SOCIAL LEARNING

2.1. INTRODUCTION

I have provided the background of the research in Chapter One and have also conceptualised the aim and the method of this research.

The main purpose of this chapter is to develop a literature review, which centres mainly on mentoring as the professional development strategy and Bandura's Social learning Theory (1977). In addition, the international and national professional development programmes was discussed to deepen our understanding of mentorship within these programmes and more specifically understanding mentoring as a form of social learning.

This study is looking at mentoring as a professional development strategy for school principals. More specifically, the study investigates mentoring as a form of social learning for school principals in the Gert Sibande district in the Mpumalanga Province.

The preparation of principals for effective school management and leadership in South Africa has been the subject of a number of researches in the field of education leadership, not only in South Africa, but the world over. Bush and Oduro (2006) contend that "Principals in Africa face a daunting challenge". Bush and Oduro quote research findings in the Gauteng province as well as in Mpumalanga province which confirm the "wide-ranging changes in the education system which have rendered many serving school principals ineffective in the management of their schools". Many serving principals "lack the basic management training prior to and after their entry into headship". The Mpumalanga education department has since taken an initiative towards addressing these issues of ineffectiveness through the participation in the ACE pilot programme (2007). This pilot programme was open to serving principals as well as to deputy principals and school management team members aspiring to become principals (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011).

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) was used as a theoretical framework to investigate mentoring as a form of social learning for the school principals of the Gert Sibande district. "Mentoring is a distinctive and central feature of the ACE programme, designed to facilitate the transfer of learning to candidates and school practice" (Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi, 2011). This study investigates whether this mentoring is indeed a form of social learning for these principals.

For a better understanding of social learning as encompassed within mentoring, a definition of social learning was important. To begin with, one question that needs to be asked is "What is learning"? In most cases learning is explained as the acquisition of knowledge. Another interesting definition of learning by Salomon (1998) is: "Learning is viewed as being the interaction, observation and reflection that occurs within a social context". Louw (1989) points out that "learning is a process through which a relatively permanent change in behaviour occurs as a result of an experience or events such as training, observation or practice". Learning takes place in different formats according to Louw:

- (a) Classical learning (Pavlov, 1848–1936);
- (b) Reflex learning (Vladimir Bechterev, 1857–1927);
- (c) Operant learning (B.F. Skinner, 1904);
- (d) Trial and error learning. (Edward L. Thorndike, 1874–1949);
- (e) Modelling behaviour/social learning (A. Bandura).

It is the last-mentioned form of learning (modelling behaviour or social learning) that is at the centre of this discussion because of its relevance in the learning of school principals. As Louw has indicated, this theory of social learning purports that learning takes place through the process of observation and/or practice. In the case of mentoring, the process is completed when the protégé learns by observing the modelled behaviour by the mentor. In terms of this study, an experienced principal modelling his/her behaviour which is copied by the protégé results in the change in behaviour. It is therefore expected that the principal being mentored develop or acquire better skills and knowledge in leading and managing a school.

Social learning can also be best understood from a social sciences term, “socialization”. Socialization is a process whereby a new or inexperienced individual is helped to fit into a new environment or social setting. Long (2007) defines socialization as learning, which refers to all forms of learning regardless of setting or the age of an individual. He further argues that socialization is the process whereby people acquire personality and learn the way of life of their society. This definition, however, lacks the explanation of how the socialization process takes place. Greenhouse (1999) refers to socialization tactics and states that they relate to social aspects of a situation (investiture versus divestiture, and serial versus disjunctive) which are particularly important for personal adjustment.

On the basis of the above discussion, I wish to agree with Greenhouse that mentoring is a tactic or strategy towards social learning. It is therefore the purpose of this research to investigate mentoring as a form of social learning for principals of schools in the Gert Sibande district. In another research, conducted by Blass, Brouer and Robyn in 2007, the roles of gender and race in politics understanding and networking ability as a function of mentoring were examined. The results indicated that the relationship between mentoring and politics understanding suggests that members of organisations seek clues and information regarding their environment, and in so doing they seek out more experienced members (or mentors) of the organisation for answers. Furthermore, the results support the contention that mentoring relationships provide fertile grounds for personal learning.

Another research in this field is that which was conducted by Ismail and Arokiasamy (2007) in “Exploring mentoring as a tool for career advancement of academics in private higher education institutions in Malaysia”. This research concluded by clearly indicating that mentoring is an important tool for career advancement among employees, including the academics. Their study also concluded that mentoring relationships has led toward a higher satisfaction, trust, self-efficacy and achievement of career goals.

It is therefore crucial that mentoring as a form of social learning be investigated in the educational setting, especially amongst principals of schools. There have been a number of changes in the education system in the country since 1994. Principals of

schools are expected to perform tasks for which they have not been prepared for. Mentoring is a tool to guide and support principals (DOE, 2007).

2.2. THE HISTORY OF MENTORING

The concept of mentoring is a very old one; as discussed below, it dates back to Homer's *Odyssey*.

Mentoring has its origin in Greek mythology with Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom. A man called himself Mentor, and Athena became a substitute parent to Telemachus, while his father, Odysseus, was away during the Trojan War. Athena guided and nurtured the boy who would become the future king of Ithaca (Ismail and Arokiasamy, 2007). Mentoring is a process that has been used for centuries as a means of handing down tradition, supporting talent and securing future leadership. It flourished in the feudal system of the Renaissance as young men served apprentices to gain membership in guilds (Moberg and Velasquez, 2004)

Moberg and Velasquez (2004) contend that mentoring is an age-old process that continues to be practised in most contemporary organisations.

According to Wood (1997) mentoring is perceived as hierarchical, the mentor being more powerful and having more knowledge than the mentee, and that this is where the problem lies in the perception of mentoring. Mentoring is a process during which one individual, usually a more senior and well-respected individual, and the mentee, usually a novice, develop a relationship where the focus of the relationship is the personal and professional development of the mentee. Mentors guide mentees along a developmental journey, assisting and encouraging them to build their own personal vision. Mentoring has the potential of integrating individuals into an organisation efficiently and ensuring that they become productive quickly.

Hobson and Sharp (2005:25), on the history of mentoring, contend that "Historically, the term 'mentor' has been used to denote a wise and trusted guide, advisor or counsellor... support given by one (usually more experienced) person for the growth and learning of another, and for their integration into and acceptance by a specific

community". The acceptance by a community contextualises the learning of the protégés, being the principals in this study, to a social context, confirming the investigation of mentoring as a form of social learning.

2.3. THE NATURE, PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF MENTORING

Mentoring is an intentional process, and is also a nurturing and insightful process in which the wisdom of the mentor is acquired and applied by the beneficiary (Wong 2007). My focus in this study is on what the principals acquire and apply through the help of mentoring. Sosik (2000), when defining mentoring says "mentoring is defined as a deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with the agreed-upon goal of having the lesser skilled person grow and develop specific competencies". The pairing of a skilled principal with the inexperienced principal perfectly fits the above definition because the purpose is to assist the less skilled principal to grow and acquire more skills and confidence in the chosen career.

Bush and Coleman (1995:61), on the purpose of mentoring, provide the following five purposes of the mentoring process for principals:

- (a) The mentor provides encouragement and support to enable the new head to become an effective head of the school;
- (b) Mentoring is designed to support the process of finding, making and taking the role of the head. This involves understanding the nature of the school as a system, taking ownership of its aim and acting on that understanding;
- (c) The raw materials of mentoring sessions are the new head's experience of his/her school – i.e. what is happening in the school, how he/she feels about it and the way people are reacting to him/her. It is through talking about, reflecting on and having support in making sense of the experience that the new head is supported in taking up his/her role;
- (d) A new head needs to understand how he/she is to take authority. What matters is that the new head can own and justify the decisions he or she takes, rather than feeling as though acting on the mentor's advice;

- (e) The new head's actions should be for the benefit of the school as a whole. He or she will be recognised as acting with authority, relating decisions to the school as a whole and to the desired achievements.

According to Hanson (2008:455), mentoring broadens teachers' views of themselves and the teaching profession. This statement provides assurance that a principal as a teacher is a beneficiary of the mentoring programme, and that his or her view of both the self and the management task is broadened. Ricciardi (2005:2), citing Bandura, says the following on mentoring "supported by the Social Learning Theory, mentoring provides direct and observational learning to help a novice acquire work patterns and skills and build personal efficacy for successful leadership".

Roberts, (2000) cited by Dennen (2001:817), noted that there are eight attributes of mentoring that commonly appear:

- (f) A process form;
- (g) An active relationship;
- (h) A helping process;
- (i) A teaching/learning process;
- (j) Reflective practice;
- (k) A career and personal development process;
- (l) A formalised process;
- (m) A role constructed by or for a mentor.

Mentoring is widely used in a number of institutions in different countries for the purpose of developing leaders. 'Developed and developing countries in the 1980s and 1990s have placed emphasis on human resource development and attempted to do so through the use of a more centralised management system of education' (Bush1999:42), referring to training and mentoring programmes for principals.

"Successful schools are complex, collaborative institutions requiring a high level of performance from every professional. School success critically begins with the school principal that – day in and day out – has prime responsibility for ensuring that all

students meet grade level and college and career readiness standards. These highly skilled leaders are not born, but developed/mentored” (www.wallacefoundation.org).

The Wallace report regards mentoring as an integral component of principal preparation programmes, designed to improve school and student performance. It contends that good principals are not born – they are mentored.

Bush & Coleman (1995:60) say that mentoring is an important mode of professional development in many countries, including Australia, Singapore, the UK and the USA. Its underlying assumption is that a more experienced colleague can facilitate the professional development of a new principal.

Mentoring is a learning process where helpful, personal and reciprocal relationships are built while focusing on achievement and emotional support is a key element. Within mentoring relationships, mentees develop and learn through conversations with more experienced mentors who share knowledge and skills that can be incorporated into their thinking and practice. By comparison, tutoring or coaching is a provision of academic and professional assistance in a particular area with a sole focus on competence (Wong & Premkumar, 2007).

Van Louw and Waghid (2008), in their critical analysis of mentorship, point out that “mentors transfer wisdom with regard to norms, values and morals of the organisation and support mentees through mediation, counselling and support while providing information that mentees would otherwise not have been able to access”.

Choi and Tang (2005), on the meaning and practice of mentoring, posit that though mentoring has existed in the literature of teacher education for some time, its meaning and practices vary in different disciplines, diverse school and curriculum contexts and over time. An understanding of such variation sets the backdrop for conceptualising the substantive aspect of mentor preparation programmes. The above understanding and conceptualisation of the mentor programmes have brought about the need to study mentoring as a form of social learning for school leadership. This study sets itself apart from mentoring which positions itself as the ultimate solution to problems relating to education leadership efficiency. Rather, it sets the

tone for mentoring as a form of learning that results from observation and modelling by the mentee as demonstrated by the mentor.

Searby (2008:2) provides the following argument for mentoring principals: "Highly skilled school leaders are not born, nor do they emerge from traditional graduate programs in school administration fully prepared to lead. It is generally recognised that they will need guidance from a more experienced school leader in their early years of administration. Workplace mentoring is critical for inexperienced school leaders so as to provide a bridge between theory learned in graduate school and the complex realities of contemporary school leadership".

Van der Westhuizen (1994:4) contends that many writers regard mentorship as a dynamic, reciprocal work relationship between an experienced office-bearer (mentor) and a newcomer (protégé) within an organisation, where the work relationship is aimed at the professional development of both participants. That means mentoring is not only beneficial to the mentee but also to the mentor. In addition, mentoring has an advantage in that it has the ability to bring together two people on a one-to-one basis, as opposed to induction where a large number of people are brought together for a session. On the functions of mentoring, Scandura (1990) mentions the following as important:

- (n) **Role modelling:** the mentor's influence by being someone the protégé wishes to emulate;
- (o) **Social support** (psycho-social): the sharing of personal problems with the mentor;
- (p) **Vocational function:** the mentor takes personal interest in the career of the mentee.

Ricciardi (2005:3) contends that mentoring can be either formal or informal, with the majority of mentoring relationships beginning informally, as a result of interest and willingness on the parts of the mentor and protégé. The basic requirement to maintain an effective mentoring relationship that promotes protégé learning is the need for pairs to develop trust, share common beliefs, determine roles and create opportunities for nurturing the relationship and monitoring progress on job

performance and role adjustment. Mentoring can thus be described as a particular mode of learning wherein the mentor not only supports the mentee, but also challenges him or her productively so that progress can be made (Smith 2007:277).

