

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND LEARNERS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT FOUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE KAVANGO REGION, NAMIBIA

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DECLARATION

In submitting this dissertation, I declare that the work presented is my own, original work, that I am the owner of this copyright, and that it has not previously been submitted for any qualification at any institution. All the sources used or quoted have been acknowledged by complete reference.

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ABSTRACT

In Namibia, the national Grade 12 academic performance for the Namibian Senior Secondary Certificate (NSSC) ordinary and higher levels examination has declined from 2011 to 2013. Of the 58 785 full-time candidates who wrote the Grade 12 national examination during the period of 2011 to 2013, only 4 610 candidates qualified for access to higher education (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2013e). A similar situation prevails in the Kavango Region, where the academic performance of Grade 12 learners has declined steadily between 2011 and 2013, from a 30% pass rate to 24.4% according to the regional statistics for the Kavango Region of the Directorate of National Examination and Assessment [DNEA] (MoE, 2013d). Against this backdrop, and by exploring the practices of four secondary school principals, this study investigates the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance at four secondary schools in the Rundu Circuit in the Kavango Region. The objective of the study was to gain an understanding of whether, and how, school leadership contributes to the learners' academic performance in school. The study employed a qualitative interpretive research method. Data was constructed through semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis.

Primarily, the study found inconsistencies between how principals understood their leadership and management roles, and what they actually practised. It would appear that, central to this gap between what was understood conceptually and what actually was implemented was the relationship that the principal had with his or her relevant staff members and, in turn, the types of relationships that existed among staff members. To this end it was found that poor staff relationships, which either emanated from poor leadership, or led to poor leadership, had a direct effect on the academic performance of learners. Concomitantly, poor leadership, poor staff relationships, as well as the poor academic performance of learners, affected the morale and commitment of both educators and the principal. Underlying the issue of poor relationships, the study brought into stark focus a concern that continues to challenge schools, not only in the Kavango Region, but in the whole of Namibia, namely the issue of unqualified and under-qualified educators. The latter, together with poor learner commitment, which is exacerbated by inadequate and questionable parental support, has contributed to the current situation of a dismally poor Grade 12 success rate, and an equally dismal number of learners who actually qualify to access higher education.

The study found that the absence of leadership and management training for principals plays a significant role in their (in)-capacity to lead and manage schools. The unpreparedness for managing the school as an organisation, which includes the critical management of staff and learners, has had serious implications for the type of teaching and learning that takes place in the four schools. The poor state of the Grade 12 learner results is just one indicator that the issue of inadequate leadership skills needs to be addressed by the Namibian Ministry of Education. As such, the study recommends that, if the education ministry wishes to address the academic performance of learners, it would need to make provision for in-service leadership training for school principals.

Keywords: School leadership; learners' academic performance; democratic leadership style; teacher-learner commitment; harmonious relationship.

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DEDICATION

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

NSSC	Namibian Senior Secondary Certificate
MoE	Ministry of Education
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
DNEA	Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment
ETSIP	Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme
EMIS	Education Management Information System
MCA	Millennium Challenge Account
ALI	African Leadership Institute

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CHAPTER ONE

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

According to the Ministry of Education, the national Grade 12 academic achievement for the Namibian Senior Secondary Certificate (NSSC) ordinary and higher levels examination declined from the year 2011 to 2013. During this period (that is, three years), a total number of 58 785 full-time candidates nationally wrote the Grade 12 examinations. Of these candidates, only 4 610 qualified for admission to higher education (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2013e). Similarly, in the Kavango Region, Grade 12 learners' academic performance declined for the past three years (2011–2013), from 30% to 24.4%, according to the regional statistics for the Kavango Region of the Directorate of National Examination and Assessment (DNEA) (MoE, 2013d). This means that 76% of Grade 12 learners in the Kavango Region were not attaining the minimum requirement for admission to tertiary institutions. Amutenya (2013: 1) explains that the Grade 12 results are used to measure and judge the effectiveness and efficiency of the school system, and for accessing higher education and employment in Namibia. Despite the fact that the Namibian government has introduced school improvement programmes and interventions to improve learners' academic achievement in schools, Grade 12 failure rates are still high in all regions of Namibia (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2006: 25). This reflects that there are crucial challenges in the education system that needs to be addressed in order to improve learners' academic performance in schools (Amutenya, 2013: 1). One of these challenges – which was the focus of this research study – is the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance.

This chapter provides the context and the rationale for the study, which aims to investigate the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance at four secondary schools in the Rundu Circuit in the Kavango Region, by specifically exploring the experiences and perceptions of school principals. It also provides an overview of the research problem and

questions, research design and methodology. While the title of the research study refers to school leadership, the focus is on principal leadership.

1.1 Motivation/rationale for the study

The study is motivated by my experience, knowledge and concern as a secondary school principal that most secondary schools in the Kavango Region of Namibia are not equipping learners to attain the minimum results in the national examinations, which is necessary to find employment or pursue higher education. According to the Namibian Senior Secondary Certificate (NSSC) ordinary and higher levels, Grade 12 national examination results are graded according to a point scale of grades (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2012a) – as shown in the table below:

Table 1.1. Grade 12 grading scales for ordinary and higher levels in Namibia

Levels	Grade	%	POINTS
Namibian Senior	A*	90 – 100%	8
Secondary Certificate	A	80 – 89%	7
Ordinary Level (NSSCO)	B	70 – 79%	6
	C	60 – 69%	5
	D	50 – 59%	4
	E	40 – 49%	3
	U	0 – 39%	0
Namibian Senior	1	80 – 100%	9
Secondary Certificate	2	65 - 79%	8
Higher Level (NSSCH)	3	55 - 64%	7
	4	40 - 54%	6
	U	0 - 39%	0

Source: (Ministry of Education, 2012a).

The Ministry of Education expects a Grade 12 candidate to obtain at least 25 points (that is five C symbols or better) in the best five subjects, including English at the end of every academic year (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2004: 5). Grade 12 learners' academic performance in the Kavango

educational region declined steadily over past three years, from 2011 to 2013. According to the Directorate of National Examination and Assessment (DNEA), the regional statistics for the Kavango Region for this period were as indicated in Table 1.2 below for the period 2011 to 2013:

Table 1.2. Grade 12 Oct/Nov Kavango regional statistic results 2011–2013.

Years	Total candidates	Candidates qualified	% qualified	Candidates not qualified	% Not qualified
2011	1 425	428	30%	997	70%
2012	1 423	116	8.2%	1 307	91%
2013	1 382	337	24.4%	1 045	75.6%

Source: (Ministry of Education, 2013d)

There are sixteen senior secondary schools in the region, of which two are private schools and fourteen are public schools. These fourteen schools have obtained a pass rate of between 0% and 30% during the national examinations for the academic years 2011 to 2013. The abovementioned performance is below average, because it does not meet the Ministry's national performance target of 60% (MoE, 2004: 5).

Limited research has been done within the Namibian context on the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance in the Kavango Region. Studies that have been conducted (e.g. Amutenya, 2013; Kantema, 2001; Kapapero, 2007; Mushaandja, 2006; Nekaro, 2001; Villet, 2001; Zokka, 2012), have explored the role of principals; factors influencing the academic performance of Grade 10 learners in two schools in the Rundu region of Namibia; effective management and professional development; Namibian school principals' perceptions of their management development needs; an exploration of teacher leadership at a Namibian urban primary school; and identifying social and environmental factors that shape the achievement levels of Grade 12 learners from two rural schools in the Oshikoto region of Namibia. The significance of this study is that it specifically investigates the relationship between school leadership – as experienced through principals - and learners' academic performance in the Kavango Region in

Namibia in order to gain an understanding of whether or not, and how, school leadership contributes, to learners' academic performance in schools. To this end, the study hoped to make recommendations to policy-makers, curriculum implementers and school leaders on how school leadership affects or does not affect learners' academic performance.

1.2 Background and context to the study

The pre-independence education system in Namibia was characterised by high failure and drop-out rates of learners in the Kavango Region (Kantema, 2001: 1). This situation has not changed since the achievement of independence. Shaningwa (2007: 2-3) contends that the same educational barriers that led to high drop-out and failure rates during pre-independence continue to affect learners during independence. Statistics from the Education Management Information System (EMIS) reveals that the Kavango Region has the highest school drop-out rates among girls in Namibia due to pregnancy (MoE, 2012b). A report by UNICEF has shown that school-leaving rates are highest in the Kavango Region, in Grades 5, 7, 8 and 10; eventually, only 30% to 40% of Grade 12 learners complete secondary school (UNICEF, 2011:14).

Prior to independence, many teachers in the Kavango Region did not receive training in school leadership, because the government did not pay attention to the training of teachers in school management and administration as a pre-condition for promoting teachers to heads of departments or principals (Kantema, 2001: 6). As a result, teachers were promoted to heads of department or principal, on the basis of their classroom performance and experience, by the appointing authority in the regional education office, and at the recommendation of the school governing bodies (school board committees) (Kantema, 2001: 6). The same situation prevailed in the Kavango Region, where teachers were appointed to school leadership without a qualification, but on the basis of being a head of department. As a result, many principals do not have the skills and training necessary for the effective leadership and management of schools. Bush and Oduro (2006: 359) acknowledge that principals in Africa face a daunting challenge because they are appointed without any school leadership training, but only on the basis of their teaching record and qualification.

At independence in 1990, the government decided to transform its education system by introducing the policy document, “Toward Education for All” (Ministry of Education and Culture [M.E.C], 1993: 2), to create a space for bringing about changes from elitist education towards education for all. The purpose was to render quality education to all Namibian citizens (M.E.C, 1993: 2). Moreover, according to Kandumbu (2005: 16-17), the Ministry of Education in Namibia attempted to expand education facilities for all children and to eradicate the backlog for learners who were previously denied access to education. The post-independence education system introduced numerous professional development programmes through in-service teachers’ training to equip school leaders with school leadership skills in order to improve learners’ performance. These programmes are more effective because they are linked to the classroom practice and address the needs of teachers (M.E.C, 1993: 77-78). Moreover, the Ministry of Education acknowledges that, at present, the opportunity for professional staff development of school leaders is insufficient. Thus, principals have expressed a strong demand for professional development and training that would enable them to manage school affairs, lead others, promote learners’ achievements, and provide advice and guidance to professional staff on educational matters (MoE, 2006: 25).

In response to the need for the professional development of school leaders, the Ministry of Education has organised school leadership training workshops and provided ‘manuals’ to principals, however, these workshops were not sufficient to equip them with knowledge on how schools should function to ensure quality teaching and learning (Kantema, 2001: 21). Currently, the Ministry of Education, through the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), has contracted the African Leadership Institute (ALI) to train master trainers (inspectors of education and principals) in all regions of Namibia. The aim of this training is to capacitate school leaders by closing the gaps identified in the area of leadership and management. The instructional leadership development training programme is comprised of a specifically designed curriculum, based on a survey that investigated the needs of school principals, inspectors of education and regional managers (MoE, 2013a: 1).

According to Swarts (2004: 1-2), quality teaching and learning in Namibia are not satisfying the expectations of the Ministry, the parents or the community, because the majority of learners’

academic performance in schools is below average. Criticisms of learners' poor performance are centred, among other factors, on the existing promotion requirements at Namibian schools. The main problem appears to be the automatic promotion of learners who have not yet attained the basic competencies, but are not allowed to repeat after having repeated once in a phase (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2011: 14-21). According to Nekaro (2001: 6-7), stakeholders in education advanced a wide range of reasons for the poor academic performance of learners in the Kavango Region. Some ascribed poor academic performance to a lack of school management and leadership skills in some principals. Other stakeholders, singled out frequent absenteeism of both teachers and learners from schools, and a poor work culture and commitment in both teachers and learners (Nekaro, 2001: 6-7). In addition, the difference in learners' academic performance among schools might be found in the broader context of how the school is managed.

In an attempt to improve learners' academic performance, the government approved and implemented a number of educational programmes. These included a fifteen-year strategic plan 2005/6–2020; an Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme; and National Standards and Performance Indicators for schools in Namibia. These programmes are comprehensive plans aimed at improving the educational system based on the Ministry's strategic goals of access, equity, quality and democracy (MoE, 2011: 14). This means that the plan is aimed at strengthening the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the general education and training system in the country (MoE, 2006: 5). The plan is being implemented and monitored by the Ministry of Education and principals are positive about the progress, despite some challenges in the implementation process.

Namibia is divided into fourteen regions. This research study was located in one of these fourteen regions – the Kavango Region, which is administered by the Directorate of Education of the Kavango Regional Council. The region is vast and has the highest number of learners and schools in Namibia. Some of these learners are orphans and vulnerable, coming from rural, working-class communities. The Kavango Region has the highest drop-out rate in Namibia due to social challenges: learner pregnancies; long distances between home and school; poverty; early marriages; illnesses; and job opportunities (Ministry of Education, 2012b). Moreover, the region

is divided into eleven circuit offices. The study was conducted in the Rundu Circuit, which is located in Rundu town. Rundu Circuit has 27 schools, 23 807 learners, 739 teachers, 83 heads of departments and 27 principals as per the 15th school day statistics of 2014 (MoE, 2014). Most teachers have teaching qualifications. However, unqualified teachers are appointed by the Ministry of Education for twelve calendar months because of the shortage of qualified teachers in the country. The majority of principals have teaching qualifications and are appointed on the basis of their classroom performance and experience.

Typically in the Rundu Circuit, the level of parental involvement and participation in school activities is not satisfactory, despite the fact that schools involve parents and guardians through school governing bodies, parental meetings, learners' disciplinary problems and, parent weeks, in which they discuss learners' progress and other school-related matters. It was observed that, in most cases, parents are invited to schools but are not able to attend meetings because of other commitments and responsibilities. This has added to the work-load of teachers in dealing with learners' problems and has had an impact on the morale of the teachers, and on learners' academic performance. Generally, the school day operates from 07:00 to 13:00. In the afternoon, each school has its own programme of providing learning support to learners through remedial teaching and extra classes. Schools in the Rundu Circuit also organise weekend classes on Saturdays and Sundays, and during holidays, to render learning support to learners.

The four schools that were selected to participate in this study are all public secondary schools. These public schools were chosen because they are all from the same circuit, are located in close proximity to one another, and serve relatively similar socio-economic communities. In terms of the focus of the study – that is the relationship between school leadership and Grade 12 learners' academic performance – the researcher considered that a sample of four schools would be manageable, and would offer adequate insight into the types of the challenges that might affect school leaders and Grade 12 learners. Two schools were performing schools, while the other two were under-performing schools. The classification of schools into 'performing' and 'under-performing' is determined by an average pass rate of 50%. Schools that achieve below a 50% pass rate are classified as 'under-performing', while, those that achieve a pass rate above 50% are

classified as ‘performing’ schools (Namwandi, 2014a: 2). All four schools offer Grades 8 to 12 and are referred to as schools A, B, C and D, respectively, while the principals, are presented as Principals 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. School A had 710 learners and 25 teachers; School B had 1 180 learners and 43 teachers; School C had 1 206 learners and 35 teachers; and School D had 1 065 learners and 31 teachers.

1.3 The research problem

There are two inter-related problems. The first one concerns the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in the Kavango Region, and the second one relates to the lack of leadership training provided to school principals, which I contend, might affect not only how well they manage and lead their respective schools, but also the learners’ academic performance. The academic performance of learners in the Kavango Region has declined significantly over the past three years (2011 to 2013). Despite the fact that the Namibian government has introduced numerous school improvement programmes and interventions to improve learners’ achievements, the academic performance of learners continues to be cause for the concern, and raises serious questions about the effectiveness and sustainability of these programmes. In Namibia, the Ministry of Education does not require formal leadership training as a pre-condition for promoting teachers to heads of departments or principals (MoE, 2006: 25). As a result, a lack of school leadership in some public schools in the Kavango Region is believed to be one of the contributing factors to the poor academic performance of learners in schools.

1.4 Main research question

In attempting to explore the relationship between school leadership and the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in the Rundu Circuit of the Kavango Region, the main focus and question of this research study is: How can school leadership contribute to learners’ academic performance in the Kavango Region? In addressing this question, the study will also explore the following sub-questions:

1. What are the challenges of school leaders in terms of learners’ performance at school?

2. What leadership styles are practised at the schools?
3. How does school leadership affect learners' academic performance at school?
4. What can the school leaders do to make a difference in learners' performance at school?

1.5 Research design and methodology

1.5.1 Research design

Given the nature of this study, a qualitative research design within the interpretive paradigm or approach will be employed. I intend to gain an understanding of the experiences and perceptions of the principals' leadership practices in relation to learners' academic performance. According to Merriam (1998: 5), qualitative research seeks to explain and understand social phenomena within their natural setting. This study will construct evidence to gain an understanding of the relationship between school leadership and learners' performance at four selected secondary schools in the Kavango Region, Namibia.

1.5.2 Methodology

The methodology is the knowledge and the interpretive framework guiding a particular research project (Harding, 1987: 2, in Le Grange, 2009: 4). Similarly, Le Grange (2009: 4) states that methodology is a philosophical framework that guides the research activity. According to Le Grange (2009: 4), methodology involves the consideration of the research design, data production, data analysis and theorising, together with the social, ethical and political concerns of the social researcher. Moreover, Hopkins and Antes (in Kandumbu, 2005: 30) state that methodology is part of the overall plan that structures specific procedures about what, or who, will supply the data, how the data will be obtained and how it will be analysed. Therefore, it is important that the research methodology is regarded as a road map that directs the researcher in how the intended study will be conducted and how the data will be generated. In this study, an interpretive paradigm or approach was used. The interpretivist approaches to study have the intention of understanding

“the world of human experience” (Cohen & Manion, in Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006: 3). On the basis of an interpretive approach, the researcher attempted to gain entry to the field to explore the experiences of secondary school principals in order to understand and interpret their role and function in relation to learners’ academic performance.

1.5.3 Data construction methods

Data construction methods refer to the various ways in which data is constructed and analysed. According to Murray and Hughes (2008: 148), it comprises listening to the subjects, observing what people do and say, and examining documents that human beings have constructed. This study has been guided by a qualitative research method. According to Cresswell (1998), a qualitative research method comprises an analysis process of understanding the different methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The data will be constructed in two ways. The first method will be through interviews with each of the principals. This will give me an understanding of the type of leadership styles and practices being used in relation to learner performance. The main reason for using interviews is to obtain in-depth data from the participants’ (principals) in relation to their understandings of leadership, and how this might relate to learners’ performance. Secondly, given the dual focus of school leadership in relation to learners’ performance, the Grade 12 learners’ results for the preceding three years (2011 to 2013) will be examined for each of the selected schools.

Furthermore, a qualitative research method has four ways of constructing data, namely structured, semi-structured, unstructured and focus group interviews. For the purpose of this study, I intend to use semi-structured interviews to gain insight into the experiences of the four school principals in relation to learners’ performance. According to Bertram (2004: 88), the interview is a good method for gaining in-depth data from a small number of people. While the first four days at each school will be spent observing the principals in their daily roles, functions and routines, the fifth day will be used for interviews with each of the principals. During the observations at the four schools, I intend to an observation schedule (Appendix 3), comprising descriptions of the various school leadership styles being practised in relation to staff relationships; interactions and relationships with learners; level of involvement in curriculum planning; level of involvement with

grade 12 learners; extent of academic support for grade 12 learners; management and staff briefings; daily routines; as well as any policies, procedures, practices, behaviour, and interaction that relate to learners' academic performance. The observation should allow me the opportunities to take note of any aspects that might not be reported by the principals during the interview process.

1.6 Theoretical framework

The concept of educational leadership is new and complex in the Namibian context. Coleman (2003: 155) explains that the concept of educational leadership is rooted in western culture, and particularly in North America. Consequently, it is viewed and understood differently by different scholars in different countries and contexts. Literature reveals that little research has been done on the concept of school leadership (Christie, 2010:697). In reviewing the existing research on the field, scholars such as Bush and Heystek (2006) argued that most of the research conducted on school leadership are conceptually limited in defining the concept of leadership. Harber and Davies (1997) in (Coleman, 2003:155) claim that school leadership in developing countries, especially in Africa fosters the idea that leadership is vested in the principal, however, leadership may also be seen as an integral role of the Head of department and a classroom teacher. This means that though the principal plays a central and influential role in school leadership, teachers also have a role to play in school leadership in order to improve the academic performance of learners.

In the Namibian context, given the fact that principals are always under pressure with administrative works and responsibilities of managing and leading teachers, learners and the curriculum, it is necessary that school leadership should be shared among all stakeholders at all school levels. Zokka (2012: 11) defines leadership as the ability to influence other stakeholders in supporting, guiding, inspiring, directing and working with them to achieve desired results. Principalship, however, may be understood as an organisational concept which designates a structural position with responsibilities and accountabilities where the principal has the power to influence the school as an organisation (Christie, 2010: 695-696). Since the principal represents and is accountable for the day to day functions of the school, the successes and failures of the school rest on him or her as the head of an organisation (Christie, 2010: 696). This means that

principalship is a professional label attached to principals in schools. I intend to draw on various conceptions of leadership styles – consisting of a theoretical framework - as I explore the experiences and perceptions of principals during my research. One of the challenges of this study is that there is no prior research on the experiences and perceptions of school principals in relation to the academic performance of learners.

1.7 Structure of the study

This study comprises six chapters that aim to investigate the relationship between school leadership and learners' performance at four secondary schools in the Kavango Region, Namibia.

In this chapter I have offered an overview of the study, covering the background to and rationale of the study, which is aimed at gaining an understanding of how school leadership contributes to learners' academic performance. It has also provided insight into the research problem and questions, research design and methodology, as well as data construction methods. Chapter two serves as a literature review, and provides an overview of global and African understandings of school leadership, while also explaining the challenges experienced by school leaders in Africa and Namibia. It discusses the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance in schools; as well as the relationship between school effectiveness and learners' performance. The chapter concludes by describing the challenges experienced in school leadership in relation to learners' performance in the Kavango Region. Chapter three explains the research design and methodology of the study and provides insights into the methodology by explaining why the qualitative research paradigm was employed. Chapter four provides the findings of the data – as constructed through the interviews with, and observations of, principals, as well as the Grade 12 results – in a narrative form based on the categories that emerged and were identified during the interview process. These categories reveal how school leadership contributes to learners' performance and the challenges experienced by school leaders in terms of learners' performance in schools. Chapter five offers an analysis of the main findings, and focuses on addressing the main research concern of this study. Chapter six concludes with a summary of the study, considers the implications of the study for educational leadership and the academic

performance of learners, and offers possible recommendations to policy-makers, education officials, principals and teachers in Namibia.