2.4. MENTORING AS A STRATEGY OF TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMMES: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Most of the work involving mentoring has been done to help prepare new and aspiring teachers and principals in education. In some countries, such as Britain, such programmes are referred to as preparation programmes, and in countries such as Australia, Wales, England and USA they are referred to as mentoring programmes. Some terms used are “induction”, “coaching” and “in-service training”. The research focuses on the serving principals specifically, but also use the preparatory programmes to build on our understanding of the impact and the extent of the principal’s leadership challenges, as well as the attempts in addressing them through these programmes and mentoring as a form of social learning.

2.4.1. SINGAPORE. The Ministry of Education (MOE) has been resorting to ad hoc in-service training courses for the development of principals and vice-principals. This has proved to be inadequate, and in 1982, assisted by the United Nations Development Programme, the MOE conceptualised a system of educational management training. This led to the commencement of the Diploma in Educational Administration (DEA) in July 1984, first for prospective primary school principals and in the subsequent years for secondary school principals as well. The Singapore model of mentoring is highly structured and elaborate, and is working reasonably well (Bush & Chew, 1999).

2.4.2. EUROPE. Mentoring in England and Wales post-dates its introduction in Singapore and the USA. The increased responsibilities imposed on the head

teachers by the 1988 Education Reform Act led to the recognition that effective leadership in schools depends on supporting, developing and training heads (Bush & Chew, 1999).

In Europe (Britain) the following principal preparation programmes have been introduced: the British Education Leadership, Management and Administration Society (BELMAS) and the European Forum on Educational Administration (EFEA). These organisations have encouraged a focus on a principal's preparation (Thody, Papanou, Johnsson & Pashiadis, 2007).

2.4.3. USA. District officials in Mexico (2002) were concerned about the increasing difficulty of finding and retaining qualified principals. The district, with 83,000 students and 126 schools, often had to advertise two or three times in order to get enough qualified applicants. The district started a voluntary program called Extra Support for Principals, or ESP, designed to combat job frustration and burnout while making the critical first year as successful as possible. The programme matches new principals with experienced administrators, and the goal is to develop long-term bonds (NAESP, 2003:14).

2.4.4. CHINA. Teaching and Research Units (TRU) in China (Shanghai) were established in 1956 to organise support for teachers in schools in each district (Wong, 2005).

2.4.5. AFRICA. Bush (2006), on the situation of principals' preparation, indicates that principals face a daunting task by often working in poorly-equipped schools with inadequately-trained staff. Learners are often poor and hungry and may be suffering the consequences of HIV/AIDS. There are so many contextual factors that have influenced and impacted negatively on the provision of education and education leadership in Africa. South Africa is no different from the many countries in Africa, having experienced oppression, poverty, segregated education and many other

factors. The Africa program does not refer to a historical perspective as did the other countries. About South Africa, Bush and Odura (2006) say that:

“In many instances, head teachers come to headship without having been prepared for their new role... As a result, they often have to rely on ...experience and common sense”.

2.6. SOCIAL LEARNING

According to Jones (1968), social learning describes the process of change which may result from interpersonal interaction. Social learning is also known as collaborative learning, referring to learning processes among a group of people seeking to improve a common situation. Laister and Kober (n. d.) define collaborative learning as any kind of group learning in which there are some meaningful learning interactions between learners. In short, social learning is learning from others. This occurs when a person learns as a function of observation – this is called observational learning, also known as vicarious learning or modelling (Bandura, 1977).

During this process it is expected that each individual (mentee or mentor) should also learn as an individual. Searby (2008) sums up the responsibilities of learners within the social learning situation as follows;

“From a learning perspective, future principals need to have the ability to assess both the strengths and weaknesses of their leadership skills, reflect on these, and then make adjustments as needed. As they enter into mentoring relationships that will assist them in this process, they should demonstrate the self-direction that is characteristic of adult learners. Mentoring is the quintessential expression of self-directed learning. At the heart of self-directed learning (and mentoring) is individual responsibility for learning”.

Smith (2007) states that mentoring can thus be described as “a particular mode of learning where the mentor not only supports the mentee, but also challenges them productively so that progress is made”.

Bandura (1977) held that individuals observe a particular action and repeat this action so that the frequency of the action increases the individual's capacity to cognitively perform the action or process without assistance. Mentoring provides such an opportunity for observing and modelling the behaviour displayed by the mentor. According to Fletcher (1998), good mentors are critical friends, personal guides, counsellors and fully engaged in a relationship that has the potential to become as fundamental to the personal development of the mentor as to that of the mentee. The above statement refers to a form of a transaction between the mentor and the mentee during the process of mentoring; thus there is learning from each other. Russel and Adams (1997) point out that mentors are also believed to experience rewards from mentoring relationships and may benefit from the creativity and energy of the protégé.

According to Bandura (1977), the learning process occurs when students learn by constructing their understanding through interpreting present experiences and integrating them with their existing understanding of the world.

Since principals are pivotal players in improving the quality of life and learning in schools, any significant contribution towards improvement requires that principals understand themselves, their experiences and the world in which they live (Restine, 1997:253).

According to Kilvington (n. d.), however, one element that keeps popping up in the relationship between social learning and mentoring is the fact that social learning refers to the kind of learning by individuals that happens through observation or interaction within the social context. When analysed the above statement, means that social learning is learning that occurs through observation, i.e. observing the mentor within the social set-up or society. The mentor models the behaviour and the mentee observes and develops a modelling behaviour (Bandura 1977). There are quite a number of social settings where learning could take place, such as schools, churches and sports fields. The anticipated behaviour to be learnt is that which is approved by society itself. On the contrary, one needs to put it plainly that observing and modelling whatever observed behaviour is governed by incentive-related sets, exerts selective control over the direction, intensity, and frequency of observing responses

(Bandura 1966:500). Also important is the issue of choice. Any individual has a choice to observe what he/she likes. It may not be proper to expect that during the mentoring process only good behaviour is going to be observed and modelled by the protégé.

I have presented social learning above as referring to learning about social issues, learning by a group of people from other people through observation and modelling. Such learning results in recognisable social entities such as collective decision making procedures (Emelo 2010). For any number of people to learn from each other, there needs to be a recognisable relationship characterised by acceptance and trust. According to Emelo (2010), on social learning with mentoring, each learning relationship begins with mutually agreed goals, allowing participants to start with a learning focus upon which all parties can collaborate. I believe that in such conditions of openness by both parties on what is to be learned, the results of the mentoring process could benefit both the mentor and the protégé.

The relationship between mentoring and social learning has been alluded to above. This relationship is also determined by the relationship between the mentor and the mentee. The relationship between the two should, according to Roberts (2000), “be of ‘mutual affinity’, a relationship with clear identification”.

This research project acknowledges the different mentoring relationship types, but focusing on one-to-one mentoring. Individual principals and deputy principals within the mentoring programme are the focus of this study. This approach helps the study to report on the effects of mentoring on each individual participant as to whether their mentoring experiences have indeed contributed to increased productivity and effectiveness.

2.7. SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

“True learning is based on discovery guided by mentoring rather than transmission of knowledge”, John Dewey.

According to this theory, individuals learn by observing the consequences experienced by others as a result of their behaviour (Rennie, 2000).

Since this study concerns mentoring as social learning, its theoretical framework is based on the Social Learning Theory by Bandura (1977). In essence this theory explains that protégés may observe how different behaviours in other employees or their mentors are either rewarded or punished, and emulate behaviours that are rewarded. Hezlett (2005) noted that the social learning or cognitive theory has been argued to offer one theoretical rationale for the positive outcomes observed in mentoring relationships. According to this theory, she says individuals learn by observing the consequences experienced by others as a result of their behaviours, and protégés may speed their learning through observing their mentors' behaviour and the reinforcements or punishments that stem from their behaviours. Since the school principals are the subject of this investigation, as learners (protégés) learning from their mentors, another dimension of learning which was to be looked into was the framework of situated cognition. This framework, according to Hansman (2003), suggests that knowledge is a relationship between individuals and the social or physical situation in which they learn.

The Social Learning Theory was born in the 1930s at Yale University, when Clark Hull taught a seminar on relating learning theory to psychoanalysis (Wilbon, 2001). From then on a number of theoretical changes were made and the guiding belief was that personality is a learned function. In 1977 Bandura advocated that people learn through observing the behaviour, attitudes and outcomes of others and the outcomes of that behaviour. Malcolm contends that Bandura observed that individuals are capable of learning through observation and practical application, usually by virtue of a mentor. The Social Learning Theory of Bandura emphasises the importance of observing and modelling the behaviour, attitudes and emotional reactions of others. Bandura states that learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do (<http://fr.webmail.co.za>). Furthermore the Social Learning Theory explains human behaviour in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural and environmental influences. Bandura (1977) also states that

individuals observe a particular action and repeat this action so that frequency of the action increases the individual's capacity to cognitively perform the action or process without assistance. In his theory he refers to five main functions in the process of learning from modelling;

- (a) Paying attention;
- (b) Coding for memory;
- (d) Retaining in memory;
- (d) Carrying out motor actions;
- (e) Motivation.

From the above discussion on the nature and purpose of mentoring, the researcher argues that there is a link between mentoring and social learning. This link is evident in the fact that mentoring is an intentional process designed to support the process of self-learning and learning through self-actualisation, making it a social learning process as explained by Bandura's Social Learning Theory.

Roberts (2000) contends that an event is an occurrence taken as a unit: the event form gives a sequence of occurrences, whereas the process form suggests something is going on. Steward and Kruger (1996), cited in Roberts (2000), reviewed the literature and found that many authors concur that mentoring is a process primarily concerned with transmitting knowledge. Again Roberts (2000) explains mentoring as a helping process, wherein a mentee is helped to learn.

The previously-mentioned functions of mentoring, according to Scandura (1990) and Bandura (1977), are now discussed; especially modelling behaviour, vicarious learning, self-regulation and self-efficacy. These functions form the basis of what this research is investigating from the sampled school principals.

2.6.1. MODELLING BEHAVIOUR

Both Bandura (1977) and Scandura (1990) emphasise modelling as a type of learning. Bandura's Social Learning Theory claims that modelling is an important component of the learning process (Turner and Shepherd, 1999). It therefore

becomes important to discuss modelling in the context of the Social Learning Theory because it occurs as a result of observing and imitating. According to Louw (1989), its essence is that one individual (the learner or imitator) observes another individual (the model) in a particular situation. If the imitator or learner exhibits, or attempts to exhibit, the observed behaviour of the model at the very same time or later, then imitation or observational learning has taken place. Speizer (1981) states that role-modelling is based on developmental theories of identification and modelling (specifically in childhood) and the social learning and cognitive development theories. Speizer, citing Kemper, describes a role model as a person who possesses skills and displays techniques which the actor lacks and from whom, by observation and comparison with his own performance, the actor can learn. The actor in the context of this discussion is the protégé, being the principal who must perform his/her duties observing the role model, the mentor. Hansman (2003), on the mentoring and learning theory, posits that in essence the Social Learning Theory explains that protégés may observe how different behaviour in their mentors are either rewarded or punished and emulate behaviours that are rewarded. Kerka (1998), cited from Hansman (2003), contends that mentoring reflects “the socially constructed nature of learning and the importance of experiential, situated, learning experience”. Bandura (1977) says that because acquisition of response information is a major aspect of learning, much human behaviour is developed through modelling.

According to Turner and Shepherd, the extent to which individuals are influenced by modelled behaviour depends on the characteristics of models, the attributes of observers and the perceived consequences of adopting similar behaviour. They also claim that in terms of peer education, the Social Learning Theory seems to be relevant in terms of (1) credibility, (2) empowerment, (3) role-modelling and (4) reinforcement.

2.6.1.1. Credibility: The mentor or the person acting as a model should be credible with the others in order for him/her to be influential. The Social Learning Theory asserts that to be a credible role model, one would need to have high status within the peer group (Bandura 1977).

2.6.1.2. Role-Modelling: It is the concept of role-modelling which seems most central to social learning. Turner and Shepherd argue that “the role of the peer educator is to serve as a positive role model and to provide social information rather than merely providing facts ... peer leaders enhance the programs applicability by modelling appropriate behaviours”.

2.6.2. THE CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR EFFECTIVE MODELLING TO OCCUR (Bandura 1977), cited by Ormond (1999)

2.6.2.1. Attention: The person must first pay attention to the model.

2.6.2.2. Retention: The observer must be able to remember the behaviour that has been observed. One way of ensuring this is by using the technique of rehearsal.

2.6.2.3. Ability to replicate: The third condition is the ability to replicate the behaviour that the model has just demonstrated.

2.6.2.4. Motivation: The final necessary ingredient for modelling to occur is motivation; learners must want to demonstrate what they have learned.

Using the above theory helped in looking deep into the process of mentoring and how principals are benefitting or not benefitting from it. If they are benefitting at all, then what has resulted from their learning? Using the theory for this study unveiled the necessary relationship between mentor and mentee for mentoring to yield the desired results, i.e. helping the mentee to learn through observation and modelling (www.learning-theories.com/social-learning-theory). Tang and Choi (2005) also introduce the aspect of learning from and being supported by others, when they state that mentoring needs to change from a one-on-one form to a less hierarchical, individualistic mode, as all teachers are more effective when they can learn from and be supported by a strong community of colleagues.

2.6.3. VICARIOUS LEARNING

Vicarious learning is also called observational learning. This form of learning entails learning from others. Vicarious processes refer to the human ability to learn not only from direct experience, but also from observing others. Observational learning allows one to develop an idea of how a new behaviour is formed without actually performing the behaviour oneself (Bandura, 1977). Vicarious learning is important in that it enables humans to form patterns of behaviour quickly.

Practically, during mentoring, the mentee has an opportunity to learn from the mentor through observation. It therefore becomes easy to model the mentor's behaviour after (a) paying attention, (b) coding for memory, (c) retaining in memory, (d) carrying out the action and (e) being motivated. According to Stone (www.med.usf.edu/~kmbrown) observational learning is governed by four processes: attention span, retention process, motor reproduction processes and motivational processes. Attention span refers to a person's ability to selectively observe actions and behaviours in his/her environment. Retention processes are made possible by the human ability to form symbols from observed behaviour stored in one's memory. Once these symbols are formed and stored in memory, they must be converted into appropriate action for modelling to occur (Bandura, 1977).

Our understanding of behavioural change (with regard to how principals develop) will be determined by the principals' persistence in observing what their mentors are doing or have been doing.

2.6.4. SELF-REGULATION AND SELF-EFFICACY

Bandura contends that a self-regulated person would be able to display the appropriate behaviour within the social situation. Bandura (1977:200) on the self-efficacy theory contends that individuals who come to believe that they are less vulnerable than they previously assumed are less prone to generate frightening thoughts in threatening situations. Those whose fears are relatively weak may reduce

their self-doubts and debilitating self-condemnation to the point where they perform successfully. Performance successes, in turn, strengthen self-efficacy.

On performance accomplishment, Bandura (1977) says that “once established, enhanced self-efficacy tends to generalise to other situations in which performance was self-debilitated by preoccupation with personal inadequacies”.

A number of the cited references above share a common view on mentoring, i.e. a form of learning where the mentee models the behaviour of the mentor. The learning from the process takes place within a particular situation, and is also influenced by this situation or context (reciprocal causation or determinism). Since learning is a social activity or process, it goes without saying that learning will take place within a society or social environment. Learning is also a socialising process. Mendez-Morse (2004) argues that mentoring is commonly considered an important practice for integrating a novice in the organisation, as well as a means of socialising the newcomer to the specific knowledge, skills and dispositions appropriate to a new role in the organisation.

In an effort to further emphasise the relationship between mentoring and social learning, I am highlighting some general principles of The Social Learning Theory as summed up by Ormond (1999):

People learn by observing the behaviour of others and the outcomes of those behaviours;

- (a) Learning can occur without a change in behaviour;
- (b) The Social Learning Theory can be considered as a bridge or transition between behaviourist learning theories and cognitive learning theories;
- (c) The social learning theory has become increasingly cognitive in its interpretation of human learning.

2.6.4.1. Factors in the development of self-efficacy and self-regulation:

Ormond (1999) provides the following factors as being responsible for affecting self-efficacy:

- (a) Previous successes and failures;
- (b) Messages received from others;
- (c) Failures and successes of others

2.6.4.2. Self-Regulation: This has come to be more emphasised in social learning theory. This is when an individual has his own ideas about what is appropriate or inappropriate behaviour and chooses actions accordingly. The following aspects are significant:

- (a) Setting standards and goals;
- (b) Self-observation;
- (c) Self-judgement;
- (d) Self-reaction.

2.7. MENTORING AND THE SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

Learning theories are rarely cited in research concerning mentoring programmes and relationships, but if learning theories are cited to explain mentoring, Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory is the one most frequently mentioned. In essence, this social learning theory explains that protégés may observe how different behaviours in other employees or their mentors are either rewarded or punished and emulate behaviours that are rewarded (Hansman 2003:104).

The quality of the mentor and of the protégé is important in order to convincingly confirm mentoring as a social learning process under the existing conditions. Ehrich *et al* (2001:10) says the following about the mentoring process: "Fundamentally mentoring is a process that exists within the dynamics of a professional and/or interpersonal relationship between a mentor and a mentee. The relationship can vary in its intensity and dynamics".

The present approach to mentoring, as adopted and implemented by the Department of Education, requires an in-depth investigation to check whether it does qualify as a form of social learning as advocated by Bandura (1977). I wish to consider the following position as explained by Meaney *et al* (2008:193):

“Personal factors in those social settings may include, but are not limited to, one’s knowledge, motivation, fears, anxiety, expected outcomes, and perceived self-efficacy encompassing the learning and performance of behaviour”. The environmental factor is conceptualised as being in three levels:

- (a) Imposed;
- (b) Selected;
- (c) Constructed.

In my opinion, the environmental factor in the mentoring practice, as practised by the department, should not be imposed. Instead, principals should see the need to be mentored and should be allowed to choose their own mentors. Failure to level the playing field could result in rejection and failure. The social learning element would be absent in this case. I maintain that the student (principal) in this case has, as Meaney, puts it “the potential to become an active agent in the learning process” if he or she has a choice in the process of choosing a mentor.

According to a workshop document presented by the ministerial task team deployed to the Mpumalanga Provincial Education Department on the 17th of February 2010 at a meeting with the principals and Circuit Managers, the following essentials of mentoring were listed and seen to be confirming mentoring as a form of social learning:

- (d) A clear understanding of the procedure and the role of the mentor and mentee;
- (e) Trust and rapport between both parties;
- (f) The credibility and genuineness of the mentor as perceived by the mentee;
- (g) Confidentiality and discretion;
- (h) A relationship based on the mentee’s perception of his/her own needs.

The workshop document provides information on the following suitable range of skills to be used by the mentor:

- (i) Counselling;
- (j) Listening;
- (k) Sensitive questioning;
- (l) Analysis.

An appropriate attitude by both parties is necessary; for instance, the ability of the mentor to challenge the protégé and the self-motivation. Once the set targets have been reached, a sense of becoming an equal is acknowledged and the relationship will change to that of a friend or peer. Hobson and Sharp (2005) agree with the above and assert that it is important to recognise that the forms which mentoring might take in practice will be influenced by a range of factors, including the relative degrees of experience and expertise, and the personal characteristics of both mentors and mentees.

Therefore it is important that during the process of mentoring there is interpersonal interaction (Jones, 1968) which results in the process of becoming co-learners (DoE 2010). This process is, in the opinion of the researcher, a process of development and change. According to Restine (1997) development occurs through a constant process of involvement in active exchange with the environment. Restine (1997) also contends that it is through this interactive exchange that individuals construct meanings, strive for competence and protect themselves from changes that threaten to undermine the assumptions or inner logic with which the self is maintained.

On the whole it is necessary to mention that the relationship between mentoring and social learning is further strengthened by the mentoring relationship between the mentor and the mentee. Morberg and Velasquez (2004) contend that the mentoring relationship should be conceived as a “friendship” and the mentor, much like a friend, is expected to support and be loyal to the protégé.

Gormley (2008:45) says that mentoring relationships are influenced by the mentors and the mentees, their interpersonal processes and the organisations and professions in which they work. Good mentors are both friends and teachers to their mentees and are expected to somehow manage highly intimate, mutual relationships without compromising their objective evaluation of mentee performance. Furthermore, Waghid and Louw (2008), on the relationship between mentor and mentee, state that the relationship is regarded as intense and focuses on the psycho-social development of the protégé, in addition to professional development.

The following attributes of a successful mentoring process, according to Tang and Choi (2005), ensures smooth socialization and learning:

- (m) A supportive relationship;
- (n) A helping process;
- (o) A formalised process;
- (p) A role constructed for or by a mentor for the protégé.

Ismail and Arokiasamy (2007) provide very important information which serves as the summary for this discussion on the link between mentoring and social learning. They maintain that according to Bandura, observational learning is characterised by the concept of self-regulation. People can regulate their own behaviour to some extent by visualising self-generated consequences. Thompson (1990), cited by Ismail and Arokiasamy (2007), argue that the Social Learning Theory represents the theoretical foundations on mentoring in education.

The relationship between mentoring and the Social Learning Theory is very clearly articulated in the purposes of mentoring and what social learning is about. Mentoring relationships, according to Ismail and Arokiasamy (2007), provide both career advancement and psycho-social functions. Moberg and Velasquez (2004) provide us with more clarity regarding this mentoring relationship when they say that it should not be conceptualised as a contractual relationship, but rather as determined by the needs of the protégé.

Ismail and Arokiasamy (2007) mention another interesting aspect of mentoring as a form of social learning in Japan. According to them, in Japan mentoring relationships have been incorporated into the culture. Japanese culture with enriched values and morals has accepted mentoring relationships as part of the work culture. Furthermore, mentoring in Japan, according to Ismail and Arokiasamy (2007), emphasises the high value of continuity, obligation and duty between individuals, the notion of respect for elders and the concept of seniors protecting juniors from failure. For the Japanese, it goes without saying that the benefits of mentoring are much greater than they were before the acculturation of mentoring.

2.8. THE EXPECTED BENEFITS OF MENTORING IN GENERAL

The benefits of mentoring listed below are proof of the usefulness of mentoring as a support strategy, not only for the protégés, but also for the institution and society. The mentors, as previously mentioned, also benefit from mentoring. The increasing rate of social change which impacts on the provision of education and its management implies a need for lifelong learning. Mentoring programmes provide protégés with the opportunity to learn. Mentoring therefore becomes the appropriate vehicle for the learning of principals.

The discussion regarding mentoring as a benefit to protégés, mentors and organisations is undertaken with great care, as the researcher is mindful of the arguments against mentorship, and agrees that mentoring could be misused. In contrast to benefits, some of its pitfalls are mentioned at the end of this discussion.

2.8.1. BENEFITS FOR PROTÉGÉS

Bush and Coleman (1995), report on the benefits experienced by mentees in the USA as follows:

“Considerable professional growth is typically observed and attributed to the fact that regular career counselling and guidance takes place... People who received the support of mentors reported that they were goal – directed, increasingly serious about the importance of detail, self-confident and reflective”.

The other benefits for protégées are the following:

- (a) Improved knowledge and skills;
- (b) Improved confidence and well-being;
- (c) Provision of advice and information;
- (d) Improved effectiveness.

Mentoring provides a number of advantages to the protégés who are willing and open to be mentored. Personal dispositions, characteristics and personality traits

influence the success or failure of the mentoring process. Self-confidence and learning to use initiative are some of the benefits to the protégé.

2.8.2. BENEFITS FOR MENTORS

- (a) Greater satisfaction;
- (b) New knowledge and skills;
- (d) Development of leadership skills;
- (e) Encouraged self-reflection;
- (f) Enhanced peer recognition.

Mentoring allows mentors to share their expertise with other mentors in an institution. They may prove themselves as valuable leaders, especially after achieving success with their protégés. Perceived benefits to the mentors, identified by Allen, Poteet and Burroughs (1997), include the development of a support network, satisfaction in seeing others grow, job-related benefits that help the mentor to do his/her job or increase in his/her knowledge and increased visibility and recognition within the organisation.

2.8.3. BENEFITS FOR THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

- (a) Enhancement of performance by teachers and principals;
- (b) Faster induction of new staff members;
- (c) Promotion of a climate of professional development;
- (d) Improvement in communication.

The enhancement of principals' abilities in leading and managing their schools will help improve learner attainment. Teachers will be able to work together for the qualitative management and leadership of the school.

On the benefits of mentoring, Goodyear (2006) indicates that the benefits can also flow in the other direction, with a younger professional offering to help a senior professional learn more about their generation, and a senior professional agreeing to

sponsor the junior professional within the organisation. A practical example of the above assertion is in the fast pace of technological development taking place today. The younger generation learns developments in technology faster compared to the older generation. In this case the younger generation will teach the older generation how to use technological equipment such as cell phones and computers.

Therefore, when defining what mentoring means, this brings us to the point of reviewing the continued use of “older experienced person”, mentoring the “younger inexperienced person”. The definition of mentoring is a collaborative form of learning, and is therefore social learning. Another contested terrain in mentorship is that of the perceived intentions of mentoring; vocational versus life-long learning. To sum up, the above-mentioned benefits of mentoring to protégés are: (1) improved knowledge and skills (skills towards vocational performance) and (2) improved effectiveness (towards vocational performance).