1.8 Delimitation of the study

The study aims to explore the relationship between school leadership and learners' performance at four secondary schools in the Rundu Circuit in the Kavango Region of Namibia. Only four secondary school principals were involved in the study. While the findings might be true in the four research schools, they might not necessarily be transferable to schools in other circuits or other regions. However, given the poor results of Grade 12 learners nationally, as well as the fact that principals in Namibia are generally not expected to have any formal qualifications, the study might have something worthwhile to offer in terms of the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance.

1.9 Ethical considerations

According to Punch (2005), all educational research involves ethical consideration as it involves data obtained from people and about people. Given that the research involved interviews with the four principals, observations of the four principals, as well as an examination of the Grade 12 learner results (2011 to 2013), the researcher sought permission from the Namibian Education Authority to conduct the study, which was granted. In terms of the institutional requirements of the researcher's university, ethical clearance was granted by the Ethics Committee of Stellenbosch University.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study aims to investigate the relationship between school leadership and learners' performance at four secondary schools in the Kavango Region Namibia. This chapter reviews literature that focuses on the following aspects: an overview of global and African understandings of school leadership; challenges experienced by school leaders in Africa and Namibia; linking school leadership to learners' performance; linking school effectiveness to learners' performance; and the description of challenges experienced in school leadership in relation to learners' performance in order to gain an understanding into the relationship between school leadership and learners' performance. The chapter also provides a theoretical framework of the study by reviewing some leadership theories in order to determine the appropriate theory/ies in which this study is to be located.

2.1 An overview of global understandings of school leadership.

School leadership comes in all forms, which, therefore makes it difficult to define the leadership approach appropriate for a certain situation. The leadership style needed in a school where learners' academic performance is below standard, for example, might not necessarily be comparable to the leadership style required in a successful school. Therefore, different leadership models are required in schools in relation to the contexts in which they function (Department of Education, 2008: 47). Both nationally and internationally, one leadership style does not succeed at all times and in all contexts, states Ngcobo (2012: 422). As a result, Ngcobo (2012: 422) [citing Cave & Wilkinson, 1997], explains that the emphasis in the school leadership effectiveness approach is placed on the ability to read situations intuitively, provide acumen and make balanced judgments about challenges confronting school leaders. Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008: 36), state that successful leaders:

“... [A]re open-minded and ready to learn from others. They are also flexible, rather than dogmatic in their thinking within a system of core values, persistent e.g. in pursuit of high expectation of staff motivation, commitment, learning and achievement for all, resilient and optimistic. These traits help to explain why successful leaders facing daunting conditions are able to push forward when there is little reason to expect for progress”.

Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Leithwood and Kingston (2008: 6) assert that successful school leadership provides a clear vision and sense of direction for the school. It focuses the attention of the staff members on what is important for the school and does not allow teachers to become distracted by initiatives that will have little impact on the learners' academic performance. As explained by Day *et al.* (2008: 6), school leaders have a clear view of the strengths and shortcomings of their staff members in terms of teaching and learning and are able to support and guide them to improve their teaching experiences. In addition, Day *et al.* (2008: 6) point out that school leaders have developmental programmes in place that emphasise the real needs of their staff members and are able to influence teachers to improve the academic standards of the learners at the school.

According to Stewart (2013: 52-54), the literature in countries such as the U.S.A, England, Singapore, Shanghai, and Ontario reveals that the role of the school leader as conceived in the past is no longer appropriate. These countries have developed a new standard to redefine the responsibilities of school leaders, with a special emphasis on leadership for learning. This means, says Stewart (2013: 52-54), that the role of school leaders has changed from administrative to instructional leadership, with a particular focus on supporting and developing the quality of teachers; setting school goals for student performance; regular monitoring of class activities; giving immediate constructive feedback on instructional programmes; and strategically using resources to improve teaching and learning. According to Lingard, Hayes, Mills and Christie (2003: 51), the study of school leadership has been an enduring concern for school administration since its inception as an academic field. In developed and developing countries, explain Lingard *et al.* (2003: 53), studies in the 1980s and 1990s revealed that school leadership was central to learners' academic achievement. Thus, schools have targeted leadership as a point of leverage for

change. Leadership must be about spreading the best teachers' practices across the work of the school, to be exercised across the school and its communities to achieve the best school outcomes for all (Lingard *et al.*, 2003: 53). School leadership, argue Lingard *et al.* (2003: 53), should not necessarily lie with the principal alone, but should be at all levels of the school, with the principal at the centre of the school, rather than at the top.

Understandings of school leadership have taken on many forms, which are not necessarily shared among scholars. Some scholars, such as Hoy and Miskel (2008: 419), align leadership to bureaucratic attributes and personality characteristics, while others, such as Brighthouse and Woods in (Fullan, 2001), link leadership to behavioural dimensions. Despite these differences, consensus has been reached amongst scholars that leadership is basically about the ability to influence other people's attitudes and to energise their participation in activities associated with organizational success (Ngcobo, 2012: 420). Similarly, leadership may also be understood as a relationship of influence directed towards school goals or outcomes, whether formal or informal. Leadership in schools, contends Christie (2010: 695-696), is not the preserve of any position, but can be found and built throughout the school. Likewise, Van der Westhuizen (1997: 187) argues that the role of school leaders is to influence, convince, inspire, bind and direct teachers to realise the common goal of education. Leadership is a process of influence based on clear values and beliefs that leads to a vision for the school. This vision, states Bush (2007: 403), is articulated by leaders who seek to gain the commitment of the staff and stakeholders to the ideal of a better future for the school, the learners and the community. According to Burger (2013: 28), school leadership deals with areas such as supervising the curriculum, improving the instructional programme of the school, working with staff members to identify a vision for the school, and building a close relationship with the community. Where school leadership is ineffective in a school, states Burger (2013: 30), it is not easy for teachers to be motivated to render quality teaching and learning. In contrast, if leadership is strong, points out, Burger (2013: 30), staff members and learners are motivated towards achieving good academic results.

In order to gain an understanding of how school leadership contributes to learners' academic performance in schools in the Kavango Region, it is appropriate to understand different leadership

theories, both globally and locally. Given the focus of the study, attention will next be given to various leadership theories: instructional, transformational, distributed, participative, and democratic leadership – in an attempt to understand the types of leadership styles that educational leaders might exhibit. These leadership theories have been selected by the researcher based on a systematic review of the international, South African and Namibian research done on school leadership (Bush, 2007: 394).

According to Bush (2007: 400), the instructional leadership model was endorsed by the English National College for School Leadership, because of its emphasis on managing teaching and learning as the core activities of an educational institution. This model focuses more on teaching and learning, the behaviour of teachers in working with learners, as well as the professional learning of teachers in relation to learners' growth. School leaders' influence is based on the students' learning through the teachers. Instructional leadership, asserts Bush (2007: 401), improves teaching and learning through modelling good practices; monitoring classroom activities; and professional dialogue and discussions with the teachers. This model is a very important dimension, because it targets the school's central activities through teaching and learning. However, the instructional leadership model, states Bush (2007: 401), underestimates other aspects of a school, such as sport, socialisation, student welfare and self-esteem. According to Hallinger (2003: 330), instructional leadership focuses more on the direct coordination, control, and supervision of the curriculum and instruction at school. Instructional leadership, states Hallinger (2003: 332), is goal-oriented, with a special emphasis on the improvement of student academic outcomes. Tjivikua (2006: 22) explains that instructional leadership may be regarded as a process of guiding and encouraging teachers towards a greater professional effectiveness that requires careful, far-sighted and effective planning based on professional insight, and constructive and accurate analysis of the teaching and learning activity. According to the Millennium Challenge Account Namibia [MCA-N] (2014: 5), instructional leadership empowers school managers and leaders to improve teaching and learning in the classrooms. The instructional leader, states MCA-N (2014: 15), should play a critical role in engaging staff members in continuous dialogue about the curriculum, teaching and learning strategies, teaching materials, support strategies, community resources, and strategies for parental involvement. The role of the principal as an instructional

leader, explains MCA-N (2014: 5-16), has the following functions: defining a clear vision for the school; managing the school curriculum; supervising teaching and learning; monitoring learner progress; and cultivating a school climate.

- Defining a clear vision for the school: The principal and staff members, in consultation with school board members, should set a clear vision for the school to ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place.
- Managing the school curriculum: The principal should be able to coordinate the curriculum in such a way that teaching and learning time is devoted optimally. The principal should support teaching programmes and provide teaching resources to teachers in order to carry out their school task meaningfully.
- Supervising teaching: The instructional leader should guide, support and encourage teachers through a journey towards greater professional effectiveness and successful teaching and learning. The principal should focus attention on creating teamwork, sharing the best teaching practices, and influencing and inspiring teachers to improve learners' academic performance.
- Monitoring learner progress: The instructional leader should regularly monitor and evaluate the learners' progress in mastering basic competencies through continuous assessment. Learner results should be used to provide support for both teachers and learners to improve on their teaching and learning practices, as well as to assist parents to understand why improvement is necessary at school.
- Cultivating a school climate: The principal should be able to create a positive and supportive climate and a learning culture in which quality teaching and learning flourish.

According to Bush (2007: 396), the transformational leadership model has its roots in collegial leadership, which assumes that the central focus of leadership ought to be the commitments and capacities of all stakeholders. Bush (2007: 396) explains that higher levels of personal commitment to school goals and the capacities for accomplishing these goals are the results of extra effort and greater productivity. Mabuku (2009: 12) defines transformational leaders as true leaders who inspire their teams with a shared vision of the future. Transformational leaders are highly visible

and spend time communicating with their followers. They do not lead from the front, but delegate responsibilities among all followers. Bush (2007: 396) conceptualises transformational leadership in terms of eight dimensions: building school vision; establishing school goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individual support; modelling best practices and values; demonstrating high performance expectations; creating a productive school culture; and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions.

Moreover, the literature reveals that transformational leaders inspire, motivate and encourage their followers to carry out their work in terms of strategic means by stressing ideals, optimism, and positive expectations. According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2005), the members' sense of identity and self is connected to the mission and the collective identity of the school. In addition, citing Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Moorman and Fester (1990), Burger (2013: 42) explains that transformational leaders challenge followers to take ownership of their own teaching. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of members and align them with the tasks that optimise their performance. Transformational leaders build collaborative relationship based on trust, warmth and honest engagement in order to be effective. According to Bush (2007: 396-397), "transformation" in the South African context has a special meaning linked to the need to change from the pre-colonial education system to the post-independent democratic system. A transformational leadership approach, states Bush (2007: 397), has the potential to engage all the stakeholders in the achievement of educational objectives in which the transformational leaders and followers assume a harmonious relationship and genuine convergence, leading to an agreed decision-making processes. However, Bush (2007: 397) points out that there is very limited implementation of changes in most schools, because transformation requires action at all levels and there are limits to what school leaders can achieve in the absence of appropriate physical, human, and financial resources. This model has been criticised as being a vehicle for control over teachers and is more likely to be accepted by school leaders, rather than the led. It also has the potential, contends Bush (2007: 396), to become "despotic", because of its strong, heroic and charismatic features.

According to Bush (2013: 543), distributed leadership has become the normative, preferred leadership model in the 21st century, because it arises anywhere in the school community and is not confined to formal leaders (principals) alone. The growing recognition of distributed leadership, says Bush (2013: 543), is motivated by the fact that it eases the burden of and pressure on the principal, who is overloaded with administrative work. Harris (2012: 9) points out that distributed leadership has already been adopted in countries like the U.K, U.S.A, Australia, New Zealand, and Hong Kong, and also in parts of Europe, as part of their educational reforms. According to Harris, Michelle and Suria (2013: 929), distributed leadership implies a social distribution of leadership in which leadership is stretched over the work of a number of individuals and the leadership task is accomplished through the interaction of multiple leaders. Harris (2012: 9) asserts that distributed leadership is associated with democratic and equitable forms of schooling, aimed at raising academic standards in improving learners' performance. The principal, says Harris (2012: 9), plays a central role in sharing some leadership responsibilities with teachers in order to support innovation and change at the school. Distributed leadership, explains Harris (2012: 9), empowers teachers to influence positive student learning outcomes in their classroom practice. Despite the fact that some of the leadership responsibilities are shared with teachers, the principal is still accountable for all the tasks distributed (Harris, 2012: 9).

According to Bennett, Harvey, Wise, and Woods (2003,) (in Harris, 2004: 14), the distributed perspective focuses on how leadership practice is distributed among formal and informal leaders. Distributed leadership, state Bennet *et al.* (2003,) (in Harris, 2004: 14), is not something done by an individual to others, rather it is an emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise. Harris (2004: 14) explains that it is a form of collective agency incorporating the activities of many individuals in a school to mobilise and guide other teachers in the process of instructional change. In schools where leadership roles are shared by teachers, asserts Harris (2004: 15), positive relationships are promoted that secure the possibility of quality teaching and learning, and this improves the academic performance of learners in the classroom practice.

According to Spillane (2005: 143), distributed leadership has garnered considerable attention in the United States and abroad. It is used interchangeably with “shared leadership”, “team leadership”, and “democratic leadership”. Distributed leadership, explains Spillane (2005: 144), is an organisational quality that involves multiple leaders, rather than individuals who are at the top of the organisation. Moreover, as pointed out by Spillane (2005: 144), distributed leadership is about leadership practice that takes the form of interaction between leaders and followers, rather than a function of one or more leaders’ action.

Harris (2004: 21) points out that the success of distributed leadership within a school can be influenced by a number of interpersonal factors, such as relationships with other teachers and school management. However, principals may feel threatened by teachers taking over their leadership positions. According to Harris (2004: 21), there may also be conflicts between groups of teachers who are committed and those who are not living up to expectations. Overcoming these difficulties, says Harris (2004: 21), might require a combination of strong interpersonal skills on the part of the “teacher leader” and a school culture that encourages change and leadership in teachers. Therefore, the key to successful distributed leadership, says Harris (2004: 21), resides in the involvement of teachers in collectively guiding and shaping instructional and institutional development. Harris and Lambert (2003,) (in Harris, 2004: 21), state that successful leaders are those who distribute leadership, understand relationships and recognise the importance of “reciprocal learning processes that lead to shared purposes”.

According to Bush (2007: 397), the distributed leadership model may be linked to participative leadership, because a participative model is consistent, for example, with the democratic values of the new South Africa. Participative leadership, explains Bush (2007: 397), assumes that the decision-making processes of the group ought to be the central focus of the group. The importance of participative leadership, states Bush (2007: 397), binds staff members together and eases the burden and pressure on the principal, because leadership functions are shared by all school leaders. Bush (2007: 398) asserts that the introduction of School Governing Bodies (SGB’s) and the development of school management teams post-independence in South Africa and Namibia provide for potential participative leadership, even though the ideal of the participative decision-

making process is not yet a reality in schools. In most of the public schools, explains Bush (2007: 398), principals are still dominant in all meetings because of their positions of power in the school, having first access to information from the education authorities, and because it is the principal who normally executes the decisions taken. Participative leadership, however, implies that all stakeholders should be involved in the decision-making process of the school (Bush, 2007: 398).

Kanyi (2008: 419) points out that the participative leadership style encourages the involvement of those closely linked to a process in the determination of that process. The potential benefits of participative leadership are:

- People's involvement in the decision-making process improves the understanding of the issues that are involved;
- People are more committed to action when they have been involved in the decision-making process;
- People are less competitive and more collaborative when they are working on joint goals;
- When collective decisions are made, the social commitment to one another is greater and thus increases the commitment to decisions; and
- Several people deciding together make better decisions than one person alone.

According to McDonald and Larson (2013), participative leadership is a management style in which all appropriate staff members are given an opportunity and are encouraged to participate in the decision-making process that best meets school needs. By giving staff members an opportunity to participate in the consultation and decision-making process, school management may expect final decisions to be supported by all staff members. Although this process can be time consuming and impractical for all decision-making processes within a school organisation, it can be very useful in having an indirect impact on the teaching and learning processes. When teachers' voices are heard in the decision-making processes, they will be empowered and motivated to improve their learners' academic performance (McDonald & Larson, 2013). Niitembu (2006: 28) explains that participative leadership became prominent towards the end of the 20th century, because of the

increasing criticism that bureaucracy was used as a form of management. Coleman (2003: 160) points out that a survey of principals in KwaZulu-Natal indicated that 75% of them “normally discuss with staff members before a joint decision is taken”, while the remainder suggested that they included at least some staff members in their decision-making processes. This implies that school management and teachers play a collective and participatory role in the decision-making process of the school. According to Van Wyk (2004: 49), decentralisation means that the participation of stakeholders originates from the belief that the state alone cannot control schools, but should share its power with other stakeholders, particularly those close to the school. However, many public schools in South Africa are still using an authoritarian style of leadership with a top-down approach (Prew, 2006: 3). Similarly, Coleman (2003: 155) claims that most African countries use the authoritarian leadership style in schools, for the following reasons:

- Classroom teaching normally tends to be authoritarian and, since teachers are appointed without the necessary qualifications and training in educational leadership, but on the basis of their classroom experience, they are likely to maintain the same style;
- The education system tends to be highly centralised and ‘top-down’,
- There are traditional notions of masculine leadership styles, “with strength, hierarchy and dominance being the paramount managerial model”.

According to Kandumbu (2005: 64), a democratic participative leadership model is commonly used in public schools in Namibia. At independence, the Ministry of Education, had realised that, in order to transform the education system in line with the four goals of access, equity, quality, and democracy, and to improve the quality of education, the collective participation of teachers, administrators and parents in the school decision-making process was critical (Kandumbu, 2005: 64). In this context, democratic participation, states Kandumbu (2005: 65-66), encourages possible social cooperation and trust among educators, administrators and the community to work together towards improving learners’ performance. Kandumbu (2005: 64) points out that democratic participative leadership also creates healthy and favourable relationships between the school and community. Moreover, a democratic participative leadership model is necessary because it helps to improve certain aspects of school management (Kandumbu, 2005: 64). Democratic participative leadership also develops responsibility, confidence and, problem solving and creates a friendlier

and more cooperative environment at the school. As part of the democratic participation process, asserts Kandumbu (2005: 64-66), school governing bodies are elected every three years, and in this process parents collaborate with teachers and administrators to develop and implement school improvement programmes. According to Kandumbu (2005: 67), bringing communities together, will motivate stakeholders to play an active role in school affairs. As a result, they may be able to encourage teachers and learners to work hard at improving learners' academic performance (Kandumbu, 2005: 67). According to Mabuku (2009: 1), bureaucratic and authoritarian leadership prior to independence had major implications for the administration and governance of schools. Mabuku (2009: 1) contends that the Namibian education system was deliberately designed to leave school managers, teachers and community members with little or no say in school affairs. At independence, the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (MBESC, 2001a) made provision through the Education Act, No. 16 of 2001 for the establishment of administrative structures such as regional education offices, circuit offices, regional education forums, school governing bodies, school management committees and learners representative councils to foster the new government's vision of a democratic society in Namibia (Mabuku, 2009: 2). This process was introduced in order to replace the old practices of autocratic decision-making processes in schools (Mabuku, 2009: 2). According to the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (MBESC, 2001b: 13):

“A democratic education system is organized around the broad participation in decision making[and its strategic plan] which calls for education managers in a school, at Head office or Regional office to base their leadership and management styles on a democratic principles, and to ensure that their educational programs are managed in a participatory and democratic styles”.

School leadership is central to learners' academic performance. The role of the school leader is to influence, convince, inspire and direct teachers towards the realisation of school goals. School leadership comes in different forms, for example, the leadership style required at school A, might not necessarily be applicable to school B, because of different contexts. Having reviewed the above leadership theories, it became evident that these theories are important to be used for this study, because they all may contribute to the academic performance of learners at schools. These

leadership theories are not synonymous but are interrelated and share some democratic principles or commonalities in which school leaders in formal positions may delegate and share responsibilities with all the stakeholders concerned and, as a result, maximise the human capacity within the organisation. In addition, these theories also focus on the sharing of best practices for teaching and learning, collaborative relationships between school leaders and staff members, shared vision for the school, democratic values and empowerment of teachers in building staff relationship and improve the academic performance of learners at school.

2.2 Challenges experienced by school leaders in Africa and Namibia.

According to Bush and Oduro (2006: 359), principals in Africa face a daunting challenge, because they are appointed without any leadership training and on the basis of their teaching record and qualification, rather than on their leadership potential. Induction and support are usually limited, hence principals have to adapt a pragmatic approach (Bush & Oduro, 2006: 359). This means, say Bush and Oduro (2006: 359), that most principals in Africa are appointed without the necessary training in leadership skills that will enable them to lead and manage schools successfully. Most governments in Africa, explains Bush (2013: 253), do not require principals to undertake leadership training before or after appointment has been made. The situation is not any different in Namibia, where the Ministry of Education does not require formal leadership training as a pre-condition for promoting teachers as heads of department or principals (MoE, 2006: 25). Consequently, argues Bush (2013: 253), appointing unprepared school leaders is damaging to both the appointees (that is, the principals) and the schools they serve.

Kitavi and Van der Westhuizen (1997: 251) point out that, entering school leadership is an emotion-laden situation, because the means by which most principals are selected, inducted and receive in-service training are ill-suited to the development of effective and efficient school leaders. In other words, the ways in which principals are appointed do not necessarily meet the requirements of the position. Most principals do not have the necessary skills, experience and qualities required to manage schools. As a result, state Kitavi and Van der Westhuizen (1997: 251), newly appointed principals are always confronted with many challenges because they are not able

to lead successfully. Given the fact that there is no formal requirement for promoting teachers to heads of department or principals throughout Africa, principals normally are appointed on the basis of a successful record as a teacher, with the implicit assumption that this will provide a sufficient starting point for school leadership (Kitavi & Van der Westhuizen, 1997: 251). For example, in Kenya, deputy principals as well as good assistant teachers are appointed to school leadership without any leadership training (Kitavi & Van der Westhuizen, 1997: 251). Therefore, say Kitavi and Van der Westhuizen (1997: 251-252), good teaching abilities are not necessarily an indication that the person will be a capable school leader. The same situation is also prevalent in Namibia, where a teacher may be appointed as a principal without the necessary leadership skills and experience, and with no induction and support (Kantema, 2001: 6). As a result, explain Kitavi and Van der Westhuizen (1997: 251-252), the newly appointed principal will not cope, but will be confronted with many pressing challenges and the school might not function as expected.

The month-long training workshop programmes that principals in Namibia are expected to attend are problematic. On the one hand, they are inadequate in addressing the numerous and diverse needs of the principals. On the other hand, principals are de-motivated, and do not see any value in attending the workshop programmes, since they lead neither to certification, nor a salary increase. Moreover, in most cases principals only attend a few days' workshops organised by the Ministry of Education through the regional education office. Any training is offered only after the appointment of the principal has already been made. This means that principals commence their new appointments, completely unprepared for their responsibilities. Bush and Heystek (2006: 365) recommend that leadership training for principals should take place before they start with their duties, and not afterwards, when they have already been compromised, and possibly made poor decisions.

According to Waghid (2002a: 95-97), the achievement of quality education in South African schools seems to be a major challenge in the sense that schools are influenced by factors such as race, poor resources, incompetent teaching, fragile learning environments, dysfunctionality and inefficient governance procedures. In addition, argues Waghid (2002a: 95-97), a lack of teacher motivation and teamwork, conflicting staff relations, time wasting, uncoordinated planning on the

part of the teachers, unruly learner behaviour and daily interruptions impede the implementation of school programmes. These are some of the challenges that continue to face schooling in South Africa, despite changes in policy and law. However, explains Waghid (2002a: 95-97), little attention has been paid to the issue of inter-school relations and how they might enhance the transformation project. According to Ngcobo (2012: 419), schools in South Africa are faced with numerous challenges, such as a lack of common understanding of the role of formal education for societal transformation; constant learner migration in search of schools; ill-prepared teachers; inadequate educational materials; and parental inaccessibility. These challenges create implementation insecurities, the rejection of proposed changes and false clarities. However, these challenges also have seen some school leaders either implementing the frameworks inappropriately or not at all. As such, says Ngcobo (2012: 419), there is a need for school leadership that has the capacity to help schools improve and cope successfully. While Waghid's description might be pertaining to South African schools, the situation in Namibia is not different.

Mushaandja (2006: 34) explains that secondary schools in Namibia are characterised by poor Grade 12 results, high absenteeism of both teachers and learners, late-coming, irregular attendance of classes and the absence of a culture of teaching and learning in some public schools. Although there is limited research on the situation in the Kavango Region, there is no reason to think that the situation in these schools is any different. According to the Ministry of Education (2006: 25), quality teaching and learning are not taking place in Namibia, particularly in the Kavango Region, because 25% of secondary school teachers are not formally qualified and those that are qualified lack the competencies critical to improved student learning. Moreover, states the Ministry of Education (2006: 25), accountability mechanisms are not well established or based on the competency and performance standards for schools. Principals are not empowered by the regional office or by the Ministry of Education (2006: 25) to hold underperforming teachers accountable for learners' poor academic performance. The Ministry of Education (2006: 25) reveals that targeted management assistance is not yet provided to poorly performing schools on how learners' performance should be addressed. Namwandi (2014a: 3) pointed out in a speech at a meeting with under-performing public school principals that the high failure rates in schools are attributed to a lack of school leadership training skills, the poor quality of teachers, a lack of commitment by

teachers to their works, a lack of discipline amongst teachers and learners, the absenteeism of both teachers and learners, the lack of parental involvement and community participation, and the lack of accountability of stakeholders in education.

2.3 Linking school leadership to learners' performance.

According to Hallinger and Heck (1998: 157), research has shown that, in order for a school to be effective, the principal has to have an indirect impact on school improvement and student achievement. Despite the fact that this indirect effect is relatively small, it is statistically significant and supports the general belief among school leaders that principals contribute indirectly to learners' academic performance. Moreover, schools that make a difference in student learning, explain Hallinger and Heck (1998: 158), are led by principals who make a measurable contribution to the effectiveness of the staff and in the learning of pupils in their charge. This implies that the principal has an influential role to play in creating an environment and circumstances conducive to teachers and learners to improve performance. Similarly, school leadership practices, state Hallinger and Heck (1998: 167), contribute indirectly to school outcomes, which are mediated by teachers' commitments, instructional practices and school culture. The principal, say Hallinger and Heck (1998: 176), plays a central role in providing support and guidance to teachers, by spending considerable time with them to develop professional human resources. Thus teachers are empowered to render effective teaching and learning to improve learners' performance in classroom practice (Hallinger & Heck, 1998: 176). In addition, establishing a clear school mission is a key avenue through which principals' influence student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998: 167-172). It is through this avenue that the principal shapes teachers' expectations and learners' opportunity to learn in schools.

Harris (2012: 14) argues that students' outcomes are more likely to improve when leadership sources are distributed throughout the school community and teachers are empowered in the areas of importance to them. Moreover, both teachers' and learners' morale improves if they are included and involved in the school decision-making process (Harris, 2012: 14). Distributing leadership to teachers, explains Harris (2012: 16), can support positive instructional change and, through this

process, a principal develops the leadership capabilities of teachers, hence contributing indirectly to student learning outcomes. According to Leithwood, Pattern and Jantzi (2010: 672), school leadership has an indirect influence on student learning that normally takes place through school goal-setting processes, the school culture, and decision-making processes, the provision of resources, teachers' commitment and attitudes towards change, instructional practices and an orderly environment. The literature revealed that there are three distinct "paths" in which school leadership influences the flow to improve student learning, namely rational, emotional and organisational paths (Leithwood *et al.*, 2010: 673).

The variables on the rational path, explain Leithwood *et al.* (2010: 674), are rooted in the teachers' knowledge and skills about teaching and learning. This implies that school leaders are expected to focus their attention on supporting teachers to provide students with immediate constructive feedback, applying various teaching strategies and managing classrooms effectively to improve learners' academic performance. The emotional path, clarify Leithwood *et al.* (2010: 675-677), encompasses the feelings, dispositions, or affective states of staff members, both individually and collectively, in relation to school-related matters. School leaders have the potential to influence teachers to develop their professional emotions and attitudes and encourage them to networking with other staff members facing similar challenges to learn from their experience. In addition, state Leithwood *et al.* (2010: 677), school leaders can improve teachers' emotions by promoting cooperation and collaboration among staff members on common goals; offering individualised support and respect to individual staff members; demonstrating concern about their personal feelings; maintaining an open-door policy; and valuing staff opinion. Goddard (2003,) (in Leithwood *et al.*, 2010: 678) argues that, when teacher-learner relationships are characterised by trust, academically supportive norms and social relations have the potential to move students towards academic success. Thus, state Leithwood *et al.* (2010: 678), school leadership is a critical contributor to trust among teachers, parents and learners. Principals engender trust among teachers and learners when they recognise and acknowledge their vulnerabilities and listen to their personal needs as soon as possible to reconcile them with a clear vision for the school.

Leithwood *et al.* (2010: 679-680) explain that the organisational path is represented by instructional time and professional learning communities. This means that the amount of time devoted to instruction has an effect on student learning progress. If instructional time is wasted, it will have a negative effect on learners' academic performance. Principals, they contend, should provide schedules and protect the time allocated for teachers to meet professional learning communities, guiding the goals and vision for professional development and providing other resources to allow professional learning communities to operate smoothly (Leithwood *et al.*, 2010: 680).

Foster (2005: 35) contends that competent administrators and teacher leadership contribute to school success. Therefore, states Foster (2005: 51), school leadership should be a choice open to all school members interested in participating in activities that support improved teaching and learning, and school success. Hallinger and Heck (2011: 7) argue that school leadership should focus on fostering conditions that support effective teaching and learning and that are oriented towards capacity building for professional learning and change. School leadership, they maintain, should also emphasise governance that empowers others and encourages broad participation in and responsibility for learners' academic performance. Moreover, school leadership, assert Hallinger and Heck (2011: 7), is proposed to achieve its effects on academic outcomes indirectly through building the school's professional capacity and by maintaining a focus on improvements in the teaching and learning processes. According to Kormla (2012: 14), a lack of school leadership in some schools lowers students' achievement, because the absence of quality leadership results in ill-adapted school organisation and programmes. In addition, Kormla (2012: 14) states that the absence of school leadership also leads to unstable and difficult staffing, students' negative attitudes towards academic achievement and, discipline, unhealthy systems and climate, and non-cooperation of parents and the community.

According to Hattie (2003: 4), literature on teachers' influences on students' learning and achievement in the U.S.A and New Zealand revealed that excellent teachers have the most powerful influence on learners' achievement. However, says Hattie (2003: 4), despite the teachers' role in students' academic achievement, effective principalship creates a climate of psychological

safety to learn. Effective leadership, states Hattie (2003: 4), influences a healthy school climate, which includes cultural responsiveness to enhancing efficient teaching through the expertise of the teacher and harnessing the students' prior knowledge for effective learning and achievement. In countries where traditional and local attitudes and customs show little respect for educational norms and regulations, the principal's committed instructional and managerial leadership becomes crucial for any effective teaching and learning to take place (Hattie, 2003: 4). Therefore, contends Hattie (2003: 4), the school cannot function without the commitment of either a principal or teachers. Leithwood *et al.* (2008: 29-30) say there are four categories of leadership practices that contribute to successful school leadership: building a vision and setting directions; understanding and developing teachers; redesigning the organisation; and managing the teaching and learning programmes:

- Building a vision and setting directions: This practice is aimed at building a shared vision that fosters the acceptance of group goals and demonstrates high performance expectations. It reflects on and adds to the functions of motivating and inspiring teachers, and clarifying school roles and objectives.
- Understanding and developing teachers: The primary aim of this practice is to enhance the knowledge and skills that teachers need to accomplish organisational goals, as well as the commitment, capacity and resilience that persist in applying the knowledge and skills.
- Redesigning the organisation: This is aimed at building collaborative cultures, restructuring the organisation, building productive relationship with parents and the community, and connecting the school to its wider environment. It also manages conflict and team building, delegating, consulting and networking.
- Managing the teaching and learning programmes: This practice aims at staffing the teaching programme, providing teaching support, monitoring school activities and buffering staff members against distractions from their work. It places a special emphasis on monitoring school activities as key to successful leaders' behaviours.

2.4 Linking school effectiveness to learners' performance.

According to Creemers and Reezigt (2005: 363), a possible link between school effectiveness and learners' performance may occur through the school development planning process. School effectiveness, state Creemers and Reezigt (2005: 363), focuses more on teaching and learning processes and on student learning outcomes in classroom practice. Learners' academic performance will not change if teachers do not take ownership of learners' achievement and have positive attitudes towards teaching and learning. Therefore, point out, Creemers and Reezigt (2005: 363-365), mechanisms should be in place to improve effective instruction in the classroom and the impact of curricula on learners' achievement. Creemers and Reezigt (2005: 364) say, the adaptability and continuity of school organisation and the commitment of teachers need to be treated as conditions that indirectly support school effectiveness in stimulating teachers to work towards improving the academic performance of learners at the school.

Kormla (2012: 11) explains that literature on effective schools describes the overall progress in learners' academic achievements as key measures of effective schools. An effective school, asserts Kormla (2012: 12), expects high academic standards for all students in a positive and caring atmosphere that sustains a culture in which effective teaching and learning flourish. Moreover, says Kormla (2012: 12-13), what makes one school effective might not necessarily hold across other schools, and most schools may manifest specific aspects of effectiveness and yet lack in others. Thus, learners' performance is an internal learning strategy that enhances learning processes to improve learning outcomes. Kormla (2012: 13) clarifies that the difference is that literature on school effectiveness focuses on the characteristics of an effective school, while literature on learners' performance emphasises the existence of internal learning processes aimed at improving learners' academic performance. Taylor (2009: 341) points out that significant school improvement are possible when capacity-building elements are combined with accountability measures. Capacity building, states Taylor (2009: 342-343), provides teachers and school leaders with the means to meet the standards. A school that exhibits relatively high levels of internal accountability has a well-developed approach to curriculum and pedagogy, characterised by routine grade level and content that focus on discussions of instructional practice and student performance (Taylor, 2009: 344). Internal accountability, says Taylor (2009: 344), is the degree

of coherence in the school around norms, values, expectations and processes for having the work done. These are the practices that effective schools use to improve learners' academic performance (Taylor, 2009: 344).

Hallinger and Heck (2011: 5) point out that successful schools engage in intentional strategies and actions to improve learning environments and teaching practices. Factors at school, assert Hallinger and Heck (2011: 6), have both direct and indirect effects on student's achievement. They are not only affecting the learners' academic performance directly or indirectly, but have a negative impact on the composition of the classroom as well as on the teaching and learning processes. Effective schools say Hallinger and Heck (2011: 13-14), clearly communicate goals to the staff, parents and students that translate the school vision and mission into appropriate educational programmes. Teachers expect a high quality work and school environment, which support teaching and learning. According to Kormla (2012: 11), the literature reveals that the attainment of educational excellence, through students' mastery of skills and the art of independent and creative thinking is the hallmark of an effective school. In addition, argues Kormla (2012: 12), the overall educational progress of students, through the promotion of students' academic performance, intellectual, vocational, cultural and personal development, is a key measure of school effectiveness. Despite scholarly emphasis on characteristics and mechanisms for improving and sustaining effective schools in order to promote high achievement by students, Christie (2008: 17, citing the Coleman Report, 1996) points out that students' personal and family characteristics are the overriding influence on their performance at schools. This means, that the social background of a student has a great influence on his/her academic performance. Moreover, according to the Coleman Report (1966: 325, in Christie, 2008: 17), the school has a limited influence on a child's achievement that is independent of his/her background and the social world. This means that the inequalities imposed on children by their families, neighbourhood and peers in their community are carried along to school and reproduce inequalities that students will be confronted with in their adult life. To this end, the school alone has little influence on the student's achievement at school (Christie, 2008: 17).

According to Nyagosia, Waweru and, Njuguna (2013: 175), research on effective schools has shown that there are particular characteristics that, successful schools share. These are: strong instructional leadership; a clear and focused mission; a safe and orderly school; a climate of high expectations for success; regular monitoring of student progress; positive home-school relations; and opportunity to learn. Instructional leadership, explain Nyagosia *et al.* (2013: 175), means that school leaders should focus on visiting teachers to monitor teaching and learning processes, and hold staff appraisal meetings to discuss strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for academic improvement. An effective school vision and mission, they continue, has a clearly articulated mission through which staff members share an understanding of and commitment to instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures and accountability. According to Nyagosia *et al.* (2013: 176), an effective school promotes safety and orderliness and is free from physical harm, and teachers and learners are treated with respect and dignity. High expectations for success are maintained when teachers demonstrate that all students have the potential to master basic competencies, and where students' progress is monitored regularly (Nyagosia *et al.*, 2013: 176). Moreover, state Nyagosia *et al.* (2013: 177), an effective school creates an environment in which parents encourage their children to learn. As such, parents become more involved in their children's education at school and in the community, and learners are more likely to do well academically. Finally, students should be provided with an opportunity to learn through schools providing adequate learning materials and the time necessary for effective instruction (Nyagosia *et al.*, 2013: 177).

According to Nekaro (2001: 18), research studies on effective and ineffective schools reveal some systematic and predictable differences. Effective schools' instructional practices, are more aligned with and the work of the teachers is focused on school goals. School leaders make greater demands on students and their policies and practices reduce the influence on the social environment. Teachers who expect much from learners, motivate them to work hard and do their best in their school activities (Nekaro, 2001: 18), while, Park (2005: 465) argues that learners who are taught by less committed and demotivated teachers, tend to develop poor work commitment towards performing their responsibilities. Levin and Lockheed (1993,) (in Nekaro, 2001: 19) note that school effectiveness research that has gained popularity in developed countries seems not to work

well in underdeveloped countries, because some developing countries lack the basic minimum inputs necessary for the functioning of the school, while developed countries are adequately provisioned. Christie (1997) produced a list of effective school characteristics based on 400 studies in the United States. These encompass the following:

- Productive school climate and culture;
- Focus on student acquisition of central learning skills;
- Appropriate monitoring of student progress;
- Practice-oriented staff development at the school site;
- Good leadership;
- Parental involvement;
- Effective instructional arrangement and implementation;
- High operationalised expectations and requirements for students; and
- Ongoing recognition of academic excellence.

Christie (1997) notes that there are important qualities that influence students' achievement in some underdeveloped countries, such as the effects of the school's social organisation, the quality of teachers, and; material factors like textbooks and writing materials.

Hattie (2009) places more emphasis on the role played by teachers and students, than on that of the principals in improving teaching and learning and achieving good learning outcomes. He points out that teacher-learner relationship and responsibilities are central to changes that boost the efforts of the principals in improving teaching and learning and sustaining learners' achievements.

2.5 Description of challenges experienced in school leadership in relation to learners' performance in the Kavango Region.

According to Kantema (2001: 109), literature on the Kavango Region reveals that very few principals receive in-service training in school leadership. Principals only attend one or two weeks of training workshops organised by the regional office, which is not sufficient and has less impact

on the leadership of the principal. These workshops normally take place after their appointment has been made, leaving the newly appointed principals unprepared for their responsibilities. As a result, argues Kantema (2001: 109), principals are not able to support and guide teachers to improve learners' academic performance.

According to the Director of Education for the Kavango Region (Dikuua, 2009), secondary school performance has been poor in the Kavango Region for the past twenty years due to the following factors: school leaders are not monitoring learners' academic performance through regular classroom observations to support and guide teachers to enhance students' learning outcomes; and parents are not involved in the education of children by encouraging them to attend school regularly and do assigned school activities. Moreover, states Dikuua (2009), the absenteeism of both teachers and learners is challenging, because the majority of learners live in absolute poverty and struggle to attend school due to hunger, while many teachers engage in private commitments apart from their professional jobs. Teachers demonstrate poor work commitment by reporting late for their classes, or leaving learners unattended. Furthermore, principals and teachers are always dealing with disciplinary issues at school, compounded by various social factors such as fighting, carrying unauthorised items, drug use and alcohol abuse (Dikuua, 2009). Dikuua (2009) says, these attitudes have a negative impact on learners' performance. According to Goagoses (2012), teachers are frequently absent from school for three to five days, especially on Mondays and Fridays, and at times, without permission or notification. When they report back to school, they furnish the principal with medical certificates claiming that they were booked off sick. Consequently, explains Goagoses (2012), valuable teaching and learning is lost in the process.

According to Kandumbu (2005: 4), Namibia faces the problem of a scarcity of well-qualified teachers in the field of Mathematics, Physical Science, Biology and English. This means, that a similar situation prevails in the Kavango Region, where some of the secondary schools have a shortage of qualified teachers. The Education Management System [EMIS] statistics for 2012 indicate that Namibia has about 24 660 teachers, of whom 1 208 are unqualified and, 3 000 are under-qualified, and the Kavango Region is affected the most, with 2 876 teachers of whom 210 are unqualified and 104 are under-qualified (MoE, 2013c). Shortages of qualified teachers, coupled

with inadequately qualified teachers, result in poor academic performance by learners (Kandumbu, 2005: 4).

In analysing the poor Grade 12 results nationally between 2011 and 2013, Raimo (2014) contends that these poor results can be attributed to improper management structures at some schools; a lack of facilities; undisciplined learners; teachers who are ill-prepared to assume responsibilities for teaching; and the mushrooming of shebeens close to schools in townships and villages, which disturbs and distracts learners during the night. Moreover, the poor academic performance of learners is also characterised by a lack of motivation among learners to study and do their school activities; overcrowded classrooms that impede teaching and learning processes; low teaching standards; the poor diet of learners and the economic status of their parents; and parents who are not doing enough to support children to foster high academic performance (Raimo, 2014). Namwandi (2014b), addressing inspectors of education at Rundu in the Kavango Region, pointed out that some school inspectors do not carry out substantive school visits to guide and support principals to manage schools successfully. Inspectors of education are not monitoring principals to ensure that ministerial policies, rules and regulations are fully implemented. In addition, Namwandi (2014b) reported, that some teachers and principals were absent from schools without permission under the pretext that they were carrying out official duties in town.

This chapter has provided an overview of global and African understandings of school leadership. It has also discussed the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance in schools. In discussing the relationship between school effectiveness and learners' performance, the chapter has described the challenges experienced in school leadership in relation to learners' performance in the Kavango Region. Furthermore, this chapter has made it apparent that there is a dearth of literature that explores the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance in the Kavango Region of, Namibia – thereby clarifying the necessity of this particular research study. The next chapter offers an overview of the research design and methodology with an emphasis on why the chosen research design is the most appropriate for understanding the relationship between school leadership and learners' performance at the four selected secondary schools.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Firstly, this chapter presents the research questions. Secondly it offers an overview of the research design and methodology for investigating the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance at four secondary schools in the Rundu Circuit in the Kavango Region, Namibia. Thirdly, the chapter explains the case study as an appropriate approach for the study. Fourthly, it discusses the data construction methods, sampling and positionality, as well as descriptions of the four schools and their respective contexts, the learners, as well as the four principals, who served as the focus group of this study. Fifthly, it discusses reliability and trustworthiness, and data analysis of the study. The chapter concludes with a brief look at the ethical considerations of the study.

3.1 Research questions

This study aims to investigate the relationship between school leadership and learners' performance at four secondary schools in the Kavango region of Namibia in order to gain in understanding how school leadership contributes or not to the learners' academic performance in schools. The main focus of concern is that for the past three years the academic performance of grade 12 learners at the four case study schools have significantly declined which the researcher contends that it could have been contributed to lack of leadership training of the principals which might affect how they manage and lead their respective schools. Therefore, in achieving the research aim, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the challenges of school leaders in terms of learners' performance at school?
2. What leadership styles are practised at the schools?
3. How does school leadership affect learners' academic performance at school?
4. What can school leaders do to make a difference in learners' performance at school?