With the emphasis on mentoring as learning, social learning could significantly contribute to the conceptualisation of mentoring in South Africa and avert the return of the top-down approach characteristic of the old order in education management. This therefore means that there must be a shift from viewing mentoring as a process whereby an experienced, older person intervenes into the life of the younger, inexperienced person. This approach has the potential of creating a view of mentoring not as the opportunity for learning of both mentor and mentee, but that of a top-down transmission of information and knowledge from the experienced “mentor” to the inexperienced “protégé”.

2.9. SOME OF THE PITFALLS OF MENTORING

Problems in a mentoring relationship can evolve when participants fail to understand the nature of the shared responsibilities and expectations needed to create and sustain a positive working relationship (Marsha and Playko, 2001). Examples are:

- (a) A mentor becomes too protective and controlling over the actions of the protégé;

- (b) Mentors do not accept that others may have different ways of doing things and need to avoid the tendency to tell protégés to do something “the way I used to do it”;
- (c) Protégés who lack confidence in their instructional leadership abilities may develop too much of a dependency on their mentors, to the point that they consider their mentor’s way of doing things as the only “ideal” way.

“A mentoring program may give mentees the impression that they are not responsible for their own professional development” (Haack, 2006).

The following potential pitfalls could possibly be found in any mentorship that has failed, and preventing these could assist in developing successful mentoring programmes:

- (d) Mismatch between the mentor and mentee (no chemistry between them);
- (e) Unrealistic expectations/unclear goals for the relationship;
- (f) Time constraints or time demands (spending too much or too little time);
- (g) Breaches of confidentiality and trust;
- (h) Abuse of power in the relationship;
- (i) Charges of favouritism (real or perceived);
- (j) Cultural barriers;
- (k) Competition between the mentor and the mentee;
- (l) Sexual harassment (Friedman P.K et al. 2004)

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two has outlined the mentorship process of school principals with the aim of enhancing their capacities in the management and leadership of schools. The relationship between mentoring and the Social Learning Theory of Bandura (1977) has been highlighted, and as a result this work investigates mentoring as a form of social learning for school principals. Chapter Two also indicated the scope of the research with regard to the mentored principals in the Gert Sibande district of the Mpumalanga Provincial Department of Education.

This chapter describes the qualitative research design of this study and provides clarity on subject sampling, data collection, data interpretation and ethical issues. The study also uses the interpretive inquiry paradigm. Interpretive inquiry, according to Waghid (2003:46), insists on two central issues; the self-understanding of the individual forms the basis of all social interpretation (phenomenological or hermeneutical) and human consciousness is transparent. According to Kelliher (2005:125), Interpreters believe that reality is not objectively determined, but is socially constructed meaning and that by placing people in their social contexts there is a greater opportunity to understand the perceptions they have on their own activities.

3.2. INTERPRETIVE RESEARCH

At this stage it is vital that a definition of “interpretive research” and how it is distinguished from the “qualitative research” be made. According to Rowlands (2005:81), qualitative research can be interpretive or positive depending on the philosophical assumptions of the researcher, while on the other hand, interpretive

research is a more specific term and is defined in terms of epistemology. According to Klein and Myers (1999), cited by Rowlands, the foundation assumption for interpretive research is that knowledge is gained, or at least filtered, through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings. In addition to the emphasis on the socially-constructed nature of reality, interpretive research acknowledges the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being explored and the situational constraints shaping this process.

A very important and relevant statement that is closely linked to the purpose of this research is that of Walsham (1995), cited by Rowlands, which states that interpretive research in terms of methodology does not predefine dependent or independent variables, does not set out to test hypotheses but aims to produce understanding of the social context of the phenomenon and the process whereby the phenomenon influences and is influenced by the social context. The research investigates mentoring as a form of social learning for school principals. Principals and their leadership and management tasks are directly and indirectly influenced by the social context, being the school and all its influencing environments.

This research aimed at understanding the experiences of the school principals with regard to mentoring and whether they experience it as a social learning or not. In other words the research seeks to understand their perspectives in terms of interpretation and analysis of the mentoring process. According to Merriam (2002:6) this is the interest of the researcher and the understanding of how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon. Weed (2006) describes an approach developed by Smith (1996) - the interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) - which focuses on interpreting the life experiences of interviewees and representing a view of the world from interviewees' perspectives. Smith and Osborne (2007), on the same IPA, provide almost the same definition when they assert that "the aim of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world, and the main currency for an IPA study is the meanings particular experiences, events, states hold for participants. The approach is phenomenological in that it attempts to explore personal experience

and is concerned with an individual's personal perception or account of an object or event".

3.3. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD

The word qualitative implies an emphasis on process and meanings that are not rigorously examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially-constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning (Carney,1997). According to Halcomb & Davidson (2006:39), qualitative research focuses on the exploration of values, meanings, beliefs, thoughts, experiences and feelings characteristic of the phenomenon under investigation. Burnard (1991) states that qualitative research methods "often involve the use of unstructured or semi-structured interviews as a principle methodology". This study uses semi-structured interviews as its data gathering method.

Qualitative research shares the theoretical assumptions of the interpretative paradigm, which is based on the notion that social reality is created and sustained through the subjective experience of people involved in communication (Matveev, 2002). A more appropriate definition of a qualitative research method is that of McMillan and Schumacher (1993) which states that:

"Qualitative research is based on a naturalistic-phenomenological philosophy that views reality as a multi-layered, interactive and shared social experience interpreted by individuals. Most descriptions and interpretations are portrayed with words rather than numbers".

In short, the qualitative research method uses words in the place of numbers to give a clear description of the people and conversations between them, as well as the context within which their behaviour manifests itself.

In this study, the background of the qualitative method indicates the following aspects according to Strauss and Corbin (n.d:9):

- (a) The need to get out into the field to discover what is really going on;
- (b) The relevance of theory grounded in data, to the development of a discipline as a basis for social action as a basis for social action;
- (c) The complexity and variability of phenomena and human action;
- (d) The belief that persons are actors who take an active role in responding to problematic situation;
- (e) The realisation that persons act on the basis of meaning;
- (f) The understanding that meaning is defined and redefined through interaction;
- (g) Sensitivity to evolving and unfolding the nature of events (processes), an awareness of the interrelationships among conditions (structures), action (process) and consequences.

According to Smaling (1992:174), cited in Mantlana (2006:123), qualitative researchers see:

- (h) The object of the study of the world as defined, experienced or constituted by investigating people;
- (i) The method of data collection as open, flexible and not strictly regimented and rigid;
- (j) The representation of data in a form that is non-numerical;
- (k) Data collection and data analysis as a cyclical relation and that one can stop gathering data when new data do not add new information on the research problem;
- (l) Qualitative research as an approach that enables researchers to learn first-hand about the social world they are investigating by means of participation in that world through a focus on the individual;
- (m) Qualitative research as the study of phenomena in their natural settings and the world as experienced by the individual in 'natural language';
- (n) Qualitative research as involving a participant who is being studied to establish a close relationship between the researcher and the participant.

This rapport enables the participants to 'open up' and talk about things that touch them deeply.

3.4. SUBJECT SAMPLING

3.4.1. WHAT IS A SUBJECT?

The researcher in order to comply with ethical concerns has decided to replace the term "subject" with "participant". Most of the literature studied refers to subject or subjects.

A subject, as defined by McMillan (1996:85), "is an individual who participates in a research study or is someone from whom data are collected. According to McMillan, the term 'subject' may also identify individuals whose behaviour, past or present, is used as data, without their involvement in some type of treatment or intervention". This researcher prefers to substitute "subject" with participant in this research.

The participants of this research are the principals who have been identified by the Provincial Education Department to be participants of the mentorship as encompassed in the ACE School Leadership programme. Ten respondents including deputies and heads of departments from the Gert Sibande district were sampled for this research as interviewees or respondents. The principals were provided by the Gert Sibande District office upon request by the researcher. The main reason for their selection is that they are the only group of the first cohort of principals who did the ACE School Leadership in the district. The fact that this study has identified a particular group means that the study follows the purposeful sampling method.

3.4.2. WHAT IS PURPOSEFUL SAMPLING?

Purposeful sampling, according to McMillan (1996: 92), is the method that allows the researcher to select particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative on the topic. This purposeful sampling is a non-probability sample that conforms to certain criteria. There are two major types:

judgemental sampling and quota sampling (Cooper and Schindler, 1998). As stated by McMillan and Schumacher (1993), the most important aspect of purposeful sampling is that “purposeful sampling means selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study when one wants to understand something about those cases without needing or desiring to generalise to all such cases”.

3.5. DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is an important part of a research process. As the dominant strategy for data collection, this research made use of semi-structured interviews as well as open-ended questions to the sampled participants. The interviews were conducted on an individual basis, rather than on a group of principals. There are so many advantages to this approach and one of them is the face-to-face contact that the researcher and the interviewee enjoy (Makhoba: 2009).

The researcher used interview questions to a sample of principals, deputy principals and heads of departments in the Gert Sibande District who are being mentored or have been through this programme. The data-collecting strategy by means of interviews was based on appropriate literature. The reasons for using interviews, according to the Lets Evaluation Resources (Internet document), are to:

- (a) explore the thinking, assumptions, emotions, attitudes and perceptions which may be influencing observed behaviour of those involved in some way, particularly in the case of the learning and teaching which is being evaluated;
- (b) follow up unexpected results or confirm interpretations generated by other methods of data collection and analysis;
- (c) offer the flexibility to adapt questioning according to the responses of interviewees, to clarify questions or answers or to probe deeply.

Where possible and ethically acceptable, audio recordings were done and the transcripts were used as the primary source of data. Ten principals on the mentorship programme were interviewed in the Gert Sibande district using structured or semi-structured interview techniques. Open-ended questions or semi-open-ended

questions formed part of the research design. The questions sought to determine whether the principals' learning experiences are a form of social learning or not. The questions also covered the primary as well as the secondary questions.

3.5.1. INTERVIEWS

Interviews have been widely accepted as a common means of data collection in a range of health disciplines including nursing, sociology, social work and allied health, because they facilitate interactive dialogues between participants and researchers (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006:38).

The interview is a "purposeful conversation" between two or more people with the explicit purpose of one being to gain information from the other (Bogdans & Biklen, 2003, cited in Anderson & Ferguson, 2007). Hannan (2007) contends that "a great deal of qualitative material comes from talking with people whether it is through formal interviews or casual conversations and also if interviews are going to tap into the depths of reality of the situation and discover participant's meaning and understandings, it is essential for the researcher to:

- (a) develop empathy with interviewees and with their confidence;
- (b) be unobtrusive, in order not to impose one's own influence on the interviewee".

Hannan (2007) states again that the advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they have "some pre-set questions, but allow more scope for open-ended answers". For the purposes of this research, open-ended questions are very important because of the quality of the in-depth information needed regarding the experiences and the attachment of meanings on principals' experiences with mentoring as a form of social learning.

In conclusion, before selecting the use of interviews (Byrne, 2001) suggests that it is important for the researcher to determine whether the research questions can be answered appropriately by interviewing people who have experienced the phenomenon of interest. In compliance with this rule, this researcher ensured that it

is only principals, deputy principals and SMT members who are been part of the mentoring process who are the participants in this study.

3.5.2 CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS

Bogdan & Biklen (2003) posit that “it is necessary for the researcher to be acquainted with the respondent before the research begins” because of the fact that in research studies which rely on interviews, the respondent may be a complete stranger. Therefore, this means that the acquaintance ensured the development of a good rapport and also provided the researcher with an opportunity to explain the purpose of the research, thus putting the respondent at ease.

The respondents were made aware of the nature of the questions and the freedom of expression provided during the interview by the researcher.

Tape-recordings during the interviews were done, as they provide added advantage of being able to be replayed at a later stage for continued study and analysis. On the use of tape recording, (Byrne, 2001) contends that there is a greater chance of misinterpretation of responses if the interview is not recorded. The advantage of this recording is that the researcher has all the information in the exact manner it was provided during data transcription. In a case where a repetition of recorded data is necessary, it was possible to replay the recordings.

3.6. DATA INTERPRETATION

The data was interpreted with the help of the set of principles for interpretive field research as suggested by Klein (1999:70), as follows:

- (i) The Fundamental Principle of the Hermeneutic Circle:** The idea of the hermeneutic circle suggests that we come to understand a complex whole from preconceptions about the meanings of its parts and their relationships. This principle suggests that all human understanding is achieved by iterating

between considering the interdependent meaning of parts and the whole that they form.