3.2 Research design

According to Mouton (2001: 55), a research design is a plan of how the research is intended to be conducted. Similarly, Creswell (2009: 5) asserts that the research design is a plan that involves the intersection of the philosophical world-views, approaches of inquiry and specific methods to be employed to direct the research under investigation. Given the nature of this study, a qualitative research design within the interpretive paradigm was employed. The researcher sought to gain an understanding of the experiences of the principals and their leadership practices in relation to learners' performance. According to Merriam (1998: 5), qualitative research seeks to explain and understand social phenomena within their natural setting. In terms of this study, the researcher constructed empirical evidence to gain an understanding of the relationship between school leadership and learners' performance at four selected secondary schools in the Kavango Region, Namibia. These schools were selected on the basis of their results in the national examinations of 2011 to 2013 (MoE, 2013d), as well as their geographical proximity. Qualitative research, states Creswell (2009: 4), is a means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or a group of people ascribe to a social or human problem. Creswell (2009: 4) explains that it involves data constructed in the participants' setting; data analysis that builds from particulars to general themes; and the researcher having to interpret the data. In addition, says Merriam (1998: 5), qualitative research usually involves fieldwork, which requires the physical presence of the researcher. In this regard, the researcher conducted interviews and observed the daily practices of the four principals in order to gain insight into their experiences, and their understanding of how school leadership contributes (or not) to learners' performance. By interviewing and observing the principals, the researcher was given access to their daily routines, their challenges, their leadership styles and, in terms of the specific focus of this study, their practices in attempting to improve the performances of learners.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2006: 273), qualitative research seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of individual experiences. It provides an in-depth understanding of the issues at

stake. In a qualitative study, participants are encouraged during interviews to express their views and opinions on a particular topic relating to the research question. Babbie and Mouton (2006: 273) explain that the main aim of qualitative research is to gain an understanding of a particular phenomenon in its real-world context. In this study, qualitative research was employed to gain an understanding of how school leadership contributes to learners' academic performance. Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004: 5) describe qualitative research as using an approach that accommodates a wide range of different views. This research allows participants to express their views in an open-ended way. Patton (2002) notes that qualitative research acknowledges that participants know themselves best and can describe, interpret and discuss their own experiences and environment from their own perspective. Only by obtaining in-depth information on the principals' experiences can these leadership practices that affect learners' academic performance be clarified and understood. In addition, Creswell (1998: 15) states that, in qualitative research, the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports the detailed views of the respondents and conducts the study in a natural setting. Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 3) state that:

“Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations that includes, interviews, conversations, photographs and recordings. It also involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach to the world”.

School leadership and learners' performance are situated social practices that seek to understand the dynamics that surround these practices. As such, the researcher needs a research methodology that captures the lived experiences of the principals. Thus, the focus was on the principals' interpretation of their own social reality in a given situation. Chilisa and Preece (2005: 142) point out that qualitative research is value laden and context based. Similarly, Clarke (2008: 2) notes that qualitative research is underpinned by an interpretivist theoretical paradigm that is context based, rather than universal. It offers a more holistic approach by taking into account people's experiences, insights, and perspectives, and by studying them in the setting within which they occur. Moreover, Ellis and Bochner (2000: 743) argue that qualitative research is a means of gaining an insider's perspective as human beings communicating to each

other's. The research can be of benefit when an already established relationship exists, and provides an opportunity to gain easy access to the principals of the selected secondary schools in constructing information that might not be entrusted to a stranger. In this regard, the study was conducted in the Rundu Circuit, where the researcher also is a principal, and enjoys a good professional relationship with the principals from the selected schools. This is an important aspect of the study, since the participants trusted and felt comfortable with the researcher to share what might be considered sensitive information. It therefore was easy to communicate with the principals and to gain access to the data required for this study.

Qualitative research is a credible methodology in constructing meaning from the perspectives of the actors, that is, the research participants (Flick, 2009; Huberman and Miles, 2002,) (in Kormla, 2012: 29). As explained by Marshall and Rossman (2006,) (in Kormla, 2012: 29), "Human actions are significantly influenced by the setting in which they occur" Human experiences cannot be understood, unless the meaning those humans assigned to them is understood. What people experience, and how they interpret those experiences, are the objectives of qualitative methodology (Patton, 2002,) (in Kormla, 2012: 29). Mertens (2005: 233) states that undertaking qualitative research is linked to the research question and to the study that is to be conducted. Hollaway and Jefferson (2000) suggest that qualitative research focuses on finding out not only what happens, but also how it happens. According to Halcomb and Davidson (2006: 39), qualitative research focuses on the exploration of values, meanings, beliefs, thoughts, experiences and feelings characteristic of the phenomenon under investigation. However, Anderson and Arsenault (2001: 133) point out that qualitative research has limitations: different researchers might not obtain the same results, as there always is more than one valid view of any social situation; the reliability of the participants' information and their relationship with the researcher might make the interpretation of the data less reliable; quality research is related to the skills of the researcher, thus the understanding and interpretation of the data are influenced by the level of those skills; and the internal validity of the study depends on the "audit trail". Hence, state Anderson and Arsenault (2001: 133) that researchers should be able to keep record of the data that will be used to analyse and draw conclusions as constructed.

Mantlana (2006: 123) views qualitative research as an object of the study of the world as defined, experienced or constituted by investigating people; the method of data construction as open, flexible and not strictly regimented and rigid; the representation of data as non-numerical; data construction and analysis as a cyclical relation; and says that one can stop gathering data when new data do not add new information on the research problem. In addition, continues Mantlana, qualitative research is 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 that individual; qualitative research as the study of phenomena in their natural settings; and the world as experienced by individual in a “natural language”, thereby creating the conditions for an “open” discussion. As a research method, qualitative research has helped this researcher to understand the leadership styles and practices that school leaders embrace at schools and that have an impact on learners’ academic performance.

3.3 Methodology

Methodology is the knowledge and the interpretive framework guiding a particular research project (Harding, 1987, in Le Grange, 2009: 4). Le Grange (2009: 4) states that methodology is a philosophical framework that guides the research activity. It involves a consideration of the research design, data production, data analysis and theorising, together with the social, ethical and political concerns of the social researcher. Moreover, Hopkins and Antes (in Kandumbu, 2005: 30) state that methodology is part of the overall plan that structures specific procedures about what, or who will supply the data, how the data will be obtained and how it will be analysed. Therefore, it is important to regard research methodology as a road map of how the intended study will be conducted and how the data will be generated.

An interpretive paradigm has been employed in this study. Mertens (2005: 7) asserts that a paradigm is a way of looking at the world that is composed of certain philosophical assumptions that guide and direct human thinking and action. For Connole (1998: 17), interpretive inquiry is aimed at discovering the meanings and beliefs that underlie the actions of others. The interpretivist approaches to the study have the intention of understanding “the world of human experience”

(Cohen & Manion, in Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006: 3). According to Waghid (2002b: 46-47), the two pivotal issues within the interpretive framework are the self-understanding of the individual as the basis for all social interpretations, and that human consciousness remains transparent. This implies that human explanations, as they appear, do not conceal any deeper understanding of events. The theory emphasises that analysis involves more than observation. Kandumbu (2005: 33-34) explains that interpretive theory is the rational articulation of meaning in a clear, lucid and coherent manner. Thus, the theory involved gives reasons for why things are happening the way they are. But these reasons are not just haphazard without any form of consistency in their articulation. Reasons are justified according to logical and systematic explanations. The point about understanding human action, explains Kandumbu (2005: 33-34), is not that events and human actions are explained according to what is observed. Instead, events and human actions are explained according to rationality - that is informed opinion, insight and understanding. In addition, an interpretive theory attempts to uncover the sense of a given action, practice or constitutive meaning. Kandumbu (2005: 34) continues that this is done to elucidate the basic conceptual scheme that orders experiences in ways such that the practices and actions fit into a whole structure of human life. Hence, interpretive theory is more appropriate to the understanding of the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance at the four secondary schools in the Rundu Circuit.

Maree (2007:58) asserts that the interpretive framework encompasses the study of theory and practice that attempts to explain phenomena in terms of the meaning that people make of them. The adoption of this approach is useful for capturing elements of the lived experience of participants in order to decode meaning in relation to understanding the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance in schools. In addition, state Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000: 22), the central point in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience in order to retain the integrity of the phenomenon being investigated. However, explain Cohen *et al.* (2000: 27), the interpretive paradigm has been criticised for having become hermeneutically sealed from the world outside the participants' activity. Its subjective reports are at some points incomplete and misleading. Despite criticism, Cohen *et al.* (2000: 27) maintain that there still are certain ways of reducing validity

threats, such as through triangulation and member-checking. Hence, the interpretive paradigm continues to be used for educational research (Cohen *et al.*, 2000: 27). As this study endeavoured to understand the relationship between school leadership and learners' performance at four secondary schools, an interpretivist approach was central. Studying the participants in their natural setting, expressing their views about leadership styles and practices being used at the schools in which they find themselves, ultimately places this study within an interpretivist research paradigm (Henning, 2004: 21). Therefore, on the basis of an interpretive approach, the researcher attempted to gain entry into the field to explore the experiences of secondary school principals in order to understand and interpret their role and function in relation to learners' performance.

3.4 Case study approach

In answering the main research question, a qualitative case study research was adopted. According to Thomas (2011: 3) a case study is a research that concentrates more on one particular phenomenon in 'real-life' context by looking at it in more details without any generalisation. Its primary purpose, states Thomas (2011:10) is to gain in-depth understanding of a specific topic in order to generate knowledge to inform curriculum implementers. Yin (2003:280) defines a case study research as a careful study of social unit that attempts to investigate a contemporal phenomenon within its' real-life' context. In this context, school leadership in relation to learners' academic performance is a social contemporal phenomenon in the Kavango Region of Namibia. Therefore, the researcher believes that he has studied the social phenomenon within its real- life context and gained the insights into the experiences and practices of the principals of how school leadership contributes or not to learners' academic performance.

3.5 Data construction methods

The researcher used three data construction methods: observation, semi-structured interviews and document analysis as primary tools to construct data for this study in order to address research questions. According to Murray and Hughes (2008: 148), data construction methods refer to the various ways in which data are constructed and analysed. Murray and Hughes (2008: 148) explain that these comprise of listening to the subjects, observing what people do and say, and examining

documents that human beings have constructed. This study was guided by a qualitative research method. A qualitative research method, states Cresswell (1998), involves a process of analysis to understand the different methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. Data were constructed through observation and interviews with each of the four principals, as well as the examination of the Grade 12 learner results from 2011 to 2013. Asking the principals about their understanding of school leadership and the leadership styles being practised at the schools, gave the researcher an understanding of the type of leadership styles and practices being used in relation to learner performance.

3.5.1 Observation

In terms of the study, the researcher spent one week at each of the research schools. Four days were used attending management and staff morning briefings to observe each of the four principals in their daily routines, while paying special attention to any policies, procedures or practices that related to the learners' performance. A school observation schedule was designed which contained descriptions of different leadership practices being practised at the schools. Spaces were provided on the observation schedules to note and tick the practices observed. The researcher also attended morning assemblies to observe the interaction between principals, teachers and learners. The four-day observations at each of the four schools offered particular insights into the intricacies of school practices and leadership. The observation was aimed at looking at people, events, behaviour, settings, artefacts, symbols, ceremonies and, routines and taking systematic notice of relevant aspects (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Simpson & Tuson, 2003: 2). Similarly, Maxwell (2005: 94) claims that observation enables the researcher to draw inferences about the perspectives that cannot be obtained by relying exclusively on interview data. He says that this is particularly essential for gaining an understanding of the aspects of the participants' perspectives that they might be reluctant to reveal directly during the interview. The advantage of observation, states Maxwell (2005: 94), is that the researcher looks directly at what is taking place, rather than relying on second-hand accounts. For Cohen, Manion, Morrison (2011: 456), observation has the potential to yield more valid or authentic data than would otherwise be the case with mediated or inferential methods. In addition, the distinctive feature of observation as a research process offers the researcher an opportunity to construct 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations. What

people do may differ from what they say, and observation provides a reality check; it also enables the researcher to look afresh at everyday behaviour that might be taken for granted (Cooper & Schindler, (2001,) in Cohen et al., 2011: 456). On the other hand, asserts Bailey (1994,) (in Cohen et al., (2011: 457), there also are disadvantages associated with observation, such as a lack of control in observing the natural setting, which may render observation less useful, coupled with difficulties in measurement, gaining access and negotiating entry, and maintaining anonymity. What counts as “evidence”, explain Cohen et al. (2011: 465), becomes cloudy in observation, because what is observed depends on when and, where, the duration of the observation, and the number of observers involved. Observation is prone to bias – in terms of what, why, when, who and how the observer is observing. Therefore, state Cohen et al. (2011: 459), caution needs be exercised when constructing data through observation.

3.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001: 262), an interview is a conversation between a researcher and a respondent. It is a conversation in which the researcher wants to get particular information from the respondent and thus has designed questions to be answered. Similarly, Punch (2009: 144) states that the interview is the most prominent data construction tool in qualitative research and that it provides a very good way for accessing people’s perceptions and meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality. It is the most powerful way of understanding others. Moreover, the main reason for using interviews is to obtain in-depth data from the participants’ (principals) in relation to their understandings of leadership, and how this might relate to learners’ performance. The qualitative research method has four ways of constructing data, namely structured, semi-structured, unstructured and focus group interviews. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used semi-structured techniques. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005) assert that a semi-structured interview is used to gain a more detailed picture about the participant’s beliefs on and perceptions of a particular topic. Similarly, Cohen et al. (2000: 278) emphasise that a semi-structured interview has advantages: the framing of questions for a semi-structured interview considers prompts and probes. Prompts enable the interviewer to clarify topics or questions, whilst probes enable the interviewer to ask respondents to extend, elaborate, add, provide details, and clarify responses. Thus, addressing richness, depth of responses,

comprehensiveness and honesty are the hallmarks of successful interviews (Cohen et al., 2000: 278). According to Bertram (2004: 88), the interview is a good method to use for gaining in-depth data from a small number of people. The interviews were conducted on the last day in the afternoons in consultations with the participants (principals) in ensuring that their daily routines should not be interrupted. The interviews were conducted to build on from the observation and to obtain in-depth data about the principals' understandings of their leadership, styles and practices in relation to learners' academic performance. The researcher used interview schedules which were given to each participant before the interviews were conducted in order to prepare in advance for the interviews. The interview conversations were tape-recorded with the consent from each participant. Each interview discussions were transcribed and thereafter, the transcriptions were given to each participant for member check in ensuring that the data constructed were validated.

3.5.3 Document analysis

Grade 12 marks the end of secondary education and serves as an entry point to either tertiary education, or employment. These results are not only perceived to provide commentary on the state of education in Namibia, but also are used to determine the level of 'performance' or 'non-performance' of a school. The Ministry of Education views them as a culmination of the country's schooling system, and attaches a lot of attention to schools that are viewed as having achieved academically, and those that have not. The classification of schools into 'performing' and 'under-performing' schools is determined by an average 50% pass rate. Schools that achieve a pass rate of below 50% are classified as "under-performing" (Namwandi, 2014a: 2). The only criterion for this classification is that of the matric pass rate. Once schools have been classified as 'under-performing', teachers are expected to identify problem areas in their subjects in which they are given regular support and guidance by the advisory teachers to improve their teaching and learning practices. The researcher used the Grade 12 results to select schools to participate in the study on the basis of the regional statistics of the results of the national examinations of 2011 to 2013; two schools, C and D are considered as 'performing' schools, while the other two, A and B are considered to be 'under-performing' (MoE, 2013d). Merriam (2001: 126) emphasises that documentary data are particularly good sources for qualitative case studies, because they ground an investigation in the context of the problem being investigated. Patton (2002: 307) summarises

the importance of document analysis as follows: “Document analysis provides a behind-the-scene look at the program that may not be directly observable and about which the interviewer might not ask appropriate question without the leads provided through documents”.

McMillan and Schumacher (1997) and Patton (2002) are of the view that document analysis is more effective if used collectively with other data construction instruments. Moreover, Patton (2002: 307) stresses the importance of combining documents with interviews and observations: “But the documentation would have made sense without the interviews and the focus of the interviews came from the field observation. Taken together, these diverse sources of information and data would give us a complete picture”.

According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003) (in Strydom & Delpont, 2011: 377), documentary examination involves the study of existing documents that enables the researcher to understand the substantive content of the data or to illuminate deeper meanings that may be revealed by their style or coverage. If documents are examined for educational research purposes, the method of document examination as a data construction method becomes operative. This is particularly useful where human experience has relevance and where events or experiences cannot be studied by direct observation or interviews (Ritchie & Lewis, (2003) (in Strydom & Delpont, 2011: 377). According to Strydom and Delpont (2011: 382), one of the basic advantages of document examination is the fact that it is the only method in which the researcher does not need to make personal contact with the respondent. As with all data construction methods, explain Strydom and Delpont (2011: 382-383), document examination also has disadvantages, as some documents might be incomplete, because they have gaps that cannot be filled in any other way; there also are factors that may influence their objectivity; and at times, some documents are not available, because records were not kept, or data were classified as inaccessible for security reasons. As a result, it becomes difficult or impossible to compare data, because information contained in some documents may be lacking (Strydom & Delpont, 2011: 382-383). Given the dual focus on school leadership in relation to learners’ academic performance, the researcher examined Grade 12 learners’ results analysis for the past three years (2011-2013) of each research school, documents on the Kavango regional statistics results 2011-2013, Directorate of National Examination and

Assessment (DNEA) statistics results (2011-2013), Subjects analysis of each school, and Report on the possible causes of poor performance of learners in Namibian schools 2012(MoE, 2012). The examinations of the above documents gave the researcher an understanding as how the four research schools grade 12 learners performed for the past three years.

3.6 Sampling and positionality

According to Maree (2007: 79), sampling refers to the process that is used to select a portion of a population for the study. Qualitative study generally is based on non-probability and purposeful sampling, rather than probability or random sampling approaches. In addition, Maree (2007), and Anderson, Herr and Nihlen (2007) agree that purposeful sampling means that participants are selected in terms of their relevance to the research question, and certain characteristics that make them holders of the data needed for the study. Moreover, in any case study, specific boundaries have to be provided in determining who is to be studied and in what settings (Berg, 2001; Flick, 2009; Stake, 2000,) (in Kormla, 2012: 30).

This study was conducted in the Kavango Region, which is administered by the Kavango Regional Council, Directorate of Education. It has sixteen senior secondary schools, of which two are private schools and fourteen are public schools. The region is divided into eleven circuit offices. The study was conducted in the Rundu Circuit. Four secondary schools were selected for this study, because it is non-random, purposeful and manageable sample. Schools were selected on the basis of their geographic proximity to one another and on the basis of the regional statistics pertaining to the results of the national examinations from 2011 to 2013, in which two schools, C and D were considered as ‘performing’, while the other two, A and B were considered ‘non-performing’ (MoE, 2013d). All four schools offer Grades 8 to 12 and they are referred to in the study as school A, B, C and D respectively, while each of the principals is presented as Principal 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. The researcher is a principal in the same circuit and enjoys a good professional relationship with the principals from the selected schools. Thus, it was easy to communicate with the respondents and gain access to the required data. Although the researcher was also a principal, he came to the research schools as an independent researcher, rather than a principal of a certain

school and did not use his position to influence any response given by participants. To avoid bias and subjectivity the researcher listened attentively to all responses without any sign of personal feeling or disagreement to any response during the interview sessions and participants were informed beforehand that there are no wrong or correct answers in these interviews. I assured the participants that the data collected will not be disclosed to the third party.

3.7 Data analysis

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:213) explain data analysis as a process of describing data in a meaningful way. While Merriam (1998) describes data analysis as a process of making sense of the data and the interpretation of what people have said on a particular phenomenon through various research methods. This implies that it is a process of making meaning of what have been said by participants. It is a careful examination of data to understand its meaning of the data that has been generated through different data collection techniques. In this regards, data analysis was an ongoing process for this case study. The process started when I was transcribing data that emerged through interviews. I listened comprehensively and carefully to the tape recorded interviews from the four participants to make sense of their responses in regard to the school leadership practices in relation to learners' performance in ensuring that research questions are answered. As I listened, I took notes and grouped all responses from the participants and summarised them accordingly. Thereafter, the data constructed from interviews were checked against the data that was collected through observations and documents to ensure that they complement each other's and that they are in line with the research questions.

The next process involved data coding. Maxwell (2005:96) explains that coding is "to fracture and re-arrange the data into themes or categories that facilitates the process of comparing or organising patterns in the same category which aids the development of concepts". In this case, I compared and organised data from interviews, observations and documents to develop categories and sub-categories which were presented in chapter 4 as guided by the research questions.

3.8 Descriptions of schools, learners and participants

School A is a public secondary school that opened its doors in 2001. It is located in the inner city of Rundu. Most of the learners are from the surrounding working class communities. The school has a total of 710 learners, with 25 teachers; 14 women and 11 men. The school has had an acting principal for four years. The principal is a qualified teacher with a four-year post graduate diploma in education. She also has an African Leadership Institute (ALI) training workshop certificate in school leadership.

School B is a public secondary school and hostel that opened its doors in 1967 with 39 learners and three teachers. It was the first secondary school in the Kavango Region. It is located in the centre of Rundu, neighbouring schools A and C. It accommodates learners from rural and urban areas. Its current enrolment is 1 180 learners with 43 teachers. The school is led by a female principal with six years' experience as principal. She is a qualified teacher with an educational management diploma in mathematics, and an African Leadership Institute training workshop certificate in school leadership.

School C is also a public secondary school and hostel established in 1978. It is located in the centre of Rundu, close to school B. It mostly accommodates learners from the surrounding rural and working class communities. The school has 1 206 learners and 35 teachers. The principal is a woman with one years' experience as a principal. She is a qualified teacher with a diploma in higher education (secondary). She also has a training workshop certificate in instructional leadership development, a programme offered by the Ministry of Education.

School D is a public secondary school that opened its doors in 1970. It is located in the inner city of Rundu. It enrolls learners from middle and working class communities. The total learners' enrolment is 1 065, with 31 teachers. The principal is a woman with four years' experience as a principal. She is a qualified teacher with a four-year higher education diploma, as well as an African Leadership Institute training workshop certificate in school leadership.

In this study, the researcher observed that the four selected schools had daily routines that ran from 7:00 to 13:00. All four schools offered Grades 8 to 12 and provided the same government curriculum, in which learners are expected to take different subjects. Grades 8 to 10 have nine subjects, including English, while Grades 11 to 12 offer six subjects, including English, and have three fields of study: mathematics and physical science, commerce and social science. In the afternoon, each school has its own programme of providing extra learning support to learners through extra classes, remedial teaching, and extra-curricular activities. The researcher also observed that all four selected schools normally have extra classes in the afternoons with Grades 10 and 12 in which teachers assist learners to complete the syllabus on time in preparation for the year-end national exams.

One of the social challenges experienced by the learners in the Kavango Region is the high drop-out rates, especially due to pregnancy among girls. In most cases, pregnant learners leave schools for months and, when they come back, they are not able to catch up with what was taught in their absence. Moreover, some learners drop-out, because they live in absolute poverty and struggle to attend school due to hunger. In addition, the communities where these learners come from are surrounded by shebeens. Shebeens create a challenge to schools in the sense that they disturb learners' attention from concentrating on their school work. They also have implications such as the learners being forced to consume alcohol and indulge in social evils, which in turn have an effect, on their academic performance.

The principals of the four selected schools were qualified teachers with teaching qualifications. They were appointed as principals on the basis of their experience as teachers or as heads of department. None of the four principals had a formal qualification in school leadership. There is no school leadership training in Namibia. However, the Ministry of Education, through the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), has contracted the African Leadership Institute (ALI) to train inspectors of education and principals in all regions of Namibia in the areas of leadership and management (MoE, 2013a: 1). This has meant that the Ministry of Education provides one- or two-week workshops in instructional school leadership training for which principals receive training workshop certificates upon completion. These leadership training workshops are currently

on offer to all principals in Namibia. Another interesting aspect of this study is that all four principals were women. It was not my intention to deliberately seek out female principals. The schools were selected on the basis of their geographic proximity to one another and on the basis of the regional statistics in the results of the national examinations of 2011 to 2013 (MoE, 2013d). The fact that all four principals were women is a coincidence. Female principals are common in Namibia; the Rundu Circuit has 27 principals, of which 17 (60%) are women, while 11 (40%) are men. These principals are respected and perceived to have good leadership qualities because they have love, compassion and empathy for their duties.

3.9 Reliability and trustworthiness of data

According to Cohen *et al.* (2011: 199), reliability is a synonym of dependability, consistency and replicability of time, instruments and groups of respondents and is concerned with precision and accuracy. For research to be reliable, explain Cohen *et al.* (2011: 199), it must demonstrate that if it were to be carried out by a similar group of respondents in a similar context, the same results would be found. With regard to qualitative research, Bogdan and Biklen (1992, cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2011: 202), state that reliability may be regarded as a fit between what researchers' record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched. Silverman (2010: 282) explains that reliability refers to the degree of consistency by which instances are assigned to the same category by different or the same observers in which the findings of the study are independent of accidental circumstances of their production. This deals with the question whether or not future researchers could repeat the same research study and come up with the same results (Silverman, 2010: 282). Therefore qualitative research can be made reliable by making the research process more transparent through the description of research strategies and data analysis methods in a sufficiently detailed manner in the research report, and by paying attention to "theoretical transparency" in making the theoretical stance explicit in which the interpretation takes place (Silverman, 2010: 282). Le Grange (2009: 7) states that there are a range of methodological approaches available to researchers to complete their research successfully. However, Le Grange (2009: 7) asks how we know whether research findings are trustworthy and that research instruments are reliable? What counts as knowledge is viewed differently by different researchers, and reliability is constructed differently within disparate paradigms (Le Grange, 2009: 7). Bush

(2002: 60) asserts that reliability applies to people who are involved in a research process and the instruments being used in the study. A reliable instrument, states Bush (2002: 61), should give more or less the same results each time it is used by the same researcher or different researchers. The main aim of reliability, points out Bush (2002: 63), is to minimise errors and biases in the study. However, Bush (2002: 63) argues that it is not easy to ensure reliability because of the deliberate strategy of treating each research participant as a potentially unique respondent. In addition, Best and Kahn (2006: 289) assert that reliability is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for validity. This means that a study must be reliable for it to be valid (Best & Kahn, 2006: 289). However, a study may be reliable, but still not yet valid (Best & Kahn, 2006: 289). Therefore, say Best and Kahn (2006: 297), one way a researcher can avoid bias or inconsistency in a study and increase reliability is to increase the number of participants or sample size of the study.

3.10 Ethical considerations

According to Punch (2005), all educational research involves ethical considerations, as it involves data from people and about people. Ethics is a set of moral principles that is widely accepted and may offer rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct about experimental subjects and respondents (De Vos *et al.*, 2005: 57). Given the focus of the study on interviews and observations at four selected secondary schools in the Kavango Region, Namibia, permission for the study was granted by the Namibian Education Authority. Bertram (2004: 72) states that a researcher must respect the autonomy of all the people participating in the research. Therefore, the following ethical issues were taken into consideration in relation to this study:

- Informed consent was obtained from the Namibian Educational Authority, as well as from the four selected secondary schools.
- Ethical clearance was granted by Stellenbosch University.
- The principals' participation in the study was voluntary. The principals were informed about the content of the interview that they would be observed in their daily practices; and that learners' Grade 12 results would be examined.

- Informed consent: The researcher obtained permission from the research schools and participants to participate in the research. Participants were given detailed information about the research process and were also informed that their participation was voluntary.
- The right to withdraw: All participants were informed in advance that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. They were also informed that they have the right not to answer any question, but they will still remain in the study. Fortunately, all participants agreed to participate in the research and attempted to answer all questions.
- The participants' rights to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity were respected. This means that the names of the participants and their respective schools will be protected and any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. The interviews were conducted by the researcher, and the data constructed from the tape-recorded interviews were stored on the researcher's personal laptop, which is password-protected.
- The participants were invited to check the transcripts before the researcher proceeded with the construction and analysis of data.
- The participants were informed that this study would be made available to the Department of Education Policy Studies Stellenbosch University, to the Ministry of Education in Namibia, and possibly presented at educational conferences.

This chapter has provided an overview of the research design and methodology, with an emphasis on why the chosen research design was the most appropriate for exploring and understanding the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance at four selected secondary schools. It has presented insights into the methodology of the study by explaining the reasons for the choice of a qualitative research paradigm and an interpretive theoretical framework. The chapter also has presented a discussion of data construction methods, sampling, a description of the schools, learners and participants, and concluded with the ethical considerations of the study. The next chapter provides the findings of the data in a narrative form, based on the categories that emerged and were identified during the interview process.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION

This chapter presents the findings that emerged during the observation and interview processes with participants from the four research schools in the Rundu Circuit in the Kavango Region, Namibia. The data will be presented under categories, that emerged from the main and sub-research questions. The following seven categories were identified: understanding school leadership and practices; challenges of school leaders in relation to learners' academic performance; Grade 12 learner results; factors contributing to poor performance at school; factors contributing to good performance at school; the impact of school leadership on the learners' academic performance at school; and principals' opinions on the role of teachers in monitoring learners' progress.

To remind the reader, the main focus of this study was to gain an understanding as to how school leadership contribute or not to the learners' academic performance at school. The categories and sub-categories presented in this chapter were developed from the data that were constructed from interviews, observations and document analysis by considering the main research question of the study. In addressing the main research question, the study also explored the following sub-questions:

1. What are the challenges of school leaders in terms of learners' performance at schools?
2. What leadership styles are practised at the schools?
3. How does school leadership affect learners' academic performance at schools?
4. What can school leaders do to make a difference in learners' academic performance at schools?

4.1 Understanding school leadership and practices

In providing their understandings of the concept of school leadership, three participants responded that school leadership is about influencing, motivating and inspiring teachers to be positive and to work towards achieving a school goal, target or vision, while Principal 1 described school leadership as being able to influence and inspire teachers to work towards achieving the goal or mission of the school.

School leadership is when someone is able to influence the teachers to inspire them so that they can work towards the goal or mission of the school (Principal 1).

My understanding is to build a team that consists of all stakeholders to motivate and encourage them to take initiative, to work hard and to implement the vision that we or I have set for the school. It is more of building a team. So the most important thing as a leader of the school is just to make sure that there is team building, because once the team is strong, whether we have shortages of resources, we can achieve whatever we have set for ourselves (Principal 3).

Principal 2 shared that a leader should motivate and lead a team to achieve a school target, and that this should be done through regular monitoring and evaluation of school activities. Principal 3 explained that a leader should see to it that there is team work in which stakeholders are encouraged to share ideas and experiences and to take initiative in implementing a school vision. In the opinion of Principal 4, school leadership may be understood as the ability to influence staff members and learners to be passionate about teaching and learning; teachers should be encouraged to have positive attitudes towards enhancing good academic performance. As such, explained Principal 4, the school also should create an environment and circumstances that will bring about a positive change in which all stakeholders work together to improve teaching and learning.

In response to how the principals understood their leadership styles and practices, Principals 1 and 4 shared that they practised a democratic leadership style at school, where teachers worked together in the decision-making process. They shared that, although teachers are encouraged to

express ideas, views and opinions in some cases, they (the principals) had to make certain decisions by themselves. Principal 2 described herself as a “consultative” principal because teachers were consulted to share ideas before decisions were taken. Principal 3 described her leadership style as participatory, because all stakeholders were involved in every step of the decision-making and initiative process, but she acknowledged that she occasionally merely gave instructions.

“I practice a democratic leadership style. We are working as a team in decision making. I also encourage staff members to give their ideas and opinions in certain cases, but still the final answer or decision lies with the principal” (Principal 4).

“I think, I am more concerned with involving others, participatory leadership. I think that is the one that work best, especially at school. One reason is that most of the teachers who are here are committed and they want to do something when they understand what is that they are to do and why they are doing it. So they want to be involved in every step of decision making. Well, there are times, a few times, when you have to give instruction on what should be done, but if you want things done properly and perfectly, involve everyone from the beginning to the end. So it is mostly participatory or involving everyone in the decision making and initiatives of the school” (Principal 3).

Given the responses received from the principals, they were all under the impression that they implemented democratic principles in their leadership, because they consulted and involved teachers in the decision-making process of the school.

During management and staff briefings at the four research schools, it was evident that teachers were involved in the decision-making process of the school. They were given the opportunity to express their views, ideas and opinions on any matters that affected the school before decisions were taken. At School C, it also was observed that each school management member or head of department was given an opportunity to address teachers in staff briefings. At School A, each teacher was given an opportunity to motivate learners with motivational stories related to learners’ academic performance during morning assemblies. Also at School A, teachers attended

departmental meetings with the departmental head every Tuesday during which, they discussed departmental activities and subject-related matters.

This category revealed that all four principals understood school leadership as the ability to influence, motivate and inspire teachers to work towards achieving school goals. In realising the school goals, a leader should be able to motivate staff members to have a positive attitude towards enhancing good academic performance. Staff members should be inspired to foster a conducive academic environment favourable for quality teaching and learning. It also emerged from this category that the principals of the four research schools believed that democratic leadership styles were the best in public schools, because teachers were consulted and involved in the decision-making processes, despite the fact that school management makes some decisions.

4.2 Challenges of school leaders in relation to learners' academic performance

In responding to the question on the challenges experienced by school principals in relation to learners' academic performance, three of the principals (1, 2 and 3) pointed out that, because some teachers and learners are not committed to their tasks, they require constant control and monitoring to do their school work. Principal 2 felt that the absenteeism of teachers and learners had a direct influence on the teaching and learning in the classroom. Principal 3 expressed concern about the difficulty in finding suitably qualified teachers at the level of Grades 11 and -12 in Mathematics, Physical Science, English and Geography. The most serious challenges identified by the principals included poor work commitment of teachers, poor learner discipline, automatic promotion of learners, and a lack of resources such as textbooks.

“Challenges are so many; you find out that some teachers are not always on task in the class. Some need the attention of the principal to move around for them to be serious with their work. At the learners' side, you will find that some learners are not committed, they come late to school, miss classes and homework is not done on time” (Principal 1).

“It is not easy to find well-qualified teachers, especially for higher grades, where you have subjects such as mathematics, physical science, even geography and those other subjects. We have teachers who are qualified for lower grades, but higher grades, 11 and 12, are challenging” (Principal 3).

As shared by Principal 1, the school experienced similar challenges with the learners. Most of the learners did not attend school on a regular basis, often arrived late, and often did not complete homework because of household responsibilities. Principals 2 and 4 felt that the poor discipline of learners had a negative effect on teaching and learning. Principal 3 indicated that the school enrolls learners from different academic backgrounds whose educational foundation is not firmly shaped in subjects such as Mathematics. These learners need special attention and support from the teachers to cope academically. Moreover, Principal 4 was of the opinion that the automatic promotion of some learners from one grade to another contributed to poor academic performance at the school, because learners had not yet mastered the basic competencies that enable them to perform as expected. Principals 2 and 3 identified a lack of resources, such as textbooks, as a challenge, because it meant that learners had to share text books and were not able to do any work at home.

“I think this automatic promotion of learners from one grade to another is also a challenge at school, especially Grade 10 and 12. It contributes to learners’ high failure rates in this region” (Principal 4).

Principals 1, 2 and 3 shared that, although some teachers were committed and dedicated to teaching and learning, others were ill-prepared and lacked commitment towards their responsibilities. They realised that the school management team needed to devise strategies that ensured continuous monitoring of teaching and learning activities at the school. In addition, Principal 2 believed that teacher absenteeism had a direct impact on the teaching and learning, because when a teacher is frequently absent from school, learners are unattended, and teaching and learning will not take place in the classroom practice. As a result, it will have a negative impact on the learners’ academic achievement.

“So if we start with teaching for instance, you might find problems like absenteeism of teachers that is a challenge, because if you have a teacher who has been absent for so long, proper teaching will not take place in the classroom. Not only from the teachers’ side, but also from the learners’ side. You have the commitment and dedication of the teachers. The level of commitment, some teachers are very well committed towards really wanting to see to it that every learner is taught to the best of his/her ability, but then you also get that teacher who is never prepared to go the extra mile” (Principal 2).

Moreover, Principals 1 and 3 indicated that, while their respective schools had qualified teachers for the lower grades, they did not have suitably qualified teachers for the higher grades of 11 and 12, and particularly in the subjects of Mathematics, Physical Science, English and Geography. The schools therefore were left with no alternative but to employ unqualified and under-qualified teachers. Of course, having unqualified and under-qualified teachers in the classroom only added to the burden of learners, who already were struggling academically. The principals were in agreement that the issue of unqualified and under-qualified teachers had a significant impact on the academic performance and discipline of learners.

Data from this category indicated that the types of challenges encountered by principals included a lack of commitment from both teachers and learners towards their academic responsibilities; frequent absenteeism of some teachers and learners; poor learner discipline; a shortage of suitably qualified teachers; automatic promotion of learners from one grade to another without mastering basic competencies in subjects; and a lack of resources such as textbooks. The principals were of the opinion that these challenges contributed greatly to the poor academic performance of the learners.

4.3 Grade 12 learner results

Given the focus on school leadership in relation to learners' academic performance, the Grade 12 learners' results of the four schools for the period of 2011 to 2013 were examined. These are set out in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Grade 12 learners' results at the four research schools in the Kavango Region, 2011–2013

Academic year	Name of school	Number of candidates	Number of candidates qualified	Qualified (%)	Number of candidates not qualified	Not qualified (%)
2011	School A	94	15	16.0%	79	84.0%
	School B	354	119	33.6%	235	66.4%
	School C	79	59	74.7%	20	25.3%
	School D	32	6	18.8%	26	81.3%
2012	School A	74	2	2.7%	72	97.3%
	School B	348	20	5.7%	328	94.3%
	School C	76	16	21.1%	60	78.9%
	School D	33	8	24.2%	25	75.8%
2013	School A	72	12	16.7%	60	83.3%
	School B	304	105	34.5%	199	65.5%
	School C	112	56	50.0%	56	50%
	School D	36	16	44.4%	20	55.6%

From the above table it is evident that, while School C obtained a pass rate of 74.7% in 2011, it only managed to achieve a 50% pass rate in 2013, while School D obtained 44.4% in 2013. Schools A and B obtained below 40% for three consecutive years. The results of the four schools are a reflection of the broader situation in the Kavango Region – where Grade 12 results have declined steadily, from a 30% pass rate in 2011 to 8.2% in 2012 – the lowest results ever. Closer examination of the achievement in terms of specific subjects from 2011 to 2013 revealed that

learners were under-performing in English, Mathematics, Physical Science, Biology and Geography.

When asked for their opinion on the poor Grade 12 results, Principal 1 explained that learners performed relatively poorly in subjects like Geography. Principal 2 shared that, while the majority of Grade 12 learners did not perform as expected, a number of them managed to qualify for access to institutions of higher education. At School B, 354 learners sat for examinations in 2011 in which 119 learners qualified for admission to tertiary education. In the year 2012, 348 learners sat for examinations and 20 learners qualified, while 105 of the 304 learners who wrote examinations in 2013 qualified. These results were based on 25 points in the best five academic subjects, including a C symbol in English.

“I would say, we are very far from where we actually want to be with our Grade 12 results. But then looking at the past three years, we have also managed to climb the ladder every year a little bit and a little bit more. But then, looking at the number of our Grade 12 learners who are qualifying to go to institutions of higher learning, every year we are definitely producing Grade 12s. For the past three years that has been the case; we are looking forward that this year the number of learners who will qualify will be even more than they were last year” (Principal 2).

Principal 3 of School C shared, that in the past, her school had been recognised for its good Grade 12 results. She attributed this achievement to the commitment and self-motivation of teachers. However, over the past three years, learner results had fluctuated, which, according to Principal C, was due to changes in school leadership.

“The school has been or is one of the best performing schools in the region, especially in Grade 12 results. For the past three years, the school has received the prize for the best school in the region. But even if we are number one or we have been number one, the results have been fluctuating because of changes in leadership” (Principal 3).

Principal 4 said that the academic performance of Grade 12 learners at school D varied from year to year, depending on the commitment and dedication of the teachers and learners at the school in a specific year. Although there had been some improvement, only 44% of learners qualified to access tertiary institutions in 2013. Those learners who did not qualify to access tertiary institutions had to upgrade through distance education, which meant attending evening classes.

All four principals acknowledged that their learners did not achieve adequate results to access higher education, and they also were not able to find employment after completing Grade 12. They therefore realised that the type of education that was being provided for their respective learners was inadequate. At School A, the learners' academic performance was still below 50%. While the learners' results had improved slightly at School B, the learners had not performed as well as the school had expected. Despite the fact that learner results had fluctuated over the past three years at School C, the school was still considered as the best performing school in the Kavango Region.

4.4 Factors contributing to poor performance of learners

It became evident from the interviews that all four principals shared common understandings about the factors that contributed to the poor performance of learners, even though they shared different views. These included: a lack of teacher commitment; the long distance learners had to travel to and from school; learners' poor academic foundation; the lack of suitably qualified teachers; high school attrition rates; and poor parental support.

“I will say, a lack of qualified teachers contributes to poor performance, because you find that, from Grade 8 to 12, learners are taught by unqualified teachers. Every year three to four unqualified teachers are employed at the school. These teachers are not doing enough in the classes, by the time learners start catching up; the year is already over” (Principal 1).

“Poor performance, there are learners who perform poorly and there are some who do well. I think the distance that learners travel. Sometimes, learners come to school early in the morning until afternoon without eating. So some do not have

anything to eat, they will just have the next meal when they will go back home”
(Principal 3).

Principal 1 explained that even when teachers tried to motivate learners, some learners were simply not interested in achieving good results or in doing their schoolwork. Principal 2 shared that the erratic attendance of learners, coupled with high attrition rates, contributed to the poor performance of learners. Learners simply stayed away or dropped out without offering any explanation, and then simply returned at a later stage. When they returned, they struggled to catch up with the work they had missed, and often dropped out again. The other commonly cited reason for dropping out related to high pregnancy rates – making girl learners the least likely to complete their schooling. Pregnant learners leave school for months and, when they return, they are unable to catch up or cope with the work-load. These learners rarely did their continuous assessment tasks and activities – leading to poor academic performance. Principal 3 indicated that the poor performance of learners can also be ascribed to long distances that learners need to travel to and from school – resulting in them often being late and; coming to school on an empty stomach, which made it difficult for them to concentrate on their school work.

“Coming together with learners’ attendance are learners’ dropout rates. You find so many learners who are dropping out for no good reason; that is definitely one of the biggest contributing factors. You get these learners who are becoming pregnant and are leaving schools for months for maternity leave; by the time that they deliver and come back; these learners know nothing what is going on in the class. If they have continuous assessment, it is even worse, because there are no marks for continuous assessment for them” (Principal 2).

Principal 4 was of the opinion that the poor academic and schooling backgrounds of the learners contributed to their ongoing struggles at high school. She felt that, because of their poor foundational base, they were never adequately prepared for high school. Learners who performed poorly were simply passed on to the next grade – even when teachers knew that they were not ready to proceed to the next grade. In addition, some learners were influenced by fellow learners not to do their school work as assigned. This had a negative impact on their academic performance.

Principal 1 felt that a shortage of qualified teachers also contributed to the poor academic performance of learners. Every year the school employed unqualified teachers to assist learners due to the shortage of qualified teachers. These unqualified teachers were not competently equipped with teaching methods and strategies to enable them to impart subject content meaningfully to the learners in the classroom to improve the learners' academic performance. In addition, some teachers were not committed to their teaching and learning. In most cases they did not prepare themselves thoroughly for their lessons and did not provide regular tasks, or assessments and feedback for learners.

“Sometimes, the learners' poor academic background in which a solid foundation is not laid from lower grades also contributes to learners' performance. I was also thinking that peer pressure can be one of the factors that affect learners' performance” (Principal 4).

While the principals were in agreement that factors such as pregnancy, high attrition rates, poor learner attendance, unqualified and unprepared teachers, as well as poor foundational support, contributed to the poor academic performance of learners, they also identified other factors. These included the long distances that learners needed to travel to school; responsibilities at home; poverty; and hunger.

4.5 Factors contributing to good performance of learners

The four principals were in agreement that the good performance of learners was determined by the commitment and motivation of teachers and learners towards their school work. Principal 2 explained that learners need to be supported by all stakeholders to be disciplined and self-driven if they hoped to progress. Principal 1 indicated that one of the contributing factors to good performance was that teachers were committed to teaching and learning in which they engage learners with enough quality and challenging activities. Teachers devoted most of their time to offering support to learners and motivating learners to achieve good results. Principal 2 felt that the commitment and dedication of teachers towards teaching and learning was central in the enhancement of good academic achievement of the learners at school. Teachers wanted to see to

it that learners' work was done regularly and that there was progress. Principal 3 indicated that there were teachers who were self-committed, hardworking and motivated about teaching and learning, who, spent much of their times with learners in the afternoons, on Saturdays and during school holidays to assist and support learners who needed special attention to be successful without the effort of the school management. Principal 2 shared that teachers and parents regularly motivated and encouraged learners to improve learning outcomes, while the school had academic performance improvement programmes in which teachers offered extra classes to Grades 10 and 12 in subjects that learners were not performing in throughout the year. This provided the learners with learning support and guidance in the afternoons, on weekends and in holidays.