- (ii) **The Principle of Contextualization** (understanding the data within the context of the interviewee's understanding and interpretation): This requires critical reflection of the social and historical background of the research setting, so that the intended audience can see how the current situation under investigation emerged;
- (iii) **The Principle of interaction between the researcher and the subject** (advocating that the interviewee, just as much as the researcher can be seen as interpreter and analyst): This requires critical reflection on how the research materials or "data" were socially constructed through the interaction between the researchers and participants;
- (iv) **The Principle of Abstraction and Generalization:** This requires relating to idiographic details revealed by the data interpretation through the application of principles one and two to theoretical, general concepts that describe the nature of human understanding and social action;
- (v) **The Principle of Dialogical Reasoning:** Sensitivity to possible contradictions between the theoretical preconceptions guiding the research design and actual findings will be required;
- (vi) **The Principle of Suspicion:** (Requires sensitivity to possible biases and systematic distortions in the narratives collected from the participants).
- (vii) **The Principle of Multiple Interpretations:** This requires sensitivity to possible different interpretations among the participants as are typically expressed in multiple narratives or stories of the same sequence of events under study.

3.7. DATA ANALYSIS

The interview transcripts and open-ended question responses were analyzed to identify common themes. When a qualitative research design involves the collection of audio-taped in-depth interviews or focus groups, researchers must decide whether their analysis is best supported by transcription or by researcher's notes derived from

or supplemented by a review of the audiotapes (McLellan, Macqueen & Neidig, 2003:65). Bogdans and Biklin (1998) suggest first ordering interview transcripts and other information chronologically or by some other criteria. This involves careful reading of data at least twice during long and undisturbed periods. The next step, according to Bogdans and Biklin, is to conduct initial coding by generating numerous category codes as you read responses, labeling data that are related.

Berkowitz (1997) suggests considering these questions when coding qualitative data:

- (a) What common themes emerge in responses about specific topics? How do these patterns (or lack thereof) help to illuminate the broader central question(s) or hypothesis?
- (b) Are there deviations from these patterns? If so, are there any factors that might explain these deviations?
- (c) How are participant's environments or past experiences related to their behaviour and attitudes?
- (d) What interesting stories emerge from these responses? How do they help illuminate the central questions or hypotheses?
- (e) Do any of these patterns suggest that additional data may be needed? Do any of the central questions or hypotheses need to be revised?
- (f) Are the patterns that emerge similar to the findings of other studies on the same topic? If not, what might explain these discrepancies?

3.8. VALIDITY

According to Cooper and Schindler (1998:387), validity means that a measure accomplishes its claim. In simpler form, it refers to the extent to which an instrument measures what it claims to measure. Postlethwaite (2005) states that there are three important types of validity in educational research: content validity, criterion-related validity and construct validity.

- (a) Content validity refers to the extent to which a test measures a representative sample of subject-matter content and behavioural content from the syllabus which is being measured;
- (b) Criterion-related validity refers to the capacity of the test scores to predict future performance or to estimate current performance on some valued measure other than the test itself;
- (c) Construct validity is concerned with the extent to which test performance can be interpreted in terms of certain psychological construct. (Postlethwaite, 2005:40-41).

The researcher made every effort to ensure the validity of the results by ensuring that the environment within which the interviews were undertaken was the same. All participants were interviewed at their schools with maximum comfortability ensured.

3.9. RELIABILITY

“Reliability refers to the degree to which a measuring procedure gives consistent results. That is, a reliable test is a test which would provide a consistent set of scores for a group of individuals if it was administered independently on several occasions” (Postlethwaite, 2005:41). Again, reliability as defined by Joppe (2000) in Golafshani (2003:598) is: “The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable”.

The researcher used the same questions to all the respondents. The way they responded to each question was almost similar with all the respondents.

3.10. ETHICAL ISSUES

Gallagher (2005) said “the social sciences in general and educational researchers in particular have become more and more conscious of ethical propriety and the need for universally acceptable codes of ethical conduct in recent years”. Care was taken

to avoid any unethical conduct during this research. To begin with, permission from the regional office of the Gert Sibande District was sought and granted before the research began. The respondents gave consent for participation and no one was coerced to participate in the research. All respondents in person as well as their school governing body chairpersons granted the researcher permission to continue with the interviews. In the case of SMT (School Management Teams) members interviewed, permission was granted by their principals.

3.11. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was limited by the vastness of the district where school principals that are registered for the ACE School Leadership programme in the Gert Sibande District are found. There are in the district fifteen participants of the programme, including principals, deputy principals and school management teams (SMT). These are the members of the first cohort in the programme.

The other limiting factor is the stigmatization attached to these principals because of their selection criteria which is “principals of poor performing schools”, which are schools whose matriculation results are below the provincial target. This negative labeling may develop a negative self-esteem in these principals which possible could make them not wish to avail themselves for the interview.

Another aspect that the researcher needs to mention here is his relationship with the interviewed principals due to his own position as principal in the same education district. To avoid any direct influence on the study, none of the respondents interviewed are from the circuit where he is a principal.

The vastness of the Gert Sibande District and its rural nature influenced the choice of the sample. There was a possibility of targeting a large number of participants from the township schools and a small number from the rural schools. The reasons for this are the travelling costs involved.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents findings on whether mentoring is viewed as a form of social learning by principals of schools who have been interviewed during this research project. The interviews were transcribed, interpreted and analysed. The participants in this study comprised principals, of secondary and primary schools, as well as sampled deputy principals and heads of departments (school) who went through the mentoring process.

4.1. DATA ANALYSIS

“Analysis involves breaking data down into bits and then ‘beating’ the bits together” (Dey, 2005). According to the derivation of the term “analysis”, Dey (2005) states that the prefix “ana” means “above”, and the Greek root “lysis” means “to break up” or “to dissolve”. According to the motivation provided in support of the statement, Dey (2005) states that this is a process of resolving data into its constituent components to reveal its characteristic elements and structure.

4.1.1. INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

The results of the study are presented in themes emerging from responses of the participants from the interview questions, and are then compared to predetermined themes from the literature review presented in Chapter Two. The following themes emerged from this study:

- (a) The reciprocal relationship that is built while focusing on achievement and emotional support;
- (b) How the mentors were assigned to the protégés;
- (c) The experiences the principals have gained during the mentoring process;
- (d) The Social Learning Theory;

- (e) The relationship between mentoring and the Social Learning Theory;
- (f) The role of the social context during the mentoring process;
- (g) The benefits of mentoring;
- (h) The personal perception of the interviewee regarding mentoring.

4.2. DATA INTERPRETATION

Data was analysed and interpreted using the set of principles for interpretive field research as suggested by Klein (1999) and mentioned earlier. They are as follows;

- (a) The fundamental principle of the Hermeneutic circle;
- (b) The principle of contextualization;
- (c) The principle of interaction between the researcher and the subject;
- (d) The principle of abstraction and generalization;
- (e) The principle of dialogical reasoning;
- (f) The principle of suspicion;
- (g) The principle of multiple interpretations.

The participants alluded to the fears they had in the beginning of the programme when they realized that their mentors were whites. According to the fundamental principle of abstraction and generalization, the understanding of the participants of white people and their assumed better social positions and successes in their schools brought the feelings of inferiority in the participants during mentoring.

The principle of suspicion came into place as a result of the above discussion. The researcher tried to be sensitive to possible biases.

4.3. MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

The responses by the participants in relation to their relationships with their mentors were that the mentors were in the beginning, unknown to them. As a result, at first there was a great degree of discomfort by the protégés as they did not know the characters of the mentors assigned to them. Most of the mentors were white male ex-principals. Only one principal and his HOD (school) had a female mentor, who was later replaced by a white male principal. This alone was sufficient ground for a

delayed interconnectedness between mentor and protégée. An American study conducted by Thomas (2001) in Hansman (2002:39) reveals that besides the difficulty experienced in forming and participating in mentoring relationships, members of historically marginalized groups, both male and female, also experience mentoring relationships differently to their European or American counterparts. Suspicions developed, as confirmed by one of the principals who stated his suspicions as follows:

"I thought that this person was here to run my school and later I became comfortable with him after a clear explanation".

In the beginning, this relationship was based on academic achievement, which is completing the Advanced Certificate in School Leadership (ACE), and later developed career-related benefits for the respondents. Most of the participants confirmed and appreciated the manner in which their mentors pushed them to finish and submit assignments, and at this stage it seems as though this mentoring was mainly about the completion of assignments and the attainment of particular learning outcomes.

Later on the relationship began to improve as they were showing progress in their academic work and passing their assignments.

"We even went to his home on some weekends, just to talk to him and get some more advice. He was more open with us".

Among the main characteristics that defined their relationships with their mentors, they indicated in general terms that the relationship was good. The only common characteristics mentioned by many of the participants were that the mentors were honest, trustworthy, supportive and very helpful.

According to Tang & Choi (2005) the attributes of a successful mentoring process are:

- (a) A supportive relationship;
- (b) A helping process;
- (c) A formalised process;
- (d) A role constructed for or by a mentor.

Dennen (2001:817) provides eight attributes which include some of the above, and which help to extend our knowledge on the subject:

- (e) A process form;
- (f) An active relationship;
- (g) A helping process;
- (h) A teaching-learning process;
- (i) Reflective practice;
- (j) A career and personal development process;
- (k) A formalized process;
- (l) A role constructed by or for a mentor.

The relationship of the mentor and the respondents had almost all of the above attributes but lacks the “process form” attribute because that process has since stopped.

4.4. ASSIGNING OF PROTÉGÉS TO MENTORS

None of the interviewees had an opportunity to choose a mentor. Therefore, they did not have any role in the selection of their mentors. The mentors were assigned to them by either the University of Pretoria or the Mpumalanga Department of Education.

“The mentors were assigned to us, since we were from different provinces. Mentors closer to us were assigned on that basis”.

According to them, the assignment of mentors to protégés was mainly influenced by the proximity of the mentors to the protégés. Hansman (2002:17), on the assignment of mentors in formal mentoring, states that “it may be akin to ‘blind dates’ or arranged marriages in some cases”. This confirms that in some cases the protégés may not necessarily be known to the mentor. Hansman further contends that formal mentoring may also include the purpose, structure and duration of the relationship and the frequency of interaction. The assignment, in the case of the participants in this research, was surely on the basis of purpose and frequency of interaction.

Hopkins-Thompson (2000:31), on screening, selection and pairing of mentors to protégés, suggests that these processes, selections and screenings are critical components of mentoring. This is important because it ensures the appropriate and purposeful assignment of protégés to mentors. “Some people are more suited to mentoring than others...great principals aren’t necessarily great mentors” (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000:31).

The selection of mentors is very crucial for the success of mentoring relationships. Stott and Walker (1992:155) contend that the selection of mentors can be the most problematic link in the chain. They also argue that in the absence of sound criteria for effective mentoring, the process can be hit or miss. The assignment of mentors on the basis of proximity to protégés, as in this research, could either be a hit or miss.

4.5. PARTICIPANT’S MENTORING EXPERIENCES

All the participants confirmed that their mentoring experience was indeed a learning experience.

On the experiences gained by the participants during the mentoring programme, aspects such as new skills and new knowledge are some of the benefits expected to be acquired by the principals. Cuerrier (2003) successfully sums up in a single paragraph some of the successes expected from mentoring, as follows:

“Focusing on mentoring which is centered on professional development and the work world leads, impacts on the personal and professional development of both the mentee and the mentor. Mentoring helps reduce choices made by trial and error as well as painful transitions; it supports people making decisions about their careers and helps them define their career plans with a longer-term outlook”. One of the principals commented as follows:

“I was appointed as a principal because I was a good deputy principal and I had the qualifications and the teaching experience they needed. I did not have any knowledge and skills to work as a principal. Mentoring really helped me a lot”.

The gained experiences mentioned by the principals during the mentorship programme included, among others: (1) learning to work with other principals within a

group as well as individually and (2) practical activities such as planning, filing, monitoring and mentoring sub-ordinates as part of their learning. These are some of the tasks with which they were struggling before the mentorship programme. The techniques of conducting meetings and decision-making were also mentioned as part of the gained experiences.

One female principal confirmed she had established mentorship at her school, where she and other senior teachers had been assigned to mentor new teachers. This research has confirmed mentoring as a form of social learning, where the process of retention as one of the steps involved in the modeling process is observed. Hean (2003) asserts that retention is the degree to which newly acquired knowledge and skills are remembered by the trainee following a learning experience. According to Bandura (1977), the translation of images or descriptions into actual behaviour is called reproduction, which element is displayed by the principal and her staff by establishing mentoring programmes at school level. The deputy principals interviewed indicated increased confidence in their abilities to continue leading and managing schools.

The experience of mentoring as form of social learning is further emphasized in Stott and Walker (1992:158) in their discoveries on mentoring: "We have also found that the mentees learn mainly through observation in a wide range of diverse situations. Observations are followed by discussion and feedback, questioning, 'hands-on' practice, and role modeling".