Principal 4 was of the opinion that the academic background of learners also played a central role in the learners' academic performance. The responses of individual principals are stated below:

“I would say number one, the teachers' commitment and dedication towards teaching and learning. They want to see that the work gets done and learners are progressing. Also the commitment of learners, they are self-driven and they know what they want to achieve. Then we have a very good disciplinary system in place that is making sure that all learners know exactly where their boundaries are. We also have school board members who regularly motivate and encourage learners” (Principal 2).

“Some of our learners are coming from the background of houses where parents are really committed to supporting them, and that is the good thing they are doing. Some of them are really committed and motivated” (Principal 4).

Principal 2 shared that there were learners who were committed and self-driven and had set their own targets towards achieving good results. In the opinion of Principal 3, some of the learners were self-motivated and had high morale towards learning. Principal 4 indicated that some learners were motivated through their involvement and participation in the school's extracurricular activities in which they were encouraged by the teachers to perform well in these activities as well

as academically. She also shared that some learners were committed and hard-working due to parental support at home, where education was valued.

For Principal 2, favourable teaching and learning were dependent on the disciplinary system of the school. In her opinion, if learners had structure and were shown that there were certain expectations of them, they were more likely to work harder and achieve good results.

During the August holiday, the researcher observed that Schools B and C organised holiday classes for the Grade 10 and 12 learners in which teachers provided individual learning support in various subjects in which the learners were struggling. The holiday classes were also used as an opportunity to prepare learners for the national examinations.

Data from this category showed that the four principals were of the opinion that commitment, dedication and motivation of both teachers and learners contributed towards effective teaching and learning, and were fundamental to the enhancement of good academic performance at school. Discipline may contribute indirectly to learners' performance; in as far as the school creates an environment that is conducive for teaching and learning to flourish. Principals indicated that all stakeholders have a meaningful role to play in improving learners' academic performance when teachers and parents collaborate and regularly motivate and support learners to improve learning outcomes.

4.6 The impact of school leadership on the learners' academic performance at schools

In responding to the question of how school leadership affects learners' academic performance, which speaks to the main research question of this study, all four principals revealed that school leadership had a positive impact on the learners' academic performance. Principal 1 felt that good professional relationships between principals, teachers and learners is fundamental in school leadership because it creates a positive attitude between staff members and learners towards achieving the desired results. Principal 2 was of the opinion that leadership positively impacts on the learners' performance when a principal is focused on a clear vision for academic achievement.

Principal 3 felt that principals should create a conducive academic environment and atmosphere favourable for teaching and learning in which teachers' performance is recognised.

“It has a positive impact on them, as the principal if I know where I am heading and I have all systems in place it is easy to convince the team to go with me in the same direction. If I can also get my teachers to move in the same direction, it is easy for them also to get the learners to all move in that same direction. So for leadership, as a principal you need to be focused on your vision. You need to address it week in, week out, whether people get tired of it or not, just to make sure that no one loses focus, but everyone knows exactly what is that we want to achieve” (Principal 2).

Principal 2 shared that leadership has an impact on the academic performance of learners when a principal demonstrates high performance expectations of teaching and learning. The principal also said that a school needs to have academic plans geared towards achieving clearly stipulated goals and that teachers should be influenced and stimulated to have positive attitudes towards improving learners' academic performance. This, they agreed, was only possible if the staff enjoyed an environment of good and clear communication and relationships based on trust and respect.

Moreover, Principal 3 explained that the principal should always display professional courtesy, compassion and empathy to every staff member and that this should ensure a positive attitude among staff members and makes them more inclined to working together in ensuring that learners actually achieve good academic results. According to Principal 4, the manner in which the principal manages conflict with the staff or deals with problematic teachers is critical to staff relationships, and ensures a climate of accountability in the school. To this end, it is important that, when the principal has to discipline a teacher, it is done with professionalism and not with the intention of embarrassing or humiliating the teacher concerned. Principal 3 felt that a lack of school leadership lowered teachers' morale towards teaching and learning, and created a stressful environment – leaving teachers feeling frustrated and negative.

“So motivation, team building and recognising the good that the teachers are doing at every instance, once a teacher does something good it should be recognised. To avoid frustration and all that, when a teacher does something that is not up to standard or something that you do not allow, that should be done in privacy to make sure that the teacher should not feel humiliated or embarrassed. I think to look at everyone, and show love, compassion and empathy to every teacher, and treat them equally, even the least performing teachers can also pick up and improve” (Principal 3).

Principal 3 shared that teachers who are performing well should be acknowledged, recognised and rewarded in order to demonstrate more enthusiasm in teaching and learning practices. Principal 4 indicated that a leader should lead by example, in which they would be expected to be strict, firm, consistent, and disciplined in whatever they are doing at school. In addition, Principal 4 felt that the principal should monitor learners’ progress continuously.

Linked to the shared belief that the leadership practices of the principals can have an impact on the academic performance of learners, all four principals stated that they could make a difference in learners’ academic performance, in terms of which principals should motivate and encourage teachers to work towards achieving the learning outcomes. Principals should be able to create an environment conducive to teaching and learning in which learners are expected to be disciplined and concentrate on their school work.

Principal 1 felt that learners’ involvement and participation in decision-making and problem-solving processes was central to improving learners’ academic performance at school. For example, if learners are involved in school disciplinary committees, they will encourage fellow learners to be disciplined and guard against disruptive behaviour in the classrooms. A well-disciplined environment contributes meaningfully to learners’ academic performance, especially if the principal supports teachers’ and learners’ efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom practice. Teachers will be encouraged to render quality teaching and learning to learners in order to improve learners’ academic performance, because when learners are disciplined and focused on their school work, it will enhance good academic results. Principal 3 shared that; in order to

improve learners' academic performance, staff members should be encouraged to work together to enforce discipline among learners to ensure that the learners behave as expected.

In addition, Principal 3 felt that staff members should be stimulated to have high expectations of themselves in achieving good results. Every teacher, therefore, should set challenging academic targets for their subjects, guide learners to have their own academic targets and motivate them to achieving set goals. In the opinion of Principal 2, the collective commitment of all stakeholders – that is the principal, teachers, parents and learners – may have a positive impact on learners' performance. Every stakeholder should be focused and committed towards making a difference in learners' academic performance. Staff members should commit themselves to supporting learners in their efforts to improve learning outcomes. The principal should buffer staff members against distractions from and negative attitudes in their work. Teachers should have a sense of love and feel compassion for the learners in order to improve learners' academic performance. Teachers should be discouraged from idleness and a lack of commitment towards their teaching and learning practices.

Principal 3, moreover, explained that the school should also devise strategies to improve learners' performance, and that this should be done through the acknowledgment and recognition of individual learners' academic performance. This means that learners who are achieving well should be acknowledged and rewarded, and through the process they will be inspired and motivated to work harder and improve their academic performance. Principal 4 indicated that the school management should encourage teachers to identify subject areas in which improvement was needed and guide them to improve their teaching practices. Furthermore, in the opinion of Principal 4, school leadership impacts indirectly on the learners' academic performance when the principal empowers teachers and regularly motivates them to support learners who need special attention to succeed in their learning opportunities, and encourages parents to participate actively in school activities.

“Ourselves as leaders, we can step in and regularly motivate teachers and learners.
We need to identify problem areas, such as personal, social or academic, and then

we should try to solve them. We need to refer learners for counselling and do a little bit of investigation to find out the root cause of learners' problem. Parents should also be involved in the process" (Principal 4).

The responses from the principals revealed that they considered good school leadership to have a positive impact on the learners' academic performance. They clearly recognised that their respective relationships with their staff had an impact on teachers' morale, and therefore on how they treated their learners. They also recognised that the principal had to be directly involved in setting goals with learners, and that this should not just be the teacher's responsibility alone. Moreover, data from this category showed that school leadership has an indirect impact on the learners' academic performance when teachers are motivated and influenced to work towards achieving good results, and when teachers and learners are recognised and rewarded for their good achievements.

4.7 Principals' opinions of the role of teachers in monitoring learners' performance

The four principals were of the opinion that teachers had a role to play in improving learners' academic performance through classroom management; control of learners' written works; proper preparation; quality teaching; providing learning support classes; providing feedback on tasks and tests; commitment; and setting achievable targets.

Principal 1 shared that teachers should have the classroom management skills necessary to cultivate a disciplined and favourable environment that nurtures quality teaching and learning in the classroom. In addition, Principal 1 felt that teachers should enforce school rules and regulations, and maintain discipline in the classroom in order to ensure that learners are dedicated to quality teaching and learning. Teachers are expected to manage their classrooms effectively with maximum time spent on tasks and concentrate more on what learners are doing. Teachers should engage learners with challenging tasks and activities that enable learners to take responsibility for their own learning. In addition, Principal 3 indicated that teachers should always be well-prepared for their daily lessons and give quality written work to learners, and then also

provide learners with immediate, constructive feedback. The learners' work should be controlled regularly to ensure that quality teaching and learning take place.

Principal 2 was of the view that teachers should have love for, interest in and commitment to teaching and learning, as well as high expectations for academic achievement. Teachers should be able to provide special attention and learning support to all learners to succeed in their learning purpose, and this should be done through various teaching strategies such as coaching, mentoring and motivation. In addition, Principals 2 and 3 indicated that teachers should always commit themselves to going the extra mile in providing learning support and guidance to the learners to improve their learning outcomes.

Principal 3 was of the opinion that, to improve learners' academic performance, teachers need to improve their subject knowledge by attending professional development programmes. Principal 4 mentioned that the enthusiasm of teachers played a significant role in how learners responded to the teacher, as well as to the subject. If teachers were not thoroughly prepared and were unenthusiastic, learners might not feel motivated to learn.

“Teachers should keep on improving in terms of knowledge or subject content. Teachers should be able to control learners' work. They have to prepare well for their lessons. They have to give quality work to learners and have to mark and give immediate feedback. It is mandatory that for all work given to the learners, correction must be done. Once all these are in place and a teacher demonstrates love for the learners, there is great potential for learners to be motivated to perform”
(Principal 3).

The three principals were of the opinion that their respective schools already had specific programmes in place to assist learners who were struggling. They also believed that some teachers were continuously assessing learners' written work and providing constructive feedback; conducting regular grading analysis; arranging parent weeks to discuss learner progress and how their work should be monitored; and that they (the principals) were regularly conducting classroom

observations. The opinions of principals concerning the monitoring of learners' progress at the research schools are explained below.

In the opinion of Principal 1, the school management had programmes in place to monitor learners' written work and continuous assessment marks. The school management normally controlled learners' written works and provided immediate feedback to the teachers based on the classroom findings to improve teaching and learning. Principal and heads of department frequently did classroom observations to support and guide teachers to improve on their teaching practices in the classroom. Principal 4 felt that the school management had an overall programme in which learners' progress was monitored. Heads of department regularly monitored learners' written works and continuous assessment activities to pinpoint whether teachers gave enough tests and homework to learners. Therefore, teachers are tasked by the management team to provide reasons why the learners were not progressing. Through this process the parents are notified of the learners' progress. This is done through parent weeks or days in which parents are invited to view learners' progress at the school. Principal 1 explained that, in most cases, the principal and heads of department monitored learners' written work on a monthly basis, after which they supported and guided teachers to improve their teaching and learning in the classroom. When teaching deficiencies were identified, teachers were given the necessary guidance and support to improve on their teaching practices.

Principal 2 said that the school management monitored the learners' progress continuously, and when shortcomings were identified in particular subjects, a teacher was advised to provide remedial teaching to learners to improve the learning outcomes. In addition, Principal 1 indicated that learners' progress was monitored by examination results, by which marks from each department and subject were analysed to determine learners' progress. Subsequently, teaching and learning support was given to individual teachers. Provisions also were made to organise mini-workshops or to invite subject specialists to support and develop teachers in specific subject areas that needed improvement.

According to Principal 2, the school conducted an internal examination at the end of every term during which learners' progress was analysed and progress report cards were issued to parents. Principal 3 indicated that, after every examination, the school does a grading analysis in various subjects to determine learners' progress and map out strategies to improve learners' academic performance. Principal 4 indicated that the end-of-term exams also serves as a continuous formal assessment in which learners' progress is monitored through the completion of promotion schedules and progress reports. In addition, Principal 2 explained that, in the course of a term, the school had a series of compulsory assessment activities in which every teacher was compelled to give formal tests and formal assessment activities to the learners in all grades to improve their teaching and learning experiences.

Principal 3 pointed out that the school had discovered that the learners' written books reflected the performance or progress of the learner in a particular subject. Therefore, the school management constantly reminded teachers to provide enough quality written work for learners to improve their academic achievement. Principal 4 was of the opinion that teachers often provide learning support activities to the learners to improve their academic performance in various subjects.

“Monitoring of learners' progress, the school management has programmes of monitoring learners' written works and continuous assessment marks. After controlling the teacher's work, feedback is given to the teachers based on the findings, with recommendations on the areas that need improvement, because we are directed by what we have observed in the learners' books” (Principal 1).

“After the examinations, we do the grading analysis to see how learners performed. What we have discovered is that learners' written work, what is in the learner's book, can tell whether this learner will perform or not. So there is a great emphasis on what teachers give to the learners in their books and therefore there is a lot of control and monitoring in terms of learners' written works. You can do classroom observations and the teacher may do proper preparation, but what is in the book, the book can tell you whether the teacher is giving enough or not” (Principal 3).

The data from this category revealed that, according to the principals, the four schools had numerous programmes in which academic activities were monitored continuously. Linked to this, it also emerged that, if teachers are key to monitoring the progress of learners and the school management team has to fulfil the responsibility of ensuring that teachers do what is required to assist learners who are struggling, the academic performance of learners is likely to improve.

This chapter has focused on presenting the research data, which comprised of interviews and observations of principals, as well as an examination of Grade 12 learner results for the period 2011 to 2013. The next chapter will focus on the analysis of data, and discussions that relate to the relationship between school leadership and learners' performance that are supported by the existing literature in an attempt to address the research focus.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the analysis of the research findings from the data and discussions that relate to the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance, supported by existing literature in an attempt to address the research focus. The following categories emerged during the study and form the basis of the ensuing analysis: understanding school leadership and practices; challenges facing school leaders in relation to learners' academic performance; and the impact of school leadership on the learners' academic performance.

5.1 Understanding school leadership and practices

Given this study's focus on the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance, it was important to understand what the principals understood by school leadership. All four principals understood school leadership to be the ability to influence, motivate, inspire and lead a team to work towards achieving a school goal. Their understandings, therefore, resonate with that of Christie (2010: 696), who describes school leadership as a relationship of influence directed towards school goals or outcomes, whether formal or informal, as well as Van der Westhuizen (1997: 187), who believes that the role of the school leader is to influence and direct teachers to realise the common goal of education. Moreover, the four principals shared the view that building a team of stakeholders who were motivated to implement the vision of the school was critical to school leadership. If a school is shaped by a strong principal-teacher relationship, and if they work as a team in achieving the goals of the school, then the school will be strong, regardless of any infrastructural shortages or shortcomings. School principals who do not manage to establish and cultivate harmonious relationships run the risk of having a staff of demotivated and frustrated teachers, which, in turn, will have a negative impact on the teaching and learning at the school. It is for this reason that Bush (2007: 403) understands school leadership as a process of influence based on clear values and beliefs that lead to a vision of the school that is articulated

by the leader, who needs the support and commitment of all stakeholders towards the accomplishment of the school goal. Likewise, Leithwood *et al.* (2008: 29-30) point out that building a collaborative culture and relationship is essential, because the school then will be connected to its wider environment. This means that principals should set academic targets for the school, which should be communicated to all staff members and learners to influence them towards achieving the desired learning outcomes.

The analysis of the data revealed that, while the four principals reported to using democratic leadership styles – practised through consulting and involving teachers in the decision-making processes – the principals were also prone to making some decisions by themselves, or simply giving instructions. It was clear from observing them in their daily routines that, at times, it was simply not possible to consult with all the teachers on every decision; it also was not possible to obtain everyone's support on every decision. It is important to note that the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture ([MBESC], 2001b: 13) makes reference to a democratic education system in Namibia that is organised around broad participation in the decision-making process and that calls for school managers to base their school leadership styles on democratic principles to ensure that their educational programmes are managed in a participatory and democratic style. In support, Kandumbu (2005: 64) argues that a democratic leadership style is necessary because it helps to improve certain aspects of the school management. It also develops the responsibility of collective problem solving and creates a friendlier and a more cooperative environment at school. Mushaandja (2006: 38) concurs that teachers, learners, parents and other stakeholders have the right to participate in the school decision-making process. Principals are expected to use democratic leadership styles and principles in their schools and have the task of overseeing the involvement of all stakeholders in the decision-making processes. However, this task is challenging, especially when some stakeholders push for decisions that are not within the framework of the ministerial policies or in the interest of some stakeholders. And it is especially challenging and, at times, impossible to achieve if school principals have not received any training or support in how to lead and manage a school based on democratic principles – as was observed at the four schools, where principals often did not always have time to consult with all staff members on every decision made. McDonald and Larson (2013) argue that the democratic

leadership style may be time consuming and impractical for all decision-making processes within the school, but when all stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process, the principal may expect final decisions to be supported and implemented – thereby having a positive impact on the teaching and learning processes. Yet, as was observed at the four schools, even when teachers are involved in the decision-making process some were still reluctant, or refused, to implement decisions taken.

5.2 Challenges of school leaders in relation to learners' academic performance

During the interviews, the four school principals were able to identify numerous challenges, which, they believed, had an impact on learners' academic performance. These include: teacher and learner commitment; teacher and learner absenteeism; and a shortage of qualified teachers. Given the complexity of each of these challenges, and even though they are inter-related, I will explore each individually.

5.2.1 Teacher and learner commitment

All the principals from the four schools indicated that some teachers were committed and dedicated towards teaching and learning, and supported learners to be successful in their learning experiences. Principals also reported that there were teachers who were self-driven, hardworking, had a high commitment towards teaching and learning and always were willing to go the extra mile in assisting and supporting learners without being instructed to do so. They came to school well-prepared with different teaching materials and teaching strategies that aroused the learners' interest in various subjects. These teachers were self-committed and spent much of their time with learners in providing extra classes and remedial teaching in the afternoons, on weekends and during holidays to assist learners who need special attention to realise their potentials and improve their learning outcomes. Day, Elliot & Kinston (2005) noted that teachers who are committed to teaching and learning will always try to use various teaching strategies appropriate to meeting the learning needs of the learners. Likewise, Leanne and Robert (2004) describe a committed teacher as an educator who is always willing to teach and meet the learning needs of most of the learners in the classroom practice. All the principals reported that, in comparison with other grades,

teachers tended to pay more attention to learners in Grades 10 to 12 – offering more work and assessment.

In-as-much as all the principals could report on the high commitment of certain teachers, they also expressed concern about the high number of teachers and learners who did not show much or any commitment to academic performance. These teachers arrived at school unprepared to teach, had little to no interest in their learners, and were not interested in improving on their teaching or offering assistance to learners who were struggling. Similarly, uncommitted learners attended school sporadically, showed little interest in their schoolwork, and often presented discipline problems. According to Park (2005: 462), teacher commitment is an internal force that comes from those teachers who have the need for greater responsibility themselves. As such, Park explains that teacher commitment may contribute to school success because it accomplishes school goals and fosters teaching and a learning environment. The principals reported that one reason why some teachers are not committed to their school work is that they are overloaded and burdened with subject responsibilities, for example you might find that one teacher teaches from Grade 8 to 12. Given the high pressure encountered in Grade 12, it is common for teachers to neglect other grades – thereby negatively impacting on the academic performance of those learners.

According to the principals, the poor work commitment of teachers was manifested in various ways. These included teachers not teaching according to the curriculum; not providing regular tasks to ensure that learners have understood the work; not giving enough writing assignments to learners; not following proper assessment procedures; not marking tasks and tests timeously; and not providing constructive feedback to the learners so that they might improve on their progress or shortcomings. At times, schools organise extra classes in the afternoons in which teachers are expected to assist learners with learning difficulties in the classroom in order to ensure that the learners are studying and doing their school work, but these teachers are not willing to attend to their assigned responsibilities. A number of teachers were only willing to assist learners if they were given incentives for their services rendered.

In the light of the afore-mentioned, three principals were of the opinion that teachers needed to be controlled and monitored on a regular basis by the school management to ensure that basic teaching responsibilities were being carried out. This could be done through regular classroom observations in which teachers are observed by either the principal or the head of department to see whether quality teaching and learning is taking place in the classroom. All four principals reported that school management also controlled learners' written work to see to it that the teacher was always on task in rendering quality teaching and learning in the classroom. Although the researcher found evidence of the school management monitoring teachers' lesson plans and learners' workbooks respectively, this was limited to either at the beginning of each term or the year, and did not occur on a regular basis. Leithwood *et al.* (2010: 679-680) maintain that school management should monitor teachers constantly to ensure that they are on task and manage teaching and learning effectively in the classroom practice. Likewise, Creemers and Reezigt (2005: 363) point out that teacher commitment is central because it stimulates them to work towards improving the academic performance of learners at the school.

As with the concern about teacher commitment, the principals raised concerns about the level of commitment by learners. The principals mentioned that learners regularly come to school late; miss classes; and frequently do not complete their homework. Principal 1, 2, and 3 indicated that they did not know how to address the poor work commitment of learners. Although they could not adequately explain the lack of commitment of the learners, they recognized that the poor work commitment of the teachers definitely had an impact on the attitudes of learners. Park (2005: 465) argues that learners who are exposed to committed teachers perform well academically, whereas those learners who are taught by less committed teachers tend to develop low commitment towards performing their academic work. This means that the commitment of learners is stimulated by the commitment and dedication of teachers towards the teaching and learning processes. What clearly emerges from the afore-mentioned discussion is that the commitment of teachers and learners is, to a large extent, inter-related, and that learners' poor commitment could not be addressed without considering the work commitment of teachers.