Some of the experiences gained by the principals, as mentioned by one of these principals, is the fact that even though she was appointed as a principal on the basis of experience and academic qualifications this did not make her an efficient principal, but mentoring has opened her eyes in terms of leadership and management. Self-confidence has been mentioned by a number of the participants, together with items such as acquired new knowledge and skills (such as problem-solving skills). What convinced me about their learning from observation was a response from one of the female members of the school management team who mentioned being "*exemplary to other educators, like my mentor was to me*" as one of the acquired experiences.

All the participating principals and deputies indicated that they have learnt a lot from their mentors. What the researcher thinks was of great help to the principals in this regard is the fact that they all realized the need to be helped by way of learning. A concern was raised by a few participants regarding the non-frequency of their mentors. The fear is that they might lose the motivation and the energy they have acquired. An indication was made that the continuation of the mentorship was going to benefit all members of the SMT at the school. This aspect of development was mentioned by all the participants involved.

Mentoring as a form of social learning is explained in Hamilton (2006:728) as ecology of mentoring contexts, when he claims that “learning and development are facilitated by the participation of the developing person in progressively more complex patterns of reciprocal activity with someone with whom that person has developed a strong and enduring emotional attachment and when the balance of power gradually shifts in favour of the developing person”. In the above paragraph mention of development by participants has been made. This is development that has been influenced by the mentor, by displaying appropriate behaviour worthy of being copied and modeled. The next paragraph outlines some of the observed behaviour by protégés from their mentors.

Participants expressed their appreciation regarding the time-keeping and time-consciousness by their mentors. One school principal boastfully told me about his mentor and said,

“You know, this guy would make an appointment for seven o’clock in the morning. He will definitely be here at that time... all the way from Secunda”.

(Secunda is about 450 kilometers from the school). As he was telling this, he was laughing. Straight-talking by the mentors was mentioned by the participants. The mentors were excellent in their planning and this trait was copied by most of the participants. The use of, or rather efficient use of, a diary was modeled by the mentors and the principals were even shown how to plan their management tasks using the diary.

Most of the respondents indicated that there was not much to observe from the mentor in terms of practical tasks. The mentors came to show and guide and did not

physically do the tasks. Most observations mentioned were in terms of good attitudes and behaviour from the mentor. *“He has been our role-model. He taught us group work”*.

Beside the roles played by the mentors, the protégés themselves are expected to participate in the learning process, and their role is of importance in mentoring. Hopkins (2000) posits that mentoring should centre on the protégé’s learning. The process should include determining strengths and improvement needs. Schrubbe (2004:325) confirms the above statement by adding that: “However, the role of the protégé in establishing this relationship is also critical” and that “there is evidence that there should be accountability on the part of the protégé to attract a good mentor”.

During the interviews, willingness of the protégés to learn was also mentioned by the participants as a role played by them during mentoring. Engaging the mentor during his/her visits at school and also after working hours has been cited as another form of learning from the mentor by the interviewees. Participation in group activities and adherence to the instructions are some of the roles played by the protégés during mentoring. The participants also mentioned that the mentors required from them to be attentive, possess good listening skills and be hard working. There was a need to change from the “poor management” to “acceptable school management”.

Accountability from the protégées begins right from the course work to the school where there are a number of challenges facing the principal.

The participants, in understanding their role within the mentoring process, indicated that their roles were to be honest, trustworthy, willing, open and cooperative at all times. These are the characteristics that embraced their relationship with their mentors, as has been mentioned above. The fact that they have acquired these traits and transferred them to their role in the mentoring relationship also indicates the modelling of behaviour by the principals.

Schrubbe (2004) sums up what has been observed by the researcher during the interviews in terms of the qualities of the protégé as being the willingness to assume responsibility, receptivity to feedback, self-perceived growth potential, ability to

perform in multiple skill areas and a history of seeking new and challenging assignments.

4.6. FACTORS THAT LIMITED THE IMPACT OF THE MENTORING PROCESS AS A LEARNING PROCESS

Most respondents did not experience any limiting factors towards the learning process. However a concern was raised regarding the non-continuity of the programme beyond the two-year academic programme. This outcry is an indication of the willingness of the principals and SMTs to accept help.

4.7. LIVED EXPERIENCES OF THE PROTÉGÉ

The participants perceived their schools' social environments as playing a very important role in their successes as leaders and managers of their institutions. The levels of poverty and unemployment are inhibiting factors in the academic attainment of their learners. One principal was questioned by the mentor on the release of learners during lunch to go and eat at home. The mentor raised valid security issues as tabled by SASA (1996).

The principal informed the mentor that the school does not have a nutrition programme; moreover the learners do not have any provision for lunch because there is none at home. This therefore forces the school to release the learners so that those who have something at home could go and eat there.

“You know the fact that the mentor could not understand our reasons for releasing the learners during lunch, raised fundamental cultural and social issues. We later came to understand his situation that is he is from a town school”.

Two of the principals in the rural schools were very concerned about the high rate of HIV/AIDS infections among the learners. Teenage pregnancies have been reported by almost all participants as a serious problem. All these issues require that the principal and the SMT should possess additional knowledge on how to deal efficiently with them. Confidentiality was mentioned as the most important trait they should

have, especially with the HIV/AIDS issues. In most of these situations, the mentors could not understand the rationale behind these incidents. The situation at these schools is completely different to the situations at the schools the mentors managed.

“One major problem we are experiencing here is the learners that are staying alone while their parents are working and living in Johannesburg. This makes it difficult to engage the parents on learner’s work”.

Some of the schools where the interviews were conducted are in the rural areas, and others, in the townships. One school principal in the rural school indicated that some of the community’s cultural practices are a hindrance to the academic progress of the learners because during a particular period in the year, the school will have to lose some of the boy learners who will have to go for initiation (mountain school). In some of the schools, the respondents were not as troubled by the issues of culture as those in the deep rural areas.

The most conspicuous suspicion brought into the mentoring relationship by most of the participants was the race issue. One principal responded as follows;

“I thought that this white principal would want us to do things like in these rich town schools, we are in the township here; the situation is different”.

There were also political issues mentioned by the participants during the interviews. The very fact that the mentors are “white” has been a political matter. The picture being portrayed is that of a “white perfectionist” transforming a “black failing” school principal. This image has been carried by the principals and has delayed the trust that was actually supposed to have been built before the mentoring process. Later on, with continued contact, the protégés began to gain confidence in their mentors and began to trust them as their helpers. It would be best if in future to have black mentors mentoring black principals, should that be possible. It is also pleasing to note that this race issue did not come in the way of the mentorship process. The issue of race may fade away with the group already in the programme, but what will happen with the new groups that will form part of the programme in the future?

4.8. TRANSFORMATION OF PROTÉGÉS ON A PERSONAL LEVEL

Schrubbe (2004), citing Jackson *et al.* in their conclusion on mentoring relationships, states that effective mentoring requires a certain chemistry for an appropriate interpersonal match, and that prized mentors have “clout” knowledge and interest in the protégé, providing both professional and personal support.

The participants were very excited by the fact that they have learnt to do things differently. The first principal interviewed indicated that she was at first very harsh with the educators. This led to her to be at confrontations with the staff. Now she relates well to the staff and has learnt to deal with her anger.

The next principal alluded to the fact that she has learnt to make collaborative decisions with the staff and is appreciating the peace that is prevailing at her school.

Most principals are doing what was indicated by another principal; that is being quick to charge educators of misconduct. Since he has been part of the mentoring programme he has learnt to deal with this situation differently. He has started a method of engaging the educator on a one-on-one basis and trying to understand the underlying causes of the behaviour displayed by the educator.

On the aspects of management, one participant commented as follows:

“My mentor taught me that instead of sitting in the office, I must walk around...just walk around... you are not doing inspection, but checking whether classes are being attended to. If there is a class without a teacher, get in... and when the teacher arrives he/she will learn that the principal is walking around and observing the attendances”.

Another principal confirmed the change on a personal level as follows:

“I have changed a lot; I now can deal with people differently. Whenever I have problems with a staff member, I deal with it professionally now by following the correct protocol”.

From the above discussion it is obvious that the change in doing things is evidence of transformation brought about by the learning process. The role of the mentor has been significant in this process as Stott and Walker (1992) outline the mentor's role: "a mentor presents a broad picture, teaches generic and possible future tasks, assesses future potential and acts as confidante, counselor and sponsor". According to them, "mentors encourage mentees to expose weaknesses and take risks when learning, something it is more difficult to do in a traditional superordinate-subordinate relationship".

4.9. THE PROTGE'S PERSONAL PERCEPTION OF THE MENTORING PROCESS.

Lankau and Scandura (2002) note that individuals learn a great deal through their interactions with others; especially those with different backgrounds, expertise and seniority in their organisations. According to Lankau and Scandura, one important work relationship that can serve as a forum for personal learning is mentoring. The emphasis is on personal learning and personal learning has the possibility of leading to a personal perception about the learning process. If mentoring, as suggested by Lankau and Scandura, is personal learning, then we need to investigate how the participants perceive the mentoring process?

Earlier, reference to mentoring as a form of social learning was made and social learning was equated to the socialization process. Socialization is viewed as the acquisition of knowledge about performance standards, important people in an organization, organizational goals and values (Lankau *et al.*).

Most of the principals indicated that mentoring is the best way to go for school leaders. One principal put it this way:

"This programme is for everybody in life, not only principals".

The other respondent indicated;

"This mentoring is good, only if you get someone that is well experienced".

They suggested that it be a requirement for new and aspiring principals and SMT members. The time on the process should be longer than it has been for them. They suggested that it should be:

- (a) A continuous process;
- (b) Targeting all educators;
- (c) An active process;
- (d) Extended beyond the academic programme.

As was mentioned by one of the participants, the allocation of experienced and hands-on mentors to the programme is very important. As per his information, one of the mentors initially allocated to his group was inexperienced and had to be corrected by the protégées most of the time. Ultimately the mentor was replaced with a more experienced one.

4.10. THE ROLE OF THE MENTOR IN THE PROTÉGÉ'S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

One of the interviewed deputy principals responded to the question on professional development as follows:

"The mentor would come to school to check as to whether you are practicing whatever you were taught he would check the files and even consult with the principal to check on your development".

Mentoring is eminently appropriate to develop professionals where human relationships and learning are central as learning and growing, and practice and reflection, and support and collaboration are the focus (Dowling and Walkington: n. d.).

Additionally, and apart from being a human relationship, mentoring (according to Robertson, 2010) requires personal and professional investment on the part of the mentor, a feat that is only possible through voluntary effort as determined by those who have studied training motivation.

The role of the mentor in the development of the protégé was seen in their learning of new skills, such as developing the vision and mission of their schools. Participants benefited from the mentors in the manner they worked towards their academic qualification (ACE School Leadership), as well as the on-site support by the mentors visiting protégés' schools. To some principals, deputies and HODs there is a renewed commitment for learning. Some have indicated that they are continuing with their studies towards their professional development. The dedication of the mentors to the professional development of the participants is seen in the sacrifices they made in travelling long distances from their residences to the schools, some of them in townships and some in deep rural areas. According to them, the professional development of the participants is shown in the skills they acquired through the mentorship programme. Those participants who are not yet principals, for example heads of departments and deputy principals, are now confident they can assume the role or position of principal at any time should it be necessary.

Another aspect mentioned by two principals is marketing of the school. He proudly related the story in this way:

"He taught us that we must sell our schools to the business people. You see, even now our school is sponsored by the Lotto".

One principal said:

"The mentor said; you must identify the strongest points of your school e.g. sport, and market your school along those lines".

4.11. ASPECTS THAT WERE FOUND TO BE INEFFECTIVE IN THE MENTOR'S SUPPORT

Not many issues were raised by the participants when answering a question relating to these aspects. The mentor's experience and hands-on assistance were the issues mentioned by the principals interviewed.

Maybe the most important issue to be mentioned is the lack of continuity in the programme, as the mentors are no longer visiting the principals. The participants in the programme alluded to the large amount of work that needs to be done within a

short space of time. Another participant mentioned the lack of knowledge of mentoring by one of the mentors who was later replaced. This indicates that the mentor might not have had the appropriate training for the tasks ahead.

4.12. WHAT EXPERIENCES DID PARTICIPANTS HAVE DURING MENTORING?

The participants expressed the view that they have indeed learnt a lot from their mentors. For them this support was long overdue. Since they were appointed to their posts - either as principals, deputy principals and heads of school departments, previously and recently referred to as “subject specialists” - they have never been given this kind of support. They only were inducted by means of a one-day course which did not do much to capacitate them.

The task of a principal, deputy principal or an HOD requires that an individual should have sound human relations skills. This includes knowledge of a number of legislative pieces such as the Employment of Educator’s Act 76 (1998), the Labour Relations Act (1995), the South African Schools Act 84 (1996) as well as the education policy dealing with education management.

The handling of issues relating to misconduct of educators was cited by participants as the one where most conflicts arose. Educators are often charged with misconduct even before a detailed one-on-one discussion between the educator and the principal is held. One of the participants responded as follows:

“I used to charge educators with misconduct even before engaging them on a one on one basis. Now I take my time and try to understand the reasons behind the educator’s behaviour before charging him”.

After the mentoring process, principals generally expressed appreciation for the advice and guidance rendered by mentors and felt that they were much better prepared to deal with matters relating to educator misconduct.

The building of sound relationships with the learners was identified (by the principals/mentees) as one of the areas where support was needed. Principals especially did not consider it necessary to get to know learners better and to foster good relationships between learners and the principal. This was usually viewed as

more important for class teachers, subject teachers and school administrators. Participants reported that with the support of mentors they adopted strategies that help them to learn to know the learners – in some instances by keeping lists of learners' names in their offices too. They reported that this helps to instill confidence and trust by the learners' parents, showing them that the principal takes interest in knowing the names of their children. Another interesting dimension was highlighted by one primary school principal:

"I never use to bother about knowing the background of the learners, even their names. I used to tell myself that I am not a social worker to know and deal with learner problems, but now I do".

All participants reported increased confidence in the implementation of their work. Problem solving skills, planning and the skills to conduct staff meetings were among the most celebrated acquisitions by the participants. They also confirmed having learnt to work in a collaborative fashion both with their staff as well as with principals of other schools.

Mentoring skills and relationships have been transferred to the level of the school. New educators are being allocated mentors by the SMT as part of an induction strategy.

4.13. PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTION OF MENTORING AS A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

With the removal of suspicions mentioned previously, the relationship gradually improved between mentors and the protégés. As a result, all participants confirmed to have gained something they did not have before the mentorship programme, but also indicated that *"it was not enough"*. There was a general feeling that the programme came as a saviour for principals who have been struggling all these years. Participants also suggested that their mentors should stay in the programme with them longer.

From what they claim to have learnt, the participants were more confident after the programme than they were before. They have reported changes in themselves as

leaders and managers. Because they are now leading differently, their confidence has increased and they are confident that the school will perform better now that they have developed professionally.

On a professional level, the increased confidence in managing and leading the school is proof of professional development on the part of the protégé. In Chapter One, the researcher tabled the reason for mentoring the principals and SMT members sampled in this research. The most important reason is to enhance their professional skills. Shareef (2008), citing Leithwood, Seashore Lewis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004), stated that leadership has the greatest impact on those schools that most need to improve learning. A number of the schools identified for the mentorship programme are those where learner achievement is not of good standard due to inefficient school leadership and management.

It is expected that these principals should be visionary leaders, and their role in twenty-first century schools does not resemble the principalship of the past. The reported standards and accountability gained through mentoring should be viewed as the largest change in the role of these principals. The stated ability to work collaboratively that these principals developed is a major indication that they did indeed experience the mentoring process as a form of The Social Learning Theory as explained by Bandura (1977). The degree of job satisfaction echoed by these principals is a true indication of professional development.

“Mentoring helped me to do the things I did with increased confidence, because they have been confirmed by my mentor”.

4.14. HOW MENTORING UNVEILED ITSELF AS A FORM OF SOCIAL LEARNING?

Social Learning has been recognized as an important perspective for understanding and problematizing the relationship between learning as a social process and social contexts in the area of adult, extension and community education for several years (Niewolyn & Wilson, n. d.).

The Social Learning Theory (Bandura: 1977:22) suggests that individuals learn new behaviours through a process that involves observation, interaction and modelling. The response from the participants reveals that the participants learnt and acquired knowledge and a number of skills through interacting and observing the mentor.

“Our mentor was helpful all over; she was excellent in helping us. We learnt a lot from her. Her attitude was like, don’t fail yourself. She encouraged me not to see myself as being in a rural school...”

This study has discovered that the principals, even though they did not have a complete idea of what social learning means, have learnt not only from their mentors and individual colleagues, but also from groups consisting of mentors and colleagues collectively.

“We used to sit together as students and share ideas and good practices as we practice from our schools”.

Bandura (1977) confirms the above learning process when suggesting that learning occurs when students learn by constructing their understanding through interpreting present experiences and integrating them with their existing understanding of the world. Another principal in the rural school said the following of the mentor’s contribution to her learning:

“Even if you are in the bushes, do not accept to be looked down upon. Make a good school where you are in the bushes”.

They indicated to have been shown and advised how to work towards improvement of conditions at their schools in ways that contributed to their own professional growth. School principals in a particular sub-district reported to have clustered themselves into competing teams. These are the principals of schools that are in the same locality who shared one mentor. The competitive spirit seems to benefit the schools as well as the community because the development of the school is the development of the community.

“I have gained a lot of experience that I am sharing with my colleagues”.

This is a confirmation of what Mescht (2008) said when he stated that "... the purpose of educational leadership is not just about particular tasks and behaviours, but is a socializing relationship".

The feedback from mentees convinced me that they did indeed undergo behavioural changes during the mentoring process. On the question of change in the handling of situations, the responses involved new attitudes and character in doing things; one mentee confirmed:

"My attitude has changed completely; I deal differently with learner behaviour as well as educator discipline issues".

These changes in behaviour have been influenced by the personalities and the environments of the participants (Ebel, 1977).

On the development of self-efficacy levels, the research has as its findings the increased self-efficacy levels of all the participants. From their reports, an indication is made of increased confidence in doing and even attempting new tasks. Regarding increased confidence, the principal interviewed second indicated as follows:

"My mentoring was an eye opener and I grew better confidence".

Federici and Skaalvik (2011) assert that self-efficacy is grounded in social cognitive theory, emphasizing the evolution and exercise of human agency, which is built on the idea that people can exercise some influence over their lives. Federici and Skaalvik conclude by indicating the results from a number of studies which have shown that self-efficacy influences people's performance. Bandura's (1986) theory postulates that individuals are engaged in their own development and can affect their own actions. This has been manifested by the willingness and commitment of the principals throughout the mentoring process, despite their contextual factors existing at their schools. They have accepted their situation and have committed themselves to improving their situation. On the question of impact the social context had on the mentoring relationship, respondents said:

"Confidentiality is very important... you must know the environment you are working in. On political issues you must involve these community's political groups. Attend their functions taking place in the township"

4.15. HOW PARTICIPANTS INTERPRET THEIR EXPERIENCES OF MENTORING

Most of the participants claim to have had a considerable amount of learning during the mentoring programme. The way they learnt was through the experiences of the mentor in dealing with issues relating to professional skills. They indicated that the mentors were principals with substantial experience as principals. The group sessions in which they participated assisted them to learn from one another, for example one principal indicated that his school and the neighbouring school which also participated in the mentorship programme are engaged in a healthy competition of developing their educators through mentoring them.

Having learnt from their mentors the skills and attitudes required in a successful mentoring programme, they will realize that success can be gained from the opportunity of observing a mentor.

One principal indicated that the only female mentor who was at first assigned to them, and who later was removed, was not well experienced. As a result, they had to work together as protégés. She (the principal) also explained that the mentor did not understand why learners were released to go home during the lunch hour, and she explained to the mentor the reasons for learners going home being influenced by the social conditions of the township.

The principals reported that they have grown in confidence and have developed a sense of self-worth as school leaders. According to them, they feel they can now deal with the number of challenges of a principal, and that learning does not end. "*We learn until we die*", echoed one of the principals.

The attainment of the ACE qualification is one of the achievements the principals are proud of. However, they complained about the assignments they had to complete while with the programme. These assignments formed part of the assessment towards the qualification. There is a danger that the understanding of the mentoring concept by the participants might be conceptualized within academic attainment. The participants on the programme focused much of their attention on passing their

assessment tasks. This has also been confirmed by the ZENEX Foundation (2008) in their report on the interim findings of their research. Mentoring as a practice should be transcending towards the practical aspects on site. They appreciated the site-based research project, and claim that it has opened their eyes to a number of site-based issues which they had ignored in the past. It seems that although they complained about work volume, they could see the benefit when looking back on the experience – improvement is hard work.

4.16. CONCLUSION

“Quality principals result in quality schools that produce higher student performance. And the opposite is true; poorly prepared principals lead schools nowhere- and once certified, they remain in the system for many years, obstructing school improvement. Aspiring school administrators, potentially responsible for the quality of learning achieved by countless numbers of students, must be tested against rigorous performance requirements during a challenging internship supervised by experts in the field” (SREB).

The above statement explicates the process and what needs to be done in order to improve results in schools. The role of the principal is crucial as the leader of both the school and, therefore, the learning process. For the principal to succeed, assistance is required. The system of education in South Africa did not in the past attend to the professional development of school principals, especially those in black areas.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a summary of the research results as well as recommendations are presented. Suggestions to the Gert Sibande District Office of the Education Department are also presented in this chapter.

5.2. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS.

This research investigated mentoring as a form of social learning and in the process used Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory as its frame of reference. The researcher has contextualized mentoring within the professional development of school principals who participated in the ACE School Leadership programme. The learning acquired by these principals has been found to be of the social learning type as explained by Bandura, i.e. learning through observation and modelling.

Bush and Coleman (1996) contend that mentoring is an important mode of professional development in many countries, and its underlying assumption is that a more experienced colleague can facilitate the professional development of a new principal. In South Africa, the Department of Education has also adopted mentoring as a strategy for the enhancement of principals' potential. The adoption of this strategy by the Department of Education is motivated by the need to help principals deal with their changing responsibilities in leading and managing their schools. Today's principals are facing a number of challenges relating to their changing roles, and some of these roles according to Van der Westhuizen (1995) are summarized below:

- (a) Responsibility for managing the daily operations necessary to sustain the school;
- (b) Organizational and professional responsibility for supporting and improving the school's instructional goals and related activities;
- (c) Ability to work through direct and indirect personal interactions with other stakeholders within the school;
- (d) Use of authority to influence the allocation of resources and harmonize the conflicting and competing special interests of all stakeholders.

In Chapter One, the researcher has provided his argument on mentoring as an appropriate strategy to enhance the capacity of principals to begin to address the legacy of neglect in the preparation of school leaders, especially those in rural and township schools. The researcher has also, through the analysis of this research data, developed further insight into mentoring as a form of social learning and an appropriate strategy for professional learning.

The data obtained reveals that the participants have indeed acquired experiences and have interpreted their learning during the mentoring process.

The information obtained from the data addresses the research questions presented in chapter one as follows:

(a) *Do the school principals in the mentorship programme in the Gert Sibande district experience mentoring as social learning?*

Mentoring provides the participants and their mentors with an opportunity to interact with one another, and in the process learning from each other through observation and modelling. This form of learning is what Bandura describes as social learning or vicarious learning. According to Bandura (1977) the four components of observational learning are:

- (i) Attention Processes;
- (ii) Retention Processes;

- (iii) Motor Reproduction Processes;
- (iv) Reinforcement and Motivational Processes.

All the participants indicated that one of the most important conditions responsible for their learning was to be attentive and cooperative at all times during the mentoring process. These were also mentioned as some of the conditions that are necessary for the success of the mentoring relationship. In the process they were expected to engage in the retention of the aspects that are associated with positive learning and avoid those associated with negative learning. Rewarding behaviour is then needed for professional and personal growth and experience. Most of the participants indicated that they have started doing their work differently and are now motivated in doing the work as principals.

Two principals commented as follows on the question that required a response on the participant's transformation on a personal level and how this transformation affected the participant's leadership and management of the school:

"I have changed a great way and I am now very helpful to other teachers";
"Yes, transformation is there and it's good. I am now able to implement policies to the latter".

The study also managed to confirm the relationship between mentoring and the Social Learning Theory of Bandura (1977). Mentoring is a process which involves a dyadic relationship in which an expert aids a novice, usually in a professional capacity (Robertson, 2010). Social learning is the process of learning from others through observation and modelling (Bandura, 1977). The participants indicated their source of learning as having being through observing and modelling positive behaviour from the mentor. This learning process also transcended from that of observing the mentor to that of learning from each other while working together. Lankau (2002) states that "the most important characteristic of mentoring as a social learning process is that it is by its nature a collaborative process wherein

both the mentor and the mentee are working together". Crow (2001) suggests that mentoring is not a passive process but an active one where both mentor and mentee are actively engaged with each other. From the data, it has been discovered that the participants were actively involved in the process. The mentors introduced opportunities for learning to the protégés, and in turn the protégés were willing to (1) pay attention, (2) retain the learning content and (3) reproduce behaviour appropriately (Bandura, 1977).