5.2.2 Teacher and learner absenteeism

Linked to the concern about the poor work commitment of both teachers and learners is the issue of absenteeism – particularly on Mondays and Fridays – which impacts directly on teaching and learning. On the one hand, the majority of learners at the four schools did not attend school on a regular basis, often arrived late, and often did not complete homework because of household responsibilities. On the other hand, the high levels of absenteeism among teachers could be ascribed to teachers having other work commitments, aside from teaching, and a lack of interest in their learners. The fact that teachers are absent on an unacceptably regular basis means that the school timetable is often disrupted, and therefore also means that teachers who are at school have extra responsibilities. When a teacher is absent, it is expected that the unattended class be attended to by another teacher. This means that the teaching and learning process is disrupted in two classes. As pointed out by Leithwood *et al.* (2010: 679), the amount of time devoted to teaching and learning has an effect on learners' learning progress, and if instructional time is wasted, it will have a negative effect on the learners' academic performance. The high incidence of absenteeism among teachers and learners encountered at the four schools possibly supports the assertion made by the Minister of Education that the high failure rates in public schools are attributed to absenteeism of both teachers and learners (Namwandi, 2014a: 3). Of course, the issue of absenteeism among teachers is different to that of learners. Teachers are absent because of other, private commitments apart from their professional jobs (Dikuua, 2009). Learners are absent because of social issues and other responsibilities, such as poverty and household chores. The two sets of reasons are different and therefore would require two different sets of approaches in management. Then there is the added issue, as shared by the principals, that even when teachers are present at school, they often are not prepared to teach and merely babysit their classes.

5.2.3 Shortage of qualified teachers

One of the challenges identified by the principals as having an impact on the learners' academic performance is a shortage of qualified teachers. All four principals expressed concern about the difficulty in finding suitably qualified teachers, especially in the higher grades of 11 and 12, and particularly in the subjects of Mathematics, Physical Science, Geography and English. They

reported that they experienced a shortage of qualified teachers on an annual basis. This means that it has become a common occurrence for learners not to have a teacher for the first two to three months of the year. In an attempt to ensure that learners are not left unattended and do not fall behind in their school work, the school management team, in consultation with the school governing body, normally recommends to the regional education office that either an unqualified or under-qualified teacher be appointed. The principals expressed concern that, despite the fact that schools appointed unqualified and under-qualified teachers on a temporary basis, this could not solve or improve learners' academic performance at schools.

Principal 1 pointed out that appointing an unqualified or under-qualified teacher is very challenging, because they are not trained and therefore lack the competencies and pedagogy that would enable them to transform subject matters meaningfully to the learners in the classroom. These teachers are not able to deliver quality teaching and learning in the classroom, and hardly are equipped to complete administrative work such as lesson preparations, marking of learners' written work and completing continuous assessment mark forms. Principal 3 reported that, in 2014, her school employed nine under-qualified teachers and three unqualified teachers. She also shared that, although they were unqualified, they were more committed to their school duties and responsibilities than some qualified teachers. Principal 1, 3 and 4 reported that most of the teachers that were trained in the local colleges/university were only qualified to teach primary and junior secondary level; therefore it was not easy to find a well-qualified teacher trained for higher secondary schools, especially in the subjects of Mathematics, Physical Science and Geography. In most cases, principals appointed junior secondary school teachers, but they lacked the competence to teach Grades 11 and 12. The principals also shared that they had previously appointed qualified teachers from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the critical subjects of Mathematics, Physical Science and English, but these teachers were only appointed for a period of five years and it was difficult to find a qualified teacher for higher grades when their contracts ended.

The shortage of qualified teachers at the four schools is supported by the statement made by the Ministry of Education, that Namibia is faced with a shortage of qualified teachers in subjects like

Mathematics, Physical Science and English. This shortage of teachers, according to the Ministry of Education, is attributed to the merger of the local colleges of education with the University of Namibia (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2013b). As confirmed by Kandumbu (2005: 3), the University of Namibia produces only a few graduates specialising in the field of Mathematics, Physical Science, Biology and English who are trained to teach high secondary grades. It therefore is not possible for the University of Namibia to cater for the needs of secondary schools in Namibia. This is confirmed in the literature, which shows that only 25% of secondary school teachers in Namibia are qualified (MoE, 2006: 25).

When the principal stimulates teachers and learners to be committed to their school work, it will enhance quality teaching and learning at the school, but if both teachers and learners lack commitment and dedication to their academic responsibilities, learners' academic performance will be affected negatively. Regular school attendance by both teachers and learners is essential for achieving good academic results. However, when teacher and learner attitudes are characterised by high absenteeism, it will contribute to the poor academic performance of learners.

5.3 The impact of school leadership on learners' academic performance

In responding to the question of how school leadership affects learners' academic performance, which speaks to the main research question of this study, the principals shared that a clear vision for academic achievement, professional relationships between the principal and staff members, motivation and commitment, and a conducive environment may have a positive impact on the learners' academic performance.

5.3.1 Establishing a clear vision for the school

The principals of the four research schools were of the opinion that school leadership has a positive effect on learners' academic achievement when the principal sets a clear vision for the school and clarifies goals for academic achievement with all staff members and demonstrates an expectation of high performance in relation to teaching and learning. This view is supported by Day *et al.* (2008: 6), who assert that a successful principal should be able to provide a clear vision

for the school and the sense of direction and motivation necessary for all stakeholders to know what is expected of them and how the learners' academic performance should be improved at the school. Similarly, Leithwood et al. (2008: 30) maintain that a principal should be able to build a shared vision for all stakeholders and demonstrate high expectations of good academic standards for the school by which teachers and learners are motivated and inspired to achieve school objectives.

The principals reported that principals should be focused on the school vision and keep staff members informed about how this vision will be achieved. When the principal influences all the teachers to focus their attention on teaching and learning, it might be easier to convince learners to follow suit. The principals felt that the school's vision would only be realised when a school has an academic plan and strategies geared towards achieving the school goal. In achieving the school goal, the principals indicated that staff members should be stimulated to have high expectations of good academic achievement so that every teacher is encouraged to set his/her own challenging academic targets in his/her respective subjects, and guide learners to also have their own individual academic targets and motivate them on a regular basis to redouble their efforts and strive towards achieving set targets. For example, a principal may decide that the school should aim for a 100% pass rate so that all learners are expected to obtain excellent results at the end of the year; in order to attain the desired results, the school should devise possible strategies and aim towards attaining excellent academic performance. However, the principals also pointed out that a school without a vision might still perform well if the teachers have a good work ethic and are committed to their learners. To this end, they felt that, regardless of the vision, much depended on the individual commitment levels of teachers.

5.3.2 Principal-teacher relationships

School leadership contributes positively to the learners' academic performance when a principal builds a positive, supportive, trusting and professional principal-teacher relationship with all staff members, explain Leithwood *et al.* (2010: 675-678), three principals indicated that good professional relationships between the principal, staff members and learners are fundamental in school leadership because they create a positive attitude among staff members and learners, and

nurture a healthy environment in which all stakeholders are expected to work together towards the realisation of the objective of the school. They also recognised that their respective relationships with their staff members influenced the type of relationships that existed between the teachers and learners. The principals therefore understood that the academic performance of learners is connected to their relationships with their teachers, which, in turn, is connected to the teachers' relationships with the principal. The principals acknowledged that, while healthy relationships with teachers encouraged a positive working environment, unhealthy relationships led to them having to be instructed to fulfil their obligations. Principal 2 confirmed that it was not easy to have teamwork at a school in which all staff members were collaborating, because at some point, you find that staff members are scattered in different directions. She reported that teachers often spread different messages that might create conflict among fellow staff members and learners, and at the end of the day it was difficult to pull all staff members in the same direction again.

It was observed during the morning briefings that some teachers regularly were reporting late for school, despite the fact that they were constantly reminded to report on time. Similarly, it was also observed during briefings that some teachers only reported to their classes when instructed to do so by the principal. Principal 1, 2, and 4 shared that they had poor relationships with teachers and learners, and that, in turn, the learners were not willing to report their problems or concerns to either the teachers or the principal. To this end they also acknowledged that there was no clearly defined communication system and understanding between the learners, teachers and principals on how to raise and address concerns. The principals said that the lack of communication at school created unstable relationships and unnecessary conflicts among staff members, which might have a negative effect on the learners' academic performance at school. The principals reported difficulties in building professional relationships among staff members, and in encouraging the professional development of teachers. The principals also acknowledged that they did not always recognise and appreciate teachers' efforts and achievements, thereby discouraging some teachers from remaining motivated or trying harder. Principals 2, 3 and 4 recognised that they had not been able to foster relationships of collegiality, compassion and empathy among the staff members. Likewise, teachers had not always acted with care and compassion towards their learners. Principal 2 confirmed that the lack of love and the uncaring relationships at school had a negative influence

on the relationship between the principal and the staff members, which eventually impacted the academic performance of learners at the school.

During the observation time at each of the schools, it also became apparent that there were personal problems between particular teachers and learners. The principals were seemingly unaware of these problems. Principal 4 acknowledged the importance of one-on-one interactions so that teachers might feel free to share their frustrations or concerns. However, she also recognised that she lacked the necessary approachability for this type of interaction to happen. Principal 3 recognised the fact that some teachers were not treated with respect and dignity, especially when they engaged in unprofessional conduct. She took responsibility for reprimanding or confronting teachers in the presence of other staff members. As a result, they felt humiliated and embarrassed. And, in turn, it was not unusual for these teachers to influence other teachers to have a negative attitude to school authority. Consequently, the relationships between the principal and teacher deteriorated further, and then had a negative impact on the learners.

It was very difficult to ascertain the full extent of the types of relationships between the principal and her respective staff members. However, it was clear that all four schools experienced visible tensions between the principal and certain teachers, particularly in instances where teachers were acting unprofessionally. Rieg and Marcoline (2008: 2) emphasise that positive relationships makes a good school, thus the principal-teacher relationship is critical in building a collaborative environment that nurtures staff members towards the achievement of academic performance. Harris (2004: 21) argues that school success is influenced greatly by the interpersonal relationships between a principal and teachers, and a principal who understands the concerns of staff members reflects in their performance. As such, Rieg and Marcoline (2008: 6) point out that it is the leadership of the principal that sets the tone for the school, the climate for teaching, the level of professionalism and the morale of the teachers. It therefore is imperative that the principal is at the helm of building professional relationships amongst the staff, aimed at the attainment of school goals.

5.3.3 Teacher motivation

The principals held the view that one of the contributing factors in school leadership that may have a positive impact on the learners' academic performance is the aspect of teacher motivation and commitment towards teaching and learning. The principals reported that it was not easy to motivate teachers who were not willing to go the extra mile in their efforts to support learners to achieve good academic results. The principals acknowledged that some of the teachers were not self-motivated in relation to teaching and learning, and this has had an impact on the performance of learners in the classroom. All the principals reported that they experienced problems with low teacher morale, and found it difficult to cultivate a positive attitude and environment towards teaching and learning.

Principal 2 and 3 said that they had some school board members (school governing body) who were actively involved in the school activities. They came to the school from time to time and encouraged teachers and learners to be committed to their school work. It was observed that some teachers were unwilling to take any advice from stakeholders on how they might best assist learners with their school work. Similarly, the two principals reported that, while some teachers worked well as a team, others did not want to cooperate. This has an impact on both the levels of motivation of some teachers, as well as a high staff turnover – both of which have an impact on learners' achievements. The principals reported that some teachers were not self-driven and, needed continuous encouragement from the principal to be committed towards their work. Principal 3 related that the school management was not encouraging teachers on a regular basis to become self-motivated, because they (school management) also struggled in their roles as managers and leaders. As such, she recognised that the school management needed to improve its leadership skills. Another contributing factor to the low morale of teachers, according to Principal 2, was the high drop-out rates of learners. She explained that learners simply stayed away without any explanation. At times they were never heard from again, and at other times they returned after a lengthy absence. As to be expected, when they returned they struggled to catch up and cope with all the work they had missed and the teachers did not have the continuous assessment marks required for them to be promoted. This added to the burden of the teachers, who had the added responsibility of ensuring that these learners reintegrated into the classroom curriculum.

Adding to the low motivation of teachers is a serious shortage of resources. These include a shortage of chairs, desks and textbooks, which means that learners are forced to share in the classroom and also means that they are not able to do homework that might require the use of a textbook. The principals reported that the shortage of resources definitely impacted on the motivation levels of teachers and the academic performance of learners. It became evident during the interviews and through the observations that the principals lacked the knowledge and skills to assist teachers in mobilising resources for their schools. It also became evident during the interviews that the four principals did not have a good enough grasp of the curriculum to adequately guide teachers on issues of teaching and learning. Moreover, given their own lack of professional training, they did not have the skills to assist teachers in their professional development. The principals reported that they generally sent teachers to attend training workshops for one week. However, they were of the opinion that the training workshops did not offer teachers any meaningful direction in improving their teaching or what to do to assist learners in their learning.

One of the practices observed at the schools involved the acknowledgement of teachers for their extra effort or for working hard. At School C, individual teachers were rewarded with a gift for any special achievement on a monthly basis. This was done so as to motivate teachers to produce good academic results. At School B, staff members were awarded certificates of achievement for outstanding performance in different subjects. This motivated some teachers to feel appreciated and worthy. Although the principals could not provide more details on how teacher motivation contributed to the learners' academic performance, they believed that teacher motivation had a positive impacts on the learners' academic performance. The research conducted by Hallinger and Heck (1998: 157) revealed that school leadership practices contribute indirectly to school outcomes, which are mediated through teacher motivation and commitment through which teachers are empowered by the principal to render effective teaching and learning to improve the learners' academic performance in classroom practice. For Finnigan (2012: 183), principal leadership is critical in improving learners' academic performance, for instance through teacher motivation. In line with Hattie's (2003: 4) view, in which he argues that a school cannot function without the motivation and commitment of either a principal or a teacher, Finnigan (2012: 184)

states that, in improving learners' academic performance, the principal should be able to motivate teachers by communicating clear goals to them for academic improvement and fostering commitment among all stakeholders to attaining learners' performance. Teacher motivation by the principal has a positive impact on the learners' academic performance when teachers themselves are motivated and encouraged by the principal to take ownership of learners' academic results.

5.3.4 School environment

The school environment has a direct impact on how effective teaching and learning take place in the classroom. All four principals reported that the principal had a lot to do in ensuring a conducive environment and atmosphere for teaching and learning. The principals related that they experienced numerous disciplinary problems, which created problems for quality teaching and learning. The principals reported that teachers were stressed and frustrated by the high incidence of disciplinary problems, and that this had an impact on their morale, and therefore had a negative impact on how they taught, which, in turn, affected the learners' academic performance. Common disciplinary problems included lengthy absence from school: coming to school without any books or learning materials; and disrupting classes. However, the principals also revealed that the poor discipline of the learners was not the only issue that made teaching and learning difficult. Certain teachers did not comply with the school code for teachers: they come to school unprepared to teach, did not fulfil their basic responsibilities; and, at times, they influenced and instigated learners to have negative attitudes to school authority. Principals at the four research schools also reported that some classrooms were overcrowded, thus teachers were not able to maintain discipline in the classroom. This had a negative effect on teaching and learning.

Principal 2 and 4 acknowledged that it was their responsibility to ensure that effective teaching and learning took place at the school, but that it was not easy to ensure a conducive environment. Principal 2 confirmed that the disciplinary problems encountered among both the teachers and the learners had a negative impact on teaching and learning. The disciplinary issues with learners were compounded by the poor levels of parental involvement. All the principals reported that they normally invited parents and guardians to attend parental meetings in which they discussed the learners' disciplinary problems, but in many cases parents were not able to attend because of other

commitments and responsibilities. As a result it became difficult to enforce discipline at the school. Principal 1 confirmed that, if the school worked hand in hand with the parents, learners' disciplinary problems would be minimised. The principals acknowledged that they were not working together with the teachers to ensure and sustain a disciplined school environment. To this end, the principals also recognised that they were not necessarily leading by example in terms of how discipline should be maintained at the school. They recognised that they were inconsistent and not firm enough when managing disciplinary cases. Again, they mentioned that, had they been equipped and trained to manage disciplinary problems among teachers and learners, they might have cultivated better schools and improved the academic performance of the learners. Principal 2 reported that, while the school had a good disciplinary system in place that ensured that everyone knows what was expected of them, the school environment was not yet conducive for teaching and learning. The researcher could not confirm whether the school really had an effective disciplinary system. However, the poor Grade 12 results of the schools might provide some indication that effective teaching and learning are in fact not happening at any of the four schools. Chapman (2010) explains that the physical environment of the school plays a role in enhancing learners' academic performance. As discussed in Chapter 2, a well-disciplined environment contributes meaningfully to student achievement when school leaders support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom (Leithwood *et al.*, 2010: 674). Similarly, Waghid (2002a: 95-97) points out that the achievement of quality education in schools seems to be a major challenge in the sense that schools are influenced by factors such as a fragile learning environment, conflicting staff relations, time wasting, unruly learner behaviour and daily interruptions, which impede the implementation of school programmes.

This chapter has offered a close analysis of the various factors, as identified through the research data, which have an impact on the academic performance of learners. Common to all of these factors, is the central issue of school leadership, and its inter-relationship with teachers and teaching, and therefore learners and academic performance. On the one hand, the research has revealed that the four schools involved in the study are disadvantaged by a variety of complex factors – from poor parental involvement, under-qualified and unqualified teachers and poorly motivated learners, to poor resources and unskilled school principals. On the other hand, the

research also reveals that, regardless of the afore-mentioned factors, all four principals believed that an effective school, manifested through the academic performance of learners, is possible if schools are shaped by visible and effective leadership practices.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This chapter offers a summary of the main findings of the study, which sought to investigate the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance at four secondary schools in the Kavango Region of Namibia. While the title of the research study refers to school leadership, the focus is on principal leadership. As has been discussed previously, in Chapters four and five, schools in rural Namibia are confronted with particular conditions and challenges, which, at times, remain beyond the control of the school principal. The findings of this study, therefore, have particular implications for teaching, learning, leading and managing schools – which I will discuss in addition to making a number of recommendations.

6.1 Summary of the main findings

The main findings pertaining to the types of leadership practices used by the four principals revealed that, while the principals all described their relationship styles as democratic, consultative and fair, this was not always evident during the observations at the respective schools. Principals often struggled to implement decisions that had been made collectively; they also experienced great difficulty in managing teachers, who often were not teaching, late, or absent from school and showed little interest in the education of the learners. They recognised that their inability and lack of skills in leading and managing teachers, as well as the curriculum, had a direct impact on the attitude, morale and performance of learners. Although all four principals claimed to understand the necessity and value of healthy staff relationships, and of closer monitoring of teaching and learners who were struggling, they could not provide any real evidence that they were indeed cultivating schools where the afore-mentioned were happening.

One of the main concerns that this study has highlighted is the issue of the unpreparedness of the four principals to lead and manage their respective schools. All four of the principals were qualified

teachers and were appointed as principals on the basis of their experience as teachers or heads of department. Other than attending a once-off workshop, none of them had any formal training or qualification in school leadership. They agreed that they simply had to learn what to do as they went along. Their poor understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities was exacerbated by the absence of any support from the Namibian education ministry. In other words, there were no clearly defined structures to which they could turn for guidance or assistance. The principals recognised that their poor knowledge and skills of what it meant to lead and manage their schools had a negative impact on staff and learners, and also affected their own morale in how they enacted their responsibilities. This meant that they often felt that they could not, or should not, intervene in a situation because they were not qualified to do so. In turn, this meant that certain teachers did not necessarily attach any value to them as principals.

Although three of the principals reported that there was team work at their respective schools, it became evident during the observations that some teachers could not collaborate; were not willing or were reluctant to fulfil their responsibilities; and were not able to support learners who struggled with their school work. The principals acknowledged that they did not know how to manage teachers who simply refused to do their jobs. Moreover, they did not necessarily know how to motivate those teachers who were fulfilling their responsibilities, but clearly needed more support to remain motivated.

Although two of the principals recognised the necessity and importance of defining a vision for the school and of establishing clear strategies to realise this vision, none of them could provide any evidence of a school vision or mission statements, any strategic plans, or just simply defined goals. When asked about this, it became clear that they had little understanding of how to develop a vision with realistic strategies. However, they also hastened to add that it still was possible for a school to perform well academically without a vision, provided that teachers and learners were committed. This opinion was based on their own assessments of their respective schools. Regardless of the poor academic of their learners – in particular the Grade 12 learners – and regardless of poor teaching, low teacher morale, a shortage of resources and poor parental involvement, the principals maintained that their schools still managed to function without any

vision or strategic plans. As such, the principals did not necessarily see the need for any change at their schools – other than addressing the poor academic results of the Grade 12 learners. Of particular importance here is that, although the principals seemed to have a technical understanding of how a school ought to operate and the type of structures that ought to be in place, they did not necessarily think that they needed to implement these technicalities or structures, such as regular parent meetings; evaluation of teaching and learning practices; staff development programmes; management of the daily attendance records of both teachers and learners; or adhering to the school timetable. The impression created by the principals was that it simply was not possible to expect their schools to implement these measures, since the type of teachers and learners they were dealing with would not adhere to these measures. From this it became evident that the context of these schools played a huge role in the level of functionality of the schools. If teachers were absent or late then it simply meant that teaching and learning did not happen – there were no contingency plans, or attempts to remedy the repeated absence or late-coming of the same teachers and learners.

One of the key findings and concerns of this research study is the large number of unqualified and under-qualified teachers. If teachers are not qualified to teach, or do not have an adequate understanding of their subjects, then learners are compromised not only in their classrooms, but in terms of long-term prospects of accessing and succeeding at higher education. The appointment of unqualified and under-qualified teachers is a matter that simply cannot be addressed by school principals. As found in the study, the principals often waited for a long time to fill particular posts, and then resorted to the appointment of just about anybody simply to ensure that some teaching and learning would indeed happen. Exacerbating this precarious situation is the fact that the four principals only had an understanding of their own respective subjects. They had little understanding of the entire curriculum, and were there unable to assist those teachers who needed assistance. The principals shared that the education department knew about the challenges they were facing, but offered no support in making available curriculum advisors, or offering basic interventions with regards to teaching or classroom management.

Although all four principals recognised the importance of healthy staff relationships and claimed to cultivate an interpersonal relationship among staff members, this was not evident during the

observation at the four schools under study. Instead, the four principals spent the beginning of each year struggling to find suitably qualified teachers, eventually opting for unqualified teachers when they realised that qualified teachers simply were not available. This situation is acknowledged by the Namibian Ministry of Education, namely that the higher education system is unable to produce the number of teachers required in schools and, more importantly, that they are not producing teachers who are skilled in teaching particular subjects, such as Mathematics, Physical Science and English at the level of Grades 10 to 12. Evident from the observations of the daily routines of the principals, as well as their interaction with staff members, is that they appear to be moving from one problem or crisis to the next. They struggled to ensure that all teachers were prepared and actually teaching; they struggled to hold teachers accountable; they exhibited limited skills in being able to motivate staff; and often felt equally demotivated in their positions as principals. Consequently, there was very little evidence of a staff that shared strong features of collegiality, or who necessarily got along. Moreover, the high staff turnover at the four schools added to the difficulty of forging good staff relationships.

The analysis of the Grade 12 learner results revealed that, for the three years from 2011 to 2013, only School C obtained a 74.7% pass rate, while the remaining schools obtained below 50%. Moreover, the study also found that the results of the Grade 12 learners declined considerably, from 30% in the year 2011 to 8.2% in the year 2012 in the Kavango Region. Based on the interviews and document analysis, it became clear that the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in the Kavango Region was not satisfactory, either in terms of pass rates or in terms of learners accessing higher education. An examination of the results of the Grade 12 learners at the four research schools revealed that, in 2011, only 199 (36%) of the 599 candidates who wrote the examinations qualified to access higher education. In the year 2012, only 46 (8.7%) of the 531 candidates qualified to access higher education, and in 2013, 189 (36.1%) of the 524 candidates who wrote examinations qualified to access higher education. The Grade 12 results were based on 25 points in the best five academic subjects, including a C symbol in English. In response to the poor Grade 12 results, all four principals acknowledged that the type of education provided at their respective schools was inadequate to prepare learners to perform well and to access higher education. The principals explained the inadequacy of the school in terms of a high incidence of

unqualified and under-qualified teachers; high rates of absenteeism and late-coming among teachers and learners; high attrition rates among learners; poor teacher and learner discipline; automatic promotion of learners; the poor academic foundation; poor teaching strategies; teachers having insufficient or no content knowledge, particularly in the subjects of Mathematics, Physical Science, Biology, Geography and English for Grades 10-12; a serious shortage of resources; poor parental involvement and support; poor or no support from the Namibian education ministry; as well as their own lack of skills and knowledge of the curriculum, and of how to lead and manage the school as an organization. The principals recognised that there was a direct correlation between the poor work ethics or attitude of teachers and learners. Where teachers often were late for classes, seldom taught and showed little interest in providing learners with feedback, learners were equally disinterested in, and disengaged from, their learning. The principals shared that they struggled to motivate these learners because they knew that doing so required dealing with the poor commitment of certain teachers.

In response to the main research focus, the study revealed that school leadership has a positive impact on the academic performance of learners. However, this was not evident during the observation at the four respective schools. Principals struggled to ensure that teachers had good work ethics; they did not know how to demonstrate high competence and performance expectations of achieving good academic results; they were not able to influence teachers to be positive in providing quality teaching and learning; and they often experienced difficulty in fostering a conducive environment and atmosphere favourable for teaching and learning. They recognised that their poor leadership skills and knowledge to create well-performing schools had a direct impact on the attitudes, morale, commitment and performance of the teachers and learners, and also affected their morale as principals in providing quality education to the learners. The principals also had little knowledge and skills for devising possible strategies and interventions to address and improve the academic performance of learners, they were unable to take full responsibility and accountability for the successful implementation of academic improvement programmes; and also could not guide and support teachers to develop academic targets for their subjects and learners to ensure that they were highly committed to achieving set targets, school goals and objectives. Although all four principals claimed to understand the importance of

professionalism at school, they could not provide enough evidence that they really were demonstrating or practising the afore-mentioned. They experienced difficulty in building a professional relationship and collaboration among teachers; and they were not able to express a sense of compassion, empathy, trust and respect for their staff members. They did not know how to lead a team towards enhancing school academic performance, and were unable to encourage one-on-one interactions or open communication in which teachers could share their daily challenges. It also was observed that the principals lacked a professional approach in handling disciplinary matters with their staff members, because they often confronted and reprimanded teachers who did not live up to the school's expectations openly. The principals recognised that their poor leadership skills had an impact on the relationship among staff and affected the morale and commitment of teachers towards teaching and learning. This created a negative attitude among staff members not to work together towards achieving school objective. In turn, this attitude had a negative impact on the academic performance of learners. In addition, the principals shared that they normally recognised and rewarded teachers who were performing academically and those who manifested positive attitudes towards school development. However, it was not evident that teachers' efforts and individual achievement indeed were appreciated. This frustrates teachers and lowers their morale and commitment towards teaching and learning and, in turn, quality teaching and learning are not provided as expected, hence learners are not adequately prepared to achieve good academic results.

6.2 Implications for school leadership and learners' academic performance

The fact that all four principals did not have formal training or skills in leadership and management means that they do not know how to manage the curriculum, their staff and the learners, or how to change their current contexts of knowing that they are not providing quality education to their learners. Therefore, the fact, that these principals are not qualified or are not supported by the Namibian education ministry has serious implications not only for what happens inside the classroom and at the school, but also for what happens to the learners once they complete (or not) Grade 12.

The implications for learners at the research schools are that they struggle to complete the prescribed curriculum; they also struggle to understand what is being taught to them; they become disengaged; and they perform poorly in their respective subjects. Given the fact that they are not equipped to do well in their education, they might feel a sense of defeat, lose focus and subsequently give up. As a result, they will not be able to meet the minimum requirements to pursue higher education or access employment. They therefore will join the ranks of unemployed citizens when they leave school because they lack the necessary knowledge and skills required for the job markets. This will be a waste of resources, since their parents expected them to either access higher education or become employed upon completion of their schooling. As a result, they might still continue to depend on their parents and guardians for support and financial means, and this will create social problems in the family. Those who do access higher education will have the opportunity to be adequately equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies to be employed or become self-employed once they complete their studies, while some might acquire skills for personal growth and development. Their standard of living will be improved and they will live a better life. Their skills will be used to improve the quality of life of other people and they will be able to uplift the living conditions and standards of society and the country in general, as well as contributing meaningfully to the economic development of the country.

Likewise, the implications for qualified teachers are that they might feel the burden of compensating for poor teaching in other classes and other grades; that they become demotivated; and that they struggle to find support and acknowledgement in a school environment where clear leadership and management are not evident. In due course they may become reluctant to carry out their daily functions; in turn, they might develop an apathetic attitude, idleness and lose interest, and start to neglect their teaching responsibilities. Their level of commitment towards teaching and learning will be affected negatively. This may result in poor teaching, and learners also will be discouraged from striving for good academic achievement. Consequently, they are likely to attain poor academic results.

The implications for unqualified and under-qualified teachers are that they experience great difficulty in preparing and presenting lessons; they struggle to meet the needs of the learners and

to engage with them so that they participate actively in the classroom; they struggle to complete continuous assessment and evaluation and do all the administrative work; they experience problems in managing their classrooms; and also experience problems in applying various teaching techniques, strategies, methods and approaches. In sum, unqualified and under-qualified teachers do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to cope in schools that are equally under-resourced and under-performing. While a number of unqualified and under-qualified teachers might have more passion and commitment than qualified teachers – as was encountered at two of the research schools – this might not be enough to adequately prepare learners in the context of poor or inadequate support in terms of leadership and management. To this end, learners will have inadequate knowledge and skills, and this will add to their existing burden of struggling to cope with the demand to achieve good results. This may lead to learning backlogs. As a result, the standard of academic performance will be below average, there will be high attrition rates and high failure rates, and many learners will not qualify to access higher education.

The implications for the parents are that, given the poor academic performance of their children, they do not necessarily see the value of their involvement in school activities. If parents cannot see that their children are learning and progressing, then they will not necessarily see the importance of their own involvement in their children's education. This is especially the case where the majority of the parents of the schools in the Kavango Region are themselves uneducated, and they might attach more value to their children working and contributing to a household than perceivably wasting their time attending school and still not amounting to anything. They will not attend regular parent meetings and school functions. They will not support schools to address and improve the academic performance of learners. This will create an extra workload for teachers, who are already struggling to deal with learners' problems. Parents will not have trust and confidence in the school management to provide quality education for their children. There will be a poor relationship between the school and, parents and the community, which will further exacerbate the poor academic performance of the learners. This will have an impact on the morale of the teachers and learners, which in turn will have a negative impact on the school's academic progress. Consequently, parents might withdraw their children or transfer them to other schools. This will reflect badly on the school and the teachers' reputation.

The implications for the principals are that, within their school contexts of little or to no support, they will feel stressed, frustrated and hopeless; they might struggle to handle teachers who are not living up to their expectations; they might experience difficulty in monitoring and controlling academic activities; they also might struggle to resolve conflict, and to interact effectively with staff members, thus affecting staff relationships. All the aforementioned will have an impact on the morale of the teachers and the principals, which, in turn, will have serious implications for the teaching and learning that take place at the schools, as well as for the academic performance of learners. To this end, the school will not provide quality education, and the learners will not be successful in attaining good results to access higher education and secure job opportunities. While all four principals acknowledged that they needed urgent assistance, and that they were willing to undergo training, they did not know how to garner the support they needed. Their repeated appeals to the Ministry of Education have gone unanswered. In time, these principals might simply leave their respective schools due to the sheer loneliness of being held accountable for a situation – such as the poor Grade 12 results – that they recognise they cannot address without the necessary support.

The implications for Namibian society are a perpetuation of a high level of unemployment; no development of skills and knowledge at institutions of higher education; and an ever-growing perception that rural schools, such as the schools under discussion, cannot provide learners with an adequate education. Consequently, parents will continue to send their children to urban and private schools at great cost, and the Ministry will continue to invest more money in these schools because they are perceived to offer a better education. Given the latter, prospective and current teachers will continue to be reluctant to teach at rural schools – where the needs are greater – because of the poor infrastructure and support. For learners, the consequences are increasingly dire, as is evident in Namibian society. In the absence of not being able to access higher education or find employment, young people turn a life of crime, alcohol and drug abuse, and other socially related ills. This will lead to social destruction and instability in society and in the country. It also may lead to unproductive citizens, and ill health and the death rate might increase in the country. As a result, the country will not produce an educated, skilled work force or qualified personnel in critical fields with the necessary skills and competencies to drive the country's economy. This may

lead to dependence on foreign expertise. Consequently, the country's economy will not develop and poverty will not be eradicated, hence the country's Vision 2030 for a knowledge-based society will not be realised.

Given the emphasis on the poor Grade 12 academic achievements, it became evident that the implications for poor Grade 12 results cannot possibly be addressed at the exit point (Grade 12 level). The challenges encountered in Grade 12 have emanated from the lower grades, in which a strong educational foundation was not laid. The poor foundational background is of course created and exacerbated by the fact that principals allocate their strongest teachers to the higher grades because of the pressure to produce good Grade 12 results. And, because the weaker, unqualified or under-qualified teachers are allocated to the lower grades, the challenges encountered in Grade 12 continue in a vicious cycle.

6.3 Recommendations

There is not much in the line of school leadership training for school principals in Namibia, and the study found that the Ministry of Education only provides one or two weeks' instructional school leadership training workshops through the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), for which principals receive training workshop certificates upon completion. The principals acknowledged that these leadership training workshops are currently on offer in Namibia for all principals in all fourteen regions. However, these workshops have little to offer in equipping principals to adequately manage and lead their schools. Given the fact that Grade 12 learner results had declined steadily from 2011 to 2013, in which the majority of learners could not access higher education or employment after Grade 12, these poor learner results have been ascribed to poor work commitment, poor staff relationships, unqualified and underqualified teachers, a lack of parental support, a shortage of resources, and poor school leadership in which principals are not adequately equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage and lead schools to improve the quality of education and the academic performance of learners.

Therefore, the poor Grade 12 results will only improve if the Ministry of Education undertakes to equip school principals with the necessary leadership training skills to enable them to lead and manage their schools as organisations. The Ministry of Education also should ensure that qualified teachers are trained with the necessary competencies to teach Mathematics, Physical Science, Biology and English at Grades 8 to 12. As for the unqualified and under-qualified teachers, they should be encouraged to upgrade their qualifications through in-service training and professional development programmes, in which they should be capacitated to improve their subject knowledge and competencies, and acquire teaching strategies that will enable them to enhance the academic performance of learners. In addition, the automatic promotion of learners from one grade to another without mastering basic competencies has implications, as these learners will face learning difficulties or challenges in which they will not be able to cope in the next grade and, subsequently, their academic performance will be below average. This will contribute to unemployment after completing Grade 12, or they will not be admitted to higher institutions to acquire the necessary skills. Other implications include that schools normally concentrate more on Grade 12 learners and neglect the lower grades, not realising or taking into account that they are creating the same problem for themselves of not adequately preparing for Grade 12 in the first place. Because of the learners' poor educational foundation and unpreparedness to obtain adequate knowledge and skills from one grade to another, this may result in them performing poorly at the exit point.

6.3.1 Recommendations to the Ministry of Education

- The University of Namibia should introduce or incorporate school leadership programmes in the curriculum.
- Provision should be made for in-service leadership training of school principals in which they will be equipped with the necessary leadership skills and knowledge.
- In-service school leadership training courses should be introduced and training workshops should be presented for a duration of at least two or three years.
- Principals should be granted full-time study leave to pursue study in school leadership.
- Principals or school leaders should be encouraged to enrol for school leadership through in-service training programmes.
- Appointments of principals should be based on acquired leadership and managerial skills.

- Principals should be appointed on a contract basis in order to keep them on their toes, and to ensure productivity and accountability (Nekaro, 2001: 118).
- Leadership training for principals should take place before appointments are made (Bush & Heystek, 2006: 365).
- Inspectors of education or the Regional office should induct newly appointed principals before they assume their duties and responsibilities.
- Continuous school leadership support and guidance should be provided to novice principals.
- Many teachers should be trained for secondary level Grades 10 to 12 in subjects such as Mathematics, Physical Science, Biology, English and Geography.
- Advisory teachers and subject specialists should be trained to support teachers in various subject areas.
- Academic improvement plans, programmes and strategies with clear targets should be introduced for underperforming schools to improve poor learner results.
- Regional educational conferences should be encouraged on a regular basis to address poor learner results.

6.3.2 Recommendations to principals

- Enrol for school leadership professional development training programmes.
- Consult experienced and well-performing school principals to gain a better understanding of how the school should be managed.
- Become involved in school exchange programmes with fellow principals in terms of school leadership to enrich your leadership capabilities.
- Encourage networking with other principals.
- Have regular one-on-one conversations with teachers on learners' academic performance.
- Invite advisory teachers and subject specialists to support teachers on a regular basis.

6.3.3 Recommendations for improving Grade 12 results

- Allocate qualified and strong teachers from lower grades to ensure that quality teaching and learning happens from Grade 8 onwards so that learners have the necessary foundation and are better equipped to perform well in Grade 12.
- Reconsider the automatic promotion of learners from Grade 11 to 12.
- Have regular motivational talks with learners.
- Encourage regular parent meetings and days in which parents discuss and view the learners' progress with their teachers.
- Organise weekend, Saturday and holiday classes for remedial teaching and learning support.
- Give mock examinations using previous examination papers to prepare learners for year-end examinations.

6.4 Conclusion

The study was undertaken to investigate the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance at the four secondary schools. The significance of the study was to gain an understanding of how and whether or not school leadership contributes to learners' academic performance in schools. Given the focus of the study, it is believed that the findings of the study will contribute and add value to the existing body of knowledge in the field of school leadership and learners' academic performance in the Namibian schools. This study accorded the researcher an opportunity to learn about how educational research is conducted. As a novice researcher, the researcher learnt that doing research is challenging; it requires skills to be able to carry research out successfully. In spite of the challenges, the researcher found the exercise to be very enriching and stimulating. The researcher gained a better insight into the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance, and the study enabled the researcher to reflect on his own experience as a school principal of the challenges faced when a principal is appointed to lead and manage a school without school leadership training skills, knowledge, and support in doing so.

Since there is a limited research in the Namibian context that explores the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance in schools, this study might serve as a reference for school principals and curriculum implementers on how school leadership affects learners' academic performance and it may inspire other researchers to undertake further research in the area of school leadership and learners' academic performance.

The researcher suggests that future studies need to be conducted in order to build on what has been researched. Since leadership is not confined to principals alone, it is hoped that future studies will consider the views of the teachers, learners and principals in establishing a clear understanding of how school leadership contributes to learners' academic performance.

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ADDENDUM A

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Principal No.: -----School (A, B, C or D): -----
Date:-----

Kindly provide the following personal information:

1. Gender

2. Years of experience as a principal

3. Highest academic qualification:

4. Highest professional qualification:

5. School leadership training qualification:

ADDENDUM B

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND LEARNER PERFORMANCE

Principal No.:-----	School (A, B, C or D): -----
Date: -----	

1. How long have you been a principal at this school?
2. What is your understanding of school leadership?
3. What leadership styles do you practise at your school?
4. What are the challenges of school leaders in terms of learners' performance at your school?
5. How do you rate the academic performance of Grade 12 learners over the past three years? And what accounts for this level of performance?
6. What are the contributing factors to poor performance of learners at your school?
7. What are the contributing factors to good performance of learners at your school?

8. How does school leadership impact on the learners' performance at school?
9. What can school leaders do to make a difference in learners' academic performance?
10. What roles do you think teachers should play in improving learners' academic performance?
11. How do you support teachers to deliver quality teaching and learning?
12. How do you monitor learners' progress at your school?

ADDENDUM C

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

Principal:

Date:.....



School:

Time:.....

Morning briefings	Tick		comments
	yes	No	
A. Relationship			
1. interaction/Teamwork			
2. Participation/ Involvement			
3. Motivation			
4. Supportive/Caring			
5. Openness			
6. Communication			
7. Encouragement/empowerment			
8. High performance expectation			
9. Orderly environment			
10. Monitoring school progress			
11. School culture			
B. Leadership styles (models)			
1. Instructional leadership			
2. Transformational leadership			
3. Distributed leadership			
4. Participative leadership			
5. Democratic leadership			
6. Autocratic leadership			
C. General observation			

ADDENDUM D

Permission letter from the Namibian authority



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
KAVANGO REGIONAL COUNCIL

DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION

Tel. (066) 258 9111
Fax (066) 2589213/2589320/258 9222

Private Bag 2134
RUNDU

Enquiries: **Alfons M. Dikuua**
Email: dikuua@kway.na

Our Ref:

Date : 07 April 2014

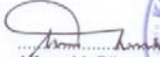
Mr. E.H. Simanu
P.O. Box 774
RUNDU
NAMIBIA

Dear Mr. Simanu


**SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS IN
RUNDU CIRCUIT [KAVANGO REGION]**

Permission is hereby granted to Mr. Simanu to conduct research at four secondary schools in Rundu Circuit.

Yours sincerely,



Alfons M. Dikuua
DIRECTOR



Cc. Inspector of Education – Rundu Circuit

All official correspondence must be addressed to the Chief Regional Officer

ADDENDUM E

Consent form



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of the study

An investigation into the relationship between school leadership and learners' performance at four secondary schools in the Kavango Region, Namibia

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by **Simanu Evalistus Hausiku studying for a Master's degree in Education Policy Studies** from the **Department of Policy Studies** at **Stellenbosch University**. The findings of the study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge and literature in the field of school leadership and learners' academic performance in schools. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of the experience and knowledge you have in this field.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study is to investigate the relationship between school leadership and learners' performance in order to gain an understanding as to how school leadership contributes to learners' academic performance in schools. To this end, the study hopes to make recommendations to policy makers, curriculum implementers and school leaders on how school leadership impacts on the learners' performance.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

I would like you to participate in a one-on-one depth interview session. The aim of this interview is to gain an understanding of the relationship between school leadership and learners' academic performance in schools. The interview session might last for 30 to 40 minutes. The researcher will also attend management and staff briefings and morning assemblies to observe how the principal manages and leads the school. Grade 12 learners' results for the past three years will also be examined to give an idea of the results being obtained at each of the schools. Semi-structured interview questions will be used in our conversation.

Our conversation will be guided by the following questions: Please, feel free to share your experience.

Questions

1. How long have you been a principal at this school?
2. What is your understanding of school leadership?
3. What leadership styles do you practise at your school?
4. What are the challenges of school leaders in terms of learners' academic performance at your school?
5. How do you rate the academic performance of Grade 12 learners over the past three years? And what accounts for this level of performance?
6. What are the contributing factors to poor performance of learners at your school?
7. What are the contributing factors to good performance of learners at your school?
8. How does school leadership impact on the learners' performance at school?
9. What can school leaders do to make a difference in learners' academic performance?

10. What roles do you think teachers should play in improving learners' academic performance?

11. How do you support teachers to deliver quality teaching and learning?

12. How do you monitor learners' progress at your school?

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no risks involved in participating in this study. The researcher will obtain informed consent from the participants and institutions where the study will be conducted, and the research will only be done once permission is granted. All participants will be assured that the data will remain anonymous and confidential.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The study will offer a better understanding as to how school leadership contributes to learners' academic performance in schools. It will contribute to the existing body of knowledge and literature of the school leadership discipline. In addition, this study hopes to enlighten policy makers, curriculum implementers and school leaders as to how school leadership impacts on learners' academic performance.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There will be no remunerations for any participants in this regard.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of storing and accessibility, in order to ensure that the data constructed will not get lost or fall into the hands of unauthorised people. The data will be released to the Department of Education Policy Studies at Stellenbosch University, the Ministry of Education in Namibia and through educational conferences. The findings will be released for educational purposes only. The participants will review the video tape to verify the authenticity of the information provided. Thereafter, the findings will be made public and the tapes will be erased.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Simanu Evalistus Hausiku, cell phone numbers +27604013092 South Africa; +264812578995 Namibia. E-mail: ehsimanu@yahoo.com. Supervisor: Dr Nuraan Davids. E-mail: nur@sun.ac.za

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to me by Simanu Evalistus Hausiku in English or Rukwangali and I am the participant in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

[I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study/I hereby consent that the subject/participant may participate in this study.] I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject/Participant

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant*] and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative*]. [*He/she*] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into _____ by _____*].