Most of the evidence in support of mentoring as a form of social learning is contained in the statements of the participants when answering the question on their learning as a form of social learning. The following statements are some of the statements reflecting the participants' support of the above statement:

"Yes, the learning was of a social learning because we learnt from one another";

"It definitely was social learning because it developed me a lot...";

"Yes, it opened my eyes on mentoring...and I will be mentoring my subordinates too";

"It was, it was, you know as a principal I got an opportunity to go through a lot, I was empowered as a leader...".

(b) what experiences did the principals have during the mentoring programme

Among their experiences, the following were the most outstanding ones from their responses to this research question:

- (i) They learnt new behaviours: The principals learnt how to deal with staff-related issues such as misconduct in a manner they did not use in the past. They reported to have learnt to first engage with the educators who are misbehaving in order to find out the causes for such behaviour, before instituting misconduct charges. There is a change from being office-based as a principal to the one that develops interest in what is happening in the classrooms as well as the school surroundings. Most

principals believed in staying in their offices and not walking around, but after mentoring they changed and started familiarizing themselves with their surroundings. The Social Learning Theory seeks to explain how patterns of behaviour are acquired and how their expression is continuously regulated by the interplay of self-generated and external sources of influence (Bandura, 1977). The new behaviour is acquired through observing the mentor and that rewarding behaviour. Hansman (n.d:104) contends that mentors are role models for behaviour that is rewarded, and therefore their protégés emulate their behaviour and thus learn organizational tasks and culture.

- (ii) They acquired new skills: Although principals did draw up the vision and the mission statement of their schools before mentoring, during the mentoring process they realized that their documents were just toothless documents drawn up for compliance purposes only. During mentoring they were taken through the process of drawing up comprehensive visions and the missions for their schools in a manner they had not thought of before. They confess that the documents do make sense now and are shared by the entire school community. They learnt how to conduct and minute meetings. They also confirmed to have realized that not all issues require a full staff meeting. Some issues require to be addressed in the form of short briefing sessions. The interviewing skills were also mentioned by one of the principals as part of his newest acquisitions from his mentoring experiences.

These learning experiences by the principals are confirmed by Wong & Premkumar (2007), when they state that “within mentoring relationships, mentees develop and learn through conversations with more experienced mentors who share knowledge and skills that can be incorporated into their thinking and practice...”. From the improved relations, as well as the participants’ interaction with their mentors and among themselves, a lot of information was shared which increased their knowledge of leading their schools.

- (iii) Increased confidence: Participants reported to have gained increased confidence levels since they were mentored. The increased confidence in the participants has decreased the stressors resulting from the lack of confidence in the job. They are now able to initiate new projects. They reported that they have successfully marketed their schools. One principal proudly boasted that his school is being sponsored by the National Lottery. Bandura asserts that a self-regulated person would be able to display the appropriate behaviour within the social situation, and he further contends that individuals who come to believe that they are less vulnerable than they previously assumed, are less prone to generate frightening thoughts in threatening situations. One principal stated as follows:

“I am not afraid of tackling any problem before me now...”

(c) How do these principals perceive mentoring as a professional development programme?

The study reveals that the participants perceive mentoring as a professional developmental strategy (programme) since the acquisition of new skills and knowledge to lead their schools. The following responses reveal the positive perceptions of the participants in this regard:

- (i) Participants' increased confidence in the execution of their professional duties, especially during and after mentoring, is an indication of their professional development. They were given the opportunity to learn how to draw policy documents and how to interpret them. They learnt more about the provisions of SASA and how they impact on their practices and responsibilities as principals. Bush and Coleman (1995:61) clearly list some of the aspects of mentoring as a professional development strategy as follows:

(a) *The mentor provides encouragement and support to enable the new head to become an effective head of the school;*

(b) *Mentoring is designed to support the process of finding, making and taking the role of the Head. This involves understanding the nature of the school as a system, taking ownership of its aim and acting on that understanding.*

- (ii) The assertion by one of the principals is proof of the increased confidence. He said: *“Mentoring has helped me a lot, now I am sure of what I am doing”.*

(d) How do they interpret their experiences?

The study also reveals that participants interpret their experiences as learning. All of the interviewees confirmed that mentoring has been the best experience in their professional development. They also indicated that mentoring should be for all educators and principals, including members of the school management teams. The principal who has benefited from the mentorship programme indicated that he would like his teachers to understand the changes he is bringing to the school, and the only way this can take place would be for them to experience being mentored too.

Another revelation from the study is the interpretation of the experiences and insights gained by the participants from the mentoring programme. They indicated that they feel as though they are starting from scratch in their posts, and feel like new principals in their schools. They now have a purpose to be at school, and feel they are adding value to the existence of the school. They are now able to act as role models and be modelled by their teachers at school. In terms of insight, they have acquired the capacity to understand the truths about their roles as principals. Hale (2000:227) suggest that mentoring can be a powerful way of developing mentee insights.

Most of these participants confirmed to have learnt a lot in terms of acquiring knowledge, skills and competences. This acquisition is, according to Wen Pan *et al.* (2010), personal learning. It is a process of information seeking and

socialization that must occur in order for personal development in the behaviour, attitudes and ability (Kram, 1996) to happen.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The participants' interpretations of their experiences in the mentoring programme are two-fold. At first their experiences about their recruitment into the programme were problematic, and because of poor performance of their schools, a stigma was attached. The principals and SMT members who were identified for the programme interpreted this selection as a form of reprimand and also a process of correcting poor leadership and management by the principal and his/her SMT.

The practical experience acquired through interaction with the mentor is seen as capacitating them with practical skills and experience.

It is again imperative that the researcher should point out some of the aspects of this mentoring programme which need to be attended to if the programme is to yield good results in the district.

Regarding the selection of mentors, the research showed that the participants in the mentoring programme did not have a role in the choice of their mentors. It is therefore generalized in this research that the needs of the protégés were not looked into individually and not taken into consideration in the selection of the mentor. The researcher therefore recommends that the district should consider the selection of mentors to be different from the current format where protégés do not have a say in the selection and possibly to be both systemic and considerate of each protégé's needs. This recommendation therefore suggests a collaborative process in the matching of the protégé to the mentor. Such a step will go a long way in making mentoring a true social learning process.

On screening, selection and pairing of mentors to protégés, Hopkins-Thompson (2000:31) suggests that these processes, selections and screenings are critical components of mentoring. The fact that they are critical components suggests that great care should be taken, as errors could occur which could impact negatively on the mentoring process. This is important because it ensures the appropriate and

purposeful assignment of protégés to mentors. The participants did not have the opportunity to select their own mentors. According to McKimm, Jollie and Hatter (2007), a mentor is seen as a “trusted friend, counsellor, advocate, role model...”, and the protégé should be granted an opportunity to choose his/her mentor when and where possible. The reason for my conviction is that most of the time a role model or friend is well-known to the person who is that behaviour.

On the relationship between the mentor and the protégé, McKimm, Jollie and Hatter (2007), suggest that at first both mentor and mentee are likely to be nervous and unsure. The collected data indicated that the participants were at first not comfortable with their mentors. A lot of suspicions developed as indicated in one of the participant’s responses:

“At first, I thought that this man was coming to run my school”.

Another issue that added to the suspicions was the fact that all the mentors were white and mentoring black principals. Hansman (2002) argues that cross-race and cross-gender relationships affect the overall mentoring experience of both mentors and protégés negatively. The research has discovered that the relationships between mentors who were all whites and the protégés who all were blacks improved as the mentoring programme continued. As stated before, at first the participants were suspicious of the white mentors, but improved to a remarkable position with a lot of benefits to the participants. This situation enables cross-cultural and cross-gender mentoring relationships to be possible and successful in this context.

There are a number of lessons that could be learnt from these cross-race and cross-gender mentor relationships.

South Africa is a country that is characterized by diversity which is upheld by our constitution. As a diversified nation we need to learn to live and do things together. The cross-gender and cross-race mentoring relationships have been researched by Ortiz-Walters et al. (2010), Cox and Nkomo (1991), Hansman (2002) and Hurley (1996), among others. Hurley (1996) provides information on how sexuality and

intimacy may play a role in mentoring relationships and organisations in general. Most of these researches concentrated on job satisfaction of protégés during mentoring relationships. They may not have concentrated on the success, or possible success, of mentoring relationships across gender and race. However, Hansman (2002), citing early research by Roche (1979) and Levinson *et al.* (1978), states that mentoring programmes within organisations should reflect society and must continually accommodate a changing world. The South African context, as a changing world, requires a situation in which recognition is given to potential racial and gender problems, but also moving towards overcoming them for racial integration to succeed. Hansman (2002) further contends that “even if female protégés are involved in mentoring relationships with women mentors, there is no assurance of successful outcomes”. The study has therefore not picked up any problems relating to gender in the relationships, but did in the beginning of the mentoring relationships pick up race-related issues.

The existence of Curriculum Implementers (CIs) is a step in the right direction in as far as curriculum development and implementation is concerned. A similar structure targeting the development of principals and SMTs is recommended. The structure will also ensure that there is continuous development of school managers. Not only should this process be completed upon acquisition of the academic qualification, but should go beyond and develop principals and SMTs in schools. This recommendation makes way for a unit that will be properly trained for its mentorship role for continued professional development of principals.

The mentoring concept in the district should find its own “habitus” in the mission statement of the district educator development unit. Mentoring requires correct contextualization within the district’s developmental strategies, especially those concerned with capacity enhancement. If our schools are to achieve good results, we need to enhance the capacity of educators and their leaders (SMTs and principals). Mathibe (2007) contends that “one reason that has always been advanced for poor results in schools is that principals are not appropriately skilled and trained for school management and leadership, and as a result there are those who call for professional development of principals”.

The primary purpose of the ACE, according to Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011) is:

“to ascertain how much of the course learning has been internalized, made meaning and of applied in practice in the school”.

The Department of Education designed the programme after realizing that although principals are qualified and in some instances holding university-acquired management qualifications, their management capabilities are not transferrable to the school situation. This has been noted in the failure of some school principals to provide appropriate leadership to their schools as part of their function. This is in accordance with the Employment of Educators Act No.76 of 1998 which stipulates that one of the functions of the school principal is to assist educators, particularly new and inexperienced educators, to develop and achieve educational objectives in accordance with the needs of the school.

The preparation of mentors will need to be a carefully planned programme that will recruit not only retired principals but experienced principals who have a track record of good leadership and management in schools. Trubowitz (2004) confirms that mentors need programmes to prepare them, so that they do not get caught up in jargon, do not use mentoring to gratify personal needs and do not view mentoring as a simplistic, mechanical process. There is also a need to look into the SMT and school principals who do not necessarily need to go through the ACE School Leadership programme, but who need mentoring.

The most appropriate way would be to mentor all principals irrespective of their school's academic performance, because the results achieved by the school may not be attributed to good leadership of the SMT only, but also to the commitment of the educators and learners. Due to the problem of educator migration from the district to Gauteng, the changes in staff provision could result in a drop in academic results as new inexperienced educators become engaged with senior classes.

In view of the experiences of the participants, two years is not enough to guarantee professional development of school leaders. There is a need for a number of developmental programmes that need to be introduced and supported through mentorship.

Most recently, the developmental programmes such as workshops and inductions and trainings that have been conducted in the district focused largely on the development of the SGB and RCL structures. This is commendable. Along with these programmes there need to be programmes targeting principals and SMTs at schools. The principals are invited to SGB developmental meetings where very little about the role of the principal is mentioned, except being an overseer and as an ex-officio member in the SGB.

The assignment of mentors needs special attention, as it has the potential to influence the mentoring results in a negative way. The fact that the mentors who were responsible for the protégés were all white and who had experience of managing and leading suburban schools might be problematic in future if it is not a problem already. All the participants were from township and rural schools, and for them to be mentored by mentors from suburban schools who do not experience the problems their protégés are experiencing, is an issue that requires attention. Future research on this issue is required.

The development of a unit which will look into the development of mentoring programmes within districts would go a long way in addressing relevant contextual factors that have not been addressed by the National mentoring programme. The factors to be looked into include among others the following:

- (a) The structure of the ACE programme needs attention. As it is currently, more mentoring takes place during the completion of the qualification and little mentoring takes place at the workplace.
- (b) The period of the mentorship (workplace) is too short and unstructured.
- (c) The selection of mentors (the matching of mentors and protégés). There is a need to consider the developmental needs of the protégés and matching

with mentors who have strengths in the relevant areas may help them (Hale, 2000);

- (d) Consideration that principals have different developmental needs as well as different forms of mentoring, depending on the phase in which each principal may be in his/her role as principal (some principals are new and some have been in their posts longer).

This research cannot provide a generalized view on its findings since the number of the interviewed participants was only ten participants and that the results are only applicable to the context in which the research was conducted.

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